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*"Her Rare Chastitee":
Belphoebe's Representation in
The Faerie Queene*

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*Cold, cold my girl?
Even like thy chastity.*

- William Shakespeare

Othello

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the presentation of Belphoebe in Edmund Spenser's Renaissance poem, *The Faerie Queene*. Belphoebe's identity as a huntress and a ward of Diana is established by her dedication to virginity. This is displayed by Spenser as a form of political praise, a celebration of Queen Elizabeth's portrayal to her English nation as their virginal monarch. My thesis will demonstrate that in *The Faerie Queene*, although Spenser associates virginity with purity, love, modesty, mystic power, Neo-Platonism and religious spiritualism, these are, paradoxically, often extensions of Belphoebe's sensual position in the poem. Hence, in my examination of Belphoebe, I offer several arguments that question the extent to which her virginity can ever actually be perceived as being completely divorced from issues of sexuality.

In order to explore my proposition of Belphoebe's virginity as praised and celebrated, but at the same time an erotic image of womanhood, I offer five distinct chapters that display this central argument. Each chapter, dealing with the associations that Belphoebe shares with other characters in *The Faerie Queene*, will both convey Belphoebe's sensuality and expand upon its consequences toward a contemporary reading of virginity in the poem as a whole. I will argue

that Belphoebe's virginity exists as a catalyst for masculine desire, which, although unsatisfied by actual sexual experience, nevertheless adds new meaning and understanding to our own classification of the virgin body in *The Faerie Queene*. I will draw upon the sources of Spenserian criticism, cultural history, feminist and psychoanalytic theory to address the integral argument posed.

My first chapter examines Belphoebe's introduction to the poem in the form of a blazon, which I will analyse in correlation with relevant portraits of Queen Elizabeth. Chapter Two centers on Belphoebe's relationship to male lust in her association with the false knight, Braggadocchio and with Prince Arthur's squire, Timias. This chapter explores my argument that virginity is sensually destructive and emasculating by being sexually innocent. Chapter Three will study Belphoebe's connection with her twin sister Amoret, who represents the marital love that Belphoebe's virginity denies. Chapter Four focuses on Belphoebe's rescue of Amoret from the Carle of Lust, arguing that she is both an enemy of lust and a manifestation of it. My fifth and final chapter views Timias' madness at losing Belphoebe, as well as his reconciliation with her, as being a direct reflection of the historical Raleigh/Elizabeth relationship of courtier and queen, of the complex relationship between public duty and private passion.

While Belphebe is very much a character of purity, mysticism and chastity, my thesis attempts to demonstrate that Spenser's depiction of her is far more intricate. It is when we read Belphebe in sensual terms (as this thesis does) that her virginity in *The Faerie Queene* can also be understood as connected to the erotic features of voyeurism, masochism, lust, as well as sexual purity. Paradoxically, these features are classified by the emotional and symbolic excess propagated through actual, constant physical denial that Belphebe, as a result of her virginity, exhibits toward the characters in the poem that are attracted to her.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed



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My supervisors were Dr. Geoff Hiller and Dr. Peter Groves. Professor Harold Love, Professor Kevin Hart and Dr. Denise Cuthbert also contributed to my ideas and references.

During my years as an undergraduate at Melbourne University, Dr. Marion Campbell introduced me to Spenser's poetry. Her enthusiastic teaching and encouragement were responsible for instilling within me a love for *The Faerie Queene* and a deep interest in the majority of its characters, especially Belphebe. It was always my dream to work with Marion as my supervisor on this PhD. Nevertheless, she provided the inspiration for this thesis in all of its aspects.

Abbreviations

Cambridge Journal – CJ

Comparative Literature – CL

1 Corinthians – 1 Cor.

English Literary History – ELH

English Literary Renaissance – ELR

Genesis – Gen.

Isaiah – Isa.

Literature, Interpretation, Theory – LIT

Modern Language Association of America – PMLA

Oxford English Dictionary – OED

Proverbs – Prov.

Renaissance Quarterly – RQ

Revelation – Rev.

Song of Solomon – Song Sol.

Spenser Studies – SS

Studies in Philology – SP

Studies in English Literature – SEL

Studies in Western Literature – SWL

Texas Studies in Literature and Language – TSLL

Introduction

In Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Belpheobe is one of the central female characters. She functions principally as both an example and a celebration of Queen Elizabeth's renowned virginity. This thesis will provide a detailed study of Spenser's representation of Belpheobe as being a historical reflection of Elizabeth, of a virginity, which combined private sensuality with public sovereignty.

Anderson recognizes that Belpheobe's name is derived from Phoebe, the legendary moon goddess, who is also the virgin huntress Diana (85). Belpheobe is Diana's ward in *The Faerie Queene*; they are also akin in their dedication both to the hunt and to perpetual virginity. In the poem, Spenser introduces Belpheobe as "a goodly Ladie clad in hunters weed" (2. 3. 21). Hence, Belpheobe's importance as a huntress is demonstrated in this initial depiction of her. Indeed, Belpheobe's dwelling place is in the forest, together with the "beares, lions, and buls" (3. 1. 14). Belpheobe hunts not only these beasts, but challenges certain male characters in the poem that each personify various degrees of beastly lust in their association with her. One principal argument of this thesis is that a contradiction exists in Belpheobe's virginal role: she stands both opposed and related to issues of sensuality through the lust she inspires in others (namely, Braggadocchio and Timias), particularly

through her innocent, and at the same time, her provocative characterization. Spenser uses the term "fresh flowring Maidenhead" (3. 5. 54) to describe Belpheobe's virginity as symbolic of the foremost degree of chastity within women, that which is taintless, non-sexual.¹ Paradoxically, it is in fact this very degree of female chastity which Spenser positions in the poem as being just as sexually alluring as the degree of wantonness that is embodied in characters like Acrasia and Duessa.

Williams notices that Belpheobe, "heavenly as she is . . . attracts desire" (1966, 49), whilst Krier acknowledges that "Belpheobe figures the Queen in her fusion of the erotic and the majestic" (81). I will elaborate on the observations offered by both Williams and Krier, since they have not developed any further their claim of Belpheobe as an erotic, desirable, yet at the same time a heavenly and mystically powerful character in *The Faerie Queene*.

In the Proem to Book 3, Spenser enables Elizabeth

In mirrours more then one her selfe to see,
But either Gloriana let her chuse,
Or in Belpheobe fashioned to bee:
In th'one her rule, in th'other her rare chastitee.²
(3. Pr. 5)

Although Spenser here distinguishes between Gloriana and Belpheobe, both of them possess 'rule' and 'rare chastitee,' as does Elizabeth.

While it is true that Gloriana is indeed shadowed in many of the other characters in *The Faerie Queene* to depict and celebrate the various aspects of Elizabeth and her reign, this thesis is concerned with Belpheobe's representation in the poem.

Spenser's reference to Belpheobe's virginity as 'rare chastitee' is the catalyst for my proposition that Belpheobe's virginity is 'rare,' not only because it classifies her position in relation to the common attributes associated with virginity during the Renaissance (purity, modesty, obedience, mysticism), but because Belpheobe's virginity, paradoxically, also connects her to the erotic aspects of *The Faerie Queene*. Hence, I argue that Belpheobe's portrayal by Spenser as a virgin huntress is not one which is restricted to typical Renaissance ideals of womanhood, but instead is available to be remodelled in reference to recent feminist and psychoanalytic issues relating to female sexuality and the representation of the female body in literature. This thesis suggests that 'rare chastitee' in *The Faerie Queene* alludes to a virginal power which is intermingled with sensual power, a power existing in the imagery, metaphors and language used by Spenser in his representation of Belpheobe.

Belpheobe's virginity has been traditionally viewed as being the reflection of Elizabeth's private self, her womanhood. The tribute to, and celebration of Elizabeth has always been acknowledged as one of

Spenser's main purposes for the poem, and this is demonstrated in his "Letter to Raleigh":

In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceiue the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery land. And yet in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most virtuous and beautifull Lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belpheobe. (1990, 737)

Here, Spenser uses the themes of public, immortal sovereignty and private, alluring virginity in order to define the importance of Gloriana and Belpheobe as literary characters.³ Elizabeth's public 'person' as 'a most royall Queene or Empresse' exists in Gloriana.

Roche recognizes that Elizabeth's state of virginity is "a quality not emphasized in Gloriana . . . Belpheobe is virginity and Gloriana is glory, while Elizabeth is both virgin and glorious" (1964, 46). However, while Gloriana represents the physical beauty, spiritual grace and universal glory of Elizabeth as a monarch, I will argue that in *The Faerie Queene*, these aspects, in addition to sovereign power, are also united in Belpheobe's virginal role.

Spenser's use of 'public' and 'private' in his presentation of both Gloriana and Belpheobe will now be analysed, to illustrate that sensuality remains fundamental to Spenser's portrayal of both characters in their shadowing of Elizabeth. Spenser highlights the erotic element in

his depiction of Gloriana and Belphebe in order to celebrate Elizabeth's own desirability as a female monarch, exalting the fact that sensuality and sovereign power are integrated in her. Gloriana, unlike Belphebe, resides publicly at Court (1. 7. 46), but she is also connected to the private sphere in so far as Spenser presents her as an erotic love object in Arthur's dream vision in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*:

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

This dream vision of Prince Arthur's may be implied as sexual through Spenser's use of the pleasurable, even erotic descriptions of 'loue,' 'goodly glee,' 'louely blandishment' and his heart being 'rauisht with delight.' What appears to unite the public and private images of Gloriana and Belphebe are the qualities of sensual appeal. If they are thus connected by their sensuality, so too must their sovereign power be united, since both Gloriana and Belphebe are the poetic reflection of Elizabeth. As Villeponteaux points out:

Although Belphebe is placed in opposition to Gloriana and thus Elizabeth's "rule," and although she

supposedly represents Elizabeth's "chastity," a component of her body natural embodies also, quite clearly, Elizabeth's political power. The idea of the king's two bodies must deconstruct in the case of the queen because her power is inseparable from her body.
(1993, 31-32)⁴

Villeponteaux has a reasonable contention here, particularly since Elizabeth's political (hence public) power was intrinsic to the virginal power that was displayed in relation to her private body. In other words, the specific type of power, which prevents Elizabeth's 'rule' and 'rare chastitee' from being separate, is indeed the virginal one that is the product of her natural body. Similarly, my thesis will demonstrate that in Spenser's representation of Belphoebe, her virginity (while being a symbolic portrayal of her role as a private woman), sometimes displays the power of a public sovereign.

The medieval concept of the monarch's two bodies was fundamental to the Renaissance,⁵ where sovereign power was linked to various literary, secular elaborations of the private, natural, ageing physical body, and the public, glorious, everlasting political body.⁶ While the natural body was recognized as committing error, growing old and decaying, the political body lacked imperfection and was immortal.⁷ The body politic, being ideally and divinely perceived, is symbolically represented in *The Faerie Queene* by the worshipped

image of Gloriana, "that greatest Glorious Queene of Faerie lond" (1. 1. 3), on the shield of Guyon in Book 2 (2. 8. 43).⁸

Gloriana exists in the poem as an elusive rather than a human character. The main difference between Gloriana and Belpheobe is one that Campbell views in the following way:

while Belpheobe is a character inside *The Faerie Queene*, fashioned by Spenser himself, Gloriana remains outside its representative strategies, as the goal which the poem desires but never achieves, except in a projected ending where the powers of Gloriana are transfigured into those of God himself.
(247)

Gloriana's godlike powers, when understood in terms of the universal, 'public' body of Elizabeth's sovereignty, are indeed powerful ones. Spenser recognizes this power and exhibits it in the Proem to Book 1:

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

This stanza displays Elizabeth as the earthly reflection of heavenly grace – her ideal form is the shape of true glory and majesty in the luminous ideal, which is Gloriana. Such a portrayal enables Elizabeth (through Gloriana's public body as she exists in *The Faerie Queene*) to

exceed her mortality and become a celestial inspiration for the poem, a force that enabled Spenser to shape it as a unified structure, supported by her symbolic and political presence. Spenser's acknowledgement of 'thoughts too humble and too vile' emphasizes the separation between his mortality in comparison to the public, celestial one of Gloriana/Elizabeth. 'Dred' relates to the Queen as a 'goddess' rather than a 'woman,' instigating Spenser's awe, fear and respect. This is the first instance in *The Faerie Queene* that Spenser refers to Elizabeth as 'dred.' He requires her light to guide him, while he exists as a shadow or a reflection of her greatness through his own poetry. I want to suggest that Spenser's use of the term 'dred' also unites the sovereign power of Gloriana with Belpheobe's virginal power.

In Isaiah, we are told: "sanctifie the Lord of hostes, & let him be your feare, and let him be your dread" (Isa. 8: 13). 'Dread' is used in this excerpt to illustrate that fear and reverence are a natural part of love and respect toward God, a form of respect for that power which may either uplift or destroy. This is the way in which Spenser uses 'dred' in reference to Elizabeth, to both recognize and honour her power, particularly her virginal power. Such a feature is exemplified in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, where the virgin Una is referred to as the Redcrosse Knight's "deare dread" (1. 6. 2) when he forsakes her to follow the lecherous witch, Duessa. Similarly, in Book 2, Spenser

writes of Belphoebe's "dredd Maiestie, and awfull ire" (2. 3. 23). This is analogous to what Timias calls Belphoebe after she has forsaken him:

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

These lines express Belphoebe's sovereignty to the degree that she is offered the same description as Elizabeth. They also relate to Belphoebe's mystical power and her control over Timias as a glorified and adored Petrarchan mistress who is capable of either destroying or restoring him to favour, just as Elizabeth as 'Goddesse heauenly bright' controls the heavens in the previous passage from the Proem to Book 1.

Despite her mystical, somewhat public power in various passages of the poem, Belphoebe is always placed in the private sphere of the forest in *The Faerie Queene*. She is first described approaching Trompart and Braggadocchio as she pursues a beast, emerging into the scene from "a forrest greene" (2. 3. 20). Her private life in the forest is greatly contrasted to the public life that she may have experienced had she lived at Court. However, it is important to recognize that this public, inexperienced existence of Belphoebe is still hypothetically

implied in the poem, and Spenser makes us aware of the public/private distinction in Braggadocchio's following speech to Belphoebe:

But what art thou, O Ladie, which doest raunge
 In this wilde forrest, where no pleasure is,
 And doest not it for ioyous court exchaunge,
 Emongst thine equall peres, where happie blis
 And all delight does raigne, much more then this?
 There thou maist loue, and dearely loued bee,
 And swim in pleasure, which thou here doest mis;
 There maist thou best be seene, and best maist see:
 The wood is fit for beasts, the court is fit for thee.
 (2. 3. 39)

Here, the public life is described in terms of pleasure rather than duty; the pleasure of seeing and being seen, of loving and being loved. From Braggadocchio's point of view, Belphoebe denies herself the right to fully exercise her sensual potential, the potential for a life of pleasure and love by existing in the forest as opposed to the Court.

Belphoebe regards the 'public' existence of court life as wasted because it consists of leisure rather than duty; she prefers to avoid "pleasures palace" (2. 3. 41) in exchange for 'honour' and activity, which she derives from "painfull toile" (2. 3. 40) in the private sphere of the woods. It is thus "in woods, in waues, in warres she wons to dwell" (2. 3. 41). Even though Belphoebe belongs to the life of the hunt, she defends her existence because she regards it as being more purposeful, more private, as opposed to Gloriana's public position in

The Faerie Queene. Only in this way, I argue, can the separation between Gloriana and Belphoebe be made.

Raleigh's poem dedicated to Elizabeth and entitled, *The Ocean to Cynthia*, depicts the public, sovereign power of the Queen as distinct from Belphoebe's. The character of Belphoebe was initially Raleigh's creation, and was as a consequence later adopted by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*. What is interesting in the following extract is Raleigh's own separation of Belphoebe from the public sphere (which is reserved for the Queen, or Gloriana type), and into the private sector in which she is held exclusively:

A Queen shee was to mee, no more Belphebe,
A Lion then, no more a milke white Dove;
A prisoner in her brest I could not bee,
Shee did vntye the gentell chaynes of love.
(1965, 327-330)

Raleigh emphasizes the distinction between Elizabeth in her public role as a national sovereign and Belphoebe as a compassionate woman; in the latter classification she is available to be loved, wooed, manipulated, inscribed in textual form, but as a revered and dreaded sovereign she is not.⁹ Following Raleigh's condemnation for treason and imprisonment in the Tower, Elizabeth could only exist for him as a queen, the personification of power, rather than the previously tender, generous, sensuous, loving private woman. Raleigh's career, strangely

enough, united these two seemingly opposed images, as I will convey in the fifth chapter. This thesis will also show that certain historical documents about Elizabeth offer descriptions of her which reveal that she understood sensuality as a personal quality, which could be used to heighten her political power, hence blending her private and public personas. This feature, opposed to both Raleigh's and Spenser's separation of the Queen's public body from her private body (as Belpheobe), demonstrates that in the maintenance of her role as a Virgin Queen toward her people, Elizabeth was able to purposefully project a personalized, sensual power, which seemed appropriately and naturally integrated with her public image at Court. At the same time, and in spite of her ageing body, Elizabeth flaunted her virginity as a source of freedom, which it lent her as both a powerful, autonomous sovereign (Gloriana) and a desirable woman of flesh and blood (Belpheobe). The following is a description of the sixty-four year old Elizabeth at her Court given by the French ambassador Andre Hurault, Sieur de Maisse, who wrote interesting descriptions about the Queen's habits after spending some months in England between 1597 and 1598:

"She was strangely attired in a dress of silver cloth, white and crimson, or silver 'gauze,' as they call it. This dress had slashed sleeves lined with red taffeta, and was girt about with other little sleeves that hung down to the ground, which she was for ever twisting and untwisting. *She kept the front of her dress open, and one could see the whole of her bosom, and*

passing low, and often she would open the front of this robe with her hands as if she was too hot."

Quoted in Hibbert (251, italics mine)

Montrose recognizes that in reference to this particular passage, "Elizabeth's display of her bosom signified her status as a maiden" (1988, 34). However, I want to argue that sensual provocation does obviously exist in this description, as well as the following one that Montrose quotes by De Maise. It portrays Elizabeth

"clad in a dress of black taffeta, bound with gold lace . . . She had a petticoat of white damask, girdled, and open in front, as was also her chemise, in such a manner that she often opened this dress and one could see all her belly, and even her navel . . . When she raises her head, she has a trick of putting both hands on her gown and opening it insomuch that all her belly can be seen." (1988, 34)

What is most interesting in both descriptions by De Maise is the effort he takes to expose the sensual personality of the Queen exhibiting her flesh from beneath her garments. Perhaps here, Elizabeth is intentionally elaborating on the power of her chastity, so pure that even sensual revelations of her body will not tarnish it. Yet at the same time, she could be hinting that virginity is a fragile state when the line between it and sensuality cannot be explicitly defined, but wavers in a state of potential defilement, of sensual provocation. So it is with my interpretation of Belphebe in

Spenser's portrayal of a virgin who is not immune to sensual depiction as well as to sovereign power.

As yet, a major study of Belphoebe in *The Faerie Queene* has not been undertaken, except in chapters or essays concerned with her. The most popular opinion amongst certain Spenserian critics is that Belphoebe exists as nothing more than an ideal or an archetype of female virginity, as well as one whose character lacks human substance. Among the first to argue this was Lewis, who describes Belphoebe as "an archetype . . . of the chaste and somewhat terrible huntress" (Images, 1967, 47). In the early sixties, Roche's chapter on Belphoebe and her twin sister Amoret considered them to be "archetypes or universals," lacking psychological motivation or realism (1964, 96). Similarly, Maccaffrey's chapter asserts that the twins are only "social models, too pure and complete to be realized in actuality" (291), and adds that Belphoebe merely embodies "the human yearning for an ideal realm which can be experienced only in imagination" (102). Also, O'Connell's chapter on Belphoebe interprets her virginity as the cause of her "elevated detachment from common human affairs, a concern for absolutes and ideals" (100).¹⁰ Concerning Belphoebe's association with Timias, Villeponteaux's essay, "*Semper Eadem*: Belphoebe's Denial of Desire," reads Belphoebe as a character who

lacks sensual desire because of her virginal status in the poem, but at the same time (whether intentionally or not), excites this type of desire in others whilst forbidding their sexual satisfaction of her (1993, 29-45).

As this thesis will demonstrate, all these interpretations present a limited understanding of Belpheobe. I instead wish to take a different view, extending on a point presented in Hughes' essay, "Virgilian Allegory and *The Faerie Queene*." Hughes discusses Belpheobe's resemblance to Virgil's Venus. His essay recognizes, as I do, the physical, mythical and symbolic similarities between Belpheobe and Venus, to show that Belpheobe both experiences the forces of sensual desire and causes others to experience it for her. However, Hughes argues that the resemblance of Belpheobe to Venus was one not consciously intended by Spenser, a view that I disagree with.

Broadus' chapter on Belpheobe and Timias in *Spenser's Allegory of Love: Social Vision in Books III, IV, and V of The Faerie Queene*, regards Timias' quest for Belpheobe's heart as part of the larger love which attracted Elizabeth's courtiers to her (97-108). Broadus offers a political reading of Belpheobe's role, but one that does not extend toward a feminist or psychoanalytic interpretation of Belpheobe's chaste, yet sensual relationship with

Timias, which I will offer in the second chapter of the thesis.¹¹

Berger writes that while Belpheobe "bespeaks honor, rejects love and passion" she is nevertheless "an object of sexual no less than divine and royal devotion [but] there is a shade of the sinister about this ambiguity" (1967, 140).¹² Berger's description of Belpheobe as being honourable, divine, royal, as well as sexual (and in his opinion, sinister) by inspiring sensual desire in others highlights Renaissance attitudes toward the presentation of sexuality in women. Female carnal desire, as Spenser shows in *The Faerie Queene* through the characters of Hellenore, Malecasta, Acrasia and Duessa, is representative of the darker, socially unacceptable side of female behaviour. This is why they, as symbols of uncontrollable lust, are excluded from the two central conventions for females in the English Renaissance: chaste marriage or virginity.

Central to my analysis of Belpheobe as both virginal and sensual, private and sovereign is Berry's discussion that Renaissance discourses of love were influenced by Platonic, medieval courtly love and Christian concepts, the result being that

the Renaissance discourses of love certainly attempted to deny the materiality of the 'chaste' woman they idealized: to exclude the female body, and feminine sexuality, from their idea of a chaste woman as exclusively spiritual (and as thereby inspiring a conviction in their own godlike powers). But the mysterious bodily presence of woman haunts these

systems, insisting upon a paradoxical conjunction of nature and spirit under the sign of woman. (3-4)

The reason why the female body was both idealized and spiritualized rather than recognized on earthly, sensual terms is because the males responsible for initiating such discourses of love perceived female sexuality as dangerous, a threat to masculine autonomy and control over women. This resulted in the need to idealize and spiritualize the female body, to remove it from the sexual sphere and into the realm of the archetypal, the exemplary. From this perspective, Belphoebe's 'human' significance in *The Faerie Queene* is reduced considerably. As this thesis will emphasize, in the 'paradoxical conjunction of nature and spirit' regarding Belphoebe, her character is no less idealized or spiritual simply because it is also sensual. After all, in Belphoebe's portrayal of Elizabeth's sovereign virginity, she is responsible for reflecting the Queen's sensual, feminine power, a power that was acknowledged by Spenser in *The Shepheardes Calender* even before *The Faerie Queene* was written.

In *The Shepheardes Calender*, the Blazon of Eliza is an important portrayal of Elizabeth as a maiden queen in Renaissance literature. Eliza's virginity is not excluded from the public image of

her sovereignty. Rather, she is presented as a virgin queen whose spirituality, sexual virtue and sovereignty are integrated:

See where she sits vpon the grassie greene,
 (O seemely sight)
 Yclad in Scarlot like a mayden Queene,
 And Ermines white.
 Vpon her head a Cremosin coronet,
 With Damaske roses and Daffadillies set:
 Bayleaves betweene,
 And Primroses greene
 Embellish the sweete Violet.

Tell me, haue ye seene her angelick face,
 Like Phoebe fayre?
 Her heauenly haueour, her princely grace
 can you well compare?
 The Redde rose medled with the White yfere,
 In either cheeke depeincten liuely chere.
 Her modest eye,
 Her Maiestie,
 Where haue you seene the like, but there?
 (55-72)

The mixture of red (the garments, the coronet, the red roses and cheeks) with white (the ermine, the daffodils and white roses) in both stanzas implies that sensuality and purity are blended in the image of the female sovereign as both desirable and chaste. Interestingly, in Book 3, the lusty dame Malecasta attempts to seduce the disguised Britomart, thinking her to be a man. Malecasta appears in the scene covered with her "scarlot mantle . . . that was with gold and Ermines faire enueloped" (3. 1. 59). Hamilton's editorial notes in *The Faerie Queene* (Spenser, 1990, 316) mention that although the ermine was

classified as the traditional symbol of chastity, it was also linked with lust – a point which Spenser obviously recognized and brings to our attention in this particularly erotic stanza of the poem. This feature enables the link between purity and eroticism to be even less apparent, especially in reference to the virgin characters of Belpheobe and Eliza.

With Spenser's poetical representation of Eliza in *The Shepheardes Calender*, in contrast to that of Belpheobe and Gloriana, there exists the inseparable connection between her private and her public self. However, Eliza's association (like Belpheobe's in *The Faerie Queene*) with Phoebe, the virginal goddess of the moon, links her to the status of a 'mayden' (a private woman), as well as a public queen with 'princely grace' and royal garments. Notable too, is the 'modest eye' of the shy virgin, which co-exists with the 'maiestie' of a monarch. Spenser's descriptions of Belpheobe in *The Faerie Queene* are closely aligned to such depictions of Eliza in *The Shepheardes Calender*, where the poet highlights and celebrates the Queen's glory and power through her sensuality, purity and her royal virginal image.

King argues that Belpheobe's virginity "offers a retrospective myth for the queen's failure to wed, one that postulates the collapse of her final effort at marriage" (1982, 151).¹³ King interprets Belpheobe's role in *The Faerie Queene* negatively, by focusing on Elizabeth's unfavourable, uneventful marital circumstances. Yet, as I argue in this

thesis, Spenser does not portray Belpheobe as the failed shadow of Elizabeth. Instead, her virginity is presented as a virtue for other women who seek virginity rather than marital love (although married love is also admirably portrayed by Spenser), to emulate:

To youre faire selues a faire ensample frame,
 Of this faire virgin, this *Belpheobe* faire,
 To whom in perfect loue, and spotlesse fame
 Of chastitie, none liuing may compaire . . .
 For thy she standeth on the highest staire
 Of th'honorable stage of womanhead.
 (3. 5. 54)

Belpheobe's virginal virtue in this stanza is presented as analogous to light, to that which is 'faire.' Spenser uses this term four times in the first two lines of the stanza, most possibly to indicate that Belpheobe's virginity is a positive, shining example which can be used to reflect upon other women who seek to adopt the virginal lifestyle which Belpheobe personifies in *The Faerie Queene*. Not only does Spenser praise Belpheobe's virginity in its similarity to light, perfection and spotlessness, but also, its taintless aspect places it on 'the highest staire . . . of womanhead.' Surely such a claim by Spenser cannot be misinterpreted as a disapproval of Elizabeth's virginity; instead this stanza is a clear celebration of Elizabeth as a virgin queen, and the divine power that appears to exude from her virginity.

This thesis comprises five chapters, each incorporating Belphoebe's relationship to other characters in *The Faerie Queene*. I will analyse Spenser's development of the character of Belphoebe in the order of the narrative in which he has placed it in the poem, in order to demonstrate that Spenser cannot separate the private and public aspects of sensuality and sovereignty from her virginal portrayal.

The first chapter examines Belphoebe's introduction to the poem in Book 2, where Spenser depicts her in the form of a blazon, the characteristic Petrarchan method of celebrating the female body as an object of male worship and control. I will explore here the extent to which such control can be said to actually exist in Belphoebe's presentation by Spenser. The second chapter will display Belphoebe's association with male desire, through her encounter with Braggadocchio, the false knight who, sexually attracted to her beauty, actively lusts after her. Belphoebe's association with male desire is extended and exemplified in her meeting and subsequent relationship with Timias, which begins in Book 3, and is also included in this chapter. Timias contrasts with Braggadocchio as a true lover, and yet, as I will argue, both men are connected by the lustful instincts they possess toward Belphoebe. In this sense, the extent to which the purity of Belphoebe's virginal virtue and her beauty can be blamed for instigating primitive desire in men will be reviewed in light of

Spenser's own representation of her in *The Faerie Queene*. Chapter Three, exploring the connection between Belpheobe and Amoret, will outline the themes of virginity, marital chastity and the attitude and treatment toward female sexuality during the English Renaissance. The fourth chapter examines the episode involving Belpheobe's defeat of the Carle of Lust in Book 4, in which I interpret Belpheobe as both an enemy of lustful desire as well as an instigator of it, despite her dedication to virginity. The fifth and final chapter will study Timias' madness at losing Belpheobe's love, which also occurs in Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene*. I will correlate this with the historical documentation and poetry of Raleigh's experiences at the Elizabethan Court, where female virginity in the Renaissance, personified by Elizabeth and shadowed in Belpheobe's presentation by Spenser, exists as a direct reflection of the complex relations of a courtier and queen, of public duty and private passion.

The aim of this thesis is to show how Spenser, in his portrayal of Belpheobe, exalts the ideal of virginity as a reflection of Elizabeth in several ways. I claim that Belpheobe's virginity, while esteemed as the private symbol of female purity and mystical power, should also not be divorced from issues of sexuality or public sovereignty, since these were aspects which Elizabeth herself encouraged as positive features of her position as a virgin queen.

Chapter One: Belphoebe's Blazon

This chapter's purpose is to demonstrate that Belphoebe's representation in the blazon of Book 2 in *The Faerie Queene* is a sensual one which is affiliated with the poetical and visual Renaissance images of Elizabeth's private, virginal body and her public, virginal sovereignty. I will elaborate upon Montrose, who reads Spenser's blazon of Belphoebe as one that "insinuates sexual provocation into its encasement of militant chastity" (1988, 47).

I will also argue against O'Connell's debatable claim that Spenser's ten-stanza description of Belphoebe is a "chaste *blason*" (101), since my reading of Belphoebe's presentation in the blazon is not only religiously, mythically and politically inspired by Elizabeth, but is also surrounded by and inseparable from eroticism. This relates to the traditional literary Renaissance portrayals of both the Queen and the presentation of the female form in general. Spenser privileges Belphoebe above all the other characters in the poem by offering her the most extended blazon in *The Faerie Queene*, yet, in the characteristic fashion of the Petrarchan blazon, Belphoebe is also silenced by the poet's written celebration of her. As I will demonstrate from a psychoanalytic perspective, however, this limitation of

Belphebe becomes, ironically, the very source of her ability to silence Spenser's own language, to suppress his power.

This chapter will also analyse the traditional blazon in relation to the attitude and treatment of the female form and female virtue both in related Renaissance literature and in relevant feminist and psychoanalytic critiques, as well as the religious, symbolic, historical and sexual dimensions of the cult of Elizabeth's virginity in *The Faerie Queene*. Elizabeth's virginity will be considered alongside a relevant selection of her famous portraits. I will combine my analysis of Elizabeth's portraiture with segments from Spenser's provocative blazon of Belphebe, noting the parallels which I recognize as existing between them; how the portraiture unites the public body of Elizabeth with the private body of Belphebe which is placed on public display through the poem.

Rather than quoting the blazon in the order in which it exists within *The Faerie Queene*, I will incorporate the stanzas (where relevant) with Belphebe's representation in the poem and selections from Elizabeth's portraiture. Elizabeth's portraits contributed to the powerful, erotic image of her sovereignty, and were a political strategy employed by both her and male artists to present her as a youthful object of beauty even in her middle age, for the objective of maintaining her sovereign power and the nation's confidence in the

continuance of her reign.¹ The emphasis in portraits during the Renaissance was to produce an icon rather than the natural person, and this was especially so with the Queen. All of Elizabeth's paintings evoke a particular model of her, notably in terms of her depiction as a sensual virgin and a powerful ruler.

In Elizabethan England, artists conformed to the 'universal' standard of female beauty figured in the Italian Renaissance, and aimed to possess that beauty, or, more exactly, the ideal form of beauty rather than the individual female's identity, by capturing it in their paintings.² The same strategy occurs poetically in *The Faerie Queene*, with Spenser representing the universal version of Renaissance female beauty in the majority of his female characters.

The typical blazon begins by cataloguing a woman's body parts from the head and ending at her feet, and is an integral part of the praise of idealized female beauty characteristic of Renaissance culture existing in *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser, like his fellow writers, was poetically inspired toward an ideal female beauty from the continental Petrarchanism which was translated in England in the 1530s. Petrarchan poetry is famous for its catalogue descriptions of the female body as an art form. These descriptions are very often the site for male fantasy, as well as an attempt to replenish desire through violent frustration and control over its object. The process of extraction allows

the masculine eye the pleasure and privilege to linger over each important segment of the woman's body in detail, to grant each portion praise but also, to assert possession over it in a way which he often, traditionally, has no privilege to do as a physical lover. Consequently, Petrarchanism constructs ideals relating to feminine desirability in the social, political, cultural and personal modes of experience. This in a certain way obliged other women to be oppressed and limited by the patriarchal pre-requisites of female beauty if they failed to meet the standards required of them. In general, these consist of a high forehead, white skin, long golden hair, black eyes, rosy cheeks, coral lips, pearly teeth and round budding breasts. As Ferry writes, the Petrarchan mistresses of Spenser look the same, since "all have virtually interchangeable parts" (158).

The interchangeable aspect of Spenser's heroines (and indeed, the characteristic Petrarchan woman) enforced the social model for women, which denied them access to individuality.³ This is aptly recognized by Shakespeare when he proclaims in his sonnet that "in the old age black was not counted fair,/Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name" (127. 1-2). Jack, with direct relation to these lines, recognizes that "there is no dark lady in *The Faerie Queene*" (194). I want to suggest that this was Spenser's way of not only conforming to Renaissance convention, but controlling his characters as

interchangeable regarding their universal physical appearance, rather than in their individualized and differing personalities and quests.

The consequence of such factors in relation to Spenser's representation of Belpheobe presents an interesting paradox. This paradox is to recognize her private, physical identity and individuality as imprisoned by Spenser's poetic strategies (just as Elizabeth's physical body is limited in her portraiture by the power of the artist). At the same time, Belpheobe's and Elizabeth's virginal identities free them from the limitations placed on females in the Renaissance, granting them access to the masculine spaces of power and control where neither can be dominated, sexually or otherwise. As this chapter, and indeed this thesis will show, Belpheobe is a character that resists masculine dominance rather than succumbing to, or being vulnerable to it.

Petrarchan poetry celebrates the unobtainable woman, and creates authority and subjectivity for the male poet. Hence, the poetry is not speaking for the female and her identity, but instead for the subject who is creating the woman. In the early modern period, men writing about women were actually sharing with other males the imaginative pleasures present in the textualization of the female body, the pleasures of in some way possessing that body through textual ingestion by the use of the imagination. This formed part of the male

tradition of literary activity, of homosocial, literary and political privilege.⁴

The self is a discursive construct, not a natural creation by a male dominated society. In *The Faerie Queene*, as in other Renaissance poems, the self fashioned and privileged is a male self. Montrose points this out as a principle, which seeks, above all else, to privilege the male writer during this era, whilst 'woman' is always the 'other,' continually objectified in the process of the masculine desire for self-construction:

Petrarchanism is one of the discourses in which a recognizably modern mode of subjectivity – an introspective egocentricity founded upon the frustration and sublimation of material desires – is first articulated and actively cultivated. The Petrarchan persona is a distinctly masculine subject explicitly fashioned in relation to a feminine other . . . the Petrarchan lover worships a deity of his own making and under his control; he masters his mistress by inscribing her within his text, where she is repeatedly put together and taken apart. (1986, 325)

This process of fashioning is usually one which strives to create, to claim a self in relation to an object, an 'other.' Renaissance literature often classifies the female form as being 'other' because she is commonly objectified through a masculine persona who fashions his identity according to her, as well as offering her his desire, his celebration. The feminine other becomes the point that enables the

masculine subject to compete with himself, with his own desires. Spenser is able to turn his female object into a sign of his poetry, one that provides it with creative inspiration and at the same time, is the centerpiece of what the poetry seeks to exemplify, to praise.

Spenser's *Epithalamion*, a poem dedicated to his bride Elizabeth Boyle, whom he wed in June, 1594, provides an excellent example and comparison of the cataloguing, rupturing and at the same time, the celebration of the female form which occurs in *The Faerie Queene* with Belpheobe. What is interesting in the following stanza from the *Epithalamion* is the way in which Spenser uses various features of Elizabeth Boyle as substances to be metaphorically ingested:

Her goodly eyes lyke Saphyres shining bright,
 Her forehead yuory white,
 Her cheekes lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,
 Her lips lyke cherries charming men to byte,
 Her brest like to a bowle of creame vncrudded,
 Her paps lyke lyllyes budded,
 Her snowie necke lyke to a marble towre,
 And all her body like a pailace fayre,
 Ascending vppe with many a stately stayre,
 To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre.
 (171-180)

The references given to 'apples,' 'cherries' and 'creame' reinforce the cultural construction that masculine self-creation and authority not only seeks to objectify and fetishize the celebrated woman in the quest for

power, but to digest her idealized, sensual form in order to duplicate that power, to achieve the quest for self-construction.

Spenser's analogies to the woman's body as an architectural construction in the latter section of this stanza from the *Epithilamion* ('marble towre,' 'pallace fayre,' 'stately stayre'), further instills his desire for self-construction at the expense of the woman's body. Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* makes a similar comparison. In Sonnet 9, Astrophil describes Stella's body as a temple, establishing her as one who is available to be potentially defiled. The female body is often seen as such in Petrarchan poetry (as is Belphebe's body, which will soon be demonstrated when her blazon description in *The Faerie Queene* is analysed). In this way, poetry is responsible for both venerating and violating the body which is also being celebrated. "Now will I invade the fort" (15), Astrophil warns in the Second Song as he catches his desired mistress asleep. Similarly, Sidney also provides an enumerative description of Stella's body. Her face in the following stanza is dehumanized as an architectural structure in order to be both controlled and admired, the flesh moving away from the organic to the material, to the Court of Virtue:

Queene *Vertue's* court, which some call *Stella's* face,
 Prepar'd by Nature's chiefest furniture,
 Hath his front built of Alabaster pure;
 Gold is the covering of that stately place.
 (9)

Stella, like Spenser's bride in the *Epithalamion*, is made even more valuable by the emblematic, architectural description offered to her, which is cut across by her sovereign beauty. Spenser also symbolically presents architectural sovereign beauty in the frame and proportions of the Castle of Alma in the second Book of *The Faerie Queene* (2. 9. 22-24).⁵

In a similar way, Spenser moves toward an architectural description of Belphoebe's legs in stanza 28:

Like two faire marble pillours they were seene,
Which doe the temple of the Gods support,
Whom all the people decke with girlands greene,
And honour in their festiuall resort;
Those same with stately grace, and princely port
She taught to tread, when she her selfe would grace,
But with the wooddie Nymphes when she did play,
Or when the flying Libbard she did chace,
She could them nimbly moue, and after fly apace.
(2. 3. 28)

In the "Song of Solomon," the Renaissance *locus classicus* for the link between the erotic and divine portrayals of the body, the beloved's legs are described as "pillers of marble, set vpon sockets of fine golde" (Song Sol. 5: 15). In *The Faerie Queene*, the image of Belphoebe's legs 'like two faire marble pillours' transfers her body away from the image of a living organism and into a structural metaphor which

functions on the boundary between the animate and the inanimate. O'Connell notes that the simile of Belphoebe's thighs with marble pillars speak not of sensual desire but of "veneration" (102), enabling her beauty to be more sacred than sexual. However, as I wish to argue, this veneration exists alongside the erotic features that are also figured in stanza 28. The structure of Belphoebe's legs as shapely, 'faire marble pillours' is a wholly erotic image in regard to Paglia's statement that the secret space of the virgin body is "a sealed vessel that must be broken into by force" (1990, 28). Paglia's observation is analogous to the "Song of Solomon"; "my sister my spouse [is as] a garden inclosed, as a spring shut vp, [and] a fountaine sealed vp" (Song Sol. 4: 12). Whether a human, poetic vessel or an architectural structure, this is indeed what Belphoebe's body appears to be in this stanza; flesh in equilibrium with the spirit.

From a biblical stand-point, Belphoebe's blazon in stanza 28 can also be read as symbolic of the temple of the body which harbors the Holy Spirit, spoken of by Paul in Corinthians (1 Cor. 6: 19, 112): "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you." Although Belphoebe's body in this stanza represents a holy temple, which harbors her virginity, her occupation as a huntress causes her to mingle not only with 'woodie Nymphes,' but also to chase 'the flying Libbard.' In Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, the

leopard's ferocious nature is depicted as analogous to that of the lion as Satyrane, the defender of chastity and the tamer of savage beasts, adequately disciplines both "Lyon" and "Libbard" (1. 6. 25). According to Hamilton (Spenser, 1990, 196), the leopard in Dante's "Inferno" represents inconstancy and can, therefore, be viewed as the enemy of a continual virtue such as Belpheobe's virginity.

In Book 1 of the "Inferno," a leopard blocks Dante's movements and forces him to go round in circles:

And lo! where but begins the mountainside,
 a leopard light and very swift of pace
 and covered with a gaily spotted hide.
 Never withdrew she from before my face;
 nay, rather blocked she so my going on
 that oft I turned my footing to retrace.
 (1. 31-36)

Like Dante's leopard, 'light and very swift of pace' is Belpheobe who can 'nimble moue, and after fly apace.' Stanza 28 shifts from a stiff, architectural portrayal of a still and silent Belpheobe, altering through this very description of her swiftly and actively engaged in her hunting and play. Though a virgin huntress and a holy vessel, the analogy of Belpheobe to a wild beast (the leopard) signals her malleable position in *The Faerie Queene*. Belpheobe's virginity does not limit her various levels of representation, but instead enables

Spenser to construct her body in ways that enhance his own poetic, masculine self-creation.

Masculine self-creation exists when the poet's eye is fixed on the sight of a woman: her body, which becomes a site for self-construction, the transcendent sign of poetry itself. This initiates the possibility that if Belpheobe, and indeed, other females in Petrarchan blazons exist as architectural catalogue descriptions, they lose their sexual potentiality. Estrin writes regarding Petrarch's poetry, "if Laura is only a poem, then sexually she is nothing" (80). This argument can be likened to the central point of my thesis. That is, if a woman is virginal or chaste, it cannot imply that, sexually, she is nothing, for sexual potentiality through sensuality may still be reflected in her essence, just as it is in Belpheobe's character. Thus, the following analysis of Belpheobe's blazon in Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene* will expand upon the notion of her 'textual desirability,' even though her body here exists in fragmented form.

Belpheobe is first described in the blazon of Book 2, though not actually named. Spenser instead evokes the following image of her:

Eftsoone there stepped forth
 A goodly Ladie clad in hunters weed,
 That seemd to be a woman of great worth,
 And by her stately portance, borne of heauenly birth.
 (2. 3. 21)

This introduction to Belphoebe emphasizes both her majesty and celestial power. Her 'hunters weed' marks her profession, also signalling her association with the virgin huntress and goddess Diana. Whilst Spenser makes reference to Belphoebe's spiritual importance in the poem, her celestial mysticism as a product of her 'heavenly' virgin birth by Chrysogene in Book 3, Belphoebe is still an 'earthy' character, native to the woods, to the hunt not only for average beasts, but for males personifying lust. This of course, extends to my reading of her representation by Spenser as a sensual rather than solely a spiritual image of female virginity, and Spenser confirms this in stanza 29 from Belphoebe's blazon:

And in her hand a sharpe bore-speare she held,
 And at her backe a bow and quiver gay,
 Stuff with steele-headed darts, wherewith she queld
 The saluage beastes in her victorious play,
 Knit with a golden bauldricke, which forelay
 Athwart her snowy brest, and did diuide
 Her daintie paps; which like young fruit in May
 Now little gan to swell, and being tide,
 Through her thin weed their places only signifide.
 (2. 3. 29)

Belphoebe's 'sharpe bore-speare' is a powerful phallic metaphor, as are her 'steele-headed darts' used to hunt the 'saluage beastes' of the forest. The description of her 'victorious play' seems to speak of the maiden's pursuit of beasts as a noble vocation as well as a recreation,

one in which she is exceptionally proficient. Because of this, Belphoebe's position in *The Faerie Queene* can be perceived as being a displaced version of the male sexual hunt for women in the poem. Whilst the male hunts for women are often restricted to sexual aims, Belphoebe's quests are used to defy the forces of lust rather than intentionally propagating them. Yet, like her foster mother Diana, Belphoebe unintentionally initiates lust nonetheless. Although her 'snowy brest' and 'daintie paps' are erotic images, Spenser also reminds us that Belphoebe's breasts 'now little gan to swell' (hence are only partially developed). Her breasts are at the same time 'tide' or bound and thus only slightly noticeable through 'her thin weed.' Whilst Belphoebe's ripening is shown, her lack of physical maturity is also enforced in this stanza. Such a feature, I argue, marks Belphoebe's unique, paradoxically sexual virginal power as all the more mysterious and alluring.

Evans regards the progressing ripeness, the blossoming of Belphoebe in stanza 29 as initiating her rise to the procreative existence of her twin sister, Amoret, whose future is based on a marriage with Scudamour (1970, 123). The relationship between Belphoebe and Amoret will be the subject of my fourth chapter, but for now Evans' point about Belphoebe's potentiality for a sexual existence is important to my own arguments in relation to Spenser's

representation of her virginity within *The Faerie Queene*. Rather than portraying Belpheobe as an unattractive, cold and spiteful enemy of lust because of her virginal role, Spenser chooses instead to use her virginity as a tempting force of earthly sensuality and possible sexuality. Such a portrayal of Belpheobe does not, however, eliminate the spiritual significance of her virginal presentation by Spenser. Instead, it contributes to it, as stanza 22 shows:

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

This stanza effectively unites the seemingly opposed images of celestial virginity with sensual, earthly virginity. The reference to Belpheobe's angelic face, lacking 'blame or blot' is also a metaphorical reference to her untainted body, but one which is not without its own pigments which announce desire (both within herself and as an enticement toward others, whether inspired intentionally or not).

Montrose reads stanza 22 as possessing "a current of sensuality" as well as "erotic arousal," provoking and at the same time prohibiting

desire. He adds that "in the comparison of her blushing cheeks to "roses in a bed of lillies shed" (22), the internal rhyme on 'bed' and 'shed' imparts to the description of her maidenly modesty a subliminal suggestion of her defloration" (1986, 326).⁶ However, if we are to go so far as to read the blazon sequence in Book 2 as being, in some ways, Spenser's textual rape of Belpheobe as Montrose implies, we encounter the problem of her as the symbol of constant virginity in *The Faerie Queene*.

The 'bed' and 'shed' rhyme in parallel to the lilies also signify another aspect of virginity relating to the popular medieval symbol of Virgin Mary's purity. Red roses are the most sensual due to their hue, so in stanza 22, sensuality is mingled with purity and mortality merges with celestial power. Spenser states that gazers feed on Belpheobe's appearance 'with double pleasure,' perhaps because she unites the beauty of angelic light with the 'verneill red' of sexual desire that is depicted as flaming through her cheeks. Similarly, in Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, the April eclogue presents Elisa "yclad in Scarlot like a mayden Queene,/And Ermines white" (57-58). The term 'double pleasure' suggests that gazers' awe and lust toward Belpheobe are a product of the sight and smell of her. She satisfies the senses of sight and smell, but not the sense of touch or physical possession; sexual desire toward Belpheobe, as a rule, always remains unsatisfied.

Belpheobe's virginity in *The Faerie Queene* echoes a sort of celestial power while at the same time inspiring earthly lust. In this way, the image of the red on white is symbolic of her paradoxical position in the poem – purity combined with lust.

In Spenser's "Hymne In Honour of Beautie," this very analogy of white purity mingled with red desire is the subject of the following lines:

Hath white and red in it such wondrous powre,
 That it can pierce through th'eyes vnto the hart,
 And therein stirre such rage and restlesse stowre,
 As nought but death can stint his dolours smart?
 Or can proportion of the outward part,
 Move such affection in the inward mynd,
 That it can rob both sense and reason blynd?
 (71-77)

What is interesting in these lines is that nothing but death itself can put an end to the raging desire inspired by the mistress's white/red beauty. In stanza 22 of Belpheobe's blazon, her beauty is able to "reiuue the ded," acknowledging the celestial, mystical importance which her virginity provides. In "The Hymne In Honour of Beautie," Spenser refers to the popular Renaissance theme of Cupid's arrows first striking the eyes and then rebounding into the heart, thus obliging the subject to fall in love. What is caused here, however, is as much love as maddening lust, with 'rage' and 'restlesse stowre,' 'robbing' 'sense and reason blynd.' These lines, when compared to the blazon of

Belphebe in *The Faerie Queene*, echo the fact that virginity, whilst symbolic of the pure white rose in the poem, should not be considered as alienated from the red rose of desire, a desire that inspires as much lust as love. Hence, for Spenser, virginity is always an image of beauty, of youth, of purity mingled with desire.

This theme is carried forth into the portraiture of Elizabeth, whose manner of uniting her sovereign power with sensual beauty contributed largely to her virginal depiction. The portrait known as "Elizabeth Dancing with Lord Robert Dudley at Penhurst Place" by an unknown artist is a fascinating one regarding the manner in which the virginal female body is placed as the object of display (in this case, Elizabeth, just as it is Belphebe in the blazon of *The Faerie Queene*). In this painting, both the male and female spectators have their attentions fixed on the sight of Elizabeth and Dudley. In contrast, Elizabeth and Dudley's eyes are firmly set only upon one another as they engage in their somewhat amorous dance. Mirabella recognizes that male subjectivity which existed "in the Renaissance and particularly in Renaissance dance was in the fact that a woman was never allowed to return the man's gaze, never allowed to look into his eyes" (424). This is due to the fact that during this period, men held power over the gaze and possessed social control; for a woman to look

*"Elizabeth Dancing with Lord Robert
Dudley at Penhurst Place," (year unknown)*



directly at a man was to rob him of his own power. Freedman explains that in the Renaissance,

the very concept of right spectatorship and the conditions under which we identify with voyeur, exhibitionist, or both are at least partly a function of gender ideology . . . we identify with the male as the appropriate bearer of the look, the female as the proper object of that look; we identify with reason against sexuality, activity over passivity, and seeing instead of showing. (2)

In the painting of Elizabeth dancing with Dudley, however, the exception to womanhood gazing back lies in the fact that Elizabeth is a queen and he is her courtier. Dersin adds historical insight to this picture: "Robert Dudley, one of the queen's favourites, lifts Elizabeth into the air as they dance a galliard, whose steps were so lively that gentlemen were advised to remove their swords in advance" (38). Whilst Elizabeth's elaborate garments appear to be restricting her movement, they do not hinder the placement of Dudley's right hand upon her sexual region, almost as if threatening her virginity. This point is elaborated since his red cheeks are mirrored in the flushed cheeks of Elizabeth's, almost as though both subjects are suffused with desire at the sight of each other. Here, the blushing cheeks of Elizabeth, like those of Belphebe in stanza 22 of *The Faerie Queene*, emphasize virginity as the rose of desire.

Spenser uses the rose as Belphebe's virginal symbol in Book 3:

That dainty Rose, the daughter of her Morne,
 More deare then life she tendered, whose flowre
 The girlond of her honour did adorne:
 Ne suffred she the Middayes scorching powre,
 Ne the sharp Northerne wind thereon to showre,
 But lapped vp her silken leaues most chaire,
 When so the froward skye began to lowre:
 But soone as calmed was the Christall aire,
 She did it faire dispred, and let to florish faire.

Eternall God in his almighty powre,
 To make ensample of his heauenly grace,
 In Paradize whilome did plant this flowre,
 Whence he it fetcht out of her natue place,
 And did in stocke of earthly flesh enrace,
 That mortall men her glory should admire:
 In gentle Ladies brest, and bounteous race
 Of woman kind it fairest flowre doth spire,
 And beareth fruit of honour and all chaste desire.
 (3. 5. 52-53)

Belpheobe's virginity is here given supernatural power to withstand the burning rays of the sun and the driving wind and rain. In the second stanza, though filled with 'heauenly grace,' Belpheobe is still able to attract others through her virtue and beauty, with a hint of sensuality in being part of that 'stocke' of 'earthly flesh'; in other words, by not being alienated from the forces of the natural world. Admired by men and women, she bears the fruits of 'honour' and 'chaste desire' rather than children, and this further likeness to Elizabeth's private self marks another link with Gloriana, whose representation in *The Faerie Queene* is an inspiration for knightly duty and honourable deeds, for the maintenance of her own glory which replaces the importance of a child.

The rose figured in these two stanzas is paralleled to the 'honour' of virginity, one that is powerful enough to both defy and maintain its purity against the forces of nature. Virginity is therefore a type of supernatural force, one that is recognized and elaborated in Milton's *Comus* as being

a hidden strength,
Which if Heav'n gave it, may be term'd her own:
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:
She that has that, is clad in compleat steel,
And like a quiver'd Nymph with Arrows keen
May trace huge Forests, and unharbour'd Heaths,
Infamous Hills, and sandy perilous wildes,
Where through the sacred rayes of Chastity,
No savage fierce, Bandite, or mountaneer
Will dare to soyl her Virgin purity,
Yea there, where very desolation dwels
By grots, and caverns shag'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench't majesty,
Be it not don in pride, or in presumption.
Som say no evil thing that walks by night
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,
Blew meager Hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magick chains at *curfeu* time,
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtfull power o're true virginity.
(418-437)

Indeed, these lines by Milton embody almost every aspect that Belphoebe personifies in *The Faerie Queene* – supernaturally overpowering any attempt to assail her virginity. She is armed through her purity, which is symbolized by the protective and at the same time lethal arrows that are used as she traverses dark, dangerous and often

horrific territory, almost as though tempting the dark forces to battle against her. Only her virginal power, however, grants her victory in any competition waged.

At the same time, as I am arguing, Belphoebe's virginal power is not divorced from desire, whether it be erotic or chaste. In Book 3, we have seen the rose associated with 'all chaste desire.' Berger understands the attractiveness affiliated with the type of desire inspired by Belphoebe's representation in *The Faerie Queene* to be linked with eroticism, arguing that "if we feel the attractiveness it is only because the narrator registers his own attraction to it . . . Even as he verbally caresses the rose, his nature metaphors are referentially obscure enough to diffuse the impact of the erotic image" (1989, 253). Berger claims that Spenser's own earthly desire is both aroused and fed by Belphoebe's sensual image in the poem. This highlights the strength of her representation, the power of imagery and language, which is used to both portray and at the same time personify her. For instance, in stanza 52, the reference to Belphoebe's "silken leaues" disspreading and flourishing provokes an erotic image in the reader's mind. It appears here that it is not merely Belphoebe's virtue and innocence that is flourishing; it is also her ripening sexuality. This view is one that Roche does not share. He writes that "the concept of the rose changes as the description progresses, from the rose symbolizing physical

virginity to the rose of spiritual virginity and spiritual love" (1964, 140) Roche approaches this point from the more spiritual qualities Belphebe has in *The Faerie Queene*, such as celestial beauty, purity, mysticism and spiritual virtue. Both he and Broaddus (102) deny the obvious sexual aspects in Belphebe which Berger and I recognize as inherent in stanzas 52 and 53 from Book 3.

It is not so much the importance of the rose itself as what it signifies metaphorically in reference to female virginity. Shakespeare's Sonnet 54 reminds us of the connection between perpetual truth and perishable beauty, where it is the perfume existing within the rose which is deemed more valuable than the flower itself:

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
The canker blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses;
But for their virtue only is their show
They live unwooed and unrespected fade,
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made:
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When that shall fade, by verse distils your truth.

(54)

Truth is a conceptual rhyme for beauty. In his sonnet, Shakespeare uses the rose's perfume as its gift to others, symbolic of the 'giving up' of

virginity in a woman. The metaphor of the rose in relation to female sexuality says much in this sonnet about the power of sexual virtue, its sweetness and true value only being felt when it becomes ruptured or lost. 'Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made' is a line similar to several of the sixteenth-century verses aiming to seduce females into giving up their virginity or face the consequences of future unattractiveness, old age, and death; moments when it is too late to offer it. Thus, in Renaissance imagery, the rose adorned the honour associated with a woman's virginity, since it was symbolic of the hymen.⁷ Spenser refers to this in Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*:

So passeth, in the passing of a day,
 Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre,
 Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
 That earst was sought to decke both bed and bowre,
 Of many a Ladie, and many a Paramowre:
 Gather therefore the Rose, whilst yet is prime,
 For soone comes age, that will her pride deflowre:
 Gather the Rose of loue, whilst yet is time,
 Whilst louing thou mayst loued be with equall crime.
 (2. 12. 75)

This stanza is expressive of the common male plea for young women to allow their virginity (the rose) to be quickly ravished sexually in preference to the slowly destructive hand of time. It is as though sexual love possesses a higher importance than female virtue, the virtue of maintaining her chastity. This is because, for Spenser, virginity here

can only exist alongside the value of youth and beauty, whilst the threat of plucking 'the Rose of loue' is very much a desirable possibility, one that ceases once time has defaced the physical, sensual beauty of the object of desire.

In Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress," the woman is coy only in the sense of being immediately unavailable; her virginity is regarded as wasted. Here, it is the ravages of time which destroy the youth and beauty that give virginity its primal value:

then Worms shall try
That long preserv'd Virginity:
And your quaint Honour turn to dust;
And into ashes all my Lust.
The Grave's a fine and private place,
But none I think do there embrace.
(27-32)

As Lockerd writes, "the point is to deflower the beloved before time does. The catch is that Acrasia's efficient deflowering has the same effect as time – it kills the blossom of youth" (136).

Unlike Acrasia and her sensually alluring Bower of Bliss, Spenser does not allow Belphebe to be destroyed either by time or by other characters in the poem; we do not see Belphebe ruined in the course of *The Faerie Queene*. However, her virginal, yet erotic beauty does provoke others' lust throughout the poem. In Book 2, again through the

symbol of the rose that is here made in regard to Acrasia, Spenser unites the themes of purity and sensuality:

Ah see the Virgin Rose, how sweetly shee
 Doth first peepe forth with bashfull modestee,
 That fairer seemes, the lesse ye see her may;
 Lo see soone after, how more bold and free
 Her bared bosome she doth broad display
 (2. 12. 74)

This description is made by one of Acrasia's victims, contaminating the concept of virginity by using the rose as a destructive symbol of desire. Similarly, in these lines, the virgin is not as innocent as she may first appear, but represents seduction through purity, through her beauty, which is signalled in the simile with a rose. There is a difference that is important though: the 'rose' here learns to become coy, and later, wanton, uninhibited and artful, as Acrasia herself is.

Book 1 of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* provides the simile of a rose that represents the fragility and value of virginity, as well as the sense of irreparable loss when it becomes ruptured:

Like to the rose I count the virgine pure
 That groweth on native stem in garden faire
 Which while it stands with wals environd sure
 Where heardmen with their heads can not repaire
 To favor it, it seemeth to allure
 The morning dew, the heate, the earth, the aire;
 Yong gallant men and lovely dames delight
 In their sweete sent and in their pleasing sight;

But when at once tis gathered and gone

From proper stalk where late before it grew,
 The love, the liking litle is or none:
 Both favour, grace, and beautie all adew.
 So when a virgin graunts to one alone
 The pretious floure for which so many sew,
 Well he that getteth it may love her best,
 But she forgoes the love of all the rest.
 (1. 42-43)

Here too, as in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the first stanza provides virginity with a supernatural force which defeats the elements, but Ariosto's second stanza also recognizes that the power associated with Angelica's virginity is lost when virginity itself has been 'plucked.' This aspect reflects upon the sixteenth-century manner of thought whereby many men fashionably aimed to seduce virgins into yielding their bodies, to capture the mystical power associated with their virginity by deflowering them either metaphorically in verse or realistically. In doing so, the male figure or persona attempts to gain not only mastery over the female, but deprive her of any other qualities she may have possessed by being chaste.

Elizabeth's emblem was the Tudor Rose and the aspect of adorned majesty is brought to the fore in the painting, "Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses." Elizabeth's gown is studded with jewels and adequately embroidered with many red Tudor roses, the trademarks of her virginal representation.⁸ This painting not only reflects virginity's relationship to marriage, but also reinforces

"Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses," c 1569



virginity's superior state in regard to Elizabeth, as a method of both recognizing her virtue as well as celebrating it. Elizabeth is seen attended by two ladies-in-waiting; the Queen carries an orb or imperial apple as a symbol of her majestic rulership along with her sceptre. In classical mythology, the apple was possessed by the most beautiful of goddesses, a theme adopted from the tale of the Judgement of Paris, which preceded the Trojan War.⁹ During the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the mischievous Eris threw an apple into the crowd and challenged the most beautiful goddess to pick it up. Perhaps for this reason, I argue, Elizabeth is seen walking with the apple proudly outstretched in her hand. She moves confidently toward the three goddesses Juno, Pallas Athene and the naked Venus who is accompanied by Cupid. Elizabeth triumphantly advances toward the center of the painting, signalling her power.¹⁰ It is here that Elizabeth personifies and at the same time subjugates the traits of all three goddesses' public and private virtues (sovereign intelligence, political military strength and feminine desirability). Their scattered possessions upon the ground nearby, a sceptre, arrows, and roses symbolize the defeat of the three goddesses. As Elizabeth moves toward them, the three goddesses in turn appear to offer her their respect, since they gaze on her with awe rather than turning their faces away. Importantly,

Juno, the goddess of marriage, dominates the center of the painting, gesturing with her arm for Elizabeth to follow her.

"Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses" is associated with Elizabeth's accession day. As a consequence, it is one of the earliest allegorical depictions of her. The painting celebrates Elizabeth as a queen who was expected by her advisers and her nation to marry and produce an heir, rather than remaining a virgin whose position is placed triumphantly above those of the other goddesses.

Elizabeth formed a different model of power through her unmarried and childless position as a sovereign. However, this position did not hinder both her self-representation and her representation by poets, painters and courtiers as being attractive, sensual. In "Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses," Elizabeth's gown is embroidered with red roses rather than white, and this signals the painting's similarity with Belpheobe's blazon sequence. Belpheobe's association with the red rose, as we have seen, marks the virgin as a potential love object. In other words, it is always the *possibility* of the virginal conquest (especially through marriage) that is the most powerful feature of the virgin's portrayal, either in literature or in portraiture. Another feature, which verifies my argument in relation to "Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses," is that Elizabeth's flaming red hair is dishevelled over her shoulders (symbolic of both virginal youth

and sensual desirability) rather than tightly constricted in a bun, as is the case with the two ladies-in-waiting walking behind the Queen.

Female hair is a powerful motif in *The Faerie Queene*. Golden hair is used by Spenser to display feminine sensuality, exuberant beauty, as in stanza 30 from Belpheobe's blazon:

Her yellow lockes crisped, like golden wyre,
 About her shoulders weren loosely shed,
 And when the winde emongst them did inspyre,
 They wauced like a penon wide dispred,
 And low behinde her backe were scattered:
 And whether art it were, or heedlesse hap,
 As through the flouing forrest rash she fled,
 In her rude haire sweet flowres themselues did lap,
 And flourishing fresh leaues and blossomes did enwrap.
 (2. 3. 30)

Broadus notices that Belpheobe's hair is not "braided for the chase (3. 6. 18)" like that of Diana's, but scattered and adorned with flowers (2. 3. 30) which are "emblems of life and sexuality" (98). This factor seems strange at first because Belpheobe's role is to be a huntress like Diana. However, the sexual nature of Belpheobe's hair both entices admirers as well as threatening them through the sheer will of her virginal power.

Stanza 30 enforces the important attribute of loose, flowing female hair as a dominant aspect of virginity as well as sexual availability. This is emphasized in the rhyme of 'shed/dispred.' The

leaves and blossoms in Belpheobe's hair signify the fruit of her virginity, waiting to be plucked, just as the symbolic rose is. Belpheobe's hair, 'loosely shed' upon her shoulders, indicates her untamed aspect, her virginity and her desirability as unified.

Blonde was the ideal hair colour of the Italian and English Renaissance, believed to reflect a virtuous inner nature, which matched the splendour of the golden hue. Paglia studies this phenomenon, contributing her own interpretation as to why it existed:

Belpheobe's Apollonian bloneness is a transparency, hard and clear . . . Light seems to penetrate blonde forms, so they seem midway between matter and spirit . . . The bloneness of his heroines is a prism through which light is intensified and projected. (1990, 177)

In Paglia's view, 'bloneness' is offered an almost phallic power in order to represent the sources of its power – hardness, penetration, intensification and projection. These are all marks of how masculine force is positioned in its relationship to the female form. This factor depicts blonde hair as androgynous.

The attractive mark of a female's power arising from her flowing golden locks as marks of mingled innocence and sexuality is elaborated through the character of the androgynous virgin knight Britomart in Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene*. Here, Britomart loosens her hair from

her helmet following her defeat by Artegall in a joust that signals their first actual meeting in the poem:

her yellow heare
 Hauing through stirring loosd their wonted band,
 Like to a golden border did appeare,
 Framed in goldsmithes forge with cunning hand:
 Yet goldsmithes cunning could not vnderstand
 To frame such subtile wire, so shinie cleare.
 For it did glister like the golden sand
 (4. 6. 20)

Artegall's response to Britomart's overwhelming beauty (4. 6. 21) expresses the male fear of the female form, stressing the heavenly aspect of Britomart, which obliges Artegall to later fall down upon his knee and worship her. As I want to point out here, it is predominantly her hair that binds him, renders impotent his martial power over the young female knight.

Spenser is fascinated by the beauty and sexuality which hair represents, especially through the metaphor of women trapping men through the trammels of their golden hair, which stands as the iconographical, fetishized location of female sexuality. Hair is conventionally long and golden in Spenser's poetry, braided, loose or netted in order to symbolize the sexual identity of female. Spenser in the *Amoretti* depicts this, where the beloved purposefully fashions her tresses as a trap to gain male admiration, male desire for her:

What guyle is this, that those her golden tresses,
 She doth attyre vnder a net of gold:
 and with sly skill so cunningly them dresses,
 that which is gold or heare, may scarce be told?
 Is it that mens frayle eyes, which gaze too bold,
 she may entangle in that golden snare:
 and being caught may craftily enfold,
 theyr weaker harts, which are not wel aware?
 Take heed therefore, myne eyes, how ye doe stare
 henceforth too rashly on that guilefull net,
 in which if euer ye entrapped are,
 out of her bands ye by no meanes shall get.
 Fondnesse it were for any being free,
 to couet fetters, though they golden bee.
 (37)

This stanza echoes a similar verse from Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*:
 "from her lockes, thy day-nets, none scapes free" (12. 2). Similarly, in
 Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Daphne's flight from Apollo focuses on her
 loose hair:

she was lovely
 Even in flight, her limbs bare in the wind,
 Her garments fluttering, and her soft hair streaming,
 More beautiful than ever.
 (1. 529-532)

Loose, streaming golden hair is a recurring motif throughout Spenser's
Faerie Queene, displaying a freedom from unbraided, and it may be
 argued, unbridled sensual power, indeed, restraint of any kind. For
 example, in Florimell's escape from the lustful knights in Book 3, "her
 faire yellow locks behind her flew,/Loosely disperst with puffe of euerie

blast" (3. 1. 16). Similarly, in Book 1, Una's "golden lockes for haste were loosely shed" (1. 11. 51), while Duessa's "looser golden lockes" are "rudely rent" (2. 1. 11) by Archimago in order to arouse Guyon's wrath to attack Redcrosse by claiming that Redcrosse has molested her as an innocent virgin, of which she is the opposite.

In the following passage from Spenser's *Epithalamion*, the female object is not described in terms of sexual temptation. Instead, her hair is celebrated as a mark of virginity, which is symbolized by the pearls embedded in it:

Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre,
 Sprinckled with perle, and perling flowres a tweene,
 Doe lyke a golden mantle her attyre,
 And being crowned with a girland greene,
 Seeme lyke some mayden Queene.
 (154-158)

The crowned hair of Spenser's bride compared with the 'mayden Queene' is especially relevant in Elizabeth's "Coronation" portrait of 1559, which presents her in the bloom of youth.¹¹ Elizabeth's natural red hair is projected with strong tinges of gold (the ideal hair colour of the Renaissance). Gold is the colour of divinity, while white is indicative of chastity, especially virginal chastity. The gold of Elizabeth's gown and her hair are one in hue and in strength, contrasting with the stark pallor of her white face, also the ideal tint for

Elizabeth's "Coronation" Portrait, c. 1559



skin in the sixteenth-century. These factors are important, for they enable Elizabeth to be presented to her people here not only as an ideal-looking sovereign, whose youth represents future power and a long life, but an ideal woman whose beauty indicates the expressions of attractiveness and desirability which the poets of Elizabeth's time (including Spenser) went to great lengths to capture in their writings. In the "Coronation" portrait, therefore, we have a clear indication of Belphebe as the virtuous and beautiful lady as Spenser regarded the Queen.

Elizabeth wears a cloak adorned with ermine fur, symbolizing purity since this creature is reported to prefer death to the tainting of its white body.¹² Her innocence and vitality are well captured by the unknown artist through her blushing cheeks and long flowing hair, which is the strongest indication of her virginity in this picture. Strong, for instance, detects the "childlike innocence" (1987, 9) reflected in the young Elizabeth's hair and eyes. The "Coronation" portrait is full of hope for a new dynasty; it mirrors the others in their actualization of that hope in Elizabeth's reign. The sceptre that she holds, symbolic of justice mingled with power, appears to represent a phallic symbol of sovereignty. This point is highlighted further in Pomeroy's reading of the picture. She notices that the "Coronation" portrait is well balanced:

All is in curves, except for the rod-like sceptre. The near-blending of the Queen's face with her ruff, and of her flowing hair with her mantle, makes an organic whole. The garments and the wearer are visually joined. She has put on majesty and embodies it. (11)

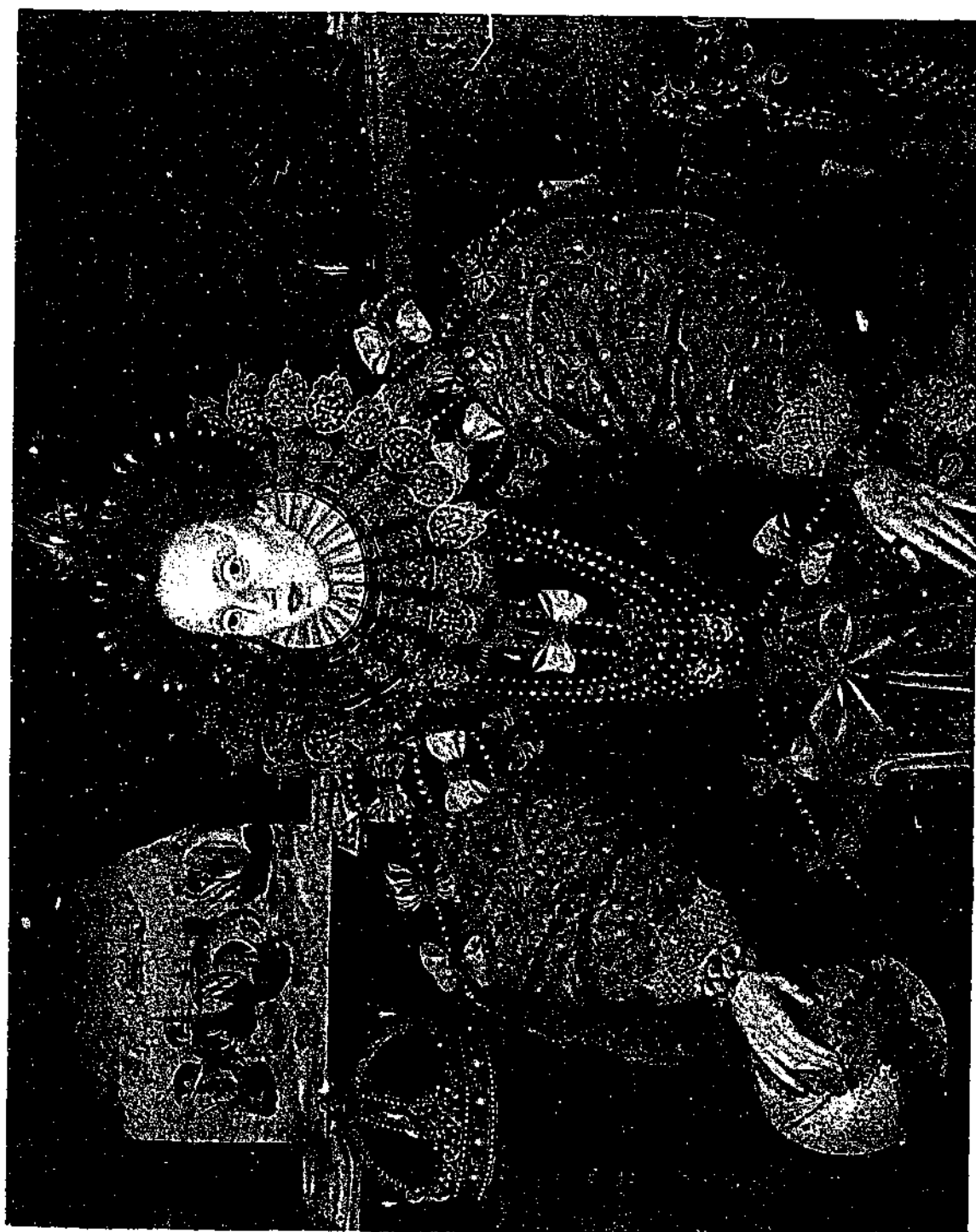
The "Coronation" portrait symbolically represents Belpheobe's presence in *The Faerie Queene* as one of a beautiful virgin who also possesses sovereign, phallic power. Warner recognizes the following features in the presentation of the virgin body in general:

Although the virginal body can be inferred from allegorical representations of desired qualities or virtues, it is often fashioned, dressed, adorned and accoutred in such a way that the inviolate integrity of the figure cannot be mistaken, through a series of visual devices arising out of common verbal metaphor, playing on the figurative associations of hardness, imperviousness and wholeness.
(1985, 250)

Elizabeth's body appears stiffened by the elaborate gown she wears. It is notable that the jewelled triangle waistband's point meets at her private area, symbolic of her virginal integrity as protected and whole by the stiff dress covering her entire body.

Her orb on which she possessively has her hand resting, signifying control not only of her kingdom, but also of the world highlights Elizabeth's regalia, symbolic of her new sovereign authority. This point is elaborated even further if we compare the "Coronation" to that of the "Armada" portrait. In the latter, the victorious Queen rests

The "Armada" Portrait, c. 1588



her hand on a globe of the world, showing her superiority over all nations, her unvanquished strength as a ruler, a woman and a virgin. In both portraits, the Queen's sexual area is covered by a knot, symbolic of the protection of her virginity; in the "Coronation" portrait, this knot appears in the form of a tassel, while in the "Armada" portrait there exists a bow. I argue that the significance of these knots may be found in stanza 27 of Belpheobe's blazon:

Below her ham her weed did somewhat traine,
 And her streight legs most brauely were embayld
 In gilden buskins of costly Cordwaine,
 All bard with golden bendes, which were entayld
 With curious antickes, and full faire aumayld:
 Before they fastned were vnder her knee
 In a rich Iewell, and therein entrayld
 The ends of all their knots, that none might see,
 How they within their fouldings close enwrapped bee.
 (2. 3. 27)

Berry reads these fastenings and knots on Belpheobe's costume as being

hymen-like boundaries which emblemize her refusal of any phallic attempt at the unravelling and decoding of her body. At the same time, these features of her clothing also hint at an alternative, many-faceted eroticism, whereby the female body is 'close enwrapped' within itself. (160)

Similarly, in his editorial notes on the poem, Hamilton (Spenser, 1990, 196) regards the 'curious articles' trailing among Belpheobe's legs as

possible charms to protect her virginity, while the knots in her garment show that her virginity cannot be loosened, in contrast to Venus' girdle in Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene*.

The girdle of chastity fits only Amoret and represents the separation between chaste and unchaste women.¹³ In the poem, the girdle symbolizes the celebration and prizing of female virginity as well as representing the virtue of chaste love within marriage. Her husband, Vulcan, gives it to Venus but she removes it whenever she commits adultery with Mars:

That girdle gaue the vertue of chaste loue,
And wiuehood true, to all that did 't beare;
But whosoeuer contrarie doth proue,
Might not the same about her middle weare,
But it would loose, or else a sunder teare.
Whilome it was (as Faeries wont report)
Dame *Venus* girdle, by her steemed deare,
What time she vsd to liue in wiuely sort;
But layd aside, when so she vsd her looser sport.
(4. 5. 3)

The girdle of chastity is encrusted with pearls and jewels, valuable emblems of chastity. Spenser describes it as "a gorgeous girdle, curiously embost/With pearle and precious stone, worth many a marke" (4. 4. 15). Through the symbol of the girdle, Spenser advises ladies to choose chastity over lust, for "that glorious belt did in it selfe containe,/Which Ladies ought to loue, and seeke for to obtaine" (4. 5. 2). The girdle itself is used principally, as it does with Venus, "to bind

lasciuious desire,/And loose affections streightly to restraine" (4. 5. 4). This suggests that women are so unchaste that they need to be sexually bound by an exterior object like the girdle which may hopefully not only bind and protect their bodies from sexual immorality, but their inner passions also, implying that women are by nature lascivious and in need of restraint and containment by men.

In relation to the public image of the Queen's sexual self-containment within both the "Coronation" and the "Armada" portraits which I argue to be symbolic of Spenser's girdle in the poem, Montrose draws particular attention to the precious jewels and bows upon Elizabeth's dress in the "Armada" portrait, particularly the larger bow positioned on the sexual area of her garment:

this demure iconography of Elizabeth's virgin-knot suggests a causal relationship between her sanctified chastity and the providential destruction of the Spanish Catholic invaders – an event represented in the background of the painting . . . a foreign danger that heightens the collective identity of Englishmen enables the Armada portraits to identify the social body with the body of the monarch. An emphasis on the virginity of that royal body transforms the problem of the monarch's gender into the very source of her potency. The inviolability of the island realm, the secure boundary of the English nation, is thus made to seem mystically dependent upon the inviolability of the English sovereign, upon the intact condition of the queen's body natural. (1986, 315)¹⁴

The "Armada" portrait tells the story of England's defeat of the invasion of the Spanish Armada in 1588 under Elizabeth's powerful

reign. The Armada was the greatest naval force in the world and the elements, along with the Queen's ships, worked to destroy it.¹⁵ This event in the country's history is celebrated by the Queen placing her hand upon the globe, signifying her imperial success, while an image of the defeated Armada in battle with the English fleet is positioned in the background to Elizabeth. In the right background window is the Armada's shipwreck, its ultimate form of defeat, on the stormy, rocky Scottish coast. In relation to colonization, there exists a metaphor of vacant land that is available as a possession for one's delight and discovery, a symbolic type of rape that is a displacement of the colonial dream. Elizabeth's virgin body is a sign of the integrity of the country; the island is like the body of the virgin, which is imperishable, yet somehow continually under threat. As Axton writes, "chastity is seen as a national virtue – England inviolate against European rapists" (70). In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser acknowledges this virginal power existing in Elizabeth, a power which sustains not only the chastity of her body, but that of her land also:

Great and most glorious virgin Queene aliue,
 That with her soueraigne powre, and scepter shene
 All Faery lond does peaceably sustene.
 In widest Ocean she her throne does reare,

That ouer all the earth it may be seene;
 As morning Sunne her beames dispredden cleare,
 And in her face faire peace, and mercy doth appeare.

In her the richesse of all heauenly grace
 In chiefe degree are heaped vp on hye:
 And all that else this worlds enclosure bace
 Hath great or glorious in mortall eye,
 Adornes the person of her Maiestie;
 That men beholding so great excellence,
 And rare perfection in mortalitie,
 Do her adore with sacred reuerence,
 As th'Idole of her makers great magnificence.
 (2. 2. 40-41)

Elizabeth's image in the "Armada" portrait also aligns with Spenser's 1590 dedication of *The Faerie Queene* to Elizabeth where she is honourably "the most high, mightie, and magnificent Empresse, renowned for Piete, Vertue, and all gracious government" (1990, 22). Here she is a symbol of a new Golden Age for England, not merely by divine right, but of majestic dominance in the world through her political victory over Spain. This historic event, which proved fundamental in the elaboration of Elizabeth as an icon, also had a close alliance with the Queen's fashioning of herself, her body politic as a colony in her speech to her army at Tilbury in August 1588. Elizabeth's position and self-portrayal as a virgin queen meant that in symbolic terms, no man possessed her physically or politically. Indeed, her self-presentation (and that by her courtiers, poets and painters) was imbued not only with spirituality and mysticism, but a strong sensual

element, which seemed to suit the Queen's depiction as a desirable, yet sexually chaste woman. Because of this latter aspect, Elizabeth defied any attempt that would violate the body of her country or herself, and this feature is explicit in her famous political speech at the Tilbury camp on August 9, 1588. Her oration is authoritative primarily because it describes power in male-gendered terms; she manipulates, through the power of language, the concept of the way things seem and the way they really are:

My loving people: We have been persuaded by some, that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes for fear of treachery. But I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let Tyrants fear! I have always so behaved myself that under God I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects. And therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not as for my recreation and disport; but being resolved in the midst of the heat of the battle to live or die amongst you all; to lay down for my God and for my Kingdom and for my people my honor and my blood, even in the dust.

I know I have but the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain; or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which, rather than any dishonor should grow by me, I myself will take up arms. (Rice, 96)¹⁶

In this speech, Elizabeth does not challenge the order of male dominance. Instead, she allows her body to occupy the masculine

position of power. When Elizabeth states that she has the heart and stomach of a king she is referring to the doctrine of the king's two bodies, one political and the other private. She symbolically embodies male gender and transcends the limits of her own sexuality in this speech, showing in some way its weakness. To be powerful she needs to exist on male gendered terms, to voice her symbolic image on a sight of her 'male' body that does not actually exist. This demonstrates Elizabeth's trust in the power of words to create an image of strength, which she feels, could not be gained without male gendering. Thus, she depicts the theory of voyeurism as an unsuccessful one in the construction and maintenance of the gaze, which marks an object's identity. Here, the object (being Elizabeth's body) can be manipulated, her words blinding her listeners to her gender position, enabling her consequential respect as a male rather than a female, a king rather than a queen, preserving herself and her nation in the process of preserving herself.¹⁷ Elizabeth's political goals were furthered when she adopted the persona of a male. She presented herself in challenging, ambiguous, yet powerful identities to her people throughout her reign; a woman and a man, a princess and a prince, a queen and a king, a mother and a firstborn son, as well as the mythic self representations of the adored yet unreachable moon goddesses Diana and Cynthia, the divine Astraea returning to earth in order to revive the golden age.

Elizabeth's Tilbury speech, where England is the virgin body protected from the threat of a potentially defiling foreign invasion, may be aligned with the following passage from Raleigh's "Discovery of Guiana." He journeyed here in 1616 in search of gold and glory. Here, the virgin land is described as openly available for human violation, a metaphorical rape and conquest, symbolically aligned with Protestant England's explorations into the New World, colonial discovery and conquest:

Guiana is a Country that hath yet her Maidenhead, never sacked, turned, nor wrought, the face of the earth hath not been torn, nor the virtue and salt of the soil spent by manurance, the graves have not been opened for gold, the mines not broken with sledges, nor their Images pulled down out of their temples. It hath never been entered by any army of strength, and never conquered or possessed by any Christian Prince. (1984, 120)

In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser describes "fruitfullest Virginia" (2. Pr. 2) as being a newly chartered land, whilst Cain reads this as "a geographical and grammatical equivalent to the partly venereal icon of Belphebe as fruitful virgin" (91). Virginia's maidenhead is here seen through male eyes and masculine fantasies of rape and possession. I want to demonstrate how this feature imprisons Belphebe's own representation in the poem through the potential violation of her virginal body as a territorial space. This is especially in the sense that,

as in Petrarchan poetics, the masculine self depends on the colonization of the female 'other.'

Recoding the allegorical symbols that construct these images enable us to interpret virginity in the poem as being the framework of Elizabeth outside it. The voyeuristic concept which recognizes and establishes woman's body as related to the land, to sovereignty, is thus at the same time, also that which sets it up to be potentially defiled. Virginity becomes the textual location of Elizabeth's power as a monarch, especially through the metaphorical and physical notion of self-containment. Elizabeth's virgin monarchy symbolically indicates the manner in which she would protect her country. She would defend England through the integrity of her body, the body of the land and the body of a woman being united as a place for political strength and protection. This ideal reinforces the fact that the nation was regarded as the monarch in this period; colonization can here be read in terms of the desire to capture, to rupture the closed space incorporated in the female body as a territorial mark in order to ensure female subservience in relation to masculine subjectivity.¹⁸

In the Proem of Book 2, Elizabeth is cast as a gazer at the New World, even though she is not part of the landscape as a literary character. Spenser instead draws the Queen into the poem as a reader, inspiration and patron:

And thou, O fairest Princesse vnder sky,
 In this faire mirrhour maist behold thy face,
 And thine owne realmes in lond of Faery,
 And in this antique Image thy great auncestry.
 (2. Pr. 4)

In this mirror, Elizabeth is shown herself as Gloriana, her ancestry and future glory, which, at the same time, does not omit her present prominence. Spenser, by giving Elizabeth liberty to view her own face here, also offers her the power to judge his work as well as herself as an object of his own representation. In doing so, he provides her with the control of the gaze over his poem's celestial depiction of her.

The Neoplatonic idealization of the Virgin Mary and Dante's Beatrice figures the image of Elizabeth as a light of virtue by her comparison with the sun in *The Faerie Queene*:

O Goddesse heauenly bright,
 Mirrour of grace and Maiestie diuine,
 Great Lady of the greatest Isle, whose light
 Like *Phoebus* lampe throughout the world doth shine
 (1. Pr. 4)¹⁹

In the "Ditchley" portrait of Elizabeth, light is manifested by the physical appearance of the Queen, by her sovereign presence. The Queen stands stiffly on the map of England, towering above it, personifying it, symbolizing her power and protection over her nation. This again establishes how Elizabeth's cult was a glamorous, self-

The "Ditchley" Portrait, c. 1592



induced enterprise. She, as both a woman and sovereign, is united with her kingdom, in control of the elements in the background; the Queen appears to banish the dark clouds and storm behind her, casting out a universal darkness, introducing her luminous presence on the foreground of the painting instead. The little orb, which Elizabeth is wearing in her left ear, recalls a reference to Una as a luminous light, so much so that she cannot be looked at directly. Spenser describes "the blazing brightnesse," the "glorious light of her sunshyny face" (l. 12. 23) in the following terms:

Her angels face
 As the great eye of heauen shyned bright,
 And made a sunshine in the shadie place;
 Did neuer mortall eye behold such heauenly grace.
(1. 3. 4)

In these lines, Spenser draws a unique comparison between two kinds of eyes; the omnipotent blazing eye of the sun and the eye of the mortals who gaze upon the illuminated power Una displays by virtue of the sun's eye. This eye brings to light what is 'shadie,' what is 'mortall.' In this sense the voyeuristic gaze of man is displayed as limited, passive in its ability only to 'behold' Una's grace rather than actively contribute to its power as the sun does. This feature recalls the biblical, apocalyptic title of "a woman clothed with the sunne" (Rev. 12: 1).²⁰

Spenser, in stanza 23 of Belphoebe's blazon, grants her eyes power over lust, to quench its forces as well as, paradoxically, precipitating them:

In her faire eyes two liuing lamps did flame,
 Kindled aboue at th'heauenly makers light,
 And darted fyrie beames out of the same,
 So passing persant, and so wondrous bright,
 That quite bereau'd the rash beholders sight:
 In them the blinded god his lustfull fire
 To kindle oft assayd, but had no might;
 For with dredd Maiestie, and awfull ire,
 She broke his wanton darts, and quenched base desire.
 (2. 3. 23)

Belphoebe's eyes give her power to look back at the voyeur. This extracts from her position as a completely passive object in the blazon. Belphoebe's 'dredd Maiestie' unites her with the public, sovereign body of Elizabeth, while 'awfull ire' marks her as a figure to be feared, as dangerous.²¹

Belphoebe's ability to quench the base desire which Cupid inspires by breaking his darts, positions her as the enemy of base love, whilst being an unwilling inspiration of lust at the same time by igniting it with her very presence in the poem. Yet, Belphoebe is very unlike the wanton Acrasia, in whose eyes "fierie beames . . . thrild/Fraile harts, yet quenched not" (2. 12. 78).

In Spenser's *Amoretti*, the mistress is in this manner accused: "fayre cruell, why are ye so fierce and cruell?/Is it because your eyes have powre to kill?" (64. 1-2), which is comparable with Belphoebe's eyes in the blazon description in *The Faerie Queene* as she controls the persona by her gaze. Also in the *Amoretti*, Spenser contributes to the power of female eyes:

Fayre eyes, the myrrour of my mazed hart,
 what wondrous vertue is contaynd in you,
 the which both lyfe and death forth from you dart
 into the object of your mighty view?
 (7. 1-4)

Similarly, in stanza 23, Spenser reinforces Belphoebe's connection with chastity, sensuality and fearlessness. Here, she is portrayed as having eyes so powerful they shoot darts at her lustful observers, in order to quench their base desires for her. I want to suggest that this image is a reversal of the Petrarchan connotation with the darts of Cupid, which are traditionally said to strike the eyes of a lover first, and later rebound into the heart, enabling love at first sight. The reversal of this theme by Spenser emphasizes not only that lust exists because of Belphoebe's presence, but also that it must be controlled because she will not compromise any assailing of her virtue. Such is the way in which Spenser unites in Belphoebe the aspects of authority, desire and divinity.²²

As the private woman shadowed in Belpheobe, Elizabeth was exalted as a virgin goddess, especially towards the latter part of her reign when it was widely accepted that she would never take a husband. Instead, she continued to protect her nation from a possible destructive challenge to the throne by refusing to marry a foreign prince, or a nobleman inferior to her.

The land of Faerie may be closely equated with England's realm that Elizabeth symbolizes as its queen. In the "Ditchley" portrait, the fact that Elizabeth is dressed in white is a reflection of her habit of wearing it in the last years of her reign to reaffirm her purity and virginity; here, the body itself becomes a type of allegory.²³ Elizabeth's motherhood over England in this portrait is displayed in the way she towers above it, as though protecting it with her own public/private, sovereign and virginal body.²⁴

The royal portraiture of Elizabeth marked an important alliance in the relationship between art and political power, contributing to her glorification as a queen and empress, to her magnificence. Her portraits were a large part of a propaganda campaign to flatter Elizabeth and present a certain idealized public image of her. Paintings, sketches and coins portraying Elizabeth's sovereign image were reproduced and widely transmitted throughout England, personifying her political and private identity as a powerful monarch, and just importantly, a sensual

identification of her as the God-appointed deliverer from the Antichrist (represented in the Roman Catholic Church). Elizabeth's virginity had an apocalyptic significance, which grew since the early days of her reign.

As we have seen, the classical imagery associated with Elizabeth included that of the virgin goddess, a figure whose virginity is associated with her chastity, a state of constancy, of physical and symbolic incorruptibility. In this way, the Queen embodied divine virtue and remained the ultimate image of royal power. O'Connell mentions, "at the most literal level Elizabeth was One because she was, as we would say, 'single.' She was unmarried and would have no descendants" (45).²⁶

While the virginity of Elizabeth might have been 'intact,' her natural body was marked by the signs of age towards the latter half of her reign. De Maise gives the following outline of the Queen at her Court, her physically deteriorating appearance during her mid-forties, although her presentation as a desirable virgin remains apparent through her pearls and open bosom:

"On her head she wore a garland of the same material and beneath it a great reddish-coloured wig, with a great number of spangles of gold and silver, and hanging down over her forehead some pearls, but of no great worth. On either side of her ears hung two great curls of hair, almost down to her shoulders and within the collar of her robe, spangled as the top of her head. Her bosom is somewhat

wrinkled as well . . . lower down her flesh is exceeding white and delicate, so far as one could see.

As for her face, it is and appears to be very aged. It is long and thin, and her teeth are very yellow and unequal, compared with what they were formerly, so they say, and on the left side less than on the right. Many of them are missing so that one cannot understand her easily when she speaks quickly." Quoted in Hibbert (251)

In addition to this, De Maisse states that "when anyone speaks of her beauty she says that she was never beautiful, although she had that reputation thirty years ago. Nevertheless," he continues, "she speaks of her beauty as often as she can" (Strong, 1987, 19-20). It is clear from these lines that Elizabeth worshipped her own corporeal beauty, and she yearned that others, especially men who took her fancy, should share in her adoration. As Strong informs us, "the more advanced the Queen becomes in years, the more passionate become the tributes to her youth and beauty" (1987, 20). Strong also writes that the Queen's fear of decay was politically as well as personally motivated, that her portraits deliberately display the rejuvenation of her image in order to settle fears relating to her lack of succession. As a result of this, "sometime about 1594 a government decision was taken that the official image of the Queen in her final years was to be of a legendary beauty, ageless and unfading" (1987, 20).

Elizabethan painter Nicholas Hilliard, in accordance with the fact that after the mid 1580s, the Queen's face was no longer painted from

life, invented the 'mask of youth,' an appearance of ethereal beauty and youth which dominates many of Elizabeth's later portraits, denying the reality of her ageing face. Elizabeth's portraits thus became fictional preservations of her political body.²⁷

A painting, which does not make an effort to deny the reality of an ageing, or more exactly, a dying queen, is that of "Elizabeth with Time and Death" (1622), attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts.²⁸ Most notable is the figure of death at her right shoulder, while Time sleeps on the left beside a broken hourglass. Two cherubs above her head hold a crown to place upon it. In the painting, the Queen still wears her ermine, pearls and jewels, while pearls and jewels are also encrusted in her hair. Elizabeth's hands still appear young and beautiful, although her haggard and sunken skin displays a greying face, eyes and fallen cheekbones, in contrast to Hillard's traditional style. Hillard's mask of youth has been removed in this portrait by another artist to at last to reveal features waning and tired of life, somehow longing for the endless rest which only death can provide. Elizabeth rests her head on her right hand, seemingly unable to hold herself upright. She holds a small book in her left hand, most probably the Bible, as she looks forward to reunion with her maker.

According to documented reports, the Queen used cosmetics containing lemon juice and mercury to maintain some semblance of

"Elizabeth with Time and Death," c. after 1620



youth during her aging years.²⁹ In this way, paintings falsely depicting Elizabeth's unchanging youth served, like poetry, as convenient forms of flattery to an ageing monarch. The act of imitation in relation to the literary depiction of Elizabeth is ridiculed in Chapman's play, *Bussy D'Ambois*, where the French Guise critically accuses the English for

making semi-gods
Of their great nobles, and of their old queen
An ever-young and most immortal goddess.
(1. 1. 11-13)

The idolatry of art and the manipulation of natural forms is highlighted in *The Faerie Queene* through the False Florimell, who is described as an "Idole faire" (3. 8. 11). She is an object of worship, of false art that aims to rival nature and to subdue it.³⁰

When the true Florimell is set next to the False one at a tournament celebrating the wedding of Florimell and Marinell in Book 5, the wanton, False Florimell melts when placed beside her genuine, chaste sister:

Streight way so soone as both together met,
Th' enchanted Damzell vanisht into nought:
Her snowy substance melted as with heat
(5. 3. 24)

Authentic nature triumphs over the false in this scene and demonstrates clearly how illusory shadows of beauty are meaningless, insubstantial, just as the elements by which Elizabeth sought to conceal her age were

and by which the False Florimell is first composed. The sprite of the False Florimell is a dead carcass, artificial, as is her beauty and virginity:

The substance, whereof she the bodie made,
Was purest snow in massie mould congeald,
Which she had gathered in a shadie glade
Of the *Riphoean* hils, to her reueald
By errant Sprights, but from all men conceald:
The same she tempred with fine Mercury,
And virgin wex, that neuer yet was seald,
And mingled them with perfect vermily,
That like a liuely sanguine it seem'd to the eye.

In stead of eyes two burning lampes she set
In siluer sockets, shyning like the skyes,
And a quicke mouing Spirit did arret
To stirre and roll them, like a womans eyes;
In stead of yellow lockes she did deuise,
With golden wyre to weaue her curled head;
Yet golden wyre was not so yellow thrise
As *Florimells* faire haire

(3. 8. 6-7)

A witch creates the False Florimell in similar ways in which the Queen in particular used various substances like mercury to whiten her face and elaborate wigs to conceal her baldness and outwardly maintain the signs of youth. Like the witch in Book 3, in the first Book of *The Faerie Queene*, sorcerer Archimago creates a lecherous spright in the physical image of Una and sends it to sexually tempt the Redcrosse Knight as he sleeps (1. 1. 45). I argue that both the False Florimell and the false Una contribute rather negatively to the theme of

artificial beauty figured by Elizabeth in both poetry and portraiture. This casts (whether or not intended by Spenser) a rather derogatory light upon the ageing Elizabeth, showing that, by definition, false beauty is illusory and often hides a lack of inner virtue.

Spenser's representation of Duessa, once her glorious majestic garments are removed, symbolically recalls the depictions of Elizabeth as an old, decaying woman, superficially clothed in the metaphorical features of youth and beauty through the grace of artists and poets:

So as she bad, that witch they disaraid,
And robd of royall robes, and purple pall,
And ornaments that richly were displaid;
Ne spared they to strip her naked all.
Then when they had despoild her tire and call,
Such as she was, their eyes might her behold,
That her misshaped parts did them appall,
A loathly, wrinckled hag, ill fauoured, old,
Whose secret filth good manners biddeth not be told.

Her craftie head was altogether bald,
And as in hate of honorable eld,
Was ouergrowne with scurfe and filthy scald;
Her teeth out of her rotten gummes were feld,
And her sowre breath abhominably smeld;
Her dried dugs, like bladders lacking wind,
Hong downe, and filthy matter from them weld;
Her wrizled skin as rough, as maple rind,
So scabby was, that would haue loathd all womankind.

(1. 8. 46-47)

This image of Duessa contrasts with Spenser's theory in the "Hymne of Heavenly Beauty" that physical beauty is proof of internal virtue: "for all thats good, is beautifull and faire" (19. 133).

The seemingly natural parallel of female beauty equated with virtue is taken for granted by Spenser in Belpheobe's blazon, where he declares her white complexion as the primary mark of her virginal purity:

Her iuorie forehead, full of bountie braue,
 Like a broad table did it selfe dispred,
 For Loue his loftie triumphes to engraue,
 And write the battels of his great godhed:
 All good and honour might therein be red:
 For there their dwelling was. And when she spake,
 Sweet words, like dropping honny she did shed,
 And twixt the perles and rubins softly brake
 A siluer sound, that heauenly musicke seemd to make.
 (2. 3. 24)

Gregerson (127) acknowledges that in this stanza, Belpheobe's white complexion also signals her analogy to a waxed tablet, her availability to be engraved. I add that this stanza also suggests that Belpheobe's virginity exists in order for Cupid to engrave his triumphs on; in this way, her virginity is said to one day be conquered by the threat of either sexual love or sensual lust. Cupid's triumphs engraved on Belpheobe's forehead in order to be 'red,' I argue, imply hymeneal blood in the shedding of her virginity. Since the rose, as we have seen, is symbolic of Belpheobe's virginity in *The Faerie Queene*, I regard

the following lines from Book 2 as synonymous with this metaphorical, hypothetical shedding of Belpheobe's virginity, just as Spenser correlates the image of blood with the rose in Book 2: "wyde was the wound, and a large lukewarme flood,/Red as the Rose, thence gushed grievously" (2. 8. 39). Also, in stanza 24, while Belpheobe's voice is 'dropping honny' and 'heauenly musicke,' she is presented as a wholly silent object.

In the "Song of Solomon," the beloved's mouth is described similarly to Belpheobe's; "thy lippes, [my] spouse, droppe [as] honie combes: honie and milke are vnder thy tongue" (Song Sol. 4: 11). In Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*, Acrasia's wanton damsels seduce Cymochles with their "sweet words, dropping like honny dew" (2. 5. 33). These examples, when compared with stanza 24 of Belpheobe's blazon, emphasize honey as a metaphorical image associated with what is lustful and sensual. This is exemplified in Proverbs: "for the lippes of a strange woman drop [as] an hone combe, and her mouth is more soft then oyle" (Prov. 5: 3).

Although Spenser's depiction of Belpheobe is not purposefully wanton or deceitful, the sexual images and metaphors with which she is associated cannot be denied. These sensual aspects open several propositions relating to the portrayal of the virgin body in *The Faerie Queene*. Firstly, that it is desirable because it is always *potentially*

available for sex. Secondly, it is paradoxical through its arousal and later quenching of base lust as a result of its heavenly origins. This latter aspect is emphasized in stanza 25:

Vpon her eyelids many graces sate,
 Vnder the shadow of her euen browes,
 Working belgards, and amorous retrate,
 And euery one her with a grace endowes:
 And euery one with meekenesse to her bowes.
 So glorious mirrhour of celestiaall grace,
 And soueraine moniment of mortall vowes,
 How shall fraile pen descriue her heauenly face,
 For feare through want of skill her beautie to disgrace?
 (2. 3. 25)

By fetishizing Belphoebe in the blazon, Spenser, at first, appears better able to control her. This, however, is a fallacy, as I will argue. Belphoebe's apparent objectivity occurs through her inaction, a result of her lack of voice, her lack of physical completeness, which symbolically constitutes a lack of power in this segment of the poem. At the same time, the poet's sense of incompetence is displayed in stanza 25: "How shall fraile pen desriue her heauenly face,/For feare through want of skill her beautie to disgrace?" (2. 3. 25). Spenser's use of the rhetorical device of self-depreciation here enforces Belphoebe's beauty as a crippling force by being so perfect that she cannot be fully objectified.³¹ The 'soueraine moniment of mortall vowes' suggest marriage vows, indicating that Belphoebe's virginity as the shadow of

Elizabeth's is above and beyond the earthly realm. This feature is strengthened by the final two lines of the stanza, where Spenser makes his mortal power clear in his insecurity to write of Belphoebe's appearance properly in order to offer a just representation of her heavenly, virginal beauty.

In a similar way, the "Ermine" portrait of Elizabeth celebrates the Petrarchan idealization of the Queen's chastity, her virginal mysticism as a state ordained by heaven. She holds an olive branch in her right hand, to represent peace both in her religious control and in the fostering of her nation. The olive branch balances the image of the sword, which is positioned in the bottom right hand corner of the painting, thus suggesting peace and justice combined with military strength. The ermine on Elizabeth's left arm wears a gold collar uniting royalty and virginity. Yates studies the "Ermine" portrait in the light of the Belphoebe's connection to the sovereign power of Elizabeth:

the lady of the 'Ermine' portrait is not only a Petrarchan heroine in her private aspect; in her public aspect she is also a 'most royall queene or empresse' . . . The 'Ermine' portrait fuses Gloriana and Belphoebe in a composite statement expressive both of the triumph of her reformed imperial rule and of her personal triumph as a chaste Petrarchan heroine. (114)³²

In the "Ermine" portrait, Elizabeth wears a black gown (black and white being her traditional virginal colours toward the latter part of

The "Ermine" Portrait, c. 1585



her reign). The top half of her hair, interestingly, is fashioned in the shape of a love heart. This could be related to the fact that in Petrarch's *Triumph of Chastity*, a picture of an ermine is embroidered as an emblem on a banner wearing a collar encrusted with topazes, reportedly, as Strong informs us, "a jewel symbolizing resistance to all human lasciviousness" (1987, 114). In *The Faerie Queene*, Artegall also has an ermine on his shield:

And on his shield enueloped seuenfold
 He bore a crowned little Ermilin,
 That deckt the azure field with her faire pouldred skin
 (3. 2. 25)

This element is important, for not only is the ermine here a symbol of chastity (personified in Britomart with whom Artegall falls in love), but British royalty as well. Artegall is presented as the knight of Justice in *The Faerie Queene*. This is symbolic when we remember that the handle of a sword of justice is featured just underneath the ermine in the painting of Elizabeth. Her power over church and state is emphatic here; she holds the sword of justice and fights over the power of the Roman Antichrist.

While Elizabeth avoided actual marriage, she still bargained herself as a marriageable object. The icons of virginity and matrimony were blended in the image she personified for several years. Both

virginity and a possible marriage gave her the power she required in order to bring prosperity and peace to England. As Benson recognizes, the Queen's unmarried state was an opportunity for the praise of Elizabeth, yet her sex was an obstacle because in Elizabethan England women were not considered as having a natural right to rule (1985, 277). While the prospect of Elizabeth's marriage remained ever unfulfilled, it brought her the power she desired. It was a prospect that she toyed with until the latter years of her life.

A point of interest here is Elizabeth's "Sieve" or "Siena" portrait. She holds the sieve (an emblem of virginity) in her left hand, nothing in her right. This subtly suggests that she values her virginity but not above all else. If this were the case the sieve would be in her right hand. In the upper right hand corner of the painting, Elizabeth's courtiers can be seen huddled together, while she remains in the foreground of the painting, alone, suggesting that it is her destiny to always be so. She stands apart from her men, yet she is Platonically linked to them also, through the public love and service they have toward her. The sieve is symbolic due to its association with the vestal virgin Tuccia, who carried water in a sieve as she walked from the Tiber River to her temple. The fact that no water issued from the sieve was proof of her virginity. This story encompasses one important aspect of virginity, which, as will be demonstrated, is also enforced by

The "Sieve/Siena" Portrait, c. 1580-83



Spenser in his presentation of Belpheobe. Under Elizabeth, virginal chastity seems to have been restored to its honoured medieval position, that is, with virginity's mystical power being well recognized. Warner reminds us that "there was one particular attitude toward virginity that the Christian religion did inherit from the classical world: that virginity was powerful magic and conferred strength and ritual purity" (1976, 48).

Another link with virginity in relation to this painting lies in the pearls with which Elizabeth is draped, not only around her shoulders and on her heart, hanging from a jewelled brooch, but also forming the V-shape around her genital area. Pearls, which were symbols of virginity in Elizabethan portraiture, depict not only the Queen's physical purity but are a reminder that the mystical power she has with the sieve, as well as the physical power of desirability she has with men (figured in their appearance in the background), stem from her virginity. In this portrait, one might argue, this power is accentuated more with the pearls around Elizabeth's sexual area than with the sieve itself.³³

In Belpheobe's blazon in *The Faerie Queene*, the sexual area of the virgin huntress is one that Spenser is at great pains to ignore:

So faire, and thousand thousand times more faire
She seemd, when she presented was to sight,

And was yclad, for heat of scorching aire,
 All in a silken Camus lylly whight,
 Purfled vpon with many a folded plight,
 Which all about besprinkled was throughout
 With golden aygulets, that glistred bright,
 Like twinckling starres, and all the skirt about
 Was hemd with golden fringe
 (2. 3. 26)

Where stanza 25 finds Spenser at a loss for words in his portrayal of Belpheobe, the poet's inability to match her physical desirability with words, is elaborated in stanza 26. Just when Spenser is about to exhibit Belpheobe's sexual parts, he moves from the hem of her skirt straight toward the description of her legs in the following stanza and, as a consequence, the final line of this preceding one is abruptly broken. This demonstrates, I argue, Spenser's possible fear of fully invading Belpheobe's body by describing it. Stallybrass expresses a common attitude toward the female body and its enclosure during the Renaissance, regarding the fact that "silence, the closed mouth, is made a sign of chastity. And silence and chastity are, in turn, homologous to a woman's enclosure within the house . . . her signs are the enclosed body, the closed mouth, the locked house" (127). This is how woman is made into a category of property, possession, a body enclosed by boundaries.

In *The Faerie Queene*, Belpheobe is lightly dressed because of the 'heat of scorching aire,' and the lilly white of her dress is another

indication of her virginity. In Book 2, Alma is clothed "in robe of lilly white" (2. 9. 19) to symbolize her virginity.³⁴ Similarly, in the *Epithilamion*, Spenser's bride is "clad all in white, that seemes a virgin best" (9. 151). In Dante's the "Purgatorio," Beatrice is described as dressed "in veil of white" (2. 30. 31). Spenser elaborates on Belphoebe's white, silken and glittering garments to display the purity and beauty of her virginity to the readers. In stanza 26, however, as in most other stanzas, Spenser's praise of Belphoebe does not end here without moving on to a sensual portrayal.

When Spenser suddenly halts as he is about to describe Belphoebe's sexual parts, I argue that this feature may have been intended to depict the female body as a tabooed object, which is somehow personified in writing, and as a consequence, given power. While one could also argue that Spenser here is suggesting that Belphoebe's sensual parts are of no significance, at the same time, the poetic description is cut across by the sovereign beauty, the sexuality of Belphoebe which, I claim, seems to suffocate the poet. The structure of stanza 26 is cut across by his recognition of the unspeakable, the powerful, the only body part (the site of her virginity), which overpowers his language. The broken line represents the secret text of the female body of which the male poet cannot speak – Belphoebe's sexual secrets are unspeakable in the sense that her virginity and sexual

potential are too overwhelming. Spenser tries to disempower Belpheobe and conspicuously fails; his broken line at the end of stanza 26 can in this sense be read as a confession of inability shown at the conclusion of the previous stanza, his symbolic castration of himself, of his denial of sexual satisfaction with this literary object of admiration and desire.³⁵

In *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney catalogues Stella's body parts in the following blazon, but, like Spenser, also lapses at the final line of the stanza, his speech becoming blocked when arriving at the description of Stella's private area:

Those lookes, whose beames be joy, whose motion is
 delight,
 That face, whose lecture shewes what perfect beautie is:
 That presence, which doth give darke hearts a living light:
 That grace, which *Venus* weepes that she her selfe doth
 misse:
 That hand, which without touch holds more then *Atlas*
 might;
 Those lips, which make death's pay a meane price for a
 kisse:
 That skin, whose passe-praise hue scorns this poore terme
 of white:
 Those words, which do sublime the quintessence of
 blisse:
 That voyce, which makes the soule plant himselfe in the
 eares:
 That conversation sweet, where such high comforts be,
 As consterd in true speech, the name of heav'n it beares,
 Makes me in my best thoughts and quietst judgement see,
 That in no more but these I might be fully blest:
 Yet ah, my May'n Muse doth blush to tell the best.

(77)

The 'best' are of course, Stella's sexual parts, features which Astrophil's muse refuses to mention not only because they are private, but because they are the only parts of Stella's body which can grant Astrophil the sexual satisfaction which he so earnestly craves. Yet, as he sorrowfully declares in this particular sonnet, he can never be fully blest in them and alternatively, cannot offer them his praise. This factor in turn, forces sonnet 77 to arrive at a deadlock, reflective of Astrophil's own blocked desires.

A similar occurrence appears in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress":

An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy Forehead Gaze.
Two hundred to adore each Breast:
But thirty thousand to the rest.
(13-16)

The woman's sexual parts, requiring thirty thousand years to both praise and describe, speaks for the poetic availability of language to Marvell, the woman's body appearing as unfathomable and, to a degree, pornographic.

Frye sees the blazon of Belphebe as derogatory rather than flattering, in much the same way as pornography is derogatory to women. Frye states that "Elizabeth stands half-naked before the reader's gaze in the figure of Belphebe in *The Faerie Queene*" (1993,

12), and adds that the textual conceptualization of, and insult to Elizabeth's sovereign body cannot be ignored. However, I argue that it is unlikely that Elizabeth would have thought she was being insulted when she read the poem, for, as will be demonstrated in the fifth chapter of this thesis, she rewarded Spenser with a pension rather than a punishment for presenting *The Faerie Queene* to her. Spenser offers Belphoebe's half-nakedness and sensual beauty as more of a complement to the Queen's 'mask of youth' and desirability rather than a pornographic narrative of her, as opposed to the following manuscript, which is clearly offensive to Elizabeth's integrity as both a monarch and a woman.

The sixteenth-century anonymous manuscript entitled, "News from Heaven and Hell" describes Leicester's sexual and political appetite at the Elizabethan Court. It was written following his death and is a fictional and crude satire about Leicester's unsuccessful effort to gain entry into heaven as a result of his earthly sins. Consequently, his punishment is to spend the future gazing into the Queen's fathomless vagina. The narrative is an example of pornography in the late sixteenth-century, a different picture of the poetically celebrated virginity of Elizabeth in *The Faerie Queene*, but one that does recognize and refer to the symbolic and political power that Elizabeth's virginity signified both to herself and to her courtiers in terms of its

threat to their masculine identities. As an example, "News from Heaven and Hell" describes Leicester's fantasy of charging "his lance of lust against the center of her target of proffe, and [being able to] rune his ingredience up to the hard hiltes into the unserchable botome of her gaping gullfe," to "drowen the member of his virillitye in the bottomless barrell of her virinnitye" (Peck, 157). This fantasy may have initiated from the desire to capture that power inherent in Elizabeth's sovereign virginity by dominating her in this manner. Thus, the writer describes this aggressive rape of her body in a pornographic display. The traditional Petrarchan blazon, claims Betts, offered a pornographic medium for the portrayal and, more importantly, the control of the female body in English poetry since the fourteenth century. She writes that "these blazons were also implicated in circumstances that replicate the homosocial conditions of the pornographic experience: the organization of masculine identity around the objectified female body" (156).

I argue that, in the case of Belpheobe's representation in Spenser's blazon, when the female body becomes fractured, objectified and silenced in the form of the literary blazon, it constitutes a threatening presence to the poet, rather than a self-destructive one which begins to deliquesce once the body loses its sense of wholeness in the language and instead becomes itemized. Belpheobe's bodily

codification only serves to add to her virginal and sensual power in *The Faerie Queene*.

Berger's reading of Belpheobe as a Petrarchan mistress in Spenser's blazon in Book 2 is as follows:

Whatever power a Diana figure like Belpheobe has over man is a power ceded by the poets who have power over her in the sense that she is their fantasy. The ideal of the autonomous virgin is a diversionary fiction enabling the male to represent himself as a victim entitled to poetic revenge. (1994, 96)

In response to this comment by Berger, I state that although Spenser may be successful in possessing and maintaining control over Belpheobe as his fantasy of the ideal woman within the poem, she also is granted control over him as a form of poetic revenge when Spenser arrives at the portrayal (or lack of it) of Belpheobe's sexual parts. In this instance in *The Faerie Queene*, the power which Spenser (perhaps unintentionally) grants Belpheobe supersedes his own as a poet.

Villeponteaux recognizes that "Belpheobe embodies not just a warning but outright censure . . . she permanently looms as a threatening and emasculating force" (1993, 33-34). This force, I suggest, arises from a virginity that will never surrender to masculine ownership (as was the case with Elizabeth, on both personal and political terms). As a consequence of this, Belpheobe's empty space in

stanza 26 where her vagina should be cannot be described, I argue, because it cannot be possessed (or metaphorically ruptured) by the poet's words in the same way that the rest of her body has been. Instead, the primal area where Belpheobe's virginity exists remains untainted by the homosocial conditioning which constitutes the need for such celebratory and, to a degree, pornographic depictions of the female body. This is what enables Belpheobe to maintain her beauty and most importantly, her power.

Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One* notices that because the female sex organs are composed of many internal elements (lips, vagina, clitoris, cervix, uterus) in contrast to the singular and external male phallus, "her sex organ represents the horror of having nothing to see. In this system of representation and desire, the vagina is a flaw, a hole in the representation's scopophilic objective" (101). Woman has no sex organ, unlike the singular phallus that stands as the signifier of western culture.³⁶ Belpheobe also, according to Spenser's presentation of her in stanza 26, gives us 'nothing to see' in regard to her sex organ, even though it exists to threaten, to castrate the metaphorical phallus of the poet's masculine subjectivity by the force of its virginal and at the same time, its sensual power.

Freud's theory relating to the male castration complex is discussed in his essay on the Medusa; "to decapitate = to castrate. The

terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something." It is the natural male fear of castration, spurred by the masculine gaze's terrifying sight of the unapparent female genitals, "the absence of which is the cause of horror" (105). According to Mulvey, "it is man's narcissistic fear of losing his own phallus, his most precious possession, which causes shock at the sight of the female genitals and the subsequent fetishistic attempt to disguise or divert attention from them" (10-11). Indeed, we have seen the way in which Spenser has done this with Belphebe. Recognizing her sexual area as the source of her female power, he diverts attention away from it by not mentioning it, yet this, as I have argued, does not completely safeguard his subjective position as a poet.

Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa," adopts a different perspective to Freud. For her, men fear women not because they are actually 'castrated men,' but because, like the Medusa, women allegedly possess a special power that overrides the phallic one:

You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing.

Men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex. That's because they need femininity to be associated with death; it's the jitters that give them a hard-on! for themselves! They need to be afraid of us. (255)

Like the Medusa, Belpheobe is portrayed in *The Faerie Queene* as beautiful – although her long hair is not composed of snakes like Medusa's is, Belpheobe's hair still unites her virginal presence with a sensuality and a power which emasculates in various forms not only the male characters who associate with her in course of the poem (as the following chapters will demonstrate), but threatens to emasculate Spenser also. The final half line of stanza 26 may, I argue, be linked to Cixous' comment regarding the two unrepresentable aspects for men, 'death and the feminine sex' in that Belpheobe represents the death of the poet's language (although momentarily) as a result of her sexual parts which are too overwhelming for description within the blazon.³⁷ Similarly, Horney's article, "The Dread of Women," in *Feminine Psychology*, recognizes that most males, fearful of the power women might have, try to rid themselves of this dread by objectifying the female body in their literary work. This objectification can take the form of either attack or praise. Horney regards masculine creative writing to consist of "the never-ending conflict between the man's longing for the woman and his dread of her" (135).

Belpheobe is a character in *The Faerie Queene* who, like Elizabeth, is both sensually longed for and at the same time dreaded by men. This is a typical Petrarchan scenario, which is displayed in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*:

This one, who with a glance can steal a heart,
 opened my breast and took my heart in hand,
 saying to me: "Say not a word about this."
 Then I saw her alone in other garb
 and did not know her, oh, who understands!
 And full of fear I told her what the truth was,
 and she resuming her accustomed form
 quite quickly turned me into (oh, my grief)
 a hardly living, baffled piece of stone.
 (23)

Estrin (65) interprets Petrarch's lines as part of a masculine reduction of selfhood, the male subject being transformed into the spectacle rather than the spectator. Hence, an uncanny mixture of both love and dread are the central themes here, emphasizing the beauty of the beloved who catalyses the poet's desire through the mere sight of her image. This is the same sight, which later results in him being transformed into stone. Petrarch makes indirect reference to the Medusa legend here, which dictates that any man who gazed upon her would, as a consequence, be metamorphosed into stone. In stanza 23 from the *Canzoniere*, the only mode of exchange between the poet and his beloved is by sight, thus the descriptive strategies are visual. The woman becomes the point that enables him to compete with himself. Laura's status as a Medusa figure is a result of Petrarch's own error rather than hers. This feature, as I point out, is perhaps the main reason why Spenser, rather than making a visual display of Belphebe's

private parts and, hypothetically, risking subsequent metamorphic punishment for such a trespass upon a virgin's body (as occurs when Actaeon gazes on the naked Diana, which will be examined in the following chapter), prefers not to describe them at all. However, in doing so, as I have argued, Spenser displays his own inferiority toward the threatening mystical and virginal presence of Belphebe.

Due to the fact that one of the characteristics of the blazon is that the female who is being described must be fetishized because she usually threatens the male poet's sense of autonomy and literary control, Frye's reading of *The Faerie Queene* verifies "that poetry about women is really about the men who pen them" (1993, 135). In Book 3, Scudamour's following questioning regarding Amoret's capture by Busirane exemplifies Frye's point:

Why then is Busirane with wicked hand
Suffred, those seuen monethes day in secret den
My Lady and my loue so cruelly to pen?
(3. 11. 10)

What Scudamour means by 'pen' here, is 'pined' down, imprisoned. Regardless of the fact that one can hardly think of Busirane as a courteous Petrarchan lover, he both objectifies and 'controls' Amoret not only by tying her up but also by writing the story of her capture in

her own blood, using his sorcery to try and seduce her in a symbolic act of rape, his writing supplying his power over her imprisonment:

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

Busirane kidnaps Amoret from her bridal feast and keeps her for seven months before she is able to consummate her marriage to Scudamour (4. 1. 3-4). Amoret's virginity is counted more valuable than death, but it is one that must be consummated only in her marriage:

her honor dearer then her life,
She sought to saue, as thing reseru'd from stealth;
Die had she leuer with Enchanters knife,
Then to be false in loue, profest a virgine wife.
(4. 1. 6)

The fear of active female sexuality could therefore be part of the reason why chastity, especially its extreme form, virginity, is so emphasized by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* through the portrayal of Belpheobe. Amoret's bleeding heart may be seen as the displacement of her ruptured hymen, the disruption of the virginal female body through the

space of writing and the textual form in general; the semi-naked woman being tied, helpless as the passive object available for the inscription of male power. I want to read this scene as a mirror of the Amoret and Lust scene, which occurs further in Book 4 and which will be analysed in my fourth chapter. There it is Belphebe rather than Britomart who rescues Amoret and is able to destroy the personified figure of lust, which captures women and then devours them. Busirane's, like Lust's sado-masochistic view of love is generated on male fantasies of fear, bondage and possession. This is itself associated with the popular claim that male power is conditioned by threat and becomes dramatized through the manner in which Busirane sadistically tortures Amoret's body.³⁸ Petrarchan poetry exemplifies the violence available for the violation of the female body. Like Busirane, Spenser's verses are directly responsible for both representing and violating Amoret's body and establishing what I describe as 'the distorted aesthetic.' This term operates through the evaluation of the female as an autonomous object of artistic beauty, which must, in an active and violent process of metamorphosis, be ruptured, fractured and damaged, in order to exemplify masculine forms of intrusion and ownership upon it.

Because of this, the blazon celebrates, displays and dismembers female erotic power. Vickers notes that, because of this feature of

codification, of analysis of each physical part of the female beloved, Petrarch's *Rime Sparse* fails to present Laura in the image of a complete woman, but as parts of her instead. Therefore, "within the context of Petrarch's extended poetic sequence, the lady is corporeally scattered; the lover is emotionally scattered and will be corporeally scattered, and thus the relation between the two is one of mirroring" (1982, 104). Vickers refers to the fact that Petrarchanism elaborates masculine subjectivity and depends upon the image of the female who functions as the sacred and privileged, yet powerless, 'other' for the purpose of defining male subjectivity.³⁹ When a woman has been allowed her sexual force, her freedom, she fragments him. This works in contrast to Berry's idea that the beloved's power is essentially passive, and that she need not do anything except exist. Yet Berry also recognizes that many Renaissance texts were "punctuated by anxiety that the beloved's passive power might suddenly seek active expression, in an assertion of her own feelings and desires which threatened to escape the rhetorical or imaginative control of the male lover" (4).

Female beauty (especially that of a virtuous woman) is threatening to male dominance through its desirability. In Belpheobe's case, there always exists the need to control the force of male desire, which is a product of gazing at that beauty. Spenser writes and at the

same time consumes Belpheobe's body in language in order to gain self-definition and wholeness by the destruction of her own physical completeness in the blazon. Whilst Belpheobe's depiction in the blazon sequence in Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene* exemplifies her virginal body as a celebrated object associated with religious, mystical, symbolic and sensual objectives, Spenser also portrays Belpheobe's body as a form which is not completely amendable to masculine fashioning or possession, as my reading of stanza 26 has displayed.

Offering an analysis of Belpheobe and Elizabeth as objects of voyeurism, this chapter has demonstrated the ways in which they are linked as objects of the male gaze. I have argued that although the traditional Renaissance aspects of the Queen's portraiture and the blazon work initially by silencing Belpheobe and Elizabeth, respectively, by placing them in positions of adoration and sensuality and at the same time, their power is exhibited extraneously by their virginal representation. However, as I have also shown, Spenser's blazon representation of Belpheobe, whilst aiming to position and weaken her as a desired, silent object in order to reinforce his own masculine literary potency, does in fact limit him under her overriding sensual, sovereign power (in her reflection of Elizabeth's power) and Spenser's inadequate control over it. The sensual and sovereign power which Belpheobe and Elizabeth possess marks the separation between

their private and public aspects as not as segregated from one another as is first apparent according to Spenser's "Letter to Raleigh." I have demonstrated some of the ways in which Elizabeth personally adopted and publicly rehearsed the two roles of private woman and public queen (as well as having them produced by painters and poets) as a political strategy in order to satisfy continuous political hunger at Court relating to her position as an unmarried, virginal, inaccessible, yet desired object of love and most importantly, of power.⁴⁰ This in fact, is what I view Belpheobe's representation in *The Faerie Queene* to be composed of.

Belpheobe's role as a virgin huntress who initiates the male gaze of admiration and the passion of lust whilst denying the sexual ownership of her will be explored in the following chapter. Belpheobe's association with the false, lustful knight Braggadocchio in comparison with Prince Arthur's lovesick squire, Timias, will be examined according to my theory that innocent virginity is a powerful instigator of lust in Renaissance literature (especially in *The Faerie Queene*). It is capable of emasculating the male characters that seek to destroy it, just as in this chapter, I have displayed Belpheobe's emasculating threat to Spenser himself.

Chapter Two: Belphoebe's Emasculation of Timias

Chapter One explored Belphoebe's initial presentation in *The Faerie Queene* as a blazon in association with related portraits of Elizabeth, to demonstrate my argument that, for Spenser, the virginal body is a pure, holy, but at the same time sensual object of display and desire. Consequently, this second chapter will be a study of Belphoebe's association with male desire. Unlike the first chapter, which concentrated on the historical and pictorial representation of Elizabeth as reflective of Belphoebe's blazon, this chapter will focus primarily on what I argue as being Belphoebe's link with male lust and emasculation in *The Faerie Queene* through her association with Timias in Book 3.

Paglia, in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, describes human erotic experience as sexually "analogous to its political allegory: the psyche, like society, must be disciplined by good government" (1997, 638). Spenser indeed makes various references in *The Faerie Queene* regarding the necessity of controlling sensual desire, which is portrayed in the poem as debilitating to those who experience it. I will argue that Belphoebe's virginity is portrayed as sensually destructive, emasculating through its sexual innocence, specifically because such

desire for her cannot be satisfied either lustfully or, alternately, consummated in the socially esteemed goal of married love. Belphoebe's confrontation with the false knight Braggadocchio in Book 2 is part of Spenser's introduction to Belphoebe's relationship with male desire, one that acts to mirror her later meeting with Timias. I will examine Belphoebe's position as a huntress in *The Faerie Queene*, the ways in which her virginal virtue and her heavenly beauty inspire the beastly lust of Braggadocchio, as well as the relationship between virginal ideal (Belphoebe) and instinct (Braggadocchio).¹ Chapter Two extends on the first chapter in the sense that Belphoebe's virginal body is first positioned by Spenser as an object of visual desire and progresses into inspiring the lust of actual characters within *The Faerie Queene* itself, namely Braggadocchio and Timias. This, I argue, highlights Spenser's poetical celebration of Elizabeth's own historical position as a sensually desirable, yet powerful monarch who inspired erotic desire while at the same time ostensibly denying others any satisfaction of her.

As demonstrated in Chapter One, Belphoebe's virginity is not passive and vulnerable to the threatening forces of the forest. Belphoebe's bow and arrows are allegorical emblems, weapons used not only in the hunt for beastly prey, but designed to thwart the demeaning and threatening forces of lust which exist around her.

However, this factor does not lessen her femininity and grace. Spenser notes the irony that Belpheobe maintains the attributes of courtesy and gentleness despite her upbringing and present existence in the 'saluage forests':

Well may I weene, faire Ladies, all this while
 Ye wonder, how this noble Damozell
 So great perfections did in her compile,
 Sith that in saluage forests she did dwell,
 So farre from court and royall Citadell,
 The great schoolmistresse of all curtesy:
 Seemeth that such wild woodes should far expell
 All ciuill vsage and gentility,
 And gentle sprite deforme with rude rusticity.
 (3. 6. 1)

The 'curtesy' and 'great perfections' that Belpheobe possesses, existing in spite of her upbringing and lifestyle in the 'wild woods' may seem at first to be contradictory. However, as I argue, the 'wildness' in which Belpheobe is surrounded is not without its relativity to the aspect of her sensual representation by Spenser when it comes to her association with the male characters of *The Faerie Queene*.

Belpheobe arouses Braggadocchio's lust when he first encounters her following his recent theft of Guyon's horse and spear. Belpheobe, in turn, mistakes Braggadocchio for one of her wounded hinds:

Vnto the bush her eye did suddein glaunce,
 In which vaine Braggadocchio was mewed,
 And saw it stirre: she left her percing launce,
 And towards gan a deadly shaft aduaunce,
 In mind to marke the beast.

(2. 3. 34)

As in the later scene where Belphoebe thrusts at Braggadocchio with her spear and disappears into the forest following his vain effort to sexually assault her, this stanza also offers Belphoebe a phallic position of authority; her 'percing launce' being a 'deadly shaft' is both a metaphor of Braggadocchio's own penetrating desire for Belphoebe and at the same time, ironically, an object which serves to halt those desires through aggressive threat and fear. We are informed by Spenser that in Braggadocchio's reaction to Belphoebe,

when her goodly visage he beheld,
He gan himselfe to vaunt: but when he vewed
Those deadly tooles, which in her hand she held,
soone into other fits he was transmewed

(2. 3. 37)

Spenser never places Belphoebe in the passive circumstance of the 'hunted' within *The Faerie Queene*; as a huntress she always maintains the masculine role of control, which is never compromised, in spite of the circumstances that confront her. This factor contributes to Belphoebe's paradoxical position in the poem, for where she as a huntress and ward of Diana becomes the symbol of militant chastity, her counterpart, a male hunter, is the ancient model of a predator, particularly a sexual one. Belphoebe as a virgin huntress is able to represent both aspects of the male and female hunters in her ability to

remain chaste and at the same time brutally threatening to and/or destroying her admirers. Braggadocchio's foolishness prevents him from understanding the concept of ideal beauty and chaste sexual virtue in the contemplative, spiritual sense, and thus he is only capable of uniting the image of Belphebe with his own predatory desires.

Spenser demonstrates in the following stanzas from the *Hymne in Honour of Beautie* that even angelic beauty is prey to savagery, to the sinful lust of others who aim to consume and thus corrupt it:

And oft it falles, (ay me, the more to rew)
That goodly beautie, albe heauenly borne,
Is foule abusd, and that celestially hew,
Which doth the world with her delight adorne,
Made but the bait of sinne, and sinners scorne;
Whilist euery one doth seeke and sew to haue it,
But euery one doth seeke, but to depraue it.

Yet nathemore is that faire beauties blame,
But theirs that do abuse it vnto ill:
Nothing so good, but that through guilty shame
May be corrupt, and wrested vnto will.
Nathelasse the soule is faire and beauteous still,
However flesh fault it filthy make:
For things immortall no corruption take.
(148-161)

These two stanzas enforce Spenser's recognition that heavenly beauty both inspires and is sometimes the victim of earthly lust, of sin. In the second stanza, he removes beauty from blame and corruption by enforcing the importance of the pure soul beneath the flesh. In this sense, indirectly, Belphebe should not be to blame for unintentionally

instilling lust within either Braggadocchio or Timias. The fault lies instead with their lecherous natures. However, this point, I argue, should not detract from Belphoebe's obvious sensual portrayal by Spenser, which will be demonstrated in this chapter through Braggadocchio's and Timias' very reactions to her.

Braggadocchio succumbs to Belphoebe's virginal presence because he is a false knight of lowly birth who pretends to be honourable while lacking understanding of the moral aspects of chivalrous behaviour. In her discussion with Braggadocchio, Belphoebe perceives the life at Court as false and frivolous, distinguishing between it and her own aim of

hunting then the Libbards and the Beares,
In these wild woods, as was her wonted ioy,
To banish sloth, that oft doth noble mindes annoy.²
(4. 7. 23)

When Belphoebe instructs Braggadocchio on the achievement of true honour he can only burn lustfully for her, consumed as he is by selfish ambition and worldly advancement at Court which he does not deserve, for he detests hard work and self-discipline which life in the woods, Belphoebe's life, demands (2. 3. 40-42).³

As Belphoebe spurns Braggadocchio's base desire, Spenser describes the scene as follows:

the foolish man, fild with delight

Of her sweet words, that all his sence dismaid,
 And with her wondrous beautie ravisht quight,
 Gan burne in filthy lust, and leaping light,
 Thought in his bastard armes her to embrace.
 With that she swaruing back, her lauelin bright
 Against him bent, and fiercely did menace:
 So turned her about, and fled away apace.

(2. 4. 42)

The influences which virginity instigates here are recognized by Spenser as sensual 'delight' and 'filthy lust,' terms which, generally, are opposed to the values which Belphoebe's character represents in the poem, the primary one being sexual abstinence. In spite of Belphoebe's defense of herself with her fierce rejection of Braggadocchio's advance, the sensual power of her virginity is heavily enforced in this stanza.

Evans interprets the boar-spear of Belphoebe as an embodiment "of those aspects of human nature which would tame the passions, and who live in the forest, therefore to, subdue and civilize it" (1970, 55). In direct opposition to this interpretation of Belphoebe offered by Evans, which depicts her as a character who opposes the passions of the human condition, Paglia describes Belphoebe as "the sex object that leaps from the brain and repels all touch" (1990, 179). Hence, Belphoebe is objectified and idealized in *The Faerie Queene* as a sexual object in every way except the actual physical one. In this way, Belphoebe's character is symbolic of discipline in the poem, more

exactly, the discipline of the human passions associated with lust and personified in the character of Braggadocchio.

Belpheobe maintains her sexual purity and domineering strength by rejecting and fleeing from Braggadocchio, in a similar way to which Florimell attempts to flee from Proteus in Book 3. When Proteus regards Florimell's virginal purity, her "faire face" and "her snowy skin" (3. 8. 24), he is consumed with lust, a lust that appears to renew his youth. Proteus, for example, is portrayed by Spenser as "an aged sire" (3. 8. 30) and yet,

The sight whereof in his congealed flesh,
 Infixt such secret sting of greedy lust,
 That the drie withered stocke it gan refresh,
 And kindled heat, that soone in flame forth brust:
 The driest wood is soonest burnt to dust.
 Rudely to her he lept, and his rough hand
 Where ill became him, rashly would haue thrust,
 But she with angry scorne him did withstond,
 And shamefully reproued for his rudenesse fond.
 (3. 8. 25)

The heat, wood and dust are all earthly, mortal images; there is no celestial value attached to lust, except in the momentary satisfaction that must eventually burn itself out through the unquenchable hand of time. The lust/dust imagery in the stanza is powerful in that lust is a meaningless pastime, resulting in nothing but death and dust. A Spenserian reminder here is that lust not only inspires the young and that virginal beauty is the prime inspiration of lust.

Thus, in a similar way to which Belpheobe's eyes "darted fyrie beames" (2. 3. 23) which attract and kindle Braggadocchio's lusty desire for her, what attracts Proteus to the virginal Florimell is her "blazing beauties beame" (3. 8. 22). Also, in Book 6, Mirabella's face generates "the beames wherewith did kindle louely fire/In th'harts of many a knight, and many a gentle squire" (6. 7. 28). Spenser, throughout *The Faerie Queene*, provides examples of virgin figures who inspire either amorous passion or base lust, sometimes both simultaneously (Amoret, Britomart, Florimell and Una to name a few), but only with Belpheobe (and in some instances, Britomart) does he demonstrate the paradox of that same power which inspires desire as being the very same one which then purposefully works to extinguish it, just as Belpheobe's presence manages to both initiate only to then break Cupid's "wanton darts, and quenched base desire" (2. 3. 23). In the *Amoretti*, Spenser distinguishes between the "flames of pure and chaste desire" (22) from the "filthy lustfull fyre" of "sensuall desire" (83). The parody which exists here shows the extent to which virginity in *The Faerie Queene*, particularly Belpheobe's virginity, is both the initiator and the enemy of both forms of desire, for both forms, even though one is holy and the other is not, aim to violate the primary force of all which is virginity. I am arguing here that Belpheobe cannot be understood without her intrinsic link to either pure or lustful desire; her

virginity does not make her immune to attracting desire, just to accepting it. This establishes her primary link with Elizabeth who demanded both desire for her beauty and respect for her virginity from her courtiers.

Anderson sees Belphoebe's beauty, solitary aspect and virginal honour transcending Braggadocchio's cowardice and lust, yet regards the two characters as being strangely akin only in terms of their opposing traits. She writes that "Belphoebe and Braggadocchio shadow forth extremes of human reality, one ideal and the other instinctual, one angelic and the other animal; and as long as they must remain so absurdly separate, they mock human dreams of unity, completion, or fulfilment" (85). And yet, one is obliged to wonder just how much 'animal' is represented in Belphoebe in order for her to have such a profound link to the force of lust as well as a resistance against it when it proves threatening to her. This feature opposes Anderson's point regarding Belphoebe's limitations, her completion or fulfilment as a character within *The Faerie Queene*. In Belphoebe, as this chapter will show, exists the 'ideal' which triggers the 'instinctual,' the 'animal' in terms of masculine responses to her, especially towards her 'angelically' determined virginity. Braggadocchio's arousal to lust by Belphoebe's eroticism, which I have demonstrated does exist, is due to

both his lack of self-restraint as well as the fact that she fails to quell his lust; instead, her virtue and purity only fuel it further.

Williams disregards Belpheobe's sexual innocence in this scene with Braggadocchio, instead arguing that Belpheobe possesses a sensually teasing and at the same time, aloof characterization, and that "Braggadocchio is base, but he is only isolating and distorting an element that is really present in Belpheobe" (1966, 51). From this point of view, Belpheobe is consciously responsible for igniting Braggadocchio's desire. The 'element' that Williams regards as 'present in Belpheobe' here appears to be base sensual desire of a more pure sort, a sort that becomes distorted in the character of Braggadocchio. Williams' argument conflicts with my own concept in this thesis, which emphasizes Belpheobe's sensual aspect as arising from virginal characteristics which are sensually (hence sexually) innocent, not intentionally provocative as Williams is suggesting. Similarly, Cavanagh, while not exactly stating whether this sexual quality is intentional in Spenser's female characters, believes that Florimell, Amoret, and Belpheobe "incite too much unlawful male lust for them to appear 'safe'" (162), regardless of their praiseworthy chastity. Yet, Cavanagh ignores the traditional Neoplatonic doctrine, which equates physical beauty with internal goodness, and this point is valid when we recall the beautiful yet misleading characters in *The*

Faerie Queene like Duessa, Acrasia and the False Florimell. However, what Cavanagh fails to point out is that Florimell, Amoret and Belpheobe incite so much male lust as a result of their sexual innocence rather than of any evil. In this sense, I argue, they are just as unsafe (if not more so) than the wanton creations of Spenser's imagination.

Bhattacharje's analysis is that according to Platonic doctrine, only virtuous individuals appreciate and worship true beauty, while Spenser believes beauty has the power to attract reverence from even the "vicious, and striking him with awe" (66). In *The Allegorical Temper*, Berger plays upon this idea and reads the character of Belpheobe as portraying honour, rejecting passionate love, while "unconsciously she is an object of sexual no less than divine and royal devotion . . . there is a shade of the sinister about this ambiguity" (1967, 140). However, as I wish to clarify, this ambiguity only exists due to the lack of distinction made in Berger's argument relating to the ownership of sexual responsibility. Dowden reveals that "the sensual mind will put even beauty to sensual uses" (60), but beauty is in itself not a sensual aspect – its sensuality depends on its perception by the onlooker. Hence, Belpheobe's virginal virtue and physical beauty are not simply the mere personifications of lust; instead, lust is a force that exists externally because of her and is excited by the image of virginal purity

through the characters of Braggadocchio, and later Timias, respectively. This highlights the fact that in several Petrarchan texts, beauty leading up to admiration and then to desire is a natural, unavoidable progression, as Roche clarifies:

Seeing beauty leads to admiration, which leads to desire, a progression that suggests the tripartite progression of sin . . . Beauty should not be unseen, if it is to fulfil its function in this world . . . beauty is to be seen, to be justly admired, and hence desired. (1989, 354)

Hough, in *A Preface to The Faerie Queene*, also acknowledges that beauty is clearly an active initiator of desire, lustful action (171). This is perhaps why Leslie acknowledges Belpheobe's "powerful erotic effect on Braggadocchio" (83). Cain similarly blames Belpheobe for evoking "base lust from the unworthy" (59), but I argue that there is no hint offered by Spenser that she does this intentionally. Broadus approaches this differently:

In *The Faerie Queene* sexual attractiveness is a more useful term than beauty, because in Faeryland there is false as well as true beauty, both of which are attractive. And there are false psyches that respond to true beauty only as if it were mere sexual attractiveness, as with Braggadocchio's response to Belpheobe. (67)

In this case, Belpheobe's 'true beauty' is only sexually attractive due to Braggadocchio (and later Timias) being 'false psyches' that react improperly toward her.

Much has to do with the onlooker's eyes, the individual gazer's perception, as to whether beauty is perceived innocently or lustfully. On the other hand, as I also wish to stress in the case of Belphebe, the eye is a passive, receptive object and it is the mind of the voyeur that is responsible for interpreting the perceptions it receives.

An excellent example of this occurs in Satan's first sight of Eve in the Garden of Eden in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost*. Satan (the epitome of evil and the initiator of lust into the world) jealously witnesses her happiness and innocent existence with Adam and begins to plot the couple's downfall. Milton's manner of describing Eve's innocence, her ignorance of her own sensual power is important, since at this stage sin and the beastly lust associated with it have not yet entered Eden. Milton draws attention to Eve's golden, free-flowing, exuberant hair, a trademark of female sexuality in the Renaissance period, as Chapter One emphasized:

Shee as a vail down to the slender waste,
 Her unadorned golden tresses wore
 Dissheveld, but in wanton ringlets wav'd
 As the Vine curls her tendrils, which impli'd
 Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway,
 And by her yielded, by him best receivd,
 Yeilded with coy submission, modest pride,
 And sweet reluctant amorous delay.
 Nor those mysterious parts were then conceald,
 Then was not guiltie shame, dishonest shame
 Of natures works

(4. 304-314)

In this description, Milton places not Eve, but her hair as coy and lustful. This is not proving Eve is culpable, instead it is we as 'fallen' readers who recognize the wantonness, and both Spenser (in *The Faerie Queene*) and Milton identify and take advantage of this fact. For Milton, the term 'wanton' not only implies the innocent interpretation of a lack of restraint, as the OED describes as "free, unrestrained" (3. c), but also the movement into the more adverse form of that which is "lascivious, unchaste, lewd" (2. a). Milton exhibits Eve's hair as 'unadorned,' 'dishevelled,' 'wanton' and 'waved'; these terms suggest a note of wildness, of uncivilized passions, hence, uninhibited sensuality. The hairs' coyness in reference to the simile of the vine, presents Milton's view of an attractive female attitude to sex; that which teases, wavers and then yields, most importantly, yielding in the end.

Lowe recognizes that, in relation to female wantonness,

there is always something imperfect about the female body, which probably originates to a large extent in the biblical portrayal of Eve, the first woman, who represents the sensual, carnal and temptress-like nature of her sex, leading men to sin and unholy sexual relations. Eve's allure is her enticing beauty, which has lust at its basis.

(23)

Similarly, in the *Amoretti*, Spenser plays upon the theme of a heavenly beauty which inspires lust rather than ennobling the spirit of the male onlooker, but does not place the blame on beauty itself:

The souerayne beauty which I doo admyre,
 witnesse the world how worthy to be prayzed:
 the light wherof hath kindled heauenly fyre,
 in my fraile spirit by her from basenesse raysed.
 That being now with her huge brightnesse dazed,
 base thing I can no more endure to view:
 but looking still on her I stand amazed,
 at wondrous sight of so celestiaall hew.
 So when my tounge would speak her praises dew,
 it stopped is with thoughts astonishment:
 and when my pen would write her titles true,
 it rauisht is with fancies wonderment:
 Yet in my hart I then both speake and write
 the wonder that my wit cannot endite.
 (3)

In these lines, the lady's beauty works to elevate the poet from his 'base' position but at the same time restricts him as a writer. Therefore, while it may not be instigating beastly lust in him, it quells his power in the literary way.

Sidney, in *Astrophil and Stella*, recognizes only too well the problems which even angelic, innocent physical beauty causes. While Stella's grace and loveliness is seen to inspire him to write poetry in the first place (1), to appreciate her virtue and its aspiration toward an honourable form of chaste love, he recognizes at the same time that physical beauty, no matter how virtuous it appears, is fundamental in

its power to inspire lust, possession, sexual union with the object of beauty itself:

So while thy beauty draws the heart to love,
 As fast thy virtue bends that love to good
 But ah, desire still cries: 'Give me some food'
 (71)

Again, it depends on the onlooker. One filled with lust will recognize all beauty as a way of fulfilling base desires, as Braggadocchio does with Belpheobe. Belpheobe's association with Braggadocchio in *The Faerie Queene* is very much akin to the story of Diana and Actaeon, which appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The similarities are numerous – both Belpheobe and Diana are virgin huntresses besieged by a male figure that lusts after them. However, where Braggadocchio intentionally and physically attempts to assault Belpheobe, Actaeon's sin is merely one of voyeuristic lust.

In Ovid, Actaeon accidentally comes across Diana and her nymphs while wandering in her woodland valley, Gargaphie:

And when he entered the cool dripping grotto,
 The nymphs, all naked, saw him, saw a man,
 And beat their breasts and screamed, and all together
 Gathered around their goddess, tried to hide her
 With their own bodies, but she stood above them,
 Taller by head and shoulders. As the clouds
 Grow red at sunset, as the daybreak reddens,
 Diana blushed at being seen, and turned
 Aside a little from her close companions,
 Looked quickly for her arrows, found no weapon
 Except the water, but scooped up a handful

And flung it in the young man's face, and over
 The young man's hair. Those drops had vengeance in
 them.

She told him so: "Tell people you have seen me,
 Diana, naked! Tell them if you can!"

(3. 178-192)

Diana's reaction to seeing Actaeon is twofold; she is ashamed of her nakedness and blushes as well as angrily seeking vengeance for his intrusion on her privacy. However, unlike Belphebe who is able to thrust her boar spear at Braggadocchio and disappear, Diana is unable to secure a weapon immediately and instead flings water at Actaeon. It is water with a curse flowing through it, causing him to be transformed into a stag and, as a consequence, devoured by his own hounds (3. 139-141). Actaeon's crime is penetrating Diana's naked form with his eyes. When Diana's own eyes view Actaeon, she humbly tries to conceal her body, immediately conscious of the violating male gaze. As Vickers notes in direct relation to this moment in the story, "seeing is traumatic for both" (1982, 105). Davies adds, "eyes can 'feed' . . . the eye of the senses is a potentially lethal instrument of destruction, rape or contamination" (1986, 81), and Berry informs us that "in the Platonic tradition, sight was usually considered the highest of the senses, and so the least contaminated by man's animal nature" (137). Yet, in Ovid, sight is very much aligned with man's animal nature where both Actaeon and Diana are concerned. She does not interpret

his sight of her as anything other than a sexual violation and as a consequence feels exposed and vengeful. Actaeon must pay the price for seeing divinity naked, what Barkan refers to as "holy voyeurism" (1980, 321).

In his writings on the gaze, Lacan notices that

From the moment this gaze exists, I am already something other, in that I feel myself becoming an object for the gaze of others. But in this position, which is a reciprocal one, others also know that I am an object who knows himself to be seen. (215).

Lacan's interpretation of the gaze has important implications in Ovid's scene where Actaeon confronts Diana. From the moment his 'gaze exists,' Diana is 'something other' than a virginal goddess – she becomes the sexual 'object' for Actaeon's gaze, just as Belphebe does when she encounters Braggadocchio. Ovid reminds us that Diana is a goddess not only of chastity but also of the hunt, and thus by her action she reverses the position between the hunter and the hunted, as again Belphebe does in *The Faerie Queene* toward Braggadocchio. In the relationship that Belphebe has with Timias in Book 3 of the poem, this theme also exists, but it is extended.

Maccaffrey distinguishes between Braggadocchio (a false lover of Belphebe) as opposed to Timias (a true lover), but she acknowledges that despite their obvious differences, both are "capable

of recognizing and of responding to . . . an ideal of behaviour" (282), which is the virginity of Belpheobe. Braggadocchio's lust for Belpheobe is based on sight alone, whilst with Timias, it is a self-destructive lust which results from both the vision of her beauty and purity as well as the true love which he also experiences as a result of her compassion and service toward him whilst he is wounded.

In Timias' response to Belpheobe, I will extend on the thematic exploration of the hunter and the hunted and the Petrarchan and Neoplatonic philosophy that utilized the popular theme of female virtue. This was ideally viewed as leading men past the earthly realm of desire, of base sensuality and onto the spiritual path toward God. Belpheobe's friendship with Timias also later succeeds his sexual love for her.⁴ I argue that Spenser's purpose in this section of *The Faerie Queene* is to indirectly depict the historical, complex relationship that Elizabeth had with her courtiers in general; she desired them to woo her Platonically as a female beloved, while at the same time denying them sexual satisfaction and controlling their political power as she saw fit.⁵ As a result, this chapter will also explore what I regard as Belpheobe's emasculation of Timias, who suffers intensely for being denied availability to her as a lover.

Before meeting Belpheobe in the forest, Timias confronts three aggressive Fosters. Here, Timias is struck in the thigh with the dart of the second Foster:

Anone one sent out of the thicket neare
 A cruell shaft, headed with deadly ill,
 And feathered with an vn lucky quill;
 The wicked steele stayd not, till it did light
 In his left thigh, and deeply did it thrill:
 Exceeding grieffe that wound in him empight,
 But more that with his foes he could not come to fight.
 (3. 5. 20)

The lustful Foster who wounds Timias possesses "in his clownish hand a sharp bore speare" (3. 1. 17). This spear can be read as a phallic instrument, enabling the piercing (and sometimes death) of another through penetration. In Timias' case, the spear renders him physically inactive and consequently opens to the future aid of Belpheobe. In his editorial notes within *The Faerie Queene*, Hamilton notes that the 'habergeon,' a sleeveless coat of mail, is associated with virtue and especially with chastity and is worn by Timias when the lustful Foster wounds him (Spenser, 1990, 355). Strangely enough, when Timias is wounded by his love for Belpheobe the habergeon is removed from his body, which I suggest as indicative that Belpheobe invokes more lust than the lustful Foster himself; the virtue of chastity is one which Timias is less likely to withhold when affected by Belpheobe's sensual (although virginal) presence.

Berger understands Spenser's displacement of allegory in Timias' wound in the following manner:

weapons and wounds are always potentially significant as double displacements in Spenser's allegorical force field: they can symbolize either the effects of Cupid or the impotence produced by penetration, which places the male victim in the position men assign to woman. (1989, 228)

It must be remembered that Belpheobe also carries a boar spear, and while hers is not used to penetrate Timias in any way, it is her virginal presence and the lust that ensues from Timias toward her that renders him impotent to Belpheobe in a variety of ways. I argue that Belpheobe's connection with Timias is one where traditional male and female positions of power are reversed, where Belpheobe emasculates Timias metaphorically in a way that limits his abilities to actualize his desires toward her (because she is a virgin and because she is socially superior to him). He becomes passive to her, her 'victim,' rather than the other way around.

Griffin notices, "when a woman steps out of the sphere of passivity, when she becomes too active, she endangers the men around her" (46). Indeed, Spenser displays Belpheobe's virginity in the poem as all-powerful rather than passive – a challenge to Timias' masculinity (just as it was to Braggadocchio's). As Berger recognizes in his

analysis of Belphoebe and her situation with the wounded Timias when she first finds him,

the danger of her entrapment in an unwanted (or at least unlooked for) erotic encounter remains. Her problem, indeed, her function in the poem, is to represent woman's autonomy, her rights over her own sexuality, by imposing constraints on male desire. It is a problem because in order to demonstrate this power, she has to arouse male desire, and this is also her function. (1989, 230)

The two functions which Berger interprets Belphoebe possessing in *The Faerie Queene* are contradictory yet accurate; to 'arouse male desire' in order to demonstrate her sensual power, and, at the same time, to deny the actualization of that desire through constraint in an attempt to display her autonomy, her right and power to dictate her own sexuality as one which is chaste, summarizes Belphoebe's paradoxical position in the poem exactly. If she were unable to arouse male desire because of her virginity, I argue, then this would be seen as a poetic insult to Elizabeth. Therefore, it is through the dichotomies of arousal and denial that Spenser, through Belphoebe, offers the most provocative form of praise to Elizabeth's femininity, a femininity which is reflected in Belphoebe as autonomous, all powerful and all too desirable in its inability to be possessed. For this reason, Mallette views Timias' lust for Belphoebe as one that can offer him no remedy through sex or marriage and as a consequence, must remain fuelled,

frustrated desire (102-105). This chapter is interested in addressing the consequences of such a rendering of Belpheobe's character in the poem, not only in regard to the character of Timias, but also in Spenser's portrayal of virginity as a force which cannot exist as only spiritual and innocent without also being understood as earthly, predatory and emasculating.

It is while she is pursuing an injured beast in the forest that Belpheobe first encounters the wounded Timias, following his defeat of the three Fosters, as he lays "wallowd all in his owne gore" (3. 5. 26):

She on a day, as she pursewd the chace
Of some wild beast, which with her arrowes keene
She wounded had, the same along did trace
By tract of bloud, which she had freshly seene,
To haue besprinckled all the grassy greene;
By the great persue, which she there perceau'd,
Well hoped she the beast engor'd had beene,
And made more hast, the life to haue bereau'd:
But ah, her expectation greatly was deceau'd.
(3. 5. 28)

Belpheobe mistakes Timias for a beast that she has recently wounded, just as she previously mistook Braggadocchio as her wounded hind. She wishes the beast to be penetrated with her phallic arrows, revealing both a metaphorically sexual and aggressive aspect of her character, the reversal of a masculine desire to see the female deflowered. Belpheobe rushes to see if it is dead and is disappointed to notice that Timias has replaced her beast. In stanza 28 of Book 3, *she*

pursues, she wounds, she sees. Spenser supplies Belpheobe's characterization with masculine verbs which signifies her active position in what appears here as an amorous pursuit.

De Rougemont focuses on the military language of love, which was strongly influenced by the military tactic terminology of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Western Europe. De Rougemont uses the metaphors of war to describe the order and affects of natural love; women surrendering and men conquering women:

A lover *besieged* his lady. He delivered *amorous assaults* on her virtue. He *pressed her closely*. He *pursued* her. He sought to *overcome* the final *defences* of her modesty, and *to take them by surprise*. In the end the lady *surrendered to his mercy*. And thereupon, by a curious inversion typical enough of courtesy, he became the lady's *prisoner* as well as her *conqueror*. (244)

Similarly, in the following stanza from *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser uses active terminology to describe Belpheobe, as opposed to the passive terms that he employs to portray the ailing Timias:

Shortly *she came*, whereas that woefull Squire
With bloud *deformed*, lay in deadly swownd:
In whose faire eyes, like lamps of *quenched* fire,
The Cristall humour stood *congealed* rownd;
His locks, like *faded* leaues *fallen* to grownd,
Knotted with bloud, in bouches rudely ran,
And his sweete lips, on which before that stownd
The *bud* of youth to *blossome* faire began,
Spoild of their *rosie red*, were *woxen pale and wan*.
(3. 5. 29, italics mine)

It is Belphebe who actively 'comes' upon Timias whilst he in turn 'lies' in a swoon approaching death itself. Timias has been drained of life before meeting Belphebe – 'woefull,' 'deformed,' 'quenched,' 'congealed,' 'faded,' 'pale' and 'wan,' all suggest the loss of life, of blood. The 'rose red' simile is also bestowed on Timias here – 'bud,' 'blossom,' 'rosie,' reflect him as being, metaphorically, an image of a defiled virgin, lying in his own blood, sucked of life and robbed of the flower of purity, not unlike the dying Adonis.

This aspect likens Belphebe to Venus, in the latter's association with the wounded Adonis. Spenser introduces the story of Adonis in *The Faerie Queene* through the tapestries in the Castle Joyeous in Book 3, which detail the story of the hunt (3. 1. 34-38). In stanza 38, the wounded Adonis, pierced by the tusks of a boar, becomes analogous to the wounded Timias. Here, Adonis' description can be symbolically read as being a post-coital one:

Lo, where beyond he lyeth languishing,
 Deadly engored of a great wild Bore,
 And by his side the Goddesse groueling
 Makes for him endlesse mone, and euermore
 With her soft garments wipes away the gore,
 Which staines his snowy skin with hatefull hew:
 But when she saw no helpe might him restore,
 Him to a dainty flowre she did transmew,
 Which in that cloth was wrought, as if it liuely grew.⁶
 (3. 1. 38)

Prior to Adonis' death, Venus in *The Faerie Queene* covers him with night, an almost maternal image as she puts him to sleep. Venus uses both her eyes and flowers to seduce Adonis in a similar manner to which Belphoebe later uses herbs to cure the wounded Timias:

And whilst he slept, she ouer him would spred
 Her mantle, colour'd like the starry skyes,
 And her soft arme lay vnderneath his hed,
 And with ambrosiall kisses bathe his eyes;
 And whilest he bath'd, with her two crafty spyes,
 She secretly would search each daintie lim,
 And throw into the well sweet Rosemaryes,
 And fragrant violets, and Pances trim,
 And euer with sweet Nectar she did sprinkle him.

(3. 1. 36)

Also like Belphoebe toward Timias, Venus does "steale his heedlesse hart away" (3. 1. 37).

When Venus looks on the body of the dying Adonis, the scene in Shakespeare's version of the story is comparable to Belphoebe looking at Timias' wounded body in *The Faerie Queene*, which will soon be shown, with the power of the gaze being a prominent feature in both texts:

Upon his hurt she looks so steadfastly
 That her sight, dazzling, makes the wound seem three;
 And then she reprehends her mangling eye,
 That makes more gashes where no breach should be.
 His face seems twain; each several limb is doubled;
 For oft the eye mistakes, the brain being troubled.

'My tongue cannot express my grief for one,
 And yet,' quoth she, 'behold two Adons dead!

My sighs are blown away, my salt tears gone,
 Mine eyes are turned to fire, my heart to lead.
 Heavy heart's lead, melt at mine eyes' red fire!
 So shall I die by drops of hot desire.
 (1063-1074)

This episode from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* can be psychoanalytically related to Freud's essay, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," which focuses on the sexual instincts; "the *reversal* of an instinct into its *opposite*" (69), a shift from activity to passivity. Freud adds that the instincts of sadism/masochism and voyeurism/exhibitionism consist of "the passive aim (to be tortured, or looked at) [which have] been substituted for the active aim (to torture, to look at)" (70).

Belpheobe's first impression of Timias is as follows, and we should note the emphasis which Spenser places on the power of her gaze, a feature of Belpheobe's sensual and at the same time annihilating power examined earlier in this thesis – she later actively tortures him with her gaze, but here she compassionately observes Timias in his pitiful, passive state:

Saw neuer liuing eye more heauy sight,
 That could haue made a rocke of stone to rew,
 Or riue in twaine: which when that Lady bright
 Besides all hope with melting eyes did vew,
 All suddeinly abasht she chaunged hew,
 And with sterne horror backward gan to start:
 But when she better him beheld, she grew
 Full of soft passion and vnwonted smart:

The point of pitty perced through her tender hart.
(3. 5. 30)

Belpheobe's links with Shakespeare's Venus are numerous. Both Shakespeare and Spenser focus on the gazes of Venus and Belpheobe; each is given voyeuristic control over a male which is either dead or half-dead, hence, helplessly passive and unthreatening. Venus' steadfast sight of Adonis' wound disturbs her so much that it actually alters her vision, her 'mangling eye' is turned to 'red fire,' so instigated by desire is she as well as by the disturbing scene of death before her. Likewise, Belpheobe's sight of the wounded Timias fills her 'full of soft passion and unwonted smart,' her 'melting eyes' also struggling to clarify the scene before her as she 'better him beheld.'

Belpheobe manifests the power of the gaze, where Timias in contrast has lost his power to see – his eyes are instead 'congealed,' while hers are 'luing'; 'sight,' 'melting eyes,' 'vew' and 'beheld' are all verbs which Spenser has given to Belpheobe in this stanza. Where one possesses active power, the other is obliged to be passive, lacking in that power. In the relationship between Timias and Belpheobe, this gaze is a predictor of their association in the scenes that follow, implying that Belpheobe is the one in control, he is the one controlled by her, especially in regard to his desire for her. However, as I also wish to stress, this stanza emphasizes that Belpheobe is not unfeeling,

that she can also be penetrated, as Timias is, and wounded with pity. Unlike Hankins (149), I argue that Belpheobe's "stedfast chastity" (3. 5. 55) does not prevent her being immune to romantic love, as do Cheney and Millar. Cheney states that when Belpheobe first sees Timias, she is "initially aroused erotically" (1993, 127), whilst Miller reads this particular moment in the poem as a time when "her pity for him takes on erotic power" (225). Indeed, Belpheobe's change of bearing turns from aggression to tenderness through 'pity' – I stress that pity piercing her heart is quite a phallic image, as Petrarch shows in the following image of Laura's penetrating and dangerous phallic eyes in *The Canzoniere*: "I fear so that attack of lovely eyes/in which Love and my death both make their home" (39. 1-2).

Similarly, in the *Epithilamion*, Spenser writes:

But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her liuely spright,
Garnisht with heauenly guifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,
And stand astonisht lyke to those which red
Medusaes mazeful hed.

(185-190)

Ovid's Medusa, possessing snakes instead of flowing golden hair, is hideous as well as deadly to the human eye, for "the forms of men and beasts, made stone/By one look at Medusa's face" (4. 781-782). Relative to this aspect of the Medusa, Berger writes, "Belpheobe

will admit the male into her charmed circle only as her victim, patient, or servant" (1989, 251). This description seems to introduce her rather mystical aspect, almost one of witchcraft, as Belpheobe tends to Timias like a physician in her effort to cure him. She feels his pulse, holds up his head, rubs his temples, undoes his chain mail and removes his helmet to further comfort him. Then she searches for herbs in the wood to cure Timias, later mixing them, applying and binding them to his wound (3. 5. 32-33):

Meekely she bowed downe, to weete if life
 Yet in his frosen members did remaine,
 And feeling by his pulses beating rife,
 That the weake soule her seat did yet retaine,
 She cast to comfort him with busie paine:
 His double folded necke she reard vpright,
 And rubd his temples, and each trembling vaine;
 His mayled haberieon she did vndight,
 And from his head his heauy burganet did light.
 (3. 5. 31)

Belpheobe, in so nursing Timias' wound, acts, in Gilbert's view, "like a surgeon, not a lover" (633). Doing so, however, Belpheobe succeeds in restoring Timias' life and alternately stimulates his desire toward her as one of a lover rather than a mere nurse:

By this he had sweete life recur'd againe,
 And groning inly deepe, at last his eyes,
 His watry eyes, drizling like deawy raine,
 He vp gan lift toward the azure skies,
 From whence descend all hopelesse remedies:
 Therewith he sigh'd, and turning him aside,
 The goodly Mayd full of diuinities,

And gifts of heauenly grace he by him spide,
 Her bow and gilden quiuer lying him beside.
 (3. 5. 34)

This stanza stresses Belpheobe's double nature as both maiden and celestial goddess. Her bow and quiver lying beside Timias when he awakens, I argue, are symbolic of the fact that he is about to be captured and conquered again as the prey of another:

Into that forest farre they thence him led,
 Where was their dwelling, in a pleasant glade,
 With mountaines round about enuironed,
 And mighty woods, which did the valley shade,
 And like a stately Theatre it made,
 Spreading it selfe into a spacious plaine.
 And in the midst a little riuier plaide
 Emongst the pumy stones, which seemd to plaine
 With gentle murmure, that his course they did restraine.
 (3. 5. 39)

Hamilton (Spenser, 1990, 352) likens this stanza to the detail in the Bower of Bliss, where water falling over pumice stones seductively lulls the unaware visitor to sleep:

And fast beside, there trickled softly downe
 A gentle streame, whose murmuring waue did play
 Emongst the pumy stones, and made a sowne,
 To lull him soft a sleepe
 (2. 5. 30)

Acrasia, an evil, lustful witch presiding over the Bowre of Blisse, allows Verdant to forget glory and put aside his armour and shield while imprisoned in her enchantments; "in lewd loves, and wastefull

luxuree,/His dayes, his goods, his bodie he did spend" (2. 12. 80). While there are vast differences between Acrasia and Belpheobe, the seductive power they share is destructive, even though with Acrasia that force is intentional and lecherous rather than unintentional and chaste.

Hamilton understands that the central difference between Acrasia and Belpheobe is "the rejection of sexual love or its abuse" (Spenser, 1990, 299). Passion does not transform to matrimonial love with them, but remains frustrated, festering, and in this sense also abused. As Spenser informs us:

that Enchaunteresse,
The vile *Acrasia*, that with vaine delightes,
And idle pleasures in her *Bowre of Blisse*,
Does charme her louers
(2. 5. 27)

On Belpheobe's distorted mirroring of Acrasia, Mallette regards Acrasia as "a demonic parody of Belpheobe . . . for Timias, struggling with desire, Belpheobe is both protector and seducer – the former willingly, the latter unknowingly and inevitably. The result is his simultaneous rescue and incapacitation" (104). However, as stated earlier, Belpheobe is made more dangerous by virtue of her virginity, which draws the onlooker into believing her innocent and then consumes him in her powerful sensuality, which is at once both sexual

and majestic. In this sense, Belphoebe, like the traditional Petrarchan mistress, at once both chaste and sensual, arouses a desire which cannot be properly placed as either celestial or sexual, but is associated with both features, and is thus the cause of the male subject's frustration. Braggadocchio's attack on her arises because of this, and the danger which Belphoebe transmits is made explicit in the episode with Timias, who, unlike Acrasia's lovers, is not paralysed, but lives in conflict with himself, unable to actualize his desires for Belphoebe and also unable to transcend them.

Spenser fashions the seductive guise of an alluring, beautiful, yet overtly chaste 'meeke' lady in the *Amoretti*:

Was it the worke of nature or of Art?
 which tempred so the feature of her face:
 that pride and meeknesse mixt by equall part,
 doe both appeare t'adorne her beauties grace.
 For with mild pleasance, which doth pride displace,
 she to her loves doth lookers eyes allure:
 and with sterne countenance back again doth chace
 their looser lookes that stir up lustes impure.
 With such strange termes her eyes she doth inure,
 that with one looke she my life dismay:
 and with another doth it streight recure;
 her smile me drawes, her frowne me drives away.
 Thus doth she traine and teach me with her lookes,
 such art of eyes I never read in bookes.

(21)

The female here sonnet controls admirers' looks through her chaste virtue; voyeurism is an instrument of her power because she knows she

can stimulate others. Her 'sterne countenance' encourages them not to gaze on her as an object of lust, which they initially do. The lady is given the power to please by abandoning herself, and the power to displease by denying sexual favour. All this she does through her gaze toward the end of the sonnet, reversing the role given to her at the beginning; that is, an object of desire. With her eyes, she also surveys and controls the persona himself, training and teaching him through her awareness of the male tendency to voyeurism. Spenser, in the first two lines, is puzzled about where to place the blame for the woman's attractiveness, lying either with nature or false art. The connection in this sonnet between nature and art, between the power of beauty and the lust it arouses which later control the actions of the persona in the *Amoretti*, is figured in *The Faerie Queene* predominantly through Spenser's presentation of Acrasia and her Bower of Bliss in Book 2. Both are portrayed as initially beautiful. However, their capacity for inciting spiritual corruption in others is inherent in their physical attraction. This corruption arises from the fact that the Bower is an artistic copy, a perversion of natural forces, and its healthy appearance being achieved by Acrasia's witchcraft rather than by nature itself. Spenser often portrays sensuality as dangerous, and thus, at the end of Book 2, the Bower of Bliss is destroyed to demonstrate that society must suppress sterile lust. Acrasia's Bower uses and manipulates

nature as attractive in order to ruin men rather than exalt them. As a consequence, Wells regards Acrasia as Belpheobe's "antithesis" due to the former's destructive effect on her lovers (68). Belpheobe's undefiled sexuality, because it is outwardly portrayed as unavailable, is nevertheless a dominant part of her chaste virtue and beauty. As will be argued, Belpheobe is far from being Acrasia's 'antithesis.' In fact, both share the fiendish gift of seductiveness: Belpheobe proves herself destructive to Timias, the man who loves her, by (even unintentionally) charming him with her virtue and inciting his lust for her. The paradox lies in the fact that Timias recognizes Belpheobe arising from a bower of her own when he first sees her. This aspect marks her main similarity to Acrasia, the symbolic connection she has with the Bowre of Bliss by Timias, particularly in its verbal identity where it seems delightful but is in actuality dangerous:

Mercy deare Lord (said he) what grace is this,
 That thou hast shewed to me sinfull wight,
 To send thine Angell from her bowre of blis,
 To comfort me in my distressed plight?
 (3. 5. 35)

Belpheobe is ironically given the role of an angel of mercy in these lines, sent on a mission to aid Timias' physical injuries while at the same time inflicting emotional, sensually damaging injuries upon him. While it may be argued that Belpheobe's 'bowre of blis' is here

predicated upon the celestial rather than the sensual sphere, the latter feature certainly does present itself to Timias.⁷

Berger (1989, 230) regards Belpheobe's inviolability as the construction of male desire, provoking desire in order to later deny it and Berleth adds that "though she is as chaste as the Rosa mystica (3. 5. 51), her encounter with Timias is latently sexual" (479). This is because, as Hinton acknowledges, "Timias wants more from Belpheobe than medicine" (170). Belpheobe cares for Timias and dresses his wounds every day, and she "his foule sore reduced to faire plight:/It she reduced, but himselfe destroyed quight" (3. 5. 41). In these lines it appears that she purposefully harms Timias rather than he destroying himself through his passion for her:

O foolish Physick, and vnfruitfull paine,
That heales vp one and makes another wound:
She his hurt thigh to him recur'd againe,
But hurt his hart, the which before was sound,
Through an vnwary dart, which did rebound
From her faire eyes and gracious countenaunce.
What bootes it him from death to be vnbound,
To be captiued in endlesse durance
Of sorrow and despaire without aleggeaunce?⁸
(3. 5. 42)

Timias is seized by his desire for Belpheobe, helpless in a power, which appears greater than his own. Timias' wound and his inability to voice it speak of his repressed longing, his body left without interpretation, his wound is a place where meaning collapses because

Belphoebe cannot hear his desire actualized in words, thus further emphasizing that he is purely in a feminized, passive person at her hands. These forces work at the unconscious level. Timias becomes wounded, while Belphoebe is on the trail of her prey (a hog). She comes across Timias instead. This initiates a mode of displacement in the narrative. Pity pierces her tender heart and she heals his physical wound, yet the more she tries to heal him, the more ill, love-sick, lustful he becomes.

With Timias, we have, as I want to argue, the idea of the lover being transformed into the state of lust, and Belphoebe's affinity with lust is evident in Timias' response to her. I am not suggesting here that Belphoebe unconsciously lusts for Timias after finding and healing him, but that Belphoebe possesses an interesting relationship with the allegorical significance of lust in the poem. The analytic aspect of allegory is important here, where the attribute of lust is made distinctly visible and prominent in Spenser's narrative at just the right moment. Here it is Timias who is figured as the victim of an erotic chase. One may argue that Timias makes a lustful object of Belphoebe because she appears at just the precise time in the narrative when he has just been wounded by the lustful Foster, and thus requires an object upon which to precipitate his own passion. Yet it must be noted that the Foster who wounds Timias represents what is primitive, beastly. The Foster, in

personifying the savage power of lust, is defeated by Timias who, however, is also vulnerable to this force of lust, which is symbolized not only by his wounded thigh (as Adonis also is), but by his immediate encounter with Belpheobe thereafter. In this way, Belpheobe can be regarded as the secondary initiator of Timias' lust, even though, literally, the concept of her virginity stands opposed to the physical passion which lust represents. Williams contributes to this theme by adding, "the poet focuses our attention by making a broad expository or exclamatory generalization preceding an important encounter" (1969, 135). Similarly, Maccaffrey in *Spenser's Allegory*, interprets the allegory of the poem in this manner, by offering an example of how the sequence works in relation to the Redcrosse Knight. He encounters Despair just as he is about to plummet into the state of despair, at the point in his career when the attribute manifests itself as significant to his growth, his experiences. In *The Faerie Queene*, Maccaffrey recognizes, the characters meet allegorical figures or one another at a time that is the most convenient to their states of being. This process can be exemplified in Timias' meeting the object of desire in Belpheobe after the lustful Foster has wounded him. Hamilton adds that Timias' wound by the Foster's boar spear is significant, since "the beast she has wounded is Timias who has overcome Lust but is himself wounded. His wound may be cured only by 'devouring' her virginity,

which she refuses him" (162). Belpheobe's presence arouses extreme forms of desire within the squire, which he must constantly battle with in order to preserve her dignity. At the same time, lingering in the background, is the faint glimmer of hope, hope for a consummation of love, and as a consequence, the end of the romance narrative as a whole. Thus, Timias' blocking of desire instigates his constant wish-fulfilment for a satisfied desire, a feature that is constantly regurgitated within the poem.

This demonstrates the ways in which love, through Spenser's narrative, can be properly understood as being a credible wound of sensual desire. In Timias, this wound is manifested outwardly in the thigh, symbolized by the lustful Foster, responsible for inflicting it, a wound that I read metaphorically as a transferred signifier of the heart. The male thigh in the Bible represents the genitals (not the heart) as the navel does for the vagina in women. Jerome, in his letter to Eustochium, refers to the male sexual organ being symbolized by the thigh through relevant biblical passages. Jerome mentions that the term is "used for decency's sake, but the male . . . generative organs are meant" (77). One such example occurs in Job, which describes the seventy-five people who entered Egypt as propagating from Jacob's 'thigh.' Jerome notes, "when after wrestling with the Lora the stoutness of his thigh shrank away Jacob begat no more children" (77).

Similarly, De Troyes' wounded Fisher King in *Perceval*, maimed by a javelin in each of his thighs, fishes "and takes his pleasure in this way because it would be quite impossible for him to bear or put up with any other sport" (420). The wounded thigh being a displaced symbol of the wounded phallus implies that a man cannot perform sexually and has another symbolic reference to Timias' feminized, passive position.

Though Timias' wounded thigh is no longer fatal as a consequence of Belpheobe's healing, his insanity is beginning in stanza 44 as a result of his internal wound of desire for the virgin:

Still as his wound did gather, and grow hole,
 So still his hart woxe sore, and health decayd:
 Madnesse to saue a part, and lose the whole.
 Still whenas he beheld the heauenly Mayd,
 Whiles dayly plaisters to his wound she layd,
 So still his Malady the more increast,
 The whiles her matchlesse beautie him dismayd.
 Ah God, what other could he do at least,
 But loue so faire a Lady, that his life releast?
 (3. 5. 43)

Belpheobe's emasculating affect on Timias is highlighted through Spenser's description of him as her prey – prone and passive. Timias' physical injury grows 'hole,' healed due to Belpheobe's charitable aid, while his metaphorical wound of love festers and becomes infected because it cannot be healed through the consummation of his physical yearning for the virgin.⁹ This scene depicts love as a genuine wound,

manifested outwardly in the thigh. The levels of Spenser's rhetoric are being cleverly folded and unfolded here, demonstrating the transforming power of language over the reader's imagination. In this sense, it is Belpheobe's 'wholeness,' which sadistically initiates the process of Timias' 'holeness'; her virginity is responsible for festering his wound of unsatisfied lust for her. It is a relationship that strongly exemplifies domination and submission. Belpheobe has power in restoring Timias' physical health, controlling his emotional behaviour, as well as his right to life itself. Consequently, this process leads Timias to masochistically torture himself. Dasenbrock notes that Petrarchanism consists of

an inequality of power and an inequality of desire . . . the dominant partner is the one who can live without the other. Chastity thus becomes a weapon in a struggle for power, not a disinterested virtue, and the chastity created by Petrarchanism – as we have seen time and time again – is simply a form of repression that leads to being enthralled by lust. (38)

Dasenbrock refers directly to Belpheobe and Timias here, viewing their relationship involving power and dominion; one is master and the other a slave. It is Belpheobe, by virtue of her virginity, which is given the role of the 'dominant,' the domineering partner.

In the *Amoretti*, the persona admires his beloved's virtue, a virtue mingled with her sadistic domination:

The love which me so cruelly tormenteth,
 So pleasing is in my extreamest paine:
 that all the more my sorrow it augmenteth,
 the more I loue and dce embrace my bane.
 Ne doe I wish (for wishing were but vaine)
 to be acquit from my continuall smart:
 but ioy her thrall for euer to remayne,
 and yield for pledge my poore captuyed hart;
 The which that it from her may neuer start,
 let her, yf please her, bynd with adamant chayne:
 and from all wandring loues which mote peruart,
 his safe assurance strongly it restrayne.
 Onely let her abstaine from cruelty,
 and doe me not before my time to dy.
 (42)

The woman's resistance functions in reaction to male desire, allowing his discourse of lament intermingled with praise to continue. Here, the woman is principally manifested as a hostile presence. With Belpheobe and Timias, Spenser stresses the degradation of men when they are consumed by passion. He is interested in the human body and in the desires and the powers of the body, the physical aspect of love and its consequences on the body itself, metaphorically as well as physically. In Timias, this is displayed in a physical form, in a manner that borders on the obsessive. Belpheobe, paradoxically, makes his wounds even worse by tending them. Here, desire feeds on deprivation; desire is predicated on the absence of physical satisfaction.

In the relationship that Belpheobe shares with Timias, virginity adopts several variant aspects. It is imaged both as a virtue and as a

sensual attraction, which must be sublimated to spiritual heights in order to be internally controlled by the male subject. Yet, the struggle to achieve this position in Petrarchan poetry and for Timias is a difficult one. Sidney exemplifies this in *Astrophil and Stella*: "A strife is growne betweene *Vertue* and *Love*, /While each pretends that *Stella* must be his" . . . "let *Vertue* have that *Stella's* selfe; yet thus,/That *Vertue* but that body graunt to us" (52. 1-2). Sidney also makes the following declaration toward desire:

Desire, though thou my old companion art,
And oft so clings to my pure Love, that I
One from the other scarcely can descrie,
While each doth blow the fier of my hart
(72. 1-4)

Likewise, desire in *The Faerie Queene* (like that of Timias for Belphoebe, which is manifested as a wound of love) is an appetite, predicated on the constant lack of satisfaction, as De Rougemont mentions in *Passion and Society*:

Sexual instincts are manifested as a hunger, and this hunger, like that for food, tends to obtain satisfaction at any cost. The more ravenous, the more indiscriminate it becomes. But the passion of the myth is compelled by its very nature to reject satisfaction. (141)

In Book 19 of *Orlando Furioso*, Ariosto shows Angelica healing and later marrying Medoro, in a sequence that is not entirely dissimilar

from Spenser's depiction of Belpheobe's relationship with Timias.¹⁰ Following Medoro's clash with a knight, Zerbino, Medoro lies bleeding in the breast as a result of a staff wound, but is later found and saved by Angelica. This description of her is remarkably similar to Belpheobe's blazon in Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*:

For loe, a darnsell came, though meanely clad
 In shepheards weeds, yet fresh and faire of favour,
 And such a one as in those base clothes had
 A shew of princely birth and hie behaviour.
 She finding him lie there in case so bad
 Did think it charitie to be his saviour.
 (19. 12)

Like Belpheobe, Angelica is moved to pity when she sees Medoro and uses her skill in the juices of herbs and flowers to revive and heal him. However, it is she who becomes filled with the heat of love for Medoro:

For while she heald his wound, another dart
 Did wound her thoughts and hye conceits so deep
 As now therewith was ravisht her proud hart,
 Possessing it although she wake or sleepe.
 Her wound to heale there was no herbe nor art,
 For more and more like flame the same doth creep;
 Yet her chiefe care is him to helpe and cure
 That all this torment doth to her procure.
 (19. 22)

While Medoro regains his vitality, Angelica, like Timias for Belpheobe, is tormented by lust, but Ariosto (unlike Spenser), marries the pair soon after Medoro's wounds have healed completely:

She suffers poore *Medoro* take the flowre
 Which many sought, but none had yet obtained,
 That fragrant rose that to that present houre
 Ungathered was, behold *Medoro* gained;
 And over her to give him perfite powre,
 With sacred rites a marriage was ordained,
 And with the vaile of this so sacred order
 She covers this her folly and disorder.
 (19. 25)

In *Hali Meidenhad*, the loss of virginity is absolute, a tragedy which in symbolic terms signifies a loss of selfhood, since "maidenhood is that treasure that, if it be once lost, will never again be found. Maidenhood is the bloom that, if it be once fully cut off, never again sprouteth up" (14). In relation to this, Donato notes, "the logic of desire that governs Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is such that there cannot be a successful resolution of amorous relationships. The moment Angelica marries Medoro she becomes irrelevant to the poem and disappears" (38). It is for this reason, I argue, that Spenser does not allow Belphebe the freedom to manifest desire for Timias as Angelica does for Medoro. To do so would not only diminish her as a symbol of virginity in *The Faerie Queene*, but also render virginity's power earthly and limited rather than timeless and universal. It would also minimize Elizabeth's own position as the focus of virginal praise and inspiration for the poem as a whole. Unlike Ariosto's version, 'the logic of desire' which governs Spenser's treatment of the relationship

between Belpheobe and Timias is that desire does not submit to consummation in order to thrive. Indeed, according to the Petrarchan inspiration from which Spenser fashions *The Faerie Queene*, unsatisfied desire is a continual theme, fuelled not only by Belpheobe, but almost all the other characters in the poem as well. Spenser treats consummated desire as conclusive, unquenched desire as powerful, perpetual, and the two kinds of treatment toward desire and love are clarified in Book 3:

Wonder it is to see, in diuerse minds,
 How diuersly loue doth his pageants play,
 And shewes his powre in variable kinds:
 'The baser wit, whose idle thoughts alway
 Are wont to cleaue vnto the lowly clay,
 It stirreth vp to sensuall desire,
 And in lewd slouth to wast his carelesse day:
 But in braue sprite it kindles goodly fire,
 That to all high desert and honour doth aspire.
 (3. 5. 1)

This stanza stresses the effect of love on different natures; base nature treats it as lust, while honourable nature uses it for noble deeds. In this way lust is a state of mind, dependent on the very nature of the person whom it affects. 'Sensual desire' and 'goodly fire' are both heated images of a flame, which burns either for self-destruction or worship for constant virginity.

In Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Isabella makes it clear that she prefers death to the loss of her virginity. She possesses a rigid

chastity, beauty alongside spiritual goodness, and both have tempted

Angelo:

Most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue. Never could the strumpet,
With all her double vigour – art and nature –
Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid
Subdues me quite.

(2. 2. 186-191)

This stresses the power of virginity over its lustful admirers. As Knight recognizes in regard to Isabella's influence on Angelo's human instinct: "Angelo has not been overcome with evil. He has been ensnared by good . . . exquisitely symbolized in his love of Isabella: the hook is baited with a saint" (42).

On Belphebe's similarity with Isabella, Watkins points out that "Spenser reveals a certain harshness and intolerance in Belphebe's response to the hopeless passion of Timias; like Isabella, she learns greater sympathy and understanding" (50-51). Despite this sympathy and understanding, Belphebe does not surrender herself to Timias' passion for her. Instead, Belphebe exists in *The Faerie Queene* partly, as Quilligan observes, "to define the queen's erotic power as unpossessable woman" (1983, 182). I would add that Elizabeth's historical influence enforces the political aspect of that virginal power

as mingled with eroticism. Villeponteaux reads this aspect as a problematic one:

Belphoebe's role seems to suggest a specific and powerful paradox that underlies Elizabeth's eroticization of political power — a contradiction in the terms of desire. Belphoebe's presence both demands desire and forbids it, as does Elizabeth's, and in both political and psychosexual terms, this denial of desire has disturbing implications for Elizabeth's male subjects, just as it does for Belphoebe's devoted squire, Timias. (1993, 32-33)

The repercussions of Elizabeth's denial of desire toward her male subjects will be explored in later chapters where I will discuss Elizabeth's virginal and marriageable state in religious, political and 'psychosexual' terms. In this chapter, Belphoebe's denial of Timias' desire for her also illustrates another common and important theme in sixteenth-century literature: male anxiety toward active female sexuality. With many of his female characters (Hellenore, Duessa, Acrasia) Spenser displays a fear of predatory female sexuality. This is part of the reason, I want to claim, why chastity and virginity are so emphasized in *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser is trying to be a spokesman for his society, to fashion women who can be controlled, and who most importantly have self-control over their own passions, their own bodies, regardless of the desire they instil in those around them. As a consequence, despite Spenser's praise and celebration of Belphoebe's virginal virtue, her seductive beauty and apparent ignorance of his lust

toward her causes a breakdown in Timias' emotions, in himself.¹¹ Because of this ignorance, Alpers blames Belpheobe for being "an unsatisfactory image of human erotic desire. Just to say this indicates the reason: Belpheobe has no erotic desires. At just the point where virginity becomes truly heroic – that is, when the ideal defines the personality – erotic desire is eliminated" (390). Also, Berger notes that "Alpers argues that if Belpheobe "is an unsatisfactory image of human erotic desire," it is because she "has no erotic desire" (1989, 254), but I argue that this remark misses the point, for if Belpheobe is 'unsatisfactory' as a personification of eroticism it must be because she arouses and then frustrates desire rather than consummating it, *not* because she is *inadequately portrayed* as an object of erotic desire by Spenser in the poem.

Cheney describes Belpheobe's virginity in *The Faerie Queene* as the reason for her being "unconsciously a type of the cruel mistress" in her refusal to grant Timias sexual favour: "from the viewpoint of Timias she possesses a gift which can restore him, one which her self-willed virginity denies to the world" (1966, 102). In Cheney's eyes, Belpheobe's virginity marks her as an object of praise, which mirrors the virgin state of the Queen, but at the same time is a state that places her in a position of ignorant sadism in her relationship with the wounded Timias. Scarry questions, "how is it that one person can be in

the presence of another person in pain and not know it – not know it to the point where he himself inflicts it, and goes on inflicting it?" (12).

As Timias suffers rejection his broken heart is, I want to claim, substituted for Belphoebe's unbroken hymen. The virgin body in literature is a sealed vessel, sacred because it has not been soiled by any man, but, as I also add, sacred because it is seen as an image of wholeness, autonomy, by specific reference to the hymen. The hymen presents a challenge to masculinity, but demands protection at the same time. This description represents a strong exchange between the wounder and the wounded, the prey and the hunter; one is always obliged to reconsider which is which. Broaddus reminds us that

Both Belphoebe's choice of the virgin life of the hunt and her desirability are at heart sexual, the energy for her strenuous life being a product of her sublimated sexuality. These two motifs – virginity as an expression of the generative powers and beauty as the moving force to love – cause Belphoebe's physical beauty and her potentiality for the sexual life to be as important to her allegorization of Elizabeth as is her choice of the virgin life. (100)

Again, as Broaddus writes, it is Belphoebe's 'potentiality for the sexual life,' which is as important as that of 'the virgin life' in both Belphoebe's poetical presentation and in Elizabeth's historical/political one. Sublimated sexuality here is recognized, not denied, and this is important for it correlates Belphoebe's position with sensuality rather

than as opposed to it. In many ways, she is responsible for Timias' wound of desire by her mere presence.

In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, Spenser similarly makes mention of the following:

For Beautie is the bayt which with delight
 Doth man allure, for to enlarge his kynd,
 Beautie the burning lamp of heauens light,
 Darting her beames into each feeble mynd:
 Against whose powre, nor God nor man can fynd,
 Defence, ne ward the daunger of the wound;
 But being hurt, seeke to be medicynd
 Of her that first did stir that mortall stownd.
 (871-878)

Indeed, this is what takes place with Timias seeking 'to be medicynd' by the same object of beauty that wounded his heart to begin with, Belpheobe. Female beauty is responsible for planting the desire for reproduction within man, inspiring him, and being an all too powerful force for him to resist. Spenser describes this power however, as heavenly born, undeniably linked to spiritual beauty, hence virginity. It is female beauty, which in these lines possesses an active force over feeble man, who exists merely as the passive recipient of its penetrating beams. This is in itself a very sexualized image. Though Spenser here praises heavenly beauty, he is not making it ignorant of sex, nor alienated from it, but naturally inclined toward it, as though it

is heavenly beauty which desires this earthly copulation, this earthly regeneration of the species.

Cavanagh recognizes that

The juxtaposition of Belpheobe's appetite for sexually-charged carnage with important encounters between herself and Timias demonstrates how vexed her presentation as paragon of chaste virtue becomes under scrutiny. In allegorical terms, as well as from a psychoanalytic perspective, Belpheobe's insistence upon Timias's sexual repression as a sign of respect for her inviolate chastity becomes increasingly suspect as she transfers her own passion and sexual curiosity into the woods, directing it toward bloodied male corpses rather than upon living, healthy bodies. (137)

I argue that Belpheobe's inclination 'toward bloodied male corpses' is a result of her repressed sexuality, repressed due to her dedication in remaining virginal. What Cavanagh regards under scrutiny, I claim as a mark of Belpheobe's repression not only of her own sensuality but also of Timias' actualization of his desire for her. Belpheobe's 'passion and sexual curiosity,' as Cavanagh describes it, is confined to the woods because of Belpheobe's role as a virgin huntress – her virginity cannot be consummated by directed upon 'living, healthy bodies,' whereas, in contrast, a 'bloodied male' like Timias is dependant on her and physically powerless in comparison to her, thus not a sexual threat.

Réage's *Story of O* deals with themes of dependency and domination, autonomy, the physical and psychological contact between

self and other.¹² Cavanagh recognizes sexual undertones in the relationship between Belpheobe and Timias in which the submissive, vulnerable female martyrs herself for her lover, masochistically embracing the role of victim. Cavanagh interestingly reverses the male/female dichotomy taken from this novel, and reads Timias as a self-abusing character in his relationship with a sexually domineering Belpheobe. Cavanagh regards Belpheobe as a sadistic lover who punishes Timias, arguing that she not only dominates the relationship, but controls Timias' behaviour, his body, like the sadistic males in the *Story of O*. Cavanagh points out that like the tortured heroine in Réage's novel, "Timias chooses to suffer physical and emotional torment in order to prove his devotion to a cruel lover" (135). This point seems to challenge Belpheobe's lack of sexuality and instead sees her character as possessing a strong, yet repressed and thus perverted attitude to sex, using her role as a hunter as a substituting outlet for her habits. This perspective of the threatening power and danger of Belpheobe's virginity in *The Faerie Queene*, which is offered here by Cavanagh, reasserts that Timias' body, rather than Belpheobe's is shown to have the available 'hole'; it is his body that has been feminized. Her body, though feminine, is not available, her 'hole' is not open to penetration, but remains virginally blocked.

I relate a section in Réage's novel to my analysis of the hole/whole wound of Timias, where O is portrayed as a universal 'hole'; the men who keep O captive describe her position in relation to themselves:

"You are here to serve your masters . . . Your hands are not your own, neither are your breasts, nor, above all, is any one of the orifices of your body, which we are at liberty to explore and into which we may, whenever we so please, introduce ourselves . . . your mouth, your belly and your behind are constantly at our entire disposal."
(25-26)

Benjamin argues that "domination and submission result from a breakdown of the necessary tension between self-assertion and mutual recognition that allows self and other to meet as sovereign equals" (1988, 12). In the *Story of O*, a woman is robbed of independence and of action once she becomes a sexual slave. O obeys her orders without rebelling, she accepts her position as a slave rather naturally, associating hitting and raping with loving, thus she is most happy when being mistreated and humiliated. O discovers her identity by initially losing it (as Timias does with Belpheobe), finding her place in a system of inequality.

Craig understands Timias' emasculation, his loss of power, as constituting Belpheobe's role in their relationship as "the threatening erotic mother" (18). This is because, according to Craig, "by nursing

Timias Belphoebe becomes both a mother to him and a forbidden Petrarchan mistress" (18). Craig interprets Belphoebe's power here as a blend of the maternal and the erotic, which not only sustains, but threatens Timias' selfhood. Indeed, inequality is a basis of his relationship with her, with Spenser granting Belphoebe power on every level, which may be interpreted historically, as a point of flattery to his all-powerful and domineering sovereign.

This issue brings about the Foucauldian question of power. For Foucault, power consists of exploitation, profit, hierarchy, control and constraint. Foucault regards power as an exercise where one person exerts force over another, as Belphoebe does with Timias. In Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, power is read as a strategy of domination arising not from class or wealth, but from tactics and manoeuvres, from a relationship of force, where resistance and struggle are linked to whatever power is exercised. Thus, where one gains power, the other must lose it. Similarly, Freud's theory on sexuality and the psychology of love is that a man's primal fear is to lose his strength, his potency, and his masculinity at the hands of a woman, becoming weak and passive in relation to her. Paglia notes, "sex as a natural rather than social transaction, therefore, really is a kind of drain of male energy by female fullness. Physical and spiritual castration is the danger every man runs in intercourse with a woman" (1990, 13).

This feature is especially depicted in the case of Timias, even though he does not fulfil a physical relationship with Belpheobe. Despite Belpheobe's efforts to ease his physical pain and discomfort, lust consumes him and causes him to waste away, almost as if a vampire has drained him:

Thus warreid he long time against his will,
 Till through weaknesse he was forst at last,
 To yield himselfe vnto 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 vp, and blast;
 As percing leuin, which the inner part
 Of euery thing consumes, and calcineth by art.
 (3. 5. 48)

This description is clearly intended by Spenser to appear horrific, demonstrative of not only the force of unbridled, unsatisfied lust consuming Timias, but the sensual identification with the figure of Belpheobe as well. Certain female characters in *The Faerie Queene* exist to lure men away from their chosen field of action, primarily using their sexuality, or in the case of Belpheobe, her sensual virginity to do so. Blood and semen were equally understood as life forces as studies of early modern physiology have demonstrated.¹³

As Timias struggles with guilt and shame that Belpheobe's presence provokes in him, his internal parts metaphorically disintegrate. This further displays that the relationship of Timias and

Belphoebe is concerned with the clash of physical and spiritual love. Through the blatant descriptions of Timias' torture, Spenser also appears to make adverse comment on Belphoebe for not submitting to the squire, despite his praise for her steadfast virginity. Spenser can be viewed as attempting to move his audience to pity the squire's sensual wound in this sequence of events. His ground certainly appears shaky, his poetical stance indefinite where Belphoebe is concerned.

Silberman sees Timias "attempting to fashion himself after ideals of chivalrous love and being deformed by them," so that his is "the risk of castration" (1995, 36). Meanwhile, Mitchell understands that for Freud "castration – or the threat thereof – is, so to speak, the high point of the psychological fear of loss and hence of danger" (77).¹⁴

Timias' ideal form of love is transformed by his desire, but that transformation becomes a fragmentation; the scattered man, fragmented by his lust for Belphoebe. Timias' desire toward Belphoebe, despite his honourable intentions toward her, remains sexual. And Belphoebe, "no paines did spare,/To do him ease, or do him remedy" (3. 5. 50).

Timias' plight whilst being tended by Belphoebe in this way echoes these lines from Spenser's *Daphnida*:

So doo I liue, so doo I daylie die,
And pine away in selfe-consuming paine,
Sith she that did my vitall powres supplie,
And feeble spirits in their force maintaine
Is fetcht fro me

(435-439)

The link between living and dying, expressed as a self-consuming pain, also implies that it is self-inflicted. The 'vitall powres' can here be read as not only a lust for life, but also a lust for physical fulfilment, which can never be satisfied.

O'Connell's explanation for the public image of the Queen as private woman represented in Belpheobe is as follows:

Basically the role attempts to respond fully to the queen's nature – to her womanhood *and* to her sovereignty. As a mistress she must be loved passionately and exclusively, but as a chaste goddess she must be revered. In more mundane (or modern) political terms, one supposes, courtiers were expressing both their high respect and their intense personal loyalty to the sovereign. (110)

As a result of this, Belpheobe's refusal to satisfy Timias' desire for her can be read politically, whereby Elizabeth was able to maintain her own attractive, manipulative power over men. In *The Faerie Queene*, Timias adopts the role of a typical Elizabethan courtier who aims to be honourable, yet his struggles to satisfy both Belpheobe's sovereignty and her womanhood are all too clear.

Paradoxically, Timias wants Belpheobe to remain virginal because her honour makes her beautiful in his eyes:

Vnthankfull wretch (said he) is this the meed,
With which her soueraigne mercy thou doest quight?
Thy life she saued by her gracious deed,
But thou doest weene with villenous despight,

To blot her honour, and her heauenly light.
 Dye rather, dye, then so disloyally
 Deeme of her high desert, or seeme so light:
 Faire death it is to shonne more shame, to dy:
 Dye rather, dy, than euer loue disloyally.

But if to loue disloyalty it bee,
 Shall I then hate her, that from deathes dore
 Me brought? ah farre be such reproch fro mee.
 What can I lesse do, then her loue therefore,
 Sith I her dew reward cannot restore?
 Dye rather, dye, and dying do her serue,
 Dying her serue, and liuing her adore;
 Thy life she gaue, thy life she doth deserue:
 Dye rather, dye, than euer from her seruice swerue.

But foolish boy, what bootes thy seruice bace
 To her, to whom the heauens do serue and sew?
 Thou a meane Squire, of meeke and lowly place,
 She heauenly borne, and of celestiall hew.
 How then? of all loue taketh equall vew:
 And doth not highest God vouchsafe to take
 The loue and seruice of the basest crew?
 If she will not, dye meekly for her sake;
 Dye rather, dye, then euer so faire loue forsake.
 (3. 5. 45-47)

Timias would rather die than succumb to his physical desire for Belpheobe and forsake his chivalrous service toward her. Silberman draws attention to the fact that "the repetition of 'dye' empties the word of both its literal and metaphorical meaning as Timias looks forward to purely linguistic jouissance" (1995, 39). The sexual connotations associated with the word 'die' in the Renaissance were wide.¹⁵ As Greenblatt adds, "death is a common Renaissance term for

orgasm – this fulfilment is characteristically poised between an anxious sense of self-dissolution and a craving for decisive closure” (1994, 64).

Timias’ internal and anguished debate within himself occurs because he must love Belphebe both in spite of, and as a result of her perfections. This, combined with the insult of his desire for her because he is a squire and she is of heavenly birth, places Timias in what Dasenbrock refers to as a ‘bind’ of Petrarchan love. Dasenbrock is sympathetic of Timias’ plight to “show his love in order to praise and honour his lady, [yet] her perfection makes her unapproachable. So he cannot show his love, yet the perfection represented in that unapproachability redoubles his love and his desire for the unattainable lady” (27). Also, Cheney argues, “since Belphebe is a chaste lady, we can expect Timias to experience a chastening of his erotic desire” (1993, 127). However, De Neef notices, as I do, that the opposite is the case, that in the character of Belphebe, “her chastity is praised, of course, but the love that she inspires is deforming” (1979, 10).

Petrarch, in the *Canzoniere*, demonstrates a similar example of virginal purity, which is an inspirer of lust and the catalyst for an internal battle between the masculine self, a battle between the worship of the lady and the overwhelming need to sexually possess her:

I find no peace, and I am not at war,
I fear and hope, and burn and I am ice;
I fly above the heavens, and I lie on earth,

and I grasp nothing, and embrace the world.

One keeps me jailed who neither locks nor opens,
nor keeps me for her own nor frees the noose;
Love does not kill, nor does he loose my chains;
he wants me lifeless but won't loosen me.

I see with no eyes, shout without a tongue;
I yearn to perish, and I beg for help;
I hate myself and love somebody else.

I thrive on pain and laugh with all my tears;
I dislike death as much as I do life:
because of you, lady, I am this way.

(134)

Petrarch's struggle is based on the desire to center on Plato's view of love as a spiritual urge, which impelled people to forsake physical union, and in so doing, elevate them to a higher plane of being. In this sense, virginity can be understood as challenging base, carnal desire (to be understood as segregated from natural sexual instinct). Petrarchan and Neoplatonic philosophy adopted the hypothesis of a virtuous lady being able to lead man past the material and into the spiritual realm. The female beloved existed as an active figure reminding her lover of his responsibilities in the spiritual rather than the material world, even though she, generally and paradoxically, offered temptation into the latter by her very beauty and virtue.

Plato's *Symposium* also outlines this factor, stating "while the gods greatly honour the courage of a lover, they admire even more and

reward more richly affection shown towards a lover by the beloved, because a lover is possessed and thus comes nearer than the beloved to being divine" (44-45). Also, Dante, in *The Divine Comedy*, provides another locus for the spiritualizing power of love:

Fixed where the everlasting circles ran
 were the rapt eyes of Beatrice, and mine
 withdrawn from heaven were turned her own to scan.
 Gazing at her I grew within divine
 (3. 1. 64-67)

A few lines later, Dante declares: "Thou madest, Love, who governest the skies,/Thou knowest, who with Thy light upliftedst me" (3. 1. 74-75).

The female as an object of sublimated desire represents man's struggle over his own nature and the physical world. Earthly love may lead to this heavenly love, but as in Petrarch, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* shows the frustration of this Neoplatonic ambition rather than its actualization. In the Petrarchan poetry of frustrated desire, relieved only when transcended, a static relationship between the lady and her lover is necessary because she is idealized and unobtainable. The poetry is less about the lady and more about the struggle within the poet's soul, relating to unrequited, or unsatisfied love. One of the main aspects of Neoplatonic theory is that sensual love was seen as inferior

to spiritual love, with the former needing to be transcended for the sake of spiritual perfection.¹⁶

Evans regards Timias as a version of Sidney's *Astrophil*, "continually seeking to master lust but always being conquered by it" (1970, 187). However, as I argue, Timias' earthly love for Belpheobe cannot flourish properly without the presence of heavenly love to initiate it, to cause it to prosper, to linger, to strengthen in the frustrated struggle between the desire for spiritual release and the desire for her body. Sidney's poem, "Leave me o love which reachest but to dust" emphatically demonstrates this:

Leave me O Love, which reachest but to dust,
And thou my mind, aspire to higher things:
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
What ever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
(32. 1-4)

Sidney's lines show that love is not heavenly, but earthly, and aligned with death (dust), with human changeability, mortality and even human frailty. There is another higher force (heavenly love), which humans must aspire to over and above the earthly, but this is not always possible.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Beatrice rises above her material representation once she dies and becomes an angelic being, making it easier for Dante to glorify her while at the same time removing any hint

of her sexuality and thus his own lustful desirability for her. This demonstrates that the only way for some to equate a woman with spirituality was to altogether deny her any sexual representation. Similarly, for Petrarch, even after Laura's death, his sexual passion for her cannot be defeated by his spiritual love and desire for God. At her death, she is seen to guide the poet to Christian virtue, yet his physical need to possess her rises to the surface of spiritual sanctification. As Pearson writes, "Petrarch's love for Laura was too human and too personal for him to succeed in spiritualizing it, even after her death" (33).

According to Plato, carnal desire is seen to imprison the soul in the body through the acts of procreation and sexual intercourse. Plato's doctrine stresses the sublimation of sexual desire in order to achieve self-knowledge, spiritual salvation. For this purpose, in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, love for a lady who is holy leads man to a higher plane:

So much therefore is this love greater and happier than others, as the cause that stirreth it, is more excellent. And therefore, as commune fire trieth golde and maketh it fyne, so this most holye fire in soules destroyeth and consumeth what so ever there is mortall in them . . . Let us therefore bende all oure force and thoughts of soule to this most holye light, that soweth us the waye which leadeth to heaven: and after it, puttyng of the affections we were clad withall at our comminge downe, let us clime up the stayers, which at the lowermost stepp have the shadowe

of sensuall beauty, to the high mansion place where the
heavenlye, amiable and right beautye dwelleth. (361)

Spenser in the *Hymne of Heavenly Beautie* exemplifies this feature:

That with the glorie of so goodly sight,
The hearts of men, which fondly here admyre
Faire seeming shewes, and feed on vaine delight,
Transported with celestiall desyre
Of those faire formes, may lift themselves vp hyer,
And learne to loue with zealous humble dewty
Th'eternall fountaine of that heavenly beauty.
(3. 15-21)

The following stanza in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene* demonstrates that spiritual love cannot exist while the mistress is ever beautiful and inspires lust. Here, Belpheobe is positioned far above Timias in status and Spenser is sensitive to expressing the squire's hatred of his inferior social and emotional position, as well as his helplessness to alter the state of affairs:

Long while he stroue in his courageous brest,
With reason dew the passion to subdew,
And loue for to dislodge out of his nest:
Still when her excellencies he did vew,
Her soueraigne bounty, and celestiall hew,
The same to loue he strongly was constraind:
But when his meane estate he did reuew,
He from such hardy boldnesse was restrained,
And of his lucklesse lot and cruell loue thus plaind.
(3. 5. 44)

The goal where sexual desire is intellectually sublimated and therefore leads to spiritual transformation, toward spiritual

sanctification through the relationship with a chaste beloved, is one that Timias aspires to, but cannot fully achieve. Instead, the struggle between the spirit and the flesh remains a major concern in his relationship with Belpheobe, and this theme permeates throughout *The Faerie Queene*. The attachment, which Timias has for Belpheobe, exhibits the extent to which even noble passions such as natural love may fester into unsound, debilitating, emasculating versions of lust once they are misapplied. Belpheobe demands Platonic devotion in others, which is why both Timias' and Braggadocchio's desire for her physical surrender proves threatening to them, rendering them powerless and passive at her hands. This chapter has highlighted the fact that there are different ways of reacting toward Belpheobe. Braggadocchio can only respond to her with lust, but in her association with Timias, Belpheobe's virginal presence, physical beauty and high social status demand his sovereign worship and service which also simultaneously prompts in him a physical desire which can never culminate in marriage, therefore emasculating him.

Chapter Three extends this by focusing on the political, religious and social aspects between virginity and married love in the English Renaissance. Here, I will examine the differences between Belpheobe and her twin sister Amoret, the latter who represents the culmination of sensual desire in the holy institute of marriage, a choice not provided

for the ever-virginal Belpheobe. Instead, her link to sensual desire, as this chapter has demonstrated, is not only emasculating in its powerful link with lust, but also one which remains forever unquenched and, as a consequence, forever desirable and desired. In reiterating Paglia's point in the beginning of this second chapter regarding the need to discipline the human erotic experience for the good of society as well as the psyche, I have demonstrated that Spenser's presentation of Belpheobe's link to erotic experience is one which fuels it even further, ironically, by a virginal power which aims to discipline sexual experience. Belpheobe's virginal representation is no more than a paradox between the instigation of desire and the need to successfully quench it, the latter of which is unsuccessful and which makes Belpheobe's presence in the poem, as a shadow of Elizabeth, all the more youthful, attractive, desirable and emasculating.

Chapter Three: Belpheobe and Amoret

The connection between virginity and marital chastity is the subject of this chapter, where Belpheobe's relationship to her twin sister Amoret will be explored through my analysis of their birth, separation and upbringing. Whilst Belpheobe is symbolic of perpetual virginity in *The Faerie Queene*, Amoret represents the ideal of marital chastity. The OED defines 'chastity' not only as "purity from unlawful sexual intercourse; continence" (1. a) but also as "abstinence from all sexual intercourse; virginity, celibacy" (2). Chastity is thus at the same time an alternative to virginity and the genus of which virginity is a species: one can be chaste without being a virgin but one cannot be a virgin without being chaste. As I hope to show in this chapter, Spenser does not, as has been critically argued, privilege one state over the other but instead offers equal praise to both virginity and marital chastity through his portrayal of Belpheobe and Amoret, respectively.

In Book 1, Spenser uses the term 'chastity' to represent the sexual states of all of the three daughters depicted in the House of Holiness: "the eldest two most sober, chaste, and wise,/Fidelia and Speranza virgins were,/Though spoused, yet wanting wedlocks solemnize" (1. 10. 4) while Charissa their married sister is "chaste in worke and will" (1. 10. 30). This stresses the power, the flexibility of

chastity to symbolize both virginity and marital faithfulness. This is also something that Bauldwin powerfully evokes in his *Treatise of Moral Philosophy*, where he emphasizes that

chastity, purity of life, continency, of refusing the corrupt pleasures of the flesh and of this world, are pretious in the light of God: and possessed only of those that keepe their bodies cleane & undefiled . . . chastity & purity of life consisteth either in sincere virginity, or in faithful matrimony. Abstineney & continency, are lovely vertues & of great force against these two capital vices (that is to say) auarice & lechery. (7)

Spenser, as I argue throughout this chapter, privileges marital chastity alongside virginity rather than in opposition to it. What he does oppose instead are the demoralizing examples of lust and perversion, which also exist throughout *The Faerie Queene*. Virginity and marital chastity are presented in the poem as equal because of what I claim to be Spenser's ambivalent position; he cannot, or rather, does not *choose* either in *The Faerie Queene* or his other works to make a distinct preference of one over the other. My argument is that Spenser's lack of choice, his ambiguity about the superiority of either virginity or marital chastity stems largely from political, cultural and religious influences in the composition of *The Faerie Queene*.

Edwards describes the English Renaissance as a time when the old values of the medieval world were being contested by new ones,

a period whose commonest quality is tension, in which two ages, one dying and one being born, strive for mastery. The tension is in religion, philosophy, morals, politics, economic and social structure . . . either the old ways must be explained and defended or the new ways must be fought for. (46)

Elizabeth's virginal status remained a fundamental influence on Spenser. With the popularity of marriage and procreation in the Protestant faction, Elizabeth's virginity disabled Spenser from representing marital chastity in *The Faerie Queene* as superior. However, it must be noted that notwithstanding the importance of virginity to the Catholics, the Protestants also esteemed it, and this was partly a result of the sexual status of their monarch.¹ Rose, for instance, points out that "the development of the Protestant attitude toward matrimony did not mean a complete rejection of the old ideal of virginity; instead there was a general elevation of the moral status of wedlock until the new ideal seemed the twin of the old" (111). The religious and cultural implications of Elizabeth's virginity have been and will continue to be addressed in terms of the Queen's paradoxical representation of herself and the regulation of her literary and pictorial presentation by others as a marriageable, yet unchanging virgin monarch.

Quilligan reads Spenser's frustration with the Queen's virginity as a significant problem in *The Faerie Queene*:

Queen Elizabeth's unique and anomalous existence poses special problems for Spenser's Protestant epic – and in these problems we see how her unique sexual status causes him great trouble because he writes in service of a specific sexual program. The queen's virginity conflicts with the broad sweep of the Protestant redefinition of the family – and therefore of women and of sexuality itself. Spenser's service of the sociology of his religion conflicts with the service of his virgin queen. He needs to celebrate his virgin patroness in a poem that elevates human sexuality to a sacred level and ennobles wedded love.

(1983, 177-178)

This 'specific sexual program' of marriage and procreation is one that Elizabeth did not satisfy during her reign. While Quilligan addresses Spenser's social problem in the writing of the poem, she fails to explore the consequences within *The Faerie Queene* itself. This chapter aims to do just this, beginning with the birth of Belphoebe and Amoret.

Chrysogonee, the mother of the twins, is impregnated by a sunbeam as she lies sleeping. She is horrified to discover her unknown and unwanted impregnation, which she quite naturally but wrongly interprets as a sexual violation:

Whereof conceiuing shame and foule disgrace,
 Albe her guiltlesse conscience her cleard,
 She fled into the wildernesse a space,
 Till that vnweeldy burden she had reard,
 And shund dishonor, which as death she feard²

(3. 6. 10)

Lewis writes that Amoret and Belpheobe "represent Spenser's view that there are two kinds of chastity, both heaven-born" (1968, 346), and several critics have related the non-sexual impregnation of Chrysogonee to the Virgin birth.³ In this way, Belpheobe's and Amoret's conception establishes their unique, mystical presence in *The Faerie Queene*, as Spenser shows:

Miraculous may seeme to him, that reades
 So straunge ensample of conception;
 But reason teacheth that the fruitfull seades
 Of all things liuing, through impression
 Of the sunbeames in moyst complexion,
 Doe life conceiue and quickned are by kynd
 (3. 6. 8)

That the twins are conceived through the sun's beams suggests their celestial nature, and again, as some critics have noted, their equality.⁴ For instance, Maccaffrey regards Amoret and Belpheobe as one female soul, "submissive, vulnerable, passive on the one hand; actively defensive and invulnerably chaste on the other" (289). Roche also sees the birth of Belpheobe and Amoret as "Spenser's way of suggesting the true genealogy of Christian virginity and marriage" (1964, 106). However, it is important to remember that even though Spenser informs his readers that Belpheobe was born first, and "Faire Amoretta in the second place" (3. 6. 4), he then stresses that "these two were twines,"⁵ casting aside any possibility of inequality between them.

In *The Faerie Queene*, virginity as a necessary state of existence for women prior to marriage is strongly emphasized by Spenser (which may also be why Belpheobe is the elder twin), especially through Amoret's trials and temptations with Busirane and the Carle of Lust. However, virginity without the prospect of marriage is also praised. This is demonstrated in Spenser's decision to part the twins at birth, to offer them no remembrance of the other's existence, yet to still allow each to be a complement to the other. His portrayal of Belpheobe's birth illustrates this point:

Her berth was of the wombe of Morning dew,
 And her conception of the ioyous Prime,
 And all her whole creation did her shew
 Pure and vnspotted from all loathly crime,
 That is ingenerate in fleshy slime.
 So was this virgin borne, so was she bred,
 So was she trayned vp from time to time,
 In all chast vertue, and true bounti-hed
 Till to her dew perfection she was ripened.
 (3. 6. 3)

Belpheobe's birth clearly reflects her future life as a virgin nymph, 'pure and vnspotted.' Spenser here explains the mortal, sexual nature as 'loathly crime,' 'fleshy slime,' yet his intention to highlight the distinction between sexuality and virginity conflicts with his praise of Belpheobe's purity. Note especially, the last line of the stanza, 'till to her dew perfection she was ripened.' 'Till' suggests that time must play a role in altering her virginal existence, whilst 'ripened' re-

enforces this argument. Ripened here can mean being more fully developed, or ripened sexually in readiness for marriage, hence reflecting Amoret's position.

In Jonson's *To Penshurst*, ripening represents the first step toward marriage, when the tenants

send
 By their ripe daughters, whom they would commend
 This way to husbands; and whose baskets beare
 An embleme of themselves, in plum, or peare.
 (53-56)

Jonson uses the analogy of fruit to depict female sexual maturity, ready to be plucked, devoured, but only in the honourable state of marriage which is, in this stanza, the natural progression of virginity. In this way, the term 'ripened' in the concluding line from the stanza in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene* could also display Belpheobe coming to maturity as a virgin or as matured and available for marriage; the latter case is what Amoret represents. As Broadus recognizes:

Throughout Belpheobe's initial appearance, Spenser presents us with a young woman who has all of the physical attributes found in one who is ready for the sexual life. Just as important, Belpheobe's beauty and sexuality are juxtaposed to other qualities that reflect a psyche committed to virginity. (98-99)

Broadus' point highlights my own contention that there is a continual affiliation between virginity and sensuality in Belpheobe's character

throughout *The Faerie Queene*. This is made more evident by comparison with Spenser's stanza on Amoret's upbringing.

Amoret is "trained vp in true feminitee," "in all the lore of loue, and goodly womanhead" (3. 6. 51), yet she is not presented as being any more sensual (or sexual) than her virginal twin:

when she to perfect ripenesse grew,
Of grace and beautie noble Paragone,
She brought her forth into the worldes vew,
To be th'ensample of true loue alone,
And Lodestarre of all chaste affectione,
To all faire Ladies, that doe liue on ground.
To Faery court she came, where many one
Admyred her goodly haueour, and found
His feeble hart wide launched with loues cruell wound.
(3. 6. 52)

Obvious comparisons exist between the two stanzas explaining the upbringings of Belpheobe and Amoret. One is the interesting repetition of 'perfect ripeness,' a description used in the stanza about Belpheobe, as we have just seen. The fact that Belpheobe is taken into the woods to be fostered by Diana while Amoret is brought to court by Venus, to be personified in 'true love alone' suggests that Belpheobe's example is not representative of love at all, but the avoidance of it. Both twins grow in ripeness, but Amoret's is more obviously for marriage. Amoret is educated for 'Faery court,' as an object to be seen, admired and emulated. while Belpheobe's place is in 'wild woods,' in isolation from the social world. Amoret being a 'Lodestarre' signals her superiority to

other women, since Spenser informs us that the principle Amoret will guide in them and personify in herself is that of 'all chaste affectione'; she outshines as well as leads. Amoret is positioned in relationship to others, while Belpheobe exists primarily as a loner (barring her relationship with Timias, of course). This is understandable since the manner in which Spenser presents her virginity is to isolate her in the woods, away from society (with the exception of Diana and the other virginal hunting nymphs). Amoret, in contrast, forms friendships with women including Britomart and Aemylia. Here, the solitary aspect of virginity, contrasted with marital chastity, does much to bolster my argument that Spenser depicts virginity as a form of self-sufficiency.⁶ Belpheobe's virginity is a praiseworthy, heroic existence, which is unavailable or inappropriate for more sociable individuals, as Shakespeare recognizes in reference to Elizabeth in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd
Than that which, with'ring on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.
(1. 1. 74-78)

Cheney separates Belpheobe and Amoret under the titles of "hard" and "soft" primitivism, respectively" (1966, 141), with one twin, Amoret, mostly sheltered from the outside world and thus

vulnerable to its dangers, while Belphebe is trained to defend herself from its harshness. De Neef however, recognizes the emotional and sexual maturity in Amoret, which is lacking in Belphebe – “Belphebe, spared all of Amoret’s pain and suffering, is also forever excluded from her joy” (1982, 116). Amoret wanders, searches, fears, learns and suffers; she is therefore the symbol of a steadfast and gentle heart. This lack of experience in Belphebe is presumably why De Neef criticizes what he regards as her weakness, her permanent virginity being a mark of immaturity in his view. However, De Neef, by doing so, ignores the ‘joys’ of purity, mystical power and emasculating strength which Belphebe’s virginity grants her, which the marital love of Amoret does not. Even though Belphebe’s permanent virginity denies her the experience of sex, it certainly, I argue, does not make her ‘immature.’ Rather, she merely experiences different aspects of life to her twin sister.

Villeponteaux acknowledges that “Belphebe’s permanently virginal state most accurately reflects Elizabeth’s image by 1590” (1998, 209). Yet Villeponteaux, like De Neef, also concludes that Spenser does not, because of Belphebe’s constant virginity, make her as important or fully developed a character. Where De Neef uses the example of Amoret to compare Belphebe to, Villeponteaux discusses Britomart, the female knight of *The Faerie Queene*, who will trade her

virginity for a married, sexual and propagating existence with her fellow knight, Artegall. Villeponteaux sees Spenser's presentation of Belpheobe as a criticism of Elizabeth, "portraying her chastity as obdurate and sterile in comparison to the complex and dynamic Britomart" (1998, 209). Again, this is because Villeponteaux views the typical female role model of the English Renaissance as naturally progressing toward a future marital union (as Britomart, Amoret, Florimell, and others do in *The Faerie Queene*). However, my reading of the poem aims to establish that this is not justifiable in all cases. Marriage is not proposed by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* as the only complete purpose in life; indeed, the virginal life is shown to be beneficial, praiseworthy, and even fruitful in its own symbolic and mystical ways.⁷

Like Villeponteaux, Cavanagh regards Belpheobe's virginity as a restrictive example of womanhood:

After the fall of Roman Catholicism in England, vowed virginity loses its centrality as an exalted female virtue. Thus, Belpheobe can bear homage to Elizabeth's professed virginity, but . . . the most highly honored mode of female chastity incorporates marital sexuality – not coincidentally, a mode which accommodates male sexual desires more readily than celibacy. (163)

While married love certainly incorporates sexuality 'more readily than celibacy,' I have argued that in Belpheobe's case, Spenser in *The*

Faerie Queene does not present desire as alien to her portrayal. Hankins (149) for instance does not view Belpheobe's virginity as an immunity to romantic love, and both Belpheobe's and Amoret's chastity is displayed in the poem as 'th' ensample of true loue alone.' Thus, Amoret and Belpheobe, once they are separated at birth, cannot be likened to Diana and Venus.

Diana and Venus are the opposites of one another, despite the sexual desirability which both of them exhibit, although in differing ways. Where Venus' amorous sensuality is often shown as exuberant and free, Diana's is enclosed, symbolic of her virginity, yet possessing no lesser force, as my previous chapter outlined. Maccaffrey defines Belpheobe and Amoret's representation in *The Faerie Queene* as being completely contradictory – "in a human context one sort of love excludes the other" (267). A similar view is expressed by Anderson, who writes: "their separation – indeed, their a-partness – becomes for each tantamount to the dividing of such twinned psychic and cosmic forces as desire and chastity, inclusion and exclusion, amorphous attraction and formal repulsion – pairs which together make possible unified experience" (86). In Anderson's perspective, the twins never achieve wholeness, each lacking something which exists in the other, yet, unlike Diana and Venus, both Belpheobe and Venus possess certain aspects of the other which prevent such a definitive antithesis.⁸

Diana and Venus are first introduced to Belphebe and Amoret as infants, when Venus asks Diana's help in looking for her lost child, Cupid. The nymphs of Diana in their search for Cupid discover the twin babies instead. Belphebe is taken by Diana "to be vpbrought in perfect Maydenhed," while Venus "farre away conuayd" Amoret, fostering her "in goodly womanhed" (3. 6. 28). It is interesting, I stress, that Spenser never portrays a verbal clash in the poem between Belphebe and Amoret, as he does with Venus' following speech to Diana, which vigorously mocks her virginal state:

As you in woods and wanton wildernesse
Your glory set, to chace the saluage beasts,
So my delight is all in ioyfulnesse,
In beds, in bowres, in banckets, and in feasts:
And ill becomes you with your loftie creasts,
To scorne the ioy, that *Ioue* is glad to seeke
(3. 6. 22)

Venus' declaration is a blunt jeer at Diana's virginity and her manner of passing time. Diana possesses energy and skill as a huntress, while Venus personifies sexuality and leisure. Venus is a major mythological figure, associated with physical regeneration, and I argue that Belphebe is a combination of physical beauty and spiritual power, even though her sexuality is based on action and moral vigour. Here, 'wanton wildernesse' suggests that Diana discovers sensual pleasure in the hunt, whereas Venus finds it in beds and bowers. This point is

interesting when we consider the following stanzas from *The Faerie Queene* in which Venus' sudden appearance both surprises and dismays the stripping, bathing Diana who has put aside her warrior form, her weapons, to become a sensual image of womanhood, of vulnerability:

She hauing hong vpon a bough on high
 Her bow and painted quiuer, had vnlaste
 Her siluer buskins from her nimble thigh,
 And her lancke loynes vngirt, and brests vnbraste,
 After her heat the breathing cold to taste;
 Her golden lockes, that late in tresses bright
 Embreaded were for hindring of her haste,
 Now loose about her shoulders hong vndight,
 And were with sweet *Ambrosia* all besprinckled light.

Soone as she *Venus* saw behind her backe,
 She was asham'd to be so loose surprized,
 And woxe halfe wroth against her damzels slacke,
 That had not her thereof before auized,
 But suffred her so carelessly disguised
 Be ouertaken. Soone her garments loose
 Vpgath'ring, in her bosome she comprized,
 Well as she might, and to the Goddesse rose,
 Whiles all her Nymphes did like a girlond her enclose.
 (3. 6. 18-19)

This scene, which is a displacement of Ovid's Actaeon gazing on Diana at her bath, suggests that the hunt is a sublimation of sexual desire, since it is normally associated with Renaissance images of male sexuality. Spenser, in these two stanzas, makes use of the term 'loose' three times, which, as displayed in the example of Eve in *Paradise Lost* in my first chapter, also establishes Diana's striptease as an innocent

but at the same time provocative sexual action. Everything about Diana is uninhibited in her description by Spenser, is open for the sexual act; 'loynes vngirt,' 'brests vnbraste,' flowing hair 'vndight' and 'garments loose' are all suggestively positioned to highlight the strong correlation existing in the virginal purity which forms the catalyst for earthy sensuality, a correlation which is also seen throughout Belpheobe's portrayal in *The Faerie Queene*.

In Book 1, a similar mingling of the Diana/Venus traits occurs in the following depiction of Una:

Sometimes Dame *Venus* selfe he seemes to see,
 But *Venus* neuer had so sober mood;
 Sometimes *Diana* he her takes to bee,
 But misseth bow, and shaftes, and buskins to her knee.
 (1. 6. 16)

While Spenser implicitly contrasts Diana and Venus, he does not exclude some of the Amoret/Venus features present in Belpheobe.

As Williams writes:

The chase of chastity and honour, on which Diana is engaged and to which, in *The Faerie Queene*, she brings up her ward Belpheobe, can merge very easily into Cupid's hunt of love . . . Diana's arrows can become confused with Cupid's . . . a complicated and hidden interchange is set up in which chastity becomes a weapon of love, or uses love as a weapon. (1966, 99)

Duffy also understands that "virginity did not necessitate sexlessness.

Diana was goddess of childbirth although chaste" (115). Berger sees

the blend of Diana and Venus in Belphoebe "because her share of Venus is muffled and repressed within the Diana function she performs, she can tend and pity the male but she can't respond to the love her tendance arouses" (1994, 95). We have seen this occur in the previous chapter through Belphoebe's association with Timias.

Belphoebe's virginity in *The Faerie Queene* reflects the strain echoed throughout Petrarchan love poetry which makes her a continual source of pleasure contemplated and appetite unsatisfied, in the same way that in *The Aeneid*, Venus captures her son's desire and feeds his need to experience her more fully by leaving him yearning. United in the character of Belphoebe are the aspects of both Diana and of Venus, a feature that is displayed in Virgil's Venus in *The Aeneid*. This Venus is a character who may have inspired Spenser's creation of Belphoebe:⁹

She had a maiden's countenance and a maiden's guise,
and carried a maiden's weapons . . . Slung ready on her
shoulder she carried a bow as a huntress would, and she
had let her hair stream in the wind; her tunic's flowing
folds were caught up and tied, and her knees were bare.

(1. 315-320)

The streaming hair is the major symbol of Venus' sensuality here, and although she is disguised as a huntress, her sensual features are similar to Belphoebe's, particularly her hair. In the *Aeneid*, Venus encounters her son Aeneas while she is disguised as Diana.¹⁰ The figure of the

unavailable, unassailable and indeed, the irresistible woman (Belphebe) in *The Faerie Queene* is in this way mirrored in *The Aeneid*. Further on, when Venus disappears from Aeneas' presence, he is exceedingly dismayed:

So Venus spoke, and as she turned away her loveliness shone, a tint of rose glowed on her neck and a scent of Heaven breathed from the divine hair of her head. Her gown trailed down to her feet; her gait alone proved her a goddess. Aeneas recognized his mother, and as she vanished his cry followed swiftly after: "Ah, you too are cruel! Why again and again deceive your own son with your mocking disguises? Why may I not join hand to hand, hear you in frankness, and speak to you in return?" (l. 402-409)

Aeneas desires Venus' complete presence, but his dissatisfaction stems from his inability to touch her; there can be no such unity between them because of her status as goddess and his as a mortal, similar to Belphebe and Timias.

This recalls an episode from Homer's *Odyssey*, where Odysseus responds to the vision of a goddess. He finds it difficult to 'name' her, but takes pleasure in looking at her. In this book, Nausicaa is presented on the morning of her wedding day. Nausicaa's resemblance to Belphebe in *The Faerie Queene* is also notable in the fact that Odysseus, like Timias, is not certain whether to address Nausicaa as a mortal or a goddess:

'Mistress, I throw myself on your mercy. But are you some goddess or a mortal woman? If you are one of the

gods who live in the sky, it is of Artemis, the Daughter of almighty Zeus, that your beauty, grace, and stature most remind me. But if you are one of us mortals who live on earth, then lucky indeed are your father and your gentle mother; lucky, your brothers too.' (6. 145-168)

Again we witness that feminine force which attracts, disappears, and thereafter frustrates the male hero. Likewise, in Virgil's description, Venus' disappearance, her absence from Aeneas, marks her as a cruel female, a denying immortal goddess rather than a nurturing presence. Yet her sensuous mortality (indicative in Belphoebe also) is marked by Aeneas' desire to touch her, to have some form of physical contact with her.

Hughes adopts a different view of Belphoebe, understanding her resemblance to Venus as "not intentional and perhaps not even conscious" (1929, 362) due to the differences they share relating to the active and contemplative life. However, I want to stress the important virginal aspect of Belphoebe's character through the presentation of Virgil's Venus disguised as a virgin huntress; here, flowing sensual beauty and constricting, threatening virginity are strongly intermingled and this connection cannot be easily dismissed.

The position in which Belphoebe and Amoret differ strongly is in reference to their vulnerability (or lack of it) to the outside world. In *The Faerie Queene*, it is easy to see Spenser's emphasis on

Belphebe's invulnerability. Amoret is kidnapped by Scudamour from the Temple of Venus, having been brought up for the primary purpose of one day being married. Amoret is given no choice in the matter, however. She does not wish to leave the Temple, as Scudamour remembers:

She often prayd, and often me besought,
 Sometime with tender teares to let her goe,
 Sometime with witching smyles: but yet for nought,
 That euer she to me could say or doe,
 Could she her wished freedome fro me wooe
 (4. 10. 57)

Amoret's abduction from the Temple of Venus displays her lack of self-control; Amoret's prayers, tears, smiles and words are silenced by Scudamour's masculine desires, his control over her body and her will. The female priests of Venus govern the Temple, yet male domination overshadows the scene, taking active control of female chastity, of female sexuality. Venus allows, even encourages, her adopted daughter to be taken by Scudamour. It is also interesting that, even after her upbringing toward married life, Amoret personally wishes to remain a virgin in the Temple, thus demonstrating her affiliation with the constant virginity of Belphebe, although Amoret's desire for the virginal life rests with her fears of marital sexuality (as the episode in the House of Busirane exemplifies). The only reason Amoret cannot remain a virgin forever is because Scudamour disregards her wishes.

This represents her loss of female autonomy and integrity, a loss that is later repeated in her kidnap by the dark enchanter, Busirane, while at her marriage feast with Scudamour. Amoret's virginity must be temporary: she is thus associated with sexuality and love, as well as surrender and possession, arising from her education in the Garden of Adonis.¹¹

In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser uses the Garden to symbolize Renaissance ideals of growth and the regeneration of time, of the newness and renewal of life through sexual love:

There wont faire *Venus* often to enioy
 Her deare *Adonis* ioyous company,
 And reape sweet pleasure of the wanton boy.¹²
 (3. 6. 46)

Here, Venus and Adonis physically enjoy one another, representing the sexual union celebrated by Spenser's depiction of married love. Adonis is considered father of all forms, and Venus the mother of all things, in particular, sex, instinct and reproduction. In contrast to the Garden of Adonis, Spenser describes the forests where Diana and Belphebe roam as "the saluage woods," "the secret haunts" and "the wastefull woods" (3. 6. 16-17). Such terminology hints of wildness, dark deception and waste, a place that is not exposed to the regenerative aspects of life with which the Garden of Adonis associates. In the Garden of Adonis, all things "are borne to liue and die,/According to

their kindes" (3. 6. 30). Therefore, at this point in *The Faerie Queene*, immortality through virginity is portrayed as being insufficient, incomplete. A flower not plucked will wither and die regardless; either way, everything in nature must perish:

For formes are variable and decay,
By course of kind, and by occasion;
And that faire flowre of beautie fades away,
As doth the lilly fresh before the sunny ray.
(3. 6. 38)

Spenser offers a pessimistic view of Marinell's virginity. Lewis, in *The Allegory of Love*, writes that "Marinell is a sort of pendant to Belphoebe: she represents virginity as an ideal, while he avoids love on prudential grounds, which Spenser disapproves [of]" (346).¹³ Cymoent, Marinell's mother, warns him to keep away from women due to a prophecy that one of them will kill or harm him. Yet Marinell is doomed to be harmed by a woman, an event that occurs when Britomart throws him off his horse and wounds him in battle (3. 4. 16-17):

For thy she gaue him warning euery day,
The loue of women not to entertaine;
A lesson too too hard for liuing clay,
From loue in course of nature to refraine:
Yet he his mothers lore did well retaine,
And euer from faire Ladies loue did fly;
Yet many Ladies faire did oft complaine,
That they for loue of him would algates dy:
Dy, who so list for him, he was loues enemy.
(3. 4. 26)

Spenser here explains that it is not natural for Marinell to live his entire life as a virgin – he speaks of the virgin life as ‘a lesson too too hard for liuing clay,’ that human love is but a natural part ‘in course of nature.’ In Marinell’s extreme form of chastity, Spenser stresses the young man’s situation with ‘too too’ – the note on ‘living’ makes it so that he is living in death in his efforts to avoid a fatal love, an ironic state of affairs. The pun on the ‘dy/dy’ terminology, establishes Timias’ complaint to Belpheobe: “dye rather dye” (3. 5. 45-47). I relate Marinell’s situation in this particular stanza to that of Belpheobe in Book 3, where the images of death and immortality in relation to her virginity can be read in both a positive and a negative light:

O what auailles it of immortall seed
 To beene ybred and neuer borne to die?
 Farre better I it deeme to die with speed,
 Then waste in woe and wailefull miserie.
 Who dyes the vtmost dolour doth abyē,
 But who that liues, is left to waile his losse:
 So life is losse, and death felicitie.
 Sad life worse then glad death: and greater crosse
 To see friends graue, then dead the graue selfe to engrosse.
 (3. 4. 38)

In Book 3, Spenser advises his readers, while at the same time offering this tribute to Elizabeth through the following example of Belpheobe:

To youre faire selues a fair ensample frame,
 Of this faire virgin, this *Belpheabe* faire,

To whom in perfect loue, and spotlesse fame
 Of chastitie, none liuing may compaire:
 Ne poysnous Enuy iustly can empaire
 The prayse of her fresh flowring Maidenhead;
 For thy she standeth on the highest staire
 Of th'honorable stage of womanhead,
 That Ladies all may follow her ensample dead.¹⁴
 (3. 5. 54)

What Spenser may also mean here is that, hypothetically, Belpheobe will continue to be an example to women even after she is 'dead,' with her virginity succeeding her, beyond age, time and life itself.

Berger points out that in contrast to the unchanging aspect of Gloriana, Belpheobe represents the mortality of the ageing Elizabeth (1967, 146). He notes how readers following Belpheobe's 'ensample dead' (3. 5. 43) are ultimately reminded of her mortality. McCabe recognizes how this aspect further separates Belpheobe's position from that of the Fairy Queen:

The separation of roles ensures that the royal icon can never be embarrassed by the wayward idiosyncrasies of the jealous, demanding spinster. To become Gloriana all Elizabeth need do is die. This is, perhaps, the final irony of an epic which cultivates the ideal of achievement. Constantly the poem looks beyond Elizabeth towards England's heroic future. In one sense at least Gloriana is Elizabeth in premature retrospect, what she might someday be perceived to have stood for rather than what she was. (133)

McCabe draws the clear distinction between Gloriana as immortal and Belpheobe as mortal. Yet by claiming Belpheobe to be Elizabeth as the

ageing, jealous spinster is also unjustified. True, Belphoebe's jealous nature is demonstrated in her anger at Timias and Amoret's embrace in Book 4 (4. 7. 36), yet Belphoebe's virginity is perpetual, belonging to youth, to beauty. It falsely implies Elizabeth's womanly attractiveness (even in old age), while Gloriana marks the Queen's sovereign power.

In direct relation to this, Villeponteaux writes, "Belphoebe is a lifeless rather than a vital figure . . . if all living ladies did follow Belphoebe's example, death would indeed be the result since procreation would stop" (1993, 42). Likewise, as Quilligan argued previously: "Spenser may counsel his female readers to follow Belphoebe's example of virginity, but the chastity he truly extols is Amoret's: it is the chastity not of a virgin queen, but of a wedded life" (1983, 197). Quilligan ignores the emphasis which Spenser places on Belphoebe's virginity. Cavanagh, while categorizing Belphoebe's virginity in *The Faerie Queene* as unique, also views it as restrictive in terms of her symbolizing exemplary chastity:

Womankind as a whole is clearly not being urged to take Belphoebe as their role model. Instead, the most highly honoured mode of female chastity incorporates marital sexuality – not coincidentally, a mode which accommodates male sexual desires more readily than celibacy. (163)

And yet, Spenser stresses in the stanza that it is Belphoebe's nature that portrays 'perfect loue' and whose virginal womanhood is 'the

highest staire' which another can be inspired toward reaching. Clearly, Belpheobe's virginity is not only shown as important but fertile, 'fresh flowring.' Hence, I argue, the *potential* for sexuality and procreation *prevents* her from being an 'ensample dead' (which may be incorporated in reference to her physical barrenness), and instead acknowledges her purity as an 'ensample' to others *until they die*, regardless of whether their chastity is virginal or marital.

Interestingly, in Raleigh's "Praisd be Dianas Faire and Harmles Light," virginity grants Diana immortality, and Raleigh highlights virginity as a force which equals the worldly realm of physical love, and in some way overwhelms it through the power which virginity displays over time itself:

Time weares hir not, she doth his chariot guide,
Mortalitie belowe hir orbe is plaste,
By hir the vertue of the starrs downe slide,
In hir is vertues perfect image cast.
(1965, 13-16)

Chrysostom states "virginity is as much superior to marriage as heaven is to earth, as the angels are to men, and, to use stronger language, it is more superior still" (14). He elevates virginity because he sees it as a more angelic way of life. In the seventh chapter of I Corinthians, Paul also preaches this message, one that was more important to the Protestants. That is because Paul, whilst

acknowledging virginity as the more ideal way of life for a Christian, also encourages marriage as an alternative form of purity against the lusts of the flesh for those who cannot sustain a life of virginity, that "if they can not absteine, let thé marie: for it is better to marie thé to burne" (1 Cor. 7: 9).¹⁵ However, according to the early church fathers, all sexuality was sinful, for sexual desire pointed toward death, decay and sin.¹⁶

Thus, in *Hali Meidenhad*, the virgin's body is protected from fading beauty in a similar way to which Milton displays it in his *Comus*, the example of which was presented in Chapter One:

And as the sweet unguent, and expensive beyond others . . . preserves the dead carcass which is therewith rubbed, from rotting, so doth maidenhood a maidens living flesh, it maintains without stain all her limbs and her five wits, sight and hearing, taste and smelling, and every limbs feeling, so that they spoil not, nor melt away through carnal lusts in the filth of the flesh. (17-18)

Virginity's pure essence appears to free the body from the destiny of all others, and I argue that this feature marks Belpheobe's virginal character as mystical, supernatural and everlasting, another aspect of Spenser's tribute to his virgin monarch who too is ideologically unfading in her political body. In Spenser's writing, such descriptions and the consequences of ravaging sexuality like this one offered in *Hali Meidenhad*, are often confined to those characters existing outside the

marital realm, or in the Garden of Adonis, where pleasure has a vital role to play.

Whilst Amoret's upbringing establishes her as representing purposeful virtue in marriage through the fulfilment of regeneration, the Garden of Adonis is contrasted with the unprotected world where Amoret must later venture. The Garden lacks hostility, and so Amoret is not aggressive as her sister is, for we have seen how Belphoebe's lifestyle delights in active hunts rather than pleasurable ease. Nelson recognizes that Amoret's education in the Garden is that sexual love brings procreation, which reflects life and unity with God, but he adds that "the theme of generation is not absent from Belphoebe's education either, although for her a sexual love is impossible . . . But her chastity is not barren . . . The children of Belphoebe are noble deeds" (223).

Nohrnberg, like Nelson, identifies a desire for virtuous, yet symbolic regeneration present in Belphoebe's noble deeds that compensates for her lack of actual children. Nohrnberg states that these deeds "are equally expressions of this drive to reproduce" (436). In Renaissance literature, there are plenty of similar expressions of noble deeds being children. Spenser provides an example of this in Book 1:

The noble hart, that harbours vertuous thought,
And is with child of glorious great intent,
Can neuer rest, vntill it forth haue brought
Th' eternall brood of glorie excellent
(1. 5. 1)

Also, Broaddus writes:

As with those virtuous characters who are moved psychically toward sexual love, Belphoebe is a self primarily as she gives expression to the urgings of sexual desire; but for Belphoebe there is only the transmuted expression of those urgings, the desire for honor that prompts noble deeds. (98)

Giamatti sees the 'noble deeds' of virginity in a different way:

Why is loving Belphoebe not wholesome, but rather inwardly destructive? Because she is a Diana, not a Venus; she is devoted to that extreme of chastity which is virginity, an ideal totally acceptable but available to very few. Spenser, after all, could not offend England's Virgin Queen. It is unsound passionately to love Belphoebe because such love must be fruitless; it can have no issue.

(96)

Giamatti, however, unlike Nelson, denies an essential aspect of the virginal life. That is, that fruitfulness is not necessarily absent from it, for it exists in the symbolic aspect if not in the physical one.

Chrysostom adds an interesting light on the issue of propagation, clarifying that "marriage will not be able to produce many men if God is unwilling, nor will virginity destroy their number if he wishes there to be many of them. But he wanted it to be so, Scripture says, because of us and our disobedience" (23). Chrysostom is here referring to the time when sin and death entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. This argument does not see virginity itself as a 'lack,' but rather, that the will of God is instrumental in the issue of

propagation. This I argue, highlights the fact that Belphoebe's virginal position possesses a force no less great than that of Amoret's marital one. For example, in *Hali Meidenhad*, the virtues of the soul as offspring are presented as natural, and no less important than those of marriage, a popular view in the medieval and Renaissance age:

If offspring be desirable to thee, take thyself to Him, under whom thou shalt, in thy maidenhood, bring forth daughters and sons of spiritual teamings, that never can die, but shall ever before thee play in heaven; that is to say, the virtues that He begetteth in thee by His sweet grace, such as righteousness, and wariness against vices; moderation, and temperance, and spiritual strength to withstand the devil, and against sin; simplicity of manner, and obedience and tranquility, endurance and sympathy for every mans sorrow, joy in the Holy Ghost, and peace in thy breast from envy and wrath, from covetousness and every warring of vice; meekness and mildness, and sweetness of heart, that belongeth of all things best to maidenhoods virtues. Such is the offspring of maidenhood, the spouse of the Son of God, that shall for ever live and play without end before her in heaven. (56-57)

Similarly, Spenser's *Hymne In Honour of Love* shows that the desire for regeneration, whether physically or through spiritual virtues, is indeed a powerful and natural force:

Thereby they all do liue, and moued 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.

For hauing yet in his deducted spright,
 Some sparks remaining of that heauenly fyre,
 He is enlumind with that goodly light,
 Vnto like goodly semblant to aspyre:
 Therefore in choice of loue, he doth desyre
 That seemes on earth most heauenly, to embrace,
 That same is Beautie, borne of heauenly race.
 (99-112)

In these stanzas, Spenser is making a comparison between the lustful, worldly drive of humanity to reproduce, and the heavenly desire to regenerate oneself, or, similarly, to inspire others through noble virtue.

It is this noble virtue through which Spenser glorifies Belphoebe's virginity in the qualities of her birth and good will:

Well may I weene, faire Ladies, all this while
 Ye wonder, how this noble Damozell
 So great perfections did in her complie,
 Sith that in saluage forests she did dwell,
 So farre from court and royall Citadell,
 The great schoolmistresse of all curtesy:
 Seemeth that such wild woods should far expell
 All ciuill vsage and gentility,
 And gentle sprite deforme with rude rusticity.

But to this faire *Belphoebe* in her berth
 The heauens so fauourable were and free,
 Looking with myld aspect vpon the earth,
 In th'Horoscope of her natiuitee,
 That all the gifts of grace and chastitee
 On her they poured forth of plenteous horne
 (3. 6. 1-2)

Here, Belphoebe possesses metaphorical fertility, in spite of the fact that she is obliged, by the narrative of the poem, to remain physically

alienated from the sexual act which Amoret can later partake in her union with Scudamour. However, as I have stressed, Belphebe is herself not left presented as an isolated and completely barren symbol of the female body in *The Faerie Queene*. Instead, she promotes 'ciuill vsage and gentility,' which I argue to be reflective of Amoret and Scudamour's physical connection.

At the end of the 1590 version of Book 3, Scudamour is reunited with Amoret, following Britomart's rescue of her from Busirane, and Spenser here celebrates their marital bond:

Lightly he clipt her twixt his armes twaine,
And streightly did embrace her body bright,
Her body, late the prison of sad paine,
Now the sweet lodge of loue and deare delight:
But she faire Lady ouercommen quight
Of huge affection, did in pleasure melt,
And in sweete rauishment pourd out her spright:
No word they spake, nor earthly thing they felt,
But like two senceles stocks in long embracement dwelt.

Had ye them seene, ye would haue surely thought,
That they had beene that faire Hermaphrodite,
Which that rich Romane of white marble wrought,
And in his costly Bath causd to bee site:
So seemd those two, as growne together quite,
That Britomart halfe enuying their blesse,
Was much empassioned in her gentle sprite,
And to her selfe oft wisht like happinesse,
In vaine she wisht, that fate n'ould let her yet possesse.
(3. 12. 45-46)

The hermaphrodite is adopted from Ovid's story of Hermaphroditus, who was once both male and female.¹⁷ In the sexual

union of Amoret and Scudamour, the hermaphrodite represents marriage as a binding of opposites into one whole, both mystical and physical. Spenser makes indirect reference in this particular scene to the verse in Genesis which dictates that a "man shal leaue his father and his mother, and shal cleaue to his wife, and they shal be one flesh" (Gen. 2: 24). This, part of Spenser's method of glorifying sexual union within the bonds of marriage, also embodies Venus in Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene*; "for, they say, she hath both kinds in one,/Both male and female, both vnder one name" (4. 10. 41). I argue that this is also a reflection of Belphoebe's somewhat double sided aspect in *The Faerie Queene*, being both virginal and at the same time sensual.

The duplication of the self in the creation of children can also be regarded as expressing the abhorrence of singleness, which Watkins discusses:

Spenser cannot accept any solution of the problem of human love which violates the progress of being. Despite his eloquence on chastity and his desire to celebrate the virgin Queen, he is not blind to the danger of spiritual as well as biological sterility and singleness. (208)

For Spenser, that danger of sterility represents a life wasted, especially on the part of a woman whose biological function, according to her culture, is to reproduce. Yet, Spenser still manages to praise that other side which opposes Watkins' 'progress of being.' Biological sterility,

while a fact of constant virginity, is subtly transformed by Spenser into a mode of eloquent celebration, satisfying his Protestant nation by exalting the benefits of marriage, as well as pleasing Elizabeth in emphasizing the greatness of her purity, her singleness, as in his *Hymne in Honour of Beautie*:

Therto do thou great Goddesse, queene of Beauty,
 Mother of loue, and of all worlds delight,
 Without whose souerayne grace and kindly dewty
 Nothing on earth seems fayre to fleshy sight,
 Doe thou vouchsafe with thy loue-kindling light,
 T' illuminate my dim and dulled eyne,
 And beautifie this sacred hymne of thyne.

(15-21)

As a 'great Goddesse' and a 'queene of Beauty,' Elizabeth is, like Belphebe in *The Faerie Queene*, both revered sovereign and sensual woman. Spenser emphasizes Elizabeth's symbolic fertility and ignores her actual physical barrenness by reinstating her as a 'mother of love,' an illuminating feature on not only his eyes, but also those of the whole world. By so magnifying virginity's mystical force rather than stressing its lack of sexual action or childlessness, Spenser again stresses its importance over the corporeal world and transfers it into something everlasting.

Hogrefe notices that in the Renaissance, "chastity for women was not a mere abstinence from bodily actions: it was a purity of mind without even a consciousness of carnal desire" (3). Frye views this

from a modern feminist perspective: "'chastity' was so central a term in describing men's desire to control women's behaviour that by the end of the sixteenth-century the social institution of marriage may be said to rest on it" (1993, 116). Frye's argument rests on the domination, in particular, of female sexuality by men. The Elizabethan Renaissance was a time that accentuated the necessity of a woman's silence, her subordination and regenerative function, especially in marriage. We have seen how Spenser used this particular theme to exploit the passive situation of Amoret in her own lack of choice by first being kidnapped by, then marrying Scudamour. Women were classified by the traits of chastity, modesty, obedience, humility, piety, kindness, patience and especially passivity.¹⁸

In Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser illustrates the dependency of women, their lack of choice regarding their individuality. Here, idealized 'womanhood' stands as nothing more than a universal set of principles in order to be controlled by men, chiefly in sexual terms through 'shamefastnesse,' 'cherefulnesse,' 'modestie,' 'curtesie' and 'obedience':

Her name was *Womanhood*, that she exprest
 By her sad semblant and demeanure wyse:
 For stedfast still her eyes did fixed rest,
 Ne rov'd at randon after gazers guyse,
 Whose luring baytes oftymes doe heedlesse harts entyse.

And next to her sate goodly *Shamefastnesse*,
 Ne euer durst her eyes from ground vpreare,
 Ne euer once did looke vp from her desse,
 As if some blame of euill she did feare,
 That in her cheekes made roses oft appeare:
 And her against sweet *Cherefulnesse* was placed,
 Whose eyes like twinkling stars in euening cleare,
 Were deckt with smyles, that all sad humors chaced,
 And darted forth delights, the which her goodly graced.

And next to her sate sober *Modestie*,
 Holding her hand vpon her gentle hart;
 And her against sate comely *Curtesie*,
 That vnto euery person knew her part;
 And her before was seated ouerthwart
 Soft *Silence*, and submisse *Obedience*,
 Both linckt together neuer to dispart,
 Both gifts of God not gotten but from thence,
 Both girlonds of his Saints against their foes offence.

(4. 10. 49-51)

In the first stanza, the universal idea of woman being unable to lift her eyes lest she attract unwanted sexual attention is important in relation to Belphebe. Not only does her status in the poem free her from the masculine ownership enforced on other females, thus emphasizing virginity's strength and rebellion against constricting rules, which work by suffocating individuality, but also Belphebe's own individuality is dependent on her virginity. This is reflective of Elizabeth's situation also; her virginity prevented the subservience of either her body or her country to a husband.

The second stanza, describing the behaviour of 'shamefastnesse,' also makes a play on female eyes, which must be

prevented from gazing, from attracting sexual allure. Yet, the rosy cheeks, symbolic of virginity in the Renaissance, coupled with 'smiles,' fail to conceal complete sexual repression and attractiveness. The modesty, courtesy and obedience mentioned in the third stanza stresses female subordination which finds its source located in the male fear of female sexuality, the male need for complete control of, as well as possession of the female body and its behaviour.

With the well known exception of Queen Elizabeth, marriage rather than virginity was viewed for women as their way of securing economic or political advantage, their power defined by family life.¹⁹ In the sixteenth-century, marriage was therefore an institution, which forged the framework of society and regulated female love and obedience.²⁰ In the English Renaissance, women were positioned as having various functions in the society, as either objects of love, wives, virgins, or whores. This categorization obliged them to be further controlled under the rigorous patriarchal environment in which they existed.

It is said that Elizabeth chose not to marry to maintain her power as an individual monarch and avoid her mother's fate; the progression of her father's new wives at Court and their subsequent deaths.²¹ This was in spite of the fact that she ruled a sixteenth-century nation which was strongly patriarchal in its family lines, believing that

women should be subjected to men in their submissive, dominated roles of wife, mother or daughter.²²

The pressure on Elizabeth to marry and bear children was great, through parliamentary aims to ensure a succession. In 1559, in the beginning of her reign, a parliamentary delegation urged her to marry and produce an heir to the throne, to fulfil her duty both as a sovereign and as a woman; in their opinion, “nothing can be more repugnant to the common good than to see a Princesse, who by marriage may preserve the Commonwealth in peace, to lead a single life, like a Vestal Nunne” (Montrose, 1986, 309). Here we witness a continual struggle for power by the Parliament seeking to place their sovereign in a definitive structure, moulding her into a particular image. At the same time, Elizabeth was also empowered by her position as sovereign to manipulate this parliamentary ideology in order to suit her political, personal and cultural ambitions.

Whilst Elizabeth marrying may have resulted in heirs, it would also have meant the cessation of her mystical and individual power as a virgin queen. According to her government, anxious about not gaining an heir, Elizabeth was refusing to fulfil her female position, the obligation of a monarch ordained by God.²³ When she came to the throne, it was naturally thought she would marry. In 1559, Elizabeth continued manipulating this marriage controversy by publicly declaring

that she was already married to her country, in an attempt to reinforce her chastity as legitimate, and emphasize her individual political authority in terms of spiritual power. In the following speech, addressed to the parliamentary delegation in 1588, Elizabeth unites the image of herself as both a public and a private queen. Not only did Elizabeth aim to satisfy her Parliament and her public by claiming she was married to England, but by stating that the English people were her adopted children, she their symbolic, yet powerful mother, she was therefore metaphorically projecting herself as a complete, fulfilled woman (hence not barren) whilst remaining virginal:

I have made choice of such state as is freest from the incumbrance of secular pursuits and gives me the most leisure for the service of God: and could the applications of the most potent princes, or the very hazards of my life, have diverted me from this purpose, I had long ago worn the honours of a bride. These were my sentiments when I was but a private person; but now that the care and weight of a kingdom lies upon my shoulders, to add to these the incumbrance of the married state would be no point of discretion in me: but that I may give you the best satisfaction I can, I have long since made choice of a husband, the kingdom of England. And here is the pledge and emblem of my marriage contract, which I wonder you should so soon have forgot. [She showed them the ring worn at the accession.] I beseech you, gentlemen, charge me not with the want of children, forasmuch as every one of you, and every Englishman besides, are my children and relations . . . Should it be my lot to continue as I am, a Virgin Queen, I doubt not but the providence of God, seconded by your counsels and my own measures, will so dispose matters as to put the question of a successor out of all debate . . . For my own part, I desire no better character nor fairer remembrance of me to posterity than

to have this inscription on my tomb when I come to pay my last debt in nature: "Here lies Elizabeth, who liv'd and died a Maiden-Queen." (Rice, 117-118)

In her speech, Elizabeth refers to her free will in choosing to remain a virgin queen; 'I have made choice' in order to offer her life to 'the service of God,' evokes the image of a nun which may be compared with the negative image of the vestal virgin given by the parliamentary delegation. Elizabeth allows her hearers to believe that, queen or not, even as 'a private person,' virginity would have remained her permanent state. By replacing any thought of a real husband with a symbolic one, as well as the use of the wedding ring, Elizabeth magnifies the force of this speech as a holy pledge, to be carried even unto death, just as the marriage ceremony does, as the conclusion of her speech makes clear. Also, just as Mary is the mother of Christ, Elizabeth uses this concept of Mary as the virgin mother to evoke her own mystical force, her holy and pure existence. Here, the Queen can present herself as a mother to her people, with England as both the father and the offspring, and thus do away with the important issue of succession.²⁴ In this speech, Elizabeth fashions and legitimates her own autonomous position through the patriarchal authority, 'the providence of God' which is the unquestioned power of all.

Villeponteaux argues that the reason Elizabeth presented herself in this way is because

the Renaissance ideal of woman is predicated upon a personal, rather than publicly political, virtue – chastity, which means virginity for the unmarried woman and fidelity for the married so that she can be entrusted to bear the children of her husband, thus fulfilling a dynastic function. (1998, 210)

The inconsistency present in the propaganda emphasizing Elizabeth as both a virgin queen as well as a mother and mystical wife to her nation lay in the fact that Elizabeth was seen to nurture, foster, and provide England with love, as well as mystical power (stemming from the mythology associated with her virginity). In her perpetual virginity, Elizabeth entered into a symbolic marriage with England. In William Birch's "A Songe betwene the Quene's Majestie and Englande" an imagined dialogue exists between England and Elizabeth (as "Bessy"). This song provides a unique, and in many ways romantic presentation of Elizabeth's allegorical marriage to England, the physical geography of the country being united with both her private and political body. England is represented as being both her true lover and husband, providing Elizabeth with the energies to fully maximize her power.²⁵

Rose mentions that "the Protestants were dwelling more and more upon the virtues of marriage until matrimony seemed not merely

equal but in many ways superior to virginity" (28).²⁶ Rose's point, however, ignores the numerous religious influences regarding virginity, which were not merely confined to Protestant belief. Indeed, the doctrines of Puritanism contributed much to this claim that virginity was considered to be equal to, and in certain cases, superior to marriage. I will show, from such writings, as well as from Spenser's own work, that virginity was far from being placed as a secondary virtue in Elizabethan England.

It may be said that marriage replaced for many Protestants what they believed to be the cultural darkness and primitivism of the medieval Catholic doctrine.²⁷ However, this point excludes the fact that many of the Protestant clergy remained unmarried, and celibacy was still demanded of holders of fellowships at Oxford and Cambridge until the early nineteenth-century. Generally, marriage in Renaissance England was perceived as a religious order ordained by God for companionship and regeneration of the nation. Calvin, in his *Institution of the Christian Religion*, in this way attacks the monastic view of celibacy:

having graced marriage with the title of sacrament, to call it afterward uncleanness and pollution and carnal filth -- what giddy levity is this? How absurd it is to bar priests from this sacrament! If they say they do not debar them from the sacrament, but from the lust of copulation, they will not give me the slip. For they teach that copulation itself is a part of the sacrament, and that it alone is the

figure of the union which we have with Christ, i. conformity to nature; for man and woman are made one flesh only by carnal copulation. However, some of them have found two sacraments here: one of God and the soul, in the bridegroom and the bride; the other, of Christ and the church, in the husband and wife. However, copulation is still a sacrament, from which it is unlawful to bar any Christian.²⁸ (5. 239)

The point here is that Calvin is not attacking virginity itself, but rather, the condemnation of marital love (hence sex), which is a holy and sanctified state according to God. Calvin directs his argument against Catholic priests who are prevented from marriage by virtue of their vows of celibacy, yet he recognizes the hypocrisy involved even in their position, since human sexuality is not to be condemned. Calvin's recognition of this issue extends toward the claim that continual virginity for its own sake is not a natural condition for mankind, however holy it may be otherwise considered to be. Similarly, Luther offers this pattern for marriage, which appears to override the value and importance of virginity according to the Bible itself: "in God's sight there is no higher office, estate, condition and work (next to the Gospel which concerns God Himself) than the estate of marriage" (423).²⁹

Hooker, however, while expressing the value of marriage as a beneficial and respectable means of propagation of the human species, does not ignore the importance and religious value placed on virginity:

In this world there can be no society durable otherwise then only by propagation. Albeit therefore single life bee a thing more angelicall and diuine, yet sith the replenishing first of earth with blessed inhabitants and then of heauen with Saints euerlastingly praising God did depend vpon coniunction of man and woman, hee which made althings complete and perfect saw it could not be good to leaue men without any helper vnto the fore alleaged ende: In things which some farder end doth cause to bee desired choice seeketh rather proportion then absolute perfection of goodnesse. (5. 73, 214)

Here, Hooker admits that virginity is 'more angelicall and diuine,' positioning it on a heavenly rather than an earthly plane, and its superiority to the state of marital love is presented as higher, though not as physically productive.

Spenser was well known as a Puritan and the leading court poet who, in Davies' words, re-enforced his "seriousness in religion with courtesy and learning" (1970, 42).³⁰ Spenser's own investment in the relationship between marriage and virginity in *The Faerie Queene* was a concentrated effort to not only influence his public audience with Protestant principles, but also to celebrate and compliment his monarch.

Boehrer views Spenser's engagement with the subject of virginity in the following way, relating to the issue that virginity is perverse because it cannot provide the reproduction of the species:

in extolling this virtue, Spenser has chosen to promote a set of values that, in its strictest sense, subverts the political requirements of monarchy to reproduce itself. He has thus placed himself in a sexually and politically radical position; chastity, understood in its absolute and not in its wedded sense, is indeed a perversion. (556)

In making this claim, Boehrer ignores the spiritually productive aspects which were aligned to virginity in the Renaissance.

While *The Faerie Queene* progresses towards the marriages of various characters, the majorities are never actualized. This, I argue, may stem from Spenser's own confusion, his ambivalence as to which virtue to praise more. Clearly in this instance his inclination seems to offer praise to Elizabeth and her virginity overall. Thus, a poem fully celebrating actualized marriages (rather than deferred ones, as *The Faerie Queene* actually does) would undoubtedly detract from the total praise of Elizabeth's virginity and shift to that of marital chastity. Future marriages in the poem are contemplated, yet never achieved. The main reason for this is, I believe, not that *The Faerie Queene* is a textually unfinished poem, but rather that Spenser was writing to praise a monarch who remained unmarried. In reference to this, a note of truth echoes in Evans' words: "the untidy life of the world which is Spenser's subject finds accurate expression in the unfinished action" (1970, 239).³¹

Thus we see that the marriages of Arthur and Gloriana, Redcrosse Knight and Una, Britomart and Artegall, though proposed by Spenser, are not represented in the poem. Even though Scudamour and Amoret are married, they are continually separated both before and after the ceremony. Other virgins moving toward marriage in the poem are Fidelia, Speranza and Pastorella.³² Marriage exists for Spenser as the natural aim of human (not spiritual or mystical) existence, emphasizing that the stories of all these characters center upon their quest to be either united or reunited with their respective spouses. Such a feature in *The Faerie Queene* would have undoubtedly left much for Elizabeth, the virgin queen, to reflect upon as the poem's primary reader, its primary object of praise. The fact that the prospective marriages should remain unfulfilled corresponds nicely in shadowing Elizabeth as an unmarried queen, for in order to fulfil them, to portray a more perfect existence with marital love as its center rather than virginity, would have meant a deflection from the aspects which Elizabeth herself represented both as monarch and as woman, particularly regarding her courtiers. The Queen diplomatically toyed with the possibility of alliances which did not come to pass through her own marriage for power and security in England, with Philip of Spain, the Duke of Anjou and his brother the Duke of Alençon, Prince Charles of Sweden, the Duke of Saxony and the Archduke Charles.

Her non-sexual, yet passionate affairs with courtiers included Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Christopher Hatton, Walter Raleigh, and the Earl of Essex.

King reminds us that when Spenser portrayed Elizabeth in *The Faerie Queene*, Belpheobe personified her virginity as a permanent state (1982, 148-151). In the words of Goldberg:

Absorption into other voices, subservience to other texts: this is the problem encountered in Spenserian narration. The narrator, simply in order to tell a tale, represents himself as being in the sense of a text that comes before him, imposed upon by demands that are "outside" his text, usurped, so that his voice belongs to a ventriloquist, his text the text of another. (31)

The Faerie Queene is above all Elizabeth's text, shaped around the public image of a beautiful, mystical, yet powerful virgin sovereign. While other characters in the poem serve to represent the desire for Elizabeth as a married queen, Belpheobe is the only one who, it is clear, will remain unwed and virginal, in order to both reflect and celebrate this state of existence in Elizabeth.

Spenser's marriage with Elizabeth Boyle is elaborately presented in the *Epithalamion* and depicts the institution of marriage and sex as holy, natural and honourable. Perhaps she is shown as being the best of all virgins because she is a bride and will soon trade her life as a virgin for her new life as a wife. Interestingly though, she as a

bride is presented similarly to Eliza in *The Shepheardes Calender*, as we will soon see, as if to suggest that virginity and future marital love are to be praised equally:

Loe where she comes along with portly pace,
 Lyke Phoebe from her chamber of the East,
 Arysing forth to run her mighty race,
 Clad all in white, that seemes a virgin best.
 So well it her beseemes that ye would weene
 Some angell she had beene.
 Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre,
 Sprinckled with perle, and perling flowres a tweene,
 Doe lyke a golden mantle her attyre,
 And being crownéd with a girland greene,
 Seeme lyke some mayden Queene.
 (148-158)

Here, the bride appears as Diana, a virgin goddess. Spenser proclaims the power of virginity, and alludes to Elizabeth, the 'mayden Queene.' Forster recognizes that in such epithalamion literature in general, the wedding has three aspects to be celebrated: "as a religious event, as a social or political event, and as an erotic event" (89).³³ In such a way then, marriage in Spenser's day was not merely a private but also a public social time.

Paradoxically, once more, Spenser in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene*, praises the virginity of Elizabeth over marital chastity, displaying my argument about his ambiguity where both are concerned:

It falls me here to write of Chastity,
 That fairest vertue, farre aboue the rest;
 For which what needs me fetch from *Faery*

Forreine ensamples, it to haue exprest?
 Sith it is shrined in my Soueraine's brest,
 And form'd so liuely in each perfect part,
 That to all Ladies, which haue it profest,
 Need but behold the pourtraict of her hart,
 If pourtrayd it might be by any liuing art.

(3. Pr. 1)

Spenser aims to inspire virtuous action in his readers by asking them to emulate Elizabeth's example of chastity, which is virginity. He not only stresses the inadequacies of language in providing a suitable presentation of her sexual value, but here expresses that virginity is so powerful that it is beyond the power of language, unlike marital chastity.

Wilson interprets Spenser as a poet who was so heavily influenced by medieval doctrines and symbolism that he naturally saw Elizabeth's virginity as one which made "chastity the fairest idea" for his poetry, and adds that "in *The Faerie Queene* the virginity of Elizabeth is constantly idealized" (1966, 364). This feature contradicts the natural instinct toward marriage and procreation, which *The Faerie Queene* also envisages.

Elizabethan society was held together by an ideological system of images, attitudes myths and feelings.³⁴ As a Protestant poet, Spenser was also responsible for contributing to a growing cult of matrimonial love. This however, did not deflect from his tributes to virginity, hence

initiating his ambiguity where both virginity and marriage are concerned. For example, in the following dedication to Elizabeth through the praise of Eliza's virginity in the April eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*, Hobbinoll asks the bathing nymphs to

Helpe me to blaze
Her worthy praise,
Which in her sexe doth all excell.

Of fayre *Elisa* be your siluer song,
that blessed wight:
The flowre of Virgins, may shee florish long,
In princely plight.
For shee is *Syrinx* daughter without spotte,
Which *Pan* the shepheards God of her begot:
So sprong her grace
Of heauenly race,
No mortall blemishe may her blotte.
(46-54)

Spenser here exalts virginity over marriage, as symbolic of Elizabeth's virginity which 'doth all excel.' However, there is no hint of her barrenness, which, as we have seen, is the worst insult that could be inflicted upon virginity in this era. Instead, Eliza is portrayed as the symbol of a fertile woman through the description of her as a 'flowre' which Hobbinoll hopes will 'florish long.' To 'florish' infers not only growth, but also a reproductive force that may be naturally associated with the flowers in nature's garden. We have only to recall the Garden of Adonis here, the essential place of natural sexual activity and growth in *The Faerie Queene*:

In that same Gardin all the goodly flowres,
 Wherewith dame Nature doth her beautifie,
 And decks the girlonds of her paramoures,
 Are fetcht: there is the first seminarie
 Of all things, that are borne to liue and die,
 According to their kindes. Long worke it were,
 Here to account the endlesse progenie
 Of all the weedes, that bud and blossome there;
 But so much as doth need, must needs be counted here.
 (3. 6. 30)

In *The Shepheardes Calender*, Elizabeth's virginity is separated from the earthly sphere and exalted. She is introduced as an angelic being; her virginity is stressed through the metaphor of her clear skin, and in *The Faerie Queene*, Una shadows Elizabeth as a 'royall virgin' (1. 2. 7; 1. 3. 5; 1. 8. 26), 'withoutten spot' (1. 12. 22). The "Song of Solomon" likewise describes the female beloved as follows, referring both to her physical appearance and her virginity: "thou art all faire, my loue, and there is no spot in thee" (Song Sol. 4: 7); "who is she that loketh forth as the morning, faire as the moone, pure as the sunne" (Song Sol. 6: 9); "my sister my spouse [is as] a garden inclosed, as a spring shut vp, [and] a fountaine sealed vp" (Song Sol. 4: 12). Warner observes that these images constituted the most popular interpretations of a virgin's symbolic body during the Medieval and Renaissance periods (1985, 257). The implication that a woman remains untarnished serves to add to her value; her worth exists not just as an example to all

other women, but makes her appear an attractive possession as a future wife, pure and ready to become 'spotted,' yet only by her husband.

In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, Colin in this way praises the virgin beloved:

"my selfe I do professe to be
 Vassall to one, whom all my dayes I serue;
 The beame of beautie sparkled from aboue,
 The floure of vertue and pure chastitie,
 The blossome of sweet ioy and perfect loue,
 The pearle of peerlesse grace and modestie:
 To her my thoughts I daily dedicate,
 To her my heart I nightly martyrize:
 To her my loue I lowly do prostrate,
 To her my life I wholly sacrifice:
 My thought, my heart, my loue, my life is shee,
 And I hers euer onely, euer one:
 One euer I all vowed hers to bee,
 One euer I, and others neuer none."

(466-479)

In his dedication to his beloved, Colin makes use of the common symbols associated with virginity – 'the floure of vertue,' the blossom of 'perfect loue' and a 'pearle' of grace and modesty, mark the virgin in this description as being above all other women, worthy of the male beloved making himself a servant in relation to her. This can be seen as analogous to Belpheobe's association with Timias, the modest, yet powerful goddess with the humble, but lowly squire. Colin Clout's praise also recalls references to the Virgin Mary's humility, modesty and perfect love, which is biblically reflected in the gospel of Luke:

Then Marie said, My soule magnifieth the Lord
 And my spirit hath reioyceth in God my Sauour.
 For he hathe looked on the poore degre of his seruant: for
 beholde, from hence forth shall all ages call me blessed.
 (Luke. 1: 46-48)

The strong affiliation which existed in the Renaissance between Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary allowed for the Protestant worship of Elizabeth as a virginal icon to replace, for many brought up in the Old Religion, the veneration of the Virgin Mary.³⁵ De Bruyn stresses that the replacement of Mary was not so much out of disrespect for the mother of Christ, but a complement to Elizabeth: "It was felt by poets and writers that no greater praise could be bestowed upon woman than that which had been conferred upon the mother of God" (58). The Virgin Mary is loved by many as the Mother of God, a cult figure with divine powers, an intercessor for men.³⁶ In the mid 1570s Elizabeth also began to be worshipped as a virgin object of love and her Protestant religion was attempting to replace Mary at the same time.³⁷ For this reason, Ardener defines virginity as the "third sex" (41), a status not confined to the category of mortality, but instead belonging to divinity.

Mallette argues that *The Faerie Queene* contests the discourses of the body, sexuality, revenge, marriage, and other important issues which were established during the Reformation: "*The Faerie Queene*

critiques, rather than mirrors, Reformation concerns, recasting and refurbishing religious discourse in each of its books" (7). Through Belpheobe, Spenser, I argue, critiques the Reformation concerns dealing with marriage and procreation, whilst his own ambiguity as to which is superior enable them to appear equal in the poem. As I have demonstrated, through both religious and poetic writers of the period, female virginity maintained its dignity and power when compared with marital love, and thus Belpheobe's place in *The Faerie Queene* is secured as an object of continued praise and worship in relation to sixteenth-century culture.

This chapter has examined Spenser's presentation of Belpheobe and Amoret as twins. Spenser presents both virginity and marital chastity as celebrated aspects of the female life, one heavenly and the other earthly. I argue that an antithesis cannot occur with Belpheobe and Amoret in *The Faerie Queene*, due to the fact that both female purity and the female ability to propagate are vital to the principles that Spenser displays in the poem. This point illustrates that the virginity which Belpheobe symbolizes should not be interpreted as sterile, unproductive, but one which is recognized in *The Faerie Queene* as equal to the marital state of life, as well as symbolically prolific. This, as I have argued, is a result of Spenser's socio-political influence through Elizabeth's own virginity which prevented him from offering

complete praise to, or exemplifying married love above virginity, an aspect which will be extended in my following chapter which studies Delphoebe's and Amoret's encounter with the Carle of Lust.

Chapter Four: Belphoebe and the Carle of Lust

In Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene*, Amoret is rescued from Lust's cave by Timias and the Carle is then chased and killed by Belphoebe. This scene will address the historical and political influence, which existed in Elizabeth's relationship to Sir Walter Raleigh (who is shadowed by Timias in *The Faerie Queene*). I will also demonstrate that Belphoebe's defeat of the Carle of Lust is intrinsic to Spenser's depiction of her aggressive role as a huntress and as a sensual woman, through the manner in which she repels the forces of lust (when she kills the Carle), and is at the same time affiliated with them by her attraction to him. Villeponteaux incorrectly states, "Belphoebe neither allows nor admits sexual desire" (1993, 40). In this scene, and the chapter as a whole, as I will show, Belphoebe's virginal position in the poem certainly does not make her immune to sensuality.

The first time that Belphoebe and Amoret are reunited following their birth and separation is in the incident featuring Lust's cave, where they, as Paglia notes, do not even recognize they are twins (1979, 47). Despite their dissimilar upbringings, Spenser brings the twins together again in this scene to highlight the fact that the marital body (Amoret) and the virginal body (Belphoebe) culminate in opposing forces, one

active and defiant (Belphebe) and the other passive and helpless (Amoret). However, as my previous chapter argued, neither the marital or the virginal states are depicted, in general, as *preferred* by Spenser in the poem; rather, they are often just portrayed as *different* to one another.

Amoret is captured by Lust after wandering from the protective care of Britomart, who lies asleep:

The whiles faire *Amoret*, of nought affeard,
Walkt through the wood, for pleasure, or for need;
When suddenly behind her backe she heard
One rushing forth out of the thickest weed,
That ere she backe could turne to taken heed,
Had vnawares her snatched vp from the ground.
Feebly she shriekt, but so feebly indeed,
That Britomart heard not the shrilling sound,
There where through weary trauel she lay sleeping sound.¹
(4. 7. 4)

There are numerous comparisons in the presentation of Amoret's character here to Spenser's portrayal of Belphebe. First of all, Amoret willingly leaves the presence of Britomart, her protector, showing (like Belphebe) no fear of the unknown, no fear of venturing through the woods alone. In Spenser's description of her walk through the wood as being either "for pleasure, or for need," we may be read Amoret's possible desire for capture, for rape, for in her unwillingness to leave the Temple of Venus, as previously shown in the last chapter, she both

wants and fears sexual experience. This fact is further illustrated by her feeble shriek.

It is important to stress that Belpheobe (as we will soon see) as well as Amoret, are both (even unconsciously) drawn toward the Carle of Lust; Amoret to be captured by him, Belpheobe to destroy and then stand in awe of his corpse. One may question why it is that Spenser chose to place these twins (rather than any other female characters) in direct association with the allegorical figure of Lust in *The Faerie Queene*. Lust is, theoretically, vehemently opposed to the virtues of both virginity and marital chastity which Belpheobe and Amoret exemplify.

Amoret demonstrates throughout *The Faerie Queene* that she continuously requires female protection to shield her from the threats of kidnap and rape, which work to foster her immense and unnecessary fear of sex. As Spenser says of Amoret, "pittie is to heare the perils, which she tride" (4. 7. 2). Rose points out that this is because, unlike Belpheobe, Amoret "has been introduced to the dangers that threaten a woman's honour and reputation" (132). However, Rose ignores Belpheobe's own threatening situation with Braggadocchio, perhaps because she dealt with it more aggressively than Amoret ever could. Although Belpheobe also possesses honour and reputation, the mystical power of her unchangeable virginity provides her with the strength and

ability to defend herself from such sexual attack. She appears (and indeed is) more powerful and victorious than any male force that she confronts. Can we assume then that Belpheobe does not need rescuing from Lust because she is immune to the sordid aspect of desire that he represents? As I want to argue, Belpheobe is capable of fending off, and destroying the Carle of Lust because the perverse forces, which he symbolizes, are already embedded within her own character. As a virgin huntress, Belpheobe's immunity to Lust lies not only in the repulsion she feels for the creature, but in her attraction toward him. This factor will be demonstrated through my analysis of her admiration of this rapist's bloodied corpse, and her later anger at any non-perverse, natural inclination toward physical love, as that which takes place between Timias and Amoret.

The creature Lust is "a wilde and saluage man" (4. 7. 5).

Yet was no man, but onely like in shape,
 And eke in stature higher by a span,
 All ouergrowne with haire, that could awhape
 An hardy hart, and his wide mouth did gape
 With huge great teeth, like to a tusked Bore:
 For he liu'd all on rauin and on rape
 Of men and beasts; and fed on fleshy gore,
 The signe whereof yet stain'd his bloody lips afore.

(4. 7. 5)

Lust's 'tusked' teeth, his club and his nose are all phallic symbols, large and "full dreadfully empurpled all with bloud," as is his mouth:

"his neather lip was not like man nor beast,/But like a wide deepe poke, downe hanging low" (4. 7. 6). Another phallic symbol rests with Lust's "two wide long ears," representing the testicles, on both sides of his "huge great nose" (4. 7. 6). Also,

all his haire was like a garment scene;
And in his hand a tall young oake he bore,
Whose knottie snags were sharpned all afore²
(4. 7. 7)

Spenser, through his creation of the Carle of Lust, illustrates a lack of tolerance for any aspect of human desire that exceeds the boundaries of social restraint, of social acceptance. This is perhaps why Spenser depicts Lust as being 'like' a man 'in shape' but having beastly hair, huge teeth and gigantic stature. The club here is another phallic description, which may be compared with Orgoglio's "snaggy Oke" (1. 7. 10) in Book 1. These facets indicate that lust is purely the instinct of an animal nature, not tempered by love, by admiration or by respect. However, as Spenser later reveals, this Carle both respects and fears Belpheobe's virginity, realizing that its purity and power can destroy the beastly forces which he embodies. While Lust is depicted in the poem as kidnapping, raping and later devouring other virgins, he fails to, and fears to try this with Belpheobe, due to her training by Diana as a willful and powerful hunter.

Lust's cave is representative of the sexual dangers present in the poem.³ Caves are commonly regarded as places of peril, as traps. Spenser describes Lust's cave as one of "darknesse and dread horror" (4. 7. 9) and a "hellish den" (4. 7. 31). This cave can be understood as perhaps being a symbol of hell in *The Faerie Queene*, a place where sinister desires are actualized at the price of female virtue, a place where life is robbed without remorse. Similarly, the dark forests, castles, cottages, and other caves which are contained in the mystical, yet threatening land of Faerie, are portrayed by Spenser as allegorical structures of evil in terms of the relationship they have to the characters that relate to, or retreat from them.

The Lust episode stresses that the two appetites of hunger and lust are intrinsic to one another. Aemylia, whose capture by the Carle is similar to Amoret's, declares that

on the spoile of women he doth liue,
Whose bodies chast, when euer in his powre
He may them catch, vnable to gainestriue,
He with his shamefull lust doth first deflowre,
And afterwards themselues doth cruelly deuoure.⁴
(4. 7. 12)

The virgin body stands as the primary enemy of Lust in *The Faerie Queene*, which is why the Carle aims to 'deflowre' and then 'deuoure' it. By doing so, he allows the force of lust to dominate that of chastity, and initiates these unwilling virgins into his own realm of sexual

conquest and the defeat, the destruction, of their honour, hence Silberman's recognition of the sinister feature present in Aemylia's rhyme of 'deflowre/deuoure' (1995, 119).

Both Aemylia and Amoret are literally and figuratively swept away by Lust, which is also suggestive of the weakness for lust presiding within the two young women, and even more so in the old hag who is also made his prisoner. Lust cares only for his own sexual pleasure.⁵ Indeed, it is obvious that Plato's definition of lust depicts Spenser's personification of it within the Carle:

it is quite random in the effects which it produces, and it is this love which the baser sort of men feel . . . it is physical rather than spiritual . . . it prefers that its objects should be as unintelligent as possible, because its only aim is the satisfaction of its desires, and it takes no account of the manner in which this is achieved. (46)

It is for this reason that Lust's desire is self-centered; he places no regard on which object he satisfies himself, as Aemylia is aware of concerning the hag; "for euer when he burnt in lustfull fire,/She in my stead supplide his bestiall desire" (4. 7. 19). Aemylia's story in the poem shows that the aspect of lust presides over virtue and honour and one's place in society, and she describes Lust as being "the shame of men, and plague of womankind" (4. 7. 18). Perhaps Lust reveals Aemylia's hidden nature to her: she, in her desire for a sexual life,

forsakes her family and decides to elope with Amyas, a man who is socially inferior to her (4. 7. 16).⁶

In the scene where the old woman offers herself to the Carle in order to save the young woman, she substitutes her body to satisfy his masculine desire. The hag enables Lust's desire to be acted out, exchanging herself for Aemylia so that the latter's virginity, integrity and physical being can be protected. On the other hand, it can be argued that the hag, by substituting her body for Aemylia's, is actually not being self-sacrificing at all, but satisfying her own lust with the creature, as does the adulterous Hellenore, "embraced of a *Satyre* rough and rude,/Who all the night did minde his ioyous play" (3. 10. 48).

In the characters of Belphoebe and Amoret, certain conventions are established within the poem which construct appropriate female sexual behaviour. If female sexual desire is not properly maintained, it is capable of allowing the woman to become degraded, pursuing her unquenchable lust for the flesh. The character of Hellenore represents the dark, and potentially terrible powers embedded within the feminine. She stands in opposition to the virtue of marital love, in that Hellenore seeks to thwart this virtue by betraying her husband through adultery. Her efforts to satisfy her sexual desires with the Satyres in the wild

forest is representative of her native, full-blown sexuality, without fear or inhibition, similar to the hag in Lust's cave.

Spenser's *Hymne in Honour of Love* marks this particular, beastly aspect of lust, which the poet describes principally as "loose desire" (175):

For loue is Lord of truth and loialtie,
Lifting himselfe out of the lowly dust,
On golden plumes vp to the purest skie,
Aboue the reach of loathly sinfull lust,
Whose base affect through cowardly distrust
Of his weake wings, dare not to heauen fly,
But like a moldwarpe in the earth doth ly.
(176-182)

The love that Spenser speaks of here is Platonic love, which enables a man to aspire toward the spiritual plane rather than disintegrate into the lower earthly realm of destruction, of death and dust, which the passion of lust promises.

Cavanagh adds an interesting psychoanalytic analysis to Belpheobe's character, one that requires exploration:

Belpheobe's insistence upon Timias' sexual repression as a sign of respect for her inviolate chastity becomes increasingly suspect as she transfers her own passion and sexual curiosity into the woods, directing it toward bloodied male corpses rather than upon living, healthy bodies. Virtuous reputations in the epic usually do not withstand such fascination with the forbidden. Once again, however, her metahuman stature keeps her potentially suspect behaviour from jeopardizing the respect and love of her admirers in Faeryland. Few other female figures could count on a similar response. (137)⁷

In my second chapter, I demonstrated how Timias' repression was indeed a result of Belphoebe's unwavering virginity, what Cavanagh terms her 'inviolable chastity.' Here, Cavanagh's suspicion of Belphoebe's 'metahuman stature' highlights Belphoebe's link, her psychotic obsession with blood and dead bodies, an obsession resulting from Belphoebe's own alleged repressions which are unleashed in murder rather than sex itself. Cavanagh's argument is interesting, for in it there exists the recognition of Belphoebe's sexual power, which, although perhaps repressed, is not nonexistent. Instead, it merely adopts a different outlet of aggression. True too, that 'her metahuman stature' – in other words, the mystical, supernatural feature of virginity – prevents and protects Belphoebe's moral character from being debased in Spenser's representation of her in *The Faerie Queene*. This further exemplifies the celebratory aspect embodied in a virginity that is to exist continually, virginity and a praise not offered to the other female figures in the poem, as Cavanagh also acknowledges.

The argument that Belphoebe is capable of destroying Lust because she cannot be tempted by his power is evident in Roche's view, which is that "the only person able to destroy Lust is Belphoebe. She is the only person in the poem for whom Lust is not a possible

temptation" (1964, 137).⁸ My presentation of Belpheobe's attraction to Lust's corpse, in contrast, goes against this.

Belpheobe's relationship to the Carle of Lust will now be displayed to manifest the 'perverse' and 'monstrous' aspect of her virginity, one that is not tempered by marriage, by a proper satisfaction and maintenance of sexual desire. I argue that Belpheobe retaliates against the unquenched forces of lust within herself by striking out at the Carle, who, in this following scene, becomes the shadow of what she may become if she fails to control her virginal power, a power recognized in the previous statement by Cavanagh.

Lust, on initially noticing the presence of Belpheobe, "fled away with ghastly dreriment,/Well knowing her to be his deaths sole instrument" (4. 7. 29). She pursues him to his cave however, and there,

She sent an arrow forth with mighty draught,
That in the very dore him ouercaught,
And in his nape arriuing, through it thrild
His greedy throte, therewith in two distraught,
That all his vitall spirites thereby spild,
And all his hairy brest with gory bloud was fild.

Whom when on ground she groueling saw to rowle,
She ran in hast his life to haue bereft:
But ere she could him reach, the sinfull sowle
Hauing his carrion corse quite sencelesse left,
Was fled to hell, surcharg'd with spoile and theft.
Yet ouer him she there long gazing stood,
And oft admir'd his monstrous shape, and oft
His mighty limbs, whilest all with filthy bloud
The place there ouerflowne, seemd like a sodaine flood.
(4. 7. 31-32)

The killing of Lust, while being an attempt by Belphoebe to destroy him, is at the same time, I argue, a violent sexual encounter. Where we have seen Lust described as controlling and raping women, here it is he that is the passive victim, overtaken and symbolically 'raped' by Belphoebe. Her very arrow can be read in this scene as phallic, piercing Lust's throat, ripping through his flesh and causing his blood to spill in the same way that he enforced the spilling of virginal (hymeneal) blood through his rape of countless innocent maidens. Lust's 'vitall spirites thereby spild' by Belphoebe in this scene is interesting, especially when we consider that 'spirit' was a sixteenth-century term for semen, making it all the more effectively a female rape of the male: she ejaculates by proxy, causing him to spill his seed on the ground, just as Onan does in Genesis 38: 9.

Belphoebe, a sexual initiator, a victor of this particular 'conquest' of Lust, also proves herself a sexual voyeur. When Belphoebe defeats Lust, then stands transfixed over his corpse, this moment in the poem may be understood as her unconscious desire for the Carle. I argue that she shows herself to feel 'the baser sort' of love for Lust, by the very fact of her undoubted admiration for his grotesque body, his 'hairy brest,' 'carrion corse,' 'monstrous shape' and 'mighty limbs' overflowing with 'filthy bloud.' According to the OED, the term

'admire' is first recorded in the 1590s and possesses a double signification: "to view with wonder or surprise; to wonder or marvel at" (2) and "to regard with pleased surprise, or with wonder mingled with esteem, approbation, or affection" (3. a). In this sense, Belphoebe's pleasure stems from a surprised wonder, which can be viewed to be altogether fascinated as well as erotic. True, Lust is also an 'object unintelligent,' but in this episode Belphoebe casts off her spiritual sensibilities and portrays her physical desires. She shows us that virginity and lust can sometimes exist in parallel to one another.

Belphoebe adopts the position of the masculine subject in the second stanza, Lust being her visual object. For Belphoebe, the gaze in this scene of *The Faerie Queene* possesses violent penetrative aspects, overriding Kaplan's psychoanalytic point that "men do not simply look; their gaze carries with it the power of action and of possession that is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive and return a gaze, but cannot act on it" (311). However, Belphoebe not only 'gazes' but, in her admiration, she sexually longs for Lust's corpse. Belphoebe's attraction toward Lust's monstrosity is fascinating, enabling us to view in detail the extent to which her virginity cannot be dismissed as mere naivety or insusceptibility to sexual passion. She stands over Lust for a long time, as though amorously entranced. Belphoebe is in the position of admiring each portion of his body, visually ingesting his form by the

sheer power of her controlling gaze. However, Lust's very death does not grant him the same privilege of returning Belpheobe's impassioned stare, thus positioning him as the feminized object in relation to her, as Timias also was. The overflowing blood of Lust in this scene, part of Belpheobe's attraction to him, is in this way perceived by Cavanagh: "the image of Belpheobe as sexual dominator is strengthened by her remarkable lust for blood, a characteristic which is also camouflaged by her privileged position" (136). Paglia adds that "we generally see Belpheobe caught up in blood-lust . . . the virgin hunter seems to relish the sight of blood" (1979, 46).

Here we can glimpse voyeuristic adoration as being deeply masochistic. The dead figure of Lust has the lesser power, while Belpheobe possesses a phallic, penetrating force. Belpheobe is what Heale terms as the "extreme opposite" (111) of Lust, yet, Belpheobe and Lust are still (even loosely) affiliated, as I want to argue, in an extension of Goldberg's point that "her opposition is also a sign that she includes what she opposes, just as her fixation on Lust, that dead member, suggests her assumption of his powers" (158-159). It is doubtful that Goldberg implies that Belpheobe actually 'becomes' the new figure of Lust after killing him; I argue that she does not 'assume' his power following his death, but that she possessed those powers *whilst* she was killing him.

Lacan does not view gazing as merely looking complacently on any given subject, instead he interprets the gaze as residing beyond the eyes and within the level of the unconscious mind, somewhat like an inner eye which is linked to the pre-Oedipal identity, to the early stage of subject formation. Lacan's following theory of the gaze is one that I wish to link with Belpheobe contemplating the corpse of Lust:

Before desire learns to recognize itself . . . it is seen solely in the other.

At first, before language, desire exists solely in the plane of the imaginary relation of the specular stage, projected, alienated in the other. The tension it provokes is then deprived of an outcome. That is to say that it has no other outcome . . . than the destruction of the other.

The subject's desire can only be confirmed in this relation through a competition, through an absolute rivalry with the other, in view of the object towards which it is directed. And each time we get close, in a given subject, to this primitive alienation, the most radical aggression arises – the desire for the disappearance of the other in so far as he supports the subject's desire. (170)

Prior to the episode in Lust's cave, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* shows no real hint of Belpheobe's personal involvement with the emotions of lust and desire. Perhaps Lust can be viewed then, as the image which Belpheobe recognizes in herself (hence the Lacanian mirror) and aims to destroy – desire 'has no other outcome . . . than the destruction of the other' as Lacan recognizes. Belpheobe is the victor in her rivalry with the Carle of Lust, who I see as 'supporting her desire' in the sense that she shows no real hint of disgust with his corpse, but rather the

opposite. It is almost as though, here, Belphoebe feels no disgust because she cannot despise a desire (lust), which she herself possesses. Her virginity and its link with eroticism, as I have demonstrated here, do not make Belphoebe a sexless character, but rather, a more complex one.

Illusions are shattered when imperfections are shown in the look of another, in the gap between the real and ideal, in the ultimate quest for recognition with the one who controls the gaze and the one who is controlled by it, as Lust is. Belphoebe, as she stands transfixed by Lust's body, resembles Ovid's Narcissus. I read this alongside the theory of Lacan's pre-Oedipal phase, as she needs to destroy an aspect of herself, the self that she might become. When Narcissus sees his reflection in the spring as he takes a drink, the scene exists in parallel to Belphoebe's admiration of Lust in *The Faerie Queene*:

He look's in wonder.
 Charmed by himself, spell-bound, and no more moving
 Than any marble statue . . .
 Everything attracts him
 That makes him so attractive. Foolish boy,
 He wants himself; the loved becomes the lover,
 The seeker sought, the kindler burns.
 (3. 418-426)

Narcissus, who characterizes the most extreme form of self-love and self-obsession, can be seen in relation to Belphoebe through her virginal position in the poem. After all, virginity is a state which

excludes all forms of physical possession, of rupture, of exterior threat. Even though Belpheobe does not deny Timias Platonic love, as we will later see in the fifth chapter, she does deny him the physical aspect of love here outlined in Narcissus.

Just as Narcissus gazes at himself, transfixed, Belpheobe does the same over Lust's body, as though she has just recognized an aspect of herself, which she never realized existed. I am not claiming here that Belpheobe physically desired Lust as Narcissus desired himself, but rather stressing again that a reading of Belpheobe's character should not be dismissed as completely oblivious to eroticism simply because she is a virgin.

Belpheobe's attraction to Lust is also different from Aemylia's and the hag's. Instead, Belpheobe's relation to the Carle exists not merely in her ability to defeat and kill him, but in being herself drawn to the forces that his image represents. On the surface, this argument appears to contradict Belpheobe's virgin state. One could perhaps expect that she should be less susceptible to Lust than her twin sister, whose future nature points toward a life of physical sexuality. Belpheobe possesses susceptibility to the creature Lust, but in way different from Amoret.

Belpheobe serves the virgin goddess Diana, a huntress who, like her, defies the forces of sexual lust rather than intentionally instigating them. Halpern writes:

Amazons and the nymphs of Diana also withhold their sexuality in ways that make them independent, strange, and frightening to men. All of these figures mark the point at which virginity ceases to denote submission and begins to denote revolt, at which purification becomes danger.
(94)

Halpern's words also indirectly mention the existing sexuality of the virgin huntress, what is 'withheld' in order to pursue independence, dominance over others. This sensual aspect of Belpheobe's attraction to the Carle of Lust is intriguing when we consider that in Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies*, the ideal virgin is classified as having no sexual desires whatsoever, her purity is mental and emotional as well as physical.⁹

When Belpheobe chases Lust and kills him, she leaves Amoret and Timias bleeding and wounded together. They are hurt because when Timias confronts Lust at an earlier stage in an effort to save Amoret, he is not successful. While Timias cannot defeat the creature, it must be remembered that he exists only as a squire, not a hunter as Belpheobe is. This explains why Timias' efforts to destroy Lust are presented by Spenser as strenuous, dangerous, and very ineffectual.

Spenser describes Timias fighting Lust, with Amoret in between them and Lust holding Amoret as a shield, for which she is unintentionally bruised by Timias in the battle.¹⁰ This provides some interesting analogies:

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

Which subtill sleight did him encumber much,
 And made him oft, when he would strike, forbear;
 For hardly could he come the carle to touch,
 But that he her must hurt, or hazard neare:
 Yet he his hand so carefully did beare,
 That at the last he did himselfe attaine,
 And therein left the pike head of his speare.
 A streame of coleblacke bloud thence gusht amaine,
 That all her silken garments did with bloud bestaine.

With that he threw her rudely on the flore,
 And laying both his hands vpon his glaue,
 With dreadfull strokes let driue at him so sore,
 That forst him flie abacke, himselfe to saue:
 Yet he therewith so felly still did raue,
 That scarce the Squire his hand could once vpreare,
 But for aduantage ground vnto him gaue,
 Tracing and trauersing, now here, now there;
 For bootlesse thing it was to think such blowes to beare.

(4. 7. 26-28)

The woman is the third term between the two males, who reflect back on one another in both erotic and aggressive passion. Belpheobe, after

chasing away Lust, unknowingly leaves the prostrate Amoret to be tended by Timias. While it may be argued that Timias, simply by battling with Lust, can be viewed as opposing the destructive force that the Carle generates, this theory does not explain the symbolic sexual wounding of Amoret. I want to claim that, in the battle between Timias and Lust, it is Lust which stands as Timias' mirror image, reflecting the inner desires which the squire possesses for Amoret, in the same way that the Carle mirrored the sexuality present in Belpheobe's virginity.

Timias' lust for Amoret is exhibited in his rush to her defence, and he almost joins her in a sexual liaison following his rescue of her. As Timias' attempts to console the distressed and injured Amoret through his kisses and amorous touches, the furious Belpheobe, who abandons both her sister and the squire, discovers him. There is no possibility of a friendship ensuing between Belpheobe and Amoret after the latter's rescue, owing to Timias' interference, which arouses Belpheobe's jealousy and possible contempt toward her twin:

There she him found by that new louely mate,
 Who lay the whiles in swoune, full sadly set,
 From her faire eues wiping the deawy wet,
 Which softly stild, and kissing them atweene,
 And handling soft the hurts, which she did get.
 For of that Carle she sorely bruz'd had beene,
 Als of his owne rash hand one wound was to be seen.

(4. 7. 35)

In Bednarz's reading of this stanza detailing the intimate bond portrayed by Spenser between Amoret and Timias, he writes that "the adjective 'lovely' is a pun on Amoret's name; the word 'new' suggests that Timias has abandoned Belpheobe, his 'old' mistress" (1983, 62). This can also be viewed as Timias' brief, symbolic betrayal of virginity as a result of his shift, his preference toward the corporeal availability of married love, which Amoret symbolizes. It must be remembered that Belpheobe and Amoret, as twins, are physically similar; both are sensually attractive women in the poem, but where Belpheobe is not responsive to Timias' masculine desires, Amoret is, and this is perhaps why he finds difficulty in resisting her. While such readings make sense for this particular point in the poem, they falter when Timias does not hesitate to abandon Amoret upon noticing Belpheobe's presence, her sudden intrusion upon them:

Which when she saw, with sodaine glauncing eye,
 Her noble heart with sight thereof was fild
 With deepe disdaine, and great indignity,
 That in her wrath she thought them both haue thirld,
 With that selfe arrow, which the Carle had kild:
 Yet held her wrathfull hand from vengeance sore,
 But drawing nigh, ere he her well beheld;
 Is this the faith, she said, and said no more,
 But turnd her face, and fled away for euermore.
 (4. 7. 36)

It is believed that this stanza is a historical reference to Elizabeth's resentful treatment of Sir Walter Raleigh following her knowledge of

his relationship and marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of her ladies in waiting.¹¹

In direct relation to these lines from *The Faerie Queene*, Broaddus writes that when Belpheobe "dispatches him with an arrow through the throat [it] could reflect a virginity totally separated from sexuality" (103). I argue instead that this desire is a very phallic, sexually implicit one on Belpheobe's part, a depiction in fact of her very killing of the Carle of Lust. The conflict between marital chastity and virginity forces Timias to make a choice in the object of his affections. It is no surprise that he abandons Amoret immediately after witnessing Belpheobe's appearance, after experiencing her instant disdain toward him:

He seeing her depart, arose vp light,
 Right sore agrieued at her sharpe reproofe,
 And follow'd fast: but when he came in sight,
 He durst not nigh approch, but kept aloofe,
 For dread of her displeasures vtmost proofe.
 And euermore, when he did grace entreat,
 And framed speaches fit for his behoofe,
 Her mortall arrowes she at him did threat,
 And forst him backe with fowle dishonor to retreat.
 (4. 7. 37)

Timias' fear of Belpheobe is evident in this stanza. It is notable that she possesses 'mortall' arrows rather than mystical ones – she is the one who has the phallic power, as this moment in the poem also emphasizes. Belpheobe continuously holds the threat of penetrating

Timias, be it with her arrows or her eyes; these mark her sexual power over the squire.

When Belphebe threatens Timias with her arrows, it may be due to her recognition of him as an accomplice of Lust. Meanwhile, his explanations are meaningless in winning back her favour, demonstrating the uselessness of words and the power of real action in the event; Belphebe believes only what she has seen with her eyes here. While it is not clear if there was anything definitively amorous occurring between Amoret and Timias, Belphebe chooses to read the scene as one of love, whilst she herself has refused to accept Timias' love, only his service.

Kane distinguishes between the contrasts in Belphebe and Amoret, stating that "together the twins define the beckoning mystery of womanhood as it exists in the male imagination: the devotion to female purity and the desire for passionate immersion" (121). Waller, in turn, writes of both aspects of womanhood as competitive, reminding us, "we are given two competing views of love signifying love expressed through the denial of sexuality and love through its affirmation. The intellectual allegiances Spenser upholds necessitates that the former is the superior" (128). Yet this is not the case in Timias' relationship with Belphebe, for he leaves the prospect of a sexual encounter with Amoret behind and reverts to Belphebe, who cannot

offer the amorous affection which Amoret can. And yet Timias has a difficult time mediating between his desire to serve either sovereignty or womanhood.¹² I would add that Timias' unfortunate predicament here arises from his desire to transform Belphoebe's sovereign virginity into the very womanhood that Amoret symbolizes, but his lowly social position disables him from actualizing his desires.

It is Belphoebe's militant virginity that grants her the determination and power to slay Lust and threaten to destroy the lusty Timias and Amoret thereafter. In Belphoebe's fleeing from Timias and Amoret, we are able to view something of her feminine susceptibility in her desire to love and be loved. When Belphoebe sees Timias comforting Amoret, she jealously and outrageously has the initial desire to strike him with the same phallic arrow with which she killed Lust. This may be read as Belphoebe being immune to lustful feelings for Timias, or instead, not being immune so that her jealousy is fed by her lustful desire for Timias which she feels she must destroy by instinctually aiming to kill him. In the last line of the stanza, she turns her face so as not to see, for she is once again given the phallic, penetrative power of the gaze by Spenser, the power of the intruder. Perhaps, I want to suggest, Belphoebe wishes to kill Amoret and Timias with the same arrow she used for Lust's slaying because, after seeing his dead body and being aware of the aspect of passion he

inspired, she is quick, as 'sodaine glauncing eye' suggests, to recognize this lustful passion when she sees its living image reflected in Timias' embrace of Amoret.¹³ Anderson notices that Belpheobe's desire "is to slay them with the very arrow she used on Lust, for she cannot distinguish between lust and love" (86). However, I argue that Belpheobe chooses to read the scene as one of love, since she also interprets it as a betrayal of Timias' Platonic attachment toward her. Also, since jealousy is a form of lust, Belpheobe's behaviour and desire to use the same arrow with which she killed Lust to harm Timias and Amoret may not just be as a result of finding them guilty of lust, but because she herself is guilty of it as well. Silberman claims, "despite his intentions, Timias' engagement with women is shown to be more fully sexual than the ideology of chivalrous disinterest admits" (1995, 38). Belpheobe is no exception to this, for this scene demonstrates her active and violent response to Timias' sexual engagement with her (and indirectly with her through Amoret).

Broaddus (105) reads Timias comforting Amoret as a sexual encounter which shadows the marriage of Raleigh and Throckmorton, and understands Belpheobe's anger and jealousy to be linked to Elizabeth's own regarding the betrayal of her courtiers. In terms of Timias' inconstancy in toward Belpheobe, he, although a squire rather

than a knight, needed to employ the following advice, which Spenser provides in the Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*:

Young knight, what euer that dost arnes professe,
 And through long labours hunttest after fame,
 Beware of fraud, beware of ficklenesse,
 In choice, and change of thy deare loued Dame,
 Least thou of her beleue too lightly blame,
 And rash misweening doe thy hart remoue:
 For vnto knight there is no greater shame,
 Then lightnesse and inconstancie in loue
 (1. 4. 1)

Although this particular stanza is addressed toward the Redcrosse Knight, Spenser's lines also appear to echo Timias' plight in his betrayal of Belphoebe. In turn, Belphoebe's jealousy of Timias' embrace with Amoret best resembles

Fowle Gealosie, that turnest loue diuine
 To ioylesse dread, and mak'st the louing hart
 With hatefull thoughts to languish and to pine,
 And feed it selfe with selfe-consuming smart?
 Of all the passions in the mind thou vilest art.
 (3. 11. 1)

Belphoebe's jealousy displays that her virginity does not prevent her from experiencing both an internal and an external manifestation of resentful and passionate anger. Watkins recognizes that the vice of jealousy in Belphoebe is "Spenser's most daring censure of his queen" (209). It is however, one based on historical evidence, which my following chapter will examine in detail.

Belpheobe's susceptibility to jealousy, to rage, and even to lust, which I have demonstrated in this chapter, positions her virginity in the sphere of human virtue and failing, rather than symbolizing a pristine, cold and non-sexual icon of female chastity. These aspects of Belpheobe's virginity further manifest themselves in the following chapter, which focuses on Timias' reaction to Belpheobe's loss as a reflection of the historical relationship between Elizabeth and Raleigh, the connection of private passion and public duty which is fused and at the same time frustrated by sovereign virginity and the rules it dictates to maintain its power. This chapter has established that these rules in Belpheobe's depiction in *The Faerie Queene* exist to maintain her virginity through the forces of aggression, jealousy, even murder, in attempts to quell the lust which she herself initiates and at the same time reacts against, I argue, because it is an intrinsic aspect of her character itself.

Chapter Five: Timias' Loss of Belphoebe

She hath lefte me here all alone,
 All allone as vnknowne,
 Who somtymes did me lead with her selfe,
 And me loude as her owne.
 (1965, 17-20)

These haunting lines from Raleigh's "As yov came from the holy land" set the theme for this fifth and final chapter which will focus upon Timias' abandonment by Belphoebe, his subsequent madness and his later reconciliation with her. In each of these states, my argument will be that the connection between public duty and private passion is renegotiated in the presentation of Belphoebe, to be not a conflict, but rather, a blend. That is because, as I will show, Belphoebe's virginal position in the poem, as Elizabeth's outside of it, highlights the *affiliation* between private duty and public passion. I will demonstrate that, for Timias, loving Belphoebe passionately can generate no fruitful sexual consequence other than the transformation into a love that is dutiful, worshipful. This is similar to a courtier's adoration of his queen, which obliges him to not only subordinate his desire toward her through public duty, but to also subordinate his masculinity in relation to her power. This occurred at Elizabeth's Court as a result of her

authority over her courtiers, authority that combined her femininity and sensuality as a private woman with her public power as a queen.

This chapter will also examine the way in which Spenser presents the capacity of the written word to immortalize the beloved in verse, a feature that is displayed in Book 4, as Timias despairingly carves Belpheobe's name into the trees in the forest. I will link this moment to Spenser's own experiences at Court, the manner in which he used poetry to carve his literary ambitions, his immortality. This type of relationship also centers upon the powerful bond between private passion and public duty, one that results, I argue, in the immortalization of the female beloved. This immortalization is reflected in Spenser's literary association with Elizabeth, and will, consequently, be read alongside Timias' situation through Raleigh's *Ocean to Cynthia*. The purpose of this chapter is to display the aspects which virginity shares with public duty and private passion, not denying the latter in place of the former, but instead combining them. I will also analyse maddening consequences this has on Timias as the symbolic reflection of Raleigh.

Belpheobe, as the previous chapter outlined, angrily leaves both Timias and Amoret alone together after her defeat of the Carle of Lust. As a result, Timias plunges into self-pity, wasting "his wretched daies in wofull plight" (4. 7. 39). He soon grows to resemble Lust; hairy,

unkept. I point out that this could perhaps be viewed as Timias allegorically *becoming* Lust: a revelation as much as a transformation, as in the case of Malbecco turning into Jealousy (3. 10. 60). Following the dismissal of Timias by Belpheobe,

Like as it fell to this vnhappy boy,
Whose tender heart the faire *Belphebe* had
With one sterne looke so daunted, that no ioy
In all his life, which afterwards he lad,
He euer tasted, but with penaunce sad
And pensiue sorrow pind and wore away,
Ne euer laught, ne once shew'd countenance glad;
But alwaies wept and wailed night and day,
As blasted bloosme through heat doth languish and decay.
(4. 8. 2)

Belpheobe controls Timias' life by one look, displaying the power of her gaze to either restore him to his previous position as her cared for, yet pitied object, or destroy him as she does here. Spenser emphasizes this power of Belpheobe by also noting that such as "the displeasure of the mighty is/Then death it selfe more dread and desperate" (4. 8. 1).

Timias' despair is accentuated; his weeping, wailing, languishing and decaying, a consequence which Belpheobe's anger, or, more importantly, her loss, has over him. In place of her lies misery for the squire, the passive one who has no power to direct the relationship as it stands, but must take his direction from a higher source – Belpheobe. As my second chapter outlined, Petrarchan adoration is deeply masochistic, presenting the male lover as physically maimed by his

mistress's glances, and here this occurs with Timias also.¹ As a result of his madness, Timias reflects the passions of lust, which too are uncivilized:

And eke his garment, to be thereto meet,
 He wilfully did cut and shape anew;
 And his faire lockes, that wont with ointment sweet
 To be embaulm'd, and sweat out dainty dew,
 He let to grow and griesly to concrew,
 Vncomb'd, vncurl'd, and carelessly vnshed;
 That in short time his face they ouergrew,
 And ouer all his shoulders did dispred,
 That who he whilome was, vneath was to be red.
 (4. 7. 40)

What is internal becomes metamorphosed into the external. Timias, while aiming to uphold his honour at all times in *The Faerie Queene*, particularly through his position as Arthur's squire, nevertheless I argue, is clearly a creature of not only lust but insanity, wildness.

In the poem, Timias is first mentioned aiding Prince Arthur, carrying his spear, and is described as Arthur's young, gentle and "dearely loued Squire" (1. 7. 37). Spenser alternately provides us with the following evidence of Arthur's love for Timias:

For him he loued aboue all mankind,
 Hauing him trew and faithfull euer tride,
 And bold, as euer Squire th... waited by knights side.
 (3. 5. 12)

Yet Arthur himself fails to recognize Timias once the latter's transformation into a savage has been, it seems, irrevocably established:

Arriuing there, he found this wretched man,
 Spending his daies in dolour and despaire,
 And through long fasting woxen pale and wan,
 All ouergrowen with rude and rugged haire;
 That albeit his owne deare Squire he were,
 Yet he him knew not, ne auiz'd at all,
 But like strange wight, whom he had seene no where,
 Saluting him, gan into speach to fall,
 And pittie much his plight, that liu'd like outcast thrall.²
 (4. 7. 43)

I wish to draw a comparison between this stanza and the fact that Belpheobe resembles the fays of medieval literature, fays that Lewis discusses in *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Lewis recognizes that these fays are "met in forest wide," that "their intentions are usually (not always) amorous," yet they display "hard, bright and vividly material splendour" (130) and are "vital, energetic, wilful, passionate beings" (132).

It is as though a vampire has sucked Timias. This 'vampire,' Belpheobe, also an enchanted faery child (or fay), being the daughter of Chrysogenee, has robbed him of his essence by not granting him the gift of her virginity. This clarifies Timias' 'fasting,' starved look, his paleness and savage aspect. Roche writes that Timias' "rejection

becomes a shameful, living death" (1964, 146), which is due to his physical and psychological transformation.

Timias' savageness stems primarily from his sacrifice of passion over the forces of reason. Rose offers the following view of passion and reason in relation to Christianity, reminding us that "the principal objection of the Renaissance moralist was not that love was a sinful involvement with the world, but that it was debasing to permit one's reason to become subject to passion" (9). To allow one's reason to become subject to passion is therefore the mark of a savage, as Spenser shows us in Timias.

The shift from sanity into madness is an important one in this scene. As Scarry notes from a psychoanalytic perspective,

It is the intense pain that destroys a person's self and world, a destruction experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe. Intense pain is also language-destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject. (35)

This 'language-destroying' aspect is highlighted in Timias' own intense pain in losing Belphebe, a pain which is reflected in his inability to converse with Arthur after the Prince finds him:

But to his speach he aunswered no whit,
But stood still mute, as if he had beene dum,
Ne signe of sence did shew, ne common wit,

As one with grieffe and anguishe ouercum,
 And vnto euery thing did aunswere mum:
 And euer when the Prince vnto him spake,
 He louted lowly, as did him becum,
 And humble homage did vnto him make,
 Midst sorrow shewing ioyous semblance for his sake.
 (4. 7. 43-44)

Timias' position from sanity to madness, from gentility to savagery rests solely with Belpheobe's judgement of him; in other words, a force external to himself creates his own mental and physical alteration into that of 'wildness.'

The two things that defined a gentleman in the sixteenth-century were his education and skill at arms. The loss of speech was considered the sign of a savage.³ In Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, the perfect gentleman is presented as being skilled in the use of arms, literate, a jovial companion and gallant in social circles, as well as chivalrous. He is a lover and a representative of the arts, in contrast to the medieval knight who was a mere warrior.⁴

The medieval wild man was prominent in European folk tradition, commonly depicted as grotesque, hairy, carrying a club, lacking Christian knowledge or virtue, requiring refinement and most importantly, control. In the Renaissance, the wild man symbolized the bestial, untamed, and degraded aspect of human society, which must remain hidden. Shortly, I will demonstrate how in Ariosto's *Orlando*

Furioso, Orlando's futile quest for Angelica and his love for her transforms him into a madman. Similarly, Timias, the gentle squire, disintegrates into a savage whose very appearance depicts "rude brutishnesse" (4. 7. 45).

Roche recognizes that the lowering of Belpheobe's opinion of Timias automatically constitutes his degradation, and, as a consequence, he flees the world. Roche's argument is paradoxical, however, when he states that "Timias is content to live in the forest not only because of his love but also because his honor consists of Belpheobe's opinion of him" (1964, 145). Yet, as I argue, to say that Timias is 'content' defeats the purpose of his initial suffering and hardship in the first place; that purpose is to later regain the favour of Belpheobe because of his state of madness without her in the harsh landscape of the forest. The forest, a wild and literally uncultivated place beyond civilized order and restraint, metaphorically depicts Timias' decline into the fallen labyrinth of the incoherent, fluxed, unmanageable passions.

Chrétien De Troyes' *Le Chevalier au Lion* establishes some important themes, which add conceptual weight to my analysis of Timias' madness. Like Spenser's squire, De Troyes' hero Yvain loses his sense of reason as well as his sociability following the anger of his

lady toward him, and must survive for a long time in the wild forest before his sanity is restored and he is reunited with her:

He went away until he was far from the tents and pavilions. Then his head is assailed by so wild a delirium that he loses his senses, whereupon he tears and rends his clothes and goes fleeing . . . He lies in wait for the animals in the woods, kills them, and then eats the game quite raw. (2802-2827)

Vance characterizes this momentary loss of reason by Yvain as linked to Aristotle's doctrine of the vegetative, animal and human souls. Where the vegetative merely lives and regenerates, the animal soul can live, grow, move and possess individual sensibility.⁵ Vance interprets the distinction between animate and inanimate beings: "At one point, Yvain lies (almost) inanimate in the forest. He is also unloved. In medieval romance, as in theology, to be lacking in love is to tend toward the lack of life itself . . . here too, an unloved hero has become inanimate" (49).

Moreover, what separates humans from animals is their capacity for reason, their third or 'rational' soul, which offers restraint of certain appetites (particularly of a sexual kind). Thus, the force that is responsible for changing Yvain and Timias into beastly figures is that inability to adequately clarify, control their reasoning. As a consequence, they become passive, unable to command the misguided, passionate forces which operate within them. While in the woods,

Yvain befriends a lion after rescuing it from an encounter with a serpent. Vance offers a penetrating analysis of this section of the story, claiming that the lion is symbolic of the hero's redeemed bestial nature into one of nobility, courtesy.⁶ The lion paradoxically represents the wildness with which the noble Yvain was once seized. Likewise, Timias' madness becomes a method of proving his own worth as a man, an obliging lover rather than a knight. His traditional position later shifts from the terrestrial locality of physical passion, into the celestial sphere of Platonic devotion toward Belphebe.

Belphebe's displeasure of Timias, her judgement of him, establishes his life in a death-like state. Spenser informs us, "his wonted warlike weapons all he broke/And threw away, with vow to vse no more" (4. 7. 39). These weapons can also be read, I argue, as symbolic of his abandonment of civil virtue and duty; Timias leaves both behind, as well as his use of language: "ne euer word to speake to woman more" (4. 7. 39). This instance in *The Faerie Queene* can also be interpreted on a metaphorical level, as Timias abandoning his "phallic weapon," central to his desire for Belphebe which he realizes can now be never satisfied, not only as a consequence of his respectful and dutiful position as her servant, and her uncompromising virginal role, but also because of his loss of her, his loss of hope in regaining her love.

As Ariosto declares through his tragic tale of Orlando's ill-fated love for the fair Angelica, "yet all shall finde that love's a thing of nought,/For sure it is an open signe of madness" (24. 1. 6-7). Orlando becomes mad when he approaches the pastoral paradise of Angelica and Medoro and sees his beloved Angelica's handwriting carved in the trees, uniting her name with her lover, Medoro (23. 78). This image is what drives Orlando (as the scorned and forsaken lover of Angelica) to mad grief, rage, and jealousy. He abandons his weapons and knightly conduct, like Timias, to become a wild savage. It is "with hate, with furie, and with revenge and rage" (23. 103. 8) that he endeavours to destroy their names:

Straight wayes he draweth foorth his fatall blade
 And hews the stones: to heav'n the shivers flee.
 Accursed was that fountaine, cave, and shade,
 The arbor and the floures and ev'rie tree.
Orlando of all places havocke made
 Where he those names together joynd may see,
 Yea, to the spring he did perpetuall hurt
 By filling it with leaves, boughs, stones, and durt,

And having done this foolish franticke feat,
 He layes him downe all wearie on the ground,
 Distemperd in his bodie with much heat,
 In mynd with paines that no tounge can expound.
 Three dayes he doth not sleepe nor drink nor eat,
 But lay with open eyes as in a sound.
 The fourth with rage and not with reason waked,
 He rents his cloths and runs about starke naked.

His helmet here he flings, his poulderns theare,
 He casts away his curats and his shield.
 His sword he throws away he cares not wheare;

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His helmet here he flings, his poulderns theare,
 He casts away his curats and his shield.
 His sword he throws away he cares not wheare;

He scatters all his armor in the field.
 No ragge about his bodie he doth beare
 As might from cold or might from shame him shield,
 And save he left behind this fatall blade,
 No doubt he had therwith great havoocke made.
 (23. 104-106)

Like Timias, when Orlando goes mad, he loses "not onely care of vertues lore/But reason, wit, and all the sence he had" (24. 4. 3-4).

Another memorable portrayal of the 'wild man' or 'noble savage' recurs in Malory. His wild man is none other than Sir Launcelot. Launcelot goes mad after Guinevere's anger and banishment of him following his involvement with Elayne, whom he believes to have been Guinevere. Like the famous knight, Timias momentarily becomes an almost diabolical figure of pathos as well as tragedy; we witness the transformation of a nobleman into a shadow of a pathetic 'other.' Through his example of Timias, Spenser appears to be illustrating how love can sometimes transform its victims into figures both internally and externally hideous. Timias' savagery is further emphasized by his loss of speech, as we have seen; he unwillingly forfeits the power of verbal communication, and as a result can only carve his Belphoebe's name on the trees in the forest as his only available source of communication.

Belphoebe's name in the trees therefore marks her immortality, both in the following scene and in the poem as a whole. As trees

represent life, so it is symbolic that her name is engraved upon them. Here, Prince Arthur witnesses Timias' effort to enshrine his lost beloved:

And eke by that he saw on euery tree,
 How he the name of one engrauen had,
 Which likly was his liefest loue to be,
 For whom he now so sorely was bestad;
 Which was by him *BELPHEBE* rightly rad.
 Yet who was that *Belphebe*, he ne wist;
 Yet saw he often how he wexed glad,
 When he it heard, and how the ground he kist,
 Wherein it written was, and how himselfe he blist
 (4. 7. 46)

When Timias carves Belphoebe's name on the trees, Goldberg understands her name to be "that word in place of loss" (55).⁷ I would add that Timias requires language because his words bring into existence metaphorically what he does not actually possess.

Here, we are immediately reminded of the Petrarchan poet's primary engagement with writing as serving an active purpose. That objective is to flatter his beloved through poetry in the hope that she will yield to him, or at least acknowledge him as a lover, or in the case of Elizabeth, as a worthy courtier/poet, respectively. In this sense, Spenser is not merely the spokesman who 'creates' the mistress in verse form, but is speaking, fashioning himself as an object in that same literary structure which shapes as well as celebrates *her*. It is only in this way that he gains his glory from what she 'leaves behind':

that is, he 'gains' by his relationship to her, but never independently of her. That is because it is traditionally the Petrarchan mistress of whom Elizabeth (shadowed as Belpheobe or Cynthia) is clearly the symbolic version, who is in the privileged position of choosing whether or not to offer love, favour to others.

For Timias now, there is only the *sign* of the lady he loves, her name. His writing of Belpheobe's name in the trees becomes his only form of access to her. Figuratively speaking, Belpheobe's very consummation of sexual love with him is an event that would disable Timias' writing anyway, and possibly prevent his further loving and worship of her. Thus, he can be seen as channelling his sexual energies into the written word. This in itself suggests a type of sexual politics in the Platonic, if not the physical sense, and the relationship between the act of writing and the art of loving become fundamental to the poem's content. Both are understood as complementary, alternate activities, in that the poem itself becomes an autonomous entity of exchange between the man and woman, designed specifically to achieve an end. It is an integral component of the social exchange, which is part of the power games at Court, not necessarily projecting genuine feelings of romantic love for the Queen, but symbolic ones. The concept of the interplay between public and private entities in the poem shows how *The Faerie Queene* celebrates private passion, but is at the same time a

public declaration of illustrative appreciation to the monarch; it is a movement in which each process relies on the other for appropriate definition. In this sense, *The Faerie Queene*, as a traditional emblem of the love narrative, becomes transformed into a political article offered to Elizabeth.

'Timias' carved trees are also symbolic of Spenser's poetic intention in *The Faerie Queene* to override and defeat mortality, time, through a consecration of literary repute. This may also be understood in a historical and political context. What Spenser portrays in this scene is the potential which language has to immortalize both love and the beloved in verse. And, while perhaps not requiring such additional fame as 'Gloriana,' Elizabeth certainly (as will soon be demonstrated) esteemed the poem and its praise toward her in her most celebrated guise as 'Belphebe,' the virgin beloved. Spenser is involved in a cycle of reciprocity with Queen here, where he offers her his poem as a gift for which he requires return of some kind, and whether or not this reward is offered, the poetic substance remains. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Silberman reads Petrarchan poetry as a hierarchical structure between "male poet and female love object" (1986, 260). The female's absence gives rise to his literary inspiration, his desires unfulfilled provide him with the subject matter he needs, and this,

public declaration of illustrative appreciation to the monarch; it is a movement in which each process relies on the other for appropriate definition. In this sense, *The Faerie Queene*, as a traditional emblem of the love narrative, becomes transformed into a political article offered to Elizabeth.

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states Silberman, stresses "the woman's active participation in the love relationship" (1986, 260).

The story of Daphne and Apollo from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, I argue, has an important parallel to Timias' loss of Belphebe. Apollo symbolizes sexual lust in his avid chase for the possession of the beautiful virgin nymph, Daphne. As in the case of Belphebe, Daphne's denial of Apollo's sexual desires toward her and, consequently, her escape from him, become the catalyst for his own passion toward her growing all the more powerful, all the more desperate and hopeless. Daphne's father transforms her into a laurel tree (the Petrarchan symbol of poetic glory) in order to save her from Apollo's oncoming rape, his control. The laurel is also the symbol of Apollo as the god of poetry because, as Estrin recognizes in Apollo's pursuit of Daphne: "once he could no longer have Daphne in the flesh, Apollo had her -- figuratively -- in the songs he sang to mourn her loss" (10). In this way, the laurel is significant of poetic advancement and glory when Daphne is changed into a laurel tree, and Apollo's existence as a future poetic model stems from the loss of his very inspiration, Daphne, whose

limbs grew numb and heavy, her soft breasts
Were closed with delicate bark, her hair was leaves,
Her arms were branches, and her speedy feet
Rooted and held, and her head became a tree top,
Everything gone except her grace, her shining.

Apollo loved her still. He placed his hand
 Where he had hoped and felt the heart still beating
 Under the bark; and he embraced the branches
 As if they still were limbs, and kissed the wood,
 And the wood shrank from his kisses
 (1. 549-557)

In this description, the image of the female body is not so much fragmented (limbs, breast, hair, arms, feet, face) as it is sexual. Her body integrates with the bark, branches and roots of the tree. This enforces the fact that her female body not only prefers to become more one with nature than with mankind (Apollo, who though a god, still engages in mortal copulation). Where Daphne literally *becomes* the tree upon which Apollo possesses an 'absent image,' Belphebe is merely the *name on the trees*. Yet, the woman's loss in both stories has the same maddening effect on the male lover, who allows loss to metamorphose into the birth of creative inspiration, of writing.

In Ovid, Apollo declares to the transformed Daphne

"Since you can never be my bride,
 My tree at least you shall be! Let the laurel
 Adorn, henceforth, my hair, my lyre, my quiver"
 (1. 558-560)

Apollo's words categorize his attachment to Daphne as one of possession, despite the loss of her mortal body. The emphasis which Ovid places on 'my bride,' 'my tree,' 'my hair,' 'my lyre,' 'my

quiver,' shows the desire to physically possess some semblance of the absent female body.

Daphne's transformation is a willed, enabling condition which helps to maintain her prized virginity, converting her from one aspect of nature into another; Daphne's absent body is predicated upon the tree's presence. In Spiller's words, "desire, as has been suggested, is the sense of an absence, or, more exactly, a need to abolish an absence" (125). Timias aims to use not the power of speech (which he loses) but the force of writing to reclaim Belphoebe's presence, at least symbolically, despite the fact that in Raleigh's *Ocean to Cynthia*, which will shortly be examined in response to Belphoebe's abandonment of Timias, "words cannot knytt, or waylings make a new" (1965, 481). However, by carving Belphoebe's name in the trees, Timias aims, I argue, to immortalise her, and in doing so fill the sense of absence that her loss provides around him and within him.⁸ I will now explore my previous claim that when Timias loses Belphoebe's favour and begins to carve her name in trees, his action is also symbolic of Spenser sealing his poetic fame through the guise of Timias in the poem.⁹

In the *Amoretti*, Spenser displays this effort to immortalize himself (through his beloved), and in doing so express the power which language has in its relationship to poetic glory, a glory that is everlasting:

One day I wrote her name vpon the strand,
 but came the waues and washed it away:
 agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
 but came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.
 Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay,
 a mortall thing so to immortalize,
 for I my selue shall lyke to this decay,
 and eek my name bee wyped out lykewize.
 Not so, (quod I) let baser things deuize
 to dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
 my verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
 and in the heuens wryte your glorious name,
 Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,
 our loue shall liue, and later life renew.
 (75)

In the octave, Spenser overpowered by the forces of nature which aim to continually subdue his efforts to immortalize his beloved, while in the sestet, Spenser emphasizes the power of verse to override mortality, death, mediocrity, and most of all, absence. Similarly, in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, Colin remembers his beloved and as he ponders his own death he declares that before he dies,

Her name recorded I will leaue for ever.
 Her name in euery tree I will endosse,
 That as the trees do grow, her name may grow:
 And in the ground each where will it engrosse,
 And fill with stones, that all men may it know.
 (631-635)

Again we witness the importance of trees as symbolic objects preserving the beloved's memory, compensating for her absence. Here, Spenser portrays the trees as ever-growing, ever-living, reflecting

Colin's love for his beloved in a way which is akin to Timias' adoration of Belphoebe. Both Colin and Timias aim to immortalize their women by virtue of their name alone, the name that marks their identity. Belphoebe's name sets her apart from other women as the beautiful (Bel) but distant virgin, Phoebe, the Greek title for the moon-goddess, who is related to the virgins Cynthia and Diana in Renaissance literature. In this way, Timias' carved trees can be understood as not only immortalizing Belphoebe, but more importantly, stressing the significance of what her name represents – namely, virginity. Spenser is here marking virginity as worthy of continual praise, I argue, throughout the ravages of time, of mortality, presenting it as worthy of the worship that is offered to it.

We have seen how Spenser reveals the power of language to immortalize both love and the beloved. Timias' carved trees represent Spenser's poetic intention in *The Faerie Queene* to override and defeat mortality and time, through a literary consecration. Before the poem begins, the last few words of Spenser's dedication to Elizabeth read: "Her most hvmble servant Edmvnd Spenser doth in all hvmilitie dedicate, present and consecrate these his labovrs to live with the eternitie of her fame" (1990, 22). It is thus his poem's dedication to the 'eternite' of the Queen's fame, which fosters Spenser's poetic stance as a writer.

Spenser was a middle class London poet and worked his way up the social ranks through his education at Cambridge University. He claimed a place through education rather than birth and used poetry as the foundation of his career. Helgerson notes that in Spenser's generation of the 1540s and 1550s, he was unique in the sense that he was considered not only the best but "the only Poet . . . a man who considered writing a duty rather than a distraction" (1978, 893). In turn, Waller recognizes that

Spenser's dream of poetry fulfilling a public role was welcome to the queen and her court. In return, a central part of the role that Spenser was attempting to carve out for the poet was that of being an essential part of the order which he celebrated. (54)¹⁰

Raleigh played an intrinsic role in Spenser's poetic career and the presentation of *The Faerie Queene* at the Elizabethan Court. Spenser and Raleigh met in Ireland and Raleigh became Spenser's patron. In 1589, with the encouragement of Raleigh, Spenser journeyed back to England to offer Elizabeth the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*. In 1590 he gained permission to publish his text,¹¹ while 1591 saw her respond to his poetical efforts by granting him financial 'favour' in the form of a pension fifty pounds a year for the remainder of his life, but no post at her Court.¹²

The connection of literature with power demonstrates that Elizabeth's presence as a monarch of England gives resolution to his narrative text, one that is both inspired and fulfilled by her. Elizabeth was impressed with the epic glorification of her in *The Faerie Queene*, and Spenser displays his appreciation for Elizabeth's generous gesture of his pension in the *Amoretti*, where he mentions "my souereigne Queene most kind,/that honour and large riches to me lent" (74. 7-8). Watson draws a parallel in Spenser's dedication here with that vital aspect of Elizabeth's identity; her public self in contrast to her private self (1967, 22).

While the public Queen may not have been dependent on Spenser's labours, the private Elizabeth desired and encouraged such displays of appreciation from courtiers. An important piece of writing which signals such praise toward Elizabeth exists in Raleigh's "A Vision vpon this concept of the Faery Queene":

Me thought I saw the graue, where *Laura* lay,
 Within that Temple, where the vestall flame
 Was wont to burne, and passing by that way,
 To see that buried dust of liuing fame,
 Whose tombe faire loue, and fairer vertue kept,
 All suddenly I saw the Faery Queene:
 At whose approach the soule of *Petrarke* wept,
 And from thenceforth those graces were not seene.
 For they this Queene attended, in whose steed
 Obluion laid him downe on *Lauras* herse:
 Hereat the hardest stones were seene to bleed,
 And grones of buried ghostes the heauens did perse.
 Where *Homers* spright did tremble all for grieve,

And curst th'accesse of that celestiaall theife.¹³
(Spenser, 1990, 739)

Raleigh's poem, like *The Faerie Queene*, is a dream vision. Laura's tomb is situated in the temple of vestal virgins, which is ironic because she was a married woman. Love and virtue now shift from Laura and toward the Fairer Queen herself. In this poem, Raleigh is both paying tribute to Petrarch and stressing that Elizabeth, as a love object, is more desirable, more everlasting than Laura could ever be, through the power of Spenser's writing.

As demonstrated, Timias' lust for the virgin Belphebe can never be consummated, and must therefore be sublimated, as his passionate energies are channelled into inscription. However, in the *Ocean to Cynthia*, Raleigh reminds us that "words cannot knytt, or waylings make a new" (1965, 481). In this sense, they cannot repair his ruptured relationship with the Queen, just as Timias' carved trees cannot bring back Belphebe.

Raleigh, born in Devonshire, was an outsider when he came to London in the mid 1570s attempting to establish a career. He was of the lower gentry, lacking the advantages of a powerful family background, but this further fuelled his ambition to make a public name, a strong reputation for himself at Queen Elizabeth's Court. As a result of Raleigh's social circumstances, he was absolutely dependent

on his personal relationship with her, which grew to be an intense, yet tragic one. It was through his secret marriage to one of Elizabeth's maids of honour in 1592 that problems arose.¹⁴ Raleigh was immediately imprisoned in the Tower of London. Raleigh's marriage, discovered by ill chance, placed a closure on the advantages of courtship and courtiership (power, money, fame).

Spenser borrowed the name of Belpheobe from Raleigh, who used it in *The Ocean to Cynthia*. This manuscript, a fragment of an epic poem, is a product of Raleigh's experience in the Tower, as he attempted to deal with his loss of favour from Elizabeth as well as his loss of her. The ocean is symbolic Raleigh himself, his forename *Walter* being homophonous with *water* in sixteenth-century pronunciation, while Elizabeth as Cynthia (the moon goddess) magnetically controls and sways him as the moon commands the tide.¹⁵ This significance stresses the natural relationship of the moon and the ocean – the pulling in and out of the waves, traversed by desire, unable to fulfil it, controlled by the moon absolutely, yet gaining definition from it.

In the following verse from *The Ocean to Cynthia*, Raleigh praises Elizabeth's sovereignty by comparing her to the sun. In doing so, he exalts her power and divinity as a giver of life, and, as a consequence, a taker of life, particularly his own:

So of affection which our youth presented,

When shee that from the soonn reves poure and light
 Did but decline her beames as discontented
 Convertinge sweetest dayes to saddest night
 (1965, 249-252)

The withdrawal of Elizabeth's favour from Raleigh is highlighted through the removal of her power, her 'beames,' the shadowing of 'saddest night' upon his life. Edwards writes, "the emotion he describes is that of the disappointed lover" (109). However, what Edwards fails to realize is that the circumstance is much more than one of lost love; most importantly, it is about Raleigh's lost ambition, lost identity, forever, yet vainly relying on the glory of Elizabeth to rectify his situation.¹⁶

The Ocean to Cynthia was directed toward effecting reconciliation with the Queen. Within it lies the close affiliation between compliment and complaint, disappointment and the desire for reassurance, hope, all intermingled with the strong imagery of death, which is a prevalent aspect of this poem. Raleigh's life as a courtier was also dead at this stage, for he relied on Elizabeth to give him 'life.' Therefore, the subject matter of *The Ocean to Cynthia* remains committed to incoherence and despair. The inwardly directed form of the complaint based on love and woe is all that is left. There a myriad of natural images in the poem, portraying Raleigh as excluded from the exuberant, contented world of the Court, and *The Ocean to Cynthia* is

unable to recuperate the loss itself, demonstrating, I argue, the failure of language to reconstruct what has been shattered, reflective of Raleigh's new sequestration from the Elizabethan Court, in the Tower of London.

Raleigh's power over his identity, over his life, becomes maimed through his experience in the Tower, where he was made literally invisible to the Court he loved so well. Writing, it seems, was his only method of escape from his restricted position. He begins by externalizing Petrarchan convention in creating a new role for himself; that of the abandoned, deprived, suffering lover, lacking the power to regain the love and physical presence of his beloved. Such self-dramatization is clearly portrayed in Raleigh's work.¹⁷ His elaborate, desperate letter to Robert Cecil depicts the Queen in several honourable, historical and mystical guises. Titled, "Sir Walter Raleigh's Lamentable Complaint" dated 31st July 1592, upon Elizabeth's departure from London, it reads:

'My heart was never broken,' saith he, 'till this day that I hear the Queen goes so far off; whom I have followed so many years with so great love and desire, in so many journeys, and am now left behind her, in a dark prison all alone. While she was yey near at hand that I might hear of her once in two or three days my sorrows were the less; but even now my heart is cast into the depth of all misery. I that was wont to behold her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph;

sometimes sitting in the shade like a goddess; sometimes
 singing like an angel; sometimes playing like Orpheus.'
 (Harrison, 150)

Raleigh's lament serves to heighten our awareness of the importance of Belphebe, which is mirrored in the symbols so closely associated with the Queen. Elizabeth is portrayed by Raleigh here as a virgin hunter (Diana), but also a goddess of love (Venus). The blend of the two goddesses is elaborated in the sensual demonstration of the wind blowing her hair about her cheeks, while all the while she is a 'nymph.' Her heavenly aspect is not denied from her mortal, sensual nature either, in Raleigh's comparison to her as an angel. Such descriptions of Elizabeth as a goddess mark how complex the state of virginity is, a state that cannot be confined to merely one or two allegorical descriptions. It is pure and angelic, but sensual (hence sexual), earthly, and painfully attractive to the outcasts who worship it, as Raleigh and Timias do. In the following stanza from *The Ocean to Cynthia*, the connection between Elizabeth and Belphebe is one of opposition rather than of similarity:

A Queen shee was to mee, no more Belphebe,
 A Lion then, no more a milke white Dove;
 A prisoner in her brest I could not bee,
 Shee did vntye the gentell chaynes of love.
 (1965, 327-330)

Raleigh's Belpheobe represents the private womanhood of the Queen, the gentle, compassionate aspect as opposed to her dangerous, threatening and intimidating public self. The dove/lion simile is the only one in Renaissance literature which marks the stark contrast in Elizabeth and Belpheobe, rather than their more obvious affiliation to one another. These two sides of Elizabeth as an angry, roaring and unfeeling Queen and a now absent, kind and loving woman, mark the fine link between the desire which once was and the anger and bitterness which has replaced it as a result of Raleigh's misadventure.

Obviously, whilst in the Tower, Raleigh could not communicate with Elizabeth directly; his only form of access was through Cecil, but his attempts to soften her heart remained unsuccessful. As Raleigh consequently laments in "S. W. Raghlies Petition to the Qveene," "who should haue mercye if a Queene haue none" (1965, 24). Elizabeth's inaccessibility, and most importantly, Raleigh's recollection of her loving nature, generous sovereignty and his loss of power under it, reveals the tragedy of his now meaningless existence. He declares in *The Ocean to Cynthia*,

Shee is gonn, Shee is lost! Shee is fovnd, shee is ever faire!
Sorrow drawes weakly, wher love drawes not too.
Woes cries, sound nothinge, butt only in loves eare.
(1965, 493-495)

Here the Queen is lost to Raleigh, yet symbolically resurrected through his poetry, just as Timias symbolically sustains the absent Belpheobe's presence by carving her name in trees. Raleigh's Cynthia can only be 'found' again in the fictional world, in poetry, where she will continue to exist as 'ever faire' – in other words, not changeable as the waning moon, but constant in beauty, virtue, and affection. These lines reflect the decay of Elizabeth's love as linked to the mutability of the world and of selfhood. Cynthia is the object of Raleigh's imagination: he has made her a symbol of transcendence and worship. The situation of mistress and lover shadows the real-life story of courtier and queen; the man who reflects on the love he once received from his lady and the devastation he faces when that love has been forfeited.

Spenser, in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, details Raleigh's broken relations with Elizabeth. Spenser refers to Raleigh as "the shepherd of the Ocean by name" (66) and describes Raleigh's vain effort to regain Elizabeth's favour through poetry:

His song was all a lamentable lay,
 Of great vnkindnesse, and of vsage hard,
 Of *Cynthia* the Ladie of the sea,
 Which from her presence faultlesse him debard.
 And euer and anon with singults rife,
 He cryed out, to make his vndersong
 Ah my loues queene, and goddesse of my life,
 Who shall me pittie, when thou doest me wroth?
 (164-171)

In these lines it is as though Elizabeth is guilty and Raleigh has been punished for doing no wrong. In addition, Spenser's lines in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* echo the uselessness of Raleigh's poetry to "empierce a Princes mightie hart" (431).

Broadbent acknowledges that

As a "beautifull" lady, Belphebe allegorizes the Elizabeth to whom her courtiers were bound by romantic love, but the conclusion to Timias's quest clearly signifies that love for the queen in her Body natural transmutes into love for her in her Body politic. (97)

Loving the Queen as a sovereign also included paying homage to her as a private woman through the words and actions dictated by romantic love. Timias' quest for Belphebe's love translates to love for her body politic due to her virginity, yet the importance of his treatment of her as a private woman is not nullified by his respect and worship of her sovereignty. The same was true of Raleigh's relationship with Elizabeth, even following his banishment, which was a result of his disloyalty to her through his marriage with Throckmorton.

Spenser informs us that Belphebe has given Timias many gifts (4. 8. 6); I suggest that this is perhaps to compensate for not offering him her virginity, just as Elizabeth was also apt to give expensive gifts to her favourite courtiers as a result of her satisfaction with them.¹⁸ In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Criseyde offers Troilus a golden

brooch encrusted with a heart-shaped ruby following their pledge of love and an exchange of rings (3. 1370-1372). The ruby is bound by a gold chain and is similar to the heart shaped ruby given to Timias by Belphoebe; its redness being symbolic not only of passion but the wound of love. I argue that the redness could refer to the 'wound' of ruptured virginity. Hence the ruby, despite being historically regarded as a talisman to preserve chastity by controlling the "amorous desires of the wearer" (Spenser, 1990, 481) as Hamilton informs us, must be 'bound' to ensure that Belphoebe's chaste aspect remains. This is implied by the couplet rhyme between 'wound' and 'bound' in the concluding lines of the following stanza in *The Faerie Queene*:

By chance he certaine miniments forth drew,
Which yet with him as relickes did abide
Of all the bounty, which *Belphebe* threw
On him, whilst goodly grace she did him shew:
Amongst the rest a iewell rich he found,
That was a Ruby of right perfect hew,
Shap'd like a heart, yet bleeding of the wound,
And with a litle golden chaine about it bound.
(4. 8. 6)

The heart-shaped ruby, I argue, is at the same time symbolic of the sensual aspect of Belphoebe, a metaphor of the part of herself, which she cannot surrender to Timias because of her dedication to virginity. It is therefore paradoxical that Spenser describes Belphoebe 'throwing' the ruby upon Timias, indicating, perhaps, her symbolic surrender. This

feature is not recognized by Villeponteaux, who notices instead that Belpheobe "exemplifies the opposite of Amoret's vulnerability: Belpheobe's impermeable body is a fortress; the counterpart of Amoret's gaping wound in Belpheobe's history is the ruby cut in the shape of a bleeding heart" (1993, 36). Villeponteaux is referring here to the gaping physical wound of Amoret, which she receives as a result of her kidnap and torture by the evil magician, Busirane, after refusing to surrender herself to him:

And her before the vile Enchaunter sate,
Figuring straunge characters of his art,
With liuing bloud he those characters wrate,
Dreadfully dropping from her dying hart,
Seeming transfixed with a cruell dart,
And all perforce to make her him loue.
Ah who can loue the worker of her smart?
A thousand charmes he formerly did proue;
Yet thousand charmes could not her stedfast heart remoue.
(3. 12. 32)

Thus, where Belpheobe throws the ruby heart upon Timias, Amoret's bleeding heart, though dying, remains 'transfixed.' Rather than having a gaping physical wound herself, Belpheobe bestows it in the symbolic form of the ruby heart, which plays a vital role in her later reconciliation with Timias, and is linked to a turtle dove who befriends him following his madness. The dove sympathizes with Timias' loss of love, and to show his gratitude to the dove, Timias gives it the ruby heart, which it then takes to Belpheobe.

Robin notes that the dove "has always been preeminently the emblem of peace, gentleness, conjugal affection, and constancy" (16). As such, the turtledove speaks of his constancy in Chaucer's "Parliament of Fowls":

"Nay, God forbede a lovere shulde chaunge!"
 The turtle seyde, and wex for shame al red,
 "Though that his lady evermore be straunge,
 Yit lat hym serve hire ever, til he be ded.
 Forsothe, I preyse nat the goeses red;
 'For, though she deyede, I wolde non other make;
 I wol ben hires, til that the deth me take.'"
 (1989, 582-588)

In *The Faerie Queene*, the turtledove's representation of constancy enables it to initiate the reconciliation between Belpheobe and Timias. Chang mentions that this scene in the poem "was expected to bring about Queen Elizabeth's reconciliation with Raleigh. But in fact Raleigh never was restored to his former position of favour" (155).¹⁹ I argue that the turtledove highlights Timias' recognition of the importance of constancy to Belpheobe following his apparent betrayal of her with Amoret. Once his lesson is learned, Belpheobe is then able to grant him the forgiveness that he so earnestly craves. This aspect demonstrates that, while she is a virginal lady rather than a married one, the attention and loyalty Belpheobe requires differs not in its strength or purpose from that which should by rights be offered to a married lady by her husband until death, as Chaucer's turtledove points

out. This type of loyalty is the very kind that Elizabeth required of her courtiers, a loyalty that Raleigh failed to fully achieve and as a result, was forever banished from her Court.

Spenser had more of a sympathetic placement of Belpheobe's representation where forgiveness and mercy were concerned, even though the purpose of his apparent alleged plan to reconcile Elizabeth and Raleigh through the circumstances with Belpheobe and Timias failed. In *The Faerie Queene*, the turtledove leaves Timias to fly to Belpheobe in order to reunite her with Timias. When Timias sends the ruby and the bird to Belpheobe, the bird draws her to Timias; "In th'end she her vnto that place did guide,/Whereas that wofull man in languor did abide" (4. 8. 11). This turtledove which has pity on Timias' plight, can be compared to the kind, milk white dove in Raleigh's *Ocean to Cynthia*, "who seeing his sad plight, her tender heart/With deare compassion deeply did emmoue" (4. 8. 3).

In the proem to Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser makes the following address to Elizabeth, where he is critical of her sternness and anxious for her to be solely a queen of love, of sensuality, of a compassionate heart:

To such therefore I do not sing at all,
But to that sacred Saint my soueraigne Queene,
In whose chaste breast all bountie naturall,
And treasures of true loue enlocked beene,

Boue all her sexe that euer yet was seene;
 To her I sing of loue, that loueth best,
 And best is lou'd of all aliue I weene:
 To her this song most fitly is address,
 The Queene of loue, and Prince of peace from heauen blest.

Which that she may the better deigne to heare,
 Do thou dred infant, *Venus* dearling doue,
 From her high spirit chase imperious feare,
 And vse of awfull Maiestie remoue:
 In sted thereof with drops of melting loue,
 Deawd with ambrosiall kisses, by thee gotten
 From thy sweete smyling mother from aboue,
 Sprinkle her heart, and haughtie courage soften,
 That she may hearke to loue, and reade this lesson often.
 (4. Pr. 4-5)

The first stanza praises Elizabeth as the virgin queen of love, who represents the only 'true' kind of love in her person – that of a virgin lady. Spenser does not portray such virginity as barren, cold, but instead full of 'bountie' in terms of good deeds and an example to the others of her sex, as well as being ranked above them all through both her sovereignty and her virginal state. Spenser is careful to isolate Elizabeth from her sex – by referring to her as a 'saint,' Spenser is also hinting at her replacement of the Virgin Mary – 'boue all her sexe that euer yet was seene.'

Rathborne interprets this Proem as Spenser recognizing and praising Platonic rather than physical love. She argues that Spenser could

hardly have been recommending marriage to the Queen in 1596, this passage must refer to "Platonic love." Arthur takes part in the Fourth Book, while in the Third, which is devoted principally to married love, he practically disappears. This suggests that his relation with his fairy mistress was to be Platonic, a perfect friendship between members of the opposite sex of the type imperfectly represented in the story of Timias and Belpheobe. (221)

While Elizabeth is so aptly praised as a 'Queen of loue,' Spenser also reveals another unwanted aspect of virginity within his poem, that of coldness, lack of mercy or understanding to the rest of the world, reflective of the narcissicism presiding in Shakespeare's Sonnet 94:

They that have power to hurt and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow;
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces
And husband nature's riches from expense;
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others but stewards of their excellence.
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die;
But if that flower with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity:
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.
(94)

This Sonnet is linked to the second stanza of the Proem, where Spenser has moved from praise of virginity to the fear of its influence, as he attempts to guide the Queen's behaviour most probably with indirect reference to Raleigh. In 'awfull Maiestie,' Elizabeth's lack of mercy, pity, must be forsaken for tender love. Here, Spenser is eager to

promote a particular understanding of virginity, moving it away from fear and toward sensuality. This he does through the terms 'ambrosiall kisses' and 'melting loue,' which imply surrender to the physical aspects of human nature and emotion, aspects, which Spenser here asks Elizabeth to 'reade' often.

When Belpheobe sees Timias as a wild man, she does not recognize him, but again offers the same feeling of pity towards him, the same pity to which Spenser instructs Elizabeth to yield to. Sidney, in *Astrophil and Stella*, recognizes the importance of such pity and often makes use of the term in his poem. In one stanza, Astrophil would prefer Stella to see him as a tale rather than a man so that he might have a better chance of obtaining her 'pity': "I am not I, pitie the tale of me" (45. 13-14). The Renaissance poets used 'pity' to infer not only relenting, but also the surrendering of the body on the part of the woman. As Campbell highlights in her essay, "Sidney's Reinvention of Petrarchan Form":

The Petrarchan convention which Astrophil adopts forces a certain decorum on him, and provides him with a ready-made vocabulary of wooing. Key-words like 'pity' and 'grace' already bear a metaphorical weight, and need to be translated: the 'grace' that Astrophil desires is the sexual favours of his lady. (86)

Thus, 'pity' not only implied sympathy, but more importantly, sexual compassion as well. Belpheobe, upon seeing Timias, is first stricken

with dread, then pity, but it is not a sexual pity; "she knew him not, but pitied much his case,/And wisht it were in her to doe him any grace" (4. 8. 12). Astrophil, Sidney's persona, desperate to possess Stella, writes, "knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine" (1. 4). And yet, like Belpheobe, Stella recognizes his pain but refuses to respond, succumb to it sexually:

Stella oft sees the verie face of wo
Painted in my beclowded stormie face:
But cannot skill to pitie my disgrace
(45. 1-3)

Therefore, in *The Faerie Queene*, we can see what grace Spenser offers Belpheobe by making her a character able to offer Timias her compassion if nothing else. This feature separates Belpheobe from the cold, icy mistresses avidly and commonly featured in Petrarchan poetry. In Spenser's *Amoretti*, we notice the traditional Petrarchan oxymorons, which characterize the lover's tumultuous state of mind, as he is helpless in controlling his desire for a cold-hearted, stern beloved:

My loue is lyke to yse, and I to fyre;
how comes it then that this her cold so great
is not dissolu'd through my so hot desyre,
but harder growes the more I her intreat?
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
is not delayd by her hart frozen cold:
but that I burne much more in boyling sweat,
and feeble my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told

that fire which all thing melts, should harden yse:
 and yse which is congeald with sencelesse cold,
 should kindle fyre by wonderfull deuyse?
 Such is the powre of loue in gentle mind,
 that it can alter all the course of kynd.
 (30)

In a similar fashion, the cold-hearted beloved is mirrored in another sonnet from the *Amoretti*:

So oft as I her beauty doe behold,
 And therewith doe her cruelty compare,
 I maruaile of what substance was the mould
 the which her made attonce so cruell faire.
 (55. 1-4)

Also, in the tenth sonnet, the persona's mistress is cruel "as she doth laugh at me and makes my pain her sport" (10. 14). In Sonnet 20, she "taketh glory in her cruelnesse" (20. 12). I argue that Belpheobe is not a reflection of this type of woman, but is instead modelled on what Spenser hoped Elizabeth *would* have been (especially in relation to Raleigh), but never was. This makes the allegorical and historical importance of the character of Belpheobe an even more valuable symbol to what the poem strives to portray in relation to a womanhood that is both ideal and idealized.

When Timias, overwhelmed by Belpheobe's mercy, falls down at her feet, he emphasizes the hierarchical separation between them:

He her beholding, at her feet downe fell,
 And kist the ground on which her sole did tread,

And washt the same with water, which did well
 From his moist eies, and like two streames proceed,
 Yet spake no word, whereby she might aread
 What mister wight he was, or what he ment,
 But as one daunted with her presence dread,
 Onely few ruefull lookes vnto her sent,
 As messengers of his true meaning and intent.
 (4. 8. 13)

Belphebe, pitying Timias, succumbs to the power of love and subsequently forgives him. He cannot speak at first, which represents both his desire and fear.²⁰ Stator reads the relationship of Timias and Belphebe as of one "highborn lady and humble servant" (113). In addition, Dasenbrock understands this moment in *The Faerie Queene* as one of servant to mistress, that Timias "in an acknowledgement of his position of servitude, kisses her feet" (26). I however, argue that this is not so simplistic. Instead, Timias' action is more one of adoration than of servitude. A servant is *obliged* to serve his master, often with no requirement of love included, but rather, duty. However, Timias kissing the ground upon which Belphebe stands and washing her feet with his tears indicates that 'his true meaning and intent' is one of worship through adoration, and gratitude for her mercy, not simply out of duty, but out of love for her. It is notable too that Timias is 'daunted with her presence dread.' This dread signifies not so much fear as respect and honour to what Belphebe's virginal position displays to him as her adoring admirer. Timias can never equal

Belpheobe in social status (to do so he would at least need to be her physical lover, which is also not ever possible given her place in the poem as a continual virgin as well as a sovereign lady). Moreover, virginity symbolizes Belpheobe's autonomy, her independence, her freedom to be adored and, at the same time, her choice in rejecting physical love due to her position. The classical world influenced Christianity with the belief that virginity was a form of powerful magic, which bestowed strength and purity to its subject.²¹ This, I argue, also constitutes part of Timias' worship toward Belpheobe.

Timias is on the ground while Belpheobe remains standing. He is reluctant to reveal his identity, as though he is both ashamed of himself and afraid of her might, but it is also as though it does not matter here if she knows who it is that worships her, but just that someone does. Timias is only capable of speaking when he senses Belpheobe's compassion, her tenderness toward him:

Ne any but your selfe, O dearest dred,
 Hath done this wrong, to wreake on worthlesse wight
 Your high displesure, through misdeeming bred:
 That when your pleasure is to deeme aright,
 Ye may redresse, and me restore to light.
 Which sory words her mightie hart did mate
 With mild regard, to see his ruefull plight,
 That her inburning wrath she gan abate,
 And him receiu'd againe to former fauours state.

(4. 8. 17)

These words from Timias demonstrate the extent to which Belphoebe's private womanhood is overshadowed by her presentation as the public, sovereign aspect of Elizabeth. The power she has over Timias' very existence through both her cruelty and her compassion is an awesome one, exemplifying Belphoebe's importance as the symbol of Elizabeth's majestic force in the poem, a sovereignty that is worshipped and adored as well as feared.

In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser refers to Elizabeth as "Dread Souerayne Goddess" (5. Pr. 11) and "most dreaded Soueraine" (6. Pr. 7). In the above stanza, Timias informs Belphoebe that she has misunderstood his passionate incident with Amoret, and thus she believes and restores him from his pit of dark despair. By offering Timias the light of her forgiveness, Belphoebe leads him toward the celestial plane of existence, indicative of her place above the mortal realm in the poem, as Spenser shows in Book 6:

After that *Timias* had againe recured
 The fauour of *Belphebe*, (as ye heard)
 And of her grace did stand againe assured,
 To happie blisse he was full high vprear'd,
 Nether of enuy, nor of chaunge afeard,
 Though many foes did him maligne therefore,
 And with vniust detraction him did beard;
 Yet he himselfe so well and wisely bore,
 That in her soueraine lyking he dwelt euermore.
 (6. 5. 12)

Timias is restored to grace and favour, but returns to a Platonic relationship with Belphebe. Here, it appears that Timias has been placed in a celestial marriage with Belphebe – the promise of remaining together forever, in spite of any external threat or influence, seems complete. His bliss, though not of an actual sexual nature, is nevertheless presented as fulfilling. In this way, Timias differs from the typical Petrarchan lover, for whom no amount of spiritual bliss is ever enough to fully compensate for a lack of sexual bonding with his beloved lady.

Timias' capture by the power of love and restoration with Belphebe also means that he lives 'mindless' – he should be serving Arthur, not a woman. He had a responsibility to Arthur, to male bonding, which he is more than happy to forsake, as Spenser shows:

And eke all mindlesse of his owne deare Lord
 The noble Prince, who neuer heard one word
 Of tydings, what did vnto him betide,
 Or what good fortune did to him afford,
 But through the endlesse world did wander wide,
 Him seeking euermore, yet no where him descride.
 (4. 8. 18)

I argue that Timias here experiences a second loss of identity through the fracturing of his relationship with, and service to Arthur; Timias owes Arthur his duty, yet he neglects this to serve Belphebe instead. In so doing, she emasculates Timias' position in the poem even further.

This factor is highlighted by Spenser in Book 5, where we see Artegall's disgraceful passivity and servitude to Radigund, and most especially in the example of the lethargic Redcrosse Knight and Duessa in Book 1:

Eftsoones his manly forces gan to faile,
 And mightie strong was turnd to feeble fraile.
 His chaunged powres at first them selues not felt,
 Till crudled cold his corage gan assaile,
 And chearefull bloud in faintnesse chill did melt,
 Which like a feuer fit through all his body swelt.

Yet goodly court he made still to his Dame,
 Poured out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd,
 Both carelesse of his health, and of his fame:
 Till at the last he heard a dreadfull sownd,
 Which through the wood loud bellowing, did rebownd,
 That all the earth for terrour seemd to shake,
 And trees did tremble. Th'Elfe therewith astownd,
 Vpstarted lightly from his looser make,
 And his vnready weapons gan in hand to take.

(1. 7. 6-7)

Where Redcrosse should have remained loyal to Una rather than plummet into sexual sin with Duessa and consequently forsake his strength for battle, as well as his integrity and chastity, Timias falters and suffers because he should have remained serving Arthur, as was his principal duty, disregarded in order to promote his allegiance with Belpheobe.²² Timias' duty, as Williams also recognizes, was "to attend Arthur on the quest for glory" (1966, 102). Likewise, Heale follows Williams' view by stating that "Timias' love for Belpheobe is to

frustrate and deflect him from his truly honourable calling as Arthur's companion" (86), whilst at the same time being sympathetic with his situation of choosing "passionate despair" above "virtuous activity" (112). This is because, as Rose points out,

Spenser regarded love as a war between the sexes, a discord to be resolved in marriage . . . As a humanist and a Christian, Spenser believed that the traditional inversion of the sexes in love – the situation in which the man is the servant instead of the lord of his lady – involved an injustice. (77)

Courtly love, a feudalized form of love in which the man worships and adores his mistress and exists as inferior to her, is similar to the relationship which Spenser depicts between Belphebe and Timias, who treats her with more respect and admiration than he does his male master, Arthur. She in turn is positioned on a pedestal; another form of displacement. Capellanus, in *The Art of Courtly Love*, gives thirty-one rules of love and discusses the ideology of courtly love as a code in which humility, courtesy and adultery are all characteristics. Courtly love was also a model that enabled and encouraged vassal homage to be given to women (184).²³ Lewis (1968, 2) emphasizes the fact that the male lover was obedient to his lady as a service of love. This homage to women which Spenser exemplifies in Timias' devotion to Belphebe is also depicted in *Orlando Furioso* (8. 71-75), as Orlando dreams of losing Angelica at a time when she needs him to

save her. He awakes in tears to go and find her while in disguise, leaving behind his own armour and abandoning his duty as kinsman to his king, Charles. When Charles discovers Orlando's disappearance, "in great rage and choller when he knew it/He sware and vovd *Orlando* sore should rue it" (8. 77. 7-8):

Alas, what damage cannot *Cupid* bring
 A noble hart once thrall'd to his lore?
 That makes *Orlando* carelesse of his king
 To whom of late most faithfull love he bore,
 Who earst so grave and wise in everie thing
 And of the church a champion was before,
 Now that in loves blind pathes he learns to plod
 Forgets himselfe, his countrie, and his God.
 (9. 1)

Spenser, on the other hand, does not depict Arthur's reaction to losing Timias as a squire because Arthur's role fades in importance alongside the predominance of Belphoebe in the story of Timias. As O'Connell writes, Belphoebe "becomes the one who confers life and honour on the squire, and Timias responds by devoting that life to her service" (107). However, as I have argued before, Belphoebe's existence certainly does result in Timias losing his reputation, for it is she who is responsible for annihilating his masculine duty to Arthur and in so doing, she subdues his masculinity by obliging him to serve her instead.

Part of the reason for Timias' response may lie in Spenser's portrayal of Belphoebe's physical appearance in *The Faerie Queene*,

which is linked with spiritual virtue and beauty, especially in terms of Timias' response to her when she finds him wounded in the forest and attempts to heal his injured thigh. Spenser enables virginity to be regarded in awe and admiration by Timias, who recognizes Belphoebe's heavenly status immediately and asks the valid question:

Angell, or Goddesses do I call thee right?
 What seruice may I do vnto thee meete,
 That hast from darknesse me returnd to light,
 And with thy heauenly salues and med'cines sweete,
 Hast drest my sinfull wounds? I kisse thy blessed feete.
 (3. 5. 35)

Belphoebe's position as a saviour is emphasized in these lines, her higher position contrasted to Timias' lowly one as he offers her his service and kisses her feet. The saviour image is an interesting one also because Belphoebe is described as returning Timias from a place of darkness into one of light, simply by dressing his 'sinfull wounds,' which here could imply his future lust for Belphoebe.

Timias is not sure who Belphoebe is – so confused is he that he cannot classify her as mortal or celestial – but she classifies herself too humbly. Similarly, in Book 2, Trompart refers to Belphoebe as a goddess, not a mortal, once he has heard her voice:

O Goddesses, (for such I thee take to bee)
 For neither doth thy face terrestriall shew,
 Nor voyce sound mortall
 (2. 3. 33)

This enables the positions of Belphoebe and Timias to be contrasted, however, since they can never exist in the same social sphere. Belphoebe answers Timias in a manner that does her sovereignty an injustice:

Thereat she blushing said, Ah gentle Squire,
 Nor Goddesse I, nor Angell, but the Mayd,
 And daughter of a woody Nympe, desire
 No seruice, but thy safety and ayd;
 Which if thou gaine, I shalbe well apayd.
 We mortall wights, whose liues and fortunes bee
 To commun accidents still open layd,
 Are bound with commun bond of frailtee,
 To succour wretched wights, whom we captiued see.
 (3. 5. 36)

The effort by Belphoebe to dissociate herself from the sovereign or celestial realm and align with the earthly one as a mere 'Mayd' is part of her humbleness as a virgin, the adopted daughter of Diana, 'a woody Nympe.' When Belphoebe fails to mention Diana's name, it demonstrates her aim to conceal her sovereign identity, for Diana is of course a goddess, and Belphoebe is also royal because she is the natural daughter of Chrysogonee, a highly born fairy. Therefore, what Spenser has achieved in this stanza is to portray Belphoebe's projection of herself as an average woman, concealing her true noble status by naming herself a 'mortall wight,' 'bound with commun bond of frailtee.' This frailty moves Belphoebe closer toward our own

understanding of her as a human character rather than merely an ice-cold goddess. Belpheobe's blushing cheeks in the first line further highlight this.

Belpheobe's presentation in *The Faerie Queene* here is comparable to that of Venus in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Venus appears as a goddess and as Aeneas' mother. She asks Aeneas if he has seen one of her sisters, to which he can only reply in the negative. Aeneas is unaware of Venus' identity at first, but responds to her striking presence with ardour: "young lady . . . only, how am I to speak of you? You have not the countenance of human kind and your voice has no tones of mortality . . . Goddess! For a goddess surely you must be" (1. 327-329). While Venus is far removed from the references to virginity (she represents amorous love instead), the behaviour which her physical presence inspires in Aeneas is almost identical to Timias' reaction upon initially seeing Belpheobe. Venus is here, like Belpheobe, dressed as a huntress with hair flowing in the wind (1. 319) and wearing high-laced crimson hunting-boots (1. 1. 337), which is comparable to Belpheobe in Book 2 (2. 3. 30), in a description explored in the first chapter of this thesis. This passage from Virgil may have been an important source for Spenser, because it also places Belpheobe closer to the realm of sensuality shared by Venus, through her physical affiliation with her, and the sensual influences they both

inspire. She also speaks of her mortal self to Timias, she is a 'Mayd,' not a 'Goddess' or 'Angell' as she says to him upon their introduction to one another.

King links Belpheobe's meeting with Braggadocchio (which we witnessed in Chapter Two) with Venus' meeting with her son Aeneas in Virgil:

Belpheobe possesses a "paradoxical doubleness" that combines attributes of Diana and Venus in a symbolic rather than a literal depiction of the queen. The presence in her character of a Venerean aspect that reflects anything but perpetual virginity may identify this episode as either a survival of an early part of Spenser's composition, one written while marriage was still a realistic option for Elizabeth, or a representation of events that predated the publication of the 1590 *The Faerie Queene*.²⁴ (1982, 151)

The 'symbolic depiction' of the Queen, which King refers to, combining the attributes of Diana with Venus, is in fact another recognition of Elizabeth's public, revered sovereignty (Diana) in contrast to her sensual womanliness (Venus). I unlike King, do not see this blending as an overlooked error on Spenser's part, a failure to manage his materials, but as a deliberate paradox.

We see an example of this in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Petrarch reflects on his impression of Laura over the years from the earlier times of his first pangs of love for her. He, like Timias, perceives her as a goddess in terms of her womanly, yet angelic beauty and behaviour.

The paradox between the virginity that opposes lust and the virginity that inspires it is verified in this example by Petrarch, which shows an erotic element in his depiction of a royal, yet earthy virginity:

She'd let her gold hair flow free in the breeze
that whirled it into thousands of sweet knots,
and lovely light would burn beyond all measure
in those fair eyes whose light is dimmer now.

Her face would turn the color pity wears,
a pity true or false I did not know,
and I with all Love's tinder in my breast –
it's no surprise I quickly caught on fire.

The way she walked was not the way of mortals
but of angelic forms, and when she spoke
more than an earthly voice it was that sang:

a godly spirit and a living sun
was what I saw, and if she is not now,
my wound still bleeds, although the bow's unbent.
(90)

Laura wounds Petrarch in the same way that we have seen Belphebe wound Timias, through the arrow of 'sensual chastity' that is linked to an untouchable beauty. The imagery of the breeze caressing Laura's golden hair, her fair yet burning eyes which catch the persona's heart and set it on fire, and particularly, her affiliation to the celestial realm here single out the supernatural, sovereign female beloved as one who makes chastity more powerful and provoking than mortal women are capable of doing.

There exists an interesting parallel between this moment in the *Canzoniere*, and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. Criseyde is also depicted as a goddess and an angel, an initial image for Troilus, which he is unable to forget, and as a consequence, his wound of passionate love for her remains incurable:

So aungelik was hir natif beaute,
That lik a thing in-mortal semed she,
As doth an heuenyssh perfit creature
That down were sent in scornynge of nature.

(l. 102-105)

Criseyde's beauty stands in defiance of nature here, surpassing its creation of femininity. Although Criseyde is a widow when Troilus falls in love with her, he does not fail to describe her in the common ways in which we have thus far seen the virgin beloved portrayed in Spenser and other related literature. Criseyde's beauty is angelic whilst remaining native, earthly, provoking a lustful response, while her mortality shrinks in comparison with her heavenly appearance. Like Belphebe, Criseyde gains power by being superior to her lover in class. Belphebe's bountiful beauty and virginity move Timias, yet it is also his respect for her higher status that prevents him from physically possessing her. Once Timias falls in love, Belphebe remains somewhat cruel in her inaccessibility. Spenser is making some obviously provocative claims in regard to our own understanding of

virginity; he has used it in depicting Belpheobe's desirability while at the same time admitting that virginity exists in the realm of worldly sensuality. This is especially so in Spenser's praise for the sexual power of Elizabeth's own virginity, echoed dramatically in Belpheobe's presentation in *The Faerie Queene*.

Similar to Criseyde's description by Chaucer is one that Raleigh bestows on Elizabeth in *The Ocean to Cynthia*:

Such force her angellike aparance had
 To master distance, tyme, or crueltye,
 Such art to greve, and after to make gladd,
 Such feare in love, such love in maiestye.
 (112-115)

Elizabeth manipulated her actions and language at Court into those of love poetry while addressing her subjects, thus superficially reversing their masculine unease at being subordinate to her. Elizabeth's realization of the attractiveness of her virginal state, in many ways, kept courtiers, foreign princes and poets fascinated and drawn to capture her throughout her entire existence as a queen. While they were also inspired by other ambitious desires (politics, wealth, fame), Elizabeth knew only too well how virginity could be capitalized as an attractive attribute.

The favoured form of addressing Elizabeth at her Court was in the typically Petrarchan manner, one which suited the Queen, since she

used it as a channel of feminine power, a way of displaying her inaccessible desirability, her mystical virginity, and her formidable sovereignty. These qualities reflect the very process by which she fashioned herself as an ideal Petrarchan mistress, a cult-like symbol. Goldberg expresses this aspect of Elizabeth rather well, describing her as

a figure of desire who demands that those who desire her be unsatisfied. Nonetheless she demands their desire . . . The queen granted position and power and gave gifts. These are real and symbolic acts at once. What she never gave – or said she never gave – was her body; it was mystified, too precious, virginal, untouchable. The elaborate world of the court ran on the illusion of sexual desire frustrated. (152)

While it is true that Elizabeth enjoyed the game of being desired without being possessable, as this thesis has shown and as Spenser enables Belpheobe to do in *The Faerie Queene*, she toyed with the possibility of marriage for political reasons to maintain her control over England.²⁵

The story of Timias' loss of Belpheobe is one that depicts the loss of identity, the fracturing of a male-bonded relationship consisting of his service to Arthur. This, as I have argued, is portrayed by Spenser as an emasculation for the man and a glory for the woman, the male only gaining whatever glory she decides to bestow upon him through his loyalty toward her. This aspect demonstrates that private passion

and public duty are two poles that rely on the other for definition. Indeed, Timias cannot separate one from the other as far as his relationship with Belphoebe is concerned. That is because her existence as both a goddess and a mortal are entwined, despite the fact that, at certain moments in the poem, one feature is given more weight than the other depending on the changing circumstances of the narrative itself. In this manner, Timias' devotion and subordination to his beloved huntress is a reflection of the actual historical events, the attitudes at the Elizabethan Court in relation to the Queen.

This chapter has examined the complex relationship existing between courtier and queen, historically reflected in Raleigh's connection with Elizabeth and through Timias' connection with Belphoebe. I have shown that virginity exists as mortal and immortal, private and public, humble and sovereign. Virginity's power to provoke madness, savagery and emasculation, and also to inspire male adoration and worship is also notable. Raleigh and Timias can only gain their definition and importance through the written word, through the literary glorification of their beloved, a portrayal that is born of their own identity's annihilation to Elizabeth and Belphoebe, respectively, as a result of private passion not fully succumbing to public duty until it is too late. This feature exemplifies not only the power of virginity as Spenser displays in *The Faerie Queene* to override traditional

patriarchal convention, but to defeat mortality and time, through the written word, which serves to glorify it, while at the same time filling that space of loss, whether it be loss of the female beloved or loss of male selfhood. Often, as we have seen in this chapter through Timias and Raleigh, it is both.

Conclusion

With some poetical characters it is easy to define the nature of their content and their meaning to the overall structure of a story. This is not so with Belphebe. Spenser's display of her in *The Faerie Queene* is so enigmatic and deep that she is difficult to describe in a word. My interpretation of Spenser's portrayal of Belphebe has called attention to the complex and often conflicting aspects of her presentation. Belphebe is the paradigm of virginal purity, mysticism, and, at the same time, she is reflective of provocative sensuality, sovereignty and emasculating power. This is so because of Belphebe's role in *The Faerie Queene* as a virgin nymph, a beautiful lady and an aggressively powerful huntress; these attributes provide the catalyst for Spenser's praise and celebration of Elizabeth as a virgin queen, of whom Belphebe is a historical reflection.

I have argued that Belphebe's virginity cannot be restricted to definitive categories which have been culturally and historically conditioned. Rather, Belphebe's portrayal in the poem lends itself to affiliations with modern feminist and, to some extent, psychoanalytic theory. I demonstrated that Belphebe needs to be understood as more than an ideal or archetype of female virginity as we have seen various

other critics interpret her as being in the past, to one extent or other. As a result, this thesis has investigated my proposition that Belpheobe's virginity is a praised, but at the same time an erotic image of womanhood, an exclusive type of virginity which unites private sensuality with public sovereignty rather than maintaining a separation between them.

My first chapter explored Belpheobe's portrayal in *The Faerie Queene* as a blazon; her body a celebrated, fetishized object of worship as well as, paradoxically, a threat to Spenser's poetic control. My reading of Belpheobe's blazon in correlation with Elizabeth's portraiture supplements its power as iconoclastic as well as erotic. The virginal body of Belpheobe that Spenser objectifies and celebrates in Book 2, is, I maintain, initially and essentially a potentially sexual body which exerts itself on the plane of visual desire, often simultaneously existing in the private and public spheres. Also, I argued that Belpheobe's sovereign and sensual power is emasculating to Spenser because her type of aggressive, individualistic and sensual virginity will not completely succumb to masculine poetic domination. This feature is apparent in Spenser's obvious hesitation, his inability to provide a description of Belpheobe's 'annihilating' sexual parts.

Chapter Two dilated upon the theme of Belpheobe's virginity as sovereign and sensual by examining the manner in which she inspires

masculine desire through her encounters with Braggadocchio and Timias, both of whom lust after her. I argued here that the connection between purity and primitive desire is inextricably linked, particularly in Belphoebe's relationship with Timias. Her emasculation of him is a result, I have pointed out, of her sexual innocence, which is destructive to his sexual desire for her, due to the fact that this desire cannot be satisfied. I have also portrayed the hostile aspect of Belphoebe's virginity; her sexual denial of Timias metaphorically destroys his body and state of mind. However, where heavenly and sexual love exist as two separate poles which constitute Timias' desire for Belphoebe, I assert that in her, the spiritual and the sensual are intermingled, making her virginity all the more complex, all the more commanding over him.

My third chapter studied Belphoebe and her twin sister Amoret, the relationship between virginity and marital chastity, as well as the attitude toward female sexuality in general during the English Renaissance. I state that Spenser, rather than creating a competitive struggle between virginity and marriage in *The Faerie Queene*, as some critics have claimed, instead privileges both qualities through Belphoebe and Amoret as being equally celebrated. This is due, I maintain, to the fact that his position as a Protestant poet and at the same time a patron to a virgin queen not merely influenced, but rather,

coerced such a religious and a political depiction, whether or not it was personally motivated.

Belphoebe's defeat of the Carle of Lust, the subject of my fourth chapter, is one in which I highlight that Belphoebe exists as both an enemy of lust as well as, paradoxically, a recipient and manifestation of it, both as a result of, and despite her dedication to virginity. Belphoebe's virginity provides her with a mystical, as well as a savage power which rivals and destroys the almost demonic allegory which is the Carle of Lust himself, and this factor, I show, emphasizes the extent to which her character, or indeed, Spenser's interpretation of female virginity, can ever be solely associated with, or confined to aspects like passivity, silence, innocence and powerlessness. Belphoebe's link with, perverse attraction to and, consequently, her defeat of Lust exemplifies her role in *The Faerie Queene* as both a huntress and a sensual woman, being able to defeat the force of Lust because of the innocent, yet indirect association which she bears with it.

Chapter Five concentrated on Belphoebe's virginity as not only destructive, but as the cause of madness and savagery. This occurs through Timias' loss of her and his own well being, which is reflective of the Platonic, frustrated and sometimes fractured bond of queen and courtier, of public duty and private passion. In this relationship, which

is historically based on Elizabeth and Raleigh, erotic desire cannot be physically consummated, or alternately, the beloved becomes absent to the male subject. Consequently, his frustrated desire is often sublimated into the streams of both madness and writing, with writing being an outlet that fills the empty space where the absent beloved should be, as well as working to immortalize her in verse. Timias' association with Belpheobe was analysed as mirrored, paralleled by Raleigh's experience of his shattered relationship with Elizabeth, which is profoundly reflected in his *Ocean to Cynthia*. This chapter also reinforced that private passion and public duty are likened to virginity and eroticism in the sense that they are enmeshed rather than opposed, and it is this intercourse between them which causes Timias' irrationality and madness.

The purpose of this thesis has been to reveal that Spenser's display of Belpheobe's virginity cannot be understood as being simplistically innocent, coldly unfeeling, vulnerable or archetypal. While Belpheobe is very much a character of purity, mysticism and chastity, my thesis has demonstrated that she needs to be understood as much more than this. A superficial reading of the poem would recognize only the general features of Belpheobe's virginal character. These, as I have argued throughout the thesis, exist only at the surface, a surface that conceals a virginal power that instigates both sexual and

sovereign features to coincide with its strength. It is when we read Belpheobe in sexual, sociological, historical political, feminist and psychoanalytic terms (as I have done) that her virginity in *The Faerie Queene* can also be linked with eroticism and idealization as Chapter One displayed, with emasculation and masochism as Chapter Two displayed, with marital chastity and sexual love as Chapter Three displayed, with base lust and voyeurism as Chapter Four displayed and finally, with madness and savagery as Chapter Five displayed. These spheres are classified, paradoxically, by the emotional and symbolic sexual excess propagated through the actual and constant physical temptation and denial which Belpheobe's character portrays in the poem as signals of her power, regardless of whether Spenser depicts this portrayal as intentional.

Through Belpheobe, Spenser is conveying an insight into the dilemma of a virginity that remains perpetual. He positions her, almost always, in the sphere of opposites – akin to the spiritual realm, but also looming dangerously close to the sensual one which threatens to destroy that virginity altogether. Perhaps Spenser is showing here the realization that fixed ideals are illusory and fragile, just as his example of the False Florimell denotes. Even womanhood as untainted as Belpheobe's contains elements that should normally exist as extraneous to it, but do not. Certainly, Spenser displays the need to accentuate her

virtues, but often, as I have highlighted, it is at the cost of exhibiting his own ambiguity when the paradoxical spheres of purity and sensuality, mortality and mysticism, virginity and marital chastity, attraction and repulsion, desire and destruction, private womanhood and public sovereignty overlap in Belpheobe's representation by him in *The Faerie Queene*, as my thesis has shown.

In *The Female Eunuch*, Greer acknowledges that, in general, the social conformation or conditioning applied to women, and the ideals relating to the female body in particular, has obliged females to be "considered as . . . sexual object[s] for the use and appreciation of other sexual beings, men." Greer adds that, generally, a woman's "sexuality is both denied and misrepresented by being identified as passivity" (15). However, as I have emphasized in this thesis, Belpheobe's virginity prevents her from becoming a 'used' sexual object for the 'male sexual beings' she encounters in the poem. Instead, Spenser enables her active revolt against any hint of a sexual encounter that would threaten and destroy her virginity, destroy all that she represent in *The Faerie Queene*. As a result, Belpheobe is therefore 'appreciated' by 'men' (Timias and Braggadocchio) only on an aesthetic level, despite her sensual portrayal by Spenser which only heightens her desirability because her constant virginity causes her to be 'unavailable' for male 'use.'

Greer's point regarding the denial and misinterpretation of female sexuality as 'passivity' is especially valid in the Renaissance, where, as we have seen, any hint of female sensuality was usually regarded as sinister, ambiguous and socially unacceptable. That is why my reading of Belpheobe's sensual representation by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* is so notable. I also demonstrated that the virginal female body was traditionally and idealistically confined to categories of spirituality, submissiveness, silence rather than the earthly, sensual or powerful ones; in this way, not threatening to masculine autonomy and masculine control over that body in the way that Belpheobe's is.

Hence, I conclude that Spenser, in the Proem to Book 3, describes Belpheobe's "chastitee" as being "rare" (3. Pr. 5) because it connects her not only to the common aspects usually associated with virginity during the sixteenth-century, but also to the powerful, erotic aspects of womanhood, which I have examined in view of the feminist and psychoanalytic theories bound to the female body. Belpheobe's 'rare chastitee' exists as a result of her paradoxical portrayal by Spenser, which integrates Elizabeth's public, sovereign, perpetual virginity with its private, mystical, and most importantly its sensual form. That is why Spenser's reminder that Belpheobe "standeth on the highest staire/Of th' honorable stage of womanhead" (3. 5. 54),

exemplifies the symbolic importance of her virginity in *The Faerie Queene* as being a "rare chastitee" (3. Pr. 5) indeed.

Notes

Introduction

¹ Warner defines virginity, as "the specific and physical state of bodily integrity resulting from sexual innocence" (1985, 249), in contrast to marital love which, ideally, is devoted to an exclusive sexual relationship with one person.

² For the reasons why Spenser singles out Belphebe and Gloriana in this passage, see Villeponteaux (1998, 209). O'Connell argues that the mirrors are not limited to Belphebe and Gloriana, but to other female characters as well (99). In opposition to this view, Lewis writes, "the identifications of Gloriana and Belphebe are the only two in the whole poem that have Spenser's authority" (1962, 384).

³ Further discussion of the idea that the public/private separation between Gloriana and Belphebe is undisputable may be found in O'Connell (101), Norbrook (116), Berger (1967, 114), Roche (1964, 97), Yates (69-70), Montrose (1986, 324) and Quilligan (1983, 182).

⁴ See also Villeponteaux, who argues that "in Spenser's attempts to represent his queen, the private body usually supersedes the public one" (1998, 210). Wilson also views the line between

Gloriana and Belphoebe as not entirely separate; instead, 'the qualities of the virgin 'lady' and those of the 'most royall queene or empresse' are often fused in Spenser's poetry" (1966, 127). I support Wilson's claim, for often in *The Faerie Queene*, the qualities of a royal virgin are emphasized in Belphoebe's representation, as will be demonstrated in this thesis.

⁵ See Kantorowicz's text.

⁶ In relation to this, see McCabe (130) and Axton (12).

⁷ For further details, see Kantorowicz (4 & 7). Greenblatt writes that the political body of Elizabeth made her "a living representation of the immutable within time, a fiction of permanence" (1980, 167).

⁸ Elizabeth as the supreme virgin ruler, adored for her virginity and respected for her sovereign role, is described by Yates (70) as being part of the religious connotations associated with Virgin Mary. Similarly, Evans points out that Spenser "envisages Gloriana's role as an allegory of that of the virgin mother" (1970, 34).

⁹ See Campbell (247).

¹⁰ Other critics who have made brief mention of Belphoebe as being no more than an idealized character in the poem, lacking human substance and experience are De Neef (1982, 116) and Williams (1966, 51).

¹¹ Existing critical essays or chapters specializing on Belpheobe, yet that are unrelated to my own arguments within this thesis are as follows:

Gilbert studies Belpheobe's association with Timias in his essay, "Belpheobe's Misdeeming of Timias," yet focuses on the link between Timias and Raleigh rather than the historical aspect of the Elizabeth/Raleigh relationship. Gilbert argues that more parallels exist in the Belpheobe/Timias story and the Guinevere/Lancelot story derived from Arthurian romance. However, as I will emphasize in this thesis, the Elizabeth/Raleigh relationship is fundamental to the political and literary essence of *The Faerie Queene*, enabling us to gain further insight into the motivations and actions of Belpheobe toward Timias as being the reflection of Elizabeth's motivations and actions toward Raleigh.

Wilson's eighth chapter (1966, 321-369) analyses Belpheobe's link with Gloriana and explores the various historical presentations of Elizabeth as a national heroine of epic significance, but does not take note of the public/private theme existing between Belpheobe and Gloriana, which I see as integral.

Berleth's essay, "Heavens Favorable and Free: Belpheobe's Nativity in *The Faerie Queene*," studies Belpheobe from an astrological perspective, yet fails to mention Amoret's importance;

being Belpheobe's twin, it must be assumed that Amoret shares the same birth chart, thereby causing their personalities and destinies to be similar, which they clearly are not. Yet, I wish to extend Berleth's view that Belpheobe's dual nature in the poem is related to her embodiment of the characteristics of both Diana (the virgin huntress) and Venus (the sensual beloved).

¹² Berger's comment is linked to one made by Cavanagh in relation to the female characters in *The Faerie Queene*. Cavanagh argues that virtuous women, alongside evil ones, "evoke suspicion" (8-9) because all femininity is associated in some way to actual or potential danger in the poem.

¹³ See also Norbrook (1984, 83 & 113). For more on the early contribution of the cult of Elizabeth, Berry notes that in the April eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*, there exists "the mysterious coexistence of spiritual power and a specifically feminine eroticism in the figure of Elizabeth as a chaste beloved" (6). Further discussion on the pure, yet sensual virgin who inspires male desire in relation to this eclogue can be found in Wells (1983, 92), O'Connell (109) and Cain (13-19 & 43).

Chapter One: Belpheobe's Blazon

¹ Berry (62) sees the portraits as vehicles for personal and political male fantasies in which Elizabeth played no part. My chapter will demonstrate, however, that she was also largely responsible for her image.

² Cropper (178) recognizes that, in contrast to female portraits, male portraits in the Renaissance period were regarded as individualized.

³ For further discussion regarding the codified features of the typically idealized Renaissance lady, see Camden (21), Forster (9-10), Wilson (1966, 243) and Wolf (59).

⁴ See Kelly (188). On the female body as an erotic object in the blazon for the sole purpose of male voyeuristic pleasure and subjectivity, see Ruthven (47), Berry (46), Gregerson (133), Summit (397), Hansen (4), Mulvey (19), Parker (1987, 131), Watkins (46), Forster (8-19), Suleiman (7) and Vickers (1986, 19).

⁵ In relation to the human body as an architectural structure, united with the flesh in the common tradition of aesthetically allegorizing the body, see Barkan (1986, 143).

⁶ See also Camden (21), who notes that part of the Elizabethan ideal of female beauty consists of the ensemble of red and white,

as with this description of Belphoebe. In his editorial notes on *The Faerie Queene*, Hamilton recognizes that the vermeil red in this stanza "indicates her sanguine nature as one unaffected by passion, and manifests her shamefastness" (Spenser, 1990, 195). Yet, I would add that the redness also suggests her sensual nature.

⁷ For other associations with the rose as a typical symbol of virginity in Renaissance verse, see Wilson (1966, 134-135). Also, in the *Roman de la Rose*, the object of the male hero is to succeed in plucking a rose, which metaphorically represents the virginity of a particular maiden. He finally succeeds in possessing this rose with the help of Venus, but in the process, faces many obstacles that aim to hinder his goal.

⁸ Further reference to this painting is given in Wilson (1966, 147-148).

⁹ Pomeroy (37) provides a detailed narrative of this.

¹⁰ Both McCabe (129) and Wind (83) make note of Elizabeth's pictorial splendour in this painting, and Wind recognizes that Elizabeth's power over the three goddesses lies in her ability to shame them by possessing the three qualities (providence, knowledge and beauty) that they each possess only singularly. For more on Elizabeth's similarity with these three goddesses, see Strong (1987, 65).

¹¹ On long loose hair as the mark of virginity in the "Coronation" portrait, see Bassnett (14 & 126) and King, who notes, "Elizabeth's long hair flows down to her shoulders in the style of an intact virgin" (1990, 43).

¹² See Strong, (1977, 147) and (1987, 115).

¹³ Silberman (1995, 101-104) regards this girdle as a symbol of the female genitals, while Cavanagh (89) views the girdle as a relic signifying a lost sexual state, or sexual virtue.

¹⁴ In relation to the jewel representing Elizabeth's genitalia in this painting, see also Frye (1994, 54).

¹⁵ On England's defeat of the Armada, see Watson (1995, 24-25), Chancellor (174-175) and Wernham (362-363)

¹⁶ For public opinion of this speech in Renaissance commentary, see Teague (68-69).

¹⁷ See Montrose, who reads this speech by Elizabeth as consisting of "the attempted rape of the queen by a foreign prince" (1986, 315). Benson (1992, 233) argues that effeminacy is dishonourable to Elizabeth here, and she uses it to mark the inadequacies of her soldiers if they should fail in their mission to defend England as her nation, her political body, consequently fuelling their desire for success in battle.

¹⁸ For more on the body of Elizabeth united with that of the land, see Tennenhouse (1986, 102-104) & (1989, 79-80) and Campbell (245).

¹⁹ Brooks-Davies (13) compares the image in these lines to the "Ditchley" portrait of Elizabeth. Yates (106) notes that the "Ditchley" portrait is connected with the Queen's visit to Ditchley in 1592. See also Benson (1985, 286 & 289), who praises Elizabeth on a divine rather than human scale, as one who is more closely affiliated with the powerful forces of nature rather than mortal womanhood.

²⁰ See Cain (48).

²¹ Krier elaborates on Belphoebe's majesty as Spenser's "dearest dread" as distant from her "dearness" (82). Unlike Krier, I claim that the distance between Belphoebe's 'dearness and her dread' is not so large, for the blazon appears to blend the seemingly opposed aspects of dearness (Belphoebe as a beautiful, private female) with her dread (Belphoebe as the powerful image of sovereignty). See also Davies, who argues that Elizabeth's relationship to Spenser is one where she exists "as his 'dread Soveraine'" and as a consequence, "the terrible aspect of her divinity is always disagreeably present to him" (1986, 53).

²² Williams rightly notices that even while Belphoebe is depicted as a heavenly creature in the blazon sequence, "she attracts desire –

though only to quench it at least in its base form" (1966, 49) and that "the love she causes is specifically sensuous" (1966, 101).

²³ Pomeroy notices how Elizabeth's dress is a silvery mixture of colour and light, not white, but possessing the "silvery pallor of moonlight." She adds, "with the crescent of pearls in her hair, Elizabeth appears here akin to Cynthia, the moon goddess" (67).

²⁴ Strong (1963, 22) envisages the private person of the Queen, Belphebe, as united with this sense of private virtue integrated with public sovereignty, as does Broaddus (100). In contrast to both Strong and Broaddus, Villeponteaux notes that in the portraits, Elizabeth's "(natural body) recedes while her role as prince (her political body) emerges" (1993, 30). My chapter has thus far argued against this view taken by Villeponteaux, instead demonstrating that through the sensual display of Belphebe's virginal body (especially in direct reference to her blazon presentation in *The Faerie Queene*), the private body is united with the political body of the monarch. Indeed, both are represented in the portraiture of Elizabeth to demonstrate that sovereign power is not divorced from virginal beauty and sensual display. I claim that the physical body is continually juxtaposed with the political (just as the virginal body is mingled with the sensual) in any thorough interpretation of either Belphebe's blazon sequence or Elizabeth's portraiture.

²⁵ For more on this see Greenblatt (1973, 54), Berry (6 & 81), Montrose (1986, 322) and Cain (10-15). Norbrook (84) informs us that Spenser's representation of Eliza in the April eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender* was paramount to the creation of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen.

²⁶ See also Cain (61). Cain recognizes this singularity as a fundamental aspect of Elizabeth's praise by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*.

²⁷ For more details on this, see Harrison (118), Cerasano and Wynne-Davies (12-14), Goldberg (152-153) and Villeponteaux (1993, 29).

²⁸ Strong writes a detailed account of his interpretation of this particular painting in (1987, 163-165) & (1963, 3). See also Walker (252-276).

²⁹ On the nature of cosmetics in the Renaissance and those the Queen used daily to maintain the whiteness of her skin and teeth, including bleaching the face with lemon juice and sulphur borax (mercury), see Camden (175-210), Hibbert (100), Erickson (1983, 261) & (1984, 222-223), Tennenhouse (1989, 87), Cerasano and Wynne-Davies (12), Legouis (20) and Evans (1970, 171). Evans likens the ageing Queen Elizabeth to the picture of the False Florimell in Book 3, who requires cosmetics to maintain a beauty

that does not actually exist. In relation to this, see Ellrodt (47), Ferry (155) and Barkan (1986, 251).

³⁰ For more on the False Florimell as nature's rival, see Dundas (50-51) and Maccaffrey (240). Ferry reads the depiction of the False Florimell as being a false description of "the true blazon of Belpheobe" (166). On the debate of beauty equated with virtue and the distrust of female beauty, see Cavanagh (56-59). For the following writers, beauty was naturally associated with virtue, just as for Neoplatonists, human grace and beauty was linked to the soul; see Bhattacharje (122), Kelso (1978, 202) and Plato (71).

³¹ On woman as 'other' see Freud's "Anal Eroticism and the Castration Complex" (564-565), Maclean (8 & 32), Harvey (33 & 53), Lacqueur (1986, 1 & 5) & (1990, 63) and Marcus (96).

³² See also Pomeroy (19).

³³ Pomeroy (46) informs us that the "Sieve" portrait possesses another emblem of Elizabeth's virginity as a rebellion against her marital prospects in relation to the story of Dido and Aeneas, which is featured on the pillar upon which her right arm is resting. For further discussion on this portrait, see Strong (1987, 94-107).

³⁴ On white as the virgin's colour in which Elizabeth also dressed to indicate her state, see Wilson (1966, 220).

³⁵ For other critical opinion on the empty space where Belphoebe's sexual description should be in the blazon, see Betts (161) and Montrose (1986, 327).

³⁶ See Moi (67).

³⁷ Vickers (1982, 109) writes that the blazon silences the female voice by scattering her body in rhyme, in order to construct male subjectivity. See also Waller (174 & 177), Traub (40), and Quilligan (1987, 165). On Spenser being threatened by Belphoebe's beauty and therefore needing to scatter her body throughout the blazon, see Mallette (61-62). On the female body as corrupt, see Charnes (23) and Newman (6).

³⁸ For more on Busirane's treatment of Amoret's heart, see Barney (237); he reads her bloody wound as a sign of consummated sex. See also Fowler (53) and Davies, who views Amoret's blood as "hymeneal blood which her virginity fears to spill in marriage with Scudamour" (1986, 100).

³⁹ See Montrose (1986, 325).

⁴⁰ See Greenblatt (1973, 52-53).

Chapter Two: Belphoebe's Emasculation of Timias

¹ On Belphoebe's meeting with Braggadocchio, see De Neef (1982, 114-115), Schleiner (178), Broaddus (99), Williams (1966, 121), Krier (67 & 85) and Norbrook (118). Belphoebe's encounter with Braggadocchio has also been interpreted as an allegory of the Elizabeth/Alençon courtship by Parker (1960, 212), Hughes (1929, 364), Dodge (178) and Berger (1967, 135).

² This is the only moment in her appearance in Book 2 that Belphoebe is given a voice and an opinion and is enabled to utilize both. These lines mark Belphoebe's similarity with the concept of honour, activity, purpose and victory over wealth and luxury. Braggadocchio is, however, too consumed with lust for Belphoebe to pay attention to her words. This theme of active virtue versus private, leisurely pleasure is repeated in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (660-675) and *Mother Hubberds Tale* (608-614). See also Wells (62-63) and Kelso (1964, 57).

³ See MacCaffrey (281) and Holleran (28).

⁴ Watson (1967, 124) recognizes this development in Belphoebe as a human one.

⁵ For more on Elizabeth's courtiers being bound to her through the rules of patronage and/or Petrarchan love through their poetry and

worship, see O'Connell (10), Broadus (97), Tennenhouse (1986, 31 & 33-34) and (1981, 238). Williams (1972, 14) states that Elizabeth purposefully evoked romantic attachment from her courtiers, while Berry writes that the rules of courtiership manipulated "Elizabeth as a chaste beloved" (6). For similar views see Waller (19-20), Dasenbrock (28), Oram (1997, 115), Frye (1993, 108), Martines (4), Marotti (207 & 213) and (1982, 404), Norbrook (3) and Javitch (225). Bates (7) recognizes that the glorification of Elizabeth's virginity in poetry counteracted the problem of her female rule in a male-orientated social structure.

⁶ On the parallel with Belpheobe/Timias and Venus/Adonis, see Bednarz (1996, 288-289), De Neef (1979, 8) & (1982, 164), Allen (302), Silberman (1995, 38 & 40) and Lanham (83-94).

⁷ Belpheobe's lustful effect on Timias is further explored in Heale (112), Hamilton (162), Dasenbrock (32), Watkins (300), Berger (1989, 235) and Alpers (1967, 186).

⁸ For more on the wound of Timias, see Marre (76), Barkan (1986, 239), Nelson (224), Alpers (26), De Neef (1982, 114), Giamatti (96), Berger (1989, 229) and Holleran (26). Bieman (201-202) unites the wound of Marinell (by Britomart) with the wound of Timias and because of Britomart's love-sickness (3. 4. 16-17), and

views Timias' wounds as erotic and thus requiring an erotic rather than medicinal remedy.

⁹ That love was viewed in the Renaissance as a physical disorder, causing sickness to various parts of the body, see Rose (10).

¹⁰ O'Connell recognizes the similarity between Ariosto's tale of Angelica and Medoro to that of Belpheobe and Timias (107), as does Alpers (1967, 185-186).

¹¹ Belpheobe's virginity has blamed for her ignorance to the passion of Timias, as noted by Barkan (1986, 241), Oram (1997, 115), Alpers (192), O'Connell (100), Miller (234), Paglia (1979, 46) and (1990, 179).

¹² On the *Story of O*, see Benjamin (1983, 51-84 & 283-286), Masse (107-146) and Marcus (193-206).

¹³ See Cavanagh (52).

¹⁴ Villeponteaux (1993, 35) attributes the likeness of Belpheobe with Radigund, the cruel warrior-huntress who emasculates men in Book 4.

¹⁵ See Traub (27) and Cirello (82).

¹⁶ See Gibbs (142), Kelly (189 & 192), Rose (16 & 19), Wind (46), Ellrodt (25 & 27) and Berry (83). On the paradox of Petrarch's love for Laura deviating between virtue and sin, with Laura as both a guide to heaven and at the same time the cause of his lust through

her goodness, see Minta (4). This is what I see happening between Timias and Belphoebe in *The Faerie Queene*.

Chapter Three: Belphoebe and Amoret

¹ For claims that Spenser held marriage and regeneration in higher acclaim than virginity, and that marriage was the ideal conclusion to Spenser's presentation of love and chastity in the poem, see Rose (3) and Knight (337-338).

² In reference to critical views on the conception and birth of Belphoebe and Amoret, see Roche (1964, 106), who views their incarnation as a celebration of Christ's, a way of equally uniting virginity with marriage. Hume (126-127) understands Spenser to be linking virginity and marriage as metaphorical twins through the birth of Belphoebe and Amoret. Berger (1988, 110) compares their birth to that of the monstrous twin brother and sister, Argante and Ollyphant, who were conceived as a result of their mother's lust (3. 7. 49-50). See also Berger (1994, 97-100), Maccaffrey (267), Lewis (Images, 1967, 48) and Berleth (479-500).

³ Watson (1967, 116) and Silberman (1995, 43) view Belphoebe's and Amoret's birth as a parody of Christ's birth. For more on the twins' birth being linked to Christ's, see Nohrnberg (532-533), Silberman (1995, 43), Hankins (137-138) and Broaddus (61-70).

⁴ That Spenser presents Belphoebe and Amoret as equal to assert that virginity and marital chastity are metaphorical twins in the

poem, see Hume (126-127), Rowse (390-391), Einstein (xi), Simon (165), Henderson and McManus (72), Lewis (1962, 35), Rose (28 & 34), Stone (135 & 491), Bassnett (41 & 124), Berry (66 & 136), Berger (1988, 110) & (1994, 97-100), Broadus (61-70), Maccaffrey (267), Hankins (137-138 & 148), Bhattacharje (69-70), Lewis (Images, 1967, 60) and (1968, 345-346).

⁵ On the slight age-gap between Belphebe and Amoret, see Rose (111). King (1982, 148) argues that Belphebe's status is higher than Amoret's because she is the elder twin, but he does not offer any valid reason why this is a proof of superiority. Indeed, it suggests only a slight age gap.

⁶ For more on the differences between Belphebe as an unchanged virgin huntress and Amoret as a wife, a lover in a mutable world, see Lewis (Images, 1967, 59). On Amoret's submissiveness contrasted to Belphebe's martial power, see Dasenbrock (40).

⁷ See Villeponteaux, who argues that Britomart's role as a wife of Artegall and a dynastic mother "draws attention to Elizabeth's refusal to play the role . . . in 1590 it was too late to urge Elizabeth to marry and bear children, but it was not too late to offend her by suggesting that she should have done so" (1998, 218). Similarly, Maccaffrey adds that "neither Belphebe nor Amoret is a totally

appropriate model for an historical heroine of love; each in turn supplies some useful guidelines for Britomart to follow" (285). I argue, however, that this is so because Britomart possesses the virginal aspect of Belphebe, which she exchanges for the marital chastity embodied in Amoret for the creation of heirs with Artegall. Britomart is an appropriate role model for the Protestant idealization of marriage.

⁸ For comparisons of virginity and marital chastity as depicted by Diana and Venus, see Watkins (129-130), Cheney (1966, 124-126), Williams (1966, 98-99), Evans (1970, 45), Lotspeich (24), Davies (1986, 79), Kermode (76) and Lewis (Images, 1967, 49).

⁹ See Anderson (1997, 85), Berger (1994, 95), Heale (56), Wind (77), Williams (1966, 50), Paglia (1990, 178), Roche (1964, 99-100), Evans (1970, 121) and Oram (1997, 100). On Belphebe's link with the sexual attractiveness of Virgil's Venus, see Broadus (98).

¹⁰ Wind (92) understands this disguise in allegorical terms, as a portrayal of Venus' true hidden nature.

¹¹ For more on Amoret's upbringing in the Garden of Adonis and the regenerative and symbolic aspects it represents in *The Faerie Queene*, see Hume (110), Cheney (1966, 121), Roche (1964, 116, 120 & 127), Lewis (Images, 1967, 51) and Kermode (77).

¹² Barkan (1986, 172) recognizes that Shakespeare introduced sexual temptation into the Venus and Adonis story, an aspect that is not present in Ovid's version.

¹³ Lewis also notices that Marinell "is the type of those who reject love not vocationally, like Belpheobe, but prudently. He gives up sex because it is not safe" (Images, 1967, 122).

¹⁴ Maccaffrey writes that in relation to these lines, Belpheobe "is dead only in the sense that she was visible in Fairy Land, far away and long ago" (275), while Bieman (205) unites the 'ensample dead' image of Belpheobe with the 'carkasse dead' of the False Florimell, as does Anderson (1996, 175). See also Quilligan (1996, 136), and (1983, 189) where she claims, "Spenser is praising Belpheobe's utmost example of absolute virginity. But he is also saying that it is dead." He in this way criticizes Belpheobe's perfection, according to Quilligan, while poetically preserving her virginity in this compliment.

¹⁵ Virginity was much praised in the medieval era, a time when sexuality was regarded as sinful. The preference for virginity in the early church was inspired by the belief that the second coming was imminent and the propagation of the human race was therefore no longer as important. See King (1990, 148), Jerome (91), Cranmer (299) and Chrysostom (12).

¹⁶ St. Jerome echoes this view toward virginity by positioning it in the mystical plane as opposed to the earthly realm – “let him then be fruitfull and multiply who intends to replenish the earth: but your company is in heaven” (91).

¹⁷ For more on the hermaphrodite, see Cirello (81), Roche (1964, 133-136), Barkan (1986, 216 & 258) and Plato (59 & 61).

¹⁸ See Jones (1986, 74 & 78-79).

¹⁹ On women placed and domesticated in the private sphere of the home and family rather than the public sphere, see Aughterson (9), Stone (5, 86, 152, 179 & 203-204), Belsey (9, 149 & 206) and Hull (47-48).

²⁰ See Heale (73 & 85). On marriage as the holier condition over the Roman Catholic privileging of virginity in the Reformation, see Mallette, who argues that this was “not specifically an attack on virginity, which is often praised as a good for some and as an imperative, before marriage, for all.” Mallette adds, “Reformation praise of marriage does not exclude praise of virginity, for both combat the ‘crime’ of fornication” (88).

²¹ On this and related reasons why Elizabeth did not wed as a political act to maintain her power as both a woman and as a queen, see Levin (1994, 1, 8 & 97), Rose (270 & 14), Adamson and Follard (88), Bassnett (39-40), Perry (9), Quilligan (1983, 213), Frye

(1994, 53), Goldberg (134), Hogrefe (21-22) and Warner (1976, 48).

²² Regarding the fact that the sixteenth-century aristocratic family was strongly patriarchal and patrilinear, see Stone (271), Evans (1989, 24), Quilligan (1987, 170) and Newman (16).

²³ See Watson (1995, 14), Wilson (1966, 6-7 & 65), Nichols (59), Einstein (16) and Teague (72).

²⁴ For more on this, see Duffy (112-113), Strong (1987, 80-83), Hibbert (73), Davies (1970, 31-32), Wilson (1966, 217) and Montrose (1986, 310).

²⁵ See Wilson (1966, 4-5 & 214).

²⁶ See also Waller (95 & 182) and Hume (126).

²⁷ See Spearing (17), Waller (54-55) and Davies (1970, 15-17).

²⁸ That the virginal lifestyle was viewed by Protestants with disgust, with strong opposition toward the monastic or celibate lifestyles, see also George and George (265-266), Haller (81) and Rose (28). For the argument that virginity lost its force among many Protestants and marriage was given a higher status and regarded as more dignified, see Rowse (390-391), Einstein (xi), Simon (165), Henderson and McManus (72), Lewis (1962, 35), Rose (28 & 34), Stone (135 & 491), Bassnett (41 & 124) and Berry (66 & 136).

²⁹ See Hyma (281 & 574) and Haugaard (233).

³⁰ Spenser saw his public, literary position as one that would spiritually and actively shape his community because he wrote for a powerful, aristocratic audience; See Miller (198). Similarly, Helgerson's *Self-Crowned Laureates*, emphasizes Spenser's writing as being instrumental in achieving political ends, attracting attention in a sphere other than just the poetic one. For more on this, see Greenblatt (1994, 46). Murrin notes that Spenser's *Faerie Queene* "was designed to civilize and educate human society" (85), as does Montrose (1986, 318-319).

³¹ More on the nature of Spenser's unfinished ending to *The Faerie Queene* can be found in Boeher (570), Goldberg (76), Waller (29 & 81), Kermode (7 & 58), Murrin (101) and Rajan (44).

³² On the many prospective marriages and their non-actualization within the poem, see Lewis (1968, 316), Haller (89), King (1982, 148), Hull (47-48) and Roche (1983, 73).

³³ See also Giamatti (132-133).

³⁴ For the importance of Elizabethan ideologies (especially marriage) acting to bind society into a system of order, see Waller (9) and Rose (4).

³⁵ See Norbrook (83-84), Montrose (1980, 156), Roche (1964, 141), Wells (18), Wilson (1980, 21), Norbrook (115), De Bruyn (58), Levin (1994, 70) & (1989, 95) and McCabe (128).

³⁶ On the debates relating to Mary's conception as immaculate, see Mark 3: 31-35, Clayton (2) and Pelikan (47, 50, 261 & 302).

³⁷ Wells (15-18) informs us that the worship of the Virgin Mary and the saints was regarded as idolatrous by the Protestants during Elizabeth's reign, and was something they attempted to eliminate and replace with the worship of Elizabeth. Wells lists the important dates of the year which Mary and Elizabeth shared, making such replacement both possible and suitable.

Chapter Four: Belpheobe and the Carle of Lust

¹ Silberman (1995, 120) accuses Amoret of possibly willing her abduction by Lust, while Paglia views Amoret's inability to defend herself or even to cry out more effectively as a sign that she is an "incomplete" female (1990, 186). Cheney (1966, 123), in addition, blames this incompleteness on Amoret's upbringing in the Garden of Adonis, stating that she is more easily captured by Lust because she is ignorant of any perverted attitude toward physical desire, such as the one he personifies. For more on Amoret's capture by Lust, see Williams (1966, 128), Roche (1964, 137), Woodhouse (215) and Maccaffrey (290).

² Silberman describes Lust as "the grotesque representation of sexuality" (1995, 10), as well as a symbol of the male genitals (1995, 121). For similar views, see Leslie (77), Maccaffrey (288) and Lockerd (20).

³ More information on the symbolic status of caves can be found in Blissett (138) and Goldberg (56).

⁴ Paglia (1979, 57) and Silberman (1995, 119) perceive Lust as the symbol of masculinity consuming virginity and female virtue as a whole.

⁵ For more on this aspect, see Hankins (160).

⁶ It is symbolic that Aemylia confronts Lust instead of Amyas, the latter being the man with whom she was meant to elope. Critics have recognized that Aemylia is captured by Lust due to her love for Amyas, a squire of low degree, which is thus understood as a form of lust. See Staton (106 & 108), Dasenbrock (137) and Maccaffrey (289-290).

⁷ For more on female aggression in the poem, see Paglia (1990, 173) and Waller (37).

⁸ Rose (132) offers a similar response to Roche, as does Evans (1970, 190), whilst Paglia (1979, 47) regards Belphebe as being immune to lust as well as love because of her virginity.

⁹ See De Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies* for the example of the virgin, Camilla (1. 24. 1). There are also other instances of women so pure they sacrifice their lives for their virginities – particularly 2. 37. 1; 2. 46. 1 and 2. 46. 4.

¹⁰ Silberman views this moment as one where "the lady doubles the shield as the object of phallic aggression" (1995, 122). Roche (1964, 137) sees the blood as sexually symbolic in relation to Amoret's stained garments. Hamilton (162) also reads this scene when Lust overcomes Timias and Amoret is wounded as an erotic allegory. On Amoret's sexual feelings regarding her injury in the

battle between Timias and the Carle of Lust, see Williams (1966, 128-129) and Hankins (160).

¹¹ For details on the Raleigh/Throckmorton affair and its link to Timias and Amoret, see De Neef (1997, 690-691), Oram (1997, 225) and (1990, 349), Waller (128), Roche (1964, 207), Adamson and Follard (200-205), Jack (219), Waller (192), Chang (154), Hough (130), Craig (538) and Bednarz (1996, 49). Gilbert, unlike these other critics, does not find the historical significance influential in the story of Belpheobe and Timias. Gilbert argues, "though Spenser writes that Belpheobe is the Queene, he nowhere asserts that Timias is Sir Walter" (624). However, Gilbert neglects Spenser's references to tobacco and the New World.

¹² This mirrors Raleigh's situation as a public courtier to the Queen and a private lover to his wife. Also, Elizabeth's banishment of Raleigh from Court is the moment in the poem when Belpheobe jealously believes that Timias is being unfaithful by embracing Amoret. For more on the public and private duty of the courtier in relation to Timias' 'betrayal' of Belpheobe here, see Oram (1990, 358), Roche (1964, 145) and De Neef (1997, 691).

¹³ For critical opinions on Belpheobe's reaction to this situation, see Paglia (1979, 47) and Haller (90).

Chapter Five: Timias' Loss of Belphoebe

- ¹ On the cruel, icy lady in Petrarchan poetry, see Forster (15).
- ² Hamilton (162-163) reads Timias' brutishness after his dismissal by Belphoebe as symbolic of his lustful state, which is signalled by his long hair.
- ³ That elegant speech was the indication of a gentleman, whilst the lack of speech implied a savage, and on courtly manners and words representing gentility, civility and wisdom in the typical English Renaissance gentleman, see Kelso (1964, 82). On these aspects being relative to Timias as a savage, see Maccaffrey (316).
- ⁴ For definitions of the wild man as an alien, often dangerous being, alienated from humanity and all of its civilized aspects, see Greenblatt (1980, 147-148), Berry (77-78, 90 & 160-161), Cheney (1966, 17) and Gransden (84). On the parallels of Timias to other wildmen, Yvain, Launcelot, Orlando and Tristan, see Bernheimer (14), Berry (91), Gilbert (637) and Bednarz (1983, 64).
- ⁵ See Vance (85-86).
- ⁶ See Vance, (88-90).
- ⁷ See also Goldberg (51 & 159).
- ⁸ On the absent lady in Petrarchan lyric, through either sickness, refusal or death, see Gregerson (127), who writes that absence

provides space for the persona's writing to be inspired and to fill that absence.

⁹ That Renaissance poets sought immortality through their works, see Martines (11). Renwick, in his interpretation of Spenser's letters, notices that he "was proposing to carve out a career for himself with poetry for his weapon" (40).

¹⁰ For more on Spenser's link between poetry and political power, see O'Connell (3).

¹¹ On the friendship between Spenser and Raleigh, see Edwards (51 & 97) and Bradbrook (29). Raleigh's persuading Spenser to accompany him to Court to present *The Faerie Queene* to Elizabeth is discussed in Koller (41), May (11 & 34), Adamson and Follard (184) and Shire (48).

¹² That the Queen's reciprocal duty was to reward Spenser for his work, see Bates (14). Brennan notes that the majority of writers sought "some form of protection, preferment or reward" (1) by praising the patron and serving the court. Brennan adds, "the best a writer could usually hope for by way of royal reward was some kind of pension in recognition of services to the court" (8). Spenser's pension by the Queen is discussed in Hibbert (127), Bednarz (1996, 279), Goldberg (128) and Martines (30 & 55). On Spenser's failure to gain all the rewards he wished, see Quilligan

(1983, 208), Shire (30), Nelson (6-7) and Adamson and Follard (188).

¹³ General critiques of this poem and the relationship of Laura to Elizabeth can be found in Adamson and Follard (185), Dasenbrock (28) and May (34-35). Bednarz (1996, 280-281) believes that this poem revises certain Spenserian paradigms, where Raleigh transforms himself from Timias to Prince Arthur, the Fairy Queen into a Belpheobe figure and Spenser from humble to great poet that displaces Petrarch and threatens Homer. Wells (1983, 92) interprets Raleigh's weeping as symbolic of Petrarch's due to the fact that Gloriana replaces Laura in the temple of fame as a chaste beloved inspiring male affection, which was an integral part of the cult of Elizabeth.

¹⁴ On Elizabeth's jealousy in regard to the marriage of any of her courtiers, see Norbrook (116-117), and on why Elizabeth considered Raleigh's marriage a sin in particular, see Williams (1972, 184-187 & 215), Edwards (13-14), Hogrefe (21) and Campbell (243). Tennenhouse explains that Raleigh's marriage to Throckmorton was a betrayal (though not just a sexual one), of his Petrarchan, romantic wooing of Elizabeth – "since Raleigh's fault was a social and political one, only social and economic

reparations – not literary ones – could serve as fit atonement” (1981, 244).

¹⁵ Raleigh’s symbolic character as the water, with Cynthia as the moon in *The Ocean to Cynthia*, is examined in Williams (1972, 182), Smuts (180 & 183), Cousins (91), Bradbrook (34) and Hibbert (127).

¹⁶ That Raleigh’s relationship with Elizabeth resembled that of a Petrarchan lover, socially inferior to his mistress, from whom he gained no genuine satisfaction, see Williams (1972, 182), Greenblatt (1973, 58) and Adamson and Follard (86).

¹⁷ Oakeshott (56) and Bradbrook (22) detail Raleigh’s madness whilst in the Tower.

¹⁸ For titles and gifts given to Raleigh by Elizabeth, see Adamson and Follard (100-103). Roche (1964, 146) interprets the heart-shaped ruby given to Timias by Belphebe as the symbol of their love, whilst Kane goes a step further and claims that the jewel “suggests a sublimated erotic depth to a rarified ideal” (120). Bieman (203) recognizes that Elizabeth as a conciliatory gift gave a similar jewelled object to Raleigh and, in addition, Hamilton’s editorial notes on *The Faerie Queene* refer to the fact that “a heart shaped ruby was presented to Elizabeth by Arthur Throckmorton to soften her displeasure over his sister’s marriage to Raleigh”

(Spenser, 1990, 481). See also Anderson (1996, 177), Gilbert (631) and Goldberg (54).

¹⁹ See also Roche (1964, 146), Evans (1970, 188), Cheney (1993, 20-21), Maccaffrey (269), Goldberg (54) and Jack (219).

²⁰ Timias' effort to be a perfect courtier, a selfless Petrarchan lover, is explored by Silberman (1995, 122).

²¹ See Warner (1985, 48).

²² Keaney (185), Williams (1961, 105-106), Roche (1964, 148), Goldberg (127) and Nelson (224) argue that Timias' choice to follow Belpheobe above Arthur was a wrongful one because it allows a woman (Belpheobe) to undermine a man (Arthur).

²³ See also Kelly (178).

²⁴ The incident was interpreted as an allegory of Elizabeth's courtship to Francois d'Alençon – her last serious marriage negotiation, between 1579-83, as King also notes (1982, 151).

²⁵ In regard to Elizabeth requiring faithful devotion without marriage from her courtiers, see Bassnett (42) and Norbrook (116-117).

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