FALSE CHARMS AND IDLE SHOWS:

A READING OF SPENSER'S *FAERIE QUEENE*, III.xi-xii.

by

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ABSTRACT

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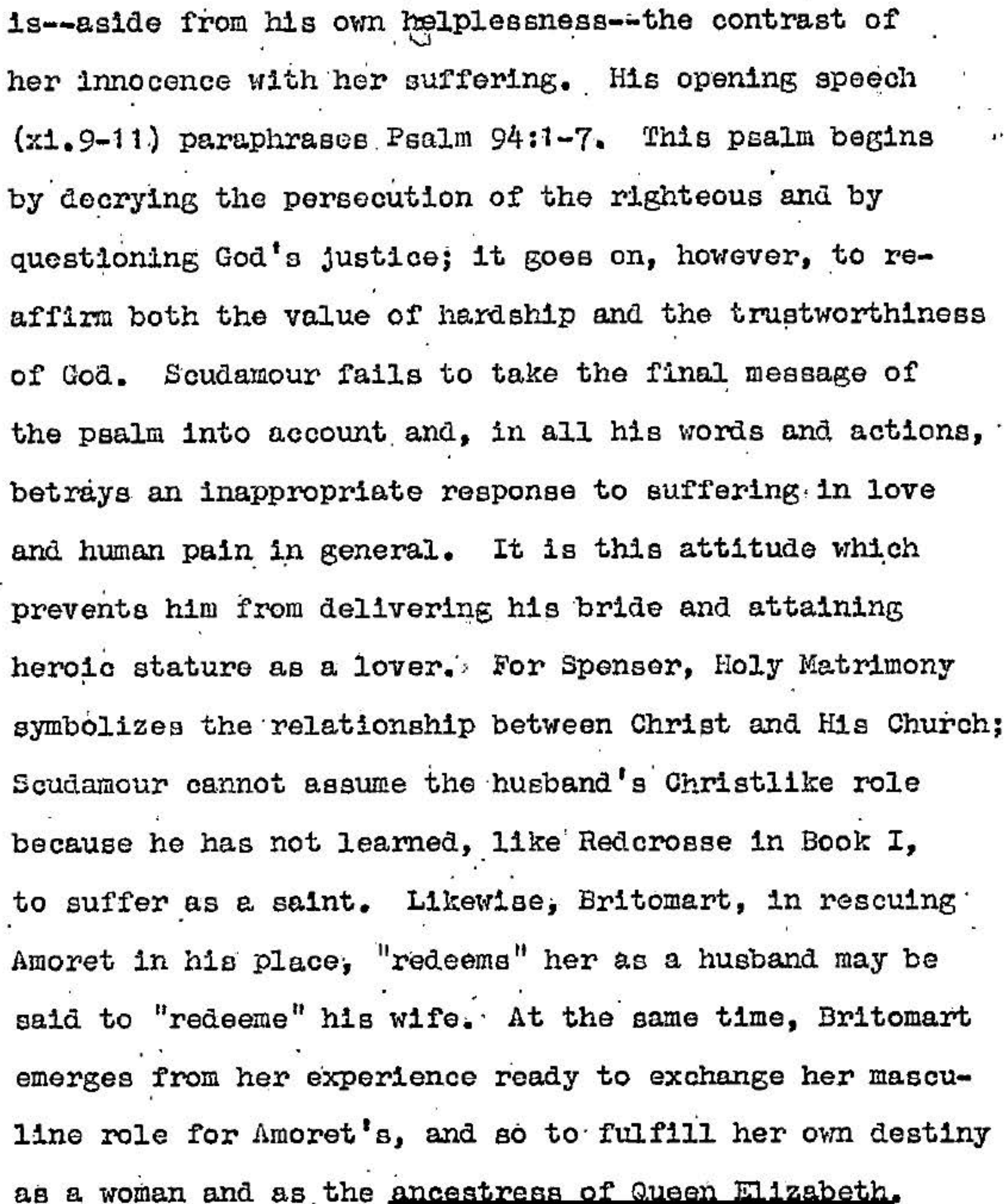
Spenser's portrayal of Amoret in the final episode of Book III of The Faerie Queene has long troubled critics of the scene. Spenser repeatedly praises Amoret for her fidelity, and she is described in canto vi as "th'ensample of true love alone." Yet her enchantment in the House of Busyrane, her placement in the Mask of Cupid, and her need of "redemption" by Britomart suggest that Amoret is the victim of her own unchastity. This contradiction has made it difficult to define the scene's significance and its relation to Book III as a whole, and has cast doubt on Spenser's control over his material.

Amoret's pierced and exposed heart is an image of the wound of love, and her portrayal must be considered in light of Spenser's teaching on the subject of that wound, as he develops it in the course of Book III. In this thesis his view of suffering in love is taken to be as follows: pain afflicts the chaste and unchaste alike, but for the latter it is both the test of virtue and the means of attaining it. Viewed thus, the contradiction outlined above emerges as the key to Busyrane's challenge and Britomart's victory in canto xii. Because all lovers

suffer, Busyrane is able to literalize Amoret's real though metaphoric wound, and by placing her in the misleading context of the mask, to make her love seem false. His intent is to convince Britomart, who herself feels Cupid's wound, that true love, since it suffers, is not true, and so to lead her to deny her own destiny as wife and mother. Britomart discovers his ruse and rescues Amoret because she knows the true significance of suffering in love.

In support of such a reading, several avenues of enquiry hitherto unexplored in earlier criticism of the final episode are pursued, and others suggested but not fully exploited in the work of previous commentators are followed up more extensively. The significance of Spenser's allusions in the canto xii to Petrarch's Triumphs is reconsidered, and a new explanation is provided for the number scheme in cantos xi and xii discovered by Alastair Fowler. Again, the Ovidian tapestries of the castle's first room are reinterpreted in light of the tradition of the Ovide moralisé.

Finally, and most importantly, a close study is made of Scudamour's dialogue with Britomart in canto xi--a passage which has never received adequate attention. For Scudamour, the chief problem raised by Amoret's dilemma



is--aside from his own helplessness--the contrast of her innocence with her suffering. His opening speech (xi.9-11) paraphrases Psalm 94:1-7. This psalm begins by decrying the persecution of the righteous and by questioning God's justice; it goes on, however, to re-affirm both the value of hardship and the trustworthiness of God. Scudamour fails to take the final message of the psalm into account and, in all his words and actions, betrays an inappropriate response to suffering in love and human pain in general. It is this attitude which prevents him from delivering his bride and attaining heroic stature as a lover. For Spenser, Holy Matrimony symbolizes the relationship between Christ and His Church; Scudamour cannot assume the husband's Christlike role because he has not learned, like Redcrosse in Book I, to suffer as a saint. Likewise, Britomart, in rescuing Amoret in his place, "redeems" her as a husband may be said to "redeeme" his wife. At the same time, Britomart emerges from her experience ready to exchange her masculine role for Amoret's, and so to fulfill her own destiny as a woman and as the ancestress of Queen Elizabeth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT p.ii-iv

Chapter One: The Problem p. 1

Part I. The Poem pp. 2-34

Part II. The Critics pp. 35-58

Chapter Two: Scudamour's Lament p. 59

I. Deus Ultionem pp. 60-74

II. Providence and Pain: The Face of Heroism in Book III pp. 75-91

III. Virtue's Might and Value's Confidence pp. 92-107

Chapter Three: False Charmes and Idle Shows pp. 108-163

Plates pp. 164-172

Notes pp. 173-189

Bibliography pp. 190-195

LIST OF PLATES

1. Triumph of Cupid. _I Trionfi_ (Italian, 15 c.). BM Add. 31843, fol. 215b.

2. Triumph of Cupid. _I Trionfi_ (Italian, 15 c). BM Add. 31843, fol. 186.

3. Triumph of Cupid. _I Trionfi_ (Venice, 15 c). Probably illuminated by Botticelli or Fra Lippo Lippi. BM Add. 38125, fol. 33b.

4. Triumph of Chastity. _I Trionfi_ (Italian, 15 c). BM Add. 31843, fol. 197b.

5. Triumph of Chastity. _I Trionfi_ (Venice, 15 c). Probably illuminated by Botticelli or Fra Lippo Lippi. BM Add. 38125, fol. 50.

6. Martyrdom of St. Agatha, "Queen Mary's Psalter," (East Anglian, 14 c). BM Royal 2 B VII, fol. 242.

7. Martyrdom of St. Catherine. "Queen Mary's Psalter," (East Anglian, 14 c). BM Royal 2 B VII, fol. 221.

8. Martyrdom of St. Christina. "Queen Mary's Psalter," (East Anglian, 14 c). BM Royal 2 B VII, fol. 221.

Chapter One: The Problem

I. The Poem

In the final episode of the third book of Spenser's Faerie Queene, Britomart, the book's titular heroine, rescues Amoret, the sister of Belphoebe and foster-daughter of Venus, from the hands of her tormenter, Busyrane. In its broad outlines, the gist of this story is obvious. Britomart's rescue of Amoret represents the victory of chastity over the enemies of true love, and her desire to reunite Amoret with her husband affirms the validity of marriage as a type of chastity. But when it comes to defining exactly what Britomart's triumph entails, and how her virtue is challenged by the House of Busyrane, the reader is on less certain ground. The answer to both questions depends on the view taken of Amoret and of her suffering, and in this matter, Spenser is less than helpful. On the one hand, Amoret seems to stand for the virtue which Busyrane is attacking; on the other, she seems to have succumbed to the vice he represents. Not only is Spenser's depiction of Amoret's situation open to two mutually contradictory interpretations, but it seems to demand them both.

We learn the facts about Amoret's plight from her husband, Scudamour. At the beginning of canto xi Britomart enters a forest and discovers the young knight weeping, his armour cast disconsolately aside. He explains his sorrow thus:

My lady and my love is cruelly pend
  In dolefull darkenesse from the view of day,
  Whilest deadly torments do her chast brest rend,
  And the sharpe steel doth rive her hart in tway,
  All for she Scudamore will not denay.

(xi.11.1-5)[1]

There he tormenteth her most terribly,
  And day and night afflicts with mortall paine,
  Because to yield him love she doth deny,
  Once to me yold, not to be yold againe:
  But yet by torture he would her constraine
  Love to conceivein her disdainfull brest;
  Till so she do, she must in doole remaine,
  Ne may by living meanes be thence relest:
What boots it then to plaine, that cannot be redrest?

(xi.17.1-9)

Scudamour is no match for Busyrane's enchantments; unable to retrieve his beloved, he accounts himself a failure as a lover and a knight. Having heard his story, Britomart comforts him, promises to help, and sets off with him to the nearby House of Busyrane. When they arrive, they find the castle guarded by a raging fire. After some hesitation, Britomart enters it. The flames part to let her pass, and she disappears into the house, leaving Scudamour, who is unable to follow, outside. Overcome by sorrow, impatience, and it seems, by envy, he throws himself to the ground, and there we leave him for a time.

Meanwhile Britomart makes her way into the ominously silent first room of the castle, its walls hung with tapestries depicting Cupid's victory over the Gods. At the far end of the room stands an altar to the God of Love, supporting

an image of him made "of massy gold, which with his own light shown." Passing through a doorway bearing the inscription "Be bold," Britomart enters a second room, its golden walls portraying Cupid's mastery of mankind. In one wall stands an iron door over which is written "Be not too bold." Unable to open the door or solve its riddle, Britomart draws aside and prepares to wait. Night falls, and so the canto ends.

When the twelfth and final canto begins, it is "the fourth hour of night," or ten o'clock. The house is shaken by a terrific storm and earthquake, and filled with a sulphurous odour that persists until midnight, at which time the iron door flies open and the Mask of Cupid enters, showing the God in triumph, attended by the ill effects of love. Amoret is displayed, bare-breasted, with a deep wound in her chest, bearing her heart on a dish. After circling the room three times, the mask departs through the same door, and Britomart resumes her vigil. When, at midnight on the second night, the door reopens, she darts through it into the third and last room; there she discovers the bound and helpless Amoret, her wound still open, and Busyrane still busy with his spells. Enraged at the interruption, the magician moves to kill Amoret with his knife; Britomart intercepts him and herself receives a wound. Nevertheless, she quickly overcomes him and forces him to undo his enchantments. As

he does so, the chain binding Amoret falls to the ground, the pillar disintegrates, the "cruell steele, which thrild her dying hart," slips out "as of its own accord," and the wound closes "as it had not been bor'd." Britomart binds Busyrane with the same chain, and, with him in hand, the two women leave the castle. As they go out, they find the rooms defaced and "cleane subverst," and the fire quenched. In the 1590 edition of The Faerie Queene, Amoret and Scudamour are immediately reunited; in the edition of 1596, the two women emerge only to discover that Scudamour has given up hope and left.

This is the picture. If we take Spenser at his word, Amoret is a chaste and exemplary wife, whose courageous refusal to deny her plighted love reveals the power of fidelity to survive imprisonment and torture. Such, at any rate, is Scudamour's view. He declares his wife to be innocent of all wrongdoing and is tormented by the injustice of her pain. Having included Amoret's suffering among the "causes" of good men, and cited her steadfastness as a "good and righteous deed," he calls Busyrane a tyrant and "Gods enimy" (xi.9). The situation he describes is reflected in the magician's name: it recalls Busiris, the legendary tyrant of Egypt, notorious for his inhumanly cruel treatment of the innocent.[2] That Amoret is dying a martyr's death

for Scudamour seems to be affirmed when Britomart, addressing him, vows "with proof of last extremity" to "deliver her from thence, or with her for you die" (xi.18). Amoret's is a noble act, and Britomart aligns herself with it from the outset.

Scudamour's words in canto xi are consistent with Spenser's characterization of Amoret in canto vi. There we learn that she is, with Belphoebe, the product of a wondrous virgin birth, which points in numerous ways to that of Christ. The entire passage runs as follows:

2

But to this faire Belphoebe at her berth
The heavens were so favourable and free,
Looking with myld aspect upon the earth,
In th'Horoscope of her nativitee,
That all the gifts of grace and chastitee
On her they poured forth of plenteous horne:
Iove laught on Venus from his sovereigne see,
And Phoebus with faire beames did her adorne,
And all the graces rockt her cradle being borne.

3

Her berth was of the wombe of Morning dew,
And her conception of the ioyous Prime,
And all her whole creation did her show
Pure and unspotted from all loathly crime,
That is ingenerate in fleshly slime.
So was this virgin borne, so was she bred,
So was she trayned up from time to time,
In all chast vertue and true bounti-hed
Till to her dew perfection she was ripened.

4

Her mother was the faire Chrysogonee,
The daughter of Amphisa, who by race
A Faerie was, yborne of high degree,
She bore Belphoebe, she bore in like cace
Faire Amoretta in the second place:
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.

5

It were a goodly storie, to declare,
By what strange accident faire Chrysogone
Conceiv'd these infants, and how them she bare,
In this wild forrest wandring all alone,
After she had nine moneths fulfild and gone:
For not as other wemens commune brood,
They were enwombed in the sacred throne
Of her chast bodie, nor with commune food,
As other wemens babes, they sucked vitall blood.

6

But wondrously they were begot, and bred
Through influence of th'heavens fruitfull ray,
As it in antique books is mentioned.
It was upon a sommers shynie day,
When Titan faire his beames did display,
In a fresh fountaine, farre from all mens vew,
She bath'd her brest, the boyling heat t'allay;
She bath'd with roses red, and violets blew,
And all the sweetest flowres, that in the forrest grew.

7

Till faint through irksome weariness, adowne
Upon the grassie ground her selfe she layd
To sleepe, the whiles a gentle slombring swowne
Upon her fell all naked bare displayd;
The sunne-beames bright upon her body playd,
Being through former bathing mollified,
And pierst into her wombe, where they embayd
With so sweet sence and secret powre unspide,
That in her pregnant flesh they shortly fructifide.

8

Miraculous may seeme to him, that reades
  So straunge example of conception;
  But reason teacheth that the fruitfull seades
  Of all things living, through impression
  Of the sunbeames in moyst complexion,
  Doe life conceive and quickned are by kynd;
  So after _Nilus_ inundation,
  Infinite shapes of creatures men do fynd,
Informed in the mud, on which the Sunne hath shynd.

9

Great father he of generation
  Is rightly cald, th'author of life and light;
  And his faire sister for creation
  Ministreth matter fit, which tempered right
  With heate and humour, breedes the living wight.
  So sprong these twinnes in wombe of _Chrysogone_,
  Yet wist she nought thereof, but sore affright,
  Wondred to see her belly so upblone,
Which still increast, till she her terme had full outgone.

10

Whereof conceiving shame and foule disgrace,
  Albe her guiltlesse conscience her clerd,
  She fled into the wilderness a space,
  Till that unweeldy burden she had reard,
  And shund dishonour, which as death she feard:
  Where wearie of long travell, down to rest
  Her self she set, and comfortably cheard;
  There a sad cloud of sleepe her overkest.
And seized every sense with sorrow sore opprest.

As Thomas Roche has noted, the first line of stanza 3 paraphrases verse 3 of Psalm 110:

> The dewe of thy byrth is of the wombe of the morning.
>
> (Prayer Book version)
>
> _Ex utero ante luciferium genui te._
>
> (Vulgate)

This verse, traditionally read as a reference to the Incarnation, provides the Communion antiphon for the Midnight Mass of Christmas in the Roman and Sarum Rite.[3] The psalm as a whole, is, moreover, the first of the five appointed for Second Vespers of the Nativity, and is the proper psalm for Evensong on Christmas Day in the 1549 and all subsequent versions of the Book of Common Prayer. Spenser's allusion to the Incarnation is reinforced in stanza 27, where he says of Chrysogonee that "she bore withouten pain, that she conceived withouten pleasure" (11.1-3). These words repeat a formula commonly applied to the Virgin Mary, of which one instance is found in Alanus de Insulis' Elucidatio in Cantica canticorum:

> Et ipsa Virgo, sine omni difficultate . . . sine omni carnis angustia, concepit et peperit.[4]

Similarly, in stanza 5, Spenser calls Chrysogonee's womb a "sacred throne," thus applying to it an epitaph proper to the womb of the Mother of Christ. The meaning of the term is profound, for it refers to the Virgin's role as Deipara, God-bearer, carrying within her the King of all Creation. Guerricus abbatus, in a sermon once ascribed to St. Bernard, employs the throne-metaphor thus:

> This Virgin was chosen from a royal lineage, the noble offspring of nobility, indeed, of royalty, so that the mother's nobility might

> confer kingly honour on the Eternal King, the Son of the King, and so that, coming from the royal seat of the Father, He might likewise assume of His Mother a kingly throne in the palace of a royal Queen. Indeed, in her and from her Wisdom has built a dwelling for Himself, and in her and from her He has prepared for Himself a throne, since in her and from her he has furnished for Himself a body perfect in every way.[5]

Even when he compares Chrysogonee's fecundation by the sun to the spontaneous generation of animal life in the Nile, and reminds the reader of the sun's generative power, Spenser uses language reminiscent of the Blessed Virgin's overshadowing by the Holy Ghost, the "Lord and Giver of Life:"

> Great father he of generation
> Is rightly cald, _th'author of life and light_;
> And his faire sister for creation
> Ministreth matter fit, which tempered right
> With heate and humour, breedes the living wight.
>
> (vi.9; italics mine)

The italicized words are almost the same as those employed by Spenser in Book I, i.37 to describe "highest God, the Lord of life and light." The sun's "faire sister" is, of course, the moon, whose mention here refers specifically to the moon's supposed role in the preparation of the female _menses_ for fructification and generation.[6] But here too the sense is double. Just as the moon has a well-established association with the Virgin Mary,[7] so the role ascribed to it in this context is precisely

the same ascribed by some to the Mother of Christ. St. Bernard, lauding her as the provider of Christ's flesh, writes:

> Beatus igitur venter, qui te, Domine Jesu, portavit! felix castitas uteri virginalis, que huic operi materiam ministravit![8]

Spenser's choice of the phrase "ministers matter fit" assumes added significance in the light of lines 3 to 5 of stanza 3:

> And all her whole creation did her shew
> Pure and unspotted from all loathly crime
> That is ingenerate in fleshly slime.

Belphoebe's (as well as Amoret's) "whole creation" includes not only the favourable "horoscope of her nativity" described in stanza 2, but also her and her sister's virgin conception--one untainted by the stain of original sin transmitted by the act of sexual union. One is reminded by the lines just quoted of the proper preface for Christmas Day in the Book of Common Prayer:

> Because thou didst give Jesus Christ, thine only Son, to be born as at this time for us; who, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, was made very man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother; and that without spot of sin, to make us all clean from sin.
>
> (italics mine)

Like Christ, Belphoebe and Amoret take their bodies (and, one presumes, their nature) from the "chast body" of a maiden mother. Like Mary, Chrysogonee provides her offspring

with flesh "pure and unspotted from all loathly crime."

In the same connection, one other curious detail of Spenser's description of the twins' birth should be noted. In stanza 5 he tells us that Belphoebe and Amoret were not nourished "with common food, / As other wemens babes," but that "they sucked vitall blood." Spenser alludes here to the legend, still widespread in Spenser's time, that the pelican revives or feeds her young with her own blood.[9] Chrysogonee's implicit comparison with this creature is an apt expression both of the uniqueness and of the selflessness of her motherhood. It is also, by way of the pelican's association in scripture with grief and exile, a fitting reflection of Chrysogonee's sojourn in the wilderness and the mental (if not physical) anguish of her inexplicable pregnancy.[10] Finally, the comparison provides one more link connecting Chrysogonee's "goodly storie" with the mysteries of the Christian faith: the pelican, because of her self-sacrificing love, has long been a symbol of Christ and, by extension, of His Church.[11]

While Belphoebe is taken by Diana to be trained up to a life of perpetual virginity, Amoret is taken by Venus to the Garden of Adonis, Venus' "joyous Paradize, where most she wonnes, when she on earth does dwell" (vi.29), and where

All things as they created were do grow,
And yet remember well the mighty word,
Which first was spoken by th'almighty Lord,
That bad them to increase and multiply.

(vi.34)

In this place of innocent and divinely ordained generation, Amoret is "trayned up in true feminitee" and "lessoned in all the lore of love and goodly womanhead" (vi.51). She is brought up by Psyche, and it is Psyche who, when Amoret has become "of grace and beauty noble Parogene," brings her "forth into the worldes vew,"

To be th'ensample of true love alone
And Lodestarre of all chast affectione,
To all faire Ladies that doe live on ground.

(vi.52)

Spenser's first reference to Amoret's ordeal in the House of Busyrane follows immediately:

To Faerie Court she came, where many one
Admyred her goodly haveour, and found
His feeble hart wide launched with love's cruell wound.

But she to none of them her love did cast,
Save to the noble knight Sir Scudamore,
To whom her loving heart she linked fast
In faithfull love, t'abide for ever more,
And for his dearest sake endured sore,
Sore trouble of an heinous enimy,
Who her would forced have to have forlore
Her former love, and steadfast loialty,
As ye may elsewhere read that ruefull history.

(vi.53)

The account of Amoret's early life ends rather abruptly at this point, and we do not hear of her again until we en-

counter her distressed lover in canto xi. But the whole of the sixth canto, particularly the lines just quoted, prepares the reader both for Scudamour's later claim that "more bounteour creature never far'd / Upon the face of living land," and for his statement that she remains in bonds because, quite simply, "she Scudamour will not denay."

So far, then, all the indications are that Amoret is a quasi-divine figure, full of grace, enured to suffering and beyond reproach. Such a view is attractive and compelling, but it runs into difficulties when Amoret's situation is examined more closely. To begin with, she has been enchanted and carried against her own will into an allegorical place of evil. In the Faerie Queene, this is usually a fairly damning combination.[12]

Of course, enchantment and abduction, taken alone, do not necessarily imply a defect in the victim. In Book I, for example, Fraelissa is enchanted along with Fradubio, through no fault of her own, and Una's abduction by Sansloy says nothing bad about her character (see I.ii.30-44 and I.iii.40-44). The matter stands differently, however, when the two motifs are combined, as they are in Amoret's case. Looking back again to Book I, one recalls the event which preludes the Redcrosse Knight's capture by Orgoglio. In canto vii, having narrowly and somewhat ignominiously es-

caped the dangers of the House of Pride, Redcrosse disarms himself and lies down beside a stream under the noonday sun. The stream is enchanted, and its nymph out of favour with Diana, because she had "one day when Phoebe fayre / With all her band was following the chace. . . . / Sat down to rest in middest of the race:"

> Thenceforth her waters waxed dull and slow,
> And all that drunke thereof, did faint and feeble grow.
>
> (I.vii.5)

Redcrosse drinks from the stream, and is possessed by sloth. But the blame for his misfortune lies with him; like the nymph, he has stopped to rest half-way through the day, "in middest of the race." As a result of his spiritual laziness, he is defenseless before Orgoglio, and ends up pining in the giant's dungeon. A similar pattern informs the story of Amavia and Mordant at the beginning of Book II. When Sir Guyon discovers the couple, Amavia is half-dead by her own hand; her husband has already been slain by one of Acrasia's charms. Mordant's death is undeserved, but the sequence of events leading up to it is initiated by his own error and weakness. Beguiled by the Circe-like enchantress, he is "in chaines of lust and lewd desires ybound," for "he was flesh: (all flesh doth frailty breed)" (II.i.54;52). His wife finds him and cures him, but she is unable to prevent Acrasia from giving him the

charmed cup which in the end undoes him, and leads Amavia to suicide. One cannot help wondering whether, like Redcrosse and Mordant, or like Verdant, who is found bewitched and senseless in Acrasia's arms at the conclusion of Book II, the spellbound Amoret does not have some sin to answer for in her misery.

There are other indications that Amoret's need for deliverance is really a need for redemption. In stanza 16 of canto xi, Scudamour assures Britomart that Amoret's rescue is impossible. As he does so, his language takes on distinctly Pauline overtones: No "worldly price" can "redeeme" her from her "thralldome and continuall feare." Britomart does succeed in "redeeming" Amoret,[13] but she does so in a manner which recalls Christ's salvation of man from sin. Her passage through the "sulphurous flames," which divide to make way for her, may call to mind the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, but with the direction reversed; Britomart is <u>entering</u> a place of evil--a place, moreover, belonging to the namesake of an <u>Egyptian tyrant</u>. The sulphur of the flames associates them with the fire of hell. The combined allusions point to Christ's harrowing of hell, sometimes described as a re-entry into Egypt to release the captive souls of fallen man. The time sequence within the final episode reinforces the parallel. Britomart enters the House sometime before evening, and

remains inside for two nights, reaching Amoret on the second midnight. Christ dies and immediately enters hell on the afternoon of Good Friday; Easter begins on midnight of the second night--the moment when Christ rises from the dead, followed by a host of souls released from everlasting torment. Amoret's need for redemption, and Britomart's association with Christ as savior suggests that the relationship of the two women is similar to that of Arthur and Redcrosse, when Arthur releases Redcrosse from Orgoglio.

If Amoret is, indeed, guilty of some sin, the House of Busyrane should tell us what it is, just as the Castle of Orgoglio and the Bower of Bliss do in the cases of Redcrosse, Mordant and Verdant. The _daimon_ of the House is Cupid, whose golden image dominates the castle's "utmost roome:"

> And at the upper end of that faire rowme,
> There was an Altar built of pretious stone,
> Of passing valew, and of great renowme,
> On which there stood an Image all alone,
> Of massy gold, which with his owne light shone;
> And wings it had with sundry colours dight,
> More sundry colours, then the proud _Pavone_
> Beares in his boasted fan, or _Iris_ bright,
> When her discolourd bow she spreds through
> heaven bright.
>
> Blindfold he was, and in his cruell fist
> A mortall bow and arrowes keene did hold,
> With which he shot at random, when him list,
> Some headed with sad lead, some with pure gold;

(Ah man beware, how thou those darts behold)
A wounded Dragon under him did ly,
Whose hideous tayle his left foot did enfold,
And with a shaft was shot through either eye,
That no man forth might draw, ne no man remedye.

(xi.47-48)

This Cupid is frightening, yet quite familiar, and not necessarily evil. C.S. Lewis has labelled him "false,"[14] but we are on safer ground if we take him simply as a representation of libido in its broadest sense, with all its potential for both good and ill. He is invoked in a similar guise in Spenser's account of Britomart's falling-in-love, and we know that in her case, at least, his darts, though painful, are used to good effect.[15] The wounded dragon, too, need not be read too tragically. He is the guardian of virginity, and he is hopelessly disabled;[16] but love, no matter how pure or providential, demands the sacrifice of virginity for its consummation, and no one can remedy that loss. The evil of Busyrane's Cupid lies in the fact that he is an idol--or, rather, it lies in the folly of "all the people in that ample house, "who to that image bowed their humble knee, and oft committed foul idolatry" (xi.49). It is the misplaced worship of sexual love, not sexual love itself, which is Spenser's target here. The same distinction applies to the tapestries by which the idol of Cupid is approached.

The "faire portraicts" woven into those "goodly arras of great majesty" depict a villainous God of Love, through whose "hert-percing dart" the gods have been degraded and defamed, and through whose "powre and great effort"

> Kings Queenes, Lords Ladies, Knights and Damsells
> gent
> Were heap'd together with the vulgar sort,
> And mingled with the raskall rablement,
> Without respect of person or of port.
>
> (xi.46)

Yet, curiously enough, the onus of guilt seems to lie less with Cupid than with his victims. Jove cannot be blamed for his "scalding smart;" but he is, apparently, to blame for slaking it by abdicating the dignity and authority of his office.

It is Jove's self-forgetfulness that makes Cupid a real tyrant:

> Whiles thus on earth great _Jove_ these
> pageants played,
> The winged boy did thrust into his throne,
> And scoffing, thus unto his mother sayd,
> Lo now the heavens obey to me alone,
> And take me for their _Jove_, whiles _Jove_ to
> earth is gone.
>
> (xi.35)

Jove's story sets the tone for the vignettes that follow. Cupid is seldom mentioned in the tales of Apollo, Neptune, Saturn and Bacchus; the focus is on the self-debasement

and short-sightedness of the gods in their pursuit of mortal loves. In several cases, divine courtship proves fatal to the human party and the role of victimizer shifts clearly away from Cupid. When, at the end of the passage, we come to that confused mass of base and highborn men and women, we suspect that they, too, have had a part to play in their humiliation.

The tapestries and the idol of Cupid point to a single error. The former depict the pursuit of love merely for its own sake; the latter represents love seen as an end in itself--"an image all alone . . . which with his owne light shone." Cupid's victims and his worshippers alike fail to refer their love to the social and spiritual ends which alone can determine the positive or negative value of a force which is, in itself, neither good nor bad. Both in the tapestries and on the altar, Cupid is sinister because he is unqualified.

Spenser's treatment of love in his Hymn of Love is helpful at this point. There, too, Cupid is hailed as "victor of gods, subduer of mankind--" a universal power who rules "this worlds still moving mightie masse" and reigns on earth within the human mind.[17] The poem veers dangerously close to the idolatry of the House of Busy-rane, save for a crucial caveat: Love is truly exalted

in man when the mind subordinates it to its final cause, and, conversely, man is distinguished from beast only in his ability to discern the true aim of his sexual desires. Speaking first of the lower forms of life, Spenser writes:

> Thereby they all do live, and moved are
> To multiply the likenesse of their kynd,
> Whilest they seeke onely, without further care,
> To quench the flame, which they in burning fynd:
> But man, that breathes a more immortall mynd,
> Not for lusts sake, but for eternitie,
> Seekes to enlarge his lasting progenie.
>
> (HL.99-105)

These lines convey a warning. For a beast, blind submission to lust "for lust's sake," is enough; nature alone will guide its yearnings to their proper end. For man, who has the freedom to obey or disobey the laws of nature and of God, and for whom procreation has the added aim of raising up future saints, such blindness is inexcusable. He can, and therefore must, see his love <u>sub specie aeternitatis</u>, and temper his pursuit of it accordingly. To fail to do so is to debase his nature and resign his human dignity.

Does such a failure lie behind Amoret's enchantment and captivity? Her presence in the Mask of Cupid suggests as much.

Its first figure is a "grave personage,"

> That in his hand a branch of laurell bore,
> With comely haveour and count'nance sage,
> Yclad in costly garments, fit for tragicke stage.
>
> (xii.3)

Entering "as on the ready flore of some theatre," he seems to promise a variation in the Senecan mode of the Ovidian themes of the castle's first room. But when we learn his name, we know that we have moved into another age entirely. He is called Ease; in him we meet the Idleness of the Romaunt of the Rose, and in the section of the mask that follows, we meet the kind of allegory with which the poem is associated.[18] Ease is succeeded by six couples, personifying the various faculties, powers and affects which rule the unwise lover's soul. One by one, they chart the spiritual decay of a person wholly given over to the promptings of uncontrolled desire.

First come fancy and desire, the one a dandified young boy "of rare aspect and beautie without peare," the other, a man

> Who seem'd of riper yeares than th'other swaine,
> Yet was that other swaine this elder's syre,
> And gave him being commune to them twaine.
>
> (xii.9)

Usurpation was one of the motifs of the tapestries; here it occurs again. Fancy, having assumed the rightful place of a conspicuously absent Reason, wanders aimlessly at

the front of the procession, waving his "windy fan . . . in the idle aire." He is in turn dominated by his older-seeming son, who, to use the trinitarian formula parodied by Spenser, is <u>consubstantialis patri</u>. The two figures, together with the living flames which Desyre "blew, and kindled busily," constitute a mock "imago Dei," and reflect a mind whose sovereign birthright has been displaced, distorted and obscured.

The room in which the mask takes place is full of Fancy's workmanship:

> Much fairer, than the former, was that roome,
> And richlier by many partes arrayd:
> For not with arras made in painefull loome,
> But with pure gold it all was overlayd,
> Wrought with wild antickes, which their
> follies playd,
> In the rich metall, as they living were:
> A thousand monstrous formes therein were made,
> Such as false love doth oft upon him weare,
> For love in thousand formes doth oft appeare.
>
> (xi.51)

But for the emphasis on love, we could be back in Phantastes' chamber in the House of Alma. There, too, the walls are covered with

> Infinite shapes of things dispersed thin;
> Some such as in the world wer never yit,
> Ne can devized be of mortall wit;
> Some daily seene, and knowen by their names,
> Such as in idle fantasies doe flit.
>
> (II.ix.50)

In both passages, the message is the same. Fancy is unable to evaluate or order the things and notions which come within his purview. Still less can he discriminate between the real and the unreal, or the proper and improper objects of desire. Lacking the guidance of reason, and encouraged by Ease, he spawns

> Devices, dreames, opinions unsound,
> Shewes, visions, sooth-sayes and prophecies;
> And all that fained is, as leasings, tales and lies.
>
> (II.ix.51)

In the House of Busyrane, he conjures love "in thousand monstrous formes," and in the mask, he is the source of all the ills that follow in his stead.

These ills are Doubt and Daunger, Feare and Hope, Dissemblance and Suspect, Griefe and Fury, and finally, Displeasure and Pleasaunce. They are more than familiar to every reader of the Renaissance love sonnet, and for this reason, we may be tempted to take them no more seriously than we would, for instance, in the following passage from Spenser's <u>Amoretti</u>:

> Of this worlds theatre in which we stay,
> My love lyke the Spectator ydly sits
> beholding me that all the pageaunts play,
> disguysing diversely my troubled wits.
> Sometimes I joy when glad occasion fits,
> and mask in myrth like to a Comedy:
> Soon after when my joy to sorrow flits,
> I wail and make my woes a tragedy.
>
> (Am. LIV)

The figures of the Mask of Cupid are, however, carefully linked with graver concerns than the momentary pains of courtship. Spenser adds certain details to his description of them by which they are transformed into mileposts on the path to moral ruin, death, and even hell. Doubt, with his monklike "brode capuccio" and his "broken reed," recalling Judah's misplaced confidence in Egypt,[19] becomes a parody of faith; Daunger, no longer the warning mechanism of the wary lady in the Romaunt of the Rose, becomes, with his net and rusty knife, a sign, perhaps, of Satan's wiles and a reminder of the peril of damnation. Daunger's characterization in turn places Fear and Hope, who follow him, in a strange light. As far as love is concerned, they are, of course, fear of rejection and hope of amorous success; but as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, they are, or ought to be, the fear of hell and the hope of heaven--that is, attrition and contrition, the two components of Christian penitence. This fear, however, flees from shadows; unmindful of a danger far worse than failure in love, he has made himself already little more than "ashes pale of hew" (xii.12). For her part Hope, arrayed, ironically enough, "in silken samite" like the bride of Christ, offers vain and superstitious favours from a "holy water Sprinkle, dipt in deowe" (xii.13).

The remaining figures are more straightforward, but their description is characterized by an increasing sense of violence and horror and a corresponding decrease in the comic tone which lightens the preceding stanzas. Dissemblaunce, with her forged deeds and borrowed hair, recalls Duessa;[20] Suspect recalls Malbecco.[21] Griefe carries a pair of pincers,

> With which he pinched people to the heart,
> That from thenceforth a wretched life they had,
> In wilfull languor and consuming smart,
> Dying each day with inward wounds of dolours smart.
>
> (xii.16)

And Fury is "full ill appareiled,"

> In rags, that naked nigh she did appeare,
> With ghastly lookes and dreadful drerihed;
> For from her bakc her garments she did teare,
> And from her head oft rent her snarled heare:
> In her right hand a firebrand she did tosse
> About her head, still roming here and there;
> As a dismayed Deare in chase embost,
> Forgetful of his safety, hath his right way lost.
>
> (xii.17)

Fury is followed by Displeasure and Pleasaunce, an "evill matched pair." The one carries "an angry waspe," the other, "an hony-lady bee." The last of the six couples, they are sketched almost off-handedly by Spenser, and share but one stanza between them (xii.18).

At this point, the mask undergoes a sudden transformation. All the figures have been but isolated aspects

of a single mind, as yet unseen, and moreover, not likely to be seen. But now the person whose mind we have seen projected as if on a screen, makes her appearance. She is no personification, but a woman, and in her presence those that have gone before her fade into abstraction. Of her attendants, Cruelty and Despight, we learn only the names; of her, Spenser's description is painstaking:

> After all these their marcht a most faire Dame,
>   Led of two grysie villeins, th'one <u>Despight</u>,
>   The other cleped <u>Cruelty</u> by name;
>   She dolefull Lady, like a dreary Spright,
>   Cald by strong charmes out of eternall night,
>   Had deathes owne image figurd in her face,
>   Full of sad signes, fearefull to living sight;
>   Yet in that horrow shewd a seemely grace,
> And with her feeble feet did move a comely pace.
>
> Her brest all naked, as net ivory,
>   Without adorne of gold or silver 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,
>   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 drawne forth, and in silver basin layd,
>   Quite through transfixed with a deadly dart,
>   And in her bloud yet steeming fresh embayd:
>   And those two villeins, which her steps vpstayed,
>   When her weake feete could scarcely her sustaine,
>   And fading vitall powers gan to fade,
>   Her forward still with torture did constraine,
> And evermore encreased her consuming paine.
>
> (xii.19-21)

This woman is Amoret, and her condition within its context seems to reveal the combined effect and final end of all the evils so far pictured in the mask. Not only does her appearance turn the allegorical method used until now inside-out, but it defies the limits of the mask itself. Her exposed and transfixed heart is no prop-piece, born on a dish in <u>token</u> of some particular notion; it is truly torn from her body, leaving a "freshly bleeding" wound that stains her skin "in sanguine red." Her heart is "trembling," and her blood is "steaming." Spenser further emphasises the immediacy of this horror by twice interjecting his own voice: "O ruefull sight!" he exclaims, and decries "the work of cruell hand." The precise nature of the "dart" which pierces Amoret's heart is not specified. It is probably one of Cupid's arrows, but it is just as likely to be that "dolour's dart" mentioned in Spenser's account of Griefe in stanza 16. Thus, her wound contains both the beginning and the outcome of her tragedy.

Amoret is followed by Cupid:

> Next after her the winged God himselfe
> Came riding on a Lion ravenous,
> Taught to obay the menage of that Elfe,
> That man and beast with powre imperious
> Subdeweth to his kingdome tyrannous:
> His blindfold eyes he bad a while unbind,
> That his proud spoyle of that same dolorous
> Faire Dame he might behold in perfect kind;
> Which seene, he much rejoyced in his cruell mind.

Of which full proud, himselfe up rearing hye,
He looked round about with sterne disdaine;
And did survay his goodly company:
And marshalling the evill ordered traine,
With that the darts which his right hand did
straine,
Full dreadfully he shooke that all did quake,
And clapt on hie his coulourd winges twaine,
That all his many it affraide did make:
Tho blinding him againe, his way he forth did
take.

(xii.22-23)

The entry of Cupid completes the shift in perspective initiated by Amoret's appearance. Disguised as a conquering general, he reveals the entire procession to be a triumph in his honour; the allegorical figures become "his goodly company," and Amoret, ceding to him her role as their common point of reference, becomes, quite simply, his "proud spoyle." Her portrayal as such is in itself telling, especially if her situation is compared with that of the captives of Cupid in Petrarch's influential poem, <u>I Trionfi</u>.[22] Its first section, <u>Il Trionfo d'Amore</u>, is unquestionably the model for this portion of Spenser's mask, and some of its lines are freely paraphrased in the mask's concluding stanzas. In <u>Il Trionfo d'Amore</u>, Petrarch describes Cupid as "<u>un vittorioso e sommo duce</u>,"[23] leading countless thousands of his victims into bondage. These unfortunates, whom Petrarch is himself destined

to join, have one sin in common; they have all indulged in or yearned after a love unsanctified by marriage. Thus, David and Solomon share their bonds with Nero (T.Cup.I.97-99;III.40-45), Semiramis and Biblis with Guenevere and Isolde (T.Cup.III.76;82). Dido is noticeably absent, but she is the exception that proves the rule. She plays a part in the second of the triumphs--that of Chastity, in which Petrarch twice asserts her innocence of wrongdoing. She died, he tells us there, not because of any passion for Aeneas, but because she chose not to dishonour her late husband (T.Ch. 11-12;157-59). Amoret's plight is, as far as the mask is concerned, identical to that of the company from which Dido is so carefully disassociated; we must assume, therefore, that her thraldom, like theirs, is the result of an overmastering and illegitimate passion, and that she is as much the agent as the victim of the ills which Spenser's mask displays.

The mask ends in dissarray. With consummate irony, Spenser has Cupid unmask himself, "that his proud spoyle of that same dolorous / Faire Dame he might behold in perfect kind" (xii.22); for a moment, the mask ceases to be a mask. Cupid surveys his company as well; like actors

caught unawares in an entertainment that proves to be too real, they seem to forget their parts and fall into disorder. New figures, briskly enumerated and unembodied, bring the passage to a swift conclusion. Reproach, Shame, and Repentance hound the fallen woman (xii.24), recalling the Penance, Remorse and Repentance endured by the Redcrosse Knight in the House of Holiness (see I.X.27-27). But here repentance is "feeble, sorrowful, and lame;" it comes too late, and leads not to salvation, but to a "rude confused rout . . . whose names is hard to read:"

> Emongst them was sterne <u>Strife</u>, and <u>Anger</u> stout,
> Unquiet <u>Care</u>, and fond <u>Unthriftihead</u>,
> Lewd <u>Loss of Time</u>, and <u>Sorrow</u> seeming dead,
> Inconstant <u>Chaunge</u>, and false <u>Disloyaltie</u>,
> Consuming <u>Riotise</u>, and guilty <u>Dread</u>
> Of heavenly vengeance, faint <u>Infirmitie</u>,
> Vile <u>Povertie</u>, and lastly <u>Death</u> with infamie.
>
> There were full many moe like maladies,
> Whose names and natures I note readen well;
> So many moe, as there be phantasies
> In wavering wemens wit, that none can tell,
> Or paines in love, or punishments in hell;
> All which disguized marcht in masking wise,
> About the chamber with that Damozell,
> And then returned, having marched thrise,
> Into the inner roome, from whence they first did rise.
>
> (xii.25.3-9:26)

The whole affair is closed, as it was opened, with a reminder of the fancy, here referred to as "wavering wemens wit" (xii.26).[24] The lines in which this phrase

appears are, however, ambiguous. Spenser either means that there are as many more "like maladies" as there are fantasies of "pains in love, or punishments in hell," or that the number of temporal and eternal punishments in store for one who has fallen for the fancy's tricks are equal in number to the "thousand monstrous formes" which it produces. Whichever the case, the woman referred to is Amoret, and these lines place the finishing touches on what amounts to a devastating indictment against her.

It is not easy to reconcile this indictment with Spenser's repeated suggestions that Amoret is also an exemplar of true and righteous love. This apparent inconsistency, and the tension it sets up in the scene, is nowhere more in evidence than in Amoret's portrayal in the castle's third and final room. The view we are given there of

> that same woefull Lady, both whose hands
> Were bounden fast, that did her ill become,
> And her small wast girt round with iron bands,
> Unto a brasen pillour, by the which she stands
>
> (xxi.30)

seems to confirm the verdict of the mask. Spenser's description is an allusion to and a reversal of the end of Petrarch's <u>Triumph of Chastity</u>, in which Cupid, having been conquered by the chaste Laura, is bound to a pillar with a

chain made of diamonds and topaz. This is the chain of chastity, which, Petrarch laments, "was once used by women, but is now used no longer."[25] Amoret, however, apparently unarmed with Laura's mighty virtues, is bound by Cupid's henchman, Busyrane, to a pillar made of brass, an alloy of Venus' metal, copper,[26] and "girt round" with an iron chain, reminiscent of Mordant's "chaines of lust and lewd desires." Suddenly, however, the picture changes, and in two lines Spenser seems to refute everything the enchantment, the tapestries and the mask have been saying about Amoret: "A thousand charmes," he says, "he formerly did prove,"

> Yet thousand charmes could not her stedfast
> hart remove.
>
> (xii.31)

The woman we have been forced, perhaps unwillingly, to see as lustful, is now, we are told, to be viewed as one whose faithfulness not even Busirane's strong magic can destroy; her transfixed heart, which had become the very symbol of her shame, is, with no warning, transformed into an ensign of honour.

Spenser's about-face may come as a welcome relief, but it is too precipitous to be convincing; the revival of Amoret's good name makes her story more palatable, but, at

the same time, seems to undermine the integrity of the episode as a whole. It brings her portrayal back into line with her characterization in canto vi and canto xi, stanzas 9-11, but it fails to account satisfactorily for the impression more recently gained of her in the House of Busyrane. At the close of canto xii, both views seem equally arguable, and both seem to stand in the way of a definitive reading of the episode.

II. The Critics

The amount of critical literature dealing with the final episode of Book III is comparatively small, although in recent years Spenserian critics have been turning their attention to the scene in increasing numbers. Each of them has had to deal, in one way or another, with the apparent contradiction I have outlined in Chapter I. According to their manner of addressing this problem, they can be fairly easily divided into three groups: those who assert Amoret's innocence, ignoring all the evidence to the contrary; those who assert her lustfulness--again, leaving conflicting evidence aside; and finally, those who have attempted to follow a _via media_ which will accommodate both views. In the following chapter, after a brief look at the critics of the first two groups, I shall review in some detail the work of the critics of the third group, concluding with a discussion of the relative success and failure of their various attempts to arrive at a comprehensive reading of the final episode.

Among those critics espousing the view that Amoret is innocent, we find few who have given the episode in the House of Busyrane more than cursory treatment. Of these,

Edward Dowden, who calls Amoret "the most tried and true of wives," and praises her "faithfulness and soft invincibility," is a typical nineteenth century example.[27] W.L. Renwick, writing in the first quarter of this century, sees in Amoret Spenser's portrayal of chastity as a "natural attribute of womanly character."[28] More recently, Robert Ellrodt states, rather defensively, that "there is not the least indication that Amoret is responsible for her captivity; she endures this trial because of her faithful love to Scudamore."[29] Unfortunately, this is the extent of Ellrodt's comments on the subject. K.W. Gransden, writing in 1969, makes a similar claim. In his opinion, Busyrane represents a temptation which Amoret withstands. He does not, however, tell us what that temptation might be. After a brief synopsis of the scene, Gransden concludes that the purpose of the allegory is to show "that innocence and virtue are incorruptible, for we are corrupted not by others but by our own will."[30]

Of those critics adopting the view that Amoret is given to lust, H.E. Cory is one of the earliest of any note. In the final episode of Book III he finds support for his thesis that the Faerie Queene betrays an increasing cynicism on Spenser's part. His discussion of the scene assumes

Amoret's lustfulness; for him, her downfall reflects Spenser's loss of faith in the indomitability of chaste womanhood.[31] Woodhouse's view is less pessimistic. According to him, Amoret is taken by Busyrane because of her own weakness. She is guided by natural instinct alone, and this, he advises, is "insufficient for life on the human level."[32] Eric Laguardia, writing a decade ago, hinges his interpretation of the episode on the similarity between Britomart's rescue of Amoret and Christ's harrowing of hell. In language betraying a great debt to Northrop Frye, he explains that Amoret is unredeemed sensual love:

> Amoret's bondage portrays the enthrallment of man by wanton sensuality which pulls him down toward the demonic and away from the divine or the possibility of chaste love. Her release from this region and her reunion with Scudamore is accomplished by Britomart. This act redeems Amoret from the sensual dimension of nature and allows her to establish a chaste love with Scudamore.[33]

In his generally excellent study, Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory, J.F. Hankins suggests that Amoret represents Britomart's own sexuality, and that Busyrane is the projection of an impulse toward sexual perversion. He supports his argument with a reference to the coupling of chastity with "Sodomita Libido" in the scheme of paired

opposites in Prudentius' Psychomachia, and to a passage from Francesco Piccolomini, whom he quotes as follows:

> Indeed, learned men formed an image of Vice having in one hand a sword, in the other a crown; so that whoever should overcome Vice should be honoured with a crown, but whoever should succumb to him should be transfixed with a sword, even to the inmost depths of the heart.[35]

Hankins goes on to say:

> The quotation above, concerning the transfixed heart, suggests that Busirane is a form of vice to which Amoret has partially yielded, though not entirely so; for she remains true to Scudamore, at the cost of excruciating suffering. Yet she has not the power to throw off the enchantment and break the charm; she can only suffer.[36]

Despite the extremity of his view, Hankins makes an attempt to take into account the fact that Amoret is faithful. For the critics of the third group, the integration of the conflicting elements of Amoret's portrayal becomes a goal of primary importance. Their work reflects two differing approaches to the problem. According to the first, Amoret is to be seen as a devoted and faithful wife who, nevertheless, is given to too extreme a passion for her husband. According to the second, she is to be seen as a too chaste virgin, whose fear of sexual encounter seizes her and prevents the consummation of her marriage.

W.B.C. Watkins takes the first approach. He begins by acknowledging the difficulties which Amoret's story presents to the reader:

> The puzzle is Amoret, whose captivity and torture by Busirane seems sadism unrelated to her character or desert, since as Belphoebe's twin, she is clearly designed to represent a second kind of chastity closer to Spenser's heart--married faithfulness. She alone of all the ladies of the tournament (in Book IV) can wear Florimell's girdle; she has found a fitting mate in Scudamour, who has fully justified his right to be her husband; she prefers torture and death to freedom with dishonour; yet, rescued from Busirane by Britomart, she must soon after be rescued from Lust by Timias and Belphoebe.[37]

Watkins' solution is as follows:

> Amoret's fault is no violation of marriage even in thought, but rather an excess and wilfulness in her love for Scudamour, together with an unwary though innocent carelessness in her manner toward Timias, laying her open to slander, just as Desdemona's overimpulsive friendship for Cassio makes her an easy victim of Iago's distortions.[38]

Graham Hough asks a similar question, and arrives at a similar answer:

> Passion, even when ratified by the Gods and sealed by marriage can be torturing and terrifying--until it is qualified and completed by friendship, fidelity, active affection and endurance: all the qualities Spenser sums up in Britomart's chastity. . . . Scudamour, the merely erotic lover, is powerless to rescue Amoret, and Britomart must become the savior from the divisive perils of a passion that is only passion.[39]

Janet Spens and Sister M. Pauline Parker agree that physical desire plays too great a rôle in Scudamour and Amoret's marriage. Spens lays the blame for it on Scudamour alone. "Her tortures," she writes, "represent the mental sufferings of the young wife in consequence of the too lustful element in Scudamour's passion for her."[40] Spens goes on to say:

> This lustful element at once wounds and inflames her. Busyrane is simply this side of Scudamour himself. . . . The flame is kindled by his evil self, and prevents his pure love's access to the Lady. On the other hand, Busyrane must not be slain, or Amoret will never be free: that is, passion must not be destroyed but its effects purified.[41]

For Parker the fault lies in the bride as well as in the bridegroom. She sees in Amoret's wound the presence of a sexual need that is insatiable and self-destructive.[42]

Padelford blames Amoret's weakness on her upbringing in the Garden of Adonis, where, he claims, "in the midst of luxury and ease and social largesse, she was not prepared . . . to place the spiritual values of matrimony uppermost. Rather, she could not refrain from surrendering herself to physical delight when once it enjoyed the conventional sanction of marriage."[43] Bradner agrees with Padelford. In his opinion, Amoret "has grown up without spiritual discipline." Her "inborn purity" helps her to

resist Busyrane, but "the weakness of her character" exposes her to capture by him.[44]

Another set of critics has, as I have mentioned, located Amoret's difficulty in denial of her passion rather than in any excess of it on her part. This view seems to have first been expressed by C.S. Lewis. His reading of the episode in the House of Busyrane is well known; he considers the enchanted castle to be a representation of the evils of courtly love, which stand between Amoret and a happy marriage. In The Allegory of Love, in which he first puts forward this interpretation,[45] he carefully avoids any discussion of Amoret's involvement or non-involvement in the sins or attitudes embodied by Busyrane; indeed, he warns the reader against pursuing any such line of enquiry.[46] To a certain extent, Lewis maintains silence on this issue in his later works; however, in English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, he writes that the House of Busyrane portrays "the imprisonment and frustration of long, serious and self-condemned passion"[47] and in his posthumous Spenser's Images of Life, he makes the following remark in a context that can only refer to Amoret: "An obsession is not to be dealt with through the appearances it produces; you have to attack the source."[48] I shall not attempt

to lay at Lewis' door an hypothesis concerning the cause of Amoret's suffering which Lewis never saw fit to amplify; but I do wish to point out that, in the few sentences he has left to us on the subject, we find the seeds of an approach to Amoret's dilemma which has steadily gained ground in the past decade, and which seems to be well on the way to general acceptance. More and more, critics are seeing Amoret as a woman afraid of love, obsessed by a nightmare vision of the marriage bed. While Britomart's success is attributed to her achievement of a healthy attitude toward sexual love, the cause of Amoret's suffering is seen to lie in a correspondingly unhealthy attitude on her part towards it.

This view begins to emerge clearly in the early Sixties. A.C. Hamilton, writing in the first year of that decade, is perhaps the first scholar to profess it openly:

> Her lover cannot save her because he is the cause of her imprisonment. When he wields his shield to assail the flames about Busirane's house, he only increases their fierceness, for it is just the assertion of his manhood which has bound Amoret, and produces the flames, her womanly fears, which prevent the consummation of their marriage.[49]

Two years later, William Nelson, noting that the Mask of Cupid is "a distillation of unhappy stories . . . of deceived women whose names are soiled by 'wikke Fame' because they succumbed to the passion of love," writes:

> The fear of joining this tragic throng cuts Amoret's heart and keeps her womanhood prisoner. . . . To win freedom for Amoret and happiness for her lover Scudamour it is necessary to overcome two obstacles. The first is the terrible fear that binds her, the second is the fierce unruliness of the sexual passion (that is, Scudamour's) that is the principle cause of that fear.[50]

Nelson's reading of the episode in the House of Busyrane is followed in the same year by that of Thomas Roche, who characterizes Amoret as a "chastely reticent female" overwhelmed on her wedding day by fear of physical surrender--a fear of which the castle, and, more particularly, the Mask of Cupid, is the embodiment. Her humiliation and torture are, in his view, products of her "wavering womens wit"--fantasies which only clear-sighted Britomart can dispel.[51]

Roche, like Nelson, bases much of his interpretation on his reading of the mask. He begins by noting that it makes an appearance at Scudamour's and Amoret's wedding feast, described by Spenser at the outset of Book IV, and comments on the apparent inappropriateness of its presence

there. He states that this "apparent contradiction" can be reconciled by examining the mask outside the context of the House of Busyrane, and goes on to argue that "its power lies in the essential ambiguity of its figures, an ambiguity that allows three interpretations, that of the wedding guests, that of Amoret, and finally that of Britomart, which is the one we accept as we read the mask in canto xii."[52] Having pointed out that a similar wedding mask occurs in Beaumont and Fletcher's play, "A Wife for a Moneth,[53] he writes:

> The context of this Mask is the bold bawry of the courtiers and country wenches who have come to see the wedding solemnities. Their knowing and amusing antics remind us that Beaumont and Fletcher's wedding mask is just another manifestation of Cupid the boy archer surveying his latest conquest.[54]

While the guests at Amoret's wedding see a mask "performed in a spirit of jovial festivity," presenting Amoret's surrender to her "victor knight," from the male point of view, she "sees, not the personification of the soneteer's psychology, but the vengeance of male sexuality on the chastely reticent female."[55] Unable to distinguish between the effects of married and adulterous love, she becomes the prisoner of her obsessive fear of Scudamour and is "'conveyed quite away from living wight unknown.'"[56]

Britomart is, however, able to "attack these fears on both moral and physical grounds:"

> As a woman she understands Amoret's attitude toward the physical side of love, and as the exemplar of chastity she is able to make the moral distinction between marriage and adulterous love. Her entry through the wall of flame gives her an intimate knowledge of the House of Busyrane, and her understanding finally allows her to release Amoret from her fears.[57]

Kathleen Williams and Donald Cheney accept Roche's view and seek to find in Amoret's past history a reasonable cause for her sexual reticence. Following Padelford's lead, but with a different goal in mind, both suggest that Amoret emerges from the Garden of Adonis unequipped to deal with love or marriage in a social context, and above all, unable to accept and surmount the suffering entailed by love in a fallen world. The significance of the Garden is seen to lie chiefly in its incompleteness as a portrayal of the nature and purpose of sexual love, and, more specifically, in its inadequacy as a training-ground for a fulfilling and mature sexual career. For Williams the Garden's failure is to be found in its repression of the dark aspect of sexuality; by its very absence it is, in her view, all the more ominously present, and it is its belated but necessary integration into the picture of love portrayed in the Garden that accounts both for Amoret's torment and Britomart's victory.[58] For

Cheney, the Garden's incompleteness lies in its exclusive physicality--a view which is consonant with his thesis that a major theme of the Faerie Queene is the tension between the natural and social orders. He summarizes his interpretation of Amoret's dilemma as follows:

> Amoret is educated in a place where Cupid is thoroughly domesticated, subordinated to the reproductive goals of nature, and himself a family man. It is not until she has left the Garden and come to the Faerie Court that she learns of his role as a source of civil strife, a force for disorder which is at variance with his role in the garden . . . Amoret's naivitee takes the form of an inability to handle the abstracted language of courtly love in isolation from the physical context in which she has been educated.[59]

Finally, there is the view of Maurice Evans, who defines Amoret as "the embodiment of the procreative sexual instinct in woman," and sees in her bondage and torment the projection of this "newborn instinct" in Britomart struggling to be released and expressed.[60] In his opinion, Amoret's plight depicts a psychological stage through which any girl "awakening physically and mentally to puberty" is likely to have to pass.[61] Busyrane and his castle become an aspect of Britomart/Amoret's psyche, and the pain inflicted by his "deadly dart" turns out, in Evans' analysis, to be self-induced. "Amoret's sufferings," writes Evans, "are real enough to tear the heart out of her breast,

and yet it is her own conception of love which torments her."[62]

Both of the approaches outlined above have something to recommend them. On the one hand, the critics who see in Amoret a passion which is excessive but not adulterous seem to bridge the gap between her faithfulness and her telltale circumstances. On the other hand, the critics who regard Amoret's story as Spenser's exploration of a virgin's struggle to come to terms with her own sexuality preserve Amoret's chastity intact while recognizing her need of redemption by Britomart. Moreover, their view brings into focus and explains a peculiarity of the House of Busyrane hitherto ignored. The House's contents comprise a condemnation of ungoverned love, yet they are supposed to be "false charmes" and "idle shewes"--the work of Busyrane, who is the enemy of chastity. This riddle is neatly solved if we agree with Nelson, Roche and their followers that Busyrane, far from tempting Amoret or Britomart to lust, contrives to make them deny the spiritual worth of love in whatever form. Such a reading allows us to see Busyrane's devices as an incomplete, and therefore false picture of love, and adds another dimension to an already highly complex scene.

Unfortunately, some of the arguments put forward by

the third-group critics create more problems than they solve. Let us take, for example, Roche's claim that the Mask of Cupid is Amoret's distortion of a harmless wedding entertainment, "performed in a spirit of jovial festivity." Roche supports this claim with two observations: first, that there is a remarkable similarity between this mask and the one in A Wife for a Moneth, and second, that this other mask is simply a playful and unalarming part of the wedding celebrations which bring the second act to a close. A glance at Beaumont and Fletcher's play proves Roche to be correct in his first observation, but places his second in a very doubtful light.

The mask in A Wife for a Moneth[63] begins with the descent of Cupid, bound, blindfolded, and accompanied by the three Graces. He demands to be unfettered, declaring this night to be his own; once free, he calls for his retinue, "the effects of Love," who enter, in couples, and dance. These are Cupid's words:

> Unbind me, my Delight, this Night is mine,
> Now let me look upon what Stars here shine,
> Let me behold the Beauties, then clap high,
> My colour'd Wings, proud of my Deity;
> I am satisfy'd, bind me again, and fast,
> My angry Bow will make too great a waste
> Of beauty else, now call my Maskers in,
> Call with a Song, and let the Sports begin;
> Call all my servants the effects of love,
> And to a Measure let them nobly move.
> Come you Servants of proud Love,
> Come away:

Fairly, nobly, gently move.
Too long, too long you make us stay;
Fancy, Desire, Delight, Hope, Fear,
Distrust and Jealousie, be you too here;
Consuming Care, and raging Ire,
And Poverty in poore Attire,
March fairly in, and last Despair;
Now full Musick strike the Air.

When they have finished, Cupid is again bound and blindfolded; the maskers depart, and Cupid, with the Graces, disappears. Roche terms this display, which may well have been inspired by the first part of Spenser's mask, "just another manifestation of Cupid the boy archer surveying his latest conquest." Perhaps--but it is a rather peculiar manifestation for a wedding. One might expect Cupid to be introduced here, as the "hundred little winged loves" are by Spenser in his Epithalamion, to kindle the desire which shall lead to the begetting of children (ll.357-71); one would not, however, expect to see a Cupid who parades "Distrust and Jealousie . . . and last Despair." Cupid's first appearance in this mask is in itself incongruous. His being bound and attended by the graces is a reference to the end of Petrarch's Triumph of Chastity (T.Ch.120-26); we know from the outset that this is the Cupid of unchaste love, and that his unbinding is the sign of danger.

The meaning of this mask becomes clear as soon as it is considered within its context. A Wife for a Moneth takes

place in the court of Frederick, a wicked king who has recently usurped the throne from his brother. Frederick lusts after Evanthe, a virtuous Lady of the court. When whe refuses his advances, he prepares to divorce his wife in order to marry her, but is again rebuffed by Evanthe, who reveals her chaste love for Valeriano, one of her servants. Enraged, the king orders the marriage of the couple, declaring that after a month of bliss, Valeriano shall die, leaving Evanthe to suffer the same fate unless another man offers to wed her on the same terms. The wedding that occurs at the end of act two is, therefore, a sterile travesty of matrimony; only at the close of the play, when Frederick has been deposed, are Valeriano and Evanthe truly married. The mask, far from being an innocent and joyful entertainment, serves as an ironic commentary on a perverse situation. If it suggests anything about Amoret's problem, it is that there is something terribly wrong with her own marriage and that the mask which carries her away from it is a horror, no matter from whose point of view it is seen.

Again, something must be said about the contention that Amoret's education in the Garden of Adonis is to blame, as Padelford would have it, for Amoret's sexual self-indulgence, or for her sexual naïvité, as Williams and Cheney claim. Padelford considers the Garden to be a place of "luxury and

ease" where pleasure is placed higher than spiritual value; Williams takes it to be a place where suffering and sin are unacknowledged and repressed; Cheney believes that Amoret's childhood home bears no real relation to the social life of man. The Garden of Adonis is misrepresented by each of these views. As its meaning has no small bearing on the way in which Amoret is to be regarded, and as its central position in the Legend of Chastity makes its proper interpretation crucial to the understanding of the entire book, it will be best to clarify the matter before proceeding further.

The Garden of Adonis is indeed a place of luxury and ease, where love is innocent and the tensions of city and court seem far away:

> For here all plentie, and all pleasure flowes,
> And sweet love gentle fits emongst them throwes
> Without fell rancor, or fond gealousie;
> Frankly each paramour his leman knowes,
> Each bird his mate, ne any does envie
> Their goodly merriment, and gay felicitie.
>
> (vi.41)

Here lives Adonis "in eternal blis, / Joying his goddesse and of her enjoyd," and Cupid also, "laying his sad darts aside," plays with the deathless youth (vi.48-49). Here too is Psyche, Cupid's "true love," with whom he dwells "in stedfast love and happy state," and on whom he has fathered

a child whose name sums up the quality of life in this most excellent of pleasant places:

> Pleasure, that doth both gods and men aggrate
> Pleasure, the daughter of Cupid and Psyche late.
>
> (vi.50)

Yet, for all its bliss, the Garden is not immune to death; although its "continuall spring and harvest . . . meeting at one time" (vi.42) approximates to timelessness, its creaturely inhabitants still feel the scourge of time. In stanzas 39 and 40 Spenser laments the mortality of the flesh, and in stanzas 44 and 45, he describes an arbour planted with all that remains of famous lovers cut down by death--Hyacinth, mortally wounded by a discus which had missed its aim, Narcissus, drowned by his own reflection in a pool, and Amintas, dead through grief over his lady's early death:

> And all about grew every sort of flowre,
> To which sad lovers were transformed of yore;
> Fresh Hyacinthus, Phoebus paramour,
> And dearest love,
> Foolish Narcisse, that likes the watry shore,
> Sad Amaranthus, made a flowre but late,
> Sad Amaranthus, in whose purple gore,
> Me seemes I see Amintas wretched fate,
> To whom sweet Poets verse hath given endless date.
>
> (vi.45)

Spenser's tribute to these unhappy lovers is followed in stanza 46 by the rather grim if luxuriant image of Adonis, "lapped" like a corpse "in flowers and pretious spycery," hid thus by Venus "from the world and from the skill / of

Stygian Gods, which doe her love envy." There is pathos in Venus' attempt so unnaturally to preserve her lover's body from corruption--a pathos which, despite the optimism of the next stanza, colours Spenser's claim there that Adonis

> All be he subject to mortalitie
> Yet is eterne in mutabilitie,
> And by succession made perpetuall
>
> (vi.47)

If the endless succession of forms which sustains Adonis is a victory over death, it is a lame one, and provides small comfort. Deprived of personal immortality, the various lovers inhabiting the Garden must content themselves with the perpetuation of species--a poor substitute for that "immortall blis" which would have been their birthright had death not entered into the world. The special tragedy which death brings to the individual--the extinction of his personal identity--is highlighted by the fact that, in order to portray Adonis as still living, Spenser must transform him from an individual into a concept. It is not Adonis the boy who "needs . . mote . . . live, that living gives to all," but Adonis, "the Father of all formes" (vi.47).

The Garden, then, may be a paradise, but it bears the scars of a fallen world. Not only does it know of death, but, for all its innocence, it knows of--even if it does

not harbour--lust. Within its walls the God of Love is a perfect playmate, husband and father; outside, however, he has, as Spenser is quick to point out,

> with spoils and cruelty
> Ransackt the world, and in the wofull hearts
> Of many wretches set his triumphs hye.
>
> (vi.49)

We have already found some of his victims inside the Garden: Hyacynth, a prey to love diverted from its natural course, Narcissus, a prey to love embogged in fantasy, and Adonis, wounded in the groin by a wild boar, a prey, perhaps to love denied.[64] These three figures, together with the double-natured god himself, serve as reminders that, for man at least, sexual love is seldom free from pain and error.

Psyche too has suffered at Cupid's hands, and is

> but lately reconcyled,
> After long troubles and unmeet upbrays
> With which his mother _Venus_ her revyld,
> And eke himselfe her cruelly exyld
>
> (vi.50)

But here the likeness to his other victims stops: they have been destroyed by Cupid, but by Psyche Cupid has himself been transformed. Within its context this detail is significant, for Psyche represents the rational soul.[65] Her triumphant presence in the Garden suggests that for man the character of sexual love is in direct relation to

the state of his soul; for the unhealthy it is madness, for the healthy it is the closest one can come to Eden.

This, then, is the place to which the infant Amoret is brought "to bee . . . trayned up in true feminitee" and "lessoned in all the lore of love and goodly womanhead." It is to Psyche's tutelage and care she is entrusted, and one may reasonably assume that the "lore" she learns includes all Psyche's hard-won wisdom, as well as all the Garden has to teach, from the essential goodness of the flesh, respect for which must form the base of any code of chastity, to the importance of a joyful but at the same time rational approach to sexuality. The opinions of Padelford, Williams and Cheney notwithstanding, Amoret's environment in general and Psyche's experience in particular provide an education which, far from depriving Amoret of the defenses needed to fend off the onslaughts of a wicked world, ought to imbue her with the values and strength to remain, against all odds, "th'ensample of true love alone."

This brings us to the flaw that mars the work of all the third group of critics. Despite the many merits of their readings, they fail to address themselves to the implications of Spenser's portrayal of Amoret at the end of canto vi. Neither the view that she is "merely passionate," nor the view that she is excessively afraid of sexual love tallies

with the fact that Spenser calls her there "the Lodestarre of all chaste affectione"--a title she shares, in an altered but no less portentous form, with the Virgin Mary.[66] Concupiscence, even within the bounds of marriage, is no fit attribute for such a woman; nor, for that matter, is terror of physical love. Either Amoret's faithfulness goes hand in hand with a positive, entire and exemplary love, or she is no true beacon "to all faire Ladies that doe live on ground." If the critics we have been discussing appear to offer various means of resolving the tension between Amoret's declared innocence and her incriminating circumstances, they do so by qualifying and diminishing her character to such an extent that it ceases to present a worrisome contrast with its surroundings.

To summarize: Every critic of the final episode reviewed so far has either ignored the inconsistencies of Amoret's portrayal altogether, or, having acknowledged them, has attempted to remove them by redefining Amoret's character to suit its context. Rosemond Tuve's observation that, "of the ma.y explanations of . . . the delivery of Amoret, none is perfectly satisfying, and perhaps none is utterly without contribution to our understanding,"[67] seems as apt today as it was ten years ago.

Thus, the meaning of the Busyrane episode remains an

open question; indeed, some critics have suggested that it is an unanswerable one, and that the fault lies with Spenser for failing to make his intentions in the scene sufficiently clear.[68] I prefer to take a less pessimistic view. In the past fifteen years, the final episode of Book III has begun to receive the kind of intensive scrutiny it deserves; now it only remains to build, on the foundation laid by recent criticism, a new approach to the scene which will unlock its puzzle and show how it brings the Legend of Chastity to a fitting close. I am encouraged in my optimism by the comments of one critic, as yet unmentioned, whose reading of the Busyrane episode, although it is too weakly argued to be definitive, manages to suggest a solution to the riddle of the scene without seeking to bypass the tensions inherent within it. I refer to Paul J. Alpers, who summarizes his own view of Amoret's plight as follows:

> Amoret's torture is a conventional image that has occurred throughout Book III. It now emerges as the culminating expression of the major issue of Book III--the compatability of sexual desire and spiritual value in human love. . . . Amoret's torture does not render a moral judgement against her, but presents, in the form of a "speaking picture," the main issue of Book III.[69]

Two important assumptions underlie Alpers' remarks--namely, that the incongruities of Amoret's portrayal are purposeful on Spenser's part, and that the reader's task

is not to explain them away, but to see how they are used by Spenser to convey a truth which both contains and transcends them. Alpers' definition of the main issue of Book III is, of course, arguable--one would have thought that, for Spenser at least, the peaceful coexistence of sexual desire and spiritual value in Holy Ma rimony was a foregone conclusion. Moreover, Alpers fails to enlist sufficient evidence to make his claims very convincing. Nevertheless, his suggestion that Amoret's suffering is a "speaking picture," whose meaning lies in the very problems it raises, can provide the basis for a new and, I believe, more fruitful approach to the final episode.

In the remainder of this essay, I shall try to defend and develop the implications I have drawn from Alpers' words, in the hope of arriving thereby at a more satisfactory explanation of the final episode than has as yet been offered. My first task will be to demonstrate that there is ample support for such an approach in the poem itself. With this task in mind, I shall devote the following chapter to an exploration of Scudamour's interchange with Britomart at the beginning of canto xi--a passage which has never received adequate attention, but which proves, on examination, to be not only a prelude but a guide to what happens in the House of Busirane.

Chapter Two: Scudamour's Lament

I. Deus Ultionem

There is no denying that, in the stanzas intervening between Britomart's entry into Busyrane's enchanted castle and her triumphant return with Amoret, Scudamour is well-nigh forgotten, and that his situation at the beginning of canto xi is quickly overshadowed by the strangeness, if not by the sheer length, of the episode which follows it. It is not, therefore, surprising that Scudamour's initial encounter with Britomart has never received much mention beyond the fact that it provides its sequel with a plot, nor that Scudamour's role in Book III has usually been considered negligible. Yet if we pause to give this scene the consideration it deserves, we shall find that, despite his brief appearance, Scudamour is a figure of no small importance, and that his situation as depicted here by Spenser sheds considerable light on the meaning of the final episode. Although Scudamour fails completely to fulfill the larger role suggested by his name and by the shield he casts aside in his despair,[1] it is he who raises in his grief the issues which inform the final episode, and it is in response to his dilemma that Spenser introduces the concepts by reference to which those issues are to be resolved. Through Scudamour's words, Spenser places the problematic nature of Amoret's plight squarely before the reader, and in so

doing shows that he is well aware of the difficulties it is going to raise. At the same time, he makes Amoret's captivity and torture the paradigm for two larger and, it would seem, related problems--the pain incurred by love and the suffering of the innocent--and indicates that the threat they pose to faith in love's value and God's providence constitutes the challenge of the House of Busyrane. Finally, he suggests that victory over Busyrane is impossible without the prior achievement of a proper Christian attitude toward pain, and that Scudamour's failure in this regard accounts for his inability to rescue his beloved.

Let us look, then at Scudamour's first speech:

> At last forth breaking into bitter plaintes
> He said; O soveraigne Lord that sit'st on hye,
> And raignst in blis emongst thy blessed Saintes,
> How suffrest thou such shamefull cruelty,
> So long unwreaked of thine enimy?
> Or hast thou, Lord, of good mens cause no heed?
> Or doth thy justice sleepe, and silent ly?
> What booteth then the good and righteous deed,
> If goodnesse find no grace, nor righteousnesse no meed?
>
> If good find grace, and righteousnesse reward,
> Why then is Amoret in caytive band,
> Sith that more bounteous creature never far'd
> On foot, upon the face of living land?
> Or if that heavenly justice may withstand
> The wrongfull outrage of unrighteous men,
> Why then is Busirane with wicked hand
> Suffred, these seven monethes day in secred den
> My Lady and my love so cruelly to pen?

> My Lady and my love is cruelly pend
> In dolefull darkenesse from the vew of day,
> Whilest deadly torments do her chast brest rend,
> And the sharpe steele doth rive 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;
> Unworthy wretch to tread upon the ground,
> For whom so faire a Lady feeles so sore a wound.
>
> (xi.9-11)

Scudamour's lament is significant for several reasons. First, it provides us with an explicit statement of the problem raised by Amoret's placement in a defamatory context. When Scudamour, having termed her righteous, bounteous and good, goes on to ask "Why, then, is _Amoret_ in caytive band?" he voices the very question which has occupied us from the outset of this essay. Secondly, his speech invests the conventional motif of the virtuous maiden-in-distress with a universality which it might not otherwise appear to have. Not only are its first two stanzas addressed to God--a distinction which, if we discount the final fragment of the Mutability Cantos, is theirs alone in _The Faerie Queene_--but the questions posed by Scudamour in stanza 9, whose elaboration in the next stanza provides the framework in which Amoret's situation is first described, are a paraphrase and expansion of Psalm 94, verses 1-7.[2] Why, Scudamour asks, does God allow the wicked to persecute the righteous? Has he no concern for their victims, or is he simply unaware

of their need? In either case, what is the value of righteousness if those who endeavour to follow its code fare no better than those who do not? Nowhere else in Book III is the justice of the pain endured by the chastest of lovers, or the trustworthiness of a God who fails to protect his followers from the "shameful cruelty" of men like Busyrane so boldly questioned. The dependence of these lines on the opening verses of Psalm 94[3] is fairly obvious:

> 1. O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, thou God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.
>
> 2. Arise, thou Judge of the world, and reward the proud after their deserving.
>
> 3. Lord, how long shall the ungodly, how long shall the ungodly triumph?
>
> 4. How long shall all wicked doers speak so disdainfully, and make such proud boasting?
>
> 5. They smite down thy people, O Lord, and trouble thine heritage.
>
> 6. They murder the widow and the stranger, and put the fatherless to death.
>
> 7. And yet they say, Tush, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.

Scudamour's paraphrase is, of course, incomplete. This brings us to a third important aspect of his speech, one which, as far as I know, has never been noted or examined by previous critics. While Scudamour's reference

to Psalm 94 helps to define what is at issue in Amoret's plight, his failure to account for the psalm's remaining sixteen verses suggests that there is something amiss in his response to Amoret's suffering, and at the same time affords the careful reader an insight into Spenser's answer to the difficulties posed by the final episode. Scudamour's omission would not in itself be remarkable, were it not that verses 8 to 23 of Psalm 94, in their reaffirmation of God's faithfulness, and their advocacy of patience in the time of trouble, effect a complete reversal of the pessimism of verses 1 to 7. Here is the rest of the psalm:

> 8. Take heed, ye unwise among the people: O ye fools, when will ye understand?
>
> 9. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? or he that made the eye, shall he not see?
>
> 10. Or he that instructeth the heathen, it is he that teacheth man knowledge; shall not he punish?
>
> 11. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are but vain.
>
> 12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in thy law;
>
> 13. That thou mayest give him patience in time of adversity, until the pit be digged up for the ungodly.
>
> 14. For the Lord will not fail his people; neither will he forsake his inheritance;

15. Until righteousness turn again unto judgment: all such as are true in heart shall follow it.

16. Who will rise up with me against the wicked? or who will take my part against the evil doers?

17. If the Lord had not helped me, it had not failed, but my soul had been put to silence.

18. But when I said, My foot hath slipt; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.

19. In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul.

20. Wilt thou have any thing to do with the throne of wickedness, which imagineth mischief as a law?

21. They gather them together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

22. But the Lord is my refuge, and my God is the strength of my confidence.

23. He shall recompense them their wickedness, and destroy them in their own malice; yea, the Lord our God shall destroy them.

The psalmist's emergence from his initial desperation is swift and occurs early on. In verse 8, he turns not only against those who think to escape God's justice, but also against those who despair of it. He goes on to say that the man who suffers either for righteousness' sake or for his sins is "blessed" (vv.12-13), and declares that "the Lord will not fail his people" (v.14). He concludes that,

although the wicked appear to have the upper hand (v. 21), they shall be destroyed by their own deeds (v. 23); meanwhile, God will continue to be a "refuge" for his people, and a source of strength for them (vv.17-18;22). Both Scudamour and the psalmist experience a lack of faith, but while the one soon reaffirms his trust in God's unfailing aid, the other turns to a spate of self-derogation whose violence is matched only by the flood of grief which interrupts it,

> Choking the remnant of his plaintife speach,
> As if his days were come to their last reach.
>
> (xi.12)

The pathos of these lines is a far cry from the assurance and hope which characterize the concluding verses of Psalm 94. True, as Britomart observes in stanza 18, Scudamour's "cause is nothing lesse than is his sorrow." Yet the absence from his speech of anything approaching the arguments and sentiments voiced in the latter part of Psalm 94 makes the soundness of his entire response to Amoret's dilemma and his own seem dubious at best.

The significance of Scudamour's incomplete and misleading paraphrase emerges more clearly if the psalm is viewed in the light of its traditional exegesis. The congregational singing of psalms occupied an important place in the reformed English liturgy, and this was reflected in the

publication and proliferation in Elizabethan England of numerous psalm commentaries and annotated metric psalters.[4] It is reasonable to assume that Spenser expected his audience to know that the main themes of Psalm 94 were generally taken to be trust in Providence, patience in adversity, and the positive value of suffering for the Christian. The psalm had long been associated with the Passion, and its twenty-first verse, to which Scudamour's description of Amoret's "deadly torments" bears such a peculiar resemblance, was often taken to refer specifically to Jesus:[5]

> They gather them together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

For this reason, the psalm as a whole is still the last of the nine appointed for matins on Good Friday in the Roman Office, and its liturgical use, apart from the weekly recitation of the Psalter was, both in pre-Reformation England and in the Catholic Europe of Spenser's time, limited to this day.[6] For the Protestant reformers Psalm 94 also foretold the travail of the reformed Church, "then most grievously afflicted"--to use the words of the Geneva Bible's translators,--"by the cruell rage and horrible tyrannie of the Papists."[7] In the Geneva Bible, Psalm 94 is introduced as follows:

> He praieth unto God against the Violence and Arrogance of Tyrants, warning them of God's judgements. Then doeth he comfort the afflicted by the good issue of their afflictions, as he felt in himselfe, and di se in others and by the ruine of the wicked, whome the Lord wil destroy.

In an English translation of the Psalms published in 1576 and later incorporated into the Geneva Bible, verse 5 of Psalm 94 receives this gloss:

> Seeing the Church was then so sore oppressed, it ought not to seeme strange to us, if we see it so now.[8]

Similarly, in his Psalmes of David, truly opened and explained, Theodore Beza writes:

> This most excellent Psalme is a displaying of the tyrannie of Sathan, by whose furies the most mightie princes of the world being stirred up, do violate all the lawes of God and man, especiallie when they rise up against the godlie, even as though there were no God, or that he had no providence at al . . . But most effectual comforts are afterward annexed, drawne forth of the unchangeable nature of God himselfe, and of his providence, and are described with great majestie, and the Godly are commaunded to read and meditate diligentlie the holie scriptures, that they may knowe these things, whereby they shal understand, even by innumerable and most certaine testimonies, that al these tempests and stormes shal turne to the commoditie of the godlie, but to the destruction of the wicked: the which thing, even the Prophet proveth by his own example, and the Church verilie never triumphed, but under the crosse.[9]

The same sense of immediacy is expressed in a prayer appended to a French metrical version of the psalm by Theodore

Beza and Clement Marot:

> Seigneur iuste Juge de tout le monde, qui conois combien sont cruels et furieux qui s'effluent contre nous, reprime par ta force invincible leur audace et temerité, <u>et nous fay ce bien que nous facions tousiours nostre profit des adversitez que nous adviennent</u>. Remets l'estat de ce monde en si bon ordre, qu'un chacun renonçant a toute iniquité te suive d'autant plus allegrement que tu te monstres iuste et bon, par nostre Seigneur et Sauveur, Jesus Christ. Amen.[10]

In Calvin's commentary, translated into English by Golding in 1571, the same chord is struck again:

> To be short, it is the Prophet's purpose, first to exhort the faithful to patience, that they shold not be faynthearted in persecution, but with quetness and silence wayt for deliverance at Gods hand: and secondly, to doe them to understande from whence this wisedom is to be set. For inasmuch as our flesh eggeth us to despaire, our hope wolde vanish away an hundred times, onlesse we knew by Gods teaching, that al miseries shall turne to our welfare. . . . For the badge whereby God discerneth his true disciples from the counterfeat, is this: if they be ready and full settled to bear the crosse, and neither repine nor struggle, but hope for deliverance quietly. And surely, the true manner of patience is, not to stand wilfully against adversities . . . but to submit ourselves to God willingly, because we lean unto his gracious goodnesse.[11]

It is to St. Augustine, however, that we must look for the definitive reading of Psalm 94. His discussion in the <u>Ennarationes super Librum Psalmorum</u>[12] lays the groundwork for all subsequent interpretations.

Noting the abrupt change of tone which so markedly distinguishes the second two thirds of the psalm from the verses paraphrased by Scudamore, Augustine writes: "This psalm sympathiseth with thee, it seeketh with thee; not because it knoweth not, but that thou mayest find in it what thou wast ignorant of" (par.9). This comment is intriguing, for in its context it suggests not only that the later verses of the psalm are aimed at correcting certain misconceptions underlying verses 1 to 7, but also that these misconceptions belong at least to some, if not all of the Christian audience to which it is addressed. Indeed, in Augustine's view, Psalm 94 is concerned less with the crimes of the wicked than with the "murmurings" of those otherwise decent men who are unable to remain true to their faith in the midst of persecution, because they have grown too secure in their high self-estimation, and because they have mistakenly assumed that virtue should exempt them from the scourge of grief. Augustine's lengthy treatise endeavours to demonstrate that the psalm's opening verses voice, albeit temporarily, a dangerous attitude toward God and human suffering--one which is, he claims, prevalent in all too many Christians. Certainly his text, as he interprets it, gives him occasion to berate his reader rather harshly:

> Thou desirest God's vengeance against the wicked, that the thief may die, and thou murmurest against God, because the thief dieth not; weigh in the balance of equity the thief and the blasphemer; thou now sayest that thou art not a thief, but in murmuring against God, thou art a blasphemer. . . . If thou wouldest have another correct his hand, do thou first correct thy tongue; thou wouldest have him correct his heart towards men, correct thy heart toward God, lest perchance, when thou desirest the vengeance of God, if it come, it find thee first (par.7).

Not only does Augustine denounce the pride and faithlessness which he finds so clearly exposed in the Psalm's initial words, but he accuses those whose attitude it points to of harbouring their own evil, if unexpressed desires. "Weak men," he says, "imagining that they live well in vain, are induced either to imitate the wickedness of those whom they see flourishing . . . or, they refrain in deed from wicked deeds, but refrain not from wicked thoughts" (par.1). Such men, he adds, will prove evil if given the opportunity:

> For there was a house very powerful for a season, of which God had made a scourge for the human race. . . . and the human race was thence chastened. . . . Now while this house was great, many groaned beneath it, murmured, censured, cursed, blasphemed. How do men narrow themselves, and how many are given up to the lusts of their own hearts! Those who murmured against that house suddenly became members of it: and from them men

> suffered such inflictions as they themselves had before complained of from men like unto themselves (par.1).

The passages I have just quoted are among the most scathing in the commentary; the character of the work as a whole is, to use the adjective applied by Augustine to the psalm, somewhat more "sympathetic." Turning fairly quickly from condemnation to edification, Augustine sets out to explain the proper Christian attitude toward suffering--and hence, he implies, toward God--as he finds it set forth in the second portion of Psalm 94. The true Christian, he contends, must face his own suffering and that of others without impatience or complaint. "Perhaps," he writes, "it is easy for the righteous to bear those iniquities of the wicked which do not affect themselves, but as they bear those of which others are the victims, so let them bear what is aimed against themselves. . . . For he who has lost this [that is, long suffering and patience] has fallen from heaven" (par.5). Noting that Psalm 94 is appointed in its title "for the fourth day," and recalling that on this day God created the celestial lights, Augustine urges his reader to imitate the patience of the stars, which never cease to "pursue their own courses, without regarding what men say concerning them. So also," he continues, "do thou not

regard whatever flesh may have done towards thee" (par.16). Taking verses 10 to 13 as his proof, he asserts that virtue is not only tested but strengthened by suffering, and that patience is a task imposed by God on his people, in order to educate them in the Christian faith:

> 'He that instructeth the nations, shall he not reprove?' He teacheth the heathen, shall he not therefore reprove? will he not hear those whom he teacheth. . . . When therefore thou receivest such a task from the master, thou art being taught (par.13).

Again, having quoted verse 11, he writes:

> Do not, brethren, despise yourselves: if ye approach the Lord with faith, ye hear the thoughts of God. These ye are now learning . . . and for this reason ye are taught, why God spareth the wicked in this life, that he may not murmur against God, who teacheth man knowledge (par.14).

By teaching him thus, says Augustine, God furthers man's salvation and reveals his love for him. Indeed, having been reminded by verse 12 of the second and eighth Beatitudes, Augustine concludes that the only proper response to suffering is to treat it as a blessing and receive it as a gift (par.7). He closes his discussion with a prayer summarizing what he takes to be the central message of the psalm:

> Thou who makest sorrow in learning, thou has chosen thus to try these thy children, and to teach them thus, to give them such lessons as to leave them still in fear,

> lest they should love something else, and forget their true good. God is good: but if He were to cease, and not to mingle bitterness with our temporal bliss, we should forget him (par.24).[13]

The commentaries reviewed above are representative of the exegetical tradition informing the approach taken to Psalm 94 in Spenser's day, and it is likely that they reflect his understanding of the psalm and that of his contemporary learned audience. By placing the psalm's opening verses in Scudamour's mouth, and having him omit the remainder, can it be that Spenser is inviting his reader to see in Scudamour's lament an inappropriate response to suffering--one which, arising from faults of the sort described by Augustine, accounts for his failure to function truly as a hero and a "shield of love?" In the remainder of this chapter I shall try to show that this is, indeed, what the poet wishes us to see.

II. Providence and Pain: The Face of Heroism In Book III

Britomart's reply to Scudamour in stanza 14 of canto xi points in the direction of such a reading. Her words suggest, at any rate, that there is in Scudamour some spiritual problem or lack of insight which aggravates his grief and makes him incapable of dealing with it:

> Ah gentle knight, whose deepe conceived griefe
> Well seems t'exceede the powre of patience,
> Yet if that heavenly grace some good reliefe
> You send, submit you to high providence,
> And ever in your noble hart prepense,
> That all the sorrow in the worlde is lesse,
> Then vertues might, or values confidence,
> For who nill bide the burden of distresse,
> Must not here thinke to live, for life is
> wretchednesse.
>
> (xi.14)

Britomart's speech is a distillation of the ideas contained in Psalm 94 and developed by its commentators. As verses eight to twenty-three of the psalm serve as a corrective to the attitude voiced in verses one to seven, so her "fit med'cine" attempts to restore Scudamour to spiritual health by reminding him of values he seems to have forgotten. Britomart holds out the hope of "good reliefe" to Scudamour, but only after she has gently chided him for his impatience and lack of faith. To reproach God for the suffering of the innocent is, she implies, to ask Him to keep a promise he never made. "Life is wretchednesse" for the

good and bad alike, and whatever aid God sends the righteous is less likely to be relief from pain than strength to bear it. The true mark of a Christian knight is trust in Providence and unflagging patience in the face of adversity--the very qualities so lacking in Scudamour's lament and in the first part of Psalm 94. It is from these virtues, not from immunity to defeat, that a Christian soldier derives his "might"--a might which, although capable of expressing itself in positive action, must perhaps be more often exercised in simply bearing one's burden of distress in a fallen world.

There are numerous indications in Spenser's work that, for him, patience as a sign of holiness and suffering as a path to sanctity are conceptions as relevant to the subject of love as they are to the subject of salvation. One passage from his Hymn in Honour of Love is particularly illuminating in this regard. In this poem Spenser, having sung of the "consuming grief" which Cupid inflicts on those who love "not for lust's sake, but for eternitie" and yet "lye languishing like thralls forlorne," makes the following complaint before the God of Love:

> But if thou be indeede, as men thee call,
> The worldes great Parent, the most kind preserver
> Of living wights, the soveraine Lord of all,

> How falles it then, that with thy furious
> fervour,
> Thou doest afflict as well the not deserver,
> As him that doeth thy lovely heasts despize,
> And on thy subjects most doest tyrannize?
>
> (HL.154-61)

The similarity of these lines to Scudamour's opening speech is striking. It is but a short step from Scudamour's

> O Soveraigne Lord that sit'st on high
> And raignst in blis emongst thy blessed Saintes

to this invocation of Cupid in his triple role as creator of the world, giver and sustainer of life, and "soveraine Lord of all." Spenser addresses Cupid as if he were the Christian God, first in the Person of the Son, then in that of the Spirit, and, finally, in that of the Father. If you are God, he asks, why do you seem to show no justice? Why do your servants seem to suffer more than your enemies? These are Scudamour's questions exactly; except for its differing rhyme scheme and line lengths, this stanza could easily be substituted for the first nine lines of his lament without doing damage either to its sense or to its context.

Of course, the particular situations described in the hymn and the lament are not the same, nor are the deities which they address. In the hymn it is the speaker who suffers unjustly, and his grief is due to rejection by

his "rebellious Dame" (<u>HL</u>.151); in Scudamour's lament, it is a woman who suffers, and there is no indication that rejection has played any part in her relations with her lover. Again, the "sov'raine Lord" before whom Scudamour complains is none other than the God of Holy Scripture; the god of the hymn, although invested with the attributes and roles of the Christian God, is still, quite clearly, Cupid. Nevertheless, the two passages share a common structure and theme: both deal with the wound of love, and both reflect a struggle to reconcile the supposed goodness of the deity addressed with the notion that suffering is an evil from which the righteous shall be spared.

Bearing this last point in mind, let us now turn to the next stanza of the <u>Hymn of Love</u>:

> Yet herein eke thy glory seemeth more,
> By so hard handling those which best thee serve,
> That ere thou doest them unto grace restore,
> Thou mayest well trie if they will ever swerve,
> And mayest them make it better to deserve;
> And having got it, may it more esteeme.
> For things hard gotten, men more dearely deeme.
>
> (<u>HL</u>.162-8)

Unlike Scudamour, the poet of the <u>Hymn of Love</u> solves his dilemma, and, in the manner of Psalm 94, he does so by redefining the meaning of pain itself. The God of Love, like the God of Jacob, allows his followers to suffer in order that they may be tried and proven. Occurring midway

through the hymn, this revelation effects a crucial re-orientation of the speaker's point of view; the remainder of his song is an amplification of the notion that true love is achievable only through hardships:

> By these, O Love, thou doest thy entrance make,
> Unto thy heaven, and dost the more endeere,
> Thy pleasures unto those which them partake,
> As after stormes when cloudes begin to cleare,
> The sun more bright and glorious doth appeare;
> So thou thy folke, through paines of Purgatorie,
> Dost beare unto thy blisse, and heavens glorie.
>
> (HL.273-79)

For those who seek an easier way, his words are harsh. Enured "to dirtie drosse," they show their "baseborn mindes" and "cowardly distrust" (see HL.173-84).

The Hymn of Love sheds light on several aspects of Scudamour's lament. First, its resolution of the problem of unjust suffering corroborates my inference from Scudamour's incomplete paraphrase of Psalm 94, namely, that his inability to come to terms with Amoret's bound and broken heart betrays a serious lack of insight on his part into the meaning and necessity of pain. Secondly, the hymn draws attention to the fact that Amoret's situation, as described by Scudamour, is a powerful image of the wound of love, and, in so doing, helps us to discern the features of a patently amorous quandary beneath Scudamour's appeal for universal justice. Thirdly, the resemblance of lines 154

to 168 of the hymn to Psalm 94 as a whole suggests that, for Spenser, the suffering entailed by sexual desire reflects man's suffering in general, and thus provides an explanation for and highlights the appropriateness of Scudamour's scriptural reference.

At the same time, the hymn brings into sharp relief an aspect of Scudamour's lament for which, on its own, it offers no clear explanation. The subject of the young knight's speech is certainly the wound of love. Why, then, does he address himself to the Christian God rather than to Cupid? In the _Hymn of Love_ the romantic issue of suffering is compared implicitly with the religious; in the lament, they appear to be fused. Moreover, during Britomart's reply, the scene's romantic _ambience_ recedes into the background altogether; her Christian stoicism, with its emphasis on Providence and its demand for faith, bears no obvious relevance to Scudamour's situation as a lover.

The solution to this difficulty lies in two crucial elements of Spenser's treatment of the theme of love in the Legend of Chastity, neither of which has been sufficiently underscored by most critics of the book. The first of these has to do with the relationship of Book III to the first book of _The Faerie Queene_. It is a commonplace of Spenserian criticism that the Legend of Holiness is a

paradigm for all subsequent legends of the poem, and this is reflected in the second and third books by the reappearance of St. George at the beginning of each. A special link, however, obtains between the story of the Redcrosse Knight and Book III's "looser rimes"--one which will suggest itself more than once in the remainder of this essay, and which derives from a fact so obvious as to be easily ignored. Romantic love is, throughout Book I, the vehicle of an extended metaphor whose tenor is the soul's pilgrimage toward salvation. Its use as such is Book I's special gift to Book III, for it makes it easier for Spenser, shifting his emphasis to the virtuous pursuit of sexual love, to employ the same metaphor with the tenor and the vehicle reversed. In the Legend of Holiness the soul is reflected in the mirror or romantic passion; in the Legend of Chastity the reverse will often be the case.

Spenser signals the operation of such a "reversed metaphor" in the Legend of Chastity in his handling of Britomart's encounter with the Redcrosse Knight in canto i. We meet Redcrosse in front of Castle Joyeous, where six knights in the service of the castle's mistress, Malecasta ("bad chastity," or simply "unchastity"), are trying to force him "to chaunge (his) liefe, and love another Dame" (i.20-24).[15] Redcrosse's predicament is an amorous

one, and it foreshadows that in which Amoret finds herself ten cantos later. It is therefore not surprising, although it is nonetheless intriguing, that the saint, stating his case before Britomart, sums up his whole spiritual journey in the form of a lover's testament:

> For I love one, the truest one on ground,
> Ne list me chaunge; she th'erraunt Damzell hight,
> For whose deare sake full many a bitter stownd,
> I have endur'd, and tasted many a bloudy wound.
>
> (i.24)

Britomart's reply is interesting:

> Certes (said she) then bene ye sixe to blame,
> To weene your wrong by force to justifie:
> For knight to leave his Ladie were great shame,
> That faithfull is, and better were to die.
> All losse is lesse, and lesse the infamie,
> Then losse of love to him, that loves but one;
> Ne may love be compeld by maisterie;
> For soone as maisterie comes, sweet love anone
> Taketh his nimble wings, and soone away is gone.
>
> (1.25)

Redcrosse has spoken as a lover, and Britomart defends him on the same terms. Indeed, his erotic dilemma has been used by Spenser to launch the reader into the first of the many lessons in the lore of love which Book III has to offer. Yet the fact that this lover is also the patron saint of a new England, and that his "erraunt Damzell" is none other than Una, the True Church, invests his situation and Britomart's response to it with a peculiar resonance.

We do not learn Redcrosse's identity until stanza 64, when he is referred to rather joltingly as "the Champion of the Bloudy Crosse;" but once we do know who he is, we cannot turn again to Britomart's remarks on sexual fidelity without at some level linking that moral virtue with the theological virtue of faith, which is the leading concept of Book I. Nor can we read the lines

> All losse is lesse, and lesse the infamie,
> Then losse of love to him, that loves but one

without recalling that epitome of "Oneness," Una. Britomart's speech is nothing more nor less than a statement about the goodness of faithfulness and the evil of "maisterie" in love, but it is a statement fashioned along the lines of and elevated by specific reference to the pattern of spirituality developed in Book I. As such, it sets the tone for much that is to follow in Book III, and helps us to understand the relevance, within its context, of the preoccupation with Providence and religious faith in Scudamour's and Britomart's exchange.[16]

To understand it fully, however, we must turn to a second important element of the love theme in Book III. Scudamour addresses his complaint to the Christian God because, throughout the Legend of Chastity, it is the Christian God, not Cupid, who goads the body and heart to

love. Spenser states this most explicitly in his description of the Garden of Adonis, where, quoting Genesis, he writes:

> Ne needs there Gardiner to set, or sow,
> To plant or prune: for of their owne accord
> All things, as they created were, doe grow,
> And yet remember well the mightie word,
> Which first was spoken by th'Almighty Lord,
> That bad them to increase and multiplie.
>
> (vi.34)

The same notion occurs in other crucial passages as well. Consider, for instance, Spenser's paean to love at the beginning of canto iii, immediately following his account of Britomart's fated vision of Artegall in her father's magic mirror:

> Most sacred fire, that burnest mightily
> In living brests, ykindled first above,
> Emongst th'eternall spheres and lamping sky,
> And thence pourd into men, which men call Love;
> Not that same, which doth base affections move
> In brutish minds, and filthy lust inflame,
> But that sweet fit, that doth true beautie love,
> And choseth virtue for his dearest Dame,
> Whence spring all noble deeds and never dying fame:
>
> Well did Antiquitie a God thee deeme,
> That over mortall minds hast so great might,
> To order them, as best to thee doth seeme,
> And all their actions to direct aright;
> The fatall purpose of divine foresight,
> Thou dost effect in destined descents,
> Through deepe impression of thy secret might,
> And stirredst up th'Heroes high intents,
> Which the late world admyres for wondrous moniments.
>
> (iii.1-2)

This passage is, in many regards, similar to the _Hymn in Honour of Love_. In both poems, the love being praised is a "sacred fire," kindled in heaven (c.f. _HL_.69), to be distinguished from the flame of lust (_HL_.176-80)--an ennobling passion (_HL_.190-96) which inspires a yearning for true beauty (_HL_.110-12) and whose purpose is the generation of offspring (_HL_.103-05). The beginning of canto iii differs from the hymn, however, in one important respect. The love it hails is not, as in the hymn, the "soveraine Lord of all," nor is it a god. It is, rather, the agent of a higher power; as a minister of Providence, it effects "the fatall purpose of divine foresight." The words "Well did Antiquitie a God thee deeme," and those which follow, might well be taken as a gloss on the nearly pagan tenor of the hymn: they suggest that behind Spenser's vision of a Cupid who is

> The worldes great Parent, the most kind preserver
> Of living wights, the soveraine Lord of all,

there stands the real Author of the wound of love, the Triune God Himself. Certainly, there is no doubt that this God plays a direct role in the enkindling of Britomart's sexual desire. The two stanzas just quoted introduce the story of her desperate visit to the cave of Merlin, where she learns that she, with Artegall, is to be the founder of

a line of British kings. The following words are among the first addressed by the magician to the love-sick girl:

> It was not, Britomart, thy wandring eye
> Glauncing unwares in charmed looking glas,
> But the streight course of heavenly destiny,
> Led with eternall providence, that has
> Guided thy glaunce, to bring his well to pas:
> Ne is thy fate, ne is thy fortune ill,
> To love the prowest knight, that ever was,
> Therefore submit thy ways unto his will,
> And do by all dew meanes thy destiny fulfill.
>
> (iii.24)

Britomart's story raises an issue which is posed repeatedly in the course of Book III, and of which Scudamour's dialogue with Britomart is only a later and more developed statement. How is the part played by Providence in "that sweet fit, that doth true beautie love" to be reconciled with the suffering which seems to attend love in all its forms, from the noblest to the basest? Britomart's love is chaste and ordained by God, but her experience of it is no less shattering than that of a Myrrhe or Pasiphaë or any other mortal seized by the basest and most pathetic of desires, and is susceptible to faithful description by means of the same terminology and poetic machinery with which the experience of unhealthy love is commonly described. Neither before nor after

Merlin's assurance that her love is according to the will of God is Britomart exempted from the mental anguish which it brings her; indeed, her lament on the Rich Strond in canto iv is perhaps the most eloquent expression in Book III of the sorrow inflicted so indiscriminately by love. Of course, she takes comfort

> Through hope of those, which Merlin had her told
> Should of her name and nation be chiefe,
> And fetch their being from the sacred mould
> Of her immortall wombe,
>
> (iv.11)

and Spenser leaves us in no doubt that her trust in Providence will not go unrewarded. But there are two singular incidents in Book III, both involving figures who, like Britomart, come to grief through love, in which the trustworthiness of Providence is less unambiguously portrayed. In her first appearance since Book II, Belphoebe revives and heals Arthur's squire, Timias, of the mortal wound received in his fight with the three fosters. Her arrival is heralded by Spenser as follows:

> Providence heavenly passeth living thought,
> And doth for wretched mens reliefe make way;
> For loe great grace or fortune thither brought
> Comfort to him, that comfortlesse now lay.
>
> (v.27)

But in the ensuing narrative Timias is healed of his first injury only to be far more grievously wounded by the love

he conceives for his benefactress. The Legend of Chastity contains no more violent picture of the wound of love than this:

> Thus warreid he long time against his will,
> Till that through weaknesse he was forst at last,
> To yield himselfe unto the mighty ill:
> Which as a victour proud, gan ransack fast
> His inward parts, and all his entrayles wast,
> That neither bloud in face, nor life in hart
> It left, but both did quite drye up, and blast;
> As percing levin, which the inner part
> Of everything consumes, and calcineth by art.
>
> (v.48)

The "comfort" brought to Florimell by Providence three cantos later seems no less equivocal. Adrift on the high seas with an unscrupulous fisherman, Florimell calls out for the help of her absent knights. It is Proteus who answers her cries, and his approach is prefaced by the following lines:

> See how the heavens of voluntary grace,
> And soveraine favour towards chastity,
> Doe succour send in her distressed cace:
> So much high God doth innocence embrace.
>
> (viii.29)

No sooner, however, is Florimell saved from sexual assault at the hands of an old lecher, than she is subjected to the lustful attentions of the monstrous "shepheard of the seas," who, unable to seduce or frighten her into submission, casts her into his undersea dungeon, "there to make her his eternall thrall" (viii.41). Proteus' dizzying

self-transformations make the unchangeability of Flori-mell's love stand out all the more strongly, yet, despite the favour her chastity finds with God, her virtue does not protect her from a fate similar to Amoret's in canto xii.[17]

Just as Scudamour's dilemma is only one in a series of undeserved misfortunes, any of which might provoke a response similar to his, so the answer to his complaint, as found in Britomart's reply, follows a well-established pattern. Seldom in Book III does Spenser draw his reader's attention to the hardships endured by his 'good' characters without at the same time reminding him of pain's positive value. In Britomart's case this reminder is afforded, once again, by Merlin:

> Most noble Virgin, that by fatall lore
> Hast learn'd to love, let no whit thee dismay
> The hard begin, that meets thee in the dore,
> And with sharpe fits thy tender hart oppresseth sore,
>
> For so must all things excellent begin,
> And eke enrooted deepe must be that Tree,
> Whose big embodied braunches shall not lin,
> Till they to heavens hight forth stretched bee.
>
> (iii.21-22)

In Timias' case the reminder lies where we might least expect to find it. Merlin's advice should help us to spot a similar reminder within Spenser's description of the "mighty ill" which ransacks Timias' heart

As percing levin, which the inner part
Of everything consumes, and calcineth by art.

(v.48)

The "levin" or lightning which lances Timias is a purifying fire; to calcine means "to burn minerals to correct the malignity of them, to purify or refine by consuming the grosser part."[18] Timias' malady is, Spenser implies, a curative, like that "sweet passion" in the Hymn of Love whose power

all sordid baseness doth expell,
And the *refyned* mynd doth newly fashion
Unto a fairer forme.

(HL.191-93, italics mine)

Florimell's calamity, too, carries within it the seeds of spiritual triumph. Her "thralldome" and "tormenting griefe" are, certainly, an occasion for sorrow, but they become for Spenser one for joy as well, inasmuch as they prove the strength of her virtue and assure her a place among the saints:

Eternall thraldome was to her more liefe,
Than losse of chastitie, or chaunge of love:
Die had she rather in tormenting greife,
Than any should of falsenesse her reprove,
Or looseness, that she lightly did remove.
Most vertuous virgin, glory be thy meed,
And crowne of heavenly praise with saints above,
Where most sweet hymnes of this thy famous deed
Are still emongst them song, that far my rymes
exceed.

(viii.42)

To be a perfect lover is, in Spenser's Faerieland, to be a saint, not only metaphorically, but in a real sense. Inasmuch as the heroism of Book III is deeply rooted in the mystique of the wound of love, it follows the pattern enjoined on all true lovers by Spenser in his <u>Hymn</u>; inasmuch as its "high intents" are stirred by God Himself, it bears a close resemblance to the heroism of Book I. Britomart's self-yielding to the yoke of Love is also a submission to the will of God; Florimell's constancy is a species of religious faith. Only in these terms can we appreciate the full weight of Britomart's advice to Scudamour in canto xi; her exhortation to "submit you to high providence" conveys a lesson she herself has had to learn.

The significance of Scudamour's incomplete paraphrase of Psalm 94 and the bearing of that psalm on the subject of love as it is treated by Spenser throughout Book III should now be apparent. The heroism of the Legend of Chastity is a passive one, its proving-ground the school of patience, and its reward the transformative effect of pain. Scudamour's unwillingness to accept the suffering of the innocent disqualifies him for a heroism of this sort, and, both as a lover and a Christian knight, deprives him of a share in the economy of grace.

III. Virtue's Might and Value's Confidence

At the end of the first section of this chapter I suggested that Scudamour's response to Amoret's captivity offers the key to his failure as a heroic lover in Book III. This suggestion has, I believe, been borne out by our discussion of Britomart's reply to his lament, of the parallel passage in the <u>Hymn of Love</u> and, finally, of the theme of providential suffering-in-love as it develops in the course of the book. In the same place I also proposed that Scudamour's inability to accept either his own or his Lady's misfortune arises from faults of the sort attacked by Saint Augustine in his commentary on Psalm 94. The pride and faithlessness of his hearers is the object of the Doctor's pastoral concern; do these defects belong to Scudamour as well? To answer this question, I shall turn once again to Britomart's speech in stanza 14. I shall then examine Scudamour's second long speech in stanzas 16 and 17, and conclude with a consideration of his behaviour in the passage immediately preceding Britomart's entry into the House of Busyrane.

Lines 5 to 7 of stanza 14, with their pointed reference to Scudamour's "noble hart," his "vertue" and his "value" seem designed to balance Scudamour's description

of himself as a "vile" and "worthless wretch," and convey a subtle reprimand for the harsh self-castigation which closes his lament. They are reminiscent of several lines from Una's speech in Book I, canto ix, in which, berating Redcrosse for his submission to Despayre, she calls his attention, albeit with some sarcasm, to his "manly heart," "constant spright," and to his value in God's eyes. Whether or not the resemblance of the two passages was intentional on Spenser's part, it invites a comparison of Scudamour's situation with that of Redcrosse at the moment of and immediately following the would-be saint's near suicide. Redcrosse, like Scudamour, is afflicted by a sense of his own vileness, and his conviction that he does not deserve God's mercy is not unlike Scudamour's that he is unworthy of Amoret's self-sacrificing love. In Book I, Spenser suggests in various ways that Redcrosse's desperate response to his own sinfulness is itself tainted with the sin of pride--a pride which resists acceptance of God's unmerited forgiveness. Redcrosse's vow to visit with Despayre despite Trevisan's repeated warnings recalls the false assurance with which, in the book's first episode, he hastens to do battle with Errour, although in that instance as well he is advised to be less rash. Redcrosse's reply to Una's plea that he withhold his stroke

"till further triall be made" is telling:

> Ah Ladie (said he) shame were to revoke
> The forward footing for an hidden shade:
> Vertue gives her selfe light, through darknesse
> for to wade.
>
> (I.i.12)

As it turns out, Redcrosse is lucky in his fight with Errour; in the later episode, his "vertue" serves him in less good stead. Spenser's remark at the beginning of Book I, canto x, immediately following Redcrosse' encounter with Despayre, serves as a commentary on both adventures:

> What man is he, that boasts of fleshly might,
> And vaine assurance of mortality,
> Which all so soone, as it doth come to fight,
> Against all spiritual foes, yeelds by and by,
> Or from the field most cowardly doth fly?
> Ne let the man ascribe it to his skill,
> That thorough grace hath gained victory;
> If any strength we have, it is to ill,
> But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will.
>
> (I.x.1)

In the same canto Spenser tells how the "soul-diseased knight" is brought by Una to the House of Holiness to be cured by Patience,

> a Leach, the which had great insight
> In that disease of grieved conscience.
> And well could cure the same.
>
> (I.x.23)

There he is subjected to a series of violent remedies, administered by Amendment, Penance, Remorse and Repentance,

aimed at quelling his "proud humours" and purging him of "the cause the root of all his ill . . . infected sin." "So," Spenser continues,

> in short space they did to health restore
> <u>The man that would not live</u>, but earst lay
> at deathes dore.
>
> (I.x.27; italics mine)

Britomart's manner of addressing Scudamour seems to be informed by a similar diagnosis of his spiritual state; her speech emphasises his need of patience, and implies that, just as his fear for Amoret hides a less irreprochable lack of faith, so a pride not unlike Redcrosse's may lurk behind his protestation that he does not merit the fidelity his Lady keeps at such great cost. Only after Redcrosse has been "recover'd by wise Patience"--a patience which clearly retains its radical sense of <u>passio</u>, or suffering--does he meet Charissa, the embodiment of Charity. Then, and only then, is he able to defeat the dragon, rescue Una's patrimony, and take her as his bride. If Scudamour is to succeed in <u>his</u> quest, and become a lover in the full sense of the word, he too must learn that humility which can bear to suffer and be suffered <u>for</u>. He must learn, in other words, to view Amoret's situation, and his own shortcomings, in the light of the Passion.

If Scudamour's failure "to quote" the greater portion of Psalm 94 betrays his need to be reminded of the values set forth in verses eight to twenty-three and reiterated by Britomart in her first speech, it also reveals his need to be reminded, like Redcrosse, of the redemptive act which is their source and vindication. Redcrosse is led astray by Despayre when, half-quoting Romans 6:23, he reminds the knight that "the wages of sin are death," but neglects to add that "the gift of God is eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (See I.ix.46-47). Likewise, Scudamour, apprised by his situation of the apparent futility of righteousness in a world overcome by pain and evil, fails to recall that it is love, not justice, that has redeemed the world, and that this love has manifested itself in the innocent suffering the psalmist wishes to avoid. Scudamour's unmindfulness of the Passion may be inferred from every aspect of his words and behaviour so far discussed; it is more clearly evident in his second description of his own and Amoret's distress:

> What bootes it plaine, that cannot be redresst,
> And sew vaine sorrow in a fruitlesse eare,
> Sith powre of hand, nor skill of learned brest,
> Ne *worldly price* cannot *redeeme* my deare,
> Out of her *thraldome* and continuall feare?
>
> (xi.16)

The words I have italicised evoke the doctrine of man's

redemption by Christ, but they do so by default. Although Scudamour's outline of the impossibility of Amoret's rescue by any "worldly price" calls to mind man's helplessness in the face of his own sin, it takes no account of the one Ransomer in Whom, one would suppose, man still could place his hope. Ironically, Scudamour's opening words recall Psalm 126:

> 1. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, then were we like unto them that dream.
>
> 2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with joy.
>
> 3. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.
>
> 4. Yea, the Lord hath done great things for us already; whereof we rejoice.
>
> 5. Turn our captivity, O Lord, as the rivers in the south.
>
> 6. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
>
> 7. He that now goeth on his way weeping and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.

This psalm, commonly taken to refer to Israel's return from captivity in Babylon, prefigures man's deliverance by Christ, and, according to some Protestant interpreters, the ultimate victory of the Reformed Church. Indeed, its sixth verse, to which line two of stanza sixteen alludes, has long been read as a promise of the Resurrection.[19]

Yet, once more, Scudamour's allusion is a misquotation: "What bootes it plaine," he asks, to "sew vaine sorrow in a fruitlesse eare?" The undistorted verse reads, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Scudamour's stoicism has about it an air, if not of insincerity, then immaturity, and one perceives a certain gentle humour in Spenser's picture of the young knight who, until this point, has lain "all wallowed . . . upon the grassie ground," rearing his head up "easily, / And leaning on his elbow" to deliver <u>his</u> reply (xi.15). He is obstinate in his futility; even Britomart's vow to rescue Amoret or die with him in the attempt fails to shake him from it, and though she does at length persuade him to arise

> And with her wend, to see what new successe
> Mote him befall upon new enterprise,

the first test of his faith sends him careening back into the grip of his despair. When, the reader will recall, the two knights reach the castle gate, they find

> A flaming fire, ymixt with smouldry smoke,
> And stinking Sulphure, that with griesly hate,
> And dreadfull horrour did all entraunce choke.
>
> (xi.21)

Scudamour's reaction to this, which follows the wording of stanzas 16 and 17 fairly closely, is by now predictable:

This is (quoth he) the dolorous despight,
Which earst to you I playnd: for neither may
This fire be quencht by any wit or might,
Ne yet by any meanes remov'd away,
So mighty be th'enchauntments, which the same
do stay.

What is there else, but cease these fruitlesse
paines,
And leave me to my former languishing?
Faire Amoret must dwell in wicked chaines,
And Scudamore here dye with sorrowing.

(xi.23-24)

With the flames guarding Busyrane's castle we come to a crucial turning-point both in Spenser's story and in our discussion. Not only does this fire afford the reader his first glimpse into the world which Britomart is about to enter, but it also provides a focus around which Spenser gathers all the themes and motifs woven into the two knights' dialogue so far. On our reading of that dialogue depends our vision of the flames, and this, in turn, will have no small bearing on the way in which we read the final episode itself. Here, then, we may begin to reap the benefits of our close study of Scudamour's encounter with the martial maid.

Like all its antecedents in Book III, the fire betokens physical passion, and from its description in stanza 21 it is clear that it is akin, not to the "sacred fire" praised in canto iii, but to "that same which doth base

affections move / In brutish minds, and filthy lust inflame." Thus, it has often been taken to signify an excess of sexual desire in Scudamour himself, and this view has provided some critics with a cause for Amoret's misfortune.[20] Since there is no indication elsewhere in Books III or IV that Scudamour has any tendency whatever to lust, such an interpretation is not very satisfactory. A rather different reading is suggested by those defects of Scudamour's character that <u>have</u> emerged in canto xi. On one level, Amoret's imprisonment, and her husband's powerlessness to help her, are the cause of Scudamour's distress; on another they are the projection of his cowardice, his blindness and his lack of faith. By the same token, the flames may be approached upon two levels. On the one, they are a magic barrier thrown across the young knight's path; on the other, they are the shadow cast by Scudamour's response to human suffering and the wound of love. Amoret's torture is an icon of that wound, and as such it is true to Spenser's view of the psychological and spiritual realities of love. But Scudamour's notion that his bride is beyond help is as mistaken as his assumption that "if good find grace, and righteousness reward," they should not meet with suffering as well. Busyrane's fire, too, points to the pain incurred by love,

but it does so to it <u>as perceived by Scudamour</u>: its "dreadfull horrour" embodies the nightmare vision, looming behind the questions raised by him in his lament, of a world in which fidelity knows no reward and the wicked flourish beneath the gaze of a God who does not care. This is the same vision which, in one form or another, haunts Book III as a whole, and it constitutes no less of a challenge to Scudamour than did to Britomart that "deepe engulfed griefe" compared by Glauce to an "<u>Aetn</u>'of . . . smoke and sulphure mingled with confused strife."

Britomart also hesitates before the flames, and her cry of dismay against "that cruell element which all things feare" reminds us that the fire represents a threat to her as well:

> What monstrous enmity provoke we heare,
> Foolhardy as th'Earthes children, the which made
> Battel against the Gods? so we a God invade.
>
> (xi.22)

It is curious that, in this admission of defeat, she should allude to the giants' unsuccessful storming of Olympus. The victory of the gods in that war was due, in part, to Minerva, and it is to Minerva that Britomart, with reference to the same myth, has been compared in canto ix:[21]

Like as Minerva, being late returnd
From slaughter of the Giaunts conquered;
Where proud Encelade, whose wide nosethrils burnd
With breathed flames, like to a furnace red,
Transfixed with the speare, down tombled ded
From top of Hemus, by him heaped hye;
Hath loosd her helmet from her lofty hed,
And her Gorgonian shield gins to untye
From her left arme, to rest in glorious victorye.

(ix.22)

Britomart's identification of herself in canto xi with "th'Earthes children" raises the spectre of a reversed moral order, in which the forces of evil hold sway in heaven over those of good, and recalls her own terror in canto ii of the hell into which her new God-given passion seems to be thrusting her.

In the present instance, Britomart's misgivings are short-lived. Scudamour's harping on "these fruitlesse paines" appears to galvanize her spirit into life; reproving him sharply for his diffidence, she moves into the flames--and so into the first decisively heroic act of her career:

Perdy not so; (said she) for shamefull thing
it were t'abandon noble chevisaunce,
For shew of perill, without venturing:
Rather let try extremities of chaunce,
Then enterprised prayse for dread to disavaunce.

Therewith resolv'd to prove her utmost might,
Her ample shield she threw before her face,
And her swords point directing forward right,
Assayld the flame, the which eftsoones gave place,

> And did it selfe divide with equall space,
> That through she passed; as a thunderbolt
> Perceth the yielding ayre, and doth displace
> The soring clouds into sad showres ymolt;
> So to her yold the flames, and did their force
> revolt.
>
> (xi.24-25)

Britomart's feat is informed by the same pattern traceable in the account of her own early history, and in those of Timias and Florimell. Her miraculous passage through the flames if not so much the result of as the necessary condition of Britomart's heroism; she becomes a hero by submitting herself to the suffering the fire signifies. By yielding herself to the wound of love, Britomart divests it of its terror, if not of its pain, and reasserts her faith

> that all the suffering in the worlde is lesse
> than vertues might, and values confidence.

Immediately, the fire, ceasing to be her enemy, accepts her as its master, and gives way.

Not so for Scudamour. Although Britomart's successful crossing bodes well for Amoret's release, his inability to accompany her undoes him:

> Whom wheneas Scudamore saw past the fire,
> Safe and untoucht, he likewise gan assay,
> With greedy will, and envious desire,
> And bad the stubborn flames to yield him way:
> But cruell Mulciber would not obay
> His threatfull pride, but did the more augment
> His mighty rage, and with imperious sway
> Him forst (maulgre his fierceness) to relent,
> And back retire, all scorcht and pitifully brent.

> With huge impatience he inly swelt,
> More for great sorrow, that he could not pas,
> Then for the burning torment, which he felt,
> That with fell woodnesse he effierced was,
> And wilfully him throwing on the gras,
> Did beat and bounse his head and brest full sore.
>
> (xi.26-27)

It would seem from Scudamour's behaviour that Britomart's words have been spent on him for nothing, and that the faults alluded to by her in stanza 14 have yet to be set right. Not only does his "huge impatience" assert itself more boldly here than in his opening lament, but it leads him to indulge in a worse fit of vexation than the one in whose throes Britomart first finds him. Moreover, in his attack on Mulciber Scudamour reveals still other moral defects; his "greedy will," "envious desire" and "threatfull pride" will prove to be his characteristic weaknesses in Book IV, and are no doubt among the factors complicating his actions in stanzas 8 to 14. Greed, envy and pride correspond exactly to the vices imputed by Saint Augustine to the murmurers whose thoughts find expression in the psalm verses paraphrased by Scudamour; such men, the reader may recall him saying, display their pride in their desire for vengeance, and, although outwardly righteous, are envious of the wicked and greedy for power. Given the opportunity they will, he warns, prove evil. Notably, in this connexion, the "fell woodness" with which Scudamour

hurls himself onto the ground is reminiscent of the worse fate of the jealousy-ridden Malbecco, who, at the end of the preceding canto, throws himself "dispiteously" down from a seaside cliff. Scudamour himself falls prey to jealousy in Book IV--a jealousy arising, once again, from pride and lack of faith.

If Scudamour shares traits with Malbecco, he may be said to share a few (one hates to say it) with Busyrane. The knight's own account of his conquest of Amoret in Book IV, canto ix, not only provides another instance of his wilfulness, but also contains an echo of Amoret's abduction by the "vile enchaunter," as it is related at the outset of Book IV:

> She often prayd, and often me besought,
> Sometime with tender teares to let her goe,
> Sometime with witching smiles: but yet for nought,
> That ever she to me could say or doe,
> Could she her wished freedom from me wooe.
>
> (IV.x.57)

> For that same vile enchaunter Busyran,
> The very selfe same day that she was wedded,
> Amidst the bridale feast, whilest every man
> Surcharg'd with wine, were heedlesse and ill hedded,
> All bent to mirth before the bride was bedded,
> Brought in that mask of love which late was showen:
> And there the Ladie ill of friends bestedded,
> By way of sport, as oft in maskes is knowen,
> Conveyed quite away to living wight unknowen.
>
> (IV.i.3)

I do not mean to suggest that Scudamour is an evil man, or that Spenser intends us to consider him as one. Yet, although he is certainly not a Malbecco or a Busyrane, both figures display in their extreme forms tendencies which he has not yet overcome, and which Spenser demands us to consider with some care. His jealousy, wilfulness and pride, together with the impatience which is their symptom and the lack of faith which is their source, must be taken into account if we are to assess adequately his character and setbacks, both as a Christian knight and as a lover; as much as or more than Busyrane's "strong enchauntments," they prevent him from achieving heroism in either sphere. Scudamour fails to operate as a "shield of love" because he does not yet have the spiritual maturity to see, let alone to imitate the profoundly sacrificial nature of love as Spenser so subtly but unmistakeably defines it in this scene. This is not to say that Scudamour does not have his good points: Spenser gives us no reason to doubt the sincerity either of his love for Amoret or of his gratitude to Britomart as expressed by him in stanza 19, and certainly he shares his weaknesses with most well-meaning lovers. Yet the standards set for heroism in the Legend of Chastity are high--as high as those proposed by Saint Paul in his por-

trayal of charity in I Corinthians 13: 4-7, the words of which are peculiarly applicable in the present context:

> Love suffreth long: it is bountiful: love envieth not: love doeth not boast it self: it is not puffed up:
>
> It disdaineth not: it seketh not her owne things; it is not provoked to anger: it thinketh not evil:
>
> It rejoyceth not in iniquitie, but rejoyceth in the trueth.
>
> It suffreth all things: it believeth all things: it hopeth all things: it endureth all things.

Scudamour has much to learn before these words can begin to describe his own love. Nevertheless, his deficiencies act as a foil against which Spenser can assert the vision of love embodied in the passage from Saint Paul--a vision which, as we shall see, Busyrane will try his utmost to pervert. All the magician's devices are ranged against Britomart in the ensuing episode to convince her that love's integrity is shattered by the suffering it entails, and that Amoret's "caytive band" represents the conquest of chaste love by an evil and avenging Cupid. It is only Britomart's firm conviction to the contrary which enables her to see through Busyrane's "false charmes" and "idle shewes," and thereby bring him to defeat.

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Spenser tells us twice in canto xii that all the contents of the House of Busyrane are a fraud, and we receive a warning to the same effect as soon as Britomart has passed into the castle's "utmost roome":

> For round about, the walls yclothed were
> With goodly arras of great majesty,
> Woven with gold and silk so close and nere,
> That the rich metall lurked privily,
> As faining to be hid from envious eye;
> Yet here and there, and everywhere unwares,
> It shewd itselfe, and shone unwillingly;
> Like a discolourd snake, whose hidden snares
> Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht
> back declares.
>
> (xi.28)

But as the scene progresses, it is difficult to determine where those "hidden snares" are laid, and what they are. Certainly, the evil which Britomart confronts must be a challenge to her role as champion of chaste love, and certainly, the "foul idolatry" committed before the idol of Cupid informs us that this is a place where love is ill pursued. Yet, as we saw in Chapter One, the two great pageants of the House--the tapestries in canto xi and the mask in canto xii--are clearly not temptations to unchastity; if anything, they are admonishments against it. As such, they force the unwilling reader toward one of two views of Amoret, neither of which tallies with her previous characterization as "th'ensample of True Love alone," or with Spenser's emphatic claim that

"thousand charmes could not her stedfast hart remove." If Amoret is innocent, then her suffering is imaginary, and her bondage represents her paralyzing fear of sexual love; if not, then the magician's workmanship reflects the wisdom of a proper attitude toward love, while his unhappy victim, supposedly "the Lodestarre of all chast affectione," presents the picture of one who has exchanged her honour for a brief and ultimately tragic self-abandonment to lust. Neither point of view has been without its exponents in recent years, nor has either view lacked supporters who express some measure of dismay over the scene. On one side of the issue, Watkins blames "our bewilderment" over Amoret on "an excess of strands in the tapestry Spenser is weaving"; on the other, Cheney comments--not without a trace of exasperation--that "Spenser's account of Amoret's difficulties manages to be generally credible without providing much specifically ethical definition."[1] Watkins suggests that Spenser has been careless as an artist; Cheny infers that he has fallen short of his avowed role as a moralist. Neither statement conveys a flattering judgement on a scene occupying such a prominent position in a work designed, according to Spenser, to be "delightfull and pleasing to commune sence," while at the same time

fashioning "a gentleman or noble person in vertuous or gentle discipline."[2]

Does Spenser fail us both as poet and teacher in the House of Busyrane, or have we been careless there as readers? The question is not an idle one, nor has our discussion in the last chapter made it any easier to answer. We have seen that Amoret's situation poses the same problem for her husband as it does for us; for him, as for the reader, the difficulty lies in the contrast of her innocence with her "caytive band." Moreover, we have seen that the framework in which that problem is first defined contains a possible solution to it. Scudamour's incomplete paraphrase of Psalm 94 reminds us--to use the words of one of its sixteenth-century commentators--that "the Church verilie never triumphed, but under the crosse."[3] Applied to the final episode, this notion, which corresponds precisely to Spenser's dictum that "lovers heaven must passe by sorrowes hell,"[4] disposes of the apparent contradiction between Amoret's suffering, as such, and her previous characterization; at the same time, however, it brings into focus an aspect of her wound in view of which Spenser's portrayal of Amoret in the mask seems negligent if not highly irresponsible. On the one hand, there is not the slightest inconsistency between Amoret's injury and the chaste affectione she

bears for Scudamour. As Paul Alpers has rightly noted, her "torture is a conventional image that has occurred throughout Book III,"[5] and we have seen it applied, in varying forms, to Britomart, to Timias, and to the Redcrosse Knight. Amoret's heart could well be "drawne forth" and exposed because it is no longer hers, but Scudamour's, and pierced because, like Britomart, she is in love. On the other hand, the fact that Cupid's "cruell wound" is in itself no index of its victim's spiritual state invests the image of that wound with an intrinsic ambiguity--an ambiguity which Spenser's description of Amoret in the mask does nothing to lessen and which, in turn, accounts for the devastating effect of her placement in a series of figures depicting the ill effects of lust. It is to this second point that we must now address ourselves if we are to determine whether the blame for carelessness in the House of Busyrane belongs to Spenser or to his readers, and whether it is possible to arrive at a more satisfying interpretation of the final episode than has to date been offered.

Let us look again at the passage in question:

> After all these there marcht a most faire Dame,
> Led of two grysie villeins, th'one _Despight_,
> The other cleped _Cruelty_ by name:
> She dolefull Lady, like a dreary Spright,
> Cald by strong charmes out of eternall night,

> Had deathes owne image figurd in her face,
> Full of sad signes, fearefull to living sight;
> Yet in that horror shewd a seemely grace,
> And with her feeble feet did move a comely pace.
>
> Her brest all naked, as net ivory,
> Without adorne of gold or silver 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,
> 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 drawne forth, and in silver basin layd,
> Quite through transfixed with a deadly dart,
> And in her bloud yet steeming fresh embayd:
> And those two villeins, which her steps upstayd,
> When her weake feete could scarcely her sustaine,
> And fading vitall powers gan to fade,
> Her forward still with torture did constraine,
> And evermore encreased her consuming paine.
>
> (xii.19-21)

Taken alone, Amoret's condition does not tell us whether her love is good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, faithful or, as Spenser might say, "light." The woman we see here could well be taken for another Florimell, or even for a type of Britomart herself, whose own desire "so deepe engord her hart / That naught but death her dolour mote depart" (iv.6). But she might just as easily be taken for a type of Malecasta, the unchaste mistress of Castle Joyeous, whose lust-fed wound, like Amoret's, "still inward freshly bled" (i.56). In Malecasta's case, as in

Britomart's, Spenser is careful to qualify the nature of the wound in question, thereby revealing his awareness that the imagery of love can be construed in a variety of ways.[6] In Amoret's case, however, he offers no such qualification; indeed, he seems at pains to preserve the ambiguity of her pain. The adjectives he uses to describe it, and the interjections in which he records his own response to it convey sympathy for Cupid's victim, and horror at her state, but they do not give the slightest indication as to how the injury itself is to be read.

Some idea of the varying responses this passage might have evoked in an Elizabethan reasonably familiar with the iconographical traditions of his day may be gained by examining the number of conflicting meanings attached to the image of the exposed or wounded heart in one typical Renaissance treatise on the use of imagery, the _Iconologia_ of Cesare Ripa.[7] There we find that a young lady carrying her heart on a dish for all to see signifies vanity and self-love, while a bare-breasted woman gesturing toward her visible heart represents the virtues of loyalty and friendship, and a young man peering upwards and pointing toward his riven breast betokens love directed toward God. Again, a bad conscience, writes Ripa, is to be shown by the figure of a woman whose breast

has been opened to reveal a heart gnawed "by a snake or worm"; a good conscience, however, may be expressed by the picture of a woman who never ceases to gaze on the heart she holds before her in her hand. A similar figure offering her heart in what Ripa calls "a gracious act" bespeaks sincerity. Rankling sorrow and futile regret make their appearance in the form of a beggared and melancholy man who rips open his chest "with both his hands" to display a heart ringed round with serpents. Yet a similarly grieving and disheveled woman, whose eyes "are turned toward heaven," and who grasps a heart "crowned with thorns," signifies true repentance, and one who sheds tears "sopra un cuore, che tiene in mano" means purity of heart.

Of course, the Iconologia is but one of many textbooks of its type that flourished in the Renaissance, and my brief survey of its heart-related imagery barely touches on a field of study well beyond the scope of this essay.[8] Nevertheless, these few examples from Ripa's book suffice to show that the ambivalence of this sort of imagery is not confined to Spenser's work alone; in this treatise, as in Spenser's poem, the exposed and wounded heart can signify great virtue and great vice alike, and the slightest pressure on the artist's part is enough to

shift the balance one way or the other.

In view of this last point, and in view of the context in which Amoret first appears in canto xii, Spenser's failure to assign any clear meaning to her pain is rather startling. Since Amoret's wound is by its very nature so susceptible to widely differing interpretations, and since Spenser chooses, at this crucial juncture, to keep its meaning open, her inclusion in the mask is all it takes to make her visible and transfixed heart a symbol of disgrace. Here, if anywhere, Cheney seems justified in his observation that Spenser's treatment of Amoret's plight is lacking in sufficient "specifically ethical definition." Elsewhere in Book III, Spenser never fails to qualify the image of love's pain, whenever it appears and in whatever form. Why, when we most require his assistance, does Spenser choose to leave us in the dark?

A possible reason for his choice emerges as soon as we recall that, in terms of the narrative, the real author of the mask is Busyrane, and that this spectacle, like all the contents of his house, is supposed to be a fraud. Spenser's vagueness in stanzas 20 and 21 makes us all too well aware of the built-in ambiguity of Amoret's wound; but by the same token it alerts us to

the ease with which the image of her love can be manipulated and misused. Is this not Spenser's way of suggesting the nature of Busyrane's fraud, and the means by which he perpetrates it? At the end of Chapter One I proposed that the significance of Amoret's presence in the House of Busyrane lies in the very problem it poses, and this has certainly been borne out as far as Scudamour's own response to her captivity is concerned. His realization that the wound of love is visited on both the unchaste and the chaste lies at the root of his dilemma, as it does also for the poet in the _Hymn of Love_ and, in a more general sense, for the prophet in Psalm 94. In the psalmist's case the pervasiveness of human suffering poses a threat to faith in God; in the hymnist's the same problem, translated into the language of romance, poses a threat to faith in the value of sexual love. In Book III the religious issue and the erotic are closely linked: for Scudamour, the fact that pain afflicts the guilty and the innocent alike leads to a loss of faith in God and in the worth of chastity as well. Should we not expect Busyrane to use the same fact--one reflected in the ambiguity of Amoret's wound--to challenge the viability of chaste and providential love, both as a concept and a way of

life? We know Busyrane to be the enemy of true love, and the "goodly ornament" of his rich house provides ample evidence that he is a skilled, if evil artist. Does Busyrane not display his enmity by placing Amoret, who is True Love, in a misleading context, and his lack of scruple as an artist by exploiting the ambivalent imagery of love to make her faithfulness to Scudamour seem false? Again, by leaving Amoret's description in the mask open to more than one reading, does Spenser not protect himself from the charge of inconsistency in her portrayal, while at the same time preserving the concealedness--and hence the danger--of the house's "hidden snares"?

Such a view is supported by Spenser's description of Amoret and her enemy when Britomart has made her move into the castle's final room:

> So soone as she was entred, round about
> She cast her eies, to see what was become
> Of all those persons, which she saw without:
> But lo, they streight were vanisht all and some,
> Ne living wight she saw in all that roome,
> Save that same woefull Lady, both whose hands
> Were bounden fast, that did her ill become,
> And her small wast girt round with iron bands,
> Unto a brasen pillour, by the which she stands.
>
> And her before the vile Enchaunter safe,
> Figuring straunge characters of his art,
> With living 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 love.
> Ah who can love the worker of her smart?

> A thousand charmes he formerly did prove;
> Yet thousand charmes could not her stedfast heart
> remove.
>
> (xii.30-31)

Here, outside the context of the mask, we see the same wound, carefully reportrayed, and qualified in no uncertain terms. To begin with, Amoret's heart is now termed "steadfast"; this adjective alone informs us that the verdict of the mask is false. Secondly, we are told that Busyrane's whole labour is "to make her him to love." Roche correctly observes, in this connexion, that the magician's motive is "not sexual, but destructive," and that "the brief passage in which we see Amoret in Busyrane's power does not reflect the nature of lust in action."[9] Indeed, the "love" Busyrane desires does not fit any of the word's accepted meanings; its usage here is an ironic comment on his wish quite literally to have his victim's heart. Busyrane's goal is not to possess Amoret physically, but to deflect her very nature from its course, and so to kill her. In the third room, as in the second, Busyrane misuses her to further his own ends, and in both rooms his object is the same. In the mask he exploits iconographical convention to malign the fidelity of Amoret's love; here he employs black magic to compel her to deny her plighted troth. In the first instance, his goal is to invalidate the con-

cept of true love by playing on the suffering it brings; in the second, his intent is to destroy the very pattern and example of true love by making literal the suffering she bears. I have suggested that his aim is to make her heart seem false; here we are told he wants, by taking it, to make her heart not only seem, but be so.

Finally, Busyrane is pictured using Amoret's own blood to spell his charms. This, together with the fact that Amoret still suffers despite the disappearance of the mask, corroborates my claim that her affliction is more the means than the result of her tormentor's fraud, and that his lie depends upon the ambiguity inherent in her wound. Amoret's heart only _seems_ to be transfixed, but this should not blind us to the truth her torture represents. Amoret's suffering is unreal insofar as it is the product of a spell; it is real, insofar as all enchantments in _The Faerie Queene_ point to the inner state of their victims. Redcrosse's charm-induced slothfulness in Book I reflects his own spiritual lassitude, and, as we have seen, the same principle operates in the stories of Mordant and Verdant in Book II.[10] Amoret's torment is an outrage which has a basis in fact; figuratively, if not literally, her heart, like those of her admirers at the faerie court, was "launched with love's cruell wound" when

first she gave herself to Scudamour, and long before she fell prey to her enemy's "enchauntment's and black magicke leare."

In Chapter One I noted that Amoret's spell, when viewed in the light of other such enchantments in The Faerie Queene, appears to place her spiritual health in doubt, as does the picture Spenser gives us of her here, "girt round with yron bands / Unto a brasen pillour, by the which she stands."[11] Both matters must be reconsidered at this point. As to the first, it is true that Amoret's charm, like those encountered in Books I and II, objectifies an inward sickness of the soul. In this instance, however, the disease we see externalized is of no ordinary nature; like Timias' "mighty ill" it is as salutary for the virtuous as it is ruinous for those of "baseborn mind." This paradox--so characteristic of sixteenth and seventeenth-century romantic literature, and so pronounced a part of Spenser's treatment of the genre--makes Amoret's enchantment a rather special case. The spells of Mordant, Verdant and the Redcrosse Knight speak out against them and display their faults; Amoret's bewitchment, as gruesome in its effect as any to be found in Spenser's work, is, in its very violence, a measure of the power and stability of her chaste love.

The same kind of paradox applies to the image of the

column and the chain. As the reader will recall, this is an allusion to the end of the second of Petrarch's *Triumphs*, in which Laura, having conquered Cupid, binds him to a pillar with the chain of chastity. Here Amoret, bound with an iron one recalling Mordant's "chaines of lust and lewd desires," replaces Cupid and would seem to be both victim of and hence fit proxy for an unrestrained and evil God of Love--in all respects the opposite of Laura. This, in fact, she is, but not as Cupid's mask would lead us to expect. The Laura of the *Triumphs* conquers Love because she is impervious to his assaults, and rescues Petrarch from enslavement to the god because, ironically enough, she is as unattainable an object for his love as is Belphoebe for the wounded squire's. In short, she is a virgin who will never be a wife. Amoret shares with Laura nothing but her virtue. She is a wife, and a willing target for the darts of love. But were it not for her vulnerability to Cupid's arrows and to Busyrane's abuse, she could not be "th'ensample of true love"--a love in which the chastity of Laura is combined with the sexuality of the Garden of Adonis.

Here we come to the heart of Spenser's message in the final episode--a message of which Busyrane's deceit is itself the vehicle. It is because Amoret differs so from

Laura--and for that matter, from Belphoebe too--that Busyrane can wound and shackle her and cast her like a Cresaid in the mask; yet it is only through our vision of her pain that we can fully understand the nature of the love she figures forth. Indeed, her binding in the place of Cupid to a column made of Venus' metal, brass, is a reminder of her role as second Cupid, adopted by the goddess in her "love's stead, which was strayd," to be "trayned up in true feminitee" and "lessoned / In all the lore of love, and goodly womanhead" (vi.28;51). The product, like Belphoebe, of a virgin-birth recalling Christ's, and a partaker, with her sister, in "the heritage of all celestiall grace," Amoret clearly signals, both in the inmost canto of Book III and in the inmost room of Busyrane's enchanted house, the infusion of a new grace into the processes of human generation marred by sin--an elevation of sexuality, rather than a denial of it.

The reading which I am proposing has several advantages to recommend it. First, it explains how the tapestries and the mask can hide a threat to chastity while at the same time seeming to convey a warning against lust.

Secondly, my view, aside from clearing Spenser of the charge of carelessness, takes care of certain difficulties previously noted with regard to his apparent "about-face" in the last line of stanza 31. In Chapter One I observed

that Spenser's reaffirmation of Amoret's fidelity is too precipitous and briefly put to be convincing.[12] Yet as long as his intentions in the mask are distinguished from Busyrane's, and the characteristic "plasticity" of the imagery of love--its ability to respond to the slightest pressure on the artist's part--is kept in mind, neither Spenser's delay in supplying us with "specifically ethical definition," nor his confinement of that definition to the one word "steadfast" need concern us. We have seen how, in Timias' case, Spenser employs the verb "calcineth" to transform what seems to be a portrait of the "mighty ill" of lust into the vision of a purifying and refining love; that he has used a similar technique in canto xii should come as no surprise--the more so since its use is particularly suited to and constitutes an ironic comment on the dynamics of this scene. Busyrane's whole enterprise is built upon the openness of Amoret's pain to varying constructions; Spenser's counter-attack--if I may, for a moment, place author and character on the same level--is based on this as well. But while the false artist has had to conjure up an entire edifice around that pain in order to traduce it, Spenser, the true craftsman, is able to belie him in one line.

Thirdly, and most importantly, my view relates Brito-

mart's experience inside the House of Busyrane to the issues which inform her dialogue with Scudamour outside the castle's gate. I have already suggested how it does so, but the point is worth repeating. Scudamour is unable to deal with Amoret's innocent suffering--and hence unable to rescue her from it--because he will not "bide the burden of distress" reflected in the wound his young wife bears. He fails to prove a worthy champion of that love which is, as Glauce puts it in Book IV (IV.vi.31), "the crowne of knighthood, and the band / Of noble minds" because he is unwilling to accept the two fundamental tenets of Spenser's teaching on the subject of true love--namely, that suffering afflicts the noble and the mean alike, and that, for lovers as for saints, the only path to glory leads through pain. It is fitting that Busyrane should use the truth of this first tenet to obscure the second--to say, in other words, that true love, since it suffers, is not true. It is also apt that Britomart should meet with success where Scudamour has failed, and in so doing see through Busyrane's "false charmes" and "idle shewes," because she knows that Amoret's wound is one all lovers share. Finally, it is appropriate--and a mark of the poet's subtle and extraordinary wit--that, once unmasked, the tyrant's fraud should in itself be proof that pain

submitted to with faith transforms and elevates the hearts which it afflicts. If Ripa's Iconologia is any indication, Amoret's affliction, once defined as chaste, becomes far more than a figure for the sorrow and confusion caused by sexual desire; by virtue of its steadfastness, her visible and transfixed heart betokens loyalty, sincerity and love of God as well, to name but a few of the virtues assigned by Ripa to the kind of wound she bears. What we see, when we reconsider the mask through Britomart's eyes, is the portrait of a Christian woman suffering the assaults of her enemies with exemplary patience, and confirming in her very bearing Britomart's belief that "all the sorrow in the world is less / Then vertues might, and values confidence." Like some third-century martyr walking to her death, she "in that horrour shewd a seemely grace, ' And with her feeble feet did move a comely pace" (xii.19).

This last comparison is not an idle one; Spenser himself seems to suggest it when, by way of Scudamour's incomplete paraphrase of Psalm 94, he associates Amoret with the true Church, and her suffering with that of Christ and of His saints. In the same connexion, I should like to draw attention to a curious aspect of Spenser's por-

trayal of Amoret in the mask which, as far as I know, has never yet been noticed. Spenser's familiarity with the traditions of medieval manuscript illumination is well attested,[13] and he cannot have been unaware that his placement of the gored and bleeding Amoret between "two villeins, which her steps upstayd" and "forward still with torture did constraine" corresponds precisely to the manner in which the martyred saints were shown in numerous manuscript breviaries and psalters.[14] Time and again, the saints are pictured in such books, often with horrible wounds, and almost always between two men who inflict the torture appropriate to each legend. These vignettes, a few examples of which appear in plates 6 to 8, usually occur in a series, with one illustration allotted to the lower margin of each page. As such illustrations seldom have any direct link with the text above them, they seem to take on a life of their own, and their combined effect is quite startling. As one turns over leaf after leaf, one gains the impression of an endlessly repeatable pattern; the names of the saints change, but the picture--and hence, one feels, the event--is always the same. This method of representation, so suggestive of the martyrs' participation in an eternal and transcendent act, must have had a great effect on Spenser's highly visual imagination--if, as I am sure he did, he ever came into

contact with it. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to see his description of Amoret in the castle's second room as a revival of the same method to depict what might be termed the martyrdom of love.

Whether or not Amoret's position between Cruelty and Despight is an allusion to her sanctity will always be a matter for conjecture. There can, however, be no doubt that, once her wound is reinterpreted, her very presence in the mask becomes, like Florimell's sojourn with Proteus, "fit song of Angells carolled to be," and that the mask itself takes on a new, more plausible and more appealing shape. In light of Spenser's cry that "thousand thousand charmes could not her steadfast hart remove," Amoret no longer appears to be part of the mask's logical development, but stands out in stark contrast to it, as the picture of self-sacrificing love against the background of a "rude confused rout" of ills in which she takes no part. This, in turn, transforms the meaning of the mask. The figures we see marching two by two no longer seem referable to Amoret as aspects of her own tormented soul; as personification of the evils bred by lust, they range themselves against her in their capacity to ruin and abuse true love's good name. Spenser is, I think, referring to the mask when in the proem to Book IV he writes:

For thy they ought not thing unknowne reprove,
Ne naturall affectione faultlesse blame,
For fault of few that have abusd the same.
For it of honor and all vertue is
The roote, and brings forth glorious flowres
of fame,
That crowne true lovers with immortall blis,
The meed of them that love, and do not live
amisse.

(IV.pr.2)

If for "naturall affection" we read "Amoret," and see the maskers as attributes of those "that have abusd the same," and lastly, take their victim to be proof that love "of honor and all vertue is the root," we should find in this passage a clear summary of the meaning Spenser wants the mask to have.

The mask, then, is capable of two interpretations; the one Busyrane intends for it, and Spenser's. This is in keeping with the findings of Alaistair Fowler's numerological analysis of the tapestries and the mask in his fascinating study, Spenser and the Numbers of Time.[15] Fowler has discovered that the total number of figures appearing in the mask, excluding its viewer, Britomart, amounts to thirty-three, the Ptolemaic catalogue number for the constellation Taurus, and that the arrangement of these figures in groups of one (Ease), twelve (the six couples), one-plus-six (Cupid with his retinue, including Amoret), and finally, thirteen (the "rude confused

rout"), corresponds to the divisions of the stars comprising that constellation, according to their varying magnitudes. The same pattern applies to the tapestries in the castle's first room. There, the number of gods and lovers totals thirty-three, as does the number of metamorphoses described. Again, each series falls into groups of one, twelve, one-plus-six and thirteen. By adding Britomart to the computation, Fowler observes, the total in both the tapestries and the mask reaches thirty-four, the catalogue number for Pisces. He then reminds the reader that Taurus is the sign ruled by Venus, in which the power of Jupiter is at its weakest, and that Pisces is the sign ruled by Jupiter, in which Venus finds her exaltation. From this Fowler concludes the following:

> Spenser represents the cause of tragedy and suffering in love as a displacement of Jupiter, the constitutional sovereign of the universe, by an evil Cupid--a Cupid wilful, tyrannical, desirous of mastery. I would suggest, therefore, that the conversion of Taurus to Pisces by Britomart may be intended to symbolize the restoration of sovereignty to Jupiter. . . . Britomart's purpose is not to annihilate love, but only to end its destructive tyranny. In her, Venus finds her Exaltation, yet at the same time becomes part of an ordered universe acknowledging divine rule. [16]

Fowler's analysis of the scene's numerical symbolism is brilliant, and his interpretation of his findings is correct, as far as it goes. Yet his reading of the eipsode needs development; it is easy to understand how the tapestries and the mask reflect the meaning of Taurus, but how do they reflect the meaning of Pisces? This Fowler does not explain. Perhaps he is prevented from doing so because he subscribes to the view that Amoret is herself in need of rehabilitation by the martial maid.[17] Once Amoret is seen as the exemplar of that love which Busyrane desires to malign and kill, the aptness and import of Spenser's extraordinary number scheme emerges much more clearly. The Taurean aspect of the house's two great pageants corresponds to the meaning Busyrane intends for them to have; the Piscean corresponds to the meaning Britomart, once having seen through his deceit, applies to them. Fowler has noted that the name of Busyrane's namesake Busiris was traditionally derived from "<u>bous</u>," the Greek for "bull;"[18] he has not mentioned that Belphoebe's birth, and therefore Amoret's, occurred beneath the sign of Pisces, with Venus in harmony with a ruling Jove:

> But to this faire <u>Belphoebe</u> in her berth
>   The heavens so favourable were and free,
>   Looking with myld aspect upon the earth,
>   In th'<u>Horoscope</u> of her nativitee,

> That all the gifts of grace and chastitee
> On her they poured forth of plenteous horne;
> _Jove_ laught on _Venus_ from his soveraigne see,
> And _Phoebus_ with faire beames did her adorne,
> And all the _Graces_ rockt her cradle being borne.
>
> (vi.2)

Sexual love is capable of sharing with virginity in "the heritage of all celestiall grace." This is the chief notion expressed by Belphoebe's and Amoret's twin birth, and it is this notion which Busyrane aims to do away with, by exploiting the fact that Amoret suffers the wound of love, while Belphoebe, like Laura, does not. More than any other figure in Book III, Amoret exemplifies the divinely ordained sexuality of the Garden of Adonis, misunderstood by those who see all human love as lust, honoured by those who know its source and providential end. From the Taurean point of view, the wounded Amoret is the product of a damning and disordering affect; from the Piscean, she is the symbol of "naturall affection" exalted to a state of grace by faithfulness, self-sacrifice, and submission to God's will.

If my interpretation of Fowler's discovery is correct, we should find that the tapestries also contain a second meaning--one which complements that of the mask. The tapestries depict the debasement of the gods through lust, and the destruction wreaked by them upon their

human lovers. Few past readers of the passage have failed to note that it depends upon and amplifies Ovid's account in Book VI of the Metamorphoses of the picture woven by Arachne in competition with Minerva. On its own, of course, this fact does little to support my conjecture that Spenser's tapestries conceal a lie equivalent to the mask's. Certainly, Arachne was punished by Minerva for her slander of the gods, and Spenser's allusion to this story aptly reflects both Busyrane's character as an evil artist, and Britomart's association with Minerva. Yet, although Ovid's Arachne is guilty of blasphemy, she is not guilty of deception; the gods of his poem are, indeed, a rather lusty lot. Transformed into a spider, Arachne still spins her web--a constant reminder of a darker, more chaotic universe than that embodied by Minerva, goddess of wisdom and champion of peace and civic pride. Britomart, however, is a Christian Minerva in a very Christian poem, and she might be expected to perceive a greater blasphemy in the tapestries than Ovid would have seen. By Spenser's day, Ovid's poetry had been subjected to over a thousand years of post-classical reinterpretation, culminating in the Ovide moralisée, a work of one or more anonymous authors which, in varying forms--some versified, some not--reached its completion

in the late middle ages.[19] This compendium of Christianized and allegorized pagan folklore provided the basis for much Renaissance commentary on Ovid, and its influence is easily traceable in a work as late as Sandys' annotated English translation of the Metamorphoses, first published in 1629.[20] Either directly or indirectly, it must have influenced Spenser as well. The meaning attached to Arachne's tapestry and to her crime by the Ovide moralisé may, therefore, have some bearing on the false enchanter's "goodly arras of great majesty," and it will be worth our while to consider briefly what it has to say about those "cruell battels" which Cupid "whilome fought / Gainst all the Gods, to make his empire great."

In the Ovide moralisé, the stories woven into Arachne's web are allegorized on two different levels. The first level is tropological, and it corresponds to the meaning of the tapestries with which we are, by now, familiar. On this level, the gods are held up as examples of inordinate desire, their metamorphoses as lessons on the power of lust to pervert and overturn authority, both in society at large and in the constitution of the individual soul. The second level of interpretation is, however, anagogical, and it is here, I would suggest, that the alternative significance of Spenser's tapestries

may lie.

The *Ovide moralisé* consistently associates the gods of Olympus with various attributes of the Christian God, and its treatment of their amorous escapades is no exception. On the anagogical level, the lusts of Jove, Apollo and the other deities, together with the transformations which they undergo, become so many figures for the love of God for man, His Incarnation, and his last humiliation on the cross. Jove's rape of Europa, for instance, is glossed as follows: "Jesus Christ, descending into Tyre and Sidon, that is, this mortal world, puts on man's carnal nature without at the same time divesting himself of his divine nature."[21] The story of Danae is expounded on similar lines. She is the Virgin Mary, and Jove is her Son, who enters her, "like rain into wool," and passes through her "like sun through a glass:"

> Pour ce donner entendement allegorique est à entendre que Jhesüchrist, Filz di Dieu le Pere, nostre Sauveur, vint en my ce monde au ventre de la glorieuse Mère Vierge pour refformer les meurs des gens et les addressier à bonne fin. . . . Mais par Accrisius peut on noter la perverse generacion des Juifz, que leur dit Seigneur et Redempteur Jhesuchrist reffusèrent et tindrent contre luy les portes fermées de foy et d'obeïssance closes par rebellion obstinée. Et par Dané peut estre entendue la dite Mère de Jhesuchrist, de laquelle il fut tant amoureux

> qu'il entra dedans elle, come fait la pluye dedans la laine, et y passa come fait le soleil dedans la verrière, sans l'entamer ne casser.[22]

Again, the desire of Semele, mother of Bacchus, to behold Jove in his full divinity reflects, according to the *Ovide*, the devout fervour of the creature intoxicated with love for her Creator. In this tale, the allegorist finds occasion to remind his audience that the saints, too, were drunk with such a love, and that it was the force of their affection which drove them to submit themselves to martyrdom.[23]

I take my last example from the tale of Daphne and Apollo. In Ovid, as in Spenser (xi.36), this story is preceded by a debate between Cupid and Apollo. In the medieval version, the two deities are said to signify God's wisdom and God's love, respectively. Having entered a *caveat* to the effect that, although these qualities appear unequal and divided from man's point of view, they are indistinguishable in God, the allegorist of the *Ovide moralisé* goes on to say that, just as human wisdom is both conquered and contained by human love, so also God allows His own love to be stronger than His wisdom. The tale itself is then glossed thus: God, pierced like Apollo by the golden arrow of His own divine desire, humbled Himself to woo His creature, man's God-given

soul. But Danae (that is, the soul), pierced with the leaden arrows of Satan, hates and flees the love of God, who never ceases to pursue her.[24]

In the tradition of the Ovide moralisé, then, the loves of the gods can be read as a warning against lust, but they can also be taken as reminders of the suffering love of the Redemption. On the basis of this second reading, the Ovide defines Arachne's crime as a denial of the efficacy of Christ's Incarnation and Passion, and adds that Minerva's tapestry, with its depiction of Jove, seated as judge amongst twelve other gods, betokens Christ on Judgement Day, surrounded by the twelve apostles, vanquishing those who have not seen fit to count his "foolish love" as wisdom.[25]

The tropological interpretation of Arachne's tapestry corresponds to the plain meaning of Busyrane's wall-hangings, and on this level, the message woven in both fabrics is the same: lust displaces Jupiter, "the constitutional sovereign of the universe," and thus upsets the order of the world and of the human soul. This is also the message reflected in the Taurean aspect of Spenser's number scheme. Does the Piscean aspect of this scheme reflect the other way in which the stories spun by Arachne can be read? We know that Busyrane's artistry,

unlike Arachne's in the original, pre-Christian version of the _Metamorphoses_, contains a lie, and we may be fairly certain that, by alluding to Arachne's deed, Spenser does not mean to say that Busyrane blasphemes against the pagan gods, as such. Moreover, the rulership of Jove and the exaltation of Venus in Pisces might well have afforded Spenser with a symbol for his faith that, as the Easter Sequence puts it, "the Prince of Life Who died, reigns immortal," and that all earthly love is exalted by and through Christ's loving death. It is also worth noting in this connexion that the constellation Pisces may in itself be an allusion to the use of the Greek word "ichthos" as an anagram for Christ. Can it be that, just as Busyrane's lie in the mask involves a denial of the value of Amoret's love-inflicted pain, so his lie in the tapestries, like that of Arachne in the _Ovide moralisé_, involves a denial of the value of God's own suffering as well?

Such a view does not seem strange if one compares the assumption underlying the _Ovide's_ anagogical interpretation of the gods' loves with that underlying Spenser's handling of the theme of sexual love in _The Faerie Queene_ and others of his works. By associating the pain and debasement wrought by Cupid with the torment and revilement submitted to by Christ through His own divine love, the

Ovide moralisé suggests that sexual love can serve as a symbol for its heavenly counterpart, and this by virtue of the suffering it brings. Perhaps the *Ovide's* authors would not have been pleased with such an explicit formulation of the matter, although they would have found ample precedent for it in the Church's reading of the Song of Songs.[26] There can be little doubt, however, that for Spenser, "naturall affection" is a most appropriate symbol for divine love, and that, for him, the ability of chaste sexual love to function as such a symbol is the key to its own significance, and the proof of its integrity.

Consider, for example, the relationship obtaining between the first and third of Spenser's *Fowre Hymns*--that is, between the *Hymn of Love*, the subject of which is "naturall affection," and the *Hymn of Heavenly Love*, which deals, quite simply, with the Redemption. Spenser begins the latter poem by renouncing the former,[27] but clearly, the *Hymn of Love*, with its increasingly fervent praise of a heaven-sent and heaven-seeking eros, and its ever more explicit use of religious language to describe it, looks forward to the *Hymn of Heavenly Love*. Nowhere is its anticipation of the later hymn more evident than in its final stanza:

> Then would I sing of thine immortall praise
> An Heavenly Hymne, such as the Angels sing,
> And thy triumphant name then would I raise
> Bove all the gods, thee onely honoring,
> My guide, my God, my victor, and my king;
> Till then, dread Lord, vouchsafe to take of me
> This simple song, thus fram'd in praise of thee.
>
> (HL.301-07)

Indeed, the two hymns harmonize in a number of ways. To begin with, they are linked by a common motif--that of heaven gained through suffering. In the Hymn of Love, this theme grows out of the poet's preoccupation with the wound of love; in the Hymn of Heavenly Love, the theme is implicit in the subject of Christ's Passion, death and Resurrection. Again, in both hymns, the dominant image is that of a purifying fire, which, in the first of the Fowre Hymns "kindleth love in generous desyre . . . And the refyned mynd doth newly fashion / Unto a fairer form" (HL 187;192-93), and in the third burns up the soul

> With sweet enragement of celestiall love,
> Kindled through sight of those faire things above.
>
> (HHL. 286-87)

Finally, in the one hymn, Cupid is invested with the attributes of the Trinity,[28] while in the other, Christ is termed "the god of Love." The two hymns do not so much contrast with one another as they inform one another--the earlier hymn providing the later with much of its

imagery, the later providing the larger framework in which the earlier needs to be seen.

In the light of the heavenly hymn, the earthly one emerges as a paean to Spenser's vision of human love modelled on and infused with Christian <u>caritas</u>--a vision which, as I have tried to show in Chapter Two, is central to Book III, but which is, perhaps, most clearly and succinctly voiced by Spenser in Sonnet LXVIII of the <u>Amoretti</u>:

> Most glorious Lord of lyfe, that on this day,
> Didst make thy triumph over death and sin:
> and having harrowd hell, didst bring away
> captivity thence captive us to win:
> This joyous day, deare Lord, with joy begin,
> and grant that we for whom thou diddest dye
> being with thy deare blood clene washt from sin,
> may live for ever in felicity.
> And that thy love we weighing worthily,
> may likewise love thee for the same againe:
> and for thy sake that all lyke deare didst buy,
> with love may one another entertayne.
> So let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought,
> love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.

For Spenser, the chaste sexual love of man and woman is a fit metaphor for spiritual love precisely because it is, or, with God's grace, is capable of becoming a reflection and a sign of Christ's love for mankind. Such a notion is consonant with, and was probably consciously related by Spenser to the Christian view of Holy Matrimony, as expounded by Saint Paul in his Epistle to the

Ephesians (5:22-32) and as enshrined in the wedding rite of the Book of Common Prayer, where marriage is described as "an honourable estate, instituted by God, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church." In The Faerie Queene, this concept finds its most noble expression in the final episode of Book I. Spenser's account there of Redcrosse's betrothal to Una is a straightforward allegory of Christ, reincarnate in His new saint, wedded to His now resplendent Church. St. Paul's image in Ephesians (5:27) of the Church "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," made "glorious" by Christ's victory over death, shines through Spenser's depiction of Una as she prepares to meet her future bride-groom:

> So fare and fresh, as freshest flowre in May;
> For she had layd her mournefull stole aside,
> And widow-like sad wimple throwne away,
> Wherewith her heavenly beautie she did hide,
> Whiles on her wearie journey she did ride;
> And on her now a garment she did weare,
> All lilly white, withoutten spot, or pride,
> That seemd like silke and silver woven neare,
> But neither silke nor silver therein did appeare.
>
> (I.xii.22)

Spenser's Epithalamion also provides indications of the importance attached by him to the symbolic meaning of matrimony. At least twice in that poem he refers to himself or his bride in words alluding to the marriage

of Christ to the Church. Since the poem is imbued with the language of the Song of Songs--itself interpreted by the Church as a celebration of her marriage to Christ--it is not difficult to notice yet another reference in the following lines to the same words of St. Paul quoted above:

> Now al is done; bring home the bride again,
> Bring home the triumph of our victory,
> Bring home with you the glory of her gaine.
>
> (<u>Epith</u>. 242-45)

The sexual act itself becomes an image of Christ's one atoning sacrifice when, in lines 317 and 318, the bridegroom, addressing Night, cries:

> And all my cares, which cruell love collected,
> Hast sumd in one, and cancelled for aye.

The meaning of marriage as outlined above provides the final key linking the lie of the tapestries with the lie of the mask. In both pageants, Busyrane, who, as the enemy of chaste sexual love is also the enemy of marriage, attempts to sever the link between sexual love and heavenly love, and thus to destroy the very foundation of the Christian view of wedlock. In so doing he commits a blasphemy not only against Holy Matrimony, but also against the truth it represents. The integrity of marriage lies in the analogy between the suffering under-

gone by Christ to save mankind, together with the hardship through which His saints must go in order to return that love, and the pain and self-denial of the mutual giving-away of heart and body entailed by true and faithful human love. Busyrane directs his attack on marriage against its most vulnerable point--the fact that the suffering it involves seems, at first sight, no different from the pain of adulterous love. But Britomart sees through his ruse and is able to withstand his attack, because she knows from her own experience that pain has many faces and that suffering, at its deepest level, is redemptive.

The symbolism of marriage also may help us better to understand the allusions to Christ's Passion and that of His saints which surround Spenser's account of Amoret's captivity. Since Amoret is the exemplar of married love, the mystery contained in Holy Matrimony makes her, like Una, a figure for _Ecclesia_. Una, the first bride to appear in _The Faerie Queene_, is such _because_ she represents the true Church; Amoret is an image of the Church because, quite simply, she is a bride. This is why Scudamour speaks not only of her grace and bounty, but also of her righteousness, and why he refers to her captor so broadly as "God's enimy." The bride in the _Epithalamion_

is termed a saint by Spenser, and endowed with all the encomiastic imagery proper to such a title (Epith.204-09). In Amoret's case, the ascription is achieved more subtly, but no less unmistakeably. For the poet's own bride

> the wished day is come at last,
> That shall for all the paines and sorrowes past
> Pay to her usury of long delight.
>
> (Epith.31-33)

For Scudamour's, the day of glory is yet to come. Like Una, who, for the greater part of her "weary journey" through Book I, must live on the hope of her knight's eventual triumph, Amoret still awaits release "in dolefull darkeness from the vew of day" (xi.11). The other two brides appear as saints emparadized; the "Lodestarre of all chaste affectione" still bears her cross.

Marriage, as conceived by Spenser, invests those who enter into it with rôles which are portentous and perhaps, rather frightening. To Scudamour, as Amoret's husband, belongs the role of Christ, "the savior of the body." But, as we have seen, he is not yet capable of playing such a part. Before he can fulfill the responsibilities of a husband he must become to God what Amoret, as the perfect wife, already is to him; the same humility, patience and faithfulness which characterize her relationship to Scudamour must characterize his to

his Creator--hence Spenser's preoccupation with the young knight's pride, impatience and lack of faith. Scudamour fails to rescue Amoret because, on the one hand, he will not imitate the expectant suffering of the saints, and on the other, because he refuses to take on the redemptive suffering of Christ. Although he thinks himself eager to enter the field of battle in defense of his beloved, he is, in fact, no more willing to undergo the Dragon Fight than he is prepared to submit himself to the hard hospitality of the House of Holiness.

In Book IV, Spenser suggests that the same faults preventing Scudamour's entry into the House of Busyrane have brought about his loss of Amoret in the first place. Canto x of the Legend of Friendship contains Scudamour's account of how he won the shield of love, and how, so armed, he assaulted the Temple of Venus, claimed Amoret for his bride, and carried her away against all odds. The tale is launched under very bizarre circumstances. At the end of Book III, according to the revised ending, Britomart emerges from the House of Busyrane with Amoret, and finds that Scudamour has gone. In the course of the next book, Britomart too is separated from Amoret. She eventually meets up with Scudamour; meanwhile, Amoret comes under the protection of Prince Arthur. Finally,

In canto ix, all the parties merge into a single band of travellers, yet--and here is the curious thing--neither Britomart nor Scudamour seems aware of Amoret's presence amongst them. In light of this, their respective complaints to Prince Arthur about the loss of Amoret take on a peculiar significance, and one notices immediately how differently they both react to the "absence" of True Love:

> And yet (quoth she) a greater wrong remaines:
> For I thereby my former love have lost,
> Whom seeking ever since with endlesse paines,
> Hath me much sorrow and much travell cost:
> Aye me to see that gentle maide so tost.
> But <u>Scudamour</u> then sighing deepe, thus saide,
> Certes her losse ought me to trouble most,
> Whose right she is, where ever she be straide,
> Through many perils wonne, and many fortunes waide.
>
> For from the first that I her love profest,
> Unto this houre, this present lucklesse howre,
> I never joyed happinesse nor rest,
> But thus turmoild from one to another stowre,
> I wast my life, and do my daies devowre,
> In wretched anguishe and incessant woe,
> Passing the measure of my feeble powre,
> That living thus, a wretch and loving so,
> I neither can my love, ne yet my life forgo.
>
> (IV.ix.38-39)

Both Britomart and Scudamour mention the hardships they have undergone in their search for Amoret, but while for Britomart, whose chief concern is Amoret's safety, these pains are of little importance, for Scudamour they are almost an obsession. Scudamour cannot see past his own anguish to another's, nor can he accept the fact that he himself should suffer. Claribell's request in the follow-

ing stanza that he recount the tale of his misfortune gives Scudamour a chance to vent his spleen more fully; only too "glad to satisfy," Scudamour begins his story in canto x by outlining the true source of his bitterness:

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

Scudamour is angry because the reward of all his trouble has been further grief. In canto xi of Book III he questions the value of a righteousness which brings no temporal benefits; here he questions the worth of a love, the pain of which is "so much greater than the fee." His response to the outcome of his marriage falls far short of the claim he makes in stanza 2:

> And yet such grace is given them from above,
> That all the cares and evill which they meet,
> May nought at all their setled mindes remove,
> But seeme gainst common sence to them most sweet;
> As bosting in their martyrdom unmeet.
> So all that ever yet I have endured,
> I count as naught, and tread downe under feet,
> Since of my love at length I rest assured,
> That to disloyalty she will not be allured.

Characteristically, Scudamour's words contain a reference to the Scriptures; and characteristically, his own words

thus condemn him. The entire stanza, and particular lines 6 and 7, allude to Philippians 3:8:

> I count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

St. Paul's statement highlights the shallowness of Scudamour's own claim. The latter's readiness to bear the "martyrdom unmeet" of love extends as far as the wooing process, but beyond that point he is unwilling to bear any kind of cross.

Scudamour's narrow view of love contrasts sharply with the inscription which accompanies the shield of love when he first sees it:

> Blessed the man that well can use his blis:
> Whose ever be the shield, faire Amoret be his.
>
> (IV.x.8)

Certainly, the force of love--represented by the shield--promises to be a sure passport to Amoret's heart, but the promise contains a warning. The gaining of Amoret will be easy; the true challenge will be in using her rightly. Scudamour has paid heed to the second part of the inscription, but he has ignored the first; he has been more than ready to make use of the shield to expedite his "conquest" of Amoret, but he has no use for the sorrow and responsibility that come with Amoret's capture.

The true worth of the shield lies in the grace it gives its bearer to honour and protect the treasure it has helped him gain; although it is useful in courtship, it comes into its own when courtship ends and marriage, with its many trials, begins. Yet it is at this point that Scudamour has cast his shield away. At the beginning of Book IV, Spenser gives this account of Scudamour's and Amoret's wedding day:

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

The term "ill-headed" is significant here. Through his blindness to the meaning of married life, Scudamour fails to be a "head" to his wife, as Christ is "Head" to His Church, and it is this failure which accounts for Amoret's eclipse. Having sacrificed her virginity to Scudamour, Amoret is in need of his shield to replace the protection which her maidenhood previously afforded. In his intoxication her husband is unable to see that, having left her guardian behind, she is now no less exposed and vulnerable

to misuse than is her heart, and in his stupour he is unable to exercise the responsibility placed on him by the wound which she now suffers as his bride. Disarmed by drunkenness, Scudamour allows Busyrane to degrade Amoret by including her in the mask, and he does not notice when the enchanter carries Amoret away. In his enchanted house, Busyrane makes literal what is Scudamour's own abusion both of Amoret's wound and of his bliss, and there the magician embodies in the deceptions of his visual art the results of Scudamour's own failure to see Amoret aright.

The conclusion of the episode in the Temple of Venus, with its reference to the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, foreshadows--or, more properly, looks back to--the disaster of Scudamour's wedding feast:

> No lesse did _Daunger_ threaten me with dread,
> When as he saw me, maugre all his powre,
> That glorious spoyle of beautie with me lead,
> Then _Cerberus_, when Orpheus did recoure
> His Leman from the Stygian Princes bowre.
> But evermore my shield did me defend,
> Against the storme of every dreadfull stoure:
> Thus safely with my love I thence did wend.
>
> (IV.x.58)

In Boethius' _Consolatio_ (Bk. III, Metre 12), the story of Orpheus is said to show that man cannot safely guide his soul to heaven while at the same time maintaining his attachment to worldly things. By looking back too soon

on Eurydice, Orpheus loses her forever; so man, by turning his thoughts back in the direction of this lower world, destroys whatever spiritual work he may have achieved. Like Orpheus, Scudamour "looks back" on his bride too quickly. His view of sexual love and marriage is earth-bound; since his attitude to suffering in love is "ill-hedded" and immature, he knows nothing of the link between earthly and heavenly love. Marriage is supposed to be a reenactment of the Redemption, but Scudamour, far from "redeeming" Amoret, removes her from the paradise of her virginity and consigns her to the hell of her captivity. Scudamour's story, like Orpheus', is that of a redemption myth gone wrong.

When Britomart rescues Amoret in Scudamour's stead, she assumes his rôle as husband, and hence also his role as protector and "saviour" of his bride. This is why Britomart's entry into the House of Busyrane recalls the Harrowing of Hell, and why the time of her stay within the castle corresponds to the period between Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection.[29] This is also why Spenser speaks of her rescue of Amoret as a "redemption." If these allusions are considered in the light of the symbolism attached to marriage, then it becomes clear that Amoret's need of deliverance, togehher with the fact that she is saved by another woman, is no sign of sin on her

part. Her situation is no more incriminating than is Una's when she waits for Redcrosse to restore her to her proper glory, or than the "proud humility" of Spenser's bride in the Epithalamion. Indeed, had Spenser written this episode with Scudamour rescuing Amoret rather than Britomart, it is unlikely that either Amoret's helplessness or her "redemption" would have created such problems for the reader as they have in the past.

In this regard it is interesting to note that, in the 1590 text of the final episode, Britomart is referred to four times with a masculine pronoun[30]--an error which was corrected in the edition of 1596 and in all subsequent editions of The Faerie Queene, and which is perhaps the remnant of an earlier version of the scene in which Scudamour, or some other man, effected Amoret's release. Whether or not such an earlier version existed, the redemptive and nuptial imagery of the final episode is enough on its own to highlight as aspect of the scene so familiar to readers of The Faerie Queene that its strangeness is likely to go unnoticed. It is easy to see why Spenser wished to portray a challenge to marriage in the House of Busyrane, and why he chose to make the meeting of that challenge itself a reenactment of the meaning of Holy Matrimony, but I can think of no other instance in myth,

fairy-lore or the fine arts in which one woman rescues another in such a fashion and under such circumstances. It was bold of Spenser to cast Britomart in a role which so obviously should belong to a man, and we must ask, as we come to the end of our discussion, why Spenser chose to do so.

I offer the following suggestion by way of answer. The integrity of marriage as a viable alternative to virginity is a matter of crucial importance for Britomart, who is destined, through her union with Artegall, to be the ancestress of Queen Elizabeth. Yet it is equally true that, throughout the greater part of Book III, Britomart does not present herself to the world as a future bride. She makes her way through the Legend of Chastity as a "martial maid," a Minerva-like figure who has much more in common with Belphoebe than she has with Amoret. Her love's wound is the only thing she shares with Busyrane's victim, and that she keeps a secret to all but her nurse, Glauce. Indeed, as far as most of the characters with whom she comes in contact are concerned, Britomart is a man. Having learned from Merlin that the object of her love is real, Britomart goes out into the world in search of Artegall, but her wanderings seem to carry her further and further afield from the initial feminine

experience of love. We must not forget that Britomart's character as a "maide Martiall" is, to begin with, little more than a disguise; in canto ii (6-7), she informs Redcrosse that she has, from infancy, "beene trained up in warlike stowre," but we soon learn that she is lying. It is Glauce who, with her, "foolhardy wit," coaxes Britomart "advent'rous knighthood on her selfe to don" (iii.57). The purpose of these "feigned armes" is to protect Britomart's virginity as she seeks Artegall, but as her journey proceeds her mask becomes a means whereby she hides her lovesickness not only from the world, but from herself.

This is made quite clear in the episode on the Rich Strond, in canto iv, when the raging sea becomes the embodiment of Britomart's erotic discontent. It is significant that, before she voices her lament (iv.7-10), Britomart dismounts her horse and bids her nurse "unlace her lofty crest," and that her complaint ends as a prayer to Neptune. Britomart's great helmet, together with her "heban speare," is a reminder of the Minervan aspect of her disguise; and in the tapestry woven by Minerva in competition with Arachne, it is Neptune who is pictured attempting to claim the goddess' city, Athens, for his own. Spenser seems to be suggesting that, in order to face her own grief and so find healing through it, Britomart must divest herself of her Minervan

paraphernalia and come to terms with Neptune, who, by way of the metaphor of the "huge sea of sorrow," is closely linked with her own love-inspired turmoil. Only in this way can she direct her ship "ere it be rent / Unto the gladsome port of her intent."

That she is not yet completely willing or ready to accept her condition as a lover is shown in the passage which follows on the heels of her lament (iv.12-18). No sooner has Britomart "shut up all her plaint in privy griefe" than she is accosted by a knight who orders her to quit the beach. Enraged, she rides to meet him, strikes him a nearly fatal blow in the region of the heart and, leaving him for dead, rides on her way. Her unfortunate victim is Marinell, who emerges later in the book as the unwilling object of Florimell's affection. Here, however, he is simply the son of a sea-nymph and the guardian of the Rich Strond. As such he is, like the sea itself, a projection of Britomart's suffering in love as she perceives it and responds to it, and her reaction to him is revealing. On the one hand, Britomart responds in anger to one who would deny her access to the sea, which, both as the reflection of her _liebespein_ and the birthplace of Venus, contains within itself the mystery of love and the secret of Britomart's destiny. On the other, in the

very act of meeting Marinell's challenge, Britomart once more hides her wound within her armour and turns her sorrow into "suddein wrath":

> Her dolour soone she ceast, and on her dight
> Her Helmet, to her Courser mounting light:
> Her former sorrow into suddein wrath,
> Both coosen passions of distroubled spright,
> Converting, forth she beates the dustie path;
> Love and despight attonce her courage kindled
> hath.
>
> As when a foggy mist hath overcast
> The face of heaven, and the cleare aire engrost,
> The world in darkenesse dwels, til that at last
> The watry Southwinde from the seabord cost
> Upblowing, doth disperse the vapour lo'st,
> And poures it selfe forth in a stormy showre;
> So the faire <u>Britomart</u> having disclo'st
> Her clowdy care into a wrathfull stowre,
> The mist of griefe dissolv'd, did into vengeance
> powre.
>
> (iv.12-13)

Britomart's aggressive posture is at once a claiming of her right to love, and an attack on love. Consider Spenser's description of the wounded and pathetic Marinell:

> Like as the sacred Oxe, that carelesse stands,
> With gilden hornes, and flowry girlonds crownd,
> Proud of his dying honor and deare bands,
> Whiles th'altars fume with frankincense arownd,
> All suddenly with mortall stroke astownd,
> Doth groveling fall, and with his streaming
> gore
> Distaines the pillours, and the holy grownd,
> And the faire flowres, that decked him afore;
> So fell proud <u>Marinell</u> upon the pretious shore.

As he dies, Marinell reveals himself as a type of Taurus, and thus as the representative of love as an undifferen-

tiated and disordering force. However, the oxe to which he is compared is "sacred," and this reminds us that love, however undeveloped and perilous, is capable of holiness. In the House of Busyrane, Britomart will be able to transmute Taurus into Pisces, but in canto iv her vision is not yet so sharp, nor is her understanding of love so far advanced. When Britomart confronts the chaos of the sea, she realizes that her hope lies in an acceptance of and partial acquiescence to its power, but her meeting with Marinell tells us that she does not yet know how to protect herself from the destructive side of that power without at the same time maiming its creative capabilities. Having reassumed her character as a martial maid, Britomart is able easily to prove her right to the sea and all it holds, but in the process she forgets the reason for her claim. In her weakness she has prayed that the sea might bring her to the fulfillment of her womanhood, but in her strength she has no use either for the sea or for its treasures:

> The martiall Mayd stayd not him to lament,
> But forward rode, and kept her readie way
> Along the strond, which as she over-went,
> She saw bestrowed all with rich aray
> Of pearles and pretious stones of great assay,
> And all the gravell mixt with golden owre;
> Whereat she wondred much, but would not stay
> For gold, or perles, or pretious stones an howre,
> But them despised all; for all was in her powre.
>
> (iv.18)

The process of Britomart's masculinization reaches its climax with her entry into the place of Amoret's sacrifice. At the same time, that entry brings her back into direct contact with her own femininity, for Amoret's suffering represents in an exaggerated form the self-exposure and "proud humility" which Britomart will one day have to undergo when she becomes Artegall's bride. By investing Britomart with the role of husband, Spenser preserves the character of the final episode as an acting-out of the relationship in marriage between man and woman, while at the same time leading Britomart into the very heart of that drama, thus initiating her into her future role in it. When Britomart walks into the castle's third room, it is her own wounded womanhood she sees before her, and when Busyrane, having been moved by her appearance to kill Amoret outright, misses his aim and wounds her instead, it is her own secret pain which Britomart confronts:

> From her, to whom his fury first he ment,
> The wicked weapon rashly he did wrest,
> And turning to her selfe his fell intent,
> Unwares it strooke into her snowie chest,
> That little drops empurpled her faire brest.
> Exceeding wroth therewith the virgin grew,
> Albe the wound were nothing deepe imprest,
> And fiercely forth her mortall blade she drew,
> To give him the reward for such vile outrage dew.
>
> (xii.33)

Spenser plays rather fast and loose with the feminine pro-

noun in this stanza, and it takes careful reading to know whether it is Amoret or Britomart whom Busyrane has knifed. For a moment the distinction between the two women is blurred, and when the picture comes back into focus, we see that Britomart has been wounded in the same place as Amoret. Just as Busyrane's outrage against the latter represents the wound inflicted on her by her husband, so the injury sustained by Britomart reminds us of the pain visited on her by the image of Artegall. Britomart's wound is the less grievous of the two, and "nothing deepe imprest" because it has not, like Amoret's, been subjected to abuse.

Britomart's anger is, of course, predictable; as in her bout with Marinell, she moves quickly to avenge herself upon her foe. But here the pattern changes, for Amoret will not let Britomart kill Busyrane: "for else her paine / Should be remedilesse, sith non but hee, / Which wrought it, could the same recure againe" (xii.34). Only he who inflicts love's wound can heal it, by repaying love with love: once more, Spenser plays on the fact that Busyrane's spell is a literalization of the conventions of romance. The wording of Amoret's plea is no less ambiguous than that of stanza 33. Spenser does not quote Amoret directly, and so the feminine pronoun may be taken

to refer to either woman; the "paine" in question is certainly Amoret's, but it could belong to Britomart as well. Amoret's words may, therefore, have a double significance for Britomart. Insofar as they refer to Amoret's affliction, they tell Britomart that no one but Busyrane can undo the spell that binds True Love; insofar as they refer to Britomart's grief, they tell her that she will never find wholeness except through surrendering herself whole-heartedly to her love for Artegall and, when the time comes, to Artegall himself.

Viewed in this way, Amoret's sententious outcry foreshadows and prepares the way for the great lesson Britomart will learn in Book V. I refer to the episode in the Temple of Isis, which occurs in canto vii of the Legend of Justice, in which Britomart sees herself transformed in a dream from a virgin priest of Isis into the goddess herself, "her linnen stole to robe of scarlet red / And moon-like Mitre to a Crowne of gold" (V.vii.13). In the same dream the crocodile that had lain coiled around the feet of the idol awakes, enters Britomart, and she gives birth to a lion (V.vii.14-16). On waking, the dismayed and perplexed virgin explains her vision to a temple priest, who tells her that the crocodile "doth represent / The righteous Knight, that is thy faithfull

lover, / Like to _Osyris_ in all just endever" (22), and that the lion is the son whom she shall bear, "That Lion-like shall shew his powre extreame" (23). The priest's opening words have an obvious bearing on our present discussion:

> Magnificke Virgin, that in queint disguise
> Of British armes doest maske thy royall blood,
> So to pursue a perillous emprize,
> How couldst thou weene, through that disguized
> hood,
> To hide thy state from being understood?
> Can from th'immortall Gods ought hidden bee?
> They doe thy linage, and thy Lordly brood;
> They doe thy sire, lamenting sore for thee;
> They doe thy love, forlorne in womens thraldome
> see.
>
> (V.vii.21)

Is is a long road from Britomart's first girlish vision of her knight within the magic glass to her apotheosis in the Temple of Isis. The crucial turning-point on that road comes when she sees Amoret "forlorne in womens thraldome," and realizes that the wound of love is the one matter in which her "queint disguise" and virgin prowess are of no avail.

Britomart's martial boldness has carried her safely through the terrors of the castle's gate of flame, and it has seen her through two nights of vigil in the House of Busyrane itself. It has brought her within reach of

"th'ensample of true love alone;" and it will bring her in good time within that of her own true love and "goodly womanhed." But when the armour of virginity has served its purpose, it willhhave to be discarded, and this the martial maid acknowledges when, heeding Amoret's advice, she stays her hand and lets the villein live.

PLATES

EL LAVREO ALBER
go cum laurora innanzi
Si ratto usciua cinto il sol di ragi
ch detto hauresti else colco pu diaci
Alzato un poco com fano i sagi
guardose i torno et a se stesso dix
Che pensi homai conuien che piu cura hagi
Ecco sun homo famoso in terra uixe
de la sua phama per morir no esce
che sta dila lege chel cel fixe
E se fama mortal morendo cresce
chi spegner se douea in breue uegio
nostre excellentie al fin unde minuresce

1. Triumph of Cupid. I Trionfi (Italian, 15 c.). BM Add. 31843, fol. 215b.

186

il ferro nudo tien dala sinistra.
P igmalion cum la sua donna uiua
e mille che castalia & aganippe
udir cantar per la sua uerde riua
E d un pomo beffata al fin cidippe :~

EL TEMPO CHI RINOVA
i mei suspiri
Pe la dolce memoria di ql giorno
ch fu principio a si lunghi martiri
Gia il sol al toro l uno e l altro corno
scaldaua e la fanciulla di titone
correua usata al so usato soggiorno
A mor gli sdegni il pianto e la stagione

2. Triumph of Cupid. _I Trionfi_ (Italian, 15 c.).
BM Add. 31843, fol. 186.

3. Triumph of Cupid. I Trionfi (Venice, 15 c.).
Probably illuminated by Botticelli or Fra Lippo Lippi.
BM Add. 38125, fol. 33b.

VANDO AD VN GIO
co & in un tempo quivi
domita la terza degli dei
e degli hōi vidi al mōdo divi
lo pſi exēpio di lor ſtati rei
facēdo mio perfetto laltrui mal
in cōſolar i caſi e dolor mei

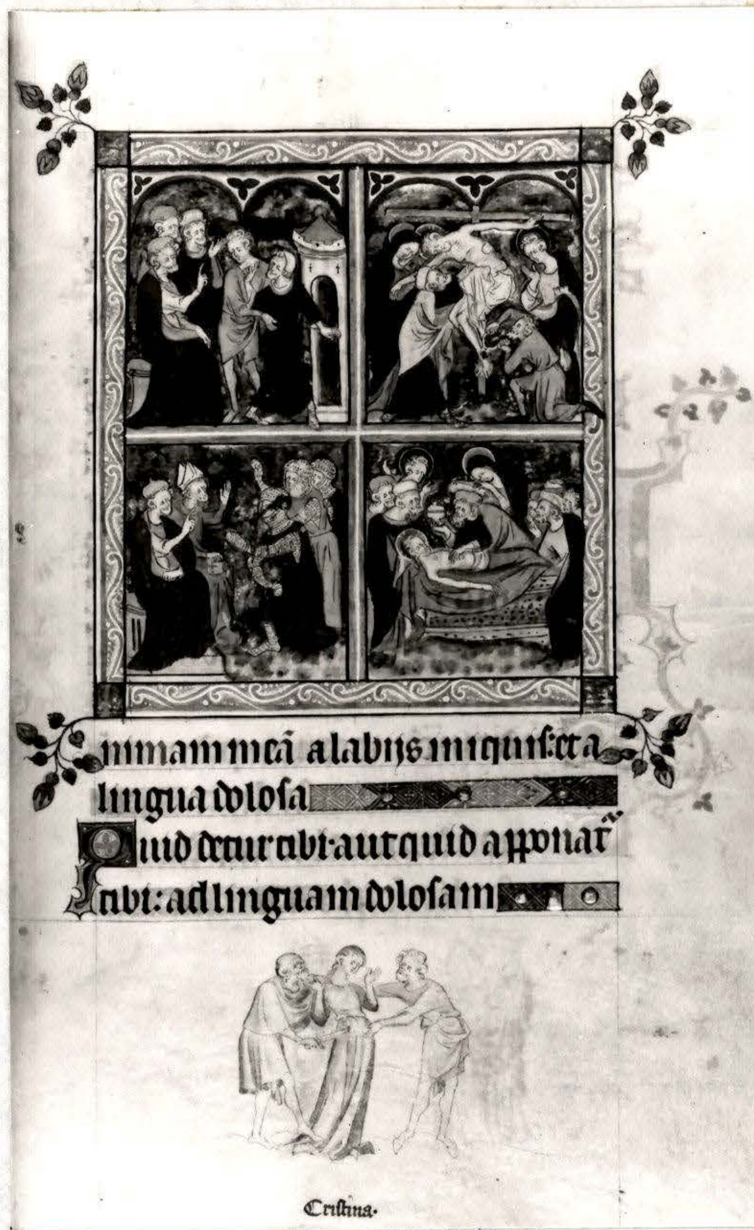
C he ſio vegio dun arco e duno ſtrale
phoebo percoſſo il giovene dabido
lun ditto deo laltro hom pur mortale
E vegio ad un laccio iunone e dido
chamor pio del ſo ſpoſo a morte ſpenxe

4. Triumph of Chastity. _I Trionfi_ (Italian, 15 c.).
BM Add. 31843, fol. 197b.

5. Triumph of Chastity. _I Trionfi_ (Venice, 15 c.). Probably illuminated by Boticelli or Fra Lippo Lippi. BM Add. 38125, fol. 50.

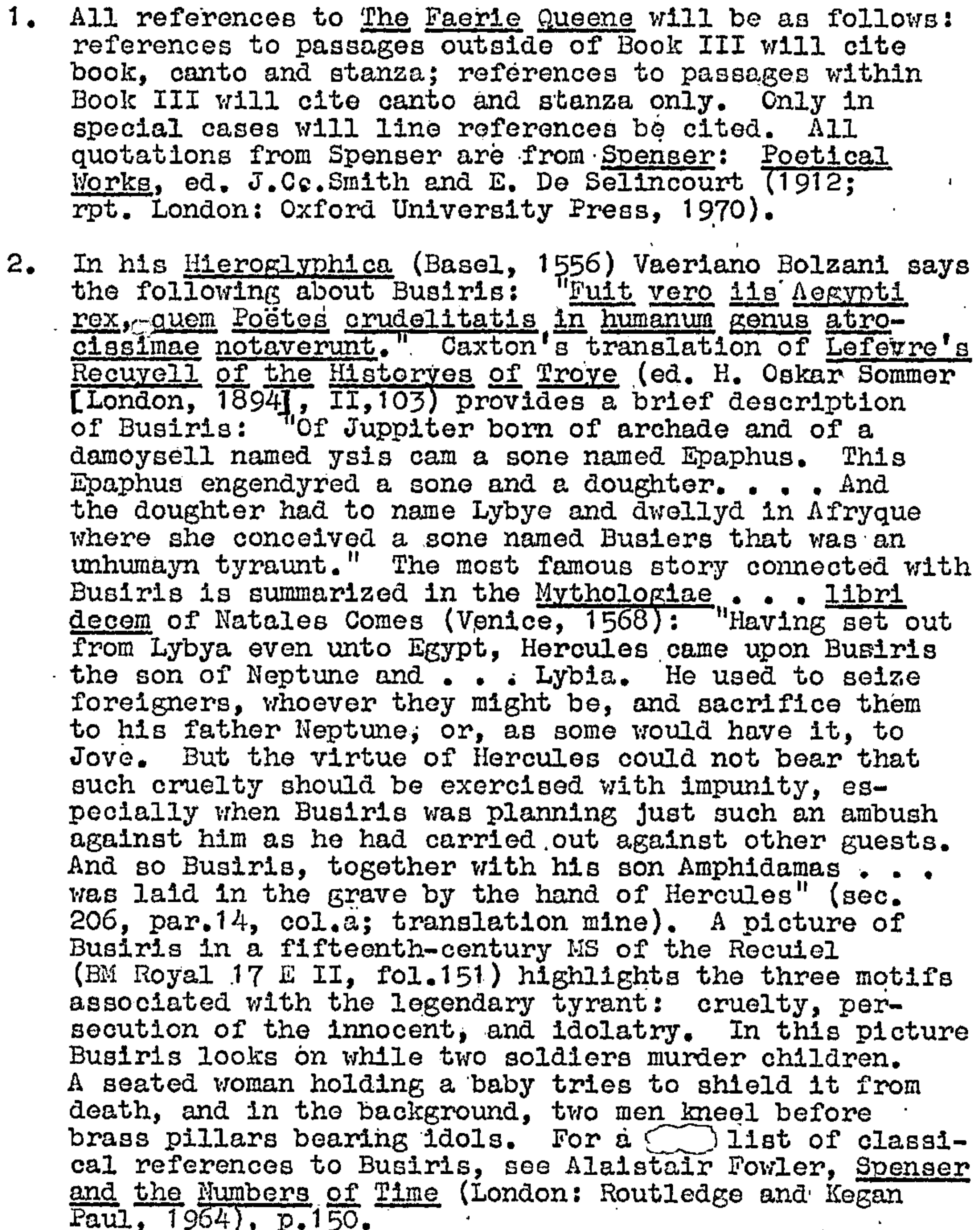
6. Martyrdom of St. Agatha. "Queen Mary's Psalter," (East Anglian, 14 c.). BM Royal 2 B VII, fol. 242.

7. Martyrdom of St. Catherine. "Queen Mary's Psalter," (East Anglian, 14 c.). BM Royal 2 B VII, fol. 221.



8. Martyrdom of St. Christina. "Queen Mary's Psalter," (East Anglian, 14 c.).
BM Royal 2 B VII, fol. 221.

NOTES



Chapter I, Section I:

1. All references to The Faerie Queene will be as follows: references to passages outside of Book III will cite book, canto and stanza; references to passages within Book III will cite canto and stanza only. Only in special cases will line references be cited. All quotations from Spenser are from Spenser: Poetical Works, ed. J.C.Smith and E. De Selincourt (1912; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

2. In his Hieroglyphica (Basel, 1556) Vaeriano Bolzani says the following about Busiris: "Fuit vero iis Aegypti rex, quem Poëtes crudelitatis in humanum genus atrocissimae notaverunt." Caxton's translation of Lefevre's Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye (ed. H. Oskar Sommer [London, 1894], II,103) provides a brief description of Busiris: "Of Juppiter born of archade and of a damoysell named ysis cam a sone named Epaphus. This Epaphus engendyred a sone and a doughter. . . . And the doughter had to name Lybye and dwellyd in Afryque where she conceived a sone named Busiers that was an unhumayn tyraunt." The most famous story connected with Busiris is summarized in the Mythologiae . . . libri decem of Natales Comes (Venice, 1568): "Having set out from Lybya even unto Egypt, Hercules came upon Busiris the son of Neptune and . . . Lybia. He used to seize foreigners, whoever they might be, and sacrifice them to his father Neptune, or, as some would have it, to Jove. But the virtue of Hercules could not bear that such cruelty should be exercised with impunity, especially when Busiris was planning just such an ambush against him as he had carried out against other guests. And so Busiris, together with his son Amphidamas . . . was laid in the grave by the hand of Hercules" (sec. 206, par.14, col.a; translation mine). A picture of Busiris in a fifteenth-century MS of the Recuiel (BM Royal 17 E II, fol.151) highlights the three motifs associated with the legendary tyrant: cruelty, persecution of the innocent, and idolatry. In this picture Busiris looks on while two soldiers murder children. A seated woman holding a baby tries to shield it from death, and in the background, two men kneel before brass pillars bearing idols. For a [illegible] list of classical references to Busiris, see Alaistair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p.150.

3. The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p.104. Roche is the only critic to have addressed himself adequately to the Christlike quality of the twins' birth. I am indebted to him for his observation of the liturgical use of Ps.110:3; the observations which follow are my own.

4. Migne, Patrologia Latina, Vol.210, col.98 (referred to subsequently as PL). Other instances include the following: "In this birth alone no desires of the flesh had place; in this birth alone no consequence of sin had part" (St. Leo, Pope, Sermo I de Nat.Dom., Lesson V of Matins for Christmas Day); "quaecunque enim mulies concepit, necesse est quod aerumnas patitur et eum dolare pariat; praeter Beatam Virginem, quae sine corruptione concepit, et sine dolore peperit, quia eius conceptio non fuit secundum legem naturae a primis parentibus derivata" (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica II, 2dae, Q. clxiv., A.2); "Accipis, ut nescis: sic reddis ut integra constes, / Nec violata paris, nec pariendo doles" (V. Fortunatus, "In Laudem S. Mariae Virginis," PL 88, col.282).

5. Sermo I in Ann. Dom (PL 185-I, col.117); translation mine. See also the eighth lesson for matins on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, in which Mary is addressed as the "holy throne of God." The Marian Index of the Patrologia Latina lists numerous references to the Virgin Mary under the headings "Thronus Dei," "Thronus Sapientiae," and "Sedes Dei."

6. J.E. Hankins, Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.224.

7. See PL 14, col.204; 20, col.861; 50, col.739; 51, col. 365; 57, col488; 152, col.665; 152, col.992; 164, col. 719; 170, col.273; 206, col.124; 210, col.94.

8. Sermo in Ann. Dom. I (PL 185, col.118).

9. See Richard II, Act 2, sc.i, 1.126: "That blood already (like the Pellican) / Thou hast tapt out, and drunkenly carous'd." See also Chester's Love's Martyrdom (1601), Dialogue CLXXX: "The Pellican . . . revives her tender Yong, / And with her purest bloudshed doth assuage / Her yong ones thirst."

experience of love. We must not forget that Britomart's character as a "maide Martiall" is, to begin with, little more than a disguise; in canto ii (6-7), she informs Redcrosse that she has, from infancy, "beene trained up in warlike stowre," but we soon learn that she is lying. It is Glauce who, with her, "foolhardy wit," coaxes Britomart "advent'rous knighthood on her selfe to don" (iii.57). The purpose of these "feigned armes" is to protect Britomart's virginity as she seeks Artegall, but as her journey proceeds her mask becomes a means whereby she hides her lovesickness not only from the world, but from herself.

This is made quite clear in the episode on the Rich Strond, in canto iv, when the raging sea becomes the embodiment of Britomart's erotic discontent. It is significant that, before she voices her lament (iv.7-10), Britomart dismounts her horse and bids her nurse "unlace her lofty crest," and that her complaint ends as a prayer to Neptune. Britomart's great helmet, together with her "heban speare," is a reminder of the Minervan aspect of her disguise; and in the tapestry woven by Minerva in competition with Arachne, it is Neptune who is pictured attempting to claim the goddess' city, Athens, for his own. Spenser seems to be suggesting that, in order to face her own grief and so find healing through it, Britomart must divest herself of her Minervan

ways in which Spenser describes that violence. In the final analysis, all images of Cupid, from the simplest to the most extended and complex, are rhetorical, for, at least in the work of a Christian poet, they all point paste the god of love to the mysterious affect he represents. For a discussion of Britomart's first bout with love, and its place in the thematic structure of Book III, see below, pp.83-89.

16. I refer the reader to Lewis' excellent analysis of Spenser's draconian imagery in Spenser's Images of Life, pp.22-24.

17. Spenser's Hymn in Honour of Love is the first of the Fowre Hymnes. I will generally refer to it simply as The Hymn of Love.

18. See Thomas Roche, The Kindly Flame, p.77ff.

19. See II Kings 18:21.

20. As she is revealed to the hapless Fradubio. See I.ii.40-42.

21. Malbecco is the epitome of jealous suspicion in Book III. His story is told in cantos ix. and x.

22. The influence of Petrarch's triumphs on the Mask of Cupid was first noted by E.B. Fowler, in his study, Spenser and the Courts of Love, pp.108-133, reprinted and condensed in The Works of Edmund Spenser, A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles G. Osgood, and F.M. Padelford (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1934), III, 354. On the general influence of Petrarch's Triumphs on Renaissance literature, see the following: Robert Coogan, "Petrarch's Trionfi and the English Renaissance," Studies in Philology, 67 (1970), pp.306-27; V.M. Essling and E. Muntz, Petrarque: ses etudes d'art, son influence sur les artistes (Paris, 1902); A. Venturi, "Les 'Triomphes' dans l'art representatif," Revue de l'art ancien et moderne, 20 (1906), pp.81ff.; Frances A. Yates, Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp.112-20, 215-16.

23. "Trionfo d'Amore," I.13. Future references to the "Triumph of Cupid" (_T.Cup._) and the "Triumph of Chastity" (_T.Ch._) will be found in the text. I have used the following edition: Carl Appel, ed., _Die Triumphe Francesco Petrarchas, In Kritischen Texte Herausgegeben_ (Halle: Niemeyer Verlag, 1901). For illustrations of Cupid's triumph, see Plates 1-3.

24. See also ix.52:

> But all the while, that he these speaches spent,
> Upon his lips hong faire Dame _Hellenore_,
> With vigilant regard, and dew attent,
> _Fashioning worlds of fancies evermore_
> _In her fraile wit_, that now her quite forlore.

Italics mine.

25. "Triumph of Chastity," 120-26:

> D'un bel diaspro er'ivi una colonna,
> a la qual d'una in mezzo Lete infusa
> catena di diamante e di topazio,
> che s'usò fra le donne, oggi non s'usa,
> legarlo vidi e farne quello strazio
> che bastò ben a mille altre vendette;
> ed io per me ne fui contento e sazio.

For some handsome illustrations of this scene, see Plates 4 and 5.

26. According to the _O.E.D._ "brass" could, in Spenser's day, be used to denote any alloy of copper, or simply copper itself. The word "copper," of course, is derived from "Cyprian"--hence its association with Venus.

Chapter I, Section II.

27. Edward Dowden, "Spenser, the Poet and Teacher," _Transcripts and Studies_ (1888), pp.288-93.

28. W.L. Renwick, _Edmund Spenser: An Essay on Renaissance Poetry_ (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1925), p.159.

29. Robert Ellrodt, _Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser_ (Geneva: E.Droz, 1960), p.76, n.1.

30. K.W. Gransden, _A Critical Commentary on Spenser's "Faerie Queene"_ (London: MacMillan, 1969), p.79.

31. H.E. Cory, _Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1917), pp.166-70.

32. A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Nature and Grace in the 'Faerie Queene,'" _Journal of English Literary History_, 16 (1949).

33. Eric LaGuardia, _Nature Redeemed: The Imitation of Order in Three Renaissance Poems_, Studies in Literature, Vol.31 (London: Mouton and Co., 1966), p. 112.

34. J.F. Hankins, _Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory_.

35. Hankins, p.162.

36. Hankins, p.163.

37. W.B.C. Watkins, _Shakespeare and Spenser_ (1950; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p.206.

38. Watkins, p. 206

39. Graham Hough, A Preface to the "_Faerie Queene_" (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1962), p.175.

40. Janet Spens, _Spenser's "Faerie Queene:" An Interpretation_ (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1934), pp.105-06.

41. Spens, pp. 105-06.

42. M. Pauline Parker, _The Allegory of the "Faerie Queene"_ (Oxford 1960), p.172.

43. Frederick M. Padelford, "The Allegory of Chastity in 'The Faerie Queene," *Variorum Works of Spenser*, III, 326.

44. Leicester Bradner, *Edmund Spenser and "The Faerie Queene"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p.83.

45. C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp.339-44.

46. C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 345.

47. C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p.380. Italics mine.

48. C.S. Lewis, *Spenser's Images of Life*, p.28. It is to this remark that Fowler appends the note cited above, n.12.

49. A.C. Hamilton, *The Structure of Allegory in the Faerie Queene* (Oxford, 1961), pp.154-55. Hamilton expresses the same view again in his later essay "On Annotating Spenser's 'Faerie Gueene:' A New Approach to the Poem," in *Contemporary Thought on Edmund Spenser*, ed. Richard C. Frushell and Bernard J. Vondersmith 'Carbondale, Ill.:(Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), p. 224.

50. William Nelson, *The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p.224.

51. Thomas Roche, *The Kindly Flame*, pp.72-88.

52. Roche, p.73.

53. The wedding mask occurs at the end of the play's second act. Beaumont's and Fletcher's debt to Spenser's mask was first noted by Thomas Warton in his *Observations on the Fairy Queen* (London: 1762), II.94.

54. Roche, *The Kindly Flame*, p.75.

55. Roche, p. 76.

56. Roche quotes from IV.i.3.

57. Roche, p.83.

58. Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p.105.

59. Donald Cheney, Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in "The Faerie Queene" (Hartford, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), pp.122-23.

60. Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.156. See also Mary Adelaide Grellner, "Britomart's Quest for Maturity," Studies in English Literature, 8 (1968), pp.35-43. Like Evans, Grellner sees in Amoret an immature aspect of Britomart's mind. See also the two following articles, neither of which has much to say about Amoret, but both of which seem to regard her as representing a stage of development which Britomart must emerge from and leave behind: Harry Berger, Jr., "Busyrane and the War Between the Sexes: An Interpretation of The Faerie Queene, III.xi.xii," English Literary Renaissance, 1 (1971), pp.99-121; Leslie W. Brill, "Chastity as Ideal Sexuality in the Third Book of the Faerie Queene," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 11 (1971), pp.15-26.
Here also I would like to mention two very recent analyses of the final episode, both of which contain useful insights into the scene, and both of which build on Roche's interpretation of Amoret as a woman in psychological bondage to her fear of sexual exposure: James Nohrnberg's The Analogy of the Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 471-80; and Isabel G. MacCaffrey's Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp.112-13.

61. Evans, pp.160-61.

62. Evans, p.164.

63. Beaumont and Fletcher's play was first published in 1625. I have used the edition of 1717 (London: Printed for J.T. and sold by J.Brown).

64. Certainly, Shakespeare's treatment of Adonis' death in his Venus and Adonis is susceptible of such an interpretation.

65. The major source for the story of Cupid and Psyche is Apuleius, Metamorphoses, 5-6; Spenser was probably aware of Boccaccio's treatment of the tale in his Genealogie deorum gentilium, V.xxii. Boccaccio writes: "Psyces ergo anima interpretatur." See H.G. Lotspeich, Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Guardian Press, Inc., 1965), p.104.

66. I have in mind the hymn "Ave Maris Stella."

67. Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p.51n.

68. See below, p.107.

69. Paul J. Alpers, The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp.18; 388. See also Iris Tillman's article "Britomart and 'Be Bold, Be Not Too Bold,'" Journal of English Literary History, 38 (1971), pp.73-87. Tillman cites and agrees with Alpers' view of Amoret, but, like him, she offers little in support of this view, and the focus of her essay is elsewhere.

Chapter II, Section I.

1. Scudamour's name means "the shield of love." His shield bears on it the image of the God of Love (xi.7).

2. See Grace Landrum, "Spenser's Use of the Bible and His Alleged Puritanism," PMLA, 41 (1926), p. 541. Landrum's mention of this reference has gone virtually ignored for forty years.

3. Here and elsewhere all quotations from the Psalms follow the Coverdale version, as found in the Book of Common Prayer. All other quotations from the Scriptures are from the Geneva Bible, of which I have used the edition of 1652.

4. Of metrical versions alone, the Short-Title Catalogue lists 52 editions by various authors between 1532, the probable year of Spenser's birth, and 1590, the year of publication of the first three books of The Faerie Queene.

5. See "The Letter of St. Athanasius to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms," trans. and ed. by "a Religious of the C.S.M.V." and appended to his edition of Athanasius' De Incarnatione Verbi Dei (1944; rpt. London: Mowbray and Co., Ltd, 1963), p.112; Cesarius of Arles, "Quare genitus Jesus Christus genus humanum per duram passionem, non per potemtiam, liberavit," PL, Supplementum II), col.280; Martin Luther, "First Lectures on the Psalms, in the Works of Martin Luther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976), II, 250. One 13th-century Gallican psalter (BM Royal 3 E VII, fol.212) puts the matter squarely. Its marginal gloss on Psalm 94:21 reads: "Ita fingit laborem et dolorem Christi."

6. Since Spenser's death its use as a proper has been extended to the feasts of the Sacred Heart and of the Most Precious Blood, neither of which existed during Spenser's lifetime. Both testify to the psalm's continuing association with Christ's suffering.

7. Epistle to Queen Elizabeth in The Boke of Psalmes, wherein are contayned prayers, meditations, prayses and thanksgiving (London: William Seres, 1576), sig.A2.

8. *The Boke of Psalmes* (London, 1576), sig.A2b.

9. *The Psalmes of David, truly opened and explained by Paraphrasis, according to the right sense of everie Psalme* . . . by . . . Theodore Beza, and faithfully translated by Anthonie Gilbie (London: Printed by Henry Denham, 1581), sig. K10.

10. *Les Pseaumes de David, mis en rime Francoise par Clement Marot et Theodore de Beze* (Geneva, 1577), sig. Q2.

11. *The Psalmes of David and Others, with M. John Calvin's Commentaries*, [trans. A. Golding] (London, 1571), sig. 3J7.

12. St. Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, trans. J. Tweed *et al.*, vol IV (Oxford: J. Parker, 1850), pp. 341-82. All paragraph references are to Augustine's treatise on Psalm 94.

13. St. Augustine's reading of the psalm is followed closely by Bede in his *In Psalmorum Librum Exegesis*, Ps. XCII (*PL*, 93), cols. 983-89.

Chapter II, Section II.

14. See HL.173-84.

15. Aptly, their own names form a concise textbook on the art of seduction. As we learn in st.45, they are called Gardante, Parlante, Jocante, Basciante, Bacchante and Noctante--that is, glancing, speaking, joking, kissing, tippling and transgressing.

16. The close relationship of Book III to Book I may also be highlighted by comparing Redcrosse's meeting with Britomart with his and Guyon's encounter at the beginning of Book II. The latter is marked at first by conflict and misunderstanding, the former by comradeship and mutual sympathy. True, Guyon mistakes Redcrosse for a villein, and the blame for this must lie with that old troublemaker, Archimago. Yet even when Guyon discovers Redcrosse's true identity, his attitude toward him is characterized by a certain deference which reflects the inequality of Holiness and Temperance, the virtues which the two knights represent. By contrast, Redcrosse and Britomart fight together as equals, and become fast friends. It is Redcrosse who provides Britomart with certain proof of Artegall's existence, and Redcrosse alone, of all the major figures in Book III, knows Britomart to be a woman. But when Britomart meets with Guyon at the outset of Book III, her relationship with him is strained, to say the least.

17. See IV.xi.4. Like Amoret, Florimell is imprisoned in darkness for seven months.

18. As defined by the OED. One example of the word's usage cited in the OED approaches Spenser's sense, although it dates from 1634: "Yet you by a chaste Chymick Art / Calcine fraile love to pietie." (Habingdon, *Castara*).

Chapter II, Section III.

19. In The Psalter of David in English (London: Edwarde Whitechurch, 1542), Psalm 126 receives the following gloss: "Here is declared the gladness of the people returned from Babylon: and under thys fygure is shewed also the gladnes of the faythfull whom Christe hath verily delyvered from the captivite of synne and dethe" (sig. K2). Similarly, in The Boke of Psalmes (London, 1576) we find: "This psalme was made after the returne of the people from Babylon, and sheweth that the meane of their deliverance was wonderful, after the seventee yeres of captivitie" (sig. Z8b). The gloss in verse 2 reads: "He sheweth how the godly ought to rejoice, when God gathereth his churche or delivereth it." Characteristically, Beza (op/cit.) applies the psalm to the trials of the reformed Church on the Continent: "It becometh them at this daie, which have escaped out of the bondage of Antichrist, and are come to that place where the pure worship of God is exercised, to praie for them continualie which sticke stil in that mire, and to prepare themselves unto new battels cheerfullie when it shal please God." (sig. O7b) I have seen one 15th-century psalter (BM Royal 2 B I, fol. 58b) in which the text of Psalm 126 is accompanied by a rough drawing of a house with barred windows--presumably a prison. The psalm is glossed thus: "Iste psalmus loquitur de reditu populi a babilonica captivitate."

20. See Graham Hough, A Preface to the "Faerie Queene," p.175; Janet Spens, Spenser's "Faerie Queene," pp.105-106; A.C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene, pp.154-55.

21. For a full discussion of Britomart's association with Minerva, see Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp.124-19.

Chapter III.

1. Watkins, Shakespeare and Spenser, p.206; Cheney, Spenser's Images of Nature, p.122.

2. I quote from Spenser's letter to Raleigh (Works, p.405).

3. The Psalmes of David . . . by . . . Beza (London, 1581), sig. K10.

4. See IV.vi.32.

5. Alpers, The Poetry of the Faerie Queene, p.18.

6. See, for example, Spenser's careful and explicit definition of Malecastas's wound:

   For this was not to love, but lust inclined,
   For love does always bring forth bounteous deeds,
   And in each gentle hart desire of honour breeds.

   (i.49)

7. Iconologia, o vero descrittione d'imagini delle virtù, affetti . . . di Cesare Ripa (Padova, 1611). The book was first published without cuts in 1593, at Rome. Rosemary Freeman, in her study, English Emblem Books (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), p.79, describes Ripa's book as "an anthology of engraved figures drawn from Egyptian, Latin, Greek, and contemporary writing, painting and sculpture," and she reports that it exerted an enormous influence within years of its first publication. I have used the second edition (cited above), and the examples I take from the book occur on the following pages of that edition: Vanità, p. 522; Amicitia, pp.16-17; Amor verso Iddio, p. 21; Coscienza I and II, pp.95-96; Sincerità, pp.484-85; Affanno, Cordoglio, Rammario, p.8; Compuntione, p.84; Beatitudine quinta (Mondezza del cuore), p.44.

8. For a good overview of this field, see Freeman, English Emblem Books, pp.37-114.

9. Roche, The Kindly Flame, p.80.

10. See above, p.13-15.

11. See above, p.31-32.

12. See above, p.32-33.

13. See Rosemond Tuve, "Spenser and Some Pictorial Conventions: With Particular Reference to Illuminated Manuscripts," Studies in Philology, 37 (1940), pp. 149-76; rpt. in Thomas Roche, ed., Essays by Rosemond Tuve: Spenser, Herbert, Milton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp.112-38. Tuve writes: "Illuminated manuscripts particularly may seem to us difficult to come at; to the Elizabethan they were ordinary and available. A rich pictorial tradition lay to Spenser's hand in these varying forms in which he could read his sources, and particularly in manuscripts, the least examined of them. And the points at which Spenser's descriptions relate themselves to this rich pictorial tradition are frequent and most striking" (p.112). Tuve brings in ample evidence to support her point.

14. I have chosen examples from a particularly fine manuscript, the so-called "Queen Mary's Psalter" (BM Royal 2 B Vii), but equally lovely illustrations of this type may be found in BM Royal 19 B XVII. The motif of martyr-with-two executioners carries over into numerous pictures of the scourging of Christ (see, for instance, BM Add.38120, fol.259) which may, indeed, be the source for the more widespread use of the motif.

15. Op.cit., pp.148-55.

16. ibid., p.154.

17. See above, Chapter I, n.12.

18. Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p.150n.

19. I have used the following text: Ovide moralisé en prose (texte du quinzieme siecle), ed. C. de Boer, Verhandlingen der Koninklyke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Niewe Reeks, Deel 61, No.2 (Amsterdam, 1954).

20. Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures . . . by G[eorge] S[andys] (Oxford: John Lichfield, 1632 [second edition]). I shall give two examples of the kind of interpretation to which Sandys submits Ovid. On sig, 2B1

he reports that Minerva's birth from the head of Zeus represents Divine Intelligence proceeding out of the Deity, and hence is a figure for the second Person of the Trinity. He also sees in the story of the giants who stormed Olympus an allusion to the insurrection of Satan and his angels prior to their fall from heaven (sig. D2).

21. Ovide moralisé en prose, p.109-10.

22. Ovide moralisé en prose, p.159.

23. Ovide moralisé en prose, p.118.

24. Ovide moralisé en prose, p.119.

25. Ovide moralisé en prose, p.161.

26. This explicitly erotic love poem is interpreted by the Church as a prophecy of Christ's love for His Church, just as it was interpreted by the Jews as a paean to God's love for Israel.

27. Spenser's "retractation" of the Hymne in Honour of Love and the Hymne in Honour of Beauty is not whole-hearted. In the dedication of the Fowre Hymnes he writes that his young readers, "being too vehemently carried away with that kind of affection, do rather sucke out poyson to their strong passion, then hony to their honest delight." One feels he is making a defense of his first two hymns comparable to that he makes in defense of "naturall affection" in the proem of Book IV--if indeed the proem, published in the same year as the Fowre Hymnes, is not referring to them as well: Spenser's "looser rimes," like love itself, should not, he seems to say, be blamed "for fault of few that have abusd the same."

28. See above, p.75.

29. See p.15-16 above.

30. The errors occur in xii.34.4 and xii.42.2;4;5. See Josephine W. Bennett, The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene" (1942, rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1960).

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