"IUDGE IF OUGHT THEREIN BE AMIS": THE PARADOX OF EDMUND SPENSER'S QUEEN

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Abstract

Queen Elizabeth I is a figure of immense complexity: a woman who manifested the power of a prince, who ruled over a society that invested all authority, except that related to the sovereign, in men, and who embraced a notion of personal chastity that included qualities alien to that chastity practised by other women. Consequently, she became the locus of iconographic interpretation. One of her interpreters is Edmund Spenser. In *The Faerie Queene*, he responds to the complications inherent in the conflation of female and monarch. Although he is her subject, he also retains a power--to instruct, celebrate, and criticize--related to his literary vocation. He does praise Elizabeth, and the encomia in *The Faerie Queene* are easily recognizable. However, it is too facile to project only the complimentary images of the queen. This thesis considers how Spenser reacts to the contradictions and ambiguities arising from Elizabeth's anomalous and radical position. Furthermore, it analyzes how *his* queen, shadowed as Gloriana, Belphoebe, Britomart, and Amoret, among others, is a paradox: she is transmuted into allegorical figures who evoke expressions of celebration, as well as tension, hostility, and criticism.

For my parents,
with love and gratitude

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"Mirrour of grace and Maiestie diuine": Instability and the Representations of Elizabeth I

The 1596 dedication to *The Faerie Queene* refers to Elizabeth I as

> THE MOST HIGH,
> MIGHTIE
> And
> MAGNIFICENT
> EMPRESSE RENOVV-
> MED FOR PIETIE, VER-
> TVE, AND ALL GRATIOVS
> GOVERNMENT. . . . (22)[1]

This hyperbolic language extends into the proem of Book I, which invokes Elizabeth as the embodiment of poetic inspiration, and can be found at various places throughout the text. This seemingly uncritical praise of the monarch appears to establish an agenda for Edmund Spenser, who reinforces his own subservience by referring to himself as a "HVMBLE SERVAVNT" (22) and a suppliant craving favours.[2] The poet wanted to attract Elizabeth's patronage, and his praise of her is consistent with both that goal and his awareness of her real power over him. Undoubtedly, too, many of the compliments to Elizabeth's person and leadership are genuine reflections of Spenser's admiration for her. However, this reading, while not quite a "red herring," masks the paradoxical renderings of the queen in the poem. The celebration is usually tempered by a sense of deep unease.

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[1]All citations from *The Faerie Queene* are drawn from the Hamilton edition. Page numbers are given for the dedication and the "Letter to Raleigh"; book, canto, stanza, and line references are provided for the poem.

[2]Expressions of hyperbolic praise and submissive humility are common *topoi* of early modern writing, especially in prefatory materials dedicated to patrons.

Consequently, the representations of Elizabeth in *The Faerie Queene* are marked by tension, criticism, and contradiction.

Many scholars support the view that *The Faerie Queene* is a panegyric for the monarch. In *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth*, Robin Headlam Wells argues that "As a poetic tribute to Elizabeth, *The Faerie Queene* was intended to 'enlarge her prayses'" (1).[3] Indeed, in the "Letter to Raleigh," Spenser himself appears explicitly to establish his poem as an extended exercise in queen-worship: "In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceiue the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery land" (737). It is true that the elements of criticism and unease do not replace praise. However, a commentary which focuses exclusively on the glorification of Elizabeth is necessarily unbalanced and incomplete. Although many critics acknowledge the dual presences of praise and criticism in the poem, they rarely consider the pair to be consistent, coexistent discursive imperatives that form a pattern of "continuous disequilibrium" (Goldberg xi).[4]

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[3]For two earlier proponents of this argument, whom Wells cites as precedents, see Greenlaw 1, 46, 100, and Wilson 321-69. A later example is David Lee Miller, and although he takes a more equivocal stance, he can still state: "Spenser's portrayal of Elizabeth is sometimes obliquely critical, as recent criticism has argued, but it remains on balance a work of glorification, specifically glorification of the body politic in the person of Elizabeth" (6).

[4]Although Thomas Cain argues that it is "a commonplace that Spenser's great poem exists to praise Elizabeth . . ." (1), he believes that the "encomium itself begins to fall away . . ." (130) in the 1596 instalment. Susan Frye extends Cain's view by tracing the "undermining of praise" (*Elizabeth I* 187n) to Book III. Judith H. Anderson's argument comes closest to mine. However, even she qualifies the negative commentary of the 1590

The Elizabethan hierarchy of power, which privileged men generally and the queen specifically, could produce a literary work that contains such doubleness of purpose (Montrose, "Elizabethan Subject" 317). Spenser's poem is informed throughout by an apprehension of the reality of the queen, a woman who attracted a complex iconography and whose anomalous position in a masculinist society often engendered expressions of anxiety and dissension, as well as adulation

A quasi-religious discourse of praise, with echoes of the cult of the Virgin Mary, was centred on the queen. There was a desire within the court to insist on adoration of the monarch, and Elizabeth obviously made use of this need. Although the cult of Elizabeth is often viewed as a static and established system of iconography and celebration, history suggests it changed as the queen's reign progressed and was, particularly in the 1590s, unstable (Berry 62-67; Hackett 163, 236-37). The royal icon, (re)created as Good Queen Bess, Gloriana, Venus-Virgo, and a plethora of other images, was the site of representational contests. The queen was a major player, but other competitors made attempts to celebrate, demystify, and fashion her.[5] Spenser was one,

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books; she calls it a "cautionary awareness of the temptations and dangers of queenly power . . ." (47). See also Hackett 190 and Norbrook 112-13, 119.

[5]Frye uses the phrase "competition for representation" (*Elizabeth I* 6) to identify the sense of iconographic conflict. She also describes Elizabeth's "*agency*" (*Elizabeth I* 7), the queen's participation in the creation of her own iconography. Louis Adrian Montrose discusses Elizabeth's ability to "*work* the available terms to serve her culturally conditioned needs and interests. By the same token, however, her subjects might rework those terms to serve their turns" ("Elizabethan Subject" 310).

although he was neither a member of court nor a political insider. *He* failed to engage in absolute praise.

The celebratory imperative within the cult cannot disguise the fact that many images of Elizabeth are essentially unstable because they are attempting to translate the paradoxes and difficulties inherent in the leadership of a female monarch. Even the concept of her virginity became a locus for representational competition.[6] She was a virgin, yet was depicted additionally as spouse (Hackett 56), mother of her people (Hackett 77-78), and "the unattainable *object* of masculine desire" (Berry 62). As Elizabeth aged and the prospect of marriage and childbirth became an impossibility, the nature of her celibacy was redefined. During the 1560s and the 1570s, when Elizabeth participated in a number of marriage negotiations, her virginity was associated with the notion of a marriageable queen (King 39-41). It was also viewed as a temporary state which would end with a wedding. Later, when it was clear that she would never marry

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[6]Although Elizabeth clearly favoured the unmarried life, she made no pledge to remain unwed, as both John N. King and Susan Doran have shown. Such a vow would have been in conflict with her stated intention to marry (Doran 2-3; King 36-37) and her participation in her own marriage negotiations (Doran 11). Nevertheless, scholars still attempt to discover "motivations" for Elizabeth's virginity, beyond the inability of her government and advisors to agree upon a suitable candidate (Doran 210-11) and her unwillingness to submit her power to the will of a husband. These catalysts include the trauma of her mother's death at her father's command; the knowledge, based upon Henry VIII's subsequent, troubled unions, that marriage did not guarantee either stability or an heir; the cost of the early, destructive, and possibly abusive encounter with Sir Thomas Seymour; the disastrous example of Mary Tudor's foreign alliance with Philip of Spain; a physical impediment hindering either intercourse, conception, or childbirth (Doran 4-6; Somerset 91-99).

and, consequently, the first definition of her maidenhood was no longer applicable, the image changed to accommodate perpetual virginity (King 58-65). Furthermore, the very existence of the queen's virginity was questioned and thus undermined by a number of rumours which declared Elizabeth to have taken lovers, including the Earl of Leicester and Sir Christopher Hatton, and to have had illegitimate children, some of whom she allegedly destroyed (Levin 66-90). The malleable perceptions of Elizabeth's virginity highlight not only the historical background of Spenser's poem and the kind of complex and contradictory figure she had become but also the challenge of reconciling the dichotomy of woman and prince. This is the paradox, represented throughout *The Faerie Queene*, to which he responded.

It is important to examine the poem in the context of the 1590s, a turbulent time for the queen both personally and publicly. It was also a decade that produced the most serious threats to her image (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 98-104; Hackett 163, 180-82). The publication of the 1590 version of *The Faerie Queene* seems to herald this critical reassessment of Elizabeth. The poem directs criticism of the Tudor queen not only in the negative monarchical representations of Lucifera and Philotime but also in the undeniably virtuous female figures of Gloriana, Una, Belphoebe, Amoret, and Britomart. The 1596 instalment of *The Faerie Queene* contains further evidence that Spenser is not an uncomplicated and uncritical queen-worshipper. While the criticism is not as blatant as Bon/Malfont's "trespasse vyle" (5. 9. 25. 2), it is present in Radigund and others. Indeed, there is a "possibility that for one awful moment the image of the bitter old woman

[Slander] glances at the living Queen" (Anderson 62).

What is the source of these negative elements in Spenser's poetic portraits of Elizabeth? His difficulties appear to derive from the radicalism of having an unmarried woman on the throne, an event which engendered anxieties in many of the queen's subjects (Levin 1-4). Although women ruled England for the last half of the sixteenth century, it is neither trite nor incorrect to call it "a man's world." Elizabeth was an anomaly; except for her dominant position in the religious, social, and political hierarchies, the gender of power was otherwise masculine. As a result, the queen had to attempt, through the use of various strategies, to reconcile the contradictions inherent in her person, simultaneously a member of a culturally-prescribed inferior sex and a monarch. Women were property, belonging by blood or marital ties to a man (Stallybrass 127-28), but Elizabeth ruled a nation. Women were supposed to be both silent and obedient, but a queen regnant must have a voice and the ability to command. The queen subverted the normative gender paradigms of her sixteenth-century world. Although she tried to overcome the problem of her sex and augment her authority by the use of literature, paintings, pageants, and speeches (her own and others), the process was always, by its very nature, continuous, precarious, and threatening.

Although Elizabeth's position as female monarch was the central point of anxiety for her age and for Spenser, the unease was exacerbated by the extreme of the queen's chastity, which was conflated with the notion of perpetual virginity. Elizabeth did not fulfil those duties of the chaste wife and mother. She was free from the rule of a husband,

and her singularity was opposed to the married state of most females (Wiesner 56-57). Queens in particular were expected to marry and assure the family line. To the consternation of the English people, who longed for the stability of an acknowledged successor, Elizabeth did not discharge her generative responsibility and, indeed, further problematized the succession by refusing to name an heir.[7] Definitions of chastity did encompass virginity, but queenly chastity did not maintain the necessary silence and obedience of the virtuous woman. In speaking, Elizabeth transgressed regular gender boundaries, in which silence was considered "an equivalent of bodily purity" (Ferguson 97):

> The signs of the "harlot" are her linguistic "fullness" and her frequenting of public space. . . . We are not, of course, addressing here the local mechanisms of social control, differentiated by both class and region, to which women were subject, nor women's resistances to them both collectively and individually, but the production of a normative "Woman" within the discursive practices of the ruling elite. This "Woman" . . . is rigidly "finished": her signs are the enclosed body, the closed mouth, the locked house. (Stallybrass 127)

As a public and authoritative figure, a queen could not be silent. Nevertheless, her voice could not be deemed a sign of sexual availability, although this attitude undoubtedly had detractors. The reason that Elizabeth, unlike other vocal women, could not be considered unchaste is supported by the praise within her own cult. It is also strengthened by the fiction that, as queen, she possessed two bodies: a body natural, private and mutable; and

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[7]Anne Somerset clarifies Elizabeth's contradictory attitude to her successor: "By keeping in check the rival claimants to the throne, Elizabeth can be said to have tacitly endorsed the title of James VI of Scotland to succeed her, but she would never officially acknowledge it" (562).

a body politic, which enclosed the public, sacred, and immutable nature of monarchy (Kantorowicz 7-23). Significantly, the latter contained "mysterious forces which reduce, or even remove, the imperfections of the fragile human nature" (Kantorowicz 9), including the unchastity connected to a woman's speech when that woman is the queen regnant. The actions of Elizabeth's body politic could not be tainted by the imperfections attached to her problematic gender.

Elizabeth's virginity was, in some ways, a slight to the very Church of which she was Supreme Governor. Protestantism held that celibacy was a state that could not be achieved by the vast majority of its (sinful) adherents, a belief which distinguished it from Catholic ideology and the practice of a celibate clergy. Therefore, the idea of the chaste marriage, a state that Elizabeth was always--at best--reluctant to join, was prized. It is true that Protestants embraced a heightened view of virginity, but it was a goal beyond the aspirations of most people (Hackett 54). Because Elizabeth was a virgin, she held a unique religious position, but it was one that further differentiated her from most of her sex. Her virginity alienated her, too, from the customs of the noble houses of her realm, which relied on marriage not merely to perpetuate their names and families, but to enlarge estates and provide a sometimes necessary infusion of capital. Elizabeth's preference for maidenhood over marriage was contrary to those with whom she most regularly associated and on whom she relied for advice and companionship.[8]

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[8]Elizabeth was often quite antagonistic towards members of her courts who had intentions of marrying. Those who married without royal permission, like Leicester and

If Elizabeth's virgin chastity marked her uniqueness, then it was also a sign of her self-sufficient, female power and a threat to patriarchal domination (Frye, "Of Chastity" 53). While it is uncontested that women, to a large extent, had to be careful to preserve their own chaste reputations, female chastity, in a commodified sense, was a property under paternal authority and was "transferred," in marriage, to the possession of the husband (Ferguson 98-99). As time and Elizabeth's fertility passed, it became increasingly apparent that her chastity would never be regulated by such masculine investments: she had neither father, brother, nor husband to be concerned with its maintenance. Her chastity was entirely self-determined; as a female construct, it stood in opposition to patriarchal definitions of what a chaste woman should be. In fact, her virginity highlighted her androgyny: it was a feminine quality which did not communicate female subservience, but a quasi-masculine control. Furthermore, Elizabeth's intact body, homologous with perfection, wholeness, and unity, became associated with properties of magic (Frye, "Of Chastity" 53-54; Hackett 115, 117-18).[9] Her virginity was conflated with the flourishing of peace in the realm: her untransgressed body was not simply comparable to England's untrespassed borders; in a certain sense, it was the source (Hackett 115). Elizabeth's

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Raleigh, exposed themselves to queenly ire, political disfavour, and personal danger. See Doran 6.

[9]This alliance of virginity with the magical and the miraculous does not begin with Elizabeth Tudor. The connection is obvious in the Catholic belief that Christ was born of a virgin mother, a figure to whom Elizabeth is often compared. It is also found in the cults of various saints, such as the virgin martyr Agnes, whose pledge of chastity protected her from sexual advances in a brothel.

chastity also guaranteed her political success (Hackett 115); as a corollary, wantonness would make her unfit to rule. In many representations, her virginity was viewed as a kind of preservative against the natural effects of aging, such as the end of fertility, and helped reinforce the queen as an active, vital political presence (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 100-01).

Spenser's treatment of the queen does not merely reflect the problems caused by the linkage of her gender and her sovereignty; it is also a function of his engagement with the nature of her power. Although some dispute the claim that Elizabeth was an absolute monarch (Hardin 31-32), she was still the woman who concentrated the power of the realm, to a large degree, within her own person. Elizabeth, in her insistence upon queenly prerogative as the source and end of authority in her realm, saw herself as an absolute ruler, and she believed that acting as such was her God-given duty. She demanded the submission of her subjects. Her frequent evocation of her right to exercise a kingly prerogative was a conscious tactic that was tied to her awareness of the perceived dangers of the female monarch.

Because of her power, Elizabeth was the patron whom Spenser hoped to attract with *The Faerie Queene*, and thus, encomia of her are appropriate to such an endeavour. Yet the inclusion of such panegyrics should not obscure the negativity that simultaneously exists in Spenser's representations of the queen. The poet truly apprehended the paradoxical qualities of her might; it could be used to reward, but it could also punish. Although Elizabeth, like Spenser's Mercilla, might be the origin of favour and equity, these virtues do not diminish her capacity to respond to personal indignities with anger,

condemnation, and even violence:

> There as they entred at the Scriene, they saw
> Some one, whose tongue was for his trespasse vyle
> Nayld to a post, adiudged so by law:
> For that therewith he falsely did reuyle,
> And foul blaspheme that Queene for forged guyle,
> Both with bold speaches, which he blazed had,
> And with lewd poems, which he did compyle;
> For the bold title of a Poet bad
> He on himselfe had ta'en, and rayling rymes had sprad. (5. 9. 25)

Spenser seems to insist that the punishment of Bon/Malfont is fitting: the fictive poet, once considered a fine writer, has composed verses which are judged in law to be "sin" (5. 9. 26. 2); they are false, blasphemous, and wicked. Spenser mirrors elements of the Bon/Malfont dichotomy: he is a good poet who is dissatisfied with certain aspects of his monarch. Bon/Malfont also shows the vulnerability of the court poet and the speed at which punishment can follow favour. No one is secure enough to be exempt from royal wrath. How could Spenser uncritically praise a queen capable of such actions? He could not. He fully understood her contradictory nature. She could give him the prizes he desired, withhold them, or treat him like John Stubbs, according to the circumstances. Stubbs, a Protestant and a lawyer, wrote a pamphlet awkwardly entitled "A gaping gulf wherein England is like to be swallowed by another French marriage if the Lord forbid not the banns by letting Her Majesty see the sin and punishment thereof" (1579), which attacked the controversial Alençon match. Neither his religion, his occupation, nor the public opinion that was against Elizabeth's young suitor could protect Stubbs from the fury of Elizabeth. Although it is alleged that the queen initially sought the death penalty,

the punishment delivered to the writer and his bookseller, Page, was still extreme and harsh. Each had his right hand struck off (MacCaffrey 202-03; Somerset 312-14). The Stubbs incident was a lesson: benevolent Elizabeth coexisted with vengeful Elizabeth; Gloriana, with Lucifera, Philotime, and Radigund.

Spenser's connections with prominent courtiers allowed him to see, at close proximity, the queen's fulfilment of the twin roles of preferment and rejection. He was also a witness to the precarious and ultimately vulnerable fortunes of the Earl of Leicester and Sir Walter Raleigh, both of whom he knew. Leicester's life is almost a demonstration of the vagaries of monarchical power. His favour with the queen brought him honours, including a peerage, but it was insufficient to offset the rage generated by his impolitic and unsanctioned marriage in 1578. His was a spectacular fall from Elizabeth's "grace." Spenser saw more evidence of the effects of the queen's ire when the news of Raleigh's secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton became public in the spring of 1592. The betrayal wrought by this alliance, which Queen Elizabeth deemed a crime and which resulted in the couple's incarceration in the Tower of London, is poetically represented in the estrangment between Belphoebe and Timias. The downfalls of Leicester and Raleigh show Elizabeth at her petty, vindictive, and intrusive worst. Although there is no comparison between the wrongs experienced by Spenser and the queenly mistreatment of these courtiers, Spenser's self-aggrandized vision of his worth to Elizabeth and her court caused him to perceive his treatment in similar terms to the punishments of Leicester and Raleigh. Certainly, he viewed his own engagement with the mighty queen as a function of

her contradictory nature; indeed, his "reward" seemed proof of it:

> Once the poem is given there is a double loss. There are some palpable ironies here, not the least of which was that Spenser had more success as a professional poet than any other poet of his time. No other poet was granted so large a pension--fifty pounds a year--by the queen. And that gift had been his after the publication of the first half of *The Faerie Queene*. Clearly, to Spenser the gift (a respectable yearly salary), along with his Irish positions, was not enough. He chose to view his Irish career as banishment, his pension as a paltry reward. Nothing compensated the poet for his creative expenditure. (Goldberg 171)

Spenser's poem never admitted him into the inner circles of court, which would have given him access to the favour he had sought from afar for so long. Elizabeth's "failure" to compensate him in the manner he desired was a confirmation of his true understanding of her power.

Spenser's paradoxical "handling" of Elizabeth is an integral part of the narrative structure of *The Faerie Queene*. In the "Forewords" to *Endless Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse*, Jonathan Goldberg identifies "a way of reading Spenser" (xi) which focuses on textual instability. He recognizes that one form of this disturbance arises from "continuous disequilibrium." A model for this practice of instability can be found in isolated examples within the story of Amoret, which is unbalanced by Spenserian revision. At one point, the reader is told that Scudamour is Amoret's choice; as the story unfolds, her selection is erased and replaced by abduction and rape. In Book III, the relationship between Amoret and Scudamour is never described as a marriage; in the subsequent book, their affiliation is transformed into a marital bond. Throughout the text, the forces of disequilibrium are always at work. Spenser's narrative design for *The Faerie Queene*

provides the necessary space for his portrait of Elizabeth in all its contradictory modes; this approach produces gaps through which the celebration and blame can emanate. He unsettles his queen by undercutting the encomia with suggestions of negativity and by combining elements of praise with dissent. Her power and self-image are definitely unbalanced, as is her radical chastity: Spenser celebrates the perpetual virginity of Belphoebe-as-Elizabeth, yet he inserts a note of sinister sexuality into the discourse to expose her chastity as problematic. He undermines the praise further in the representations of Britomart and Amoret by reinventing queenly chastity as marital chastity. The textual disequilibrium, furthermore, creates a similar sense within the reader. The way the text is written compels the reader to question the praise of Elizabeth and to confront the tensions, negativities, and anxieties that run through the poem.

Goldberg's analysis also highlights the lack of closure in *The Faerie Queene*. "the poem is not merely finally unfinished, but frustratingly incomplete and inconclusive throughout, even when it encourages readers to expect conclusions. This is characteristic of Spenserian narration, and it is characteristically problematic" (1). The reader does not need to look further than Amoret's disappearance into the text at the pivotal moment of her reunion with Scudamour to find an illustration of this tendency. In a larger sense, the antithetical treatment of Elizabeth also refuses to be closed, for the reader is left with no sense of resolution. Spenser fails to be neatly categorized as encomiast or critic. As a consequence, the reader can never untangle queen-worship from anxiety in Spenser's mixed view of the monarch. There are no unequivocal conclusions, only further debates,

ambivalences, and ambiguities.

Spenser's complex appraisal of the queen corresponds with the intricacy of the text's allegory. Marion Wynne-Davies refers to allegory's possession of a "perpetual mutation of meaning" (81). Although, at times, the allegory of *The Faerie Queene* appears quite schematic and there seems to be a comfortable one-to-one relation between signifiers and signifieds (in Book I, for example), the poem is ruled by plurality, displacement, and disturbance.[10] Goldberg, following Barthes, differentiates the readerly text, which "drives towards signification" (10), from a writerly text like *The Faerie Queene*, which "plays with signifiers, and its names are the names of names linked in an endless chain of words . . ." (10-11).[11] The activity of reading sets up a manipulation and collapsing of identities. The proem to Book I exemplifies this tendency:

> And with them eke, O Goddesse heauenly bright,
> Mirrour of grace and Maiestie diuine,
> Great Lady of the greatest Isle, whose light
> Like *Phoebus* lampe throughout the world doth shine,
> Shed thy faire beames into my feeble eyne,
> And raise my thoughts too humble and too vile,
> To thinke of that true glorious type of thine,
> The argument of mine afflicted style:
> The which to heare, vouchsafe, O dearest dred a-while. (1. Proem. 4)

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[10]David Norbrook discusses Goldberg's use of the word "revolutionary" in connection with *The Faerie Queene*: "the text itself is radical because it allows readers to participate in the production of meanings rather than providing them with a fully-formed content" (8).

[11]Of course, Goldberg's focus remains on the narrative features of *The Faerie Queene*, but his comments, in this case, are equally applicable to the nature of Spenserian allegory.

According to Cain, this stanza follows the structure of the Orphic hymn: "praise by accumulated epithets, then petition, to which Spenser adds in the alexandrine a *votum*, or gesture of offering" (52). This is suitable verse for the panegyrist. Elizabeth is figured in a sequence of guises, encompassing both the divine and the human: she is a Goddess, a "Mirrour of grace and Maiestie diuine," and the "Great Lady." These representations of Elizabeth appear to be excessively flattering, as is appropriate for the embodiment of Spenser's poetic stimulus. He is the humble recipient of the inspiration, symbolized by light, which radiates from her. Yet the encomia of Elizabeth are subverted because Spenser has created an antagonistic subtext. The poet brings her under his masculine control. As a Muse, she is shown to be useful to a male enterprise; her value lies in being a figurehead, leaving others to act. In addition, Spenser makes her subject to and of his "argument." While he is *her* subject in truth, in the poem he can and does "govern" her fictive appearances. Furthermore, Spenser suggests that she is not "grace and Maiestie diuine," but only the "Mirrour" of these virtues:

> Hence, the designated reader of Spenser's allegory is just as surely a mirror as the text in which she is supposed to see her own reflection; she cannot be the true source of light, but only its debased material likeness. As Spenser indicates, the queen's political self-mythologizing can never attain the glory to which she lays claim: she is the mirror and not the lamp. (Wynne-Davies 95)

Spenser's claim that Elizabeth is the pattern or "type" of glory is only a platitude; he has already denied her the preeminent role of originator of the light, assigning her instead the secondary function of reflection. An examination of this single stanza demonstrates the endless malleability of the allegory, which allows Spenser to explore the paradox of his

queen.

The antithetical treatment of Elizabeth not only fits the allegorical and narrative strategies of the poem, but is a function of epic literature's preoccupation with the epideictic (Cain 4-5; Wells 1). For the Renaissance poet, the epic was considered to be part of the genre of praise, yet it had a strong element of didacticism (Cain 4-5). An epic like Spenser's presents virtue as a paradigm for imitation. Erasmus explains the pedagogic responsibility of the epic poet/encomiast in a letter relating to the *Panegyric for Archduke Philip of Austria*:

> First of all, those who believe panegyrics are nothing but flattery seem to be unaware of the purpose and aim of the extremely far-sighted men who invented this kind of composition, which consists in presenting princes with a pattern of goodness, in such a way as to reform bad rulers, improve the good, educate the boorish, reprove the erring, arouse the indolent, and cause even the hopelessly vicious to feel some inward strirrings of shame. . . .How much easier it is to lead a generous spirit than to compel it, and how much better to improve matters by compliments rather than abuse. (114-15 [ep. 180])[12]

Spenser, too, is concerned with ethical development, an interest to which he refers in the "Letter to Raleigh": "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman

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[12]Erasmus discusses the didactic quality of the panegyric elsewhere. In another letter relating to the *Panegyric*, he writes that "there is certainly no other method of correcting princes so effective as giving them an example of a good prince for a model . . . provided that you bestow virtues and remove vices in such a way that it is clear that you are offering encouragement towards the one and deterrence from the other" (112 [ep. 179]). He also refers to the writer as teacher in *The Education of the Christian Prince*: "Charles was a prince to whom a man need not hesitate to offer the picture of a true and upright Christian prince without any flattery, knowing that he would either gladly accept it as an excellent prince already, or wisely imitate it as a young man always in search of self-improvement" (4).

or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (737). However, in presuming to educate morally the readers of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser is including those who already are gentlemen and members of the nobility. Although the queen is not named, she, as a noble (albeit the *most* noble), is also a target and a student of the poet's ethical teaching (Erickson 158).[13] Hence, the didactic aspect of the epic provides a third structure for presenting Spenser's ambivalence towards his ruler.

What is the basis for Spenser's presumption that he can redefine Elizabeth's image, be her schoolmaster, and criticize her? Obviously, censure of the queen by a subject hoping for royal renumeration for his literary efforts was a risky endeavour. But Spenser has his own kind of power. As the maker of the discourse called *The Faerie Queene*, he is concurrently subject to power and able to subject others to his power (Montrose, "Elizabethan Subject" 303; Parker 61):

> During the course of a long reign, many male subjects of various statuses, skills, and interests were engaged in--and, in various ways, profited by--sponsoring, designing, and executing the representations of royal power. It is in this sense that the ruler and the ruled, the queen and the poet, are construable as subjects differentially shaped within a shared conjuncture of language and social relations, and jointly reshaping that conjuncture in the very process of living it. (Montrose, "Elizabethan Subject" 318)[14]

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[13]Cain disagrees with this conclusion: "Spenser manages this [deliberative] role so as to make Elizabeth the source of instruction rather than its object" (6). For a similar view, see Wells 5.

[14]To a certain extent, all of Elizabeth's subjects had a share in the production/reproduction of the royal image. Spenser's fashioning was privileged because of the dissemination of his poetry and his associations with the powerful of the court.

Spenser may rely on the queen for preferment and reflect back to her reader's gaze images of her glorious sovereignty, but he is also a ruler: "He asserts, again and again, his own hegemony over an empire as vast and turbulent as hers, the empire of language" (Giamatti 332). Consequently, he may manipulate queenly representations and undermine praise of the monarch with antagonistic expressions of tension and negativity. Like Elizabeth, he is "two persons" (Spenser 737): he can exist in the contradictory positions of subject and sovereign, and maintain the dual functions of praise and criticism. He possesses a writer's power over the poetic world he has devised, and his right to criticize is founded on that authority.[15]

One signal that *The Faerie Queene* should be interpreted as a product of disequilibrium is created by the ancillary texts to the 1590 publication of *The Faerie Queene*: the "Letter to Raleigh" and the Dedicatory Sonnets. Although the Letter is inconsistent in many places, some critics continue to treat it as an authoritative source (Erickson 140). Wayne Erickson shows, however, that the Letter in particular acts as a "masterful manipulation" (142) and that Spenser is playing the double role appropriate to the subject-poet:

> In the Letter, Spenser justifies his subject matter and technique by, in essence, denying their originality, defending his poem by detailing its conformity to authoritative ancient and modern models: the poet becomes a mere player on the stage of literary history, acting a script that has been written for him.

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[15]Giamatti admits that Spenser desired Elizabeth "to understand that he too is a sovereign, though in fact he came to believe less and less in the efficacy of his potency as monarch while she from all one can tell, scarcely noticed him or his power at all" (332).

> Simultaneously, Spenser subtly inverts expectation, mastering the power to which he submits and asserting his own imaginative potency by advertising a poem that undermines, dissects, and transforms some of the very qualities represented in the Letter as its own. These contrary strategies articulate Spenser's dialogue with his audiences. . . . (147)

The implication of Erickson's analysis is that the anticipated praise of Elizabeth, promised by the Letter, must be suspect. Moreover, the doubleness of Spenser's treatment of Elizabeth is supported by the Dedicatory Sonnets, which Erickson calls, in conjunction with the Letter, an exercise in "preventative rewriting" (143). That Spenser acknowledges the possibility of "gealous opinions and misconstructions" (737) being attached to *The Faerie Queene* implies the existence of criticism. The appended texts then act as a method of entering the poem and provide a guide to the dynamics which characterize the paradoxical attitude towards Elizabeth as one warranting both adulatory and critical responses.

The second signal that Spenser's queen is an amalgam of contradictory elements can be found in the multiplicity of her representations. In the "Letter to Raleigh," Spenser emphasizes that his strategy involves fragmentation: "And yet in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belphoebe . . ." (737). He reiterates his approach in the poem itself:

> Ne let his fairest *Cynthia* refuse,
> In mirrours more then one her selfe to see,
> But either *Gloriana* let her chuse,

Or in *Belphoebe* fashioned to bee:
In th'one her rule, in th'other her rare chastitee. (3. Proem. 5. 5-9)

It is clear from an examination of other poetic figures that Elizabeth's "mirrours" reflect more than Gloriana and Belphoebe, and this conclusion is suggested by Spenser himself when he states that he uses Belphoebe *only* "in some places" to image Elizabeth-as-Lady. In Book I, her figures include the Muse of poetic inspiration, Una, Lucifera, and Gloriana. In spite of the fact that fracture is a recognizable aspect of Spenserian narration, it does not fully explain the necessity of supplying Elizabeth with plural identities. Undoubtedly, fragmentation is a way for the poet to negotiate the dualities of absence and presence, and praise and unease. Elizabeth is omnipresent in the text, yet, at the same time, curiously and surprisingly absent in a poem meant to glorify her. Representations of her are in every book, but none are given her name[16] and align fully with the historical reality of Elizabeth Tudor, Queen of England. Her "position" in the text is so unstable that there is no "ultimate convergence with pure signification" (Bellamy 5). The reader knows, however, that Spenser links names to one another in a paradigm of narrative deferral. As a result, the various manifestations associated with Elizabeth are sufficiently allusive that Spenser's queen cannot be ultimately elusive, even if there is no simple one-to-one allegorical correlation. What the fragmentation does is give the poet an opportunity to praise the monarch by allowing her shadows to infiltrate every book of *The Faerie Queene*. It also

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[16]For a full discussion of the unreadability of Elizabeth I in *The Faerie Queene*, see Bellamy.

gives Spenser an opportunity to negate her power through "descriptive dismemberment" (Vickers, "Diana Described" 103), a plan famously exploited by Petrarch. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser provides no complete portrait of Elizabeth, just as Petrarch gives none of Laura; rather, "Laura is always presented as a part or parts of a woman" (Vickers, "Diana Described" 96). Spenser does not section Elizabeth's body, but her royal image and character. Gloriana figures Elizabeth's sovereignty; Belphoebe, Britomart, and Amoret, her chastity; Lucifera, her pride; and so forth. This segmentation of Elizabeth into constituent parts gives neither perfect signification nor poetic presence, but it does give the illusion of unity (Vickers, "Diana Described" 105, 107). The diffusion allows Spenser to praise his queen, but it also shows his poetic power over her: she may be able to dismember his physical body, yet he can perform a series of imaginative "amputations." In his text, he transforms his own subjection by submitting her poetic traces to his own "author"ity (Vickers, "Diana Described" 108-09; "The blazon" 96).

A third signal that Spenser is "writing" Elizabeth according to two antagonistic impulses can be found by investigating the status of women in *The Faerie Queene*. Sheila T. Cavanagh shows that, in the epic, the beauty and virtue of many of the female characters, including those who figure the queen, make them vulnerable to patriarchal power. They become threads in the poem's pattern of "repeated displacement, subversion, and abuse of female characters" (Cavanagh 3). Florimell is an exemplar of this rubric. She is interchangeable with the Snowy Florimell, and her flight, a common "activity" for many virtuous women in the text (Cavanagh 30), exposes her to the dangers posed by a

variety of predatory men. The reader is left to puzzle over the value of Florimell's beauty and goodness because both leave her open to attack and are, at times, indistinguishable from the chimera of the false Florimell:

> By their aduise, and her owne wicked wit,
> She there deuiz'd a wondrous worke to frame,
> Whose like on earth was neuer framed yit,
> That euen Nature selfe enuide the same,
> And grudg'd to see the counterfet should shame
> The thing it selfe. In hand she boldly tooke
> To make another like the former Dame,
> Another *Florimell*, in shape and looke
> So liuely and so like, that many it mistooke. (3. 8. 5)

Furthermore, the idea of female agency, so closely associated with Elizabeth's own attempts to present herself to her people, has few parallels in *The Faerie Queene* (Cavanagh 76). Florimell and Amoret, for example, are defined by their connections with men who kidnap, rape, and marry them, subjecting them to masculine domination. Their lives are entirely shaped and reshaped by male abuse of or claim to their virtue and beauty, and, in Amoret's case, spousal right and rapist's might are conflated in the body of her husband, Scudamour. Indeed, many of the virtuous female characters are commodified beings in a system of marital/sexual economy (Cavanagh 76). Elizabeth herself was a player in this economy, but it was one over which she, as a queen regnant, exerted a certain mastery. She was never controlled by her role within it. But Spenser accommodates his queen to his vision of acceptable female behaviour by making many of her poetic substitutions actively seek a place in a heterosexual union or by making knights pursue the women as objects of desire. Even Britomart, ostensibly the most autonomous

female in the text, is compelled to find Artegall after seeing his face in Merlin's "glassie globe" (3. 2. 21. 1). Beauty and moral excellence are connected with Elizabeth in the poem and, through the invocation of these qualities, she is praised; nevertheless, by undermining the women who possess these attributes, by creating instances in which the female is subject, or victim, to the traditional ascendancy of men, he is exhibiting his unease with Elizabeth's gender and power.

The use of the word "shadow" to describe Elizabeth's textual representation is the fourth indication of Spenser's mixed treatment of the queen. The term is mentioned in the "Letter to Raleigh" and is repeated in the poem. In the proem to Book II, Spenser refers to the necessity of using shadows to allow the reader to perceive the "fairest Princesse vnder sky" (2. Proem. 4. 6):

> The which O pardon me thus to enfold
> In couert vele, and wrap in shadowes light,
> That feeble eyes your glory may behold,
> Which else could not endure those beames bright,
> But would be dazled with exceeding light. (2. Proem. 5. 1-5)

He employs the word again in the proem to the subsequent book to emphasize the nature and deficiency of his art:

> But O dred Soueraine
> Thus farre forth pardon, sith that choicest wit
> Cannot your glorious pourtraict figure plaine
> That I in colourd showes may shadow it,
> And antique praises vnto present persons fit. (3. Proem. 3. 5-9)

The use of shadows, "couert vele," and "colourd showes" are indicative of the paradox of the queen. She is so radiant and spectacular that she must be screened from her subjects'

gaze, and Spenser humbly admits that his skill is insufficient to represent her fully, but the praise is undermined by "metaphors of darkness, disguise, and clouding" (Erickson 154).[17] Even the oxymoronic phrase of "shadows light" cannot hide this subtext. Just as shadows distort the true size and shape of a person, so Spenser is distorting the encomia of Elizabeth with tension and criticism. According to Hélène Cixous, Spenser's narrative tactic is a commonplace of literature:

> Where is she, where is woman in all the spaces he surveys, in all the scenes he stages within the literary enclosure?
>
> We know the answers and there are plenty: she is in the shadow. In the shadow he throws on her; the shadow she is. (67)

The final sign of Spenser's ambiguous representation of the queen can be found in distancing agents, elements in each image of Elizabeth which help to make perfect signification impossible. Lucifera is connected with Elizabeth in that she is a "mayden Queene, that shone as *Titans* ray, / In glistring gold, and peerlesse pretious stone . . ." (1. 4. 8. 5-6); yet unlike Elizabeth, she is a usurper: "Yet rightful kingdome she had none at all, / Ne heritage of natiue soueraintie, / But did vsurpe with wrong and tyrannie . . ." (1. 4. 12. 3-5). Arthur's attachment to Gloriana, a chaste queen regnant like Elizabeth, distances her from the Tudor monarch. Indeed, marriage is an extraordinarily popular method of placing a literary gap between various royal avatars and Elizabeth. This strategy is activated in the portraits of several queenly representatives, including

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[17]Erickson shows that in the Letter, Spenser "dresses his statements about allegory in metaphors of darkness, disguise, and clouding that suggest hidden or esoteric meaning inaccessible to the audience he presumably seeks to attract and enlighten" (154).

Britomart, who is seeking her chosen mate, and Amoret, who is married to Scudamour. On one level, these distancing agents are attempts to protect the poet from princely wrath; on another level, they signal Elizabeth's subjection to Spenser's literary and masculine power. He tries to reduce her to a truly submissive role so that she needs, like the normative woman, to be protected by a man.

Cixous underscores that discursive "Thought has always worked through opposition . . ." (63). To her extensive list of paradoxes can be added adulation and anxiety, which have grown from the "Man / Woman" (63) and Woman / Sovereign dichotomies. Spenser does not dispute Elizabeth's legitimate right to the throne of England. The praise and unease that permeate the representations of the queen act as his recognition of the magnificence of her reign (coupled with his desire to receive preferment) and the difficulties associated with the rule of an unmarried, virginal woman in a society that devalued feminine worth. It can be undeniable that he found Elizabeth's sovereignty problematic at times. As a result, Spenser's discourse of Elizabeth is informed by ambivalence. This doubleness is most evident in those royal avatars who are closely associated with the queen: Gloriana, Belphoebe, Britomart, and Amoret.

2

"My liefe, my liege, my Soueraigne, my deare": The Queen in Dream and Shield

In the "Letter to Raleigh," Spenser sketches an important role for the Faerie Queene in the poem. Aside from linking her explicitly with Elizabeth, he marks her as the goal of Arthur's quest: the Prince has "seene in a dream or vision the Faery Queene, with whose excellent beauty rauished, he awaking resolued to seeke her out, and so being by Merlin armed, and by Timon throughly instructed, he went to seeke her forth in Faerye land" (737). Spenser also shows that Gloriana is a participant in the quests of the first two books of the epic; she assigns the knights to their endeavours. Moreover, the poet affirms that she will appear in a proposed twelfth book, which will show her court as the origin of those adventures "vndertaken by xii. seuerall knights" (738). However, Gloriana's presence in *The Faerie Queene* is as illusory as the existence of Book XII. Virtuous, beautiful, a queen inspiring devotion she may be, but she is ultimately elusive. As royal source for the knights' quests, she is sometimes erased or replaced (Shaver 118). As object of Arthur's desire, she becomes a narrative absence. Gloriana is evidence of Spenser's agenda for the representation of Elizabeth in the poem: the glorification of the queen is countered by tension.

Spenser establishes the Faerie Queene as praiseworthy. The "aged holy man" (1. 10. 46. 5) called Contemplation tells the reader of the beauty of Gloriana's city, the excellence of her knights, and the nature of her heavenly birth:

> Yet is *Cleopolis* for earthly frame,
> The fairest peece, that eye beholden can:
> And well beseemes all knights of noble name,
> That couet in th'immortall booke of fame
> To be eternized, that same to haunt,
> And doen their seruice to that soueraigne Dame,
> That glorie does to them for guerdon graunt:
> For she is heauenly borne, and heauen may iustly vaunt. (1. 10. 59. 2-9)

This element of celebration is extended when Spenser involves Gloriana in chivalric quests. She is the instigator of some of the adventures of the Knights of the Maidenhead, and the objective of Arthur's journeys is to be united with her. This role is inaugurated with the travels of Red Crosse:

> Vpon a great aduenture he was bond,
> That greatest *Gloriana* to him gaue,
> That greatest Glorious Queene of *Faerie* lond,
> To winne him worship, and her grace to haue,
> Which of all earthly things he did most craue. . . . (1. 1. 3. 1-5)

Gloriana acts as the source of the hero's crusade, and Red Crosse, in turn, desires to bring her further honour. Yet this stirring portrayal, with its repetition of the adjective "greatest," is undermined by tensions.[1] Three considerations emerge from this representation to unbalance the glory of the Faerie Queene. Firstly, Gloriana is a passive figure. Certainly, she appoints the Red Crosse Knight to his task, but that is the extent of her function. She is useful to the male's enterprise, but has no part in successful chivalric action. In this way, Spenser reveals the limits of female sovereignty: it can never

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[1]Anderson calls the repetition of "faire" in 3. 5. 54 "insistent, even anxiously so" (54). The emphasis on "greatest" in 1. 1. 3 hides a similar uneasiness.

encompass masculine, and undeniably princely, martial activity.[2] Instead, the male courtier takes precedence in both narrative and occupation (Berry 154).[3] Secondly, because Gloriana's role is recalled after Red Crosse has begun the quest, she is textually deferred. Her purpose can be explained--and dismissed--in five lines. By again reinforcing the importance of the knight at the expense of his queen, Spenser is interpreting female power of the kind Elizabeth exercises in light of normative male hegemony. By making Gloriana-as-Elizabeth an absence, divorced from action and development, he is focusing on the compulsion to place her not only on the narrative sidelines, but also on the margins of patriarchal culture and society. Thirdly, Gloriana's act of initiating her knight's adventure is further diminished by Una's expropriation of that operation. Una tells Prince Arthur:

> At last yledd with farre reported praise,
> Which flying fame throughout the world had spred,
> Of doughtie knights, whom Faery land did raise,
> The noble order hight of Maidenhed,
> Forthwith to court of *Gloriane* I sped,
> Of *Gloriane* great Queene of glory bright,
> Whose kingdomes seat *Cleopolis* is red,
> There to obtain some such redoubted knight,
> That Parents deare from tyrants power deliuer might. (1. 7. 46)

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[2]Later in the epic, Spenser approaches the restrictions of Elizabeth's gynaecocracy from another direction. The ventures of the female Knight of Chastity, who undertakes martial endeavours while dressed as a man, also highlights Elizabeth's inability to assume the warrior role of a king.

[3]Berry believes that, as the poem developed, the "status of the courtier-knight" (154) changes: "In fact, from the beginning of his epic, the proems . . . to the individual books had traced a different and more personal search for masculine self-affirmation from that of the courtier. Recent Renaissance criticism has defined this alternative masculine mode of identity as that of the self-conscious poet" (154-55).

Can the reader consider this revision of Gloriana's role as royal initiatrix to be an example of Spenserian absentmindedness? Absolutely not. It should rather be judged as a product of narrative disequilibrium. The change in the female assigning the quest to Red Crosse reduces both Gloriana's role and her effectiveness (Shaver 118).[4] This replacement, though, has more negative implications:

> despite the multifold signs devoted to various--absent--individual ladies, women are eminently interchangeable. This plethora of undifferentiated women counters the notion that Faeryland is structured around feats to honor specific women; instead, the endless transference of female bodies allows male figures to exert masculine supremacy and to display generalized desire. (Cavanagh 103)

The supplanting of Gloriana by Una in Red Crosse's quest undermines the Faerie Queene's power because it reveals that there is no distinction between her occupation and that performed by someone of an inferior station. (Una is a princess, not a queen regnant.) Consequently, queenly business is manifestly woman's business.

Later in the epic, another "female exchange" occurs. Arthur interchanges Gloriana with Florimell (Cavanagh 23-24): "Oft did he wish, that Lady faire mote bee / His Faery Queene, for whom he did complaine: / Or that his Faery Queene were such, as she . . ." (3. 4. 54. 6-8).[5] Obviously, one reading of this passage shows the extent of Arthur's longing

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[4]In Book III, Gloriana's role in the quest structure collapses. Britomart's crusade to seek her future mate, Artegall, is entirely self-determined.

[5]My analysis is complicated by the fact that both Una and Florimell are representations of Elizabeth. However, because Spenser's allegorical figures are immensely complex, they can be used in a number of different contexts. Here, they carry critical significance for those parts of the narrative that involve Gloriana.

for Gloriana. He is kept from sleep by his desire for her. Yet it is meaningful that the Prince's yearning does not retain a specific focus; he wishes Florimell, whom he pursued, was his lady-love, or vice-versa. There is no differentiation between the women, except that Florimell, because she has been viewed in flight, has a comfortingly substantive physicality. In preventing Arthur from making a clear distinction between Gloriana and Florimell, in fusing the two females together as a singular object of the Prince's desire, Spenser is resituating Elizabeth within the accepted sixteenth-century confines of gender, which include male regulation of female chastity. In addition, by conflating the sovereign Gloriana with the unroyal Florimell, Spenser is emphasizing Elizabeth's commonality with other (inferior) women; the poet is highlighting her gender and the masculine dominance over the female sex. Although in the text Arthur remains separated from both queen and female subject, his aspiration to restrict one or the other of them (and perhaps both) within a heterosexual union is evidence that female chastity in this context is opposed to Elizabeth's virgin chastity. Spenser shows that Florimell and Gloriana, both shadows of the Tudor queen, are exchangeable merchandise in a sexual economy. By extrapolation, Elizabeth, too, is placed in that framework.

Spenser's exploration of Elizabeth's gender and power, and his double focus on praise and dissent receive rich treatment in the passage containing Arthur's dream of the Faerie Queene:

> Me seemed, by my side a royall Mayd
> Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay:
> So faire a creature yet saw neuer sunny day.

> Most goodly glee and louely blandishment
> She to me made, and bad me loue her deare,
> For dearly sure her loue was to me bent,
> As when iust time expired should appeare.
> But whether dreames delude, or true it were,
> Was neuer hart so rauisht with delight,
> Ne liuing man like words did euer heare,
> As she to me deliuered all that night:
> And at her parting said, She Queene of Faeries hight. (1. 9. 13. 7-9, 1. 9. 14)

This dream shows several points of intersection with the dream experienced by Simon Forman, sixteenth-century physician and astrologer. In the latter, the doctor walks with the queen while she is dressed in "a coarse white petticoat all unready" (qtd. in Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 62). During this "royal progress," Elizabeth is kissed by a weaver. Later, Forman raises those parts of the queen's garments that are in danger of becoming soiled by the dirt of the alley. The sexual innuendo becomes overwhelming:

> I told her that she should do me a favour to let me wait on her, and she said I should. Then said I, "I mean to wait upon you and not under you, that I might make this belly a little bigger to carry up this smock and coats out of the dirt." And so we talked merrily and then she began to lean upon me, when we were past the dirt and to be very familiar with me, and methought she began to love me. And when we were alone, out of sight, methought she would have kissed me. (qtd. in Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 62)

Louis Adrian Montrose's analysis shows that Forman's dream emphasizes the bifurcation inherent in the female monarch: she is simultaneously superior and subordinate:

> Forman's dream epitomizes the indissolubly political and sexual character of the cultural forms in which such tensions might be represented and addressed. In Forman's wordplay, the subject's desire for employment (to *wait* upon) coexists with his desire for mastery (to *weight* upon); and the pun is manifested physically in his desire to inseminate his sovereign, which is at once to serve her and to possess her. And because the figures in the dream are not only subject and prince but also man and woman, what the *subject* desires to perform, the *man* has the

> capacity to perform: for Forman to raise the Queen's belly is to make her female body to bear the sign of his own potency. In the context of the cross-cutting relationships between subject and prince, man and woman, the dreamer insinuates into a gesture of homage, a will to power. ("Shaping Fantasies" 65)

The scene of Arthur's dream, like Forman's, enacts similar antithetical ideas, the product of Spenserian disequilibrium

There is much praise of Gloriana, and consequently Elizabeth, expressed in Arthur's dream.[6] Gloriana's virtue is truly the female counterpart of the Magnificence embodied in the Briton Prince (Berry 155-56). She is also the object of intense masculine desire and love. Arthur tells Una that

> From that day forth I lou'd that face diuine;
> From that day forth I cast in carefull mind,
> To seeke her out with labour, and long tyne,
> And neuer vow to rest, till her I find. . . . (1. 9. 15. 5-8)

Gloriana is the beautiful Petrarchan beloved who becomes the goal, ultimately unrealized, of Arthur's quest through Faerie Land.[7] The extent of his emotional desolation at the separation, stressed by his "watry eyen" (1. 9. 15. 4) and his unwillingness to break his vow to recover her, enhances her glory and, by implication, Elizabeth's. Indeed, as is appropriate for a queen regnant and as an echo of Elizabeth's own reign, it appears that

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[6]Cain believes that "Gloriana always figures the queen" (112).

[7]Cain argues persuasively that a union of Arthur and Gloriana could never occur within *The Faerie Queene*, even in the proposed, but unwritten, twelfth book. The meeting of the couple "would violate the carrot-and-donkey nature of Arthur's quest, in which Gloriana's elusiveness is essential to her omnipresence as Idea, as well as Arthur's role as ancestor" (122).

Gloriana is not under any masculine control: she orchestrates her own arrival and departure. Furthermore, she is the speaker in the scene (Berry 157). While Arthur is entirely silent, she flatters him, almost orders him to return her affection, and, through the night, speaks words of an obviously exciting nature. This ecstatic moment, with its strong erotic overtones, magnifies the royal stature of both Elizabeth and Gloriana because the Faerie Queene is shown to be a suitable object of worship and an independent, vocal woman. That Spenser also suggests that Elizabeth is linked to Britain's magnificent, Arthurian past, a myth perpetuated by the House of Tudor, is a compliment to his monarch's "ancestry" (Cain 116-17; O'Connell 79). The similitudes between fictive and historical queens are strong and adulatory.

Arthur's dream, however, cannot be read without a realization that the celebration of Gloriana is interpenetrated with criticism. While the praise is direct, the tensions are subtle, yet recognizable. One method of uncovering this negativity is through an intratextual consideration of *The Faerie Queene*. Book I's first erotic dream, Red Crosse's nightmare of the false Una, parallels some of the features of Arthur's dream: the dreamers are virtuous; the women are royal and considered chaste; there is a definite sexual component and an emphasis upon the element of "mistrust" (1. 1. 49. 3) or delusion. The dream of the titular knight of Book I is wholly duplicitous and illustrates how a knight's dreams can be fraught with error, especially when he attempts to conflate the dream lover with a virtuous woman. The inability to discern between the real and the imagined recurs throughout the poem and often blurs the designation between virtue and vice. Although it

seems to Red Crosse that the figure in his dream is Una transformed into a "loose Leman to vile seruice bound" (1. 1. 48. 6), the woman is merely a product of "A fit false dreame, that can delude the sleepers sent" (1. 1. 43. 9). Similarly, Gloriana's sexuality and presence in the Prince's dream are illusions.

The dreamed Gloriana seems to have a dangerously "open body" (Stallybrass 134), a distinct sign of wantonness. Her speech, which leaves Arthur "rauisht with delight," corresponds to the apparent sexuality perceptible in the act of lying next to the slumbering Prince. While it is clear that Elizabeth would not view speech as unchastity, the eroticism of the encounter cannot be ignored. Obviously, this passage, which recasts Spenser's virginal Faerie Queene in frankly sexual terms,[8] could have proven problematic for him (Wynne-Davies 102), but the poet has a strong instinct for self-preservation. He negotiates a leap of logic. If the reader uses the paradigm of Red Crosse's dream as the key to understanding Arthur's, then the highly sexualized Gloriana is but a mirage; she cannot be used to impugn the queen. By using the strategy of the dream, Spenser effectively denies Gloriana speech: her words are really Arthur's. By this means, too, the sexuality collapses and is ultimately erased; it is projected by the Prince. There is no intimation that virtues are besmirched (Cavanagh 18), and because the poem establishes Gloriana and Arthur as destined lovers, no reproach of the knight and his lady is required. Spenser manages to "close" the openness of Gloriana's body, and at the same time,

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[8]Berry considers Gloriana's behaviour to be "the prelude to an act of spiritual rather than sexual intercourse . . ." (157).

reconfigure Elizabeth's conception of royal chastity. Gloriana's silence, as well as the promise of a union with the Prince, resituates queenly chastity within the sphere of male dominance. Virginity, in this scheme, is temporary and is relinquished within the bonds of marital fidelity.

Cixous's musings on the nature of masculine dreams link male desire with a sense of female disembodiment. *He* is present and controls; *she* is malleable and powerless:

> Man's dream: I love her--absent, hence desirable, a dependent nonentity, hence adorable. Because she isn't there where she is. As long as she isn't where she is. How he looks at her then! When her eyes are closed, when he completely understands her, when he catches on and she is no more than this shape made for him: a body caught in his gaze. (67)

Gloriana is a textual absence, insubstantial because she is separated from the immediacy of the poem's action.[9] Instead, she is a figure from Arthur's past and dream: he represents her to the reader, just as Scudamour represents Amoret within the story of the victory at the Temple of Venus. This deferral into a position of narrative inferiority allows Spenser to highlight Elizabeth's subordination, as poetic material and as a woman. Arthur is the instrument which allows Gloriana to be shadowed in the text: she becomes *his* subject, the subject of the story related to Una. In this way, the Faerie Queene is silenced; her voice is

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[9]Although the evidence of the "pressed gras" (1. 9. 15. 2) suggests strongly that Gloriana is physically present, Arthur's use of "seemed" (1. 9. 13. 7), the emphasis that the encounter occurs in sleep, and his inability to detect "whether dreames delude, or true it were" (1. 9. 14. 5) implies absence. Hamilton cites Lewis on the encounter: "That experience, Lewis concludes, is 'the soul's new-kindled raptures at its first meeting with a transcendental or at least incorporeal object of love'" (121n). Obviously, the dream is another example of Spenserian disequilibrium.

a fabrication of Arthur's description of the dream, a vehicle for his own development:

> Description, then, is a gesture of display, a separating off and a signaling of particulars destined to make visible that which is described. Its object or matter is thus submitted to a double power-relation inherent in the gesture itself: on the one hand, the describer controls, possesses, and uses the matter to his own ends; and on the other, his reader/listener is extended the privilege or pleasure of "seeing." (Vickers, "The blazon" 96)

Through the frame of the dream, then, the representation of the Tudor monarch is muzzled and mastered. Her independence is a chimera. Consequently, Elizabeth is redefined in terms of the characteristics of proper womanhood, which involve silence and submission to male dominance and voice. That Cavanagh calls the "storytelling . . . an act of verbal masturbation . . ." (19) emphasizes that masculine pleasure is paramount and that the female is rather superfluous except as part of the knight's narrative.

Gloriana becomes a figure of male storytelling again in a conversation shared by Arthur and Guyon, the titular hero of Book II. She is the subject of their discourse, and her face is pictured on Guyon's shield. The celebration of the Faerie Queene by the Knight of Temperance is indisputable:

> Faire Sir (said he) if in that picture dead
> Such life ye read, and virtue in vain shew,
> What mote ye weene, if the trew liuely-head
> Of that most glorious visage ye did vew?
> But if the beautie of her mind ye knew,
> That is her bountie, and imperiall powre,
> Thousand times fairer then her mortall hew,
> O how great wonder would your thoughts deuoure,
> And infinite desire into your spirite poure! (2. 9. 3)

Guyon continues by calling her "the flowre of grace and chastitie" (2. 9. 4. 3), and he

likens her glory to "the morning starre" (2. 9. 4. 7). The shield does not only prompt praise of Gloriana; it is like many royal images, which, since the time of the Roman Empire, were used to suggest the "absent power of which they were but emanations" (Strong 40). Spenser, through the shield, invokes and venerates two absent queens, Gloriana and Elizabeth, and acknowledges their authority.

The clever replacement of the usual coat of arms by Gloriana's face can be considered another compliment to the Tudor monarch. The female icon, representative of Elizabeth, supplants the traditional heraldic designs associated with a display of patriarchal lineage (Vickers, "The blazon" 105). This displacement is a recognition that Elizabeth has inverted sixteenth-century gender conventions: an unmarried queen with seemingly little interest in continuing her own line demonstrates the instability of, and her transcendence over, the system of primogeniture, which was prejudicial to women. Furthermore, the "picture of that Ladies head" (2. 9. 2. 8) confers a certain martial advantage on the bearer, though not for the superiority of the shield's metal or design. It acts as a charm against injury.[10] Its protective powers are dependent upon male responses to the queen and correspond to the mystic relationship between English peace and Elizabeth's virginity: the shield is the equivalent of the hymen that will not be breached. Early in Book II, the Red Crosse Knight stops his attack on Guyon when he sees the portrait of Gloriana:

Whose hastie hand so farre from reason strayd,

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[10]After 1585, many began to wear miniatures of Elizabeth as a kind of "talisman" (Strong 121).

> That almost it did haynous violence
> On that faire image of that heauenly Mayd,
> That decks and armes your shield with faire defence. . . . (2. 1. 28. 5-8)

This protective element is even extended to the Saracen Pyrochles, who attaches Guyon's shield to his wrist. This theft places the opponent, the noble Arthur, at a definite disadvantage:

> But euer at *Pyrochles* when he smit,
> Who *Guyons* shield cast euer him before,
> Whereon the Faery Queenes pourtract was writ,
> His hand relented, and the stroke forbore,
> And his deare hart the picture gan adore,
> Which oft the Paynim sau'd from deadly stowre. (2. 8. 43. 1-6)

The inability of Red Crosse and Arthur to strike the shield proves the extent of Gloriana's power: like Elizabeth, she is a queen who inspires tremendous loyalty and love. However, Pyrochles's adoption of Guyon's shield accommodates a slight for Gloriana-as-Elizabeth. It is significant that her powers are conferred equally on a "Paynim" connected to the seductive forces of love and on a rightful Christian knight. This indiscrimination suggests both an ineffectiveness and an instability. It reflects a perceived lack of knowledge in chivalric, military, and religious matters, all male "spheres of influence." The deployment of the shield by Saracen and virtuous knights highlights a changeability and a weakness in the queen.

The portrait, then, exposes the duality of Spenser's treatment of his monarch. His poetic depiction of a queen's head inevitably, albeit indirectly, contains the historical trace of the problematic nature of Elizabeth's "head"ing any male-dominated organization. The

concept of the Tudor monarch, princely but rather unfortunately female, as Head of the Church of England, for instance, was a source of controversy, particularly at the beginning of her reign. Both her father and brother had used the title of Supreme Head. Elizabeth, however, was given instead the title of Supreme Governor, although her authority over the Church was not significantly different from Henry VIII's or Edward VI's (Levin 14; MacCaffrey 56). Although it appears that Elizabeth herself chose to relinquish the title of Supreme Head, she must have made the decision with the knowledge that many objected to its being conferred on a woman (Levin 14).[11] This incident is evidence of the redefinition imposed on Elizabeth's power by certain male factions. Therefore, by using a picture of the female head, Spenser is not only honouring his queen, he is also indirectly expressing generalized male anxiety about her position:

> A female head to a male body politic poses the problem of monstrosity Knox trumpeted so impoliticly months before Elizabeth ascended the throne, and she was continually forced to remind her Parliaments, in exactly those terms, of her own authority: "I will deal therein for your safety, and offer it to you as your Prince and head without request; for it is monstrous that the feet should direct the head." (Quilligan 170)

The shield, like the dream, emphasizes Gloriana's absence in the poem and also those deficiences which emanate from her femininity: she, unlike Arthur, can never be both

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[11]The protests against Elizabeth as Supreme Head of the Church were based on two arguments. The first derived from the notion that only Christ deserves the title; hence, it was inappropriate for a monarch to be so named. The second arose from a consideration of Elizabeth's gender. As women were admonished to be silent in church, it would have been contradictory and offensive for a female to be titled Supreme Head (Somerset 79).

prince and knight. In armed contests, she "appears" as an armorial token, divorced from the traditional warrior function of kings and bearing close resemblance to the favours that females bestow on admired knights. As a result, the queenly role is shown to be a passive one, involving inspiration and deferral rather than leadership and activity. The shield underscores the subjection of Gloriana-as-Elizabeth to Spenser's male, poetic command. He uses it to subvert her authority by decapitating her image, though in historical terms dismemberment lies within Elizabeth's range of power. His description of her face has a celebratory aspect, but by focusing on that one part of the body, he is able to behead her and divest her of her power (Vickers, "Diana Described" 103). Further confirmation of this conclusion is dispersed through the dialogue of Guyon and Arthur. The knights twice mention death in connection with the portrait of Gloriana on the shield: "Full liuely is the semblaunt, though the substance dead" (2. 9. 2. 9); and "that picture dead" (2. 9. 3. 1).[12] These references reinforce the masculine and authorial desire to exercise some control over Elizabeth.

By presenting Gloriana on a shield, an object associated with battle and, hence, with men, both queens are transformed into masculine property. Male ownership of the objectified female is a commonplace in *The Faerie Queene*, and that trope is used again in the representation of another royal avatar, Amoret. Spenser is circumscribing female

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[12]Cavanagh also notices the connection of Gloriana and death. She sees it as "one possible reason for Arthur's perpetual sublimation of his sexual desire for the Queen. In each case, the representation of the beloved distances the knight from the danger implicitly allied with the actual woman" (20).

sovereignty, making it valuable only in its support of male enterprise. Perhaps there is even a subtle wish that Elizabeth temper her independence so that she would be more compliant to masculine endeavours and (his own) advancement. Gloriana also becomes a possession of men because she is the topic of Arthur and Guyon's conversation. Their description of her provides a means for the knights to promote themselves primarily homosocially and secondarily sexually (Cavanagh 108). Gloriana is merely a projection of their need to bond and of Arthur's passionate desire for her. These are the reasons that compel Arthur to ask Guyon about the identity of the female image, although the Prince must already know who the woman is: "why on your shield so goodly scord / Beare ye the picture of that Ladies head?" (2. 9. 2. 7-8). These motivations also underlie Guyon's extensive report of Gloriana's beauty and virtue, and Arthur's second explanation of his quest:

> Certes (then said the Prince) I God auow,
> That sith I armes and knighthood first did plight,
> My whole desire hath beene, and yet is now,
> To serue that Queene with all my powre and might.
> Now hath the Sunne with his lamp-burning light,
> Walkt round about the world, and I no lesse,
> Sith of that Goddesse I haue sought the sight,
> Yet no where can her find: such happinesse
> Heauen doth to me enuy, and fortune fauourlesse. (2. 9. 7)

Through the knights' discourse, Gloriana's value is established within the marital economy of *The Faerie Queene*. It is insufficient that Arthur and Guyon *know* she is fair and good; her worthiness must be somehow *proven* by a prolonged, double study of her attributes. Gloriana is confined to typically female roles, including the chosen "prize" of the Briton

Prince, a facilitator of male friendship, the static goal of Arthur's pursuit, and the distant source of chivalric inspiration. Again, queenly power is weakened by the stress that is placed on the womanly aspects of Gloriana-as-Elizabeth: she is inactive and absent, subjected to male power, and owned.

While Spenser's poetic portrait of Gloriana praises Elizabeth, he can never resist an opportunity to unsettle the accolades and manipulate the royal avatar so that her anomalous sovereignty becomes more palatable to the male subject. In "Spenser and the Problem of Women's Rule," Susanne Woods contends that "In figuring her as the confluence of princely and maidenly grace, Spenser makes . . . the Faery Queen, a literalization of the courtly ideal lady, whose inspiring virtues are the backbone, and even precondition, for all virtuous action and civilized order" (149). Accordingly, Gloriana-as-ruler is "not less womanly, but rather more womanly . . ." (149). Yet, in this case, her womanliness is also weakness. It is true that Spenser occasionally praises the culturally accepted male-specific characteristics of independence and eloquence, but these are juxtaposed with an overwhelming number of specifically female, inferior characteristics: subordination, silence, passivity, and normative chastity. Her royal functions are limited to encouraging the chivalric quests and standing as the unapproachable object of Arthur's desire; it must be by careful design that both roles reinforce her commonality with less powerful women. The appellations assigned to her by Guyon fuse queenly rule and gender, suggesting that the two are congruent, not opposed: "My liefe, my liege, my Soueraigne, my deare . . ." (2. 9. 4. 5). While Elizabeth based aspects of her power on her

femininity, she would have had little sympathy with Spenser's tactics because they made trivial, malleable, and somewhat impotent the foundation of her rule. Gloriana has little to do with the active, authoritative reality of Elizabeth, but everything to do with the poet's efforts to construct an alternate queenship.

3

"To sende thine Angell from her bowre of blis": The Queen as Perpetual Virgin

The figure of Belphoebe is Spenser's attempt at shadowing the exceptional nature of Elizabeth's inviolate chastity. Belphoebe, a permanent virgin, represents the singular chastity which was increasingly associated with the Tudor queen after it became apparent that no wedding would ever be forthcoming (King 64). Both fictive and historical ladies are anomalies in societies that regard matrimony as a kind of goal, especially for the well-born woman.[1] Because of this problematic distinctiveness, Spenser's portrait of the virgin huntress becomes an exercise in equivocation. Certainly, she is worthy of praise as a virtuous, beautiful, and skilled woman. But, as always with these royal avatars, Spenser's unease complicates the celebration. The recurrent inversion of praise is a product of the careful insertion of negativity: sexuality, androgyny, comedy, blindness, and gender confusion interpenetrate the discourse of Belphoebe. An investigation of the historical allegory and the curious symmetry that exists between Belphoebe and figures who are identified as evil shows the huntress to be rather threatening. Indeed, although the

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[1]The pairing of knights with virtuous, beautiful females throughout the epic strengthens this contention. That marriage was a integral part of the lives of the women of the English Renaissance is supported by Merry E. Wiesner:

> For the majority of women in early modern Europe, sexual relations . . . were simply one part of the institution which most shaped their lives--marriage. Marital patterns and customs varied widely throughout Europe, but in all places and at all times the vast majority of women and men married at least once, and society was conceived as a collection of households, with a marital couple, or a person who had once been half of a marital couple, as a core of most households. (56-57)

references to Belphoebe in the "Letter to Raleigh" and the Proem to Book III appear to establish her as an important character in the epic, she is not the Knight of Chastity (Berry 158; King 64). Britomart is assigned the role which, at first glance, would seem a perfect fit for Belphoebe, skilled at weaponry and stalking, and dedicated to the preservation of her virgin chastity. However, Spenser finds it necessary to make another woman the titular knight of the book devoted to chastity and to weaken immeasurably the glorification of perpetual virginity by showing a narrative preference for marital fidelity. After all, only one figure is used to illustrate chastity as everlasting celibacy; Britomart, Amoret, Una, Florimell, and Pastorella are characters for whom virginity is temporary. Furthermore, it is meaningful that Belphoebe, unlike all the other complexly allegorical females, never meets Arthur or the titular knights of the books in which she appears.[2] As a result, "she is not presented as contributing to the human application of the different virtues which the books explore--temperance, chastity, friendship" (Berry 158). The virtue attached to the untransgressed body, of which Belphoebe is the proponent, fails to encourage moral development in these areas. Her virginity is viewed as an extreme and as an instrument of isolation.

Belphoebe is connected to Elizabeth in a number of ways. Hunting is an avocation they share. Elizabeth was an expert at the sport, taking time during royal progresses to

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[2]Belphoebe's detachment from the action is part of a pattern of absence and disappearance for royal avatars in the epic, although it is not as extreme as Gloriana's non-appearance and Amoret's vanishing into Scudamour's story of the Temple of Venus.

chase deer, and like Belphoebe, she was skilled at the use of the bow (Somerset 381). While Belphoebe's hunting associates her with other females, namely her companions, it does bring her into contact with men; she meets Braggadocchio, Trompart, and Timias when she "pursewd the chace / Of some wild beast . . ." (3. 5. 28. 1-2). Elizabeth's participation in the hunt also brought her into male company: for instance, she enjoyed hunting with the able Earl of Leicester (Somerset 130). Undoubtedly, it is fitting that the monarch should be compared to the divine Diana, the chaste goddess of the hunt; as Elizabeth aged and her cult incorporated the concept of perpetual virginity, the use of the figure of Diana in her iconography became more popular (Hackett 174-75). Belphoebe, the Spenserian shadow of Elizabeth, is connected to the virginal goddess by fosterage, occupation, and name, which is fashioned after Raleigh's "owne excellent conceipt of Cynthia, (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana.)" (737).[3] Her appearance is explicitly compared to the moon-goddess:

> Such as *Diana* by the sandie shore
> Of swift *Eurotas*, or on *Cynthus* greene,
> Where all the Nymphes haue her vnawares forlore,
> Wandereth alone with bow and arrowes keene,
> To seeke her game. . . . (2. 3. 31. 1-5)

Furthermore, Belphoebe's description incorporates solar images, and she is sometimes

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[3]The fashioning of Elizabeth-as-icon by Spenser, following Raleigh, confronts the queen's ability to construct and control her own imagery. The "Letter to Raleigh" and the poetic reminder that Spenser provides in the Proem to Book III show his indebtedness to Raleigh and the double, masculine manipulation of the subject-queen (Montrose, "Elizabethan Subject" 324).

likened to the sun: "*Belphoebe* was her name, as faire as *Phoebus* sunne" (3. 5. 27. 9). References to the sun are also a feature of Elizabethan iconography.[4] Note the interesting fusion of solar and star imagery[5] in the description of Belphoebe's eyes (Hackett 139):

> In her faire eyes two living lamps did flame,
> Kindled aboue at th'heauenly makers light,
> And darted fyrie beames out of the same,
> So passing persant, and so wondrous bright,
> That quite bereau'd the rash beholders sight. . . (2. 3. 23. 1-5)

Thus, Belphoebe-as-Elizabeth is linked doubly to the heavens, a sign of favour and superiority.

In the Proem to Book III and the "Letter to Raleigh," Belphoebe is identified as the representation of Elizabeth's virginal body natural. Spenser appears to find this virtue commendable:

> To your faire selues, a faire ensample frame,
> Of this faire virgin, this *Belphoebe* faire,
> To whom in perfect loue, and spotlesse fame
> Of chastitie, none liuing may compaire:
> Ne poysnous Enuy iustly can empaire
> The prayse of her fresh flowring Maidenhead;
> For thy she standeth on the highest staire
> Of th' honourable stage of womanhead,
> That Ladies all may follow her ensample dead. (3. 5. 54)

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[4]Solar imagery has long been associated with monarchical iconography. The Plantagenet adoption of the device of the sunne-in-splendour is but one English example of this trend. However, this type of imagery also connects Elizabeth with the Woman Clothed with the Sun, the Apocalyptic figure opposed to the Whore of Babylon and signifying the true, Protestant Church (Wells 31).

[5]Star imagery was, not surprisingly, connected to Elizabeth (Hackett 167, 200, 208).

This stanza could stand as an exemplar of what Spenser does with the figures who shadow Elizabeth: he is simultaneously praising and deconstructing the praise. Belphoebe mirrors that chastity of Elizabeth's to which only the outstandingly good may aspire according to Protestant ideology (Hackett 54). She alone inhabits "the highest staire" of chastity, and her life should be chosen as the perfect model of innocence. But at the very moment when Elizabeth's chastity should be definitely identified with Belphoebe, the connection is rendered indistinct (Anderson 55). Anderson's gloss of this stanza is compelling and excavates the doubleness of Spenser's approach to the queen. The quadruple repetition of "faire" within the space of two lines "is insistent, even anxiously so" (54), but it is also eminently logical, creating a series of connections between the "Faire ympes of beautie" of the preceding stanza and the best example of chastity, Belphoebe. What is significant for Elizabeth is the resolution that "none liuing may compaire" with Belphoebe. An obvious reading is that no one, not even Elizabeth, can equal the virgin huntress (55). Is Spenser questioning the existence of the queen's virginity or presenting her chastity as somehow sullied? Perhaps. This phrase, however, exposes Spenser's response to the powerful, female Elizabeth. By refusing to equate her chastity with Belphoebe's, he is again seeking to reconfigure her within the definition of normative chastity. If there is no double occupation of the top rung of the ladder of chastity, then Elizabeth's virtue must be closer to that associated with good women in general, who are subservient to men. But Spenser is always ready to try another tactic and he does in the peculiar, problematic last words of the stanza, "ensample dead." Anderson's analysis of this verbal conundrum leads to the

suggestion that it

> could just as well mean "her dead, or lifeless, example." At first glance, before we are startled into reassessment, this is exactly what it seems to mean, and if this were in fact all it meant, it would serve as a chilling comment on the ideal that Belphoebe embodies and, although at a distinctly greater remove than before, on that of the Queen as well. (56)

There is nothing vital in virginal chastity. This sterility is highlighted by the juxtaposition in the following canto of the flashback to Belphoebe's early years with the sexual, procreative forces of the Garden of Adonis (Villeponteaux, "*Semper Eadem*" 42).

Belphoebe reflects the androgyny which has been identified with Elizabeth. She experiences a self-sufficiency and a freedom in her woodland home which has obvious parallels with the autonomy of the Tudor queen. Certainly, there are dangers in the wilderness, but these perils are not from the natural world; they emanate from menacing masculine figures, such as Lust and Braggadocchio. The latter, for example, attempts to capture Belphoebe:

> But that the foolish man, fild with delight
> Of her sweet words, that all his sence dismaid,
> And with her wondrous beautie rauisht quight,
> Gan burne in filthy lust, and leaping light,
> Thought in his bastard armes her to embrace. (2. 3. 42. 2-6)

Belphoebe easily eludes the threat from the false, clownish knight; her purity cannot be defiled by any man, especially one of his inferiority and wickedness. Yet a subtext of instruction, of warning, for the queen seems to emerge at this point. Through Belphoebe's example, Spenser shows Elizabeth the risks to which her autonomy has exposed her. Although Belphoebe is able to defeat Braggadocchio, her would-be attacker, it is

significant that once he materializes from his hiding place, she does not recognize his inherent duplicity and the hazard that he might pose to her virginity. Her greeting to him emphasizes her blindness:

> All haile, Sir knight, and well may thee befall,
> As all the like, which honour haue pursewed
> Through deedes of armes and prowesse martiall;
> All vertue merits praise, but such the most of all. (2. 3. 37. 6-9)

Belphoebe's bold address, connected unequivocally to wantonness, incites his aggression. Furthermore, she is endangered because she has entered the "public" sphere of men, beyond the traditional female confines of the house.[6] In a certain sense, because unchastity is linked with openness, of the mouth and of access, it makes comprehensible, though nonetheless unacceptable, Braggadocchio's assault on the virtuous huntress. Spenser provides a cautionary tale for Elizabeth: there can be serious consequences for a female who claims a right to live according to male standards of independence and who fails to be ruled according to principles of normative womanhood.

Belphoebe also incorporates the undeniably masculine characteristic of dominance within her person (Cavanagh 134), a quality which has an obvious congruence with the rule of Elizabeth. Belphoebe's power is highlighted during her involvement with Arthur's squire, Timias. In Book IV, he is estranged from Belphoebe because of her indignation at his assistance of Amoret. Once again, Spenser the schoolmaster surfaces. Belphoebe's

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[6]Maureen Quilligan notes that Spenser "is . . . marking the scene as a moment where the cultural line is drawn between a woman's licit private sphere and a culturally suspect public arena" (159).

control and punishment of the hapless Timias seems excessively harsh. Indeed, she initially threatens the couple with "that selfe arrow" (4. 7. 36. 5) which she used to kill Lust. Belphoebe is angered that the squire's "affections" have found a "new louely mate" (4. 7. 35. 3). There is an egocentrism and an absurdity in her jealous response to the squire. However, this indignation at Timias's "handling" (4. 7. 35. 7) of Amoret's body is ironic and inappropriate because she can never yield her body to him and fails to understand fully his feelings for her (Shaver 119-120). Her behaviour rests upon

> a contradiction in the terms of desire. Belphoebe's presence both demands desire and forbids it, as does Elizabeth's, and in both political and psychosexual terms, this denial of desire has disturbing implications for Elizabeth's male subjects, just as it does for Belphoebe's devoted squire, Timias. (Villeponteaux, *Semper Eadum* 32-33)

The chaste authority of Elizabeth's fictive representative, therefore, is affiliated with female unfairness, selfishness, and obfuscation. Here is another admonition of Elizabeth's power: a life which conflates virginal chastity and royal domination is necessarily limited. Consequently, there is a lack of awareness underlying her treatment of male courtiers and a corresponding selfishness in her demand of total faithfulness.

The story of Belphoebe's birth and upbringing validates her as a praiseworthy figure. Appropriately, the singularity of her virtue is echoed by the strangeness of these circumstances:

> Her berth was of the wombe of Morning dew,
> And her conception of the ioyous Prime,
> And all her whole creation did her shew
> Pure and vnspotted from all loathly crime,
> That is ingenerate in fleshly slime.

So was the virgin borne, so was she bred,
So was she trayned vp from time to time,
In all chast vertue, and true bounti-hed
Till to her dew perfection she was ripened. (3. 6. 3)

Belphoebe's mother is "the faire *Chrysogonee*, / The daughter of *Amphisa*, who by race / A Faerie was, yborne of high degree . . ." (3. 6. 4. 1-3). The conception of Belphoebe and her twin sister Amoret is supernatural; in an occurrence paralleling the myth of Danae and the shower of gold (Hamilton 355n), Chrysogone is impregnated "Through the influence of th'heauens fruitfull ray" (3. 6. 6. 2). Obviously, Belphoebe's miraculous genesis in her mother's womb, with its overtones of Christ's Incarnation (Hamilton 355n), marks her as an extraordinary individual.[7] However, Spenser is unable to leave the compliment unassailed. While the poem does not identify the piercing of Chrysogone's insensate body as a rape, the act can be so designated. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver elucidate how a text's non-recognition of rape does not erase the presence of violence:

> The process of unraveling the cultural texts that have obsessively made rape so pervasive and so invisible a theme--made it "unreadable"--is multilayered. It involves listening not only to who speaks and in what circumstances, but who does *not* speak and why. It requires that we listen for those stories that differ from the master('s) story; that we recuperate what has too often been left out: the physical violation and the women who speak it. (3)

Chrysogone does not verbalize the violence, and, moreover, she has no idea of the reality of her situation. Such is her innocence. Yet, while she might remain unaware of what has happened to her, she experiences some distress at the physical results of the sun beams'

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[7]Cavanagh remarks that "Belphoebe's traditional escape from criticism" (130) can be attributed to the remarkable nature of her gestation, birth, and childhood.

"play" upon her naked body: "So sprong these twinnes in wombe of *Chrysogone*, / Yet wist she nought thereof, but sore affright, / Wondred to see her belly so vpblone . . ." (3. 6. 9. 6-8). The poor woman is compelled to flee into the "wildernesse" (3. 6. 10. 3) because she has an understanding that she has been involved in an incident of "shame and foule disgrace" (3. 6. 10. 1). This paradoxical sense that Spenser uses to complicate the portrait of Belphoebe continues with her birth and education. Significantly, Chrysogone gives birth with no pain, a sign of an extraordinary child (Hamilton 359n). Yet her oblivion continues because she has no knowledge of this event. While it seems good fortune that the children are taken into the care of Venus and Diana, the goddesses' actions read unmistakably like a kidnapping (Cavanagh 129-30):

> Vp they them tooke, each one a babe vptoooke,
> And with them carried, to be fostered:
> Dame *Phoebe* to a nymph her babe betooke,
> To be vpbrought in perfect Maydenhed,
> And of her selfe her name *Belphoebe* red. . . . (3. 6. 28. 1-5)

What is implied for Elizabeth by the unusual conditions of Belphoebe's origins and early life? It would be simplistic to correlate Chrysogone with Anne Boleyn; the utter ignorance of the former could never match the perception of the latter, who, if one considers the initial relationship with Henry VIII, was involved in the progress--and manipulation--of events (Fraser, *Wives* 135-36). It is interesting, though, how both women are the victims of bodily violence, although that perpetrated against Queen Anne, her beheading by a Calais sword, brought not only her death, but also was the culminating act of her being branded, undoubtedly falsely, a whore (Fraser, *Wives* 244-46, 251, 254).

Unlike Elizabeth's mother, Chrysogone continues to be viewed as an innocent. A second parallel exists within the childhoods of Belphoebe and Elizabeth; neither is raised by a biological mother. Belphoebe's fostering with Diana's nymph is similar to the Tudor princess's living in the household of her fourth and final stepmother, Catherine Parr.

The nature of Chrysogone's chastity, which involves a complete nescience of sexuality and the corresponding reproductive functioning of the female anatomy, is closer to the virgin chastity of Belphoebe and Elizabeth than that connected with Britomart and others. Her chastity is associated strongly with the notion of ignorance, and a corresponding blindness can be found in Belphoebe.[8] She has no understanding of the passionate emotion motivating Timias's relapse into illness and she misconstrues his care of the wounded Amoret, her own, unknown sister. The obliviousness of Faerie mother and daughter can only serve to condemn Elizabeth. Spenser demonstrates that the corollary of virginal chastity is unawareness of one's self and others. On a basic level, commitment to a celibate life denies one children (and this is true of Chrysogone, as well) and spouse, and can affect an alienation from the feelings of others. This latter characteristic is exemplified by Elizabeth's reaction to the proposed marriages of her ladies-in-waiting:

> Not only did she resent the upheavals that her ladies' marriages caused in her own domestic arrangements (although in point of fact many of those who did take husbands resumed their places at Court shortly after their weddings) but she failed

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[8]Cavanagh notes that "Belphoebe's incredible, yet implicitly admired, blindness helps ensure her continuance as an emblem of 'dew perfection'" (132).

> to see why they needed the fulfilment of family life any more than she did. She would "much exhort all her women to remain in virgin state as much as she may be", and even on those occasions when she pretended that she would not mind if they married, and asked her ladies if they had anybody in mind, "the wise ones did well conceal their liking thereto, as knowing the Queen's judgment in this matter". (Somerset 346-47)

The continuation of the motif of blindness into the 1596 books was probably Spenser's recognition that the queen's failure to reward him in the manner *he* wanted was the result of blindness--to his poetic genius--as was her continued punishment of Raleigh.

Belphoebe is first introduced in a single scene in Book II. In a certain sense, her entrance seems almost misplaced or misconceived because there is no compelling reason for her to appear. The narrative focus is on Belphoebe's relationship with Timias, which is developed in Books III and IV; as a result, her meeting with Braggadocchio and Trompart seems a digression. But if Spenser is following a narrative tangent, then he is doing so for some purpose. The encounter allows him to give an extensive description of the warrior-huntress and to further examine the nature of female power.[9]

The most prominent feature of the Belphoebe-Braggadocchio meeting is the eleven-stanza blazon, which forms the epic's longest portrait (Hamilton 195n). Following the accepted Petrarchan paradigm, it establishes the virgin huntress as a woman of spectacular beauty, exceptional virtue, and remarkable restorative power. Miraculously, she can awaken the dead, like Christ with whom she is linked by her conception and birth.

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[9]Quilligan's commentary on this episode is enlightening: "The scene with Braggadocchio is not only one of the most comic moments in the epic, it has . . . a cultural connection to the Renaissance problem of female authority . . ." (157).

It is appropriate, therefore, that Spenser frequently compares Belphoebe with angels in order to emphasize her comeliness, purity, and grace, and to situate her as a suitable object for male veneration:

> Her face so faire as flesh it seemed not,
> But heavenly pourtraict of bright Angels hew,
> Cleare as the skie, withouten blame or blot,
> Through goodly mixture of complexions dew;
> And in her cheekes the vermeill red did shew
> Like roses in a bed of lillies shed,
> The which ambrosiall odours from them threw,
> And gazers sense with double pleasures fed,
> Hable to heale the sicke, and to reuiue the ded. (2. 3. 22)

The colours of Belphoebe's face, white and red, reflect the famous badge of the Tudors, the crowned Tudor rose, and create a blazon within a blazon. Although Spenser uses lilies in the description, the linkage of the colours and the rose makes the comparison inevitable; Belphoebe is implicitly identified with Elizabeth through the monarch's heraldic device. The association of Belphoebe with the queen is extended by the assertion that the huntress has skill in curing the sick, a quality proven by her healing of Timias's initial wounds. While it is doubtful that Elizabeth had much practical ability in medical matters, as a queen regnant, she touched victims of scrofula, then called the king's evil, to affect a cure and blessed the metal that was later moulded into cramp rings, which were worn to relieve suffering (Levin 16, 179n).[10] That she had the power to heal was not merely a function of her mystical sovereignty; this particular "magic" was closely allied to her inviolate chastity

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[10]These rituals were not limited to the reign of Elizabeth I, but were connected with certain ceremonies of medieval kings (Levin 16, 21-22).

(Levin 16). The ability to render cures is also connected to Belphoebe's virginity. In Book III, she is capable of treating the injured Timias because she has been instructed in medicinal lore by Diana's nameless nymph, who also brought her up in "perfect Maydenhed": "For she of hearbes had great intendiment, / Taughte of the Nymphe, which from her infancy / Her nourced had in trew Nobility . . . (3. 5. 32. 3-5).

The blazon is full of flattery for Belphoebe-as-Elizabeth, but Spenser simultaneously seeks to nullify her power through bodily dismemberment (Vickers, "Diana Described" 103). Parts of her body are sprinkled throughout this sequence: face, eyes, "iuorie forhead" (2. 3. 24. 1), teeth and lips, eyelids, legs, "daintie paps" (2. 3. 29. 7), and "yellow lockes" (2. 3. 30. 1). The focus on the body seems inappropriate for, even opposed to, a compliment to a lady dedicated to virginal chastity. By presenting her as a series of fragments, Spenser is asserting his own poetic hegemony over the feminine, monarchical authority which Belphoebe represents.[11] Furthermore, there is a decided sexuality in the description of the militant virgin. Spenser seems to be referrring to far more than Belphoebe's clothing in the following stanza:

> So faire, and thousand thousand times more faire
> She seemd, when she presented was to sight,
> And was yclad, for heat of scorching aire,
> All in a silken Camus lylly whight,
> Purfled vpon with many a folded plight,

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[11] Although Belphoebe is a shadow of Elizabeth's body natural, she can also represent aspects of the queen's sovereignty (Villeponteaux, "*Semper Eadum*" 31-32). According to Kantorowicz, "The King's Two Bodies . . . form one unit indivisible, each being fully contained in the other" (9).

> Which all aboue besprinckled was throughout
> With golden aygulets, that glistred bright,
> Like twinckling starres, and all the skirt about
> Was hemd with golden fringe (2. 3. 26)

Hamilton signals that there is something curious in line nine's lacuna: "The only half-line in the poem for which there is not an apparent reason" (196n). Montrose argues that the "conspicuous gap at the center of the blason coincides with a conspicuous silence about the center of the body it describes. Moving downward, the narrator's gaze skirts the fringes of Belphoebe's secret parts . . ." ("Elizabethan Subject" 327). Spenser may suppress the description of Belphoebe's genitals, but it is tantalizingly suggested. Consequently, through the language of male authority, Petrarchanism, he counters Belphoebe's, and Elizabeth's, power--by diffusing her body throughout the text and by attempting, however furtively, to introduce aspects of traditional, inferior womanhood, which have a strong sexual component, to female command. In the sixteenth century, a woman's body could be controlled by father, husband, or, as in this case, male poet. The infusion of Belphoebe's portrait with sexuality, her depiction as the sensual object of the masculine, voyeuristic gazes of Trompart, Braggadocchio, and Spenser, allows the poet to try to circumscribe female power, to control the poeticized female body of the queen.[12]

The blazon further tarnishes the compliment to Belphoebe by directly and

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[12]Montrose views the description differently: "But, as the royal body is handled ambivalently throughout the blason, so here in particular the symbolic locus of royal power is less a source of the (male) subject's security than an oblique threat to that security" ("Elizabethan Text" 327).

indirectly linking her with Amazon queens. Using Amazons in Elizabethan iconography was doubtless a dangerous business, for while they mirror female authority, their power is based on the ability to control or exterminate the male. Moreover, they are connected to infanticide, cannibalism, and promiscuity (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 66). Understandably, the Amazonian image was never particularly favoured by Elizabeth or her encomiasts (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 76-77). However, Spenser pursues the association twice in his presentation of Belphoebe. The clothing of Radigund, Queen of the Amazons, connects her with Belphoebe (Villeponteaux, "*Semper Eadum*" 35):

> All in a Camis light of purple silke
> Wouen vppon with siluer, subtly wrought,
> And quilted vppon sattin white as milke,
> Trayled with ribbands diuersely distraught
> Like as the workeman had their courses taught;
> Which was short tucked for light motion
> Vp to her ham. . . . (5. 5. 2. 1-7)

Radigund, like the virginal Belphoebe, also wears buskins. Interestingly, her shield is decorated 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" (5. 5. 3. 7-9). This double repetition of "Moone" is significant. It associates Radigund with the moon-goddess, Diana, with whom she shares a martial aspect. Of course, Belphoebe, too, is strongly affiliated with Diana, although she, unlike the Amazon, embodies both the virginal and warrior features of the deity. What can be Spenser's purpose in relating Belphoebe to Radigund, who is neither chaste nor virtuous? Obviously, it insinuates a threatening aspect into the discourse of Belphoebe, showing an independent, virginally chaste woman to have an invidious side

(Villeponteaux, "*Semper Eadum*" 35-36). This belief in the menace of the unattached virgin is not solely Spenser's:

> Suspicion of unmarried women was not completely new in the sixteenth century, . . . but this was the first time actual laws had been enacted against secular unmarried women. Both Protestant and Catholic authorities increasingly viewed marriage as the "natural" vocation for women--for all women in Protestant areas and for most women in Catholic areas--so that women who did not marry were somehow "unnatural" and therefore suspect. (Wiesner 62)

Belphoebe's connection to Radigund insinuates that her autonomy from male authority is as sinister and as contrary to normative gender hierarchy as is the Amazon's. The female warriors' emasculation and domination of the men under their control must have had a particular resonance for Spenser and other Elizabethans. Hence, the conflation of virgin with Amazon indicts female sovereignty and royal chastity. It allows Spenser to exhibit the unease produced in him and others by the fusion of woman and prince in the body of his queen (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 66). For Spenser, Elizabeth's rule contained disturbing aspects of Amazonarchy.

The second reference to an Amazon queen comes at the end of the blazon:

> Or as that famous Queene
> Of *Amazons*, whom *Pyrrhus* did destroy,
> The day that first of *Priame* she was seene,
> Did shew her selfe in great triumphant ioy,
> To succour the weake state of sad afflicted *Troy*. (2. 3. 31. 5-9)

This passage sketches the story of Penthesilea, which centres on a certain doubleness and provides a microcosmic example of Spenser's twin purposes in the treatment of Elizabeth. The Amazon is shown to be the powerful warrior-"nurse" of the city of Troy, coming to

its aid after the death of Hector, yet the moment of her annihilation, at the hands of Pyrrhus, is also mentioned. By rendering her power and her body vulnerable to a masculine force, Spenser is reconfiguring female authority. It cannot be sustained because, ultimately, the woman has become the subject, or victim, of male dominion and strength. Hence, Spenser insinuates into his encomium of Belphoebe-as-Elizabeth the menace of Penthesilea and, at the same time, a model of the defeat of female supremacy.

Spenser carries the scorn further. It is not sufficient for Elizabeth to be likened to Amazons; her court is also insulted. Belphoebe's conversation with Braggadocchio delivers an inculpation against the court (O'Connell 104). Braggadocchio wonders why Belphoebe does not exchange "this wilde forrest, where no pleasure is, / . . for ioyous court . . . " (2. 3. 39. 2-3). She prefers the life "In woods, in waues, in warres" (2. 3. 41. 1):

> Who so in pompe of proud estate (quoth she)
> Does swim, and bathes himselfe in courtly blis,
> Does waste his dayes in darke obscuritee,
> And in obliuion euer buried is. . . . (2. 3. 40. 1-4)

While Hamilton explains Belphoebe's response as one aligned with the traditional preference for the active life (198n), there appears to be a greater note of negativity in her statements. Certainly, she is not indicting those courtiers who seek a life "Abroad in armes, at home in studious kind" (2. 3. 40. 8), but it is clear that she sees them pursuing their endeavours away from the locus of the court. Consequently, those irrevocably linked with the court are dwelling in "pleasures pallace" (2. 3. 41. 8). This place bears a marked

resemblance to the palace of Lucifera in two respects. Firstly, both are approached by an easily traversable "way," and secondly, the passage to both is unhindered. The doors to the court that Belphoebe describes "stand open wide" (2. 3. 41. 9). This is similar to the arrangement at Lucifera's palace where "the gates stood open wide" (1. 4. 6. 2).[13] Ironically, Braggadocchio is the perfect representative for Belphoebe's beliefs about court life (O'Connell 104). The indictment of the court by a royal avatar must implicate the queen, the reason and the focus of the operation of the court and the chief "swimmer" in its pleasures. In Belphoebe's scheme, attendance at court inhibits the "painfull toile" (2. 3. 40. 9) most closely connected with the achievement of honour.

The episode with Braggadocchio has a comic cast. The scene turns on disorder and misapprehension. The false knight, hero to neither the reader nor his liege-man, cowers in a bush, which causes Belphoebe to mistake him for a wild beast and threaten him with death. When he emerges, she, unlike the dishonourable Trompart, is unable to recognize the cowardice and fraudulence that form Braggadocchio's character She is also blind to the danger he poses. Why has Spenser positioned Belphoebe's introduction to the poem in this encounter with a buffoon? Quilligan believes that his

> solution to the problem of shadowing Elizabeth is to bring in the clowns. In comedy, the male cultural response to the doubled erotic and political power of a female may legitimately include laughter. His specific signalling of the *commedia*

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[13]Note the contrast with the door of the House of Holiness, which is "fast lockt; / For it was warely watched night and day, / For feare of many foes . . ." (1. 10. 5. 1-3).

> *dell'arte* in the character of Braggadocchio implicitly indicates the already achieved transgression of usual cultural limits that was inherent in Elizabeth's female rulership: her presence as a female, capable of acting in public, continues to remain a shock to the patriarchal system; it is constantly in need of recuperation through the ideological functioning of what we call Elizabethan literature. (163)

Comedy becomes a method for dealing with the threat posed by Belphoebe-as-Elizabeth. Her authority is undermined by the ridiculousness of the situation in which she finds herself. In this episode, Spenser acknowledges the sinister aspects of Belphoebe, most notably through the comparisons with Radigund and Penthesilea, and, by analogy, the unsettling features of Elizabeth's sovereignty Through laughter, however, he seeks to diminish this masculine unease.

While no comedy is evident in Belphoebe's relationship with Timias, there are parallels with the mock-heroic meeting with Braggadocchio: Belphoebe is established as beautiful, chaste, and worthy of male veneration, but negativity is again inserted into the discourse. Ironically, the virgin huntress meets Timias, suffering from battle injuries, when she "did trace / By tract of bloud . . ." (3. 5. 28. 3-4) an animal she had wounded. He is as much the victim of Belphoebe as that beast, and this comparison is stressed by the use of the word "hart" in the passage that describes his new "hurt":

> O foolish Physick, and vnfruitfull paine,
> That heales vp one and makes another wound:
> She his hurt thigh to him recur'd again,
> But hurt his hart, the which before was sound,
> Through an vnwary dart, which did rebound
> From her faire eyes and gracious countenaunce. (3. 5. 42. 1-6)

These lines suggest that Belphoebe, the owner of the "dart" that damages the sorrowful

Timias, is not entirely blameless in causing his wound of love (Cavanagh 133).

Timias, like Braggadocchio and Trompart, is overwhelmed by Belphoebe's beauty. It is what he first notes on awakening in her care:

> Mercy deare Lord (said he) what grace is this,
> That thou hast shewed to me sinfull wight,
> To sende thine Angell from her bowre of blis,
> To comfort me in my distressed plight?
> Angell, or Goddesse do I call thee right?
> What seruice may I do vnto thee meete,
> That hast from darkenesse me returnd to light,
> And with thy heauenly salues and med'cines sweete,
> Hast drest my sinfull wounds? I kisse thy blessed feete. (3. 5. 35)

Timias's addressing Belphoebe as an angel reiterates the description found in Book II's blazon and reminds the reader of the otherworldly nature of her conception and birth. By referring to her as angel and goddess, Timias stations Belphoebe in a position far superior to his own (Cavanagh 134). That she has condescended to help him, a self-professed sinner, in his time of misery only enhances, for him, her high status. Accordingly, he owes her homage beyond a simple appreciation of her solicitude; he is compelled to render to her the tribute usually reserved for saints. In this passage, then, Elizabeth would find two familar manifestations of her female sovereignty. She is confirmed as the chaste beloved of Petrarchan and courtly love rhetoric (O'Connell 109) and as the authority to whom male service is due.

But a rather alarming allusion has been inserted into this stanza, and it centres on the phrase "bowre of blis." On one level, of course, it refers to heaven, the fitting place for an angel. On an intratextual level, however, it connects the virtuous Belphoebe with

Acrasia, who dwells in the Bower of Bliss which Guyon destroys at the end of Book II. Superficially, there appears to be little beyond beauty which these two women have in common. Belphoebe is a virgin; Acrasia enslaves men in sexual bondage and transforms them into beasts. Nevertheless, the similarities are strong and implicate Belphoebe in the suffering of Timias.

Acrasia is a carnal creature. When she is found by Guyon, she is lying beside a young man who has given up the active life of a knight to be her paramour:

> His war-like armes, the idle instruments
> Of sleeping praise, were hong vpon a tree,
> And his braue shield, full of old moniments,
> Was fowly ra'st, that none the signes might see;
> Ne for them, ne for honour cared hee,
> Ne ought, that did to his aduauncement tend,
> But in lewd loues, and wastfull luxuree,
> His dayes, his goods, his bodie he did spende:
> O horrible enchantment, that him so did blend. (2. 12. 80)

What does Timias share with Acrasia's lover, who wallows in the excess and idleness of the Bower? The squire is not, after all, the bewitched slave of an enchantress, and he does not experience a similar sexual fulfilment. Yet, he is viewed as an "outcast thrall" (4. 7. 43. 9) when Arthur happens upon his squire in the woods. Likewise, Timias's relationship with Belphoebe does have a sexual tone (Cavanagh 133).[14] The "dart" that Belphoebe

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[14] In a way, Belphoebe's sexually-charged alliance with Timias mirrors the Elizabeth-Leicester pairing. It is true that although the queen maintained her virginity, her relationship with the Earl had a definite sexual element:

> It was in the spring of 1559 that it began to be suggested that Lord Robert was something more than a trusted royal servant, and that instead he had progressed to being royal favourite. Elizabeth was treating him with such marked affection that

unconsciously sends to wound Timias evokes a sense of sexual penetration, although the roles of the male and female are reversed. Indeed, Cavanagh posits that Belphoebe and Timias are involved in a sadomasochistic relationship, in which she enacts the role of dominatrix and he submits to her will (133-37). He has already judged himself to be vastly inferior to his nurse. Consequently, it is better that he "dye meekly for her sake; / Dye rather, dye, then euer so faire loue forsake" (3. 5. 47. 8-9). This spirit of self-sacrifice brings him great suffering:

> Yet still he wasted, as the snow congealed,
> When the bright sunne his beames thereon doth beat;
> Yet neuer he his hart to her reuealed,
> But rather chose to dye for sorrow great,
> Than with dishonourable termes her to entreat. (3. 5. 49. 5-9)

That Belphoebe is the one to control the relationship is borne out by her behaviour in Book IV. She initiates their estrangement, and he is "Full of sad anguish" (4. 7. 38. 4) at the separation. He is bound to her as intensely as the supine lover is to Acrasia.

Eventually, Timias, like the lover in the Bower of Bliss, abandons his weapons: "His wonted war-like weapons all he broke, / And threw away, with vow to vse no more, / Ne thenceforth euer strike in battel stroke" (4. 7. 39. 1-3). His relationship with the

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> it did not escape comment. . . . Elizabeth behaved so demonstratively towards Lord Robert that some observers condemned her conduct as nothing short of immodest, and the shocked Feria [the Spanish ambassador] reported that it was "even said that her Majesty visits him in his chamber day and night". (Somerset 111)

However, it is doubtful that Timias is meant to do more than glance at Leicester. The historical allegory for this section is obviously aimed elsewhere.

celestial Belphoebe has delayed his return to his lord, Prince Arthur. In fact, Arthur's entrance in canto vii of Book IV fails to rehabilitate Timias, who is mourning the severing of his contact with Belphoebe.[15] Moreover, Arthur does not even recognize his squire, a close companion on many of his adventures:

> Arriuing there, he found this wretched man,
> Spending his daies in dolour and despaire,
> And through long fasting woxen pale and wan,
> All ouergrowen with rude and rugged haire;
> That albeit his owne deare Squire he were,
> Yet he him knew not, ne auiz'd at all,
> But like strange wight, whom he had seene no where. . . . (4. 7. 43. 1-7)

Timias has abandoned totally his former life, his friendship with the Prince, and his aspirations to knighthood. He has come to resemble, because of his overly long, unkempt hair, an animal of the forest. Animals are Belphoebe's usual prey, but Timias's bestial appearance is an outward manifestation of his victimization. At this point in the narrative, he strongly suggests the "comely men" (2. 12. 86. 2) who were formerly Acrasia's lovers and who have been magically changed into beasts by the witch. Because Belphoebe has produced this radical transformation in Timias and has hindered his squirely duties and the fulfilment of his ambition to be a knight, it is rightful that Spenser has indirectly linked her to Acrasia (Berry 161).

The Belphoebe-Acrasia connection has ramifications for Elizabeth. The casting of

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[15]Hamilton notes that Arthur's appearance in the seventh canto of Book IV, which deviates from the pattern of his canto viii arrivals, is a signal that he cannot deliver Timias (479n).

a royal avatar as part of a sexual dyad implicates her conduct. Like Belphoebe and Acrasia, the queen always had the upperhand in relationships. *She* controlled, showed favour or displeasure, and was independent of the male for support (financial and otherwise), status, and, to a certain extent, happiness. Therefore, by linking Elizabeth and Acrasia through the instrument of Belphoebe, Spenser is indicating that he often finds the gender confusion and power attached to a female prince problematic, disturbing, and unnatural.[16] Furthermore, he seems to find male dependency on the female an obstacle to the realization of masculine ambition.[17] It can leave men distressingly vulnerable and dislocated: they abandon normative male enterprise in order to pursue female approbation and endorsement of their activities. Their endeavours are always conditional on the woman's approval, and she can thwart or facilitate them at will. Service to one's queen can sometimes become an exercise in emasculation.

It has long been acknowledged that the incidents in Book IV involving Timias and Belphoebe are a close allegorical study of Elizabeth's estrangement from Raleigh. Book III briefly connects the squire and Raleigh, but the correlation is not developed until

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[16]The Bower of Bliss is considered unnatural and deceptive. The ivy, for example, is just a good imitation: "For the rich mettall was so coloured, / That wight, who did not well auis'd it vew, / Would surely deeme it to be yvie trew . . ." (2. 12. 61. 3-5).

[17]Spenser probably found a parallel with his situation: a male poet hoping for the patronage of the queen.

later.[18] Raleigh's spectacular and abrupt fall from grace was caused by a secret marriage. Elizabeth Throckmorton, Raleigh's bride, is usually identified as one of the queen's maids of honour (Somerset 498); it is more likely that she was one of a group of ladies who attended Elizabeth in the privy chamber (May 12-13). Her involvement with Raleigh is well-known. They began a clandestine affair in 1591, which resulted in pregnancy, the reason undoubtedly for their marriage in the fall of that year. Throckmorton hid the pregnancy and subsequently gave birth to a son in March of 1592. In April, she returned to court, but the masquerade was soon over. Raleigh's secret was finally revealed in May. Unquestionably, Elizabeth felt the deepest sense of betrayal:

> Between them the Raleghs had made Elizabeth look a fool, and she naturally took exception to this. Until now she had been under the impression that Ralegh's devotion to her remained absolute, and the depth of his duplicity was only underlined by the fact that as recently as January 1592 she had granted him Sherborne Castle. But Ralegh was guilty of more than a mere breach of trust: by seducing a maid of honour, and then marrying her without her mistress's consent, he had laid himself open to punitive action on two counts, and the cynical way in which he had sought to deceive the Queen made it especially unlikely that she would be lenient about his offense. (Somerset 498)

By August, the couple was interred in the Tower of London, and although their imprisonment was of a short duration, Raleigh's disgrace was complete. It was several years before he returned to Elizabeth's favour. It is this separation of queen and courtier that Spenser allegorizes.

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[18]The mention of tobacco as one of the three possible herbs applied to Timias's wounds links the squire to Raleigh. The latter introduced the plant to England (O'Connell 110).

O'Connell believes that Timias shadows that aspect of Raleigh that was courtly lover to the queen (110). In this context, it becomes somewhat understandable that he is exiled from Belphoebe-as-Elizabeth for dishonouring her by giving his attentions, even momentarily, to Amoret: "Is this the faith, she said, and said no more, / But turnd her face, and fled away for euermore" (4. 7. 36. 8-9). What is important in the historical allegory is Belphoebe's belief in his transgression and her reaction to it, just as Elizabeth's perception of Raleigh's perfidy shaped his fall from favour. It is clear, though, that Spenser is involved in something of a historical shift (O'Connell 122): the actions of Timias are less criminal than those of his historical counterpart. Belphoebe's swift leap to judgement and her biased presentation of Timias's actions (O'Connell 118-19) are Spenser's attempt to gain sympathy for his former patron. This revision of history continues when Belphoebe and Timias are finally reconciled: Spenser is actually anticipating the reunion of sovereign and courtier which did not occur until the year following the publication of this book (O'Connell 122). Perhaps he was trying to influence the outcome of events. Additionally, Timias's identification of Belphoebe as the source of his suffering implicates the royal prototype in Raleigh's misery and distances the courtier from much of the responsibility for his disgrace:

> Ne any but your selfe, O dearest dred,
> Hath done this wrong, to wreake on worthlesse wight
> Your high displesure, through misdeeming bred:
> That when your pleasure is to deeme aright,
> Ye may redresse, and me restore to light. (4. 8. 17. 1-5)

The historical allegory of Book IV involves a marriage of the distorted real world with the

land of Faerie. The mirror, though blurry, is sufficiently reflective to image criticism of Elizabeth for her role in the downfall of Raleigh.

Belphoebe represents the womanly aspect of the queen. Spenser has fashioned her so that he can celebrate royal chastity, beauty, and ability. However, underlying this praise is a substantial subtext of criticism and tension. Spenser immerses the reader in a description of Belphoebe's comeliness and virtue, but he cannot leave the compliment alone; such passages must be infused with a hint of unease, an allusion to an evil figure, or a sense that there is something wrong with Elizabeth's conception of her chastity and power. He cannot prevent his essentially masculine reaction from entering the discourse. He is trying to transform his subjection and his queen's female power. Within the portrait of Belphoebe, the dynamic of negativity is strong. Her status as the beautiful, chaste beloved may not be cancelled by criticism, but it certainly inverts and compromises the praise. Belphoebe, the inviolate virgin, is not immune to male anxiety. Neither, it seems, is Elizabeth.

4

"Yet wist her life at last muste lincke in that same knot": The Queen and the Knight of Chastity

Britomart, unlike Gloriana and Belphoebe, is never designated a shadow of Elizabeth. Although readers can readily perceive similarities between the female warrior and the Tudor queen, Spenser is careful to distance the fictional from the real. Why has he made this distinction? Clearly, Britomart succeeds, like Elizabeth, in her world; she functions well in a male-dominated society. However, the martial method of her triumph has little relation to the monarchical success of the queen, as does her excellence as a conventional female, a role that Elizabeth disdained. With the "mayd Martiall" (3. 3. 53. 9), the poet has established a figure of perfection who surpasses all virtuous women and whose chivalric pursuits outdo all knights. By distinguishing Elizabeth from the figure of Britomart, Spenser varies his usual technique of using the queen's similarity to royal avatars to censure. Although there is a strong element of praise for the queen within the narrative of Britomart, criticism can be found in the gaps between royal and idealized lives; distance is employed to highlight Elizabeth's shortcomings (Villeponteaux, "Displacing" 54). The queen, although often worthy of adulation, can never quite match Britomart's standard of perfection.

The figure of Britomart is, nonetheless, a fitting complement for Elizabeth. Like Belphoebe, Spenser describes the Knight of Chastity in terms of the moon and the sun. In an echo of Belphoebe's narrative, the chaste Britomart is compared to the lunar goddess,

Cynthia:

> As when faire *Cynthia*, in darksome night,
> Is in a noyous 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;
> . . . . . .
> Such was the beautie and the shining ray,
> With which faire *Britomart* gaue light vnto the day. (3. 1. 43)

Later, when she is forced to remove her armour at the castle of Malbecco, Britomart's beauty, like the sun, is dazzling:

> And eke that straunger knight emongst 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. (3. 9. 20)

This revelation of the woman within the knight's costume leads Spenser to make a comparison between the undressing of Britomart and Minerva's disrobing after the battle with Enceladus:

> Like as *Minerva*, being late returnd
> From slaughter of the Giaunts conquered;
> . . . . . .
> Hath loosd her helmet from her lofty hed,
> And her *Gorgonian* shield gins to vntye
> From her left arme, to rest in glorious victorye. (3. 9. 22)

Minerva, Roman goddess of war, is appropriately used in this simile praising the martial Britomart. It also should be noted that Minerva was often used in encomia of the queen

(Hackett 104-05, 120-21).[1]

Britomart also shares with the queen her position as her father's heir. From Elizabeth's birth to the declaration of her bastardy after the death of Anne Boleyn, the Tudor princess was heir presumptive to the English throne. After June 1543, Henry VIII restored Elizabeth to her rightful place in the line of succession, behind Edward and Mary. The absence of Britomart's mother in the text resembles Elizabeth's own history. Indeed, the events of Elizabeth's life seem to suggest that Anne was of little importance to her daughter. The separation of mother and child caused by Anne's imprisonment and death undoubtedly marked (or marred, depending on the viewpoint) the queen, but her silence on the subject seems particularly meaningful.[2] Elizabeth, unlike her sister, did not attempt to redeem her mother's name or reputation when she had the power to do so, and it is believed that she spoke of Anne on only two occasions (Somerset 7). Even before her mother's execution, Elizabeth's upbringing and education were entrusted to a group of caretakers, one of the most important of whom was Kat Ashley. This woman had a place in her household which was similar to that held by the fictional Glauce (Somerset 10).

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[1]As a warrior-goddess, Minerva does not seem to be the most suitable choice for a figure of Elizabeth. Nevertheless, connections can be made through the commonalities of maidenhood, immortality (obviously fictional in the queen's case), patronage of cities, and wisdom. The last characteristic is explicitly associated with Elizabeth in *The Faerie Queene* at 3. 2. 3. In this stanza, she is dissociated from Britomart's chivalric pursuits and aggression.

[2]There are hints, however, that Anne Boleyn retained her maternal importance. Elizabeth "borrowed" her motto, *Semper Eadem*, and her badge from her mother (Somerset 7). She was also loyal to members of the Boleyn family.

The latter is Britomart's "aged Nurse" (3. 2. 30. 2) and companion, and becomes a kind of substitute maternal figure, although she is not royal.

For Britomart and Elizabeth, a symmetry exists which goes further than a mere similarity of family circumstances; it encompasses dynastic ties as well. Spenser has imaginatively recreated the ancestry of Elizabeth Tudor so that it includes the fictional Britomart and Artegall. As foretold by Merlin, the couple will generate a royal line of "Renowmed kings, and sacred Emperours" (3. 3. 23. 1), which will eventually culminate in Elizabeth:

> Thenceforth eternall vnion shall be made
> Betweene the nations different afore,
> And sacred Peace shall louingly perswade
> The warlike minds, to learne her goodly lore,
> And ciuile armes to exercise no more:
> Then shall a royall virgin raine, which shall
> Stretch her white rod ouer the *Belgicke* shore,
> And the great Castle smite so sore with all,
> That it shall make him shake, and shortly learne to fall. (3. 3. 49)

This encomium of Elizabeth, in depicting peace at home as an important feature of her reign duplicates the symbolism of Britomart's armour. The uniting of people within Britain is reflected in Britomart's choice of armour and weaponry (Hamilton 336n; O'Connell 84). She, a British princess, wears the armour of Angela, a Saxon queen, and wields the spear of Bladud, which links her with the kingdom's Arthurian past. As a consequence, "Both Elizabeth and Britomart are embodiments of *discordia concors*: Britomart early, fictional, and prophetic; Elizabeth present, actual, and fulfilling" (O'Connell 84).

There is a certain amount of correspondence between the female authority attached to Britomart and Elizabeth. Although the former is not a queen regnant, she has expectations of attaining the crown on her father's death. Moreover, it is to a British throne she will succeed; she identifies her homeland as the "greater *Britaine*" (3. 2. 7. 9). Britomart's power, like that of Elizabeth, is linked to strength and self-sufficiency. The Knight of Chastity engages in two related quests that stress her possession of these attributes: in Books III and IV, she undertakes her initial search for Artegall, and in Book V, she goes to Radegone to rescue him from his imprisonment by the Amazon warriors. In addition, she, like her royal "descendant," understands the value of caution.[3] This wariness proves practical in the house of Dolon:

> But by Gods grace, and her good heedinesse,
> She was preserued from their traytrous traine.
> Thus she all night wore out in watchfulnesse,
> Ne suffred slothfull sleepe her eyelids to oppresse. (5. 6. 34. 6-9)

Britomart's power is connected with domination of men, although the knight exercises command in a manner completely alien to the queen's own experience. Britomart defeats

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[3]Although Elizabeth was on several occasions involved in scandals arising from a lack of circumspection in her conduct, especially towards men, she was also capable of great caution, a quality that sometimes became indistinguishable from procrastination and avoidance. Her behaviour in the wake of the death of Thomas Seymour demonstrates her prudence:

> her first priority was to rehabilitate herself in the favour of the King. Anxious not to be branded a shameless hussy, the image she now cultivated was one of modesty and reserve. Her dress was sober to the point of boredom. . . .More importantly, her concern to impress upon the Council that she would undertake nothing without their approval led her to take exaggerated care to keep them informed of her most insignificant activities. (Somerset 28)

men in hand-to-hand combat.

Britomart's performance as a knight is unparalleled in *The Faerie Queene*. Her first action in the text is her battle with Guyon, the Knight of Temperance. She is able to unseat him, and it is skill only which saves him from death or injury. This meeting immediately establishes Britomart's mastery in combat. Her victory is enhanced by the revelation that this is Guyon's first defeat:

> Great shame and sorrow of that fall he tooke;
> For neuer yet, sith warlike armes he bore,
> And shiuering speare in bloudie fielde first shooke,
> He found himself dishonored so sore. (3. 1. 7. 1-4)

At first, the narrator, by revealing the "secret powre vnseene" (3. 1. 7. 8) of Britomart's spear, attempts to undermine the completeness of her martial achievement; Guyon's blame is erased by the suggestion that the fault is not his. However, as other knights in the poem fight with some sort of armorial advantage, the use of the enchanted spear should not sully her success. Later, the narrator concedes "That of a single damzell thou wert met / On equall plaine, and there so hard beset . . ." (3. 1. 8. 4-5). This acknowledgement emphasizes that whatever benefit is accorded to Britomart by the magic of the spear can be identified with her own power, the force of chastity (Hamilton 306n; Villeponteaux, "Displacing" 54).

The clash with Guyon also reveals that, when she is dressed as a knight, Britomart is functioning as a man. Until she is recognized as "the famous *Britomart*" (3. 1. 8. 6), her presence is designated by masculine pronouns. This association of female knight with

masculine pronouns, which is not a manifestation of Spenserian absentmindedness and can be found at other points in the text, stresses not merely the totality of Britomart's manly disguise, but also that her socialization and behaviour are recognizably male (Cavanagh 139). Her adoption of a masculine role, for which her training has prepared her, is founded on her quest for Artegall, whom she sees in "the glassie globe that *Merlin* made" (3. 2. 21.1). In a sense, this physical transformation into a knight becomes Britomart's imitation of Artegall's portrait in "that mirrhour fayre" (3. 2. 22. 5) (Villeponteaux, "Displacing" 60). He is a "comely knight, all arm'd in complete wize" (3. 2. 24. 2); she becomes, in a modelling gesture, the "gentlest knight aliue" (3. 11. 19. 1) and fitted, like him, in armour. Her outward metamorphosis from female to male is complete when she becomes protector to her own lady, Amoret.[4] They become a (chaste) couple after Amoret's liberation from the House of Busirane:

> His will she feard; for him she surely thought
> To be a man, such as indeed he seemed,
> And much the more, by that he lately wrought,
> When her from deadly thraldome he redeemed,
> For which no seruice she too much esteemed,
> Yet dread of shame, and doubt of foule dishonor
> Made her not yeeld so much, as due she deemed.
> Yet *Britomart* attended duly on her,
> As well became a knight, and did to her all honor. (4. 1. 8)

Although Amoret soon becomes privy to the true gender of her rescuer, they continue to function publicly as knight and lady. At the Tournamant of Dames, for instance,

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[4]Cavanagh, too, notes Britomart's championing of Amoret (144-45), but she views the knight's activities in an altogether more negative light.

Britomart escorts "Her louely *Amoret*" (4. 5. 13. 2) to try on Florimell's girdle and compete for the title of "Queene of beautie" (4. 5. 26. 4). When Britomart is offered the prize of the Snowy Florimell, her refusal is based on the code of chivalry, which promotes devotion to one's chosen maiden over fickleness, and her chastity, which must not capitulate to any falseness.[5] Her loyalty actually *exceeds* that of the assembled male combatants who flock to the side of the false Florimell: "But *Britomart* would not thereto assent, / Ne her owne *Amoret* forgoe so light / For that strange Dame . . ." (4. 5. 20. 6-8). The successful performance of Amoret and Britomart as a couple lends a certain element of believability to Scudamour's jealousy of Britomart, whom he has judged guilty of the theft of Amoret.

Britomart's treatment of Amoret supports her designation as a paragon. Indeed, she plays the martial role so well that she rightly deserves to be deemed the *best* knight. Her victories over the virtuous Guyon and Marinell, her subsequent rescue of the beleaguered Red Crosse Knight,[6] and the vanquishing of the evil Busirane show her superiority in matters chivalric. One of her most stunning triumphs occurs when she

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[5]Obviously, this explanation becomes very convoluted when one remembers that, as a woman, Britomart would have little interest in the charms of the false Florimell. What is important here is appearances; Britomart must be *seen* to be above the corruptions and temptations of the other knights.

[6]Although Red Crosse gives "her good aid" (3. 1. 66. 7) in her battle with Malecasta's champions at the end of Book III, canto i, one does not get the same sense of urgency as when Britomart earlier saves her fellow knight. At that time, Red Crosse is "In such distresse and doubtfull jeopardy" (3. 1. 22. 6) that she must rescue him by compelling his six attackers to tell her "The cause of their dissention and outrageous yre" (3. 1. 23. 9).

defeats all challengers, including the disguised Artegall, in the tournament. Her victory is made greater by the fact that she has accomplished what the expert Knights of the Maidenhead have failed to do:

> So did the warlike *Britomart* restore
> The prize, to knights of Maydenhead that day,
> Which else was like to haue bene lost, and bore
> The prayse of prowesse from them all away. (4. 4. 48. 1-4)

These interactions stress her infallibility. Unlike the Knights of Holiness, Temperance, and Justice, and other virtuous male figures, she never succumbs to evil or is defeated. She is always triumphant.[7] Even her injuries fail to impede her successful conduct in arms.[8] Her extraordinary status is amplified further because Britomart not only shows mastery in the traditionally masculine arena of battle, but she is also able to perform feats that men cannot. When she meets Scudamour, he is lamenting his inability to pass through the barrier of fire which prevents his entry into the house of Busirane. Britomart easily advances through the flames "as a thunder bolt / Perceth the yielding ayre, and doth

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[7]Of course, her victories are predicated on her chastity. Red Crosse, in contrast, can be the victim of Duessa's tricks and still rehabilitate his holiness. Britomart's virtue, once gone, is gone forever, so she cannot be seen as surrendering to evil in any form (Cavanagh 25).

[8]A good example of this tendency occurs in the House of Busirane episode. Although the wound that is delivered by the magician is not serious, it makes Britomart fight more furiously:

> Exceeding wroth therewith the virgin grew,
> Albe the wound were nothing deepe imprest,
> And fiercely forth her mortall blade she drew,
> To giue him the reward for such vile outrage dew. (3. 12. 33. 6-9)

displace / The soring clouds into sad showres ymolt . . ." (3. 11. 25. 6-8). Scudamour's next attempt, like all the earlier ones, is fruitless. *She* rescues his beloved; *he* remains outside the walls, whining at his ineffectualness, until he finally decamps (according to the 1596 edition), leaving Amoret to her fate. Britomart even bests the noble and skilled Arthur, who is not able to duplicate her feat of finding a destined, envisioned mate. That she is capable of surpassing the embodiment of Magnificence attests to her manly perfection. In fact, she is the only titular hero in *The Faerie Queene* who does not need the assistance of Arthur to complete her quest.

That Spenser is uncomfortable with identifying Elizabeth with the actions of a female knight is certain. Although Britomart's "Armory" (3. 3. 59. 7) seems to echo that moment when Elizabeth, allegedly adorned in some form of armour, addressed the troops at Tilbury, the connection disintegrates under the consideration that this cross-dressing was an isolated event in her reign, if it occurred at all (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 3).[9] Mary Villeponteaux recognizes the source of the difficulty:

> But represent herself as a warrior [Elizabeth] rarely if ever did, possibly because this avatar is too much of an incursion into traditionally masculine territory, and if we can identify one aim in all of Elizabeth's rhetorical manipulations, it is to make herself as woman monarch palatable to her subjects without attenuating her power.
>
> The woman warrior was a problematic figure for an age like Spenser's, which was so anxiously concerned with outward, distinguishing signs that were believed

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[9]Frye details the conflicting descriptions of Elizabeth's attire on this day and concludes that there is "no contemporary evidence that she actually wore armour at all" (*Elizabeth I* 3).

> to reveal the innate qualities of an individual, such as station and gender. ("Displacing" 59)

In one instance, Spenser distances the knight from the queen because Britomart possesses a physical, martial might that cannot be matched by Elizabeth:

> Of warlike puissance in ages spent,
> Be thou faire *Britomart*, whose prayse I write,
> But of all wisedome be thou precedent,
> O soueraigne Queene, whose prayse I would endite. . . . (3. 2. 3. 1-4)

Britomart's "puissance" has no correlation with Elizabeth; the queen is praised for her wisdom (Villeponteaux, "Displacing" 55). Yet, the connection of Britomart and Elizabeth condemns the latter. It highlights a deficiency in Elizabeth's rule: she is unable to fulfil a martial function beyond that of figurehead. Furthermore, the virgin warrior may serve as an indictment of Elizabeth's promotion of peace: "the queen's reluctance to intervene with a military force in the European religious conflicts was also a source of frustration to some of her Protestant subjects" (Villeponteaux, "Displacing" 65n).[10]

The inability to participate actively in military pursuits, as kings historically did, or to pursue certain martial endeavours are just two of Elizabeth's shortcomings that the appearance of the manly Britomart emphasizes. Britomart is able to hide her gender behind her armour and to play the male role when the situation warrants. Conversely, Elizabeth was never able to transcend the limitations of her gendered body. Throughout

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[10]It is not a contradiction for Spenser to praise Elizabeth's policy of peace at 3. 3. 49 and simultaneously to use Britomart to condemn this same activity. It is part of the "continuous disequilibrium" of the poem.

the long course of her reign, her gender caused problems. Elizabeth and her iconographers always had to accommodate her womanhood to the traditional hierarchy of power, which placed men at the pinnacle of home, church, government, and court. Sometimes her gender gave her a definite advantage; at other times, it was a liability which generated nothing but anxiety. Britomart, happily, does not share the queen's gender "defect": when she needs to be a man, she manifests masculinity; when it is fitting or essential that she appear as a woman, she does so (Cavanagh 139).

Britomart's ability to shift gender and to undertake a male role seems analogous to Elizabeth's androgynous power. Britomart's armorial disguise allows her a freedom that is not experienced by any other virtuous female within the borders of Faerie Land, an autonomy that can be shared only by a queen regnant. However, while it is true that the Knight of Chastity mirrors the distinctly masculine characteristics of liberty, independence, and assertiveness found in Elizabeth, beyond this congruence she cannot be used to reflect effectively the queen's androgyny. Elizabeth was able to perceive and depict her power in ways that embraced aspects of androgyny, but did not efface her femininity. Britomart must hide her vulnerable femininity with the armour of the male. Although she has been educated in the use of arms, this deliberate adoption of a martial, masculine role is important. It allows her to wield authority and to act freely, but her power becomes based on her appearance as a man. She does all that a normative, albeit superior, male would do: she participates in battles and tournaments, protects the downtrodden, attaches herself to a lady. Her pretence is not without precedent since she uses the armour "Which long'd

to *Angela*" (3. 3. 58. 8) and is said to surpass the "warlike feates" (3. 4. 2. 4) of Penthesilea, Deborah,[11] and Camilla. A disparity emerges between the real and imaginary worlds because this model of queenly androgyny is not one that Elizabeth could accept. Elizabeth's androgynous self-representation differed markedly from Britomart's privileging of the masculine part of her person (Berry 162; Cavanagh 139). While the queen did refer to herself in masculine terms, as prince and king, and employ a kingly prerogative, her authority, unlike Britomart's, did not cause her to mask her gender, a task that was an impossibility in any case. Instead, she based her power, to a degree, on her femininity (Levin 1-4). It reverberates in images of Elizabeth as bride, wife, and mother of the realm, courtly lover, pelican (Hackett 80-81), and chaste protector of Britain, as well as in figurizations of various goddesses, female Biblical figures, and fictional characters. Although her gender was always problematic, she did not divorce herself from it or conceal it, but tried to use it in a way that would benefit her. Elizabeth subverted the traditional hierarchy of power; Britomart, on the other hand, reinforces it (Berry 161) by conflating authority with masculinity. Consequently, women's authority continues to be linked with conventional patriarchal standards of who is and is not powerful; its maintenance relies on following an established paradigm of masculine domination.

Britomart's success as the perfect knight is linked with the superiority of her virtue.

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[11]Deborah is a familiar icon within the cult of Elizabeth I, representing the queen's authority and Protestantism (Cain 124; Hackett 39-40). Significantly, Britomart is distanced from this figure through the opening lines of 3. 4. 3.

When Spenser muses on the greatness of Britomart, who surpasses the superlative fighting women of antiquity, he moves from a contemplation of her valour in arms to a compliment to her chastity:

> Yet these, and all else that had puissance,
> Cannot with noble *Britomart* compare,
> Aswell for glory of great valiaunce,
> As for pure chastitie and vertue rare,
> That all her goodly deeds do well declare. (3. 4. 3. 1-5)

What allows Britomart to defeat all comers, to succeed where men cannot, and to withstand all wickedness is her unassailable chastity. These feats also attest to the completeness of her virtue, which is based on ownership alone. One does not "grow" in chastity, as one does in holiness or justice; one is either chaste or unchaste. Britomart's virtue needs no further development or testing, as the virtues of the earlier titular knights do. Consequently, her bodily purity confers on Britomart a kind of moral perfection that is translated into a martial supremacy.

The connection of military hegemony to chastity serves to distance Britomart's and Elizabeth's conception of that virtue. Of course, the queen's chastity was redefined (by herself and others) to include masculine qualities, which facilitated her overcoming of the gendered barriers of privacy, silence, and obedience, but this revision made it an extreme. Spenser's connection of chastity with "manliness," the etymological root of "virtue" (Cavanagh 8-9, 139; Frye, *Elizabeth I* 14), does the opposite; it does not make Britomart's chastity more radical. Ironically, it shapes it into something eminently normative. The conventionality of Britomart's chastity is signalled by her armour. Its protective barrier

symbolizes the hymen. Her spear, which is also associated with her chaste power, is undeniably phallic (Villeponteaux, "Displacing" 54). The nexus of these chaste and sexual elements suggests that the focus of Britomart's virtue is not the perpetual virginity of Elizabeth, which it resembles superficially, imperfectly, and temporarily, but rather marital fidelity. In fact, Britomart's motivation for arming herself and functioning as a knight is not for her own glory or even for her own moral development; the reason lies with finding her destined husband and becoming, essentially, a royal breeder. The discrepancy between Britomart's and Elizabeth's chastity slights the queen, who failed to replicate the future spousal and maternal roles of Britomart, and rebukes her conceptionalization of the virtue (Villeponteaux, "Displacing" 54).[12]

The purpose of Britomart's quest is foregrounded in the epic. It is first mentioned in the stanza that reveals her gender and name:

> Euen the famous *Britomart* it was,
> Whom straunge aduenture did from *Britaine* fet,
> To seeke her louer (loue farre sought alas,)
> Whose image she had seene in *Venus* looking glas. (3. 1. 8. 6-9)

Spenser is proclaiming here the importance of Britomart's identity as a lover; this fact must be recognized and so it is embedded, rather incongruously, into the narrative in the midst of her conflict with Guyon. The "dreadfull Mage" (3. 3. 14. 6), Merlin, also makes this

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[12]Frye, in *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* and "Of Chastity and Violence: Elizabeth I and Edmund Spenser in the House of Busirane," and Bruce Thomas Boehrer, in "'Carelesse Modestee': Chastity as Politics in Book III of *The Faerie Queene*," discuss the figure of Britomart in terms of a reconfiguration of Elizabeth's chastity.

designation and contributes to her immersion into a normative female role. It is Merlin's magic mirror into which Britomart gazes to see the image of her future mate:

> So thought this Mayd (as maydens vse to done)
> Whom fortune for her husband would allot,
> Not that she lusted after any one;
> For she was pure from blame of sinfull blot,
> Yet wist her life at last muste lincke in that same knot. (3. 2. 23. 5-9)

Hence, Britomart's goal becomes primarily marital and so fits within typical gender boundaries of womanly subservience.

> Ne is thy fate, ne is thy fortune ill,
> To loue the prowest knight, that euer was.
> Therefore submit thy wayes vnto his will,
> And do by all dew meanes thy destiny fulfill. (3. 3. 24. 6-9)

Her early training "in warlike stowre" (3. 2. 6. 3) and her guise as a knight provide the means for marriage and gender assimilation (Frye, "Of Chastity" 62). Britomart's right to independent action and authority is as transitory as her virginity; both will be yielded to Artegall in marriage.

Britomart also learns from Merlin pertinent information about her importance as a mother. She and Artegall will produce a royal line that will terminate with Elizabeth. Therefore, marriage is not an end in itself; it becomes a dynastic vehicle. As a consequence, her future fertility becomes an important issue in the text. The narrator reminds the reader of Britomart's destiny as foundress of a royal line and subject of the machinations of Love, which is personified as a god (Hamilton 326n):

> But thy dread darts in none doe triumph more,
> Ne brauer proofe in any, of thy powre

Shew'dst thou, then in this royall Maid of yore,
Making her seeke an vnknowne Paramoure,
From the worlds end, through many a bitter stowre:
From whose two loynes thou afterwards did rayse
Most famous fruits of matrimoniall bowre,
Which through the earth haue spred their liuing prayse,
That fame in trompe of gold eternally displayes. (3. 3. 3)

The emphasis on Britomart's marriage and progeny, among whom is the praiseworthy Elizabeth of history, inculpates the queen's adherence to a code of virgin chastity. Britomart pursues the duties of a normative *and* a royal woman: to wed and secure the patriarchal line by producing heirs of her body. By conceiving, she will institute a royal dynasty. Virginal Elizabeth, on the other hand, destroyed her own house.[13]

The import of Britomart's fecundity resurfaces in the epic during her sojourn at Isis Church. There she has a most fantastic dream, in which she is menaced by a crocodile: "He gan to threaten her likewise to eat; / But that the Goddesse with her rod him backe did beat" (5. 7. 15. 8-9). The intervention of Isis does not "save" Britomart from the attentions of the reptile. He changes tactics so that she finds him more pleasing:

Tho turning all his pride to humblesse meeke,
Him selfe before her feete he lowly threw,
And gan for grace and loue of her to seeke:
Which she accepting, he so neare her drew,
That of his game she soone enwombed grew,
And forth did bring a Lion of great might;
That shortly did all other beasts subdew.

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[13]The barrenness of Elizabeth makes a lie to Merlin's words of 3. 3. 50. 1: "But yet the end is not." Although the Scottish king, James VI, was distantly related to Elizabeth, his accession to the English throne as James I supplants Tudor with Stuart and begins a new dynasty.

With that she waked, full of fearefull fright,
And doubtfully dismayd through that so vncouth sight. (5. 7. 16)

Cain views this scene quite positively and in terms of the allegory of justice: Britomart sees "her destiny in a vision of clemency subduing severity . . ." (151). Rosemary Freeman discerns a greater complexity and feels that the crux of interpreting the dream is the crocodile: "the Temple of Isis scene remains limited by the dubious role of the crocodile . . ." (281). The beast is both dangerous and ardent, and as a symbol of Artegall, represents Britomart's "repressed fears and desires" (Hamilton 575n) of her future with the Knight of Justice. If the dream is Britomart's destiny, then her prospects are entirely conventional ones. Clearly, Artegall holds the power in the relationship. The crocodile is a fearsome creature: his docility ends with awakening, and his power is only momentarily deflected by Isis. It is significant that he still achieves his goal of "winning" Britomart, in spite of the goddess's intercession. It appears that in marriage, Britomart will be subject to her husband's will, just as she is subject to the crocodile in the dream. The male will is the one that is satisfied, while Britomart is frightened. The analysis of the dream by the Temple's priests reinforces the conventionality of her fate:

That Knight shall all the troublous stormes asswage,
And raging flames, that many foes shall reare,
To hinder thee from the iust heritage
Of thy sires Crowne, and from thy countrey deare.
Then shalt thou take him to thy loued fere,
And ioyne in equall portion of thy realme.
And afterwards a sonne to him shalt beare,
That Lion-like shall shew his powre extreame. (5. 7. 23. 1-8)

Although it is mentioned that Britomart will reign jointly with her spouse, her active,

martial role will be diminished. Artegall will be the knight who battles her enemies, a circumstance juxtaposed with his peril in Radegone, from which he will be rescued by his betrothed. Before their marriage, he will assume her warlike role, and eventually she will be relegated to traditional womanly activities and defined by her connections with husband and child. The power and skills of Artegall and his son are emphasized. In this family unit, there is no other role for Britomart to assume except that of conventional royal female: queen consort and queen mother. The promise that Britomart will, in the future, act as a normative woman is a denouncement of Elizabeth's unorthodox conception of her chastity and of her presumption to rule alone.

Following the dream in Isis Church, Britomart continues her journey to Radegone. There she will engage Radigund, with whom her character is sometimes paralleled, in a battle. Spenser has carefully drawn a certain similitude between these female warriors by linking aspects of their separate combats with Artegall (Woods 153). Both women have a history of defeating their male opponents, but they do not need to rely on their martial skill to attain victory. Instead, they possess a particularly effective secret weapon, beauty, and it is revealed to Artegall in the same way. A blow to the head leads to Britomart's unveiling:

> The wicked stroke vpon her helmet chaunst,
> And with the force, which in it selfe it bore,
> Her ventayle shard away, and thence forth glaunst
> A downe in vaine, ne harm'd her any more.
> With that her angels face, vnseene afore,
> Like to the ruddie morn appeard in sight,
> Deawed with siluer drops. . . . (4. 6. 19. 1-7)

Her loveliness affects Artegall as profoundly as facing the portrait of Gloriana on the shield influences Arthur. His startled reaction to her face and hair mirrors the marvel felt by those at the castles of Malecasta and Malbecco who are privileged to glimpse the attractions usually hidden by armour. It stops peremptorily the *coup de grâce*:

> And as his hand he vp againe did reare,
> Thinking to worke on her his vtmost wrake,
> His powrelesse arme benumbd with secret feare
> From his reuengefull purpose shronke abacke,
> And cruell sword out of his fingers slake
> Fell downe to ground, as if the steele had sence,
> And felt some ruth, or sence his hand did lacke,
> Or both of them did thinke, obedience
> To doe to so diuine a beauties excellence. (4. 6. 21)

Artegall, so moved by the sight before him, venerates Britomart: "At last fell humbly downe vpon his knee, / And of his wonder made religion, / Weening some heauenly goddess he did see . . ." (4. 6. 22. 2-4). Artegall also strikes Radigund on her head and, while she is "In sencelesse swoune" (5. 5. 11. 4), unlaces her "sunshynie helmet" (5. 5. 11. 8) in preparation for her decapitation. He is undone for the second time by a pretty face:

> But when as he discouered had her face,
> He saw his senses straunge astonishment,
> A miracle of natures goodly grace,
> In her faire visage voide of ornament,
> But bath'd in bloud and sweat together ment;
> Which in the rudenesse of that euille plight,
> Bewrayd the signes of feature excellent:
> Like as the Moone in foggie winters night,
> Doth seeme to be her selfe, though darkned be her light. (5. 5. 12)

As a result of this "defeat," Artegall becomes the Amazon's slave, seemingly making a mockery of Scudamour's belief that the Knight of Justice had, upon being confronted with

Britomart's beauty, become that "Ladies thrall" (4. 6. 28. 8). His submission to Radigund is a perversion of his genuflection to Britomart: "Tho with her sword on him she flatling strooke, / In signe of true subiection to her powre, / And as her vassal him to thralldom tooke" (5. 5. 18. 1-3).[14]

Although the two episodes are strikingly alike, Spenser seems to insert sufficient differences so as to distance Britomart from Radigund (O'Connell 141). A precedent has already been set when Spenser disconnects Britomart and Penthesilea, another Amazon queen, by the lines: "Yet these, and all that else had puissance, / Cannot with noble Britomart compare . ." (3. 4. 3. 1-2). Although a relationship is implicit, Spenser carefully distances Amazon from martial maid in a way that he does not for Belphoebe. Because no sexual innuendo is attached to Britomart, as it is to Belphoebe, the possibility of a strong link being forged between Britomart and Radigund is further negated. By this

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[14]The tropes of feminine beauty and the corresponding male response of reverence that are so identifiable in the passages relating Artegall's battles with Britomart and Radigund recur throughout the text. For Britomart, as for Gloriana and Belphoebe, beauty enhances her suitability as an object of male worship. But beauty sometimes masks momentarily the morality of the appealing female. For Spenser, physical appeal and virtue are not necessarily synonymous (Cavanagh 56-62). For example, the knights competing in the Tournament of Dames are attracted to the illusory beauty of the Snowy Florimell, who is, in reality, a *male* "Spright yfraught with fawning guile" (3. 8. 8. 1). The fact that Artegall reacts in a similar fashion to Britomart, a complement of Elizabeth, and Radigund is significant. Beauty temporarily blinds Artegall to the reality of Radigund and gives her a definite advantage, as it does Britomart. Correspondingly, Spenser appears to be disdaining that aspect of Elizabeth's persona, reflected strongly in her portraiture (Strong 147-48), which maintained a youthful beauty into old age. It was a strategy designed to connect power with beauty, ideas associated with Britomart and Radigund, and to obscure the truth--in this case, of her aging body--with the veneer of loveliness, a camouflage that also works for the Amazon queen.

method, the poet maintains Britomart's perfection and refuses to conflate warrior virgin and Amazon. This is the paradigm for identifying the disparities in Artegall's single combats with female warriors. Woods outlines many of these, believing that the distorted mirroring of the two episodes allows the reader to analyze appropriately the meaning (150-51):[15]

> Artegall's submission to Britomart happens because of the power of love; his submission to Radigund occurs because he has sworn to be her vassal if he does not defeat her in the field. The encounter with Britomart occurs in the context of Book IV, "of friendship," a book about proper relationships. The one with Radigund occurs in a book concerned with justice. In the former case Artegall is completing a proper union; in the latter he suffers from a failure of necessary sternness. With Britomart there is a mutuality of submission, effected cautiously through conversation and agreement. Perhaps most important, Artegall becomes Britomart's vassal of his own free will. He becomes Radigund's slave because of her improper use of feminine beauty to effect political tyrrany. (153)

It should be noted that even their beauty is disparate: Britomart's face is like the "ruddie morn"; Radigund's is the moon obscured by fog. What the twinning of the battle scenes has accomplished is subversion: if Britomart is distanced from both Radigund and Elizabeth, then there must be some correlation between Amazon and Tudor queen. The connection is implied because both Radigund and Elizabeth fall away from the womanly perfection of Britomart. In Radegone, Spenser conceives of female rule as anomalous,

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[15]Woods and I, however, arrive at different meanings. Her view is considerably more positive than mine:

> As a self-perceived national poet on the Virgilian model, Spenser clearly saw the glorification of Elizabeth and Elizabethan England as a large part of his task.
>
> Yet there is more of the gentle appreciative lover of the *Amoretti* in Spenser's positing of possible female equality, or at least equity, than there is of the Queen's toady. (155)

chaotic, and unlawful. Because he has established a congruence between Elizabeth and Radigund, it appears that these qualities intersect with the female leadership of the English monarch and reproach elements of her queenship.

The veracity of Spenser's unease is supported by other features within the Radegone narrative. It is here that Spenser makes an explicit (and condemnatory) statement about the nature of women's rule:

> Such is the crueltie of womenkynd,
> When they haue shaken off the shamefast band,
> With which wise Nature did them strongly bynd,
> T'obay the heasts of mans well ruling hand,
> That then all rule and reason they withstand,
> To purchase a licentious libertie.
> But vertuous women wisely vnderstand,
> That they were borne to base humilitie,
> Vnlesse the heauens them lift to lawfull soueraintie. (5. 5. 25)

This stanza does follow Calvinistic thought in suggesting that there is the possibility of exception to the rule of female subjugation, as many Protestants considered Elizabeth to be (Benson 277, 279-80). Nevertheless, the line that makes the exemption for those women divinely raised to the throne seems an "afterthought" (Benson 280) or a gesture of self-protection. Spenser cannot allay his own discomfort with female sovereignty. The weight of eight lines enumerating the dangers of gynaecocracy cannot be offset by mentioning the single exception that lies within the scope of God's mandate.

Britomart's restoration of male rule after her defeat of Radigund seems to bolster this opinion. Assuredly, it is a jarring moment for many modern-day readers, who see the potential for the establishment of a successful and legitimate female rule under the

leadership of Britomart. But at that moment of triumph, when she has again proven her martial and moral superiority by freeing the hapless and imprudent Artegall from his enslavement, she restores patriarchal rule:

> 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 wisdome did admire, and hearkned to her loring.
>
> For all those Knights, which long in captiue shade
> Had shrowded bene, she did from thralldome free;
> And magistrates of all that city made,
> And gaue to them great liuing and large fee:
> And that they should for euer faithfull bee,
> Made them sweare fealty to *Artegall*. (5. 7. 42, 5. 7. 43. 1-6)

In terms of the allegory of justice, of which this act is a part, the restoration of patriarchal order makes a great deal of sense. The chaos and injustice of Radigund's rule must be replaced with the promise of law under the Knight of Justice, whose virtue is redeemed along with his liberty. Artegall's worthiness must not only be restored, it must be *seen* to be restored. Who is more suitable to reestablish order than the woman who, through the dream in the Temple of Isis, is connected with the working of equity (O'Connell 145-46)? Britomart's removal of power from the Amazons also reproduces a commonplace of Elizabeth's reign, her oppression of other women. The queen seemed to view herself, as did many Calvinists, as an exception to the general principle of patriarchal rule (Somerset

59-60). Perhaps that is why she did little to help the cause of women during her reign: "For . . . Elizabeth, as for Spenser's Britomart, the woman who has the prerogative of a goddess, who is authorized to be out of place, can best justify her authority by putting other women in their places" (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 76).

But Elizabeth would *never* efface her own power, as Britomart does by resigning her position as the reigning princess and transforming her governance into nothing more than an interregnum. In sixteenth-century Europe, there were many examples of royal women acting as regents during their husbands' absences or their sons' minorities and as deputies for kings separated from their holdings by a considerable distance (Hopkins 135-57), but the crowns were never theirs, except for temporary safekeeping.[16] Britomart performs the duties of a consort, preserving Artegall's power during his short indisposition; she does not act as a queen regnant would. Although Spenser reminds the reader that Britomart possesses the wisdom that he has earlier assigned to Elizabeth and functions as an appropriate recipient of worship, as does the queen, the distance between the two figures remains strong. It is within this gap between fiction and history that criticism of Elizabeth emerges. By having Britomart reconstruct patriarchal rule from the remnants of female authority, a definite preference is shown for the dominion of men. The queen is insulted by the indication that the ultimate power remains masculine. By invoking the hegemony of orthodox patriarchy, Spenser is seeking to lessen the radicalism of female

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[16]Charles V and Philip II of Spain depended upon female relatives to govern the Netherlands in their stead, but under their ultimate control (Hopkins 135-36, 150-55).

rule and to quieten the misgivings that Elizabeth's leadership engendered to the moment of her death. The replacement for gynaecocracy is the rule of men; the only acceptable power for women is within the limits of a regency, in which authority remains invested in males.

Although the episode in Radegone contains strong disapproval of Elizabeth and her reign, it is also full of praise for her. This contradiction is available within the poem because Spenserian allegory works on a number of levels. The historical allegory of the Radegone sections of Book V celebrates the queen's mastery of her archrival, Mary Queen of Scots. As a queen, Mary undoubtedly shared some of the same qualities as Elizabeth; hence, it is appropriate that Radigund mirrors aspects of Belphoebe and Britomart. It is nonetheless fitting that Mary be portrayed as an Amazon, not only because of her beauty, which Spenser acknowledges (O'Connell 140), but also because she was a threat to the security of Elizabeth's crown and realm: Mary had a strong claim to the English throne; had once been styled the rightful queen of England; and became a focus, even while a prisoner in England, for unrest and outright rebellion, usually among Catholics (Somerset 203-04, 235-36, 396-97, 427-30). Moreover, Mary's family contained formidable, Amazon-like women, including her mother, Mary of Guise, and her first mother-in-law, Catherine de Medici, both of whom had tremendous political power. Mary's chaotic reign in Scotland reflects the turbulence in Radegone.[17] Eventually, the Tudor queen was forced

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[17]It would be fallacious to suggest that Spenser represented Mary as an Amazon to impugn her sexual appetites:

to execute the Queen of Scots when Mary was implicated in a plot against Elizabeth's life. Mary, like Radigund, was beheaded. This historical reading is more advantageous for Elizabeth because it does not erase her political authority. Because the text follows the sequence of the Scottish succession, which moved from female to male rule when Mary abdicated in favour of her son, James, Britomart's renunciation of power seems perfectly reasonable. The restoration of patriarchy in Scotland did not affect Elizabeth's status in her own country, just as Britomart's actions cannot affect her position within her father's kingdom. In the context of the historical allegory, Elizabeth, like Britomart, deserves to be considered a goddess by ridding the land of the threat of anarchy and by securing her kingdom against the menace of one who, like Radigund, could usurp another's power.

After the defeat of Radigund, Britomart disappears from the text. The reader is left with the lasting impression that she is the one woman in Faerie Land who gets everything right: she is the uncrowned Gloriana who concedes power to a man, the Belphoebe who reciprocates the love of a devoted swain, the Amoret who can rescue

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> In early youth she naturally paid little attention to such questions [on the subject of sex], and during the period of her first widowhood also was remarkable for the discretion with which she conducted herself. Her disastrous marriage to Darnley, springing from physical attraction, gave her every reason to adopt an extremely suspicious attitude towards passion and its consequences. If, despite all these considerations, she experienced some genuine fulfilment in Bothwell's embraces, it is remarkable how little effort she made to keep in touch with her husband, once she was in captivity. . . .Another interesting aspect of her captivity is that she made absolutely no attempt to quench any desires of the flesh, if indeed she felt them, during the whole nineteen years. . . .[F]rom the age of twenty-five onwards, the queen led a life of total chastity. (Fraser, *Mary* 381)

herself and others. In one body, she is the perfect knight and the perfect, conventional woman, one who can see her betrothed in danger and save him, and then see him off on further adventures in which she can have no part. Spenser uses this ideal to centre his criticism of Elizabeth, who can resemble many aspects of Britomart's perfection, but who can never match her dual excellences. Both females achieve personal power inaccessible to other women, but with Britomart, Spenser also reestablishes marriage and procreation as normative monarchical imperatives. He manipulates sovereign, counterheterosexual chastity so that it moves beyond bodily integrity to encompass integrity in marriage; he reconfigures gynaecocracy so that it becomes acquiescent to the demands of patriarchal practice. Britomart highlights those features of Elizabeth's rule that provoked the most uneasiness: the queen could never fulfil the roles of a male/king or of a traditional female.

5

"Left in the victors powre, like vassall bond": The Queen and the Triumph of Patriarchy

The story of Amoret is an exercise in revision. The 1596 version of *The Faerie Queene* excises the original ending of Book III, the reconciliation of the beleaguered Amoret and Scudamour; the closure provided by the hermaphroditic embrace is erased in favour of the continuation of Amoret's narrative, and wandering, into Book IV.[1] Other features of the story are also changed. Book IV recasts the relationship of Amoret and Scudamour into a marriage; the moment of Busirane's capture of Amoret is modified in Book IV so that it is set at a specific event, the "bridale feast" (4. 1. 3. 3); and finally, Amoret's free choice of Scudamour is transformed into surrender by Scudamour's disclosure that he essentially kidnapped Amoret from the Temple of Venus. Change is indeed the hallmark of Amoret's story, for within it, Spenser attempts to reconfigure regal chastity (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 114, 118; "Of Chastity" 49-50) and female power. This permutation is achieved by subjecting the royal avatar Amoret to continual, and ultimately inescapable, male domination. This agenda, of course, is not unique to Amoret, but what distinguishes her treatment from that of the other representations of Elizabeth in the poem is the unremitting brutality that she experiences. As a result, the element of queen-worship is particularly muted, although Spenser is too clever and too self-serving to omit

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[1]Some narrative closure was probably considered essential for the 1590 edition, which ended with Book III. However, this closure was no longer necessary with the expansion of *The Faerie Queene* into six books in 1596.

it altogether.

Like Britomart, Amoret is never identified as a figure of Elizabeth and her victimization, which is rarely relieved, appears to have little correspondence with the strong, independent Tudor queen. Undoubtedly, Spenser was aware of the danger of associating his queen with a woman who is serially exploited by men, who is reticent, who is constantly desirous of rescue, and who, moreover, is married.[2] The fictive and historical ladies, however, have more in common than a litany of their differences would suggest, although it would be rather simplistic to equate Amoret as wife of Scudamour with Elizabeth in her guise as spouse of England. It is true, though, that Amoret comes upon her status as royal avatar partly through her association with her twin, Belphoebe, who is recognized in both the "Letter to Raleigh" and the epic as a representation of Elizabeth (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 123; "Of Chastity" 62):

> These two were twinnes, and twixt them two did share
> The heritage of all celestiall grace.
> That all the rest it seem'd they robbed bare
> Of bountie, and of beautie, and all vertues rare. (3. 6. 4. 6-9)

By itself, this argument is not entirely satisfactory because it provides only the most tenuous of links between the queen and Amoret, and downplays the real similitudes that

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[2]Cain asserts that "Spenser depreciates Amoret slightly in favor of Belphoebe" (102) and that "it appears that some shift of emphasis during the poem's evolution has played down Amoret's encomiastic role" (102). He attributes the situation to historical forces. If parts of Book III were written during the time of Alençon's "courtship" of Elizabeth, then the necessity of a married avatar was pressing. When it became clear, however, that marriage was an improbability, it made "desirable the attenuation of Amoret as a type of the married queen" (102).

exist between them. The complicated mix of miracle and violation that marks the conception and birth of Amoret, which indicate both her exceptionality and, in some ways, her destiny, echo some of the circumstances in Elizabeth's early life. Additionally, Amoret's childhood and young womanhood, like those of the queen, are punctuated by her transference from one "mother" to another. Her kidnapping, the first of many, from her biological mother Chrysogone brings her under the influence of Venus, who, in turn, places her in the care of Psyche, an inhabitant of the Garden of Adonis:

> Hither great *Venus* brought this infant faire,
> The younger daughter of *Chrysogonee*,
> And vnto *Psyche* with great trust and care
> Committed her, yfostered to bee,
> And trained vp in true feminitee. . . . (3. 6. 51. 1-5)

In Book IV, which revises elements of the previous book's narrative of Amoret, she is again associated with Venus. She appears as one of a "beuie of fayre damzels" (4. 10. 48. 8) in the goddess's temple. It is in this setting that Amoret, like other mirrors of the queen, is likened to the sun, a device associated with Elizabeth's iconography:

> Like to the Morne, when first her shyning face
> Hath to the gloomy world it selfe bewray'd,
> The same was fayrest *Amoret* in place,
> Shyning with beauties light, and heauenly vertues grace. (4. 10. 52. 6-9)

The radiance of the dawn flatters Amoret and the queen for whom she is a figure.

Both Amoret and Elizabeth are exemplars of chastity. In fact, although Amoret is separated from the husband for whom she has to preserve her chastity and is abused by men to whom she does not belong, she is never judged to be unchaste. Significantly, the

narrator acknowledges that Busirane's "sinfull lust" (4. 1. 4. 2) has not tainted her purity. Her chaste state is, of course, partly due to the magical healing of her physical wounds, injuries which are described in frankly sexual terms (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 129-30):

> The cruell steele, which thrild her dying hart,
> Fell softly forth, as of his owne accord,
> And the wyde wound, which lately did dispart
> Her bleeding brest, and riuen bowels gor'd,
> Was closed vp, as it had not bene bor'd,
> And euery part to safety full sound,
> As she were neuer hurt, was soone restor'd:
> Tho when she felt her selfe to be vnbound,
> And perfect hole, prostrate she fell vnto the ground. (3. 12. 38)[3]

Later events also test Amoret's chastity, but she is steadfast. Tension arises because she knows that she owes a debt of gratitude to the knights who have rescued her; they could demand certain favours from her as recompense for their efforts.[4] For example, she knows that the deliverance that Britomart has accomplished in the House of Busirane is deserving of "Her loue, her seruice, and all her vtmost wealth" (4. 1. 6. 4), just as she subsequently recognizes that Arthur may demand her body in exchange for the service he has done her:

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[3]The phrase "perfect hole" allows for the double possibility that Amoret has been restored to her former (virgin) state and that, paradoxically, she continues to bear the wounds of her victimization. This instability is available to the reader because the word "hole" connotes "wholeness" while denoting "perforation." Claudia M. Champagne, too, notices the pun, but she connects the phrase with both Amoret and Britomart (111).

[4]Dorothy Stephens recognizes that "Amoret acts in dutiful accordance with cultural expectations pressing upon her from two sides: she should be resolutely self-contained; she should be pliantly grateful" (529). This double female imperative is just one of the "glitches in the patriarchal system" (529).

Feare of her safety did her not constraine,
For well she wist now in a mighty hond,
Her person late in perill, did remaine,
Who able was all daungers to withstond.
But now in feare of shame she more did stond,
Seeing her selfe all soly succourlesse,
Left in the victors powre, like vassall bond;
Whose will her weakenesse could no way represse,
In case his burning lust should breake into excesse. (4. 9. 18)

In both instances, Amoret determines to follow the dictates of her honour and remain "profest a virgine wife" (4. 1. 6. 9). Her resolve is obviously made easier by the fact that neither rescuer is sexually interested in her: Britomart, as a heterosexual woman, does not want sexual repayment from Amoret; neither does the Briton Prince, who is searching for his own mate, Gloriana. The superiority of Amoret's chastity is confirmed by her ability to wear "the girdle of faire *Florimell*" (4. 5. 2. 5), a means of proving "chast loue, / And wiuehood true . . ." (4. 5. 3. 1-2):

Till that at last the gentle *Amoret*
Likewise assayd, to proue that girdles powre;
And hauing it about her middle set,
Did find it fit, withouten breach or let. (4. 5. 19. 2-5)

While it is a compliment to have such a "noble Paragone" (3. 6. 52. 2) associated with Elizabeth, Amoret's chastity is undeniably opposed to the queen's perpetual virginity. The text makes evident that Amoret's virginity is of the temporary sort that will terminate with a love relationship. Her upbringing has established this course for her. She has been raised within the fecund precincts of the Garden of Adonis, a place where Venus enjoys "Her deare *Adonis* ioyous company" (3. 6. 46. 2). The sexual model presented by the

goddess is reinforced by Amoret's fosterage with Psyche, the love of Cupid. Psyche becomes Amoret's teacher in the ways of "feminitee":

> Who no lesse carefully her tendered,
> Then her owne daughter *Pleasure*, to whom shee
> Made her companion, and her lessoned
> In all the lore of loue, and goodly womanhead. (3. 6. 51. 6-9)

For a time, Amoret serves in the Temple of Venus. Her companions are figures of the essential virtues of the normative, chaste female--Womanhood, Shamefastenesse, Cherefulnesse, Modestie, Curtesie, Silence, and Obedience--and not the radical chastity of the virgin queen.

Through Amoret, Spenser reinvents regal chastity so that it becomes normative; this reconfiguration involves returning chastity to male regulation. The power to restrict what was perceived as female immorality is inherent in Scudamour's assertion that *he* is the reason that Amoret will not succumb to the evil magician Busirane:

> My Lady and my loue is cruelly pend
> In dolefull darkenesse from the vew of day,
> Whilest deadly torments do her chast brest rend,
> And the sharpe steele doth riue her hart in tway,
> All for she *Scudamore* will not denay.
> Yet thou vile man, vile *Scudamore* art sound,
> Ne canst her ayde, ne canst her foe dismay;
> Vnworthy wretch to tread vpon the ground,
> For whom so faire a Lady feeles so sore a wound. (3. 11. 11)

Monitoring female chastity can only be facilitated by possession, and in Book IV Amoret's chaste body becomes Scudamour's property when their relationship is recast into a marital alliance. Her commensurate status as a commodity in the marriage economy (Cavanagh

76, 79, 98-99; Goldberg 130-32) is supported by the narrator's pronouncement that "*Scudamour* her bought / In perilous fight . . ." (4. 1. 2. 1-2). Scudamour advances this designation of Amoret-as-possession when he tells the story of the "aduenture, which [he] did assay / For that faire Ladies loue . . ." (4. 9. 40. 8-9). His language is unmistakably that of the marketplace (Goldberg 131), with frequent references to victory in battle and to the value of his conquest:

> Long were to tell the trauell and longe toile,
> Through which this shield of love I late haue wonne,
> And purchased this peerelesse beauties spoil,
> That harder may be ended, then begonne.
> But since ye so desire, your will be donne.
> Then harke ye gentle knights and Ladies free,
> My hard mishaps, that ye may learne to shonne;
> For though sweet loue to conquer glorious bee,
> Yet is the paine thereof much greater then the fee. (4. 10. 3)

The triumphant Scudamour recognizes the truth: a woman's body is a commodity, a spoil discussed in the same terms as the shield the victor owns. This typically masculine view of female chastity is totally opposed to, and seeks to proscribe, the characteristic self-containment and power of the queen's virginal chastity.

But Amoret and Scudamour are separated for much of the narrative, so Spenser must use methods other than Amoret's marriage, which positions her as her husband's chattel, for redefining queenly chastity. He resorts to violence. Frye's exegesis of Book III foregrounds the meaning of the brutality practised by men upon this royal avatar: "violence . . . results from the conflict between Spenser's insistence on chastity defined as male possession of the female body and the counterheterosexual chastity of Spenser's

audience and patron, Queen Elizabeth I" ("Of Chastity" 49). For Amoret, the misogynistic violence of Book III's House of Busirane episode begins a pattern of abduction, captivity, and rape that extends into Book IV's tales of the Cave of Lust and its aftermath, and the Temple of Venus. Her treatment reinforces her powerlessness and distinguishes her chastity, which has no associations with either autonomy or authority, from that of Elizabeth. Spenser subjects Amoret to the violent actions of a series of men, including her husband; she passes from one male to another in a chain of fear and brutality. Although she belongs to Scudamour, this transferral of her person emphasizes her vulnerability and situates her firmly as an object in the male-controlled exchange economy (Cavanagh 99). Her commodification and victimization are amplified by constant references to her situation as a spoil and a vassal. The conflation of violence and possession (albeit temporary ownership in several instances), of male domination and female vulnerability, directly assails the concept of a strong, self-referential chastity that is linked irrevocably to female control and female majesty.

In the poem, the first violent incident that involves Amoret is her kidnapping and torture by Busirane.[5] In Book IV, Spenser places the abduction immediately following her marriage to Scudamour:

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[5]Cavanagh details the disturbing tendency within criticism of *The Faerie Queene* to blame the victim for the violence that is committed against her (2, 174n). Champagne exemplifies this trend. She believes that Amoret has succumbed to a kind of psychological disorder: "the House of Busyrane, the Masque of Cupid, Amoret's torture, and Busyrane himself, are the creations not of the male imagination but of what Spenser calls 'phantasies / In wauering wemens wit' (III.xii.26.3-4)" (107).

> For that same vile Enchauntour *Busyran*,
> The very selfe same day that she was wedded,
> Amidst the bridale feast, whilest euery man
> Surcharg'd with wine, were heedlesse and ill hedded,
> All bent to mirth before the bride was bedded,
> Brought in that mask of loue which late was showen:
> And there the Ladie ill of friends bestedded,
> By way of sport, as oft in maskes is knowen,
> Conueyed quite away to liuing wight vnknowen. (4. 1. 3)

Busirane's ability to capture Amoret emphasizes not only her utter defenselessness, but also her inability to control the possession of her own body (Cavanagh 104; Frye, *Elizabeth I* 124, 135). Busirane wants Amoret, so he steals her; she is entirely helpless before his masculine--and criminal--power. Amoret's abduction directly subverts regal chastity, which lends the queen an independence from male interference and an ownership of her own body: "Captivity provides a paradigm of control at once temporal and physical for enforcing an entire matrix of approved female behavior, including passivity, silence, modesty, and consignment to a world hidden from the public eye" (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 135).

In spite of his devotion, Scudamour is unable to rescue Amoret; he cannot penetrate the flames that shield the entrance to the House of Busirane.[6] But Britomart can and does. Upon entering the magician's lair, the Knight of Chastity views the decorations

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[6]Scudamour's inability to rescue his lady highlights a definite lack in the knight. Certainly, he cannot compare to the virtuous perfection of Britomart. Indeed, his actions in Book IV, which chronologically occur before the episode in the House of Busirane, echo disturbingly those of the evil Busirane and Lust (Craig 15-20). However, reading the incident without recourse to events in the subsequent book shows that, even at this stage, "Scudamour, if he hasn't done anything particularly wrong, hasn't done anything particularly right either" (Craig 18).

of the house, many of which feature male domination of the female and the machinations--or metamorphoses--he undertakes to gain possession of her (chaste) body (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 126; "Of Chastity" 63). The disturbing elements of the tapestries and other household ornaments set the tone for the events that follow: the Masque of Cupid and the revelation of the nature of Amoret's bondage.

The Amoret of the masque is inextricably connected to, yet separate from, the "authentic" Amoret of the poem.[7] The torture experienced by the figure of Amoret in the pageant is paradigmatic of the harsh treatment, inflicted by various men, that is endured by her counterpart. Her appearance is preceded by the arrival of Ease and six pairs of masquers; she emerges from the inner room accompanied by "two grysie villeins, th'one *Despight*, / The other cleped *Cruelty* by name" (3. 12. 19. 2-3). Her state is horrific:

> Her brest all naked, as net iuory,
> Without adorne of gold or siluer bright,
> Wherewith the Craftesman wonts it beautify,
> Of her dew honour was despoyled quight,
> And a wide wound therein (O ruefull sight)
> Entrenched deepe with knife accursed keene,

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[7]That the Amoret of the masque is simultaneously able to be and not to be the "real" Amoret is a conundrum that can be explained by referring to the often contradictory evidence provided by the poem. Clearly, the "Amorets" share one bodily appearance and certain elements of their torture is similar. However, Britomart proves, by penetrating the inner room, that the masquers are manifestations of Busirane's imagination: "She cast her eies, to see what was become / Of all those persons, which she saw without: / But lo they streight were vanisht all . . ." (3. 12. 30. 2-4). The magician has created the characters from his art: therefore, he is able to invent, through his enchantments, an Amoret who can offer her heart. The "real" Amoret is not so susceptible: "Yet thousand charmes could not her stedfast heart remoue" (3. 12. 31. 9). See Frye, *Elizabeth I* 126-28; "Of Chastity" 63-64.

Yet freshly bleeding forth her fainting spright,
(The worke of cruell hand) was to be seene,
That dyde in sanguine red her skin all snowy cleene.

At that wide orifice her trembling hart
Was drawn forth, and in siluer basin layd,
Quite through transfixed with a deadly dart,
And in her bloud yet steeming fresh embayd. . . . (3. 12. 20, 3. 12. 21. 1-4)

The Amoret of the masque bears the signs of patriarchal oppression on her own flesh. Furthermore, this persecution becomes intensified because she is a figure who has been wounded *and* raped, although the description never details explicitly a sexual violation (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 128-131; "Of Chastity" 49-51, 63-4).[8] Significantly, however, the inscription is there: her "wide wound," also tellingly called "that wide orifice," has been incised by a phallic knife; her "hart," a word which glances at the genital core of a female body, has been pierced by a "dart."

When Britomart finally enters Busirane's "inner sanctum," she finds the helpless Amoret secured to a pillar:

both whose hands
Were bounden fast, that did her ill become,

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[8]The raping of Amoret does not alter her status as a virgin. This seeming paradox can be reconciled in a number of ways: the poem persists in designating Amoret as a chaste virgin; the wounds inflicted upon her by Busirane are healed, restoring her virginity to a "perfect hole"; and the text erases the rapes of Amoret that have been "penned" within its pages, a common design of literary representations of rape (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 129; Higgins and Silver 2) and one that facilitates the overlooking of the violations. This erasure is expedited by Britomart's unawareness of the sexual danger posed by the magician and the narrator's failure to acknowledge that such sexual violence has occurred, a fiction maintained even while the violations of Amoret are minutely and graphically described (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 128-131).

And her small wast girt round with yron bands,
Vnto a brasen pillour, by the which she stands. (3. 12. 30. 6-9)

The author of Amoret's torture is Busirane:

And her before the vile Enchaunter sate,
Figuring straunge characters of his art,
With liuing bloud he those characters wrate,
Dreadfully dropping from her dying hart,
Seeming transfixed with a cruell dart,
And all perforce to make her him to loue.
Ah who can loue the worker of her smart?
A thousand charmes he formerly did proue;
Yet thousand charmes could not her steadfast heart remoue. (3. 12. 31)

The Amoret who is rescued by Britomart is, like her analogue in the procession, a double victim of Busirane: her body has been cut by him, and this wound contains the encrypted traces of her rape. Amoret is bound to an undeniably phallic symbol, the pillar (Hamilton 418n). The violence of rape enforces patriarchal hierarchy; therefore, the violation of Amoret becomes a symbolic assault on Spenser's female monarch, whose unassailable chastity was one of the strategies that allowed her to retain her hold on power. By making Amoret's body "patriarchal territory," to use Stallybrass's phrase, the poet is reconstructing the queen's chastity so that it eliminates her ownership of her body; by returning the body of a representation of Elizabeth to the power of a male creator, Spenser places Elizabeth's female monarchy within his own poetic possession. Although Amoret does not succumb to Busirane's "overtures" of love, which are inescapably brutal and oppressive, and offer him her heart, his imprinting of his proprietorship upon her flesh substitutes patriarchal suzerainty for Elizabeth's chaste self-sufficiency.

It is meaningful that Busirane is a writer, although his ink and his compositions are abhorrent to his virtuous audience. His writing connects him implicitly with Spenser, and both want to constrain aspects of the feminine, particularly chastity, within the confines of literary creation (Frye, *Elizabeth I* 132-33; "Of Chastity" 69-70). Their discourses attempt to manipulate women who are the subjects of the writer's art: Busirane wants to make Amoret love him; Spenser pursues the rewards that only Elizabeth can confer. But neither poet can approach "his" lady as a suppliant because their desire for approbation is balanced by a corresponding will to power What they are seeking, more than anything else, is a female recognition of their own masculine supremacy and the authority to interpret poetically Amoret and Elizabeth. Their "scripts" try to wrest autonomous representation from the women and to compromise regal chastity: Spenser wants to substitute normative chastity for the radical chastity of Elizabeth; Busirane wishes to terminate Amoret's chastity, which manifests itself in her unwavering devotion to Scudamour, and supplant the knight in her affections, through the expeditious use of spells and other sources of enchantment.

But the magician does not only resemble Spenser; he is also linked to the hideous figure of Lust, who kidnaps the hapless Amoret when she wanders from the custody of the sleeping Britomart.[9] At first glance, there seems to be little that the refined, artistic

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[9]Stephens argues convincingly that Amoret and Britomart must become separated at this point in the narrative because the Knight of Chastity is wholly consumed with her feelings for Artegall: "There is no room among the living for this 'true love' [Amoret] and Artegall, too" (536).

Busirane has in common with the cannibalistic "caveman," but it is undeniable that "Lust is Busyrane reduced to lowest terms . . ." (Craig 20). Lust mirrors the actions and aims of the evil enchanter; like the more sophisticated Busirane, he imprisons Amoret and imperils her chastity. Aemylia, Amoret's companion in captivity, relates the extent of their endangerment to her innocent comrade:

> This dismall day hath thee a caytiue made,
> And vassall to the vilest wretch aliue,
> Whose cursed vsage and vngodly trade
> The heauens abhorre, and into darknesse driue.
> For on the spoile of women he doth liue,
> Whose bodies chast, when euer in his powre
> He may them catch, vnable to gainestriue,
> He with his shamefull lust doth first deflowre,
> And afterwards themselues doth cruelly deuoure. (4. 7. 12)

Although he does not mask the threat of rape with platitudes of love, Lust owns Amoret's body: she is a "spoile" of his "trade." His possession of women is total; he wins his property through the theft of unwilling and unprotected females, and his title is strengthened by his right to use and dispose of his captives as he desires. Although Amoret is shielded from rape and death by the intervention of a fellow prisoner, the old woman who "supplide his bestiall desire" (4. 7. 19. 9), and the rescue undertaken by Belphoebe and Timias, her internment by and vulnerability to Lust, her *de facto* owner, reconfigures queenly chastity. The episode in the Cave of Lust renders chastity, which comes under male power, normative. Thus, the abduction coupled with the double threat of rape and murder are Spenser's attempts to contain the militancy of Elizabeth's individualistic conception of chastity.

The fight that leads to the defeat of Lust proves again that Amoret's worth to men lies within the owner-possession dyad. Even though he is being besieged by the "gentle Squire" (4. 7. 24. 3), Timias, Lust will not relinquish his property: "Yet will he not the lovely spoile downe lay, / But with his craggy club in his right hand, / Defends him selfe, and saues his gotten pray" (4. 7. 25. 5-7). Indeed, in the battle, Amoret's body is useful as a replacement for an object; ironically, she, the monster's virginal victim, is transformed into the shield of Lust:

> Thereto the villaine vsed craft in fight;
> For euer when the Squire his iavelin shooke,
> He held the Lady forth before him right,
> And with her body, as a buckler, broke
> The puissance of his intended stroke.
> And if it chaunst, (as needs it must in fight)
> Whilest he on him was greedy to be wroke,
> That any little blow on her did light,
> Then would he laugh aloud, and gather great delight. (4. 7. 26)

The objectification of Amoret throughout this scene is disturbing, yet it serves the purpose of returning female chastity to the authority of men and of negating entirely the possibility of the female autonomy of Elizabeth. The redefinition of queenly chastity does not end with Amoret's rescue by the virtuous characters of Timias and Belphoebe. The reconfiguration continues with Amoret's unceasing victimization; imminent deliverance from peril does not free her body from the unwanted sexual attentions of men. Her wounding by Timias, which also harms Lust and causes a "streame of coleblacke bloud" (4. 7. 27. 8) to fall from his body onto her clothes, intimates a sexual encounter (Hamilton 477n). The presence of carnality seems to be confirmed by Belphoebe's reaction to

Timias's care of Amoret; she regards her twin as the object of Timias's lust. Belphoebe interprets his solicitude as salacious, viewing his "kissing" and "handling" of Amoret's body as an outrage, as irrefutably unchaste. Such is the strength of Belphoebe's belief that she is prepared to kill the pair with the same arrow she used to destroy Lust:

> Which when she saw, with sodaine glauncing eye,
> Her noble heart with sight thereof was fild
> With deepe disdaine, and great indignity,
> That in her wrath she thought them both haue thrild,
> With that selfe arrow, which the Carle had kild:
> Yet held her wrathfull hand from vengeance sore. . . (4. 7. 36. 1-6)

Although Amoret is quickly abandoned by her erstwhile doctor in favour of her twin and her chastity remains unsullied, the fact that she has appeared as the object of male sexual intent and interest serves to activate Spenser's definition of chastity, which, as it is procreative in nature, must have a definite sexual component.

Amoret is not left alone for very long, for she eventually is offered the protection of Arthur. Although "cause of feare sure had she none at all / Of him, who goodly learned had of yore / The course of loose affection to forestall . . ." (4. 9. 19. 1-3), she is aware and frightened of the threat that he, as a man, poses to her chastity:

> And taking leaue of all, with him did beare
> Faire *Amoret*, whom Fortune by bequest
> Had left in his protection whileare,
> Exchanged out of one into an other feare. (4. 9. 17. 6-9)

That Amoret has nothing to fear from the Prince's "burning lust" is less important than her *belief* that she stands in peril. Her conviction that she is "Left in the victors powre, like vassal bond" conforms to normative constructions of chastity, in which the woman

occupies a weakened position and is vulnerable to masculine control. The threat of male encroachment on a helpless, chaste female is another attempt by Spenser to undermine the inviolate chastity of the queen.

The conclusion of Arthur's protection of Amoret corresponds with one of the most curious incidents in *The Faerie Queene*: the unacknowledged reunion of Amoret and Scudamour. Husband and wife are finally in the same place at the same time, yet there is no mention that their long and rigorous separation is at an end. Certainly, this "non-event" is one of the discontinuities of the text, but it remains a significant episode in Spenser's reevaluation of regal chastity. The reunion reinforces the sense of Amoret's subjugation and her silence. She is intrinsically irrelevant as a woman, as a wife. Her importance to Scudamour rests in being the subject of his discourse to other knights. Scudamour "doth his conquest tell, / Of vertuous Amoret . . ." (4. 10. Argument. 1-2), and his tale supports Cavanagh's view that the "emphasis upon narrative rather than physical sex suggests again that male characters are most interested in sexual alliances because of the stories they create" (101). Scudamour shows his dominance by co-opting her story, a deed that functions as a kind of violation. His is the voice that is heard, and his re-creation of events leaves the reader to speculate on the nature of the story she would tell, if given the opportunity (Cavanagh 99). She is valuable only as a figure in the story he fashions (Higgins and Silver 4). Furthermore, the knights' storytelling fosters not marital ties, which include Amoret, but the creation of "homosocial bonds between virtuous men . . ." (Cavanagh 101). Consequently, Scudamour's story strengthens male power by giving to

him the task of interpreting, and even ventriloquizing, Amoret and of forging male friendships at the expense of heterosexual relationships.[10] Scudamour's narrative makes Amoret superfluous, and so, being unnecessary, she disappears:

> But in the (Hegelian) schema of recognition, there is no place for the other, for an equal other, for a whole and living woman. She must recognize and recuntnize (sic) the male partner, and in the time it takes to do this, she must disappear, leaving him to gain Imaginary profit, to win Imaginary victory. (Cixous 79)

In another of the many mirrorings of the poem, Scudamour's interpretation of Amoret reflects Spenser's reinterpretation of Elizabeth. The telling of Scudamour's narrative compromises the conceptualization of queenly chastity, which countenances neither female silence nor female impotence before male (authorial) force. The disappearance of Amoret also parallels the curious absence of Elizabeth within *The Faerie Queene*. Elizabeth-as-Elizabeth is never acknowledged in the text; instead, she is represented by a number of shadows. She becomes a figure in a male text as completely as Amoret and Gloriana are figures in "their" knights' stories; all are narrative pawns, subject to male "author"ity.

Amoret is also important to her husband as a suitable and precious object of a quest--he speaks of "the fame of this renowmed prise" (4. 10. 4. 1)--and this quality is the emphasis of the story which he tells to the assembled company. His language not only assigns a value to his wife, but reflects the words attached to her in the episodes which

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[10]Scudamour's tale of conquest over Amoret mirrors elements in Arthur's account of the dream with Gloriana (Cavanagh 99). The scene also has obvious parallele with Arthur and Guyon's discussion of Gloriana. Notably, Arthur is present for all these sessions, including Scudamour's storytelling.

center on the House of Busirane and the Cave of Lust. Scudamour relates that "no intreatie would forgoe so glorious spoyle" (4. 10. 55. 9). The Argument of Book III, canto xi, which introduces the subject of the House of Busirane, notes that Amoret is "Loues spoyles." She is also designated as plunder, as a "louely spoile," during her encounter with Lust. The connection of the ostensibly virtuous Scudamour with two evil characters helps the reader to restore the aspect of violation to the narrative of Scudamour's "victory" at the Temple of Venus (Cavanagh 96, 100-01; Craig 15-20); it facilitates the excavation of rape and kidnapping in the scene. Although he is associated with the morally upright characters of Amoret, Britomart, Artegall, and Arthur, Scudamour shares many characteristics with Busirane and Lust. More unsettling than the curious verbal parallels that link the knight to the crimes of Busirane and Lust is the fact that both the magician and Amoret's mate seek to control her through love. Busirane uses magic to secure her love, but his actions convey only torture. Scudamour believes that his wife loves him; he tells Britomart that Amoret is unable to love Busirane because her devotion "Once to me yold, not to be yold againe" (3. 11. 17. 4). Love, for him, seems an effective means of controlling her responses to other males; it binds her to him alone. Moreover, male domination of Amoret extends into expropriating interpretation of events from her, through Busirane's masque and Scudamour's narrative. One of the purposes of Scudamour's storytelling is to construct bonds with principled men; it also proves that he is closer to evil men than the poem actually acknowledges. As a result, his actions must be appraised according to the models set by Busirane and Lust.

It is difficult to consider Scudamour's seizure of Amoret as honourable or acceptable because the "mode of achievement becomes hard to distinguish from the 'villanie' against which the knight supposedly defends the lady" (Craig 19). He is just another version of the violence represented by Busirane and Lust; like them, he uses force against Amoret, although the text never concedes that the act that Scudamour commits in the Temple of Venus is a rape (Cavanagh 96). However,

> rereading rape involves more than listening to silences; it requires restoring rape to the literal, to the body: restoring, that is, the violence--the physical, sexual violation. The insistence on taking rape literally often necessitates a conscious critical act of reading the violence and sexuality back into texts where it has been deflected, either by the text itself or by the critics: where it has been turned into a metaphor or a symbol or represented rhetorically as titillation, persuasion, ravishment, seduction, or desire (poetic, narrative, courtly, military). (Higgins and Silver 4)

Scudamour's treatment of his wife is evidence not of "persuasion" or "desire" or the kind of courtly love that a knight should feel for his lady (or his queen), but of rape. There is no definitive moment of physical violation in the abduction of Amoret by Scudamour, but it is there, suggested by a number of textual features. Scudamour is as much the sexual predator as the Cupid who adorns his shield, a Cupid brandishing the phallic devices of "his killing bow / And cruell shafts . . ." (4. 10. 55. 3-4). The knight's weapon of choice is the spear, an object that also has obvious phallic connotations. Scudamour uses this device to gain entry to the Temple, the home of Amoret and an undeniably female space, and this act is identifiable as a metaphor for rape. Bolstering this belief are the reactions of Scudamour and Amoret to the invasion of the Temple and the theft of one of Venus's

coterie. For a brief moment after he sees Amoret, it appears that Scudamour has some cognizance that what he is doing is wrong, although it is merely a momentary and easily allayed pang of conscience:

> Whom soone as I beheld, my hart gan throb,
> And wade in doubt, what best were to be donne:
> For sacrilege me seem'd the Church to rob,
> And folly seem'd to leaue the thing vndonne,
> Which with so strong attempt I had begonne.
> Tho shaking off all doubt and shamefast feare,
> Which Ladies loue I heard had neuer wonne
> Mongst men of worth, I to her stepped neare,
> And by the lilly hand her labour'd vp to reare. (4. 10. 53)

Amoret is not overcome by love at first sight. In fact, when Scudamour shows her the shield of Cupid, which functions as the ticket for the prize of Amoret, "At sight thereof she was with terror queld" (4. 10. 55. 5). Her actions prove that she is scared and unwilling, but her resistance, a key feature of rape (Higgins and Silver 4), is ignored:

> She often prayd, and often me besought,
> Sometime with tender teares to let her goe,
> Sometime with witching smyles: but yet for nought,
> That euer she to me could say or doe,
> Could she her wished freedome fro me wooe;
> But forth I led her through the Temple gate. . . . (4. 10. 57. 1-6)

The rape and abduction of Amoret by the man who professes to love her, a man who believes that her love is contingent on his winning her, has implications for the perpetual virginity of the queen. To oppose Elizabeth's conceptualization of her chastity as a solitary, independent virtue unconnected with marriage, Spenser sets the heterosexuality of the Amoret-Scudamour relationship. To the poet, regal chastity must

contain the possibility of procreation, as it has in the past, and combat the singularity and sterility of Elizabeth's virginity. That he contextualizes the meeting of this couple within such violent circumstances reaffirms the female body as a male possession, as accessible to male control. Amoret's aversion to leaving the Temple precincts with this unknown man, a kidnapper-rapist, is understandable, but it establishes the extent to which a chaste woman can be dominated by masculinity. The intensity of the cruelty of Scudamour--and of Busirane and Lust, too--is a way to make the domination complete.

In the narrative of Amoret, the triumph of patriarchal authority is so total that any manifestation of female power is quashed.[11] Female spaces, places in which women have established communities, are not impervious to male invasion. The Temple of Venus is one such setting. Another is the Cave of Lust. Although the cave is a prison and belongs within the masculine power of Lust, it is plainly a female space (Stephens 523-24, 537). Gilbert and Gubar accept the possibility of such a paradox; they believe that

> the womb-shaped cave is also the place of female power, the *umbilicus mundi*, one of the great antechambers of the mysteries of transformation. As herself a kind of cave, every woman might seem to have the cave's metaphorical power of annihilation. . . . At the same time, as herself a fated inhabitant of that earth-cave of immanence . . . , every woman might seem to have metaphorical access to the

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[11]Stephens articulates, too, the various signs of women's power in the text. Her conclusion, however, differs from mine:

> Busyrane misreads Amoret as someone susceptible to his rewriting. I would argue that Spenser counteracts Busyrane's misreading not so much by providing correct readings elsewhere in the poem as by testing the limits of women's power to resist standard definitions. In this way, *The Faerie Queene* puts itself in the delicate position of sympathizing with a type of feminine error that does not always benefit men. (540)

dark knowledge buried in caves. (95)

In the Cave of Lust, Amoret and Aemylia establish a friendship borne out of mutual peril and mutual fear. But they are not alone in the cave; an old woman is also imprisoned there, a woman to whom Aemylia seems indebted for satisfying Lust's attentions (Stephens 537):

> Through helpe (quoth she) of this old woman here
> I haue so done, as she to me hath showne.
> For euer when he burnt in lustfull fire,
> She in my stead supplide his bestiall desire. (4. 7. 19. 6-9)

This community of three is broken irrevocably by the arrival of Lust at the cave. Amoret flees the scene, and a rescue is undertaken by Belphoebe and Timias. When Belphoebe informs the two remaining captives of their freedom, the sense of female community is further shattered by the moral contrast of the victims (Stephens 537): Aemylia has retained her chastity; the old woman is considered a "leman fit for such a louer deare" (4. 7. 34. 5). Although Elizabeth did not live in an exclusively female community and so no one-to-one correlation can be made between her lifestyle and those experienced by the women in the Cave of Lust and the Temple of Venus, Spenser uses these spaces to circumscribe female power. Such power is illusory and ultimately subject to the hegemony of men.

Another casualty of masculine domination of women is female choice, an aspect of heterosexual relationships that Arthur considers of tremendous importance. He believes that to women "the world this franchise euer yeelded, / That of their loues choise they might freedom clame . . ." (4. 9. 37. 6-7). Amoret exercises this power in selecting

Scudamour over the other knights at Faerie Court:

> But she to none of them her loue did cast,
> Saue to the noble knight Sir *Scudamore*,
> To whom her louing hart she linked fast
> In faithfull loue, t'abide for euermore. . . . (3. 6. 53. 1-4)

But her choice is excised by the revision of her story in Book IV; her selection, a detail which emphasizes Amoret's active participation in the development of her relationship with Scudamour, is contradicted by her husband's version of the story. His later account casts Amoret as a victim of male domination, abused and reluctant. Elizabeth as queen clearly had the power to choose and to make decisions. By removing such elements from the narrative involving the royal avatar, Amoret, Spenser attempts to limit the independent power of the monarch.

The power that is associated with the exploits of Amoret's female rescuers is also attenuated. Certainly, their endeavours are worthy of praise and demonstrate both courage and skill in arms. However, the aura of independence and authority that their saving of Amoret confers on them is lessened when Britomart and Belphoebe, the two dominant figures of chastity, transfer their interest from Amoret to the pursuit of heterosexual relationships. Britomart and Amoret function as knight and lady within the chivalric society of Faerie Land, yet when Britomart and Artegall form a new couple, Amoret is summarily displaced (and misplaced).[12] Belphoebe is able to abandon her twin

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[12]Although Britomart and Amoret act as a couple, Stephens argues "that Britomart's tenacious refusal to 'forgoe' Amoret 'so light' bears only superficial resemblance to the male knights' attempts to keep hold of female property" (535).

to fate and the ministrations of Timias because of her jealous interpretation of the squire's care of Amoret. It is unfortunate and telling that Amoret becomes expendable when she interferes, albeit unknowingly, in the relationship of Belphoebe and Timias. At the moment of the desertion, the virgin huntress, like the queen, shows the inconsistency of her attitudes towards heterosexual relationships. On the one hand, she disdains involvement with a man; on the other, she evinces a decided interest in him. Spenser uses Britomart and Belphoebe to restore the primacy of heterosexual relationships at the expense of virginal chastity and female, self-sufficient power.[13]

The stories of the two most prominent complements of Elizabeth, Britomart and Belphoebe, intersect with the account of Amoret's "progress" through Faerie Land. Spenser uses these three women as modulations of the exceptional chastity and female power of the queen. Although he seeks the same end with his treatment of Amoret, the means he uses are far more brutal; the difference lies in the intensity of the violence she experiences and the inescapability of her subjugation to men. Spenser's agenda for this royal shadow is far more unbalanced than for Gloriana, Belphoebe, or Britomart: she endures more bodily violence than any other virtuous female in the poem; and there is little emphasis on praising the queen. Yet the entire narrative of Amoret, with its terror, threats, and brutality, gives honour to Elizabeth. It confirms the rightness of her preference for the celibate life. The perils of Amoret prove that Elizabeth was correct to

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[13]Of course, Timias's power is not strengthened by Belphoebe's actions. What is important is that *her* autonomous power is affected.

avoid marital entanglements, to elude those heterosexual relationships in which she would have to surrender body and power to a man. For Elizabeth, unlike Amoret, there is no triumph of patriarchy; instead, she retains voice, autonomy, and authority.

6

Conclusion

Queen Elizabeth I was an anomaly: she was an unmarried, female monarch who ruled a society that otherwise privileged men. Furthermore, the conflation of her royal power with virginity subverted traditional definitions of what it meant to be a chaste woman in sixteenth-century England. As a consequence, Elizabeth's person became the site of an iconographic competition which confronted those problematic features that resulted from the fusion of her princely authority and gender. Edmund Spenser, like many of her subjects, responded to the ambiguities that persistently complicated representations of the queen. Indeed, ambiguity became the guiding principle for his treatment of Elizabeth in *The Faerie Queene*.

Those involved in iconographic production reacted to Elizabeth on a continuum that placed hostility and worship as the two extremes. What is startling about Spenser is that his response *embraces* these extremes. It is irrefutable that he praises the queen: in the poem, he celebrates her majesty, wisdom, judgement, chastity, and dynasty. His queen-worship arises from two sources: firstly, he, like many others, probably felt genuine admiration for Elizabeth and her accomplishments; secondly, he wanted to attract her patronage for his literary endeavours, so praise became an appropriate part of his agenda. But the compliments are undermined by unease and tension. Within the poetic world of *The Faerie Queene*, he exposes both *his* anxieties and *her* flaws, and he further attempts to reconfigure those qualities of the queen that are so radical and so disturbing: her

singular female power and her self-referential, militant chastity. Raleigh obviously recognized this double programme functioning in *The Faerie Queene*. In fact, he inserted a kind of warning to Spenser in one of the Commendatory Verses:

> If thou hast beautie praysd, let her sole lookes diuine
> Iudge if ought therein be amis, and mend it by her eine.
> If Chastitie want ought, or Temperance her dew,
> Behold her Princely mind aright, and write thy Queene anew. (739)

There is much negativity in the shadows of Elizabeth in the text. Spenser has assiduously interpenetrated the discourse with expressions of sexuality, normative chastity, masculine power, comedy, blindness, and violence that work to criticize the queen and to reposition her fictively in a more normative role.

Within *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser is highly successful in (re)presenting Elizabeth. But has he affected the world that exists outside the boundaries of his text? Certainly, the poem acts as part of the iconographic dialogue that revolved around the figure of the queen. In addition, it evokes that spirit of critical reassessment that was integral to Elizabeth's iconography in the 1590s. Spenser, however, sought to have an impact on one reader in particular, the reader to whom the poem is addressed. Is he successful in this enterprise? The answer, rather appropriately, remains equivocal. Spenser was rewarded with an annuity but with none of the honours he felt he otherwise deserved. Although the queen in the poem can be manipulated to his will, the real Elizabeth remains remote, as distant from him as the Faerie Queene is from the pursuits of Arthur. Obviously, Elizabeth had to respond to the criticism and anxiety provoked by the

aesthetic images of the 1590s, but she failed to respond specifically and personally to Spenser's poetic power, beyond giving him money. Perhaps therein lies the greatest irony. The poet who reacted so completely to the paradox of his queen did not evoke a sustained and reciprocal reaction from her. She did not acknowledge, in any substantial way, either his influence or the influence of his poem.

Nevertheless, Spenser's poetic force is definitely felt. His very real power lies in his ability to influence the reading of the queen. If Elizabeth failed to react to her textual reflections, then others have done so. *They* have seen the contradictions inherent in Spenser's queen; *they* have responded.

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