

“FOOLISH MEN THAT PRAYSE GIN EKE T’ENVY”: ARMES, ARMOR, and EROTICISM
IN SPENSER’S *THE FAERIE QUEENE*

by

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THESIS CERTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

FOOLISH MEN THAT PRAYPE GIN EKE T'ENVY: ARMES, ARMOR, and EROTICISM IN SPENSER'S *THE FAERIE QUEENE*

Noah Ryan Desimone

In Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, scenes of armament and disarmament allegorize the way that idealized and degenerate forms of masculinity are forged. Armor, in Spenser, is less a physical than a psychological shield. Donned at the wrong time, the knights become cruel, untrustworthy, and apathetic. Removed at inappropriate junctures, they descend into lust, avarice, and gluttony. Spenser's epic models the self-fashioning by which gentleman could come to embody the harmony of Venus and Mars. Empedocles' principle of love and war—the idea that eros and strife must come together for the generation of life to occur—is central to Spenser's idea of exemplary masculinity as well as to his political and artistic vision of harmony. The epic models a paradigm of courtly masculinity that places a premium on intense emotional relationships between men, even as it divorces eros from the realms of martial honor and patriarchalism. Since Spenser's vision of self-fashioned masculinity depends upon his understanding of court culture and the woman presiding over it, I conclude my thesis by looking at the epic's critique of Elizabeth I's use of romantic tropes and erotic pageantry

Introduction—The Many Shadows of Elizabeth

In Tudor England, chivalric tales of knights like Sir Gawain, Lancelot, Arthur, and Lanval, initially composed for the court culture of Anglo-Norman England, were reevaluated from a humanist perspective and reworked to serve a new court culture. The carefully orchestrated pageantry of Queen Elizabeth and her court often replicated the superlative aspects of magnificence inherent to romantic figures like Chrétien de Troyes' Arthur and Guinevere. By appropriating this imagery, Queen Elizabeth and her court sought to resurrect the grandeur of Norman chivalric romance as a means of political legitimization.

The Earl of Leicester's pageant at Kenilworth Castle in 1575 exemplified the role of medieval romance in Elizabethan court culture. Elisabeth Woodhouse discusses the artificial nature of the Kenilworth landscape itself and explains that Leicester's castle and grounds had been artfully reconstructed to reflect the Earl's identification with romance. Woodhouse explains that the whole of Kenilworth served as romantic pageantry, stating that "Leicester's land and water were being symbolically linked with the gods, which his goddess queen was being drawn into" (130). Aside from Leicester's use of divine imagery from the Italian romance *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (*Poliphilo's Strife of Love in a Dream*; 1499), Leicester drew upon Arthurian iconography with his representations of King Arthur's knights and the lake (130). By asserting this romantic lineage, Leicester laid claim to the romantic traditions embedded within Elizabeth's romantic lineage as the living descendant of King Arthur, the exemplary monarch of the Great Britons (Frye 68). Later, Elizabeth is presented with "the figure of a dim-witted giant" holding the keys to the gates and Kenilworth's very own "Lady of the Lake, who welcomes her to Leicester's territory" following Leicester's representation of Kenilworth as an incarnation of

Arthurian romance (Woodhouse 68). Just as the Tudor line itself claimed descent from Arthur, Leicester sought to legitimize himself through pageantry and by appealing to the aspects of romance associated with the birth of Britain. Elizabeth's response to Leicester's appropriation of Norman romance, as detailed in Robert Langham's *A Letter 1580*, was chilly. Elizabeth stated that "It pleased her Highness too thank this Lady, and too add withall, we had thought indeed the Lake had been ours, and doo you call it yourz noow?" (qtd. in Frye 69). Elizabeth clarified her disbelief in Leicester when she stated that the Lake of Arthurian mythology, as well as romance as a whole, "had been ours." Deflating Leicester's claims of romantic legitimization, Elizabeth asserted that Leicester's, or any other noble's, claims of romantic reciprocation were fraudulent. This argument over the ownership of the lake is important because it reveals Elizabeth's policing of romantic pageantry and the political power of pageantry. Elizabeth's quick termination of Leicester's claim to romance demonstrates the exclusive nature of Elizabeth's claims to romantic lineage.

Elizabeth's appropriations of romance for the purpose of buttressing her control over court were effective throughout her reign and coincided with the growing association between the traditionally Christian worship of God and the Anglican worship of Elizabeth herself as a godly idol. Robin Wells explains the extent of this worship stating that "the longer Elizabeth reigned, miraculously impregnable to Catholic plots and presumptive husbands, the greater was the tendency for Protestant Elizabethans to see the adulation of their Virgin Queen as a precise and proper substitute for the cult of the Virgin Mary" (18). Wells goes on to state that Elizabethan idol worship was also tied to a steady production of mythico-historical literature, contextualizing Elizabeth's proposed ownership over romance. This influx of mythical literature from authors such as Spenser "makes extensive use of prophecy and historical parallelism"

(Wells 8). This repurposing of romance and chivalric mythology resulted in a steady reinforcement of Elizabeth's figuring as an idol throughout Elizabethan literary circles. However, despite his adoption of mythico-historical literature, Spenser consistently explored the complicated problems of romantic reappropriation and offered a trenchant critique of the political deployment of romance in the court of Elizabeth. In his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, Spenser explains the structure and purpose of his allegory:

SIR knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and this booke of mine, which I have entituled the Faery Queene, being a continued Allegory, or darke conceit, I have thought good aswell for avoyding of jealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded,) to discover unto you the general intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any particular purposes or by-accidents therein occasioned. The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline: Which for that I conceived shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historical fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter, then for profite of the ensample: I chose the historye of king Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many mens former workes, and also furthest from the daunger of envy, and suspition of present time. ("A Letter" 714-715)

Spenser's purpose in the creation of his continued allegory and dark conceit was to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" ("A Letter" 714-715). In order to successfully fashion a virtuous gentleman, Spenser explains to Raleigh that an appropriation of the history of King Arthur would work best to aid in his moral endeavours. Spenser indicates that

appealing to Arthurian romance provides a sense of plausibility to his work, as romance can be read as historical fiction. Similar to Queen Elizabeth's ownership of romance as a means of political legitimization, Spenser explains that he deployed Arthurian romance as a way to legitimize his writing. Spenser acknowledges the legitimizing aspects of the romance genre when he stated that romance was the "furthest from the danger of envy, and suspicion of present time" ("A Letter" 715). In particular, Spenser identifies Elizabeth as the subject of his allegorical endeavor to refashion a more noble gentility. Spenser states that although glory is the general intention for his representation of the Fairy Queen, "in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her" ("A Letter" 716). Although Spenser makes it clear that his general intention is to glorify Gloriana, in some places his allegorical shadows of Gloriana—presented as various female figures in the epic—represent Queen Elizabeth. While central Queene figures such as Glorianna, Belphoebe, Una, and Britomart are rarely presented as critical representations of Elizabeth, some of Spenser's shadowed personages highlight the sophistry inherent to early modern deployments of romantic pageantry. More importantly, some of these shadowed versions of Elizabeth highlight Spenser's trepidation towards an avaricious court culture.

Spenser's account of Mammon's daughter, Philotime, in Book 2, Canto 7, highlights the disturbing realities underpinning the Elizabethan illusion of romance. Philotime, who embodies the troublesome allegorical concept of ambition in Guyon's hellish vision, presents herself as an erotic object of romance:

Her Face right wondrous fair did seem to be,
That her broad Beauty's Beam great Brightness threw
Thro the dim Shade, that all Men might it see:
Yet was not that same her own native Hue,

But wrought by Art and counterfeited Shew,
Thereby more Lovers unto her to call;
Nath'less, most heavenly fair in Deed and View
She by Creation was, till she did fall;
Thenceforth she sought for Helps to cloke her Crime withal.

There, as in glistring Glory she did sit,
She held a great Gold Chain ylinked well,
Whose upper end to highest Heaven was knit,
And lower part did reach to lowest Hell,
And all that Press did round about her swell,
To catchen hold of that long Chain, thereby
To climb aloft, and others to excel:
That was Ambition, rash Desire to sty,
And every Link thereof a Step of Dignity. (2.7. 45-46)¹

The repulsive nature of this hellish queen sitting in glory with countless “lovers unto her to call” elucidates a clear parallel to the romantic conventions of Elizabethan court culture (2.7.46. 1). Spenser’s acute attention to the fabricated nature of Philotime’s romantic pageantry lays bare the manipulative arts and counterfeited nature of this shadowed presentation of Elizabeth. Like a plague, the counterfeited romance originating from Philotime cascades all the way down through the court as her great gold chain linked all of the most ruthless and ambitious political figures

¹ Text from the *Faerie Queene* will be cited as (Book. Canto. Stanza. Line Number(s)).

ascending from hell to gain favor with this Elizabethan stand-in concealed by makeup and a romantic aura.

In a similar fashion to Philotome, Elizabeth regularly displayed herself at court in attire that played upon the powers of erotic pageantry. As detailed in Prévost-Paradol's *Journal*, on at least one occasion, the queen "kept the front of her dress open, and one could even see the whole of her bosom, and passing low, and often she would open the front of her robe with her hands as if she was too hot" (Martin 12). As a result of Elizabeth's political deployment of erotic self-objectification, she muddied the romantic waters that she claimed to own. Christopher Martin's analysis of Elizabethan pageantry explains that Paradol's account of Elizabeth's explicit erotic presentation highlights her often absurd application of romantic pageantry. According to Martin, Elizabeth's overt display of her bosom before a French ambassador was a conscious use of erotic pageantry for the political purpose of combatting thematic discrepancies of the now 63-year-old Elizabeth playing a virgin queen (Martin 12). Highlighting this issue, *The Faerie Queene* identifies the eroticism of Elizabeth's political pageantry as a dangerous misuse and misinterpretation of chivalric literature. Like Elizabeth's makeup, elaborate outfits, and appropriations of romance, Philotime's romantic presentation of glory conceals hellish intentions.

Rather than simply lambasting pageantry itself, eroticism is presented as the supreme danger of *The Faerie Queene* and functions by "besmearing... the body all, through charmes and magicke might, that all [the] senses [are] bereaved quight" (1.2.42). Unlike the physical hazards presented by such figures as the dragon, Orgoglio, or the Sarazins that appear in the epic, threats like Duessa's application of herbs and ointments bereave the senses and affect the judgement of those who succumb to the dangers of eros. The corrosive nature of libidinous desire places the

afflicted in physical peril. Orgoglio is, for example, able to have “battred [Redcrosse] quight” only after the knight of holiness chooses to be “poured out in loosnesse on the grassy ground” in a scene of sexual submission to Duessa (1.7.7,14). Almost every figure in *The Faerie Queene* succumbs to at least one instance of erotic temptation. From Britomart’s disarmament and attempted ravishment at Malecasta’s court and Fradubio’s lascivious dreams of Duessa’s *neather partes*, to Artegall’s regendering and submission to Radigund, or even Britomart’s love-sickness at her erotic vision of Artegall in the mirror, Spenser demonstrates the ability for eros to contradict the generative aspects of romance and feudal hierarchy itself. With this understanding of eros as a corrupting force within court culture, the next section will consider the critical discourse surrounding Spenser’s cosmology and how it answers this dilemma of eros.

Arms, Armor, and Harmony

Notwithstanding the conspicuous acknowledgement of Elizabeth I on the title page of his epic romance, the queen never actually appears in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596). Instead, she is figured obliquely through the fairy queen Gloriana. While Spenser’s Proem implicates the classical discourses surrounding love as intrinsic to the production of martial honor and his own art, Spenser’s representation of Elizabeth and his validation of love pageantry are always constrained by separating love from erotic lust. While the Proem lists idealized beauty as necessary for the production of art, Spenser explains that his thoughts are “too humble and too vile, To thinke of that true glorious type of thine” (1.Proem.4. 6-7). Although Glorianna exists as the true Elizabethan figure of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser maintains a strict distance from her for fear of depicting her through an erotic lens; instead, Spenser allows for the whole of his epic poem to represent the beauty that Elizabeth embodies.

Spenser's decision to depict Elizabeth only through an allegorical character, reflects a Lucretian understanding of love. Lucretius drew a sharp distinction between eros and a love of the metaphysical transcendence embodied by the goddess Venus. In his *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius writes, "Venus deludes lovers with phantoms; they cannot satisfy their gaze with the loved one's body, nor can their wandering hands rub anything away by roving all about the soft and tender limbs" (Lucretius 4.1101-1104). Lucretius describes the phantom delusion of worldly eros as a degraded replica of the philosophical love of heavenly beauty or philia. The equating of Elizabeth I with heavenly beauty, requisite to court panegyric in the period, presented a problem for intellectuals like Spenser who wanted to please the queen without violating his philosophical principles. As A.C. Hamilton observes, "Spenser will not flatter Elizabeth—an action condemned at II vii 47.3—but think of the glory of which she is the antitype, her type being 'Gloriane great Queene of glory bright'" (qtd. in Spenser 30). Spenser's substitution of Elizabeth with a figure of abstracted beauty presents an emblem of beauty and generation that mirrors Lucretius' otherworldly Venus.

Although Spenser is critical of early modern applications of romance, his work appropriates the literary genre and is often sympathetic to the presentations of love therein freed from erotic contamination. Similar to fourteenth-century adaptations of the genre by Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower, Spenser's moral redeployment of the romance highlights the limitations and consequences of the genre; in the case of Philotime's erotic presentation, Spenser reveals the potential dangers of a court culture in which pageant iconography works to conceal the immorality of a court politics. However, this critique does not extend to the logic of romance itself. The romantic allure of beauty is the driving force of chivalric duty in *The Faerie Queene*, as Britomart, Artegall, and even Spenser as the writer are capable of "rais[ing] thoughts too

humble and too vile” while under the spell of Phoebus’ lamp of love (1.Proem.4). Here, Spenser identifies love, which has been separated from eros, as a necessary component of political and artistic harmony.

In the preface to *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser repurposes Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* as he calls out for generative inspiration from the gods associated with love and desire:

And thou most dreaded impe of highest Ioue,
Faire Venus sonne, that with thy cruell dart
At that good knight so cunningly didst roue,
That glorious fire it kindled in his hart,
Lay now thy deadly Heben bowe apart,
And with thy mother mylde comto mine ayde:
Come both, and with you bring triumphant Mart,
In loues and gentle iollities arraid,
After his murderous spoyles and bloudie rage allayd.

And with them eke, O Goddesse heavenly bright,
Mirroure of grace and Maiestie diuine,
Great Ladie of the greates Isle, whose light
Like Phoebus lampe throughout the world doth shine,
Shed thy faire beames into my feeble eyne,
And raise my thoughts too humble and too vile,
To thinke of that true glorious type of thine,
The argument of mine afflicted stile:

The which to heare, vouchsafe, O dearest dread a while. (1.Proem. 3)

The general understanding of Spenser's Proem is that it replicates Lucretius' invocation to Venus in *De Rerum Natura* while emphasizing Empedocles' unity of love and strife² in the generation of political and artistic harmony (Vertue 140). This union of love and strife in Spenser is realized by the coming together of Venus and Mars. Spenser commands Cupid to abandon his bow and, with his mother, come to Spenser's aid (I.Proem. 3. 6, 9). Evelyn May Albright, clarifies Spenser's combination of love and strife as generative and states that "love and Strife act among the elements just as in Empedocles's, and we have the mixture, the subdual of Strife by Love, and the growing into one, the dependence of all creatures upon these elements and these activities for their coming into being, and (elsewhere in Spenser) the circle or wheel of existence" (740). While critics such as Albright and Bercovitch acknowledge the importance of Empedocles' cosmogony in early modern authors, these critics fail to recognize how Spenser's cosmogony differs from both Lucretius and Empedocles; namely, that Spenser identifies the disarmament of eros as intrinsic to this harmony of a unified Venus and Mars. Just as in traditional depictions of Empedocles' cosmogony, Spenser explains that Mars is disarmed of his bloody rage by his love for Venus. However, Spenser's cosmogony is complicated when Cupid is disarmed in a more literal fashion and commanded to "Lay now thy deadly Heben bowe

² Authors like Evelyn May Albright have noted Spenser's secondhand exposure to Empedocles since "Aristotle introduces 201 references to Empedocles in twenty-four separate works; and for this reason, if no other, it seems reasonable to suppose that Spenser would be aware of the nature of Empedocles's doctrines" (734). Sacvan Bercovitch also highlights the popularity of Empedocles' in Europe from the renaissance all the way into the latter half of the sixteenth-century in his essay "Empedocles in the English Renaissance." Bercovitch contextualizes this early modern preoccupation with Empedocles as the result of an audience of authors, such as Spenser, who were eager for a classical example of humanist philosophical poetry (Bercovitch 75). Spenser's repurposing of materialist concepts of creation from Lucretius likely originate with Empedocles' tendency to "gather from every quarter—from superstition and science, from myth and observation, from idealist and naturalist philosophies—and building from this multiplicity of materials a vision of man as microcosm" (75).

apart,” the same bow that instigated Arthur’s³ glorious fire for Glorianna (1.Proem.3. 3-4). This act of disarmament is crucial for Spenser’s preface, as it designates Venus and Mars’ progeneration of Harmony as the result of a Cupid disarmed of his deadly Heben bow and its influence over bodily desire.

In C.S. Lewis’ “The False Cupid” from *Spenser’s Images of Life*, he identifies the Proem as Spenser’s “generalized relation of values,” where “concord’s resolution of discord” is allegorized as harmony (20). The libidinous erotic desires of Cupid’s cruel dart must be abandoned for Spenser’s harmony to occur, as “it is a Cupid without his ‘deadly Heben bowe’ who inspires the concubitus whereby the goddess Harmony is engendered” (Lewis 20). The disarmed Cupid of harmony stands in stark contrast to the armed Cupid displayed on Scudamore’s shield at the temple of Alma. Whereas the armed Cupid on the shield emblemizes Scudamore’s intemperate desire for Amoret and the destructive nature of eros, the disarmed Cupid of the Proem does away with eros (Spenser 4.10. 55). Lewis’ analysis of Cupid and armor highlights the way in which eros is inextricably bound to worldly strife, war, and disorder for Spenser. Considering these connections, the various erotic threats that recur in Spenser’s epic clearly acknowledge a longstanding dynamic in romance: the fear of eros’ destructive influence over court politics and potential homoeroticism that had long haunted the discourse of martial honor. In the moments when Eros is disarmed, Spenser’s depiction of harmony promotes the aspirational love of Philia. Contextualizing Lewis’ symbolic logic of arms and armor within the critical discourse surrounding Spenser’s cosmogony, it is clear that these processes of armament

³ Hamilton identifies the recipient of Cupid’s cruel dart in Spenser’s Proem as Arthur, not Mars. Hamilton states that the glorious fire, which Cupid’s cruel dart kindled, belonged to Arthur, “suggesting his love for Gloriana and also his desire for glory” (qtd. in Spenser 30). This clarification as to the recipient of Cupid’s dart is important because it suggests that Cupid did not bring Mars and Venus together through the use of his bow.

define Spenser's belief in a concept of love that is freed from the contamination of eros. Specifically, *The Faerie Queene* notes the significance of removing eros from love, as Spenser suggests that participating in the affectionate activities of love is necessary for the production of harmony. While the Proem clarifies that such harmony is realized by uniting the martial imperatives of war and the affectionate imperatives of love, the various allegorical virtues—organized by Books in *The Faerie Queene*—reveal how the unification of these imperatives through armament might look.

Erotic Armament and Affectionate Friendship

Armor within Spenser assists in the maintenance of chivalric honor and in protecting heroic knights from the carnality that undermines masculinity. Armor functions as a metaphorical prophylactic and works to protect male knights against the homoeroticism that poisons the affective economy of patronage. This prophylactic function of armor is revealed in scenes where knights are ravished following their disarmament such as Redcrosse Knight's emasculation following his willful abandonment of arms and armor after he drinks from Phoebe's water. Despite the resistance to eros that armor offers, Spenser presents a problem with the process of armament. While armament protects knights from the dangers of eros, it also strips them of their capacity to participate in the philial discourse of love.

Spenser's acknowledgment of the significant role of armament and disarmament in the subjugation of women portrays the way in which armor separates knights from the discourse of love. This depiction of women's disarmament also experiments with alternative romantic conventions in Book 3, presenting a heroic economy that predates Anglo-Norman romance:

By record of antique times I finde,

That women went in warres to beare most sway,
And to all great exploits themselves inclin'd:
Of which they still the garland bore away,
Till envious men fearing their rules decay
Gave coynely straight lawes to curb their liberty,
Yet sith they warlike armes have laid away,
They have excelled in artes and policy,
That now we foolish men that praise give eke to envy (3.2.2).

In this passage, Spenser explains that prior to their disarmament, women were not treated as pageant objects of romance since they bore away the garland in favor of armor. *The Faerie Queene* presents an ancient, pre-romantic, culture that saw women participating in “warres to bear most sway” (3.2.2. 2). Spenser depicts the historical account of war-like women through their armament. These women participated in their own exploits of martial power and were active participants in the enforcement of martial honor before men who were envious of their power laid away their armor. Women’s ability to “excel in artes and policy” is revealed to have grown in tandem with their subjugation as a result of their disarmament by men (3.2.3. 6). The power of women’s arts and policy is exemplified by Cambina’s knowledge of “all the artes, that subtil wits discover” in Book 4 and her ability to pacify Cambell and Triamond (Spenser 3.2.2). These powers of arts and policy retain the amatory dynamics that had long animated the extensive system of patron-client relations governing the social, political, and economic order of things.

Spenser explains that affectionate arts, which are central to the discourses of love, are born out of disarmament and subjugation. As a result of this relationship between disarmament

and the acquisition of affectionate arts, this section explains that access to the discourse of love is dependent upon a removal from martial culture. Spenser's knights jealously police examples of affectionate love and romantic pageantry throughout the epic as a result of their inability to access arts and policy (3.2.2. 8-9). Moments such as the never-ending pursuit of Florimell or the ludicrous contest over her girdle exemplify the embarrassing results of a martial culture that prohibits men from directly participating in the affective dynamics of love (Spenser 4.5.). The knights' envy and their desire to participate in the filial bonds of social obligation reveals a moment wherein Spenser problematizes traditional romantic depictions of martial honor and postulates a bygone feudal system of female empowerment.

Male knights' envy of female participation in the filial dynamics of love mirrors how masculinity was governed through romance. Laurie Finke and Martin Shichtman describe how this feudal economy was controlled by complex systems of patronage that governed every aspect of social life. Critics argue that, unlike contemporary economic exchanges, these transactions of patronage were grounded in reciprocal obligation that was emotionally charged. Finke and Shichtman point to the "hordes of young knights that were bound together by the affective ties of gift giving-and receiving—which created personal relationships encoded in discourses about 'love'" (486). As a result of this highly affectionate gifting culture, Anglo-Norman literature reveals an acute awareness of the potential dangers of the slippage from the homosocial to the homoerotic in male relationships. Working to police the boundaries of love and honor, women were often figured as amatory surrogates in the affective transactions between a king and his knights in medieval romance (486). This use of woman as surrogate is central to the romance tradition, as it worked to siphon homoerotic energy away from the patron-client relation and mitigate anxieties about sodomitical bachelor knights. This analysis of patronage and female

surrogacy is necessary for understanding the role of women in traditional romance and in Spenser. However, unlike the romantic authors Finke and Shichtman draw from, such as Marie De France and Chrétien de Troyes, Spenser's account of women's subjugation in Book 3 explains women's surrogate role as related to their disarmament and the arts and policy acquired thereafter.

Spenser's deployment of female erotic surrogacy is perhaps best exemplified by Cambell and Triamond who are able to realize the virtue of friendship only after Canacee and Cambina are established as surrogates for their relationship. In Book 4, Cambell and Triamond are presented as the allegorical representation of friendship, yet they start the tale as enemies. Unlike Britomart and Amoret's relationship, Cambell and Triamond find themselves unable to embody friendship without the assistance of a female surrogate to siphon away the romantic dangers of homoeroticism. After their lengthy battle proves both Cambell and Triamond equal in martial prowess and honor, Cambina magically intervenes and the two are then able to show affection towards one another:

Of which so soone as they once tasted had,
Wonder it is that sudden change to see:
Instead of strokes, each other kissed glad,
And lovely haulst from feare of treason free,
And plighted hands for ever friends to be.
When all men saw this sudden change of things,
So mortal foes so friendly to agree,
For passing joy, which so great maruaile brings,
They all gan shout aloud, that all the heaven rings. (4.3.49)

By way of Cambina's knowledge of "all the arts, that subtile wits discover," Cambell and Triamond are given the opportunity to embody friendship (4.3.40. 1-3). Like most moments from *The Faerie Queene*, this example of magical intervention is no simple *deus ex machina*; Cambina's arts⁴ exemplify Spenser's approach to male friendship. As a woman in a romantic literary setting, Cambina is gifted with the ability to enact sudden change and allow Spenser's knights to "each other kissed glad, and lovely haulst from feare of treason free" (4.3.49. 3-4). In other words, Spenser establishes that women's romantic arts can free men from the fears of treasonous homoeroticism, allowing them to engage in the affectionate relationships of *philia* inherent to patronage economies. Beyond this necessity for feminine arts, the female ability to facilitate patron relationships illuminates the reason why Cambell and Triamond allegorize the concept of friendship in the epic. Spenser reveals that Cambell and Triamond can embody friendship only after Canacee has been wed to Triamond. In the end, the perfect friendship of traditional chivalric literature can only exist when both knights are wed to the erotic surrogate, the sister in this case, of the other.

Spenser later complicates his depiction of harmonious friendship in Book 4 by choosing not to appeal to the traditional patron economy of chivalric literature described by Finke and Shichtman. After Cambell and Triamond have been bound together by the surrogacy of Cambina and Canacee, the two heroes participate in a tourney. However, due to his grievous wound, Triamond is unable to fight Satyrane. To "purchase honour in his friends behalve," Cambell

⁴ Here, *artes* is a reference to the arts Cambina used to bind Cambell and Triamond. Spenser specifies that Cambina's arts were learned from her mother (4.3.40. 1-4). This generational teaching of the arts that can "pacifie the strife, which caused so deadly smart" reinforces the concept that the discourse of love was exclusively controlled by women (4.3.40. 9). The inclusion of this concept of love pacifying strife reinforces the Proem's depiction of harmony. More specifically, Cambina's arts pacifying strife realizes the Proem's process of harmony created through the unification of love and strife.

decides to wear Triamond's arms and armor (4.4.27). In this scene of rearmament, Cambell proves his friendship for Triamond by purchasing honor for his friend within the martial economy of the tournament. The disarmed and injured Triamond later returns Cambell's favor and chooses to arm himself in his friend's armor, fighting in his place (4.4.33. 6). The illustration of these two friends' willingness to fight in each other's place does provide what Hamilton describes as "an exemplum of erotic friendship" (qtd. in Spenser 440). More precisely, Triamond and Cambell's process of disarmament and rearmament acknowledges an alternative mechanism that allows for men to engage in emotional love for each other without participating in homoeroticism.

While Cambell and Triamond's friendship at the end of Book 4 represents the optimal circumstances for affectionate friendship and the management of eros in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser presents several other examples of male relationships that reflect, and sometimes critique, Elizabeth's romantic approach to the sixteenth-century English court. Throughout the epic, various representations of love and knightly friendship exist apart from allegorical perfection or the category of authentic romantic friendship. In particular, the prophesied marriage at the heart of *The Faerie Queene* highlights the role of armament in Spenser's creation of political harmony and identifies disarmament as central to women's role in romance and patronage.

Britomart and Artegall's Harmonious Union

Britomart and Artegall's prophetic union describes the components requisite to political harmony in Spenser. The representation of Britomart in Book 3 elucidates how her armament enhances her ability to embody love. The initial trials Britomart faces in her vision of Artegall depict a "filthy lust... which depart from course of nature and of modestee" (3.2. 40-41). Beyond

a simple longing or sexual desire, the text makes it clear that Britomart's lust for Artegall in this Canto is against nature and is in line with Elizabethan notions of carnality as Britomart displays a physical as well as emotional affliction complete with "trembling ioynt... frosen cold vaines," and "melancholy" (3.2.34). As a result of this debilitating love-sickness, Britomart cannot pursue Artegall, and upon their marriage, produce political harmony.

Britomart overcomes her symptoms when she dons the "goodly armor, and full rich array, which long'd to Angela, the Saxon Queene" (3.3.59-60)⁵. Britomart's armament serves to unify her generative aspects of love by disempowering the destructive presence of eros, similar to Cupid's disarmament during the Proem's call for the unification of Venus and Mars. Although Britomart's donning of armor enables her to resist eroticism and embody her role as the allegorical figure of chastity, the broader context of her armament signals that she will not repress all amatory interactions. This willingness to encourage affectionate relationships differentiates her from the male knights of Spenser and the romance genre. This necessity for love is codified in Canto 3 when Merlin reveals that Britomart's destiny is tied to her passion for Artegall:

The man whom heavens have ordaynd to bee

The spouse of Britomart, is *Arthegall*:

He wonneth in the land of *Fayeree*,

Yet is no *Fary* borne, ne sib at all

To Elfes, but sprong of seed terrestrial,

⁵ This armor of "the saxon queene" harkens back to Spenser's discussion of the "puissance of ages spent" and the "great exploits of power" of ancient female martial societies from (3.2.2) suggesting that Britomart may represent a female martial culture. Also, "Angela" and "Saxon" may be a reference to "Anglo-saxon," furthering the notion that Britomart establishes the royal British genealogical line.

And whylome by false *Faries* stolne away,
Whyles yet in infant cradle he did crall;
Ne other to himself is knowne this day,
But that he by and Elfe was gotten of a Fay. (3.3.26)

According to Merlin's prophecy, the "heavens" themselves "have ordaynd" Artegall to be "the spouse of Britomart" (3.3.26. 1-2). Spenser positions Artegall as arriving in Fairyland after a terrestrial birth. Artegall is codified as existing outside of the land of fairies and is shown to inhabit the real-world history and lineage of Britain in this revelation about his origins.

Considering that Britomart's armor establishes her as a return of the ancient Saxon Queene, she and Artegall's prophesied union denotes the unification of Norman romantic tradition and Spenser's imagined historical lineage of Saxon women. The prophesied evolution of romance depends upon Britomart's initial fall to eros. Britomart's desire to fulfill her emotional wants in uniting with Artegall initially contrasts her anti-erotic role as an allegory of chastity.

Britomart's later role as the allegorical figure of chastity⁶ will protect her from the filthy lust of eros, enabling her to fulfill the harmonious model of love outlined in Spenser's Proem. The unification of romance and martial honor within Britomart is further prophesied to produce the landscape of British genealogy leading up to Elizabeth herself:

Renowmed kings, and sacred Emperours,
Thy fruitful Ofspring, shall from thee descend;
Brave Captaines, and most mighty warriours,
That shall their conquests through all lands extend,
And their decayed kingdoms shall amend:

⁶ Britomart embodies chastity after she is cured of her love-sickness (3.2.34).

The feeble Britons, broken with long warre,
They shall vpreare, and mightily defend
Against their forren foe, that commes from farre,
Till vniuersall peace compound all ciuill iarre.

It was not, Britomart, thy wandering eye,
Glauncing vnwares in charmed looking glas,
But the streight course of heuenly destiny,
Led with eternall prouidence, that has
Guyded thy glaunce, to bring his will to pas:
Ne is thy fate, ne is thy fortune ill,
To loue the prowest knight, that euer was.
Therefore submit thy wayes vnto his will
And doe by all dew meanes thy destiny fulfill. (3.3. 23-24)

In Merlin's vision, Britomart's fruitful offspring are prophesied to extend across all of Britain's lands and defend against foreign enemies. Besides defending Briton, these descendants will amend "the decayed kingdoms" of Britain until "vniuersal peace compound all ciuill iarre" (3.3.23. 9). Merlin makes it clear that this establishment of a distinctly unified British culture occurs with the generative force of a love freed from the corruption of eros and "thy wandering eye, Glauncing vnwares in charmed looking glas" (3.3.24. 2). Merlin explains that Britomart's love of Artegall must adhere to an eternal providence instead of eros.

The outcome of Artegall and Britomart's union presents the results of the harmonious love outlined in the Proem. Spenser's description of fruitful offspring descending from Britain imitates the Venus realized in Lucretius' "Proem":

Mother of Aeneas's sons, joy of men and gods, Venus the life-giver, who beneath the gliding stars of heaven fillest with life the sea that carries the ships and the land that bears the crops; for thanks to thee every tribe of living things is conceived, and comes forth to look upon the light of the sun. (Lucretius 27)

Like Lucretius' Venus, the harmonious Britomart of Merlin's prophecy is the life-giver of Britain. Merlin reiterates this generative symbol of Britomart when he states that "Renowned kings, and sacred Emperours, Thy fruitful Ofspring, shall from thee descend" (Spenser 3.3.23. 1-2). Britomart embodies the generation of life necessary for harmony to occur; however, her offspring also produce the martial culture required to defend against foreign invaders and end civil war. This requirement for the life-giving generation of love and a martial culture resulting from war contextualize the Proem's call for Venus and Mars to come together. The generative aspects of love, which establish empires such as England and Fairyland, must be protected by the military might of strife and war.

Armament is necessary for establishing Britomart and Artegall as a unification of Venus and Mars since it also allows for Britomart to subdue Artegall of his strife in the church of Isis. In Book 5, Canto 7, Britomart witnesses another cryptic vision of her marriage to Artegall. In this vision, Artegall is figured as a crocodile, the symbolic representation of Osiris (qtd. in Spenser 554). With Britomart associated as Isis, Spenser once again allegorizes Britomart and Artegall's marriage as a unification of strife and love.⁷ Exemplifying Venus' subduing of Mars in

⁷ Spenser pulls from Egyptian mythology to represent unification of love and strife with Isis representing the goddess of love and Osiris portraying the god of death. Once again, Spenser

Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and Spenser's "Proem," the church of Isis offers a vision of Britomart as an Isis keeping a crocodile at bay. Spenser describes Isis, stating that "One foote was set vpon the Crocodile, And on the ground the other fast did stand, So meaning to suppress both forged guile, And open force" (5.7.7. 1-4). Britomart's subdual of the crocodile suppresses the guile and force of strife. This moment of subdual reflects a tendency within Spenser to characterize the subjugation of male knights at the hands, or occasional foot, of powerful female figures.

This prophetic union based around a subdual of masculine strife is also maintained by Isis' arms in this section, as after the crocodile "gan to threaten her likewise to eat; But that the Goddesse with her rod him backe did beat" (5.7.15. 8-9). The armed Isis' rod enables Britomart to maintain control over the explicitly erotic crocodile.⁸ In this scene, the necessity of Isis' rod highlights female armament as necessary for the union of love and strife. Moreover, the crocodile's lustful depiction suggests that engendering political and social harmony requires female armament as a way to resist the eros of strife.

While Britomart's subdual of Artegall contextualizes female armament as politically harmonious, Radigund's actions at the Amazonian court display the disharmony of unchaste female armament. Radigund's helmet is removed during Artegall's battle in the Amazonian court, revealing that she is a woman. This revelation leaves Artegall confused and incapacitated since he mistakes the Amazon for the conventional affectionate surrogate of romance. Once Radigund's helm is unlaced and she is revealed to have the fair visage of a woman, Artegall is

reflects a unification of strife and love similar to the pairing of Venus and Mars central to Empoecles and Spenser's Proem.

⁸ Hamilton describes the crocodile as emblematic of eros. Hamilton explains connotation of Spenser's crocodile when he states that "Traditionally, the dragon is the guardian of chastity—see 6.8-9*n*—but here **swolne with pride** (in the sexual sense) it has become its enemy" (qtd. In Spenser 555).

struck before her beauty “with pittifull regard, that his sharpe sword he threw from him apart, cursing his hand that had visage mard: no hand so cruell, nor no hart so hard, but ruth of beutie will it mollifie” (5.5.13). In this moment of hesitation, Radigund bests Artegall in combat and forces him to disarm. Spenser realizes the allegorical need for Artegall’s subjugation as spelled out in the church of Isis. However, Radigund contaminates Artegall’s necessary subjugation by introducing political avarice and eros.

Radigund converts Artegall into an object of desire in her Amazonian court and disarms him after he is defeated by her feminine beauty. Like other erotic figures throughout the epic, Radigund’s subjugation of Artegall serves her desire to ravish knights. Radigund does not utilize armor as an erotic prophylactic, unlike Britomart. Instead, Radigund remains corrupted by Cupid’s dart and suffers from love-sickness. Spenser describes Radigund’s erotic contamination when he states that “much the greater still her anguish grew,/Through stubborne handling of her loue-sicke hart;/And still the more she stroue it to subdew,/The more she still augmented her owne smart,/And wyder made the wound of th’hidden dart” (5.5.28. 1-5). Radigund’s festering love-sickness defines her actions and prevents her from generating a politically harmonious court that mirrors the prophesied Britain. The result of this example of female empowerment suggests that Britomart’s subjugation of Artegall must be tempered by chaste intentions. Figures of allegorical strife must be subjugated by women who retain their chastity in order for a unification of love and strife to generate political harmony. These instances of female empowerment via armament also help to define Spenser’s illustration of ideal masculinity.

Harmonious Masculinity

Spenser’s portrayal of the martial woman, Britomart, presents an alternative to the failings of romantic masculinity. Britomart’s role within the epic also complicates traditional

depictions of armor as a masculine contraceptive against the influences of eros. Britomart highlights the potential for direct amatory interaction achieved through her reestablishment of a Saxon martial culture that included women in systems of martial authority. Britomart is coded within a martial culture which predates Anglo-Norman romance, allying her with Spenser's ancient women who had "wont in warres to beare most sway" and rejected the trappings of erotic objectification (3.2.2). Mirroring Saxon women, Britomart's armament enables her to hide away the garland, the symbolic representation of female subordination, and participate in knight errantry.

Before presenting an alternative representation of masculine identity, Spenser problematizes the masculinity of sixteenth-century Britain throughout his epic. Understanding how the apparatus of martial warfare maintains male dominance in feudal structures provides important insight into this exploration. Ian Moulton describes Elizabethan masculinity as aggressive and born out of martial culture, explaining that England's martial system of masculinity came into conflict with the arts and policy associated with aristocratic conduct, noting that the many "[m]anuals of aristocratic conduct such as Castiglione's enormously popular *Book of the Courtier* are largely devoted to negotiating the gap between ideologies of masculinity based on physical force and the novel social situation of the Renaissance court, in which graceful dancing and measured speech were as crucial to a successful courtier as fencing and riding" (Moulton 253). The increased need for male gentry to familiarize themselves with romantic conventions and maintain a purposeful separation between traditional acts of masculine honor and the feminized customs of the Elizabethan court produced violent outcomes. Moreover, this unruly masculinity instigated a reactionary and aggressive culture that often derided a perceived female influence over male identity, art, and politics.

Moulton's description of masculinity contextualizes the frequent suspicions surrounding the royal and moral authority of women from critics such as John Knox throughout sixteenth-century. Elizabeth Whitley details a heated conversation between Mary Stuart and John Knox in which he suggests that "he could be 'as well content to live under your Grace as was Paul to live under Nero.' He adds, 'in verrey deed Madame, that book [*Plato's Republic*] was written most especially against that wicked Jezebel of England'" (170). Following this comparison, Mary responds, "'But (said she) ye speak of women in general'" with Knox clarifying that "Most true it is Madame, (said he)... for of late years many things which before were holden stable, have been called in doubt..." (Whitley 170). In this example, Knox embodies the common anxieties brewing in court culture after the intrusion of limited female empowerment within royal society. Sixteen years after Knox's death in 1572, these anxieties came to a head as "England was at war with Spain, and thus for fifteen years the national conduct of the most masculine of pursuits, warfare, was in the hands of an elderly woman" (Moulton 253). Demonstrating the cultural tensions of sixteenth-century men, Spenser's knights often exhibit unruly and destructive masculinity as a result of their anxieties over eros and feminization as described by Moulton and others.

Spenser does not present any satisfactory examples of knightly men who are able to both arm themselves against eros and simultaneously interact with it. Although the act of armament seems to provide a buffer between erotic danger and masculinity, disarmament equates to a forfeiture of masculine honor, ravishment, and damnation as evidenced by knights like Redcrosse and even Artegall. It is telling that Artegall is not the one to pursue Britomart and is instead tasked with his role as the embodiment of justice. Just as unarmored women such as Malecasta, Florimell, and Cambina are ill equipped to act as subjects of patronage, Spenser's

armored men are woefully unprepared to engage in the harmonious generation of a combined strife and love; male knights cannot act as objects of affectionate attention without sacrificing their martial honor. As a result, Spenser reveals that men envy the arts and policy that women have access to after their subjugation and donning of the garland (3.2.2). This forced adoption of arts and policy allowed noble women to become objects of romantic affection without succumbing to ravishment or the lasciviousness associated with powerful women like Duessa or Malecasta (3.2.2). The knight's repeated failings reveal a need for both the arming of martial armor, and an understanding of the arts and policy that men envy.

Spenser explores this need for a dual protection against eroticism through Guyon's actions at the Bower of Bliss. While most of the anxieties male knights face regarding their experiences with eros result in dishonor or violence against themselves, Guyon's actions explicate the more disturbing implications of this issue. Guyon does resist becoming an object of eros by Acrasia and suffering the same fate as Verdant. However, Guyon's immoderate repression of the bower's generative aspects of love and beauty results in an equally disturbing violence directed against everything amatory:

But all those pleasaunt bowres and Pallace brave,
Guyon broke downe, with rigour pittillesse;
Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save
Them from the tempest of his wrathfulnesse,
Their groves he feld, their gardins did deface,
Their barbers spoyle, their Cabinets suppressse,
Their banket houses burne, their buildings race,
And of the fayrest late, now made the fowlest place. (2.12.83)

Like the anti-woman John Knox, Guyon is presented with an assault on the carefully monitored notions of masculinity inherent to romantic chivalry. From this doubt, Spenser presents the common violence at the heart of romantic literary regulation in the statement that “all those pleasaunt bowres and Pallace brave,/Guyon broke downe” (2.12.83. 1-2). After this initial act of violence, Spenser clarifies that Guyon makes no compromises regarding the generative aspects of love such as agape or philia since “Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save Them from the tempest of his wrathfulnesse” (2.12.83. 3-4). Spenser illustrates the binary outcomes of love discourses within traditional romantic structures throughout the whole of this Canto; Knights who enter the bower are either objectified to the point where they succumb to eros and lose their souls or they, like Guyon, must make the fairest aspects of art and nature into the foulest of places.

Guyon’s admittedly immoderate violence at the end of Book 2 reveals Spenser’s bleak depiction of love and masculinity. Stephen Greenblatt’s popular assessment of this scene in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* seems apt: Guyon’s violence is a necessary tool of role-play in his fashioning of temperance given the expectations of the romantic literary constraints in which Guyon exists (Greenblatt 161). Despite Greenblatt’s accuracy in his assessment of the violence inherent to romance, Spenser does provide a less violent alternative to the binary trappings of the genre. Notably, Spenser places Britomart in similarly tempting and dangerous erotic situations to the one Guyon faces at the end of Book 2. Unlike Guyon, Britomart’s role as an acceptable object of affection allows for a degree of maneuverability that was unavailable to Guyon at the Bower of Bliss or to any other self-fashioning man of romance. Spenser’s account of women’s disarmament and their subsequent role as the originators of arts and policy foregrounds the introduction of Britomart, *The Faerie*

Queene's allegorical representation of chastity and the mythologized representative of a pre-Norman chivalry.

Rescuing Masculinity in Spenser

In Book 3, Canto 1, Britomart's role as the allegorical patron of chastity is threatened by the erotic advances of Malecasta, a figure of lust whose wanton eyes foretell a dangerous figure not unlike Acrasia (3.1.41). Britomart's armor is positioned as the first method of protection against Malecasta's dangerous erotic intrusions just like the male knights of *The Faerie Queene*. After Malecasta has led Britomart and Redcrosse into her bowre and "cheared them well with wine and spiceree," the knights begin to disarm and fall victim to the dangerous influence of eros (3.1.42). Although Redcrosse totally succumbs to the temptations of Malecasta's erotic persuasion and embodies the immoderate Verdant, the advances of Malecasta are resisted by Britomart for the first time as she "would not disarmed bee" (3.1.42. 6-8). Instead, Britomart demonstrates temperance towards eros objectification as she "onely vented up her umbriere, and so did let her goodly visage to appear." (3.1.42. 8-9). Whereas a man of romance's acceptable response to the threat of objectification would be a rejection of amatory passion altogether, Britomart demonstrates an alternative response. Britomart can interact with feudal amatory relations without disarming herself to the dangers of Malecasta's lascivious court because she is a woman, gifted with the arts and policy of feminine romance. Britomart is allowed to maintain her role as a subject of patronage while still engaging in the emotional aspects of love and pageantry. This unique ability to safely interact with eros is a result of Britomart's armored ability to resist the temptations of eros and her epistemic understanding of it as a former erotic surrogate. Like Queen Elizabeth's deliberate decision to "open the front of her robe with her hands as if she was too hot," Britomart embodies an understanding of the duality of her armored

protection from ravishment and the uses of pageantry (Martin 12). Britomart's dual position as an object of, and participant in, amatory feudal relations remains unstained throughout this perilous interaction. Spenser momentarily shadows Elizabeth through Britomart's display of an interaction with romance that maintains a strict distance from eros.

Malecasta's court is important in establishing the significance of Britomart's role as the alternative to romance because Britomart demonstrates the ineffectiveness of traditional masculinity when unarmored and objectified. As Spenser has illustrated throughout the whole of *The Faerie Queene*, male knights destroy, and often self-destroy, when they are made vulnerable to eros. Non-harmonious masculinity often fails knights throughout the trials of romance and results in the destruction of the very sentimentality that drives the romantic genre as detailed in Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss. Reminiscent of Redcrosse's bedroom scene of ravishment at the hands of Duessa and Archimago, Malecasta's scene of intrusion into Britomart's bower highlights the utility of an erotic subject stripped of the needless anxieties of performative masculinity:

Where feeling one close couched by her side,
She lightly lept out of her filed bedd,
And to her weapon ran, in minde to gride
The loathed leachour. But the Dame halfe dedd
Through suddein feare and ghastly drerihedd,
Did shrieke allowed, that through the hous it rong,
And the whole family therewith addred,
Rashly out of their rouzed couches sprong,
And to the troubled chamber all in armes did throng.

And those sixe knights that ladies Champions,
 And eke the Redcrosse knight rant to the stownd,
 Halfe armd and halfe unarmed, with them attons:
 Where when confusedly they came, they fownd
 Their lady lying on the senseless ground;
 On thother side, they saw the warlike Mayd
 Al in her snow-white smoke, with locks unbownd,
 Threatening the point of her avenging blade,
 That with so troublous terror they were all dismayd. (3.1.62-63)

Britomart provides a temperate alternative to Guyon's response at the Bower of Bliss in Malecasta's bowre scene.⁹ Like Guyon's experience before Acrasia's ravishing bed, Britomart feels "one couched by her side" and chooses to resist her objectification at the hands of the lady of delight (3.1.62. 1). While Britomart ran to her weapon, she did not give into the same destructive anxieties as Guyon. Instead, Britomart chooses to threaten Malecasta with the point of her sword as an alternative to killing her. Britomart is able to navigate the process of her own pageant objectification while maintaining her autonomy as a subject of affectionate patronage as "they saw the warlike Mayd/Al in her snow-white smoke, with locks unbownd,/Threatening the point of her avenging blade" (3.1.62. 6-8). Even in the process of policing the extent of her own objectification, Britomart maintains her ability to present herself as a romantic figure of affection

⁹ Spenser specifically refers to bowres in Canto 1 when he states, "Eftesoones long waxen torches weren light,/Unto their bowre to guyden every guest:/Tho when the Britonesse saw all the rest/Avoided quite, she gan her selfe despoile,/And safe commit to her soft feathered nest" (3.1.58 3-7). This section seems to suggest that the "bowres" guide *Malecasta's* guests to their rooms and links the Lady of Delight's Castle Joyous to Acrasia's Bowre of Bliss.

as she has her hair down and wields a sword. Here we see that Britomart is armed and, as such, can engage in Romantic masculine systems of patronage. Yet, we also see that she is a suitable object of beauty and amatory relations by way of her ability to disarm and perform the pageantry of a romantic woman. Through her armament and access to arts and policy, Britomart is able to perfectly embody the Proem's unity of love and strife as she has the capacity to avoid becoming overcome by eros but also still maintain the artes and policy of an eros object in martial culture. In this way, Spenser suggests that the unity of Venus and Mars must be realized through the romantic union of martial masculinity and feminine amatory relations.

Spenser suggests that no male chivalric participants can ever reach the magnanimity of a female patron figure such as Britomart or Elizabeth. However, Spenser suggests several examples of how male figures might be sculpted through turmoil and objectification to realize their own allegorical virtues. While the realization of Britomart's virtue necessitated her donning the anti-erotic armor of the Saxon queene, Spenser's male knights must be tempered by disarmament at the hands of women. As noted by Katherine Eggert, Spenser's text is consistently preoccupied with the epistemic consequences of female invasion:

But even then, penetration does not convey comprehension. As any number of critics have noticed, Guyon seems not to learn anything as he invades the "covert groves, and thickets close" of Acrasia's Bower (2.12.76). His comments to his monitory guide, the Palmer, after he has infiltrated and destroyed this feminine enclosure deal only with the piggish Grill, who, like the "Gryllus" transformed by Circe in Plutarch's reworked version of the *Odyssey*, resists being returned to human form. Spenser's Grill, however, seems to have succumbed to the temptation more of hogwash than of feminine filth, so that for Guyon to learn his

primary lesson from Grill's example ("See the mind of beastly man, That hath so soone forgot the excellence / Of his creation" [2.12.87]) is for him to have forgotten Acrasia and her erotic temptations entirely. Thus even if as Greenblatt argues Guyon masters the Bower's allure of erotic release, he nonetheless absorbs none of that allure, even so much as to comment on it. Since knowing the Bower in a sexual sense would be prelude to knowing it in an epistemological sense, inhabiting all its feminine mysteries, Guyon's task to rephrase John Milton's comment on this episode is to see, not know, and hence abstain. (Eggert 7)

Here, Eggert's observations of Guyon's abstinence highlights his inability to truly understand the effects of Acrasia's erotic bower. However, this abstinence also prevents Guyon from embodying a masculinity that reflects the symbolic unification of love and strife from the Proem, as the embodiment of love requires a moment of intemperate ravishment and objectification in order to understand the arts and policy of the female space. While Eggert highlights this tendency to only see, and not, know feminized eros, Spenser does, in fact, provide at least two moments of male knight's slippage into and back out of the dangerous space of eros.

The ever-present depiction of erotic danger in Spenser is more than a simple reflection of early modern anxieties surrounding eros. Along with acknowledging these concerns, the various instances of male knight's momentary intemperance serve the teleological function of allowing the knight errant to experience and overcome the lascivious influences of eros, and in so doing, to gain the arts and policy so important to Spenser's model of virtuous unity. One such example of male ravishment in *The Faerie Queene* is expressed through Redcrosse Knight's interactions with Duessa in Book 1, Canto 7 and his subsequent rearmament. In this Canto, Orgoglio defeats Redcrosse after the knight drinks from Phoebe's fountain "with greene boughs decking a gloomy

glade,/About the fountain like a girlond made” (1.7.4. 4-5). Following this not-so-subtle callback to the garlands of female subordination, *Duessa* disarms *Redcrosse* and transforms him into the subjugated figure of the romantic woman. After *Orgoglio*, “hime to dust thought to haue battered quight,” *Duessa* presents the giant with a proposition which identifies both *Redcrosse* and *Duessa* as *Orgoglio*’s guerdon (1.7.14.). This moment of disarmed ravishment echoes the enforced donning of the garland, which Spenser discusses in Book 3. While many critics such as Greenblatt and Eggert have highlighted the errantry of this situation and Redcrosse Knight’s failure in the face of eros, Redcrosse’s invigorated successes following his rearmament suggest a productive purpose in his erotic fall.

After Redcrosse is saved from *Duessa* and rearmed as a participant in the bonds of patronage, he details the epistemological significance of his time as a bondslave to *Duessa* and *Orgoglio*:

Faire Lady, then said that victorious knight,
The things, that grieuous were to doe, or beare,
Them to renew, I wote, breeds no delight;
Best musicke breeds delight in loathing eare:
But th’only good, that growes of passed feare,
Is to be wise, and ware of like again.
This daies ensample hath this lesson deare
Deepe written in my heart with yron pen,
That blisse may not abide in state of mortall men.
Henceforth Sir knight, take to you wonted strength,
And maister these mishaps with patient might;

Loe wher your foes lies stretcht in monstrous length,
 And loe that wicked woman in your sight,
 The roote of all your care, and wretched plight,
 Now in your powre, to let her liue, or die.
 To doe her die (quoth *Vna*) were despight,
 And shame t'auenge so weake an enemy;
 But spoile her of her scarlot robe, and let her fly. (1.8.44-45)

Here, Redcrosse asserts the impact his suffering has had on his demeanor as a knight. Unlike Guyon, Redcrosse did not simply witness the consequences of feminine eros, he lived and suffered as a result of them. Because of his understanding of objectification, Redcrosse states that “th’only good, that growes of passed feare,/Is to be wise, and ware of like again./This daies ensample hath this lesson deare/Deepe written in my heart with yron pen,/That blisse may not abide in state of mortall men” (1.8.44. 5-9). Instead of the errant knight of folly that Spenser portrays throughout the first six Cantos of Book I, Redcrosse is finally able to “master these mishaps with patient might” (1.8.45. 2). As proof of this evolution, Redcrosse finally chooses to listen to Una and displays the temperance that he lacked in scenes such as the abandonment of Una following his erotic dreams at the hands of Archimago. Despite Duessa’s horrible treatment of Redcrosse, he comes to abide by Una’s belief that “To doe her die (quoth *Vna*) were despight,/And shame t’auenge so weake an enemy;/But spoile her of her scarlot robe, and let her fly” (1.8.45. 7-9). Like Britomart, Redcrosse’s exposure to the forces of eros and objectification enable him to better react to erotic threats and to understand the arts and policy that most of Spenser’s knights lack.

Redcrosse's mercy before Duessa and his subsequent transformation into the allegorical agape figure of St. George helps to elucidate the purpose and scope of knight errantry and eros. However, aside from Britomart, Spenser's realization of Lucretius' unification of Venus and Mars is most clearly depicted by Artegall in Book 5, Canto 7. Yet another example of a male knight who has succumbed to the allure of eros and become an object of eroticism as a result, Artegall's fall figures male rearmament as needed in order to rescue male knights from disharmonious masculinity.

During Artegall's battle in the Amazonian court, Radigund's helmet is removed and it is revealed that she is a woman, leaving Artegall confused and incapacitated as he mistakes the Amazon for the conventional erotic object of romance. The second that Radigund's helm is unlaced and she is revealed to have the "faire visage" of a woman Artegall is struck with "pittifull regard" before her beauty and throws his sword away: "thereof his cruell minded hart Empierced was with pittifull regard, that his sharpe sword he threw from him apart, cursing his hand that had visage mard: no hand so cruell, nor no hart so hard, but ruth of beautie will it mollifie" (5.5.13). In this moment of hesitation, Radigund bests Artegall in combat and forces him to fully disarm. After Artegall is disarmed by her feminine beauty, Radigund converts him into an object of desire in her Amazonian court. Artegall is only liberated from the erotic clutches of Radigund and Clarinda after Britomart arrives, defeats Radigund, and enters the now emasculated Artegall's bowre:

Ah my deare Lord, what sight is this (quoth she)

What May-game hath misfortune made of you?

Where is that dreadful manly looke? where be

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

Thenceforth straight into a bowre him brought,
And causd him those uncomely wedes undight;
And in their steed rayment sought,
Whereof there was great store, and armors bright,
Which had bene reft from many a noble Knight;
Whom that proud Amazon subdewed had,
Whilest fortune favoured her successe in fight,
In which when as she him anew had clad,
She was reviv'd, and joyd much in his semblance glad. (5.7. 40-41)

With his rearmament, Artegall is liberated from his role as an affectionate surrogate in the gifting economy of Radigund's homosocial court. Artegall's tenure as slave to a lascivious woman, who utilizes the forces of eros to disarm and ravish knights, details the significance of the male understanding of what Eggert called *female mysteries* (Eggert 7). Artegall is objectified and taken as an erotic trophy like Redcrosse; however, Radigund also "made him to be dight in womans weedes, that is to manhood shame,/And put before his lap a napron white,/In stead of Curiets and bases fit for fight" (5.5.20. 6-9). Mirroring Britomart's conversion from the lovesick princess to the masculine armored Saxon Queen during Merlin's process of armament, Britomart

“him anew had clad,/She was reviv’d, and joyd much in his semblance glad” (5.7.41. 8-9). As a result of Artegall being robbed of his manliness, he realizes the unified properties of love and strife in the final moments of this Canto. Artegall is then refashioned back into a chivalric gentleman knight with a newfound knowledge of the arts and policy inherent to the affectionate relationships of harmony.

Unlike Redcrosse’s merciful sentencing of Duessa and Britomart’s temperate response to Malecasta’s erotic behavior and her love scene with Amoret, the audience is ultimately never treated to a newly moderate Artegall following his scene of rearmament. Considering the significance of Britomart and Artegall’s prophetic union, it seems plausible that Artegall’s evolution towards a more temperate and amorous player in the homosocial culture of Faerieland would be realized by his marriage to Britomart. However, the ultimate fate of Britomart and Artegall’s union is, of course, deferred. Keeping in mind Spenser’s allegorical shadowing of Elizabeth through her characterization of eros figures like Duessa and Snowy Florimel, it is prudent to consider Britomart and Radigund as diametric representations of Elizabeth’s potential application of eros and romance.

Conclusion

Keeping Elizabeth’s Kenilworth pageant in mind, Radigund’s role as the emasculating ruler of the Amazonian court serves as a shadowed representation of Elizabeth’s emasculation and disempowerment of the Earl of Leicester. Just as Elizabeth stated that “we had thought indeed the Lake had been ours” and, in so doing, disempowered the Earl of Leicester’s appropriation of romance (Langham 4), Radigund’s removal of Artegall’s chivalric armor worked to disempower his romantic station within court culture. Beyond this emasculation, Radigund’s beauty utilized as a disempowering tool mirrors Elizabeth’s controversial

deployment of eros (5.5.13) discussed by Christopher Martin. Spenser's other erotic villains display the potential shortcomings of Elizabeth's implementation of romantic pageantry and eros. However, Radigund's representation as a sovereign queen figure with the unified aspects of martial and amorous policy highlights a troubling political scenario that characters like Duessa, Philotome, and Malecasta have merely hinted. Opposite of Britomart, Radigund's influence over the dynamics of patronage is stagnation and regression. Although Radigund's court is seemingly anti-romantic in the sense that traditional gender roles are flipped, the resulting romantic structure and homoerotic anxieties of the Amazonians are strikingly Norman. Although the implications of Radigund's connections to Norman culture have yet to be explored, it is obvious that her court's re-gendering of men to be used as erotic surrogates in the Amazonian economy of amatory patronage serves to critique a potential future for English masculinity and court culture.

If Radigund's impact on *The Faerie Queene* suggests Spenser's disapproval of the emasculating aspects of Elizabeth's court, Britomart's presence embodies Elizabeth's potential. Britomart counters Radigund and identifies the social outcomes of the Proem's call for cosmological harmony. Clarifying postulations from critics like Vertue and Bercovitch, Britomart's embodying the "puissance of ages spent," throwing off the Norman yoke and appealing to a Saxon culture, expands the scope of traditional romance and constitutes the generative outcomes of Empedocles' concept of harmony (3.2.3. 1). Moreover, Britomart's portrayal manifests Spenser's hope for a court in which Elizabeth reinvigorates the romantic structures of British feudalism, as Britomart ultimately chooses to arm Artegall, reestablishing his disempowered claims to romantic political power, affirming his harmonious masculinity, and establishing the royal British line through their potential marriage and consummation. Unlike all

the other Elizabethan stand-ins, Britomart's presence throughout *The Faerie Queene* challenges the politically manipulative applications of romance and eroticism inherent to Elizabeth's reign and recharges increasingly alienated patronage relationships with an amatory code of honor which foolish men may praise and envy (3.2.2).

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