

"Loue my lewd Pilot": The *Ars Amatoria* in *The Faerie Queene*

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Loue my lewd Pilot hath a restlesse mind
And fortune Boteswaine no assurance knowes,
But mind and saile withouten starres, gainst tide and wind:
How can they other do, sith both are bold and blind? (FQ 3.4.9)¹

In one of the more puzzling passages of *The Faerie Queene*, Britomart indulges in her "complaint" for her never-before-seen but much-beloved Arthegall (3.4.8–10). She then attempts to dissolve her mists of grief "into vengeance" (13) by wounding Marinell (17), who, like her, represents a type of self-absorbed lover. Apparently, she thought that such violence would be more purgative of her love-malady than the cure her kindly nurse had sought, which included herb-powered spells, burning hair, and Glauce's generous invitation to "Spit thrice vpon" her (3.2.30–52). Perhaps "bizarre" would be a better word in this case than "puzzling." Spenser reminds us, *ad nauseam*, that she represents the virtue of chastity.² How can one account for the erotics of Britomart's complaint, a paraphrase of Petrarch's "Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio" (*Rime* 189)?³

In anticipation of such naive readerly difficulties, Spenser uses Glauce as a surrogate to qualify Britomart's ardor in the cantos preceding the complaint. It is easy to explain. Surely it cannot be that "vncouth thing . . . filthy lust" (3.2.40), because "Sweet loue such lewdnes bands from his faire companie" (41). Yet Britomart, herself unsatisfied with such explanations, consistently describes her malady in physical terms: a "raging smart," a "flame" (43); "[I] feed on shadowes, whiles I die for food" (44); and, once the Nurse kisses her "alablaster brest," the old woman notices its tendency to "pant and quake" (42). In the 1590 version of the conclusion to Book 3, Britomart serves as voyeur while Amoret and Scudamour embrace with unabashed physicality as if "they had beene that faire *Hermaphrodite*" (3.12.46a). While Amoret "did in pleasure melt, / And in

sweete rausihment poured out her spright" (45a), Britomart "to herselfe oft wisht like happinesse" (46a).

Chaste Britomart's urge is not uncouth, filthy, or lewd, but it is lust, by no means a paradox.⁴ The antics of Spenser's heroine comprise an excellent meditation on the torments of deceptive lust that one can use to examine the issue in different parts of the epic. And one can better understand his Britomart by analyzing other references to this base passion in *The Faerie Queene* and relating them (carefully) to her. Such synthetic reading is crucial to the full examination of any issue in Spenser.

In Britomart's most grotesque image of her ills, she describes love as "a hidden hooke with baite I swallowed . . . infixed . . . Within my bleeding bowels" (3.2.38–39). Singed by desire and struck on the breast by Marinell's spear (one of many heart-piercing configurations attached to her), she penetrates his "threesquare scuchin" and "mayled hauberque" with her own "sharpe speare" (3.4.15–16). *The Faerie Queene* duplicates this spectacular display of displaced phallic aggression many times, one of the most noteworthy when Britomart unhorses Arthegall with the same spear, the lovers' identities unknown to one another (4.4.44). So ambiguous Spenser explains the evils of lust but then demonstrates the opposite. After all, this uncivilized generative force drives the Garden of Adonis (3.6), that celebration of healthy sexuality that comprises the approximate mathematical center of the entire *Faerie Queene* (its womb, perhaps), a place where "Franckly each paramour his leman knowes" (3.6.41), where Venus reaps "sweet pleasure of the wanton boy" Adonis (3.6.46).

This mythological contradiction accords well with Spenser's paradoxical reliance on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁵ Although one commentator implies that *The Faerie Queene* uses the idea of metamorphosis as an example of moral evil, "Virtue . . . means holding to one's visible shape," another argues with equal conviction that such transformations may also "suggest the shifting nature of the moral categories themselves."⁶ Furthermore, Spenser's romance structure suggests that he owes much to Ovid's anamorphic narratology.

Spenserians rarely note that the *Ars amatoria*, that notorious guide to the art of love much consulted by medieval and Renaissance poets, informs *The Faerie Queene*.⁷ Spenser may seem to condemn Ovid's book by analogy, but he raids it for ideas and images in tacit admiration and tribute. For example, Ovid's narrator, the *magister* or *praeceptor Amoris*, advises young men:

Ergo agi fallaci timidè confide figurae
Quisquis es: atque aliquid corpore pluris habe. (AA 2.143–44)⁸

Whoever you are, trust a deceptive beauty only in fear, and possess something more substantial than her body.

This could serve as warning to virtually every faerie knight who cannot detect the dubiety of Duessa, the False Florimell, Acrasia, or Malecasta. Certainly Spenser relies more heavily on other texts to create his epic's allusive texture: *Odyssey*, *Iliad*, *Aeneid*, *Orlando Furioso*, and *Metamorphoses*. However, Spenser uses the *Ars* as an intertext to develop the psychology of various characters enmeshed in sexuality, depraved and otherwise. Furthermore, it does not always constitute an example of evil and sin. Spenser implies that one should not always shun the precepts of the master, which aid in the conception of Britomart.

I

Recent theorists have explored the importance of *imitatio* as a Renaissance concept, so no exhaustive survey is necessary here.⁹ Given so many distinct voices (Aristotle, Cicero, Petrarch, Vives, Erasmus, Ricci, Ascham), no single view can be said to represent the whole. However, one can say that sixteenth-century humanists used it as a pedagogical method to teach schoolboys their Latin and Greek *auctores* (authoritative models from antiquity) by translation and reproductive imitation, with the subtext that Virgil, Horace, or Cicero had learned to write in precisely this way (i.e., by copying Homer, Pindar, or Demosthenes). Accordingly, *imitatio* helped comprise a poetics that these same schoolboys formed in adulthood. Yet Spenser and his fellows saw that Virgil does not reproduce Homer so much as rewrite him. Accordingly, they often imitate their classical and medieval sources in a dialectical fashion. So *imitatio* becomes a predatory writerly activity, both tribute and violation.

Surely Spenser knew Roger Ascham's treatise on the topic in *The Scholemaster* 2.5 (1570) titled *Imitatio*. In it Ascham enunciates his pedagogy and accounts for virtually all imitation theory from antiquity to his own time. Although he despises romance and rhyme, both dear to Spenser,¹⁰ his zeal for reading authors such as Cicero and his belief that one who does so will be "both learned, wise, and also an honest man, if he ioyned with all the trewe doctrine of Gods holie Bible"¹¹ seem to have influenced the author of *The Faerie Queene*. (Spenser also knew Ascham as the beloved teacher of the monarch to whom he dedicated his epic.)

Ascham explains that "*Imitation* is a facultie to expresse liuelie and perfetlie that example which ye go about to follow," and he divides the definition into three parts.¹² The third, choosing the best author to imitate, comprises the most important for the student. Ascham explains that one can treat dissimilar material in a similar fashion to the *auctor*, or vice-versa, much as Cicero does with Demosthenes: "This he altereth and changeth, either in propertie of wordes, in forme of sentence, in substance

of the matter, or in one or other conuenient circumstance of the authors present purpose."¹³ Ascham gives an apprentice poet almost complete license to do what he will with a maker of antiquity—as long as he perpetrates no rhyming or romancing.

Spenser's work in its totality takes such license and exhibits virtually all phases of *imitatio*. He closely translates Petrarch or du Bellay, rewrites Theocritus and Virgil, raids Homer and Ariosto, and "overgoes" and subverts Ovid. In "A Letter of the Authors" to Raleigh appended to the 1590 version of *The Faerie Queene*, he explains, in part, his imitative technique in creating Arthur, "being made famous by many mens former workes" as a model of moral virtue:

I haue followed all the antique Poets historicall, first *Homere*, who in the Persons of *Agamemnon* and *Vlysses* hath ensampled a good gouernour and a vertuous man . . . then *Virgil*, whose like intention was to doe in the person of *Aeneas*; after him *Ariosto* comprised them both in his *Orlando*.¹⁴

But this simple and bland statement does not account for Spenser's liberal borrowing from the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, or his rewriting of the *Orlando Furioso*. Nor does it explain his use of several other authors for diverse reasons besides "ensampl[ing] a good gouernour and a vertuous man." Actually, Ascham's license to alter as one imitates in word, phrase, and matter seems to have guided Spenser "in one or other conuenient circumstance of [his] present purpose" as he raided classical, medieval, and Italian Renaissance literature for material. It explains his strange use of the *Ars amatoria* as a formative intertext for *The Faerie Queene*, a work Spenser intended to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline."¹⁵

II

However, given the stereotype of the "moral" and "Puritan" Spenser, such a claim may appear fatuous. When two types of the *magister* actually surface in Book 3, the author's allegorical critique of the *Ars-Ovid* seems scathing. As the much-pursued Florimell flees the hyena (a lustful beast) that Satyrane has already subdued with her golden girdle (an emblem of chastity), she happens upon an old fisherman and his skiff for refuge, and advises the tiller:

Haue care, I pray, to guide the cock-bote well,
Least worse on sea then vs on land befell.

Thereat th'old man did nought but fondly grin,
And said, his boat the way could wisely tell:
But his deceitfull eyes did neuer lin,
To looke on her faire face, and marke her snowy skin. (3.8.24)

Spenser knew that Ovid uses the helmsman and fisherman of love as controlling metaphors for the *magister* in the *Ars*.¹⁶ As with many incidental characters in *Faerie Queene* 3, the old fisherman is a type of Lust or Lechery:

Arte citae uelòque rates, remòque reguntur.
Arte leues currus: arte regendus amor.
Curribus Automedon lentis erat aptus habenis:
Tiphys in Haemonia puppe magister erat:
Me Venus artificem tenero praefecit amori:
Tiphys, & Automedon dicar Amoris ego. (AA 1.3–8)

Swift ships are guided by the art of sail and oar; a chariot is easily driven with art: love should also be guided by art. Automedon was skilled with the supple reins of the chariot. Tiphys was the master of the Haemonian ship. Venus has made me the expert in delicate love; I should be called the Tiphys and Automedon of Love.

The *Ars* suggests that men in complete control of women may deceive them more easily and that men may enjoy this mastery if they, in turn, submit themselves to the master's teaching. The tiller-*magister* straddles Florimell, gropes her breasts, and wrestles her under a pile of rotting fish scales. Her resistance never falters, perhaps an allegorical comment upon the efficacy of Ovidian woman-hunting. Ovid stresses *ars*; Spenser argues that Lechery has no art at all.

Or perhaps the clumsily rustic nature of many of Spenser's characters affirms the need for Ovidian *ars*. The *magister* reminds us that it is not always safe to fish for young girls, "Nec teneras tutum est semper captare puellas" (AA 1.405), advice the rustic fisherman should have taken. And Florimell would have remained screaming under the fishy effluvia in the skiff, "Ruffled and fowly raid with filthy soyle" (3.8.32), without Proteus, who saves her from "that old leachour" (36). One would not expect such a rescue since the *magister Amoris* counsels his student-lover to model himself after this sea-god, one whom Ovid labels "Protea . . . ambiguum" elsewhere (*Met.* 2.9):

Qui sapit, innumeris moribus aptus erit.
Vtq[ue] leuis Proteus modo se tenuabat in vndas,
Nunc leo, nunc arbor, nunc erat hirtus aper. (AA 1.761–63)

Whoever is wise will adapt himself to numerous guises, just as
supple Proteus varied himself in the waves: now a lion, now a tree,
now a shaggy boar.¹⁷

At first, Spenser's incarnation seems gentle and fatherly to Florimell, whom he "full softly kist" (FQ 3.8.35) before taking her to his bower beneath the sea. Yet he too is another type of lecher: Florimell "ever more . . . him refused flat, / And all his fained kindness did detest" (39). Like the fisherman's, his *ars* fails. So, again Spenser alludes to the *Ars*, and even more specifically to the god Ovid uses as his emblem of the skillful lover, then pounds the *auctor* and his attitudes to a pulp—the same author whose myths of change are so essential to the densely allusive romance texture of *The Faerie Queene*.

III

Proteus and the old fisherman are only two of many images and tableaux portraying immoderate physical desire in *Faerie Queene* 3, pictures so manifold and interconnected as to make the author seem dizzyingly obsessive and homiletic. In fact, the idea that lust and its most notorious champion in antiquity could be anything but evil in Spenser's imagination may appear to be worse than fatuous to the postmodern reader, who may wonder why the author seems so obsessed with and troubled by sexuality. However, Spenser imbibed Ovid more subtly than has been heretofore supposed. He owes him too much to dismiss him.

Spenser, like Ovid, often pictures lust as predatory. The *magister* counsels, "Scit bene venator, ceruis vbi retia tendat" (1.45): the hunter knows well where to spread his nets for the stag. Also: "tu praecipue curvis venare theatris" (1.89): one should hunt chiefly in the theaters for women. Here, however, Spenser dispenses with *ars* and makes his predators animals who are usually hunted. That "griesly Foster . . . Breathing out beastly lust" to defile Florimell (3.1.17) pursues her like an animal, resembling the Hyena "That feeds on women's flesh" (3.7.22), and "through his perfect sent, / And passing speede, . . . shortly he her ouerhent" (3.7.23). The giantess Argante, like a "Goshauke," captures the unfortunate Squire of Dames and, having finished with him, wishes to devour Satyrane, her business being "To seeke young men, to quench her flaming thrust" to "serue her lust" (3.7.50).

The *magister* has many male types in *The Faerie Queene* besides the tiller or the foster, usually manifested in those characters who practice verbal deception for nefarious sexual purposes. Ovid's treatise informs the *iuvenes Romae*, "dabit eloquio victa puella manus" (1.464): a conquered woman will give her hand to eloquence. Therefore, skill in love is

useful if hidden: "Si latet ars, prodest" (2.313). Feigning love's wounds with words and pretending faithfulness will bring her to you: "Est & agendus amans, imitand que vulnera verbis: / Hic tibi quaeratur qualibet arte fides" (1.613–14). To the *magister* women are deceivers who deserve to be tricked, so "Fallite fallentes" (1.647). Spenser dramatizes this particular alliterative imperative in the hermaphroditic False Florimell, that male daemon who "all the wyles of wemens wits knew passing well" (3.8.8) and who uses "termes of loue and lewdnesse dissolute" (3.8.14). Spenser demonstrates the emptiness of such eloquent lewdness when Sansloy "With fawning wordes . . . courted" Una, "oft sighing sore" (1.6.4). Enjoying no success with his "flatt'ring arts," the paynim knight uses "greedy force" and "gan the fort assayle" (1.6.5). Perhaps he read the *Ars*, which suggests that women actually welcome this greedy force: "Vim licet appellent: grata est vis illa puellis" (1.675). Those who succeed with nods and winks instead, like Paridell, simply dismiss their Hellenores when they grow bored: "He nought be clogd. So had he serued many one" (3.10.35). Although Spenser dramatizes the horror of such thinking and behavior in Busyrane's house and on his tapestries that portray "all of loue, and all of lusty-hed" (3.11.29), he is not without a sense of humor elsewhere. The comical Squire of Dames, charged to "do seruice" of a sexual nature "vnto gentle Dames" to satisfy his lady's perverse sense of faithfulness in him, receives "Three hundred pledges for [his] good desartes" (3.7.55), which even amuses the stoic Satyrane. *Si latet ars, prodest*, indeed.

Spenser declares, just as Shakespeare's Albany tells his lustful wife, that proper deformity in the fiend seems not so horrid as in woman. Naturally Ovid does not see women's concupiscence as deformity. Actually, *ipse dixit*, this makes them easier to seduce, and one should not doubt that they can all be overcome, a principle to which the first two books of the *Ars* are devoted: "ne dubita cunctas superare puellas" (AA 1.345). After reciting a catalogue of crimes prompted by women's lust, he assures men that the female's sex drive is deadlier than the male's: "Acrior est nostra, plusque furoris habet" (1.344). Ovid then implies the same idea in two carefully joined lines in his address *ad feminas*:

Nil, nisi lasciuui per me discuntur amores;
Femina praecipio quo sit amanda modo. (3.27–28)

Only lascivious ways to love are learned through me; by these ways chiefly a woman ought to be loved.

Yet for all his notations of sexual freedom conducive to the modern temperament, Ovid's subtext is deeply patriarchal: women's lust renders them prey and therefore makes them inferior beings. And this is Christian

Spenser's inheritance from his pagan master, properly moralized: "So readie rype to ill, ill wemens counsels bee" (3.10.11). Even the predatory giantess Argante is afflicted with "feminine / And filthy lust" (3.11.4), which exposes her vulnerability.

The canto devoted to Malecasta (3.1), who, like Duessa and her iconographic mother the Whore of Babylon, wears a "scarlot mantle" (59) and is "giuen all to fleshly lust" (48), is one of twelve Spenserian essays on the topic in the Book of Chastity. One of Malecasta's tapestries shows that picture of Venus, whose "tender hart was with [Adonis's] beautie smit" (34), and since we are not yet in the Garden of Adonis, this is a bad thing. No love-goddess, Malecasta's "wanton eyes, ill signes of womanhed, / Did roll too lightly" (41) at the sight of Britomart in her masculine armor, presaging both Hellenore (3.9.52) and Shakespeare's backhanded compliment at women's expense to his beautiful young man: "An eye more bright than theirs, lesse false in rowling" (Sonnet 20.5). Like the wound that Virgil's Dido nourishes that consumes her marrow with blind fire ("vulnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni" [*Aen.* 4.2]), through Malecasta's "bones the false instilled fire / Did spred it selfe" (3.1.56). Spenser dramatizes such self-inflicted victimhood for sexual purposes in Hellenore's adventures with the satyrs: "euery one as commune good her handeled" (3.10.36). At Malbecco's invitation to resume their marriage, Hellenore's retort, "she it all refused at one word" (3.10.51), would seem to resemble Grill's in the Bower of Bliss (2.12.87)—she too prefers to have her hog-gish mind.

Spenser constantly and insistently distinguishes lust from love. He dismisses as filth Malecasta's feelings for the as-yet-unmasked Britomart: "Such loue is hate, and such desire is shame" (3.1.50). Similarly, the *ars*-less Chorle in pursuit of Florimell expresses "No loue, but brutish lust, that was so beastly tind" (3.7.15). Earlier in Book 3, Spenser explains love in neoplatonic terms as that "Most sacred fire," a "sweet fit, that doth true beautie loue, / And choseth vertue for his dearest Dame"—most definitely not that "which doth base affections moue / In brutish minds, and filthy lust inflame" (3.3.1).

Spenser's dichotomy becomes frenetic and strained so that "loue" seems to be as empty a word (and as blind a metrical line-filler) as the ubiquitous "goodly." Ovid of course recognizes no such neat (Christian) distinction, but his sense of *fas* and *nefas* colors his sense of what types of women not to pursue:

Este procul vittae tenues, insigne pudoris
Quaeq[ue] tegis medios instita longa pedes.
Nos Venerem tutam, concessaque furta canemus,
Inq[ue] meo nullum carmine crimen erit. (AA 1.31–34)

Keep your distance, slender fillets, symbols of chastity, and the long robe that hides the feet. I sing of safe lovemaking and allowable secrecy, and there will be no crime in my poetry.

Later in the *Ars*, he repeats the injunction:

En iterum testor: nihil hic, nisi lege remissum:
Luditur in nostris instita nulla iocis. (2.599–600)

Again let me explain: there is nothing here except what the law allows. No long robe plays in my games.

In the abstractions *Love and Lust*, Spenser Christianizes Ovid's pagan distinction between "respectable" Roman women and manifold *puellae* who might represent an evening's entertainment, but he is similarly unconvincing. Just as Ovid admits elsewhere that all (including matrons in their modest long robes) can be had, "cunctas / Posse capi" (1.269–70), Spenser's *Love and Lust* blur in *Amoret* and even in *Britomart*.

IV

Perhaps all references to lust somehow emanate from the description of Lechery in the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins in the House of Pride (1.4.24–26). This would be a natural assumption to make, not only because Spenser's portrait of the sin occurs so early in his epic, but because a reading of the entire work would suggest that it is somehow archetypal. Furthermore, since this vice follows Gluttony and precedes Avarice, the writer intends the reader to associate the three sins, just as he does allegorically in *Faerie Queene* 3.9–10: Hellenore (Lechery), Malbecco (Avarice), Paridell (Gluttony).¹⁸ So Lechery is the central lobe of a triad, a vice of sexual excess and covetise, a conception with a classical analogue in the *Ars amatoria*, although pagan Ovid could never have heard of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Spenser colors *Faerie Queene* 1.4.24–26 with Ovidian hues. In the first stanza (24), the sin rides upon a goat with "whally eyes (the signe of gelosy)," the psychological nausea that afflicts any lover in the *Amores*, *Remedia amoris*, and the *Ars*. Spenser dramatizes this in Book 3 with Malbecco, who "Forgot he was a man, and Gealosie is hight" (10.60), and whose name literally means "evil little he-goat."¹⁹ Lust is an "Vnseemely man to please faire Ladies eye," perhaps a nod to the dictum of the *magister* to men to avoid foppery: "Forma viros neglecta docet" (*AA* 1.509), and a similar admonition to women to eschew men who profess their own elegance: "vitate viros cultum form mque professos" (3.433). The alexan-

drine that concludes *Faerie Queene* 1.4.24, "O who does know the bent of womens fantasy?" has a clear parallel in the *Ars*: "sunt diuersa puellis / Pectora: mille animos excipe mille modis" (1.756–57). Again the patriarchal subtext reads: women are weak, susceptible to lust, victims who deserve to be blamed.

Spenser continues his analogue in the next stanza (25):

And in his hand a burning hart he bare,
Full of vaine follies, and new fanglenesse:
For he was false, and fraught with ficklenesse,
And learned had to loue with secret lookes,
And well could daunce, and sing with ruefulnesse,
And fortunes tell, and read in louing bookes,
And thousand other wayes, to bait his fleshly hookes.

The *magister* advises both men and women to cultivate fickleness and falsehood: "vt fallas ad mea sacra veni" (3.616)—attend to my rites so that you may deceive. Although (male) Lechery prides himself on his terpsichorean and vocal prowess, Spenser may have transposed further concepts of deceit from Ovid when he suggests that a man praise a woman's dancing and singing regardless of her skills: "Brachia saltantis, vocem mirare canentis" (2.305). The "fleshly hookes" recall the Ovidian tiller-fisher metaphor as one who holds the hook: "qui sustinet hamos" (1.47). Spenser even leaves us a clue to his intertext. Perhaps one of the "louing bookes" that Lechery reads is that which Spenser raids, the *Ars amatoria*, whose chief term, translated as "art," he constantly applies to Paridell, the disciple of the *magister*. He takes as his emblem a burning heart (3.8.45); he and Hellenore exchange a plethora of "secret looks" (3.9.27).

Stanza 26 summarizes Lechery's unreconstructed Ovidian qualities: the predatory male, the man who deceives with speech, the lusting woman: "Inconstant man, that loued all he saw." Surely he knows that all can be caught: "cunctas / Posse capi" (*AA* 269–70). The stanza also continues to imply that women should blame themselves for their victimhood at the hands of Lechery, who "ioyd weake wemens hearts to tempt and proue / If from their loyall loues he might them moue." Again, Ovid believes that women's sex drives are stronger than men's, and that this biology accounts for their pathology. Another patriarchal explanation that Spenser seems to endorse in the foregoing couplet: "Parua leues capiunt animos" (1.159)—little things captivate shallow minds, for the purpose of seduction. Gluttonously and avariciously lecherous, the *magister* serves as classical precedent for a medieval vice that Spenser reanimates in his Renaissance romance.

V

Although Spenser's Ovidian description of Lechery in *Faerie Queene* 1.4.24–26 reticulates to the evils of lust in Book 3 and elsewhere, much of it also makes a ghostly connection with Britomart. At first, it seems too minor to notice, capricious or even perverse readerly activity, on the order of believing Desdemona unchaste. Lechery is an "Vnseemely man to please faire Ladies eye" (1.4.24); oddly, so is Britomart in her male disguise before the gaze of Malecasta (3.1). Yet Britomart's eyes, like those of Lechery, Malecasta, and the women in the *Ars* who are easy prey, tend to wander and roll. The torturous Masque of Cupid in which Busirane forces Amoret to participate is one that the "warlike Mayde behold[s] earnestly . . . ne could satisfie her greedy eyes" (3.11.53). As previously mentioned, the 1590 conclusion to Book 3 finds her "much empassiond in her gentle sprite" at the erotic embrace of Amoret and Scudamour (3.12.46a). Spenser hints at Britomart's chaste voyeurism much earlier in her story. When she looks into Merlin's magic mirror and sees Arthegall, Spenser attaches to her the odd simile of "th' Aegyptian Phao" who hid "From all mens vew . . . / Yet she might all men vew out of her bowre" (3.2.20). Not too bold, perhaps, but bold enough, hiding from all men's sight in her masculine armor.

Britomart's fondness for looking in the mirror also suggests a kind of vanity that Spenser associates with Lechery and that the *magister* considers essential for hunting women.²⁰ She gazes into "that mirrhour fayre," and "Her selfe a while therein she vewd in vaine" to think of things "that mote to her selfe pertaine" (3.2.22). One might protest that this self-reflection relates to the idea that Britomart will see her future husband if she looks long enough. Yet Spenser does not enunciate this idea until the next stanza (23), so "in vain" may mean "vainly" as well as "uselessly." When she sees Arthegall, her "proud portance . . . now did quaille" (3.2.27). Elsewhere self-absorbed, "With such selfe-pleasing thoughts her wound she fed" (3.4.6).

Other troublesome spiderwebs connect. In the metaphor of the fisher or tiller, the *magister* thinks of himself as one who holds the hook, duplicated in the "fleshly hooks" that Lechery baits and proffers (1.4.25). Such a device snares Britomart in her complaint that "the hidden hooke with baite I swallowed" (3.2.38). Accordingly, the Vice holds a "burning hart" in his hand (1.4.25), perhaps Britomart's "molten hart" (3.2.15). Lechery joys to tempt weak women's hearts and move them from their loyal loves. Spenser describes Britomart, surely not weak or moveable, as a "silly [i.e., innocent, simple] Mayd" (3.2.27) who strives for her own smart, her marrow bubbling away. Insist as she might that "mine is not . . . like others wound" (36), and "no vsuall fire . . . which on my life doth feed, / And

suckles the bloud, which from my hart doth bleed" (3.2.37), she sounds very much like Dido and Malecasta, if not too bold.

Spenser could well have applied such words as "dissemble," "disguize," "beguile," "feignd," and "deceiue" to the Protean *praeceptor Amoris*. He constantly uses this diction in reference to Britomart, who makes her complaint by the sea that Ovid's favorite god, Proteus, haunts. Britomart "dissemble[s] her disguised kind" (3.2.4) and tries to mask her emotions throughout Book 3. Spenser devotes much of Canto 2 to her attempt to pump Guyon for information about Arthegall "To feed her humour with his pleasing stile" (11), while pretending not to be interested and to despise him instead since he tried "to beguile / A simple mayd" (12)—infinitive and adjective patently false. Later in the canto, Spenser, by implied metaphor, compares Britomart to the beast who changes its skin:

For pleasing words are like to Magick art,
That doth the charmed Snake in slomber lay:
Such secret ease felt gentle *Britomart*,
Yet list the same efforce with faind gainesay. (15)

Guyon's description of Arthegall entrances Britomart into a "charmed" state at the "pleasing words." And one of those troublesome terms, "faind," resurfaces just before her complaint in which she indulges "her feigning fancie" (3.4.5). The present participle intimates that her desirous nature is mercurial, Protean, Ovidian. In Book 4 she flushes and blushes in front of Arthegall, whom she has just knocked from his horse, yet "she it would dissemble" (4.6.29). Spenser's (patronizing) comment:

How euer she her paynd with womanish art
To hide her wound, that none might it perceiue:
Vaine is the art that seekes it selfe for to deceiue. (40)

The alexandrine seems to be an exorcism of Ovid's famous "Si latet ars, prodest" (2.313): if art is hidden, it is useful. But why use Britomart to exorcise it? Why not Paridell, the Squire of Dames, Busirane? Spenser clearly implies that it is useless and prideful of Britomart to presume that she can disguise the *ars* she employs and to fool herself into thinking that she is employing it.

Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene* contains one of the strangest stanzas in the entire epic, one in which Britomart continues her Protean-Ovidian ways in her role-playing with Amoret, who thinks her a knight proffering protection.

Thereto her feare was made so much the greater
Through fine abusion of that *Briton* mayd:
Who for to hide her fained sex the better,
And maske her wounded mind, both did and sayd
Full many things so doubtfull to be wayd,
That well she wist not what by them to gesse,
For other whiles to her she purpos made
Of loue, and otherwhiles of lustfulnesse,
That much she feard his mind would grow to some excesse. (4.1.7)

To keep the meter running in his mellifluous Italianate stanza, Spenser must eschew the fanciful trisyllabic names of his characters and hope that the reader can keep track of the subject with monosyllabic pronouns. The "her" in the first line is Amoret, but the "*Briton* mayd" who makes her so fearful with "fine abusion" (studied deception) is Britomart, who torments Amoret (the "she" of line 6) to salve her own sexual angst. Then in line 7, "she" (Britomart) makes "her" (Amoret) so nervous that in line 9, "she" (Amoret) fears—without warning "his" (i.e., Britomart's) mind, which seems bent on "lustfulnesse." Spenser's careful change of gender reinforces his heroine's Protean nature. Very bold indeed.

Britomart spends Book 3 in a state of continual sexual arousal and frustration. It comprises, I think, the impetus of the whole book, the very animus that the *magister* in the *Ars* attempts to foment. Britomart watches men chase women and women chase men, is herself chased by a woman and by men, sees Paridell and Hellenore go to it, observes Busirane's sex show featuring Amoret, and attempts (unsuccessfully) to work off her own longings by the noble sport of jousting. Spenser intended our last look at her in Book 3 to be her voyeurism of Scudamour and Amoret (1590 3.12.43–47), but he may have sensed that she (and we) had seen quite enough.

When criticism admits that Britomart lusts, it adds the rider that she does so chastely and nobly, because her desire will eventually begin the line that will produce the monarch whose approval Spenser labors so hard to gain. So Spenser himself strives to tell us, "Not that she lusted after any one" (3.2.23), and to intimate, through figures such as Glauce, that Britomart does not know what lust is: "Of much more vncouth thing I was affrayd; / Of filthy lust" (40).

Yet Britomart knows perfectly well what it is. She explains to Guyon, "I loathed haue my life to lead, / As Ladies wont, in pleasures wanton lap" (6). When she senses that Malecasta's eyes caress her, she "dissembled it with ignoraunce" (3.1.50). Her physical symptoms are Ovidian-Petrarchan. In even hearing the name of Arthegall, she,

As if she had a feuer fit, did quake,
And euerie daintie limbe with horroure shake;
And euer and anone the rosy red,
Flasht through her face. (3.2.5)

Like the foregoing Malecastas and Hellenores and their Ovidian grandmothers, lust makes her a kind of prey, as she admits, wishing to "yield the pray of loue to lothsome death at last" (17). She feels afflicted by that "sore" and "sad euill" (3.3.16–18), one that Merlin, who made the mirror that began it all, thinks the antithesis of evil.

Moreover, suffering Britomart knows that she herself lusts, and defends her tendency to do so. When Glauce assures her of the filthiness of lust, the provenance of Ovidian feminine decadence found in *Metamorphoses* 9–10, exemplified by Myrrha, Biblis, and Pasiphae, Britomart demurs politely but frankly:

Beldame, your words doe worke me little ease;
For though my loue be not so lewdly bent,
As those ye blame, yet may it nought appease
My raging smart, ne ought my flame relent,
But rather doth my helpelesse griefe augment.
For they, how euer shamefull and vnkind,
Yet did possesse their horrible intent:
Short end of sorrowes they thereby did find;
So was their fortune good, though wicked were their mind. (3.2.43)

Bestiality, incest, immoderate lust: Britomart has no taste for such fare, but at least these mythological women in that lewd book found "Short end of sorrowes" and "good fortune" in satisfying their "raging smart." She envies their sexual satisfaction in principle. It is an incredible statement for her to make. Perhaps, as one critic suggests, Britomart tacitly asserts that "bestiality and incest are better than nothing."²¹

At the beginning of *Ars amatoria* 3, Ovid apologizes to women for arming men against them, and then promises to redress the balance by giving arms to them in the person of Penthesilea the Amazon, proposing that they go into battle on equal terms: "Ite in bella pares" (3). Spenser internalizes and revises this passage in offering to sing Britomart's praises "and make them knowen farre" (FQ 3.2.3), and in admitting later:

For all too long I burne with enuy sore,
To heare the warlike feates, which *Homere* spake
Of bold *Penthesilee*. (3.4.2)

His Amazon owes much more to Ovid than to Homer in his dialectical imitation of the *magister Amoris*. Spenser raids the *Ars* for its phenomenology of sexual tension, desire, and deceit, and allegorizes its impetus so that it drives his paragon of chastity. Again, this is not such a paradox. Although Spenser is fond of creating the narratological illusion of being a declarative and didactic poet, a careful reading of his characters and their adventures makes this illusion vanish as utterly as the visions in the House of Busirane. As sternly as he may admonish us, "neuer let th'ensample of the bad / Offend the good" (3.9.2), he often refuses to define the operative dichotomous terms in a way that he may have led us to anticipate—particularly where his use of the *Ars amatoria* is concerned.

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NOTES

This essay began as a paper presented at the Huntington Library under the auspices of the Renaissance Conference of Southern California, 12 May 1995. Two fellow participants made helpful comments: Professor Caroline McManus, California State University, Los Angeles, and Professor Cyndia Clegg, Pepperdine University. I am also grateful to the anonymous readers at *TSL* for their close reading of my piece, as well as the editor, Professor John Rumrich, the University of Texas at Austin. However, my primary debt is to my teacher who introduced me to Spenser and who taught me to read him, and to whom this essay is dedicated: Professor Elizabeth Morley Ingram, Eastern Michigan University.

1. All references to the 1596 *Faerie Queene*, J. C. Smith's Oxford text (1909) that A. C. Hamilton annotates in his edition (New York and London: Longman, 1977). All other textual material pertinent to *Faerie Queene* is taken from this edition.

2. Sheila T. Cavanagh has several unflattering things to say about Britomart and her chastity. I find these comments particularly disagreeable: "Britomart is surprisingly dim-witted," and "demonstrates that female virtue becomes more palatable when it is personified by a manly woman." Furthermore, Britomart "presents . . . evidence that the so-called 'virtue' of chastity is largely an intricate and surreptitious mode of female subordination. By offering Britomart as the reputed heroine and central exemplar of this virtue, the text implicitly supports the culture's systematic denial of women." See *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in "The Faerie Queene"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 139, 171.

3. The intertextual connection between Britomart's complaint (FQ 3.4.8–10), Petrarch's *Rime sparse*, 189, and Thomas Wyatt's translation "My galey charged with forgetfulness" has never been properly explored. I do not propose to do so here, but I would say that Spenser's expansion and compression of Ovid resembles Petrarch's and Wyatt's in that all three Renaissance writers drop the sardonic edge of the *magister*, see the speaker as adrift and in thrall to Love as

navigator, and excise the figure of the charioteer. Yet Spenser strongly differs from his epochal contemporaries. His speaker, a chaste woman who enunciates her erotic grief, does not believe that her desires are diseased. And though "Loue is [her] lewd Pilot," she also attempts to "be her own pilot" as well, thus enacting the metaphor that the *magister* appropriates for himself. Although he notes no Ovidian connection, Jerome Dees enumerates over thirty direct references to ships in Spenser's epic. See "The Ship Conceit in the *Faerie Queene*: 'Conspicuous Allusion' and Poetic Structure," *Studies in Philology* 72 (1975): 208–25.

4. Britomart's physical desire, be it lust or not, has been remarked upon but not fully studied. Harry Berger observes that Britomart has a "nightmare fear of her own lust as well as [Artegall's], the fear of being captured and possessed in mind and heart as well as in body." "Busirane and the War between the Sexes: An Interpretation of the *Faerie Queene* III.xi–xii," *English Literary Renaissance* 1 (1971): 117. Lesley Brill views Britomart's complaint as sexual sublimation, and her chastity as "essentially aggressive." "Chastity as Ideal Sexuality in the *Faerie Queene* III," *Studies in English Literature* 11 (1971): 15. Helen Gardner suggests instead that Britomart's malady is sexual frustration in "Some Reflections on the House of Busyrane," *Review of English Studies* 34 (1983): 411. Following Gardner, James W. Broadus analyzes Britomart's sex drive according to sixteenth-century physiological and gynecological theory, concluding that "Sexual desire expressed as chaste love is the indwelling force which impels Britomart on her quest." "Renaissance Psychology and Britomart's Adventures in *Faerie Queene* III," *English Literary Renaissance* 17 (1987): 186–206; 195.

5. On Spenser's use of the *Metamorphoses*, see W. P. Cumming, "Ovid as a Source for Spenser's Monster-Spawning Mud Passage," *Modern Language Notes* 45 (1930): 166–68; "The Influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on Spenser's 'Mutabilitie' Cantos," *Studies in Philology* 28 (1931): 241–56; Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1932); Kathleen Williams, "Venus and Diana: Some Uses of Myth in *The Faerie Queene*," *English Literary History* 28 (1961): 101–20; *Spenser's World of Glass* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Colin Burrow, "Original Fictions: *Metamorphoses* in *The Faerie Queene*," in *Ovid Renewed*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 99–119.

Some more particular comments: Berger notes that "Spenser revises Ovid by converting the literal description of bodies to a figurative interpretation of psyches" ("Busirane and the War between the Sexes," 120). Antony E. Friedmann brilliantly analyzes the effect of Ovid on Spenser's imagination, suggesting that the Diana-Actaeon episode in the *Metamorphoses* (3.131f.) serves as source for the Bower of Bliss, Belphoebe's Bower, the Garden of Adonis, Diana's Fountain, Una and the Lion, Arthur's description of Gloriana, and the tapestry in the House of Busirane. "The Diana-Actaeon Episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *The Faerie Queene*," *Comparative Literature* 18 (1966): 289–99. Michael Holahan remarks that Spenser offers "a serious parody . . . which places the *Metamorphoses* on significant trial." "Iamque opus exegi: Ovid's Changes and Spenser's Brief Epic of Mutability," *English Literary Renaissance* 6 (1976): 244. Theresa M. Krier suggests

that Spenser's use of Ovid's epic includes "imitative expansion of episodes, character types, and ethical norms—which lead to his proliferating watchers of the female body." *Gazing on Secret Sights: Spenser, Classical Imitation, and the Decorums of Vision* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 136. However, the most penetrating comments are those of Leonard Barkan, who argues convincingly that Spenser's epic "may well be the fullest poetic exploration of metamorphosis since Ovid's time, for in it Spenser builds a hierarchy of types of transformation. Though he classifies amorous self-metamorphoses as quintessentially empty and immoral, he places them among other types of transformation in such a way as to suggest the shifting nature of the moral categories themselves." *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 241–42.

6. Respectively, Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 176; Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh*, 242.

7. Like the issue of Britomart's lust, the idea that Spenser uses the *Ars* as source-intertext-paradigm has been mentioned only cursorily in *Faerie Queene* criticism, hence the need for the present study. In *Spenser and the System of Courtly Love* (Louisville, 1934; reprint, New York: Phaeton Press, 1968), Earle B. Fowler adduces parallels between the *Ars* and *The Faerie Queene*, but in the fashion of his day, provides no analysis (88–90); similar are Calvin R. Edwards, "Spenser and the Ovidian Tradition" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1958), and Helen C. Gilde, "Spenser's Hellenore and Some Ovidian Associations," *Comparative Literature* 23 (1971): 233–39. In *The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's "Faerie Queene"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), Thomas P. Roche connects the etymology of Busirane's name to *Ars amatoria* 1.643–58, because "Ovid's ironic advice to his hypothetical lover . . . betray[s] an attitude toward love and women . . . that underlies the conceit of love as war" which one can then link "with the figure of Busiris . . . and Spenser's Busyrane" (81–82). In *Spenser's World of Glass*, Williams provides similar connections (109–110); Hamilton notes like parallels in his edition, *passim*. On the other hand, Lauren Silberman describes Busirane as "Petrarchan," and distinguishes sharply between Ovidian and Petrarchan eroticism throughout her study. See *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of "The Faerie Queene"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 63.

8. All quotations from the *Ars* are taken from the edition of Andreas Naugerius (i.e., Andrea Navagero, 1483–1529), *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum epistolae, Amorum libri iii, De arte amandi libri iii, De remedio amoris lib. ii* (London: T. Vautrollier, 1583), 203–68, a carefully printed text with line numbers and marginal glosses. Since Naugerius is probably the best Renaissance editor of Ovid, I have made every effort to reproduce his accent marks and other variations from modern texts of the *Ars* to which his edition is, in my judgment, superior. The publisher Vautrollier was granted a ten-year patent to publish Ovid's Latin works on 19 June 1574, so most likely this was Spenser's edition (*A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland . . . 1475–1640*, comp. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave [London: Oxford University Press, 1963], 201). All translations are my own.

9. For example, see George Pigman's groundbreaking essays: "Imitation and the Renaissance Sense of the Past: The Reception of Erasmus' *Ciceronianus*," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 9 (1979): 155-77; "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 33 (1980): 1-32. Thomas Greene's *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) delineates *imitatio* into four categories: reproductive-sacramental, contaminative, heuristic, and dialectical. See Chapter 3, "Imitation and Anachronism" (28-53). His endnotes comprise in themselves an extensive bibliography on the subject both in primary and secondary sources. See also Martin L. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation in Italy from Dante to Bembo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

10. All quotations from *The Scholemaster: Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols., ed. G. Gregory Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), 1: 1-45. Ascham's remarks on rhyme and romance are well known, but worth citing: "In our forefathers tyme, when Papistrie, as a standing poole, couered and ouerflowed all *England*, fewe bookes were read in our tong, sayuing certaine bookes of Cheualrie, as they sayd, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in Monasteries, by idle Monkes or wanton Chanons: as one for example, *Morte Arthure*; the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter and bold bawdrye" (1: 3-4). Furthermore, "surelie to follow rather the *Gothes* in Rhyming than the *Greekes* in trew versifying were euen to eate ackornes with swyne, when we may freely eate wheate bread emonges men" (1: 31). Spenser, it would seem, did not heed either critical pronouncement.

11. Ascham, 1: 7.

12. *Idem*, 1: 5. The first two parts of Ascham's definition consist of a rewriting of the Aristotelian dictum that tragedy is an imitation of life (i.e., comedy is included) and the suggestion that one will learn the most from imitating the best writers from antiquity.

13. *Idem*, 1: 9. Ascham mentions Ovid precisely once in *Imitatio* as an example of an ancient author whom Chaucer "and other lentlemen" had been so foolish as to translate by means of "that barbarous and rude Rhyming"; they therefore resemble "the *Gothians* in handling of their verse" (1: 30). Ascham does not hold Ovid up as a fit model for imitation, nor does he condemn him. Here again Spenser makes his own way.

14. Hamilton, ed., *Faerie Queene*, 737.

15. *Idem*.

16. See AA 1.47; 368; 373-74; 393; 402-3; 763; 771-72; 2.9-10; 337; 731; 3.27; 510.

17. Spenser's conception of him seems to resemble that of Natalis Comes, who envisions the sea god's transformations as informed by justice: "sic enim fieri Proteum modo ignem, modo aquam intelligendum est, & modo fructiferam arborem, modo crudelissimam feram propter praemia iustitiae ac supplicia" (*Mythologiae* 8.8); "Therefore it ought to be understood that Proteus became fire, water, a fruit-bearing tree, and a bloodthirsty beast according to the rewards and punishments of justice." See *Natalis Comes Mythologiae, siue explicationis fabularum, libri decem* (Padua: 1616; reprint, New York: Garland, 1979), 443 (my translation). There were several earlier editions of Comes available to Spenser

(1551, 1567, 1581). Robert Ellrodt argues unconvincingly that Comes was Spenser's primary mythological text, rather than the *Metamorphoses*. See *Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser* (Geneva: Droz, 1960), 61–63.

18. For more on the associations between these three sins, see John M. Crossett and Donald V. Stump, "Spenser's Inferno: The Order of the Seven Deadly Sins at the Palace of Pride," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 14 (1984): 203–18. They question the traditional triad of fleshly sins (Sloth, Gluttony, Lechery) as schematized by Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1952), and Samuel C. Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962). See also Linda Gregerson on Hellenore as debased currency to the avaricious man who possesses her: "Protestant Erotics: Idolatry and Interpretation in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," *English Literary History* 58 (1991): 4.

19. Hamilton, ed., *Faerie Queene*, 384, 398.

20. Silberman also suggests that Britomart's gazing represents a type of narcissism or vanity (*Transforming Desire*, 24). See also Calvin R. Edwards, "The Narcissus Myth in Spenser's Poetry," *Studies in Philology* 74 (1977): 63–88.

21. Silberman, *Transforming Desire*, 26.