Although theories of exploitation and subversion have radically changed our understanding of gender in Renaissance literature, to favor only those theories is to risk ignoring productive exchanges between "masculine" and "feminine" in Renaissance culture. "Appropriation" is too simple a term to describe these exchanges – as when Petrarchan lovers flirt dangerously with potentially destructive femininity. Edmund Spenser revises this Petrarchan phenomenon, constructing poetic flirtations whose participants are figures of speech, readers, or narrative voices. His plots allow such exchanges to occur only through conditional speech, but this very conditionality powerfully shapes his work. Seventeenth-century works – including a comedy by Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley and "Upon Appleton House" by Andrew Marvell – suggest that the Civil War and the upsurge of female writers necessitated a reformulation of conditional erotics.

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The limits of eroticism in post-Petrarchan narrative

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The limits of eroticism in post-Petrarchan narrative

Conditional pleasure from Spenser to Marvell

Dorothy Stephens

University of Arkansas

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For Paul Alpers

Quae tibi, quae tali reddam pro carmine dona?

Contents

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Part I

Spenser

1 Into other arms: Amoret's evasion

> I haue seldome seene an honest woman to haue many frinds that wil take hir part . . . You may quickely ghesse a Strumpet by her multitude of friendes. Barnabe Riche, *Favltes Favlts*, G4v–r

> A wind fane changabil huf puffe
> Always is a woomman.
> Virgil, *Thee First Fovre Bookes* (trans. Stanyhurst), 81

In a relatively minor passage from *The Faerie Queene*'s Book IV, Spenser gives us a haunting description of Amoret as she recovers from a swoon to find herself in the "darknesse and dread horrour" of Lust's cave:

> She waked out of dread
> Streight into griefe, that her deare hart nigh swelt,
> And eft gan into tender teares to melt.
> Then when she lookt about, and nothing found
> But darknesse and dread horrour, where she dwelt,
> She almost fell againe into a swound,
> Ne wist whether aboue she were, or vnder ground.
>
> With that she heard some one close by her side
> Sighing and sobbing sore, as if the paine
> Her tender hart in peeces would diuide:
> Which she long listning, softly askt againe
> What mister wight it was that so did plaine?
> To whom thus aunswer'd was: Ah wretched wight
> That seekes to know anothers griefe in vaine,
> Vnweeting of thine owne like haplesse plight:
> Selfe to forget to mind another, is ouersight.
>
> Aye me (said she) where am I, or with whom? (IV.vii.9–11)[1]

We do not know at first who "some one" is, but her voice materializes so nearby as to take the place of Amoret's own thoughts, and because all of the gender-specific pronouns for several stanzas belong to Amoret, the clause "as if the paine / Her tender hart in peeces would diuide" pierces both women with the same pang of grief. It is as though the "tender teares" of one woman proceed from the other's "tender hart," so that

when Amoret asks, "Where am I, or with whom?" her second phrase serves less as an additional question than as a reiteration of her first one. Unwittingly, she reveals the paradoxical nature of Æmylia's warning: rather than ignoring yourself in order to worry about me, Æmylia advises, you need to make yourself aware that your hapless plight is just like mine.

But why does the poem have Amoret exchange confidences with Æmylia in *this* particular cave? We usually think of lust as the sort of urge that requires the maintenance of ever more emotional distance as physical distance decreases. (Spenser makes it clear that this is no Cave of Pleasantly Naughty Dalliance; the monster Lust is gruesomely homicidal.) One readily available but incomplete answer is that this cave, like caves in many romances, figures the interior of woman's body, protected and protecting as long as man remains outside. When Æmylia makes her former life into a story for Amoret, we become conscious of other men besides Lust who hover at the cave's entrance:

> But what I was, it irkes me to reherse;
> Daughter vnto a Lord of high degree;
> That ioyd in happy peace
> . . .
> It was my lot to loue a gentle swaine. (IV.vii.15)

We may also become conscious of a slight ambivalence – not in Æmylia, but in the narrative – toward her change from a state defined by these men to a state in which, although she is "of God and man forgot" (IV.vii.14), she can enter into close communion with another woman. Because *The Faerie Queene* does not allow many such meetings between women to happen within its borders, however, the context as well as the contents of Lust's cave deserve a closer look. This chapter is about the space within that cave and about women's wandering to and from its enclosure. Although the second half of *The Faerie Queene* registers an intense anxiety about the forms of female power it presents, my premise is that Spenser's song to his aging queen also colludes with a feminine eroticism that has little to do with greatness.

The Lust episode's importance for the opening book of Spenser's second installment will become clearer if we circle back to the end of the poem's first installment, just after Amoret has escaped from another form of lustful coercion in the House of Busyrane. In order to weave Scudamour and Amoret's courtship and marriage into Book IV, first published in 1596, Spenser unraveled the selvage of their story in Book III, by canceling the five final stanzas of the 1590 edition and replacing the lovers' blissful reunion with a painful continuation of their separa-

tion. Mistakenly convinced that Britomart (whom he believes to be a male knight instead of a woman in armor) has failed to rescue Amoret from the enchanter Busyrane, Scudamour in the 1596 revision wanders off in search of other assistance. Jonathan Goldberg has written that Scudamour and Amoret's hermaphroditic embrace in the original ending to Book III represents a closure that the poem cannot allow itself or its readers to possess. Moreover, when Scudamour has the chance to "reclaim his wife" later in Book IV, he chooses instead to tell his friends a story about how he originally won Amoret from Venus. "Rereading," Goldberg argues, " . . . is his only prize. We are in Scudamour's place, left with our desire for an ending" (*Endlesse Worke*, 66). I would argue that Amoret strays from the confines of such a statement. Implicit in Goldberg's argument about Books III and IV is the idea that whereas Scudamour loses Amoret, Amoret loses herself; we cannot, however, dispense with Amoret simply by making her represent Scudamour's lack.[2]

Otherwise astute criticism has run momentarily aground in these shallows. Judith Anderson describes Amoret's relationship to Timias and his beloved Belphoebe after the Lust episode in Book IV:

> She is part of their story, and when she is simply abandoned by them in the middle of it, she becomes, both narratively and morally, a loose end waiting to be woven into the larger design . . . In short, what befalls Amoret in the two cantos she shares with Belphoebe and Timias looks very much like the other half of their story, the half muted in Belphoebe's withdrawal from Timias and suppressed in her return to him. What befalls Amoret unfolds the "inburning wrath" of Belphoebe (viii.17) and gives tongue to the revilement and infamy that Ralegh's secret marriage incurred. ("In Liuing Colours," 59–60)

Anderson's commentary provides excellent guidance within its own territory, but if Amoret does function as a textual register of other characters' interiority, surely it is a mistake to treat her unproblematically as such. What, for example, does her story mean for female or male readers who do not desire the particular sort of closure that Scudamour or Timias desires? And why should we believe that the poem expects us to desire this particular closure?

When Amoret pours herself into Scudamour's waiting arms, her body does become an "instrument of mutual pleasure," as Lauren Silberman argues; nevertheless, the questions that various critics have raised about the torturer Busyrane as a figure for the male artist and Petrarchan poet should make us suspicious about this emblem's use of the female body as an aesthetic instrument.[3] Glossing Busyrane as "*Busy-reign*," Harry Berger writes that the enchanter represents "the male imagination trying busily (because unsuccessfully) to dominate and possess woman's will by

art, by magic, by sensory illusions and threats – by all the instruments of culture except the normal means of persuasion'' (*Revisionary*, 173). After Amoret's escape from this authorial manipulation, her joyful embrace with Scudamour is bound to strike us at first as a direct contrast:

> 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. (III.xii.45a–46a)

Yet Busyrane is not dead, and the hermaphrodite analogy takes shape almost on his doorstep. If we gaze uncritically upon the bride while she ''pour[s] out her spright,'' we risk the possibility of aligning ourselves with the proprietary voyeurism of the ''rich *Romane*'' who carved his own hermaphrodite.[4] Emblematic immobility is a new situation for Scudamour, but the image of Amoret melting into his welcoming arms oddly echoes a previous image of Amoret welded to Busyrane's cruelly phallic pillar of brass. The image of Busyrane's pillar appears in the final canto of Book III, where Spenser elaborately schematizes the violent potential of sexual desire. Spenser leaves his readers to decide whether this violence represents fear or fantasy and whether it is filtered through Amoret's consciousness as a bride, Scudamour's as a groom, Busyrane's as an artist, Britomart's as an onlooker, or some combination of the above. At the very least, I hardly think we can rule out Busyrane's agency here:

> Ne liuing wight [Britomart] saw in all that roome,
> Saue that same woefull Ladie, both whose hands
> Were bounden fast, that did her ill become,
> And her small wast girt round with yron bands,
> Vnto a brasen pillour, by the which she stands.
>
> 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? (III.xii.30–31)

Subtly or not, the hermaphrodite's visual echo of the brass pillar begins to make the hermaphrodite seem like Busyrane's own idea of a proper heterosexual relationship. Good women have often been admonished to keep still, of course, through happy times as well as adverse ones, and insofar as the hermaphrodite's ostensibly equal union of the sexes does recall Busyrane's brass pillar, we could say that it is all too normal in its social construction.

The Faerie Queene contains several hermaphroditic figures – notably the self-sufficient Venus, who "syre and mother is her selfe alone, / Begets and eke conceiues, ne needeth other none," and Dame Nature, who "whether she man or woman inly were, / That could not any creature well descry" (IV.x.41; VII.vii.5). But the hermaphrodite analogy at the end of Book III in the 1590 edition differs from these others in representing the fusion of two distinctly sexed characters; the image is of a hermaphrodism something like Siamese twins, with two heads and four arms. The figure thus owes a great deal to Plato's *Symposium*, where Aristophanes speculates that humans were once hermaphroditic, with "four ears and two organs of generation and everything else to correspond" (*Symposium*, 190b). Love, explains Aristophanes, is our impulse to return to the state before we were severed, "by attempting to weld two beings into one and to heal the wounds which humanity suffered" (191c). Socrates modifies this simple picture later in the evening by saying that according to his teacher, Diotima, the object of love is to unite itself to beauty in order to procreate; nevertheless, Diotima's definition of love retains the hermaphroditic idea insofar as her emphasis on mutuality revises the traditional Greek notion that hierarchy is essential to a man's erotic experience. Reminding us that the Greeks believed that only women could experience sex as a mutual act, David Halperin writes that when Socrates quotes the teachings of Diotima, a woman, Plato means to find in female eroticism "an image of the reciprocal erotic bond that unites philosophical lovers who are jointly engaged in conversation and the quest for truth" (*One Hundred Years*, 131–136).

As Halperin goes on to argue, however, this philosophy of mutual love ironically erases femininity altogether, given that the supposedly feminine views attributed to Diotima are actually predicated upon male physiology. (So, for example, Diotima teaches that the reproductive function is inseparable from erotic pleasure.) "In other words, it looks as if what lies behind Plato's erotic doctrine is a double movement whereby men

project their own sexual experience onto women only to reabsorb it themselves in the guise of a 'feminine' character'' (*One Hundred Years*, 142). But Halperin gives a word of caution:

> The radical *absence* of women's experience – and, thus, of the actual feminine – from the ostensibly feminocentric terms of Plato's erotic doctrine should warn us not to interpret Plato's strategy simplistically as a straightforward attempt to appropriate the feminine or as a symbolic theft of women's procreative authority. For Plato's appropriation of the Other works not only by misrecognizing the Other but by constructing ''the other'' as a masked version of the same. (*ibid*., 145)

Or, in the words of Teresa de Lauretis, this Platonic appropriation of femininity ''has also had the effect of securing the heterosexual social contract by which all sexualities, all bodies, and all 'others' are bonded to an ideal/ideological hierarchy of males'' (''Sexual Indifference,'' 20). Indeed, both Halperin and Philippa Berry show that *The Symposium* itself, as well as the critical tradition after Plato, codifies this elision of feminine desire by implying that Diotima must be merely a literary device invented by Socrates.[5]

Berry observes that the tradition of eliding Diotima informs the Renaissance neoplatonists' creation of their Petrarchan ladies, who wield moral, intellectual, and erotic powers precisely because they do not convincingly have existence apart from the men who write them (*Of Chastity and Power*, 36–37). In the House of Busyrane, which readers have long recognized as an allegory of a Petrarchan courtship, Busyrane concentrates all of his arts upon making Amoret fear her own wandering desires. More than that, however, in the process of turning Petrarchan *topoi* and tropes of sublimated desire (the burning passion, the Greek gods' visits to mortal women) into images of a particularly Petrarchan torture, he tries to make Amoret herself into a static emblem of sublimated pain when he shows Britomart a pageant in which Amoret ''figures'' the torments of love by being exhibited with a gaping wound in her breast, holding before her in a silver basin her bloody heart transfixed with a dart.[6] This is what Amoret seems to escape when Britomart leads her to the waiting Scudamour in the 1590 edition of the poem. Yet the type of erotic bonding that we find in the neoplatonic tradition, where Diotima can only point toward masculinity, is precisely the danger that Spenser sets up for the 1590 Amoret who melts and pours her spirit into her husband's arms when she is overcome with ''huge affection'' (III.xii.45a). The phrase refers to her love but also powerfully suggests his erection that overmasters and mysteriously transforms her, until it is his desire with which she is filled.

Maureen Quilligan argues persuasively that although the pen that

Busyrane dips into Amoret's blood for ink makes him into a "sadistic sonneteer," Spenser "manages to correct this (male) art by viewing it from the opposite perspective of the lady, who usually merely peruses the lines of the poem" (*Milton's Spenser*, 198). She goes on to suggest that although Britomart forces Busyrane to close the gaping wound in Amoret's breast, his reversed charms cannot heal "the wound of desire – which Britomart shares with Amoret." By way of support for her suggestion, however, she quotes the hermaphrodite stanza, in which "*Britomart* halfe enuying their blesse, / Was much empassiond in her gentle sprite" (III.xii.46a), explaining that "*Blesser*, in French, is to wound; such wounding, a real anatomical event in sexual consummation, is bliss." Whether or not Quilligan's irony is intended, this seems an odd way to conclude a discussion of the specifically female point of view, since wedding nights are not always blissful for wounded brides. Britomart's naïveté could certainly allow her to envy the wound without realizing its burden of pain, yet if we really wish to read the wound from the "perspective of the lady," we must take into account the irony of the lady's naïve envy of this particular blessing. Most of Quilligan's chapter on "The Gender of the Reader" is extraordinarily insightful in its argument about the ways Spenser rewrites stories of masculine desire by viewing events from the perspective of the desired, desiring, or threatened woman; and Quilligan does go on to argue that in Book IV, the rest of Amoret and Scudamour's story demonstrates "the tension between husbandly love and its implicit antagonism to women." This takes the form of a "conflict within the terms of chivalric love" between "ladies' undeniable rights, and those rights granted by conquest" (*Milton's Spenser*, 206–207). But for Quilligan, because the conflict does not taint the hermaphrodite itself, the hermaphrodite's disappearance cannot represent anything but loss. In a conclusion that recalls Goldberg's, Quilligan writes that "what we are left with is a desire for the canceled text of the 1590 ending, a desire that Spenser satisfies with illusory substitutions" and that, "like the cancellation of the happy ending to Amoret's story, the cancellation of the 'Letter to Ralegh' suggests an entire reorientation of Spenser's initial program in the face of hard political realities" (*ibid.*, 207–208).

Although my own argument runs in a different channel from these statements of Quilligan's, in making them she joins the company of other critics, and for a very good reason: we do desire closure of *some* sort, even if we are sophisticated enough to analyze and enjoy the frustration of our own literary desire, and the poem does clearly set up the hermaphrodite as an example of blissful closure in *some* sense. Nor should we necessarily disagree when Quilligan explains the cancellation

of the hermaphrodite as Spenser's decision to "dismiss a male reader [Lord Burleigh], select a paradigmatic female one, and then reconstitute the canceled full-gendered readership (as imaged in the closing embrace of Amoret and Scudamour) within the 'androgynous' queen" (*Milton's Spenser*, 201). I do not so much want to contradict such readings as to select a different set of desires and relationships for our attention, with the conviction that just as there are other narrative positions possible besides ventriloquism on the one hand and subversion on the other, so are there other Amorets possible besides the Amoret whose meaning depends upon Scudamour at the same time that it validates him.

It is important to see, moreover, that if the hermaphrodite on Busyrane's doorstep resembles Busyrane's idea of the proper relationship between the sexes, it also begins to resemble his idea of the proper relationship between women. Signs in the House of Busyrane caution Britomart, "Be bold, be bold," and then "Be not too bold" (III.xi.54), quotations from the Bluebeard folk tale. In the Bluebeard text behind Spenser's text, the next sentence of the jingle is "Lest that your heart's blood should run cold."[7] Because in the folk tale Mr. Fox (Bluebeard) commands Lady Mary not to look at his former wives, intending to make her join them if she does, Busyrane's own allusion to the tale implicitly warns his headstrong guest that it could be lethal for her to attempt any sort of meeting with the woman who is his prisoner.

I will return in Chapter 3 to the importance of the Bluebeard allusion in the context of Britomart's surrounding adventures; for now, suffice it to say that like the epic's revised edition in 1596, Spenser's original 1590 edition has Britomart choose not to heed Busyrane's implicit warning; she boldly enters and rescues Amoret. But Britomart's labor for Amoret's release has taken place on the prisoner's behalf rather than in her company. As Patricia Parker observes, deferring Scudamour and Amoret's union "preserves their difference and extends their story," allowing the poem to enlarge its definition of romantic love to include friendship – the titular virtue of Book IV (*Inescapable*, 93, 95). Beyond this concern for Scudamour and Amoret's relationship, however, we should notice that only by canceling the hermaphroditic embrace between Scudamour and the freed Amoret can the poem emphasize just how thoroughly both Britomart and Amoret have ignored Busyrane's warning that they stay apart. By canceling the hermaphrodite, the poem not only gives these two women an additional quest, it gives them a quest together, as friends. The distance between "Amoret" as the sign of Scudamour's proprietary loss in Book III and "Amoret" as the sign to Belphoebe of Timias's lust in Book IV constitutes a space for feminine desire, in which Amoret and Britomart may "wend at will" just as Scudamour does, and

without his company. This is the promise – and the warning – with which the second version of Book III ends.

I am arguing that the poem's replacement of the hermaphrodite revives and extends the implications of its disapproval of Busyrane's form of seduction. Busyrane insists that Amoret confine her thoughts and speech to his claustrophobic system of meanings – and if the other demands that he makes are immoral, they nevertheless exert pressure upon his prisoner because his initial demand for her rapt attention resembles similar demands made by moral men. Whereas Busyrane plies his arts to confine a woman, Barnabe Riche (whom I quote in my first epigraph for this chapter) claims it is men whose freedom of intellectual movement love curtails. These seemingly opposite arguments complement rather than cancel each other: "In loue, what seeth the eie? lasciuiousnes; what heareth the eare? lasciuiousnesse; what vttereth the tongue? lasciuiousnesse; what thinketh the heart? lasciuiousnesse; what in[c]ureth the bodie? lasciuiousnesse" (*Favltes Favlts*, 20v). For Riche, the male lover's senses do not serve as windows to the world but as claustrophobic walls. The only thing a man in love can apprehend is lasciviousness – which is to say, woman, since the surrounding text makes it clear that love's contamination proceeds from her innate impurity rather than simply from the impropriety of a particular relationship. We could pronounce Riche's cultural anatomy a rationalization, a blind for the social fact that it was women rather than men who were exhorted to confine their thoughts and speech to what the opposite sex wanted of them. On the other hand, Riche's rationalization is precisely the sort of discourse that reifies itself. Undoubtedly, men could and did sometimes feel claustrophobic in the presence of their own erotic responses to women. Spenser addresses this phenomenon early on: Red Crosse breaks out of *The Faerie Queene*'s first canto by charging from Archimago's little hermitage into the open air, terrified by a conviction that Una has begun to wander sexually. In Book II, Phædria, whose lack of moral purpose achieves a sort of purity in its thoroughness, laughs when her perversely wandering boat restricts the choices open to each man who embarks with her in the mistaken belief that she will ferry him to his destination. Aside from all of the complex concerns for property and legitimate succession, an errant wife, fiancée, or daughter disconcerted a man by robbing him of a safe haven, while someone else's errant wife, fiancée, or daughter provided the same man with a false haven that turned into confinement (in the manner of Acrasian or of Circean islands). This was a zero-sum sexual economy; enlarged scope for her necessarily meant narrowed sights for him.

Both the House of Busyrane and Amoret's subsequent journey in

search of her husband, who has left in despair, problematize the complex distribution of blame and punishment that occurred in the sixteenth century whenever a wife wandered. The wronged husband deserved the shame of a cuckold's horns because he was assumed to have given too little correction to his wife, leaving her too much to her own devices. He was culpable precisely because every woman left unsupervised was considered perilously on the verge of becoming morally wayward.[8] Yet the requirement that women remain sexually constant – immovably fixed – was irreconcilable with the requirement that they always adapt to masculine social and literary structures. (As Peter Stallybrass points out, Othello takes Desdemona's submission of her own opinions to his as proof of her inconstancy; Othello tells Lodovico, "Sir, she can turn, and turn; and yet go on / And turn again . . . ": *Oth*., IV.i. 4.1.253–254; "Patriarchal Territories," 137). Britomart must wander to find Artegall, and Amoret, to find Scudamour, but their wandering exposes them to lustful men. When Scudamour and Amoret are separated in an unfamiliar territory, she becomes the stray by definition – but this condition also makes her the one who must adapt quickly if she wishes to remain "perfect hole" (III.xii.38).

Obviously, a woman's ability to adapt herself to the men around her would have dubious social value when it extended to her evil abductor, whatever his prerogatives as a man. Curiously enough, *The Faerie Queene* experiments with this ambiguity most explicitly in a passage that involves only women. I am thinking of the beginning of Book IV, where Amoret does not yet realize that her flirtatious rescuer is female. Amoret trembles:

> For well she wist, as true it was indeed,
> That her liues Lord and patrone of her health
> Right well deserued as his duefull meed,
> Her loue, her seruice, and her vtmost wealth.
> All is his iustly, that all freely dealth:
> Nathlesse 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.
> . . .
> His will she feard; for him she surely thought
> To be a man, such as indeed he seemed,
> And much the more, by that he lately wrought,
> When her from deadly thraldome he redeemed,
> For which no seruice she too much esteemed,
> Yet dread of shame, and doubt of fowle dishonor
> Made her not yeeld so much, as due she deemed. (IV.i.6–8)

Within the story, Britomart's duplicity reflects a careful stratagem – albeit one that manipulates Amoret cruelly – since Britomart believes that her male disguise will make her and her timid charge appear less vulnerable to outsiders. What Amoret doesn't know, she can't betray to anyone else. At the same time, however, Britomart's armor allows this passage to do double service as a commentary on the relationships between the sexes by converting some of our laughter at the transvestite comedy into a sense of irony about glitches in the patriarchal system. Here, as in the original conclusion for Book III, Amoret acts in dutiful accordance with cultural expectations pressing upon her from two sides: she should be resolutely self-contained; she should be pliantly grateful. (The final two lines of stanza 8 do not say that "doubt of fowle dishonor / Made her not yeeld so much, as due *he* deemed.") In Book III, Amoret's positive and negative obligations are divided between two male characters – Busyrane and Scudamour – who merge into each other allegorically only when it suits our particular critical agendas for them to do so. Amoret's momentary uneasiness with Britomart here in Book IV clearly tags these competing obligations as a cultural paradox: the notion that every man of miscellaneous goodness who saves a woman from torture "right well deserue[s] as his duefull meed, / Her loue, her seruice, and her vtmost wealth" cannot seem anything but misguided in this comedic context; by indicating that strong bonds do not assure sexual parity, the poem tacitly underscores its mistrust of the absolute fusion represented earlier by the hermaphrodite (IV.i.6).

At the end of the second book of *Il Cortegiano*, when Castiglione's female characters rebel against several disparaging remarks made about women, they call upon a sympathetic man, Lord Julian, to defend them. In Sir Thomas Hoby's 1561 translation, Lady Emilia teases Julian, "You are counted the protector of the honour of women, therefore it is now high time to shew that you come not by this name for nothing, and . . . now must you thinke that in putting to flight so bitter an enimie, you shall binde all women to you much more, and so much, that where they shall doe nothing els but reward you, yet shall the bondage still remaine fresh, and never cease to be recompensed." A few moments later, she declares roguishly that women are not only as virtuous as men but "a great deale more, and that it is so, ye may see, vertue is the female, and vice the male" (Castiglione, *Courtier*, 182–183). Yet her humor has already undercut itself in the subtext of her first request, which amounts to a promise that Julian's defense of the ladies' virtue will prompt them to give it to him. As with Spenser's hermaphrodite, the metaphor of emotional and social bonding points toward a metaphor of emotional and social bondage.[9]

If we collapse the commentary on women's friendships implicit in Amoret and Britomart's story (where Britomart must protect the two of them from possible marauders by pretending to be male) with the story's commentary on heterosexual relationships (where Britomart represents actual men), we arrive at a third reading: if women's unavoidable inconstancy exposes them to lustful or otherwise demanding men, it also may expose them to other women. This possibility often generates anxiety in Renaissance texts, bound up as it is with the suspicion that women's friendships may supply goods and services over and above those supplied by husbands or lovers.[10] Without registering much anxiety at this point, however, Spenser's text heads directly toward this question of what one woman renders another. The two stanzas quoted above, in which Amoret tries to render the same service to her male rescuer that she withholds from him, enclose a stanza about the way that Amoret's serviceable nature allows her rescuer to bait her:

> 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. (IV.i.7)

Nothing in Britomart's history of comical aggression toward strange knights (as when she and Paridell crash like bump-cars in Book III) has quite prepared us for her infliction of gratuitous anxiety upon a waif who cannot defend herself. The motives we are given for Britomart's teasing are that she wishes both "to hide her fained sex" and to "maske her wounded mind." The first motive constitutes a strategy; the second hints at a poorly rationalized sadism. Yet each of these phrases encloses two opposing ideas. In Spenser's grammar, where two negatives make a deeper negative and where redundant intensifiers – "fowle euill," "greedy *Auarice*," "equall peares" – defy our accusations of superfluity, hiding one's fained sex means that one does an awfully good job of hiding it. But of course the phrase also means, illogically, that Britomart manages to hide her pretense of being male. And if she "maske[s]" her painfully frustrated desires the way that Busyrane masques his, she is not concealing but displaying, putting on a show of signs meant to be deciphered. (Remember that in Busyrane's house, the "wounded mind" is Amoret's, masqued publicly as a heart in a silver basin.) These two phrases' duplicity about Britomart's duplicity suggests that her flirtation is more

than just a private antidote for tedium and that she halfway intends Amoret to guess what her armor hides. If Amoret hesitates in the face of this riddle, still believing in her rescuer's specifically masculine seductiveness, our own partiality for the other half of the answer (that this knight is really a woman who flirts only in order to feign) may excuse her.

But Britomart dallies more with Amoret than she ever does with Artegall, and it is tempting to say that at this stage of the game, she mostly feigns in order to flirt. By keeping her helmet on, Britomart can afford to raise the dialogue to a higher erotic pitch, engaging in a closer intimacy than would otherwise be allowable. (One thinks of that valentine with Mary Raphael's painting.) Although the text thereby betrays a male fascination with eroticism between women, it also demonstrates concern for the two characters and an unwillingness to carry its farcical use of them beyond a certain point. Britomart's public unhelmeting when she and Amoret do reach a castle transfers the humor of Amoret's nervous sense that her rescuer's conversation is "doubtfull to be wayd" onto lords and ladies who can hardly believe their eyes when a fierce knight turns out to have floor-length tresses: "All were with amazement smit, / And euery one gan grow in secret dout / Of this and that, according to each wit" (IV.i.14). Her traveling companion's vast relief at this new turn of events could have been treated comically but is not:

> And eke fayre *Amoret* now freed from feare,
> More franke affection did to her afford,
> And to her bed, which she was wont forbeare,
> Now freely drew, and found right safe assurance theare.
>
> Where all that night they of their loues did treat,
> And hard aduentures twixt themselues alone,
> That each the other gan with passion great,
> And griefull pittie priuately bemone. (IV.i.15–16)

These stanzas have an erotic subtext; the double entendres of "passion," "bemone," and "hard aduentures" reinforce one's initial sense that the phrase "their loues" not only points outward to two male objects but encloses a more private exchange between the two women. They speak "twixt themselues alone" of their previous "hard aduentures," while at the same time, they speak of "hard aduentures" that happen "twixt themselues alone."[11]

Like the water that half-covers Sir Guyon's dripping bathers in Book II, this enclosure may titillate outsiders, but because Book III has already given us an investment in Britomart's and Amoret's individual griefs, the stanzas above do not request primarily that we "see and know, and yet abstain."[12] Instead, we are asked to see, know, and sympathize – perhaps

even to envy this friendship which provides such a telling commentary on Book IV. Stanza 16 shows both the narrator's indulgence and something like respect in refraining from laying the two women's conversation bare to us. It may seem as though Spenser has repeated the time-honored riddle about what women discuss when men aren't around (of which the time-honored answer is, "As it happens, thank god, they always talk about us"), except that the imprecision of "their loues" allows eavesdroppers no assured answer.[13]

These two women do find "right safe assurance" with each other, banishing their own doubts precisely at the moment when ours enter. It is wonderfully puzzling that the one happy bed scene in the whole poem appears here. This is the closest *The Faerie Queene* gets to the *Epithalamion*'s joyful nocturnal union of two heretofore separate persons, and because Spenser refers to Britomart and Amoret indistinguishably in the stanza describing their nocturnal conversation, the absence of mastery that the *Epithalamion* both asserts and undercuts seems here in Book IV actually a present condition for one night. While the text declares literally that each of the women longs to complete herself in her absent mate, the subtext at least momentarily believes in the self-sufficiency of their interaction with each other.

This interaction moves out of its safe enclosure the next day when Britomart and Amoret meet Blandamour, whose name "descrie[s] / His fickle mind full of inconstancie," as if to heighten by contrast the example of female constancy that the poem has just shown us (IV.i.32). As soon as Blandamour spies the two women, naturally believing one a "knight aduenturous" and the other "his faire paragon, his conquests part," his immediate reaction is to attempt to steal the strange knight's lady. Britomart has other ideas:

> The warlike Britonesse her soone addrest,
> And with such vncouth welcome did receaue
> Her fayned Paramour, her forced guest,
> That being forst his saddle soone to leaue,
> Him selfe he did of his new loue deceaue. (IV.i.36)

"Her fayned Paramour" and "his new loue" ought to refer to the same ironically frustrated relationship, but they do not. Blandamour sees in Britomart only an armored knight; if he had won the joust, "his new loue" would have been Amoret.[14] The humor of Spenser's reference to Britomart's "fayned Paramour" depends upon our knowing, as Britomart and Amoret do, that both of them are equally appropriate targets for Blandamour's lust – and equally inappropriate, of course. And so when they gallop off, the man who has crassly attempted interference lies

in the dust, "Well warned to beware with whom he dar'd to dallie" (IV.i.36). Just who *is* "whom," anyway? Given the slippage inherent in Spenser's word "dallie" (which wanders uncontrollably between eroticism and violence, perhaps translated most aptly in our phrase "mess around with"), and given the skirmish of grammatical references in previous lines, this "whom" means both women. Blandamour would separate them by distinctions of gender; they demur.

Although the relationships that develop between women and men in this poem do not prohibit friendships among men, they often exclude or put pressure on those among women. Yet the authorial voice that asks us to take pleasure in Britomart and Amoret's exchange of confidences clearly is not asking us to believe along with Barnabe Riche that one can tell a strumpet by her multitude of friends. Granted, Spenser does not argue coherently against this position, and in fact, he provides much support for it in characters such as Duessa and Ate, or Serena (who meets a rapist when she wanders away from Calepine in search of flowers). I suggest that it is precisely because of the overwhelmingly negative cultural pressure upon women's friendships – superadded to the pressure of romance narrative structure, which tends to deflect and defer the desires of both sexes – that the few female alliances allowed in the poem take on such importance. While some of the poem's voices attempt to circumscribe or constrict relationships among women, other narrative voices seem on the point of acknowledging that these socially marginal alliances provide the poem with a kind of energy found nowhere else.

Blandamour's divisive and coercive impulses resurface so often in other men who meet the two women that these male characters begin to reflect badly upon the whole patriarchal enterprise (an enterprise conscientiously promoted by much of the rest of the poem). After having disarmed Blandamour, Britomart and Amoret next appear at the tournament for the False Florimell, another exercise in the acquisition of female property. Humorously enough, Britomart wins the prize, but she does not explain her refusal to accept the False Florimell by unhelmeting and revealing her own sex, as on other occasions. Nor does the narrator give the explanation for her. Instead, we are asked to compare the admirable nature of her and Amoret's existing relationship to what *would* be the questionable nature of the False Florimell's relationship to any of the knights who have jousted for her, including some of the poem's most illustrious heroes:

> *Britomart* would not thereto assent,
> Ne her owne *Amoret* forgoe so light
> For that strange Dame, whose beauties wonderment
> She lesse esteem'd, then th'others vertuous gouernment. (IV.v.20)

The critique of the traffic in female property takes another turn when Satyrane decides to let the False Florimell choose her own mate. His method is not to ask her preferences but to set her in the middle of a circle of men in order to observe "to whom she voluntarie came" (IV.v.25). These are the tactics we use with puppies or small children when we ourselves are feeling childish enough to want to know their favorites. Childishly, then, the False Florimell moves "of her accord" to the buffoon Braggadochio. General indignation takes the field, and when Braggadochio removes himself and his prize that night by stealth, all of the men trot off in droll pursuit. Britomart remains behind with "*Amoret*, companion of her care" (IV.v.30).

Before Britomart reappears in the following canto, her relationship with Amoret has already brewed further discord, as we learn when Artegall and Scudamour meet companionably "vnder a forrest side" to swap grudges (IV.vi.2). Artegall, who has no idea that his destiny is to marry the strange knight who unseated him at the tournament, feels bitter over having been deprived of his chance to win the False Florimell. The stranger, he says, "hauing me all wearie earst, downe feld, / The fayrest Ladie reft, and euer since withheld" (IV.vi.6). Meanwhile, Scudamour has been tricked by Ate into believing that this same unknown knight, who rescued his bride from Busyrane's house, has been having an affair with her ever since. Though we know he is wrong about the affair, one of Britomart's functions in the poem is in fact to withhold female prizes the way some of Spenser's women withhold sexual favors; it is her aggressive substitute for coyness. And so the two men have reason to grumble:

> Whiles thus they communed, lo farre away
> A Knight soft ryding towards them they spyde,
> Attyr'd in forraine armes and straunge aray:
> Whom when they nigh approcht, they plaine descryde
> To be the same, for whom they did abyde. (IV.vi.9)

Plainly, "communed" means "conversed," but when Britomart sends both Scudamour and his horse to the ground in the following stanza, the narrator's wry observation that "neither [man nor horse] greatly hasted to arise, / But on their common harmes together did deuise" (IV.vi.10) links the men's conversation with the holding of certain experiences and attitudes in common (at the same time that it establishes community between a man and the beast who serves him). Artegall and Scudamour's version of community centers upon their "common harmes," while their anger brings them together precisely because they know that they do not hold *things* in common. Britomart, their common enemy, is the one who has perversely drawn their female property back into circulation.

I would argue, then, that Britomart's tenacious refusal to "forgoe" Amoret "so light" bears only superficial resemblance to the male knights' attempts to keep hold of female property, and that by the same token, Britomart and Amoret's wandering in each other's company while searching for their lovers bears only superficial resemblance to the knightly rush for Florimell's look-alike. Spenser sets the stage for the latter contrast in his argument for this same canto, which has to be one of the funniest and most profound moments in the poem: "Both Scudamour and Arthegall / Doe fight with Britomart, / He sees her face; doth fall in loue, / and soone from her depart" (IV.vi.arg.).

Despite Britomart's tenacity, however, Amoret goes "astray" while her friend lies sleeping outdoors (IV.vi.36). Carelessness on Britomart's part? Perhaps so, since Spenser often uses naps to represent the temptation to let down one's guard. But if we move from the chronology of the plot to the order of the poem, we see that the more immediate reason for us to read in stanza 36 about Amoret's straying is that in stanzas 20 through 33 Britomart and Artegall have seen each other without armor for the first time and have fallen in love. If the plot does not directly say that this heterosexual union will put extra pressure upon the two women's story, the poem's ordering does suggest such a possibility. Squeezed between the stanzas in which Britomart tells of Amoret's earlier disappearance and those in which she and Artegall first become allies are two stanzas that take one last look at the odd negotiations the two women have been making with the world's view of them: in stanza 34, Scudamour interrupts Britomart's and Artegall's pleasurably embarrassed murmurs because of his own, less pleasant anxieties about his absent bride. Obviously, Amoret cannot have been having an affair with this strange knight, after all, given that the knight has turned out to be a maiden. But where *is* Amoret, if not in this knight's arms? Confused and unhappy, but polite, Scudamour begins his request for an explanation from the golden-haired Britomart, "But Sir . . . " (IV.vi.34).[15] In the following stanza, Britomart herself inscribes a kind of epitaph upon the monument of her and Amoret's friendship: "Ne euer was there wight to me more deare / Then she, ne vnto whom I more true loue did beare" (IV.vi.35). There is not room among the living for this "true loue" and Artegall, too.

The coincidence of Scudamour's confused perception of Britomart's gender (even as he clearly perceives her actual sex) and Britomart's declaration of love for Amoret in the same passage in which the poem supplants Amoret with Artegall may throw some light on the Cave of Lust, which is where Amoret lies at this narrative moment. But my metaphor is misleading, because I do not propose to light up the Cave's

dark interior, only to point out its obscure internal contradictions: first, although the monster Lust is extravagantly male, Amoret loses herself to Lust – becomes lustful – while in the company of the sleeping Britomart. Second, unlike the House of Busyrane, the Cave of Lust enacts the opposite of violation's wound, when the darkness enables Amoret and Æmylia to develop a sense of community by emptying out their painful life stories. The cave protects these women's intimate conversation even as it imprisons their bodies.

"Community" may seem a broad label for just two people, but of course there is a third prisoner in the cave, to whom Æmylia owes her life. We learn of this debt when Amoret asks Æmylia about survival:

> Thy ruefull plight I pitty as mine owne.
> But read to me, by what deuise or wit,
> Hast thou in all this time, from him vnknowne
> Thine honor sau'd, though into thraldome throwne.
> Through helpe (quoth she) of this old woman here
> I haue so done, as she to me hath showne.
> For euer when he burnt in lustfull fire,
> She in my stead supplide his bestiall desire. (IV.vii.19)

The old woman who supplies her own body appears genuinely selfless here; if we follow the allegory, we may conclude that lust as well as Lust acts upon this unnamed woman, but the stanza's tone and the narrative situation give more occasion for our admiration than for our censure. Æmylia expresses gratitude for help rather than horror at the woman's wickedness, and the "lustfull fire" and "bestiall desire" are "his."

After Amoret escapes, Belphoebe peers into the cave's shadows to ask who remains. With eerie spareness, Spenser tells us that she sees nothing and hears only "some litle whispering, and soft groning sound" (IV.vii.33). Griefs shared within the cave have prepared us for pathos here, but the light of moral day requires that our sympathy make distinctions among women:

> Then forth the sad *Æmylia* issewed,
> Yet trembling euery ioynt through former feare;
> And after her the Hag, there with her mewed,
> A foule and lothsome creature did appeare;
> A leman fit for such a louer deare.
> That mou'd *Belphebe* her no lesse to hate,
> Then for to rue the others heauy cheare. (IV.vii.34)

As long as the women remained inside Lust's cave, the poem asked us to sympathize with their fear of male invasion from without. Now, however, when the cave empties itself out, a female character absorbs

and re-emits that element of threat. Daylight transforms the unnamed "old woman" into a "Hag" who incurs both Belphoebe's and the narrator's contempt. The burden of disgust has moved from a male rapist to one of his captives. No one defends her; the poem does not refer to her again.

Just what distinguishes the old woman's surrender of her body in the cave from Amoret's self-"ouersight" in worrying about a stranger's sobs – or from Æmylia's own captivity to Lust? Daylight declares our questions moot by bidding us to believe its loathsome picture of the old woman's true nature and to compare this picture with Æmylia's purity. Yet Æmylia and Amoret emerge from the cave's immoral influences into a confusingly immoral world, where dashing young rescuers give sexual wounds and then more or less accidentally leave their rescued maidens to famish, as Timias does.

The relationships constructed by women who are hedged with threats of violence – Britomart and Amoret, Amoret and Æmylia, Æmylia and the old woman – differ markedly from Amoret's relationships with men after her rescue, and Spenser takes pains to underscore the difference. After Arthur has cured Amoret's wounds with herbs and restored Æmylia to her lover, he escorts Amoret onward in search of her husband. At this point, the poem carefully echoes and intensifies its earlier account of Amoret's discomfort at finding herself alone with a knight who might, within the poem's terms, justly claim a debt of gratitude from her:

> But now in feare of shame she more did stond,
> Seeing her selfe all soly succourlesse,
> Left in the victors powre, like vassall bond;
> Whose will her weakenesse could no way represse,
> In case his burning lust should breake into excesse. (IV.ix.18)

As with Britomart in canto i, here Amoret remains unknowingly safe in Arthur's care, and as earlier, the protector with whom she travels has a romantic quest of his own. There is just one difference:

> Thus many miles they two together wore,
> To seeke their loues dispersed diuersly,
> Yet neither shewed to other their hearts priuity. (IV.ix.19)

Whereas Britomart and Amoret break their silence and soon become close confidantes when Britomart takes off her helmet, good breeding will not allow Arthur and Amoret to speak more than a few courteous words while circumstances dictate that they sit closely together on a horse. Or rather, Spenser calls good breeding to mind here, though he chooses not to do so in other outwardly similar situations.

The phrase "Yet neither shewed to other their hearts priuity" retroactively deepens the value of that earlier relationship with Britomart. It also retroactively makes Amoret's and Æmylia's mingled, shadowy voices all the more important in that their tenuous response to divisive violence has given the poem a means of questioning the restrictions placed upon women's public – and private – expression. In fact, the statement that neither Arthur nor his charge "shewed to other their hearts priuity" marks the end of Amoret's conversations in the entire poem, since this is the last line that brings her before our eyes. From here on, she remains silent and invisible, existing only in the mouths of other characters, who refer to her as if she were present but who never speak directly to her. In one sense, a chaste woman's silence can never be mysterious, since it is so completely expected, but Spenserian critics have long felt the necessity of imagining a lost or unwritten interpolation that would cancel the narrator's silence on the subject of Arthur's merely implicit presentation of Amoret to her voluble husband. (See IV.ix.38–41, where a stanza could be inserted.)

After Book IV sets up a reunion between Scudamour and his bride, it inexplicably replaces the bride's presence with the bridegroom's story of their courtship.[16] To paraphrase Æmylia's warning in the cave, the text apparently forgets Amoret's self to mind another. But the oddest maneuver of all in the silent presentation of the bride is simply that Scudamour does not refuse to take Amoret back. After all of her wandering and sexual wounding, she remains unproblematically blameless when she comes home to the husband whom she left on their wedding day. Scudamour need not swallow his pride or debate whether to strangle his wife in her bed, because in his account, she is still a virgin. I propose that we consider Amoret's silence in the face of Scudamour's story about her chastity and his loss of it a type of resistance – not so much from a female character to a male one as from one of the poem's narrative voices to another. If Scudamour attempts through his oral reminiscences to reconstitute Amoret as the perfectly whole sign of his proprietary loss, crying up her value within a masculine system of meanings, then rather than interpreting her failure to reappear as her own loss of self, we can read her absence as a successful resistance to mere contextualization. The coercion of discourse joins that of desire here, and if we read this scene back into the passage about Lust's cave, the masculine forces just outside the cave's entrance pose semantic dangers as well as sexual ones. Within the story, of course, Amoret does want to return to her heterosexual context. Nevertheless, Spenser renders the cave's interior perfectly ambiguous for the poem's own set of desires. Just as a wife's body is and is not her own territory, the cave is and is not woman's context.

So it is with Amoret's body. Because Scudamour, Busyrane, Lust, and Timias are in one sense representations of the same person, Amoret's wounds become various representations of one attempt to possess her. Thus the continual retelling of Amoret's violation and reconstitution of virginity places the story of her wandering into other women's arms both before and after that of her rape, effectively allowing her straying from Scudamour not only to invite the damage that men do to her – as the traditional moral would run – but also to cure it. Nor does her husband repossess her healed body.

Even well-educated Englishwomen of the Renaissance tended to believe much of what they were told about their need for masculine protection in view of the intellectual and physical weakness of their own sex; nevertheless, their diaries, letters, and published writings give little indication of their accepting the charge of inconstancy that men routinely leveled against them. Some writers questioned the Petrarchism of previous decades for having attempted to ascertain women's interior constancy and purity by deciphering arbitrary emblems: white hands, starry eyes, golden hair.[17] One of Petrarch's most devoted followers in *The Faerie Queene* is the enchanter Busyrane, who surrounds himself and his prisoner with emblems of cruel inconstancy that carry no less power for all their unpleasantness. Busyrane misreads Amoret as someone susceptible to his rewriting, someone whose heart's blood he can make into his ink. I would argue that Spenser counteracts Busyrane's authorial misreading not so much by providing correct readings elsewhere in the poem as by testing the limits of women's power to resist the standard definitions that would bond them always to men.

What does this say about Spenser's relationship to his chief reader, a female prince? In response to recent critics' tendency to emphasize Elizabeth Tudor's participation in an androcentric social order, Philippa Berry argues that the courtly cult of Elizabeth often represents Elizabeth as a Diana surrounded by women, or as an inaccessible, feminine moon. "In order to understand her contradictory historical position *as a woman*," Berry writes, "we have to consider the potentially subversive representation of Elizabeth as a Petrarchan or neoplatonic beloved who also had both worldly and spiritual power" (*Chastity and Power*, 5). Berry goes on to speculate that although Spenser begins his career by praising the cult of Elizabeth in the *Shepheardes Calender*, where Eliza is a shepherdess queen among shepherdesses, the final books of *The Faerie Queene* testify to Spenser's growing dissatisfaction with the courtly cult. Yet although I agree with Berry that Spenser begins to decenter Elizabeth as his epic progresses, it does not therefore follow that he represents all feminine power as becoming progressively weaker. On the contrary,

some of the voices in his poem turn toward another sort of femininity – a femininity just as secretive as the Eliza of the cult, but far less committed to the masculine good. If Elizabeth's male courtiers and poets feel sometimes barred from the feminine interior of her circle of power, they can nevertheless participate by declaring themselves her servants and her body politic. But Amoret is not the politically powerful queen, nor is she the Petrarchan mistress whom Scudamour paints when he narrates the story of the day he stole Amoret from Venus's temple. She is, finally, no one to whom any man can bond himself.

In this way, *The Faerie Queene* puts itself in the delicate position of sympathizing with a type of feminine error that does not always benefit men. Spenser differs from more single-minded moralists of his day in the degree to which he opens his text to the very powers that threaten it – specifically to a female world not entirely controlled by male expectations. Doing this, he allows women's alliances to trouble some of the poem's most resolutely trod paths, including those that lead toward matrimony and a propertied empire, yet these glimpses from inside the female world continue to gain poetic strength after various other motivating energies of the poem have dissipated. It is true that Amoret resembles Plato's Diotima in her ability to confer poetic power. Yet Amoret's silent disappearance differs from that of Diotima in that Spenser's text, unlike Plato's, registers its own inability to speak for the woman who has vanished.

In 1615, Joseph Swetnam warned "vnmarried wantons" that their waywardness had made them lose their very identities, leaving them without definition: "You have . . . made yourselves neither maidens, widows, nor wives" (*Araignment*, 204). Two years later, the pseudonymous Ester Sowernam retaliated with a pamphlet on the title-page of which she described herself, with an air of defiant mystery, as "neither Maide, Wife nor Widdowe, yet really all, and therefore experienced to defend all." Amoret – who leaves her husband's side before they have consummated their marriage, undergoes a series of rapes that leave her "perfect hole," and bereaves Scudamour at the very moment of their reunion – is unreasonably neither maid, wife, nor widow. Yet she is really all, and therefore experienced to defend her particular brand of evasion and error.