Drama Queens:

Performance, Gender, and Power in Spenser and Marlowe

by

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Abstract

As renaissance prince, godly virgin, mother to the nation, and above all, masterful politician, Elizabeth I's multivalent political performances made her the ultimate drama queen. Through such self-conscious performances Elizabeth crafted a composite role formed from gendered images of authority in order to create a conceptual space from which to govern. Like the perennially threatened borders of her realm however, this "conceptual space was inevitably a battleground, because in the performance of her power Elizabeth ... repeatedly crossed her society's unstable gender distinctions" (Frye, *Representation,* viii). My doctoral dissertation investigates the sovereign's performative, gendered persona as reflected in the allegorical envisioning of Edmund Spenser, and challenged by the popular, politically charged drama of Christopher Marlowe. Presenting feminist expansion on Patrick Cheney's groundbreaking hypothesis that Marlowe's work was structured in self-conscious competition with his literary rival, Edmund Spenser, I demonstrate that the characterizations of the often-overlooked women in Marlowe's plays function as direct counter-genre to those of Spenser's female characters in *The Faerie Queene* (1590). In so doing, I also challenge the widely held assumption that Marlowe presents "a world of relatively uncomplicated gender roles in which emotions are the preoccupation of women, and power the preserve of men" (Gibbs, 164). Extending recent investigations crediting the behavior of Marlowe's female characters as more nuanced than a series of stereotypical sketches, (Deats, 2002, Chedgzoy, 2004; Hopkins, 2009), I argue that Marlovian women adapt socially-significant behaviors in an aggregate process that anticipates Judith Butler's description of the performative as a dramatic "construction of meaning ... through a stylized repetition of acts" (*Gender Trouble,*190; 191). Gendered imaginatively with the contemporary British monarch and responding to Spenser's precedent-setting typologies, Marlowe presents his female characters as engaged in iterative performances of power.

Organized thematically around interrelated aspects of Elizabeth I's public and political persona, my dissertation counterpoints Spenser's officially sanctioned but nevertheless critical representations of the monarch against Marlowe's subtly subversive imaginings. Beginning with

Elizabeth I's famous image as the virgin queen, I explore Spenser's virtuous Una in conjunction with Marlowe's darkly comic portrayal of Abigail in *The Jew of Malta*. I follow with consideration of Elizabeth's romantic courtship in relation to the misadventures of Spenser's Belphoebe and Marlowe's tragic Dido. The magic of language and the instability of gender are the focus of my third chapter centering on Spenser's Amoret and Marlowe's Mephostophilis, while marriage and identity are the topic of my subsequent inquiry into the representations of Florimell and Zenocrate of the *Tamburlaine* plays. Figurations of Elizabeth as warrior queen are addressed through Spenser's iconic Britomart and Marlowe's bellicose Isabella from *Edward II.* I conclude with an analysis of Elizabeth's approach to her greatest rival, Mary, Queen of Scots, examining the characterizations of the Scottish Queen in Spenser's Duessa and Mutabilitie, and Marlowe's malevolent Queen Catherine from *The Massacre at Paris*. Through these gendered, suggestive, and occasionally inter-textual associations, I demonstrate that where Spenser envisioned a multi-faceted woman of power, and in so doing created an epic Elizabethan worldview, Marlowe scripted lines of drama that put such drama queens into political play.

Preface

This is an original work by Jennifer Sheckter. An earlier version of argumentation in Chapter 5 previously appeared in my article, "Perform to Power: Isabella's Performative Self-Creation in *Edward II*" in *Marlowe Studies: An Annual*, 3 (2013).

To the memory of my mother:

"*These then, though unbeheld in deep of night,*

Shine not in vain"

- John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book IV, 674-5.

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Introduction

We princes are set as it were upon stages in the sight and view of the world.
-Elizabeth I, Speech to Parliament

A renaissance prince, a godly virgin, a mother to the nation, and above all, a masterful politician: Elizabeth I's multivalent political performances made her the ultimate drama queen. In his now-classic study, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning,* Stephen Greenblatt argued that Elizabeth possessed a "conscious sense of her identity as at least in part a *persona ficta* and her world as a theatre" (*Self-Fashioning*, 167). Through such self-conscious performances, Elizabeth crafted a composite role formed from gendered images of authority in order to create a conceptual space from which to govern through decades of political warfare. Susan Frye argues in her literary biography of the monarch that, like the perennially threatened borders of her realm, this "conceptual space was inevitably a battleground, because in the performance of her power Elizabeth ... repeatedly crossed her society's unstable gender distinctions" (*Representation,* viii). Evidence of the sovereign's performative, gendered persona, and the effect that it had on the social psyche finds perhaps its clearest expression in the allegorical envisionings of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene.* At once a panegyric tribute, an elaborate cultural metaphor, and an acute political critique, Spenser's epic poetry was met with both approbation and creative challenge both by contemporaries and subsequent generations. As Roma Gill points out in her extended essay in *The Spenser Encyclopedia,* perhaps the most seemingly antithetical of these responses was the popular, politically charged drama of Christopher Marlowe: "It is hard to think of a greater contrast than that between the personal styles of Spenser and Marlowe. To describe Spenser's verse, such epithets as delicate, gentle, harmonious, fluent, and leisurely may serve; but none of these describes 'Marlowe's mighty line' (Jonson 'To the Memory of... Shakespeare') with its forward thrust and breathtaking urgency" (1190).

Given these widely divergent styles, each reflecting such disparate aims, Patrick Cheney's hypothesis in *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession* is all the more remarkable. Positing that Marlowe's work was deliberately structured in self-conscious competition with his literary rival, Cheney asserts that the Marlovian cursus forms a subtle "critique of what Spenser's literary

career serves: the literary, political, religious and sexual ideals of Queen Elizabeth's nascent Empire" (15). By meticulously cataloguing words and phrases that are shared, borrowed and repurposed between the contemporaries, Cheney argues that Marlowe anticipates a Derridean "deconstructive strategy" (16) in systematically inhabiting the structures that his drama intends to critique. Expanding Cheney's premise, this dissertation widens the scope of consideration to include image, gender, and performativity as part of Marlowe's deconstructive strategy, one that I argue is acutely responsive to the social, political, and ideological criticisms offered by Spenser's text. In so doing, I show that Marlowe's drama encourages his audience to adopt what Catherine Belsey defines as a deconstructive approach, one that reveals "the text implicitly criticizes its own ideology; it contains within itself the critique of its own values in the sense that it is available for a new process of production of meaning by the reading, and in this process it can provide a knowledge of the limits of ideological representation" (174, in *Feminisms Redux*).

Further, Cheney notes, "what is astonishing is how recurrently Marlowe's habitation of Spenser's structures privileges the underprivileged half of Spenser's binary oppositions" (272). More than popular appeal or simple contrariety, it is through his female characters that Marlowe articulates his most concerted challenge to the status quo as envisioned by Spenser. Herein, I offer corrective to a long-standing critical tradition as observed by Joanna Gibbs that regards Marlowe as scripting "a world of relatively uncomplicated gender roles in which emotions are the preoccupation of women, and power the preserve of men" (164). Instead, I demonstrate that as representatives of the social, political, and literary Other -- the quality Simone de Beauvoir observed in *The Second Sex* as "the fundamental characteristic of woman" (29) -- each of Marlowe's female characters actively embodies Derrida's definition of deconstructive challenge: "operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure" (*Of Grammatology, 25)*. This challenge, I argue, is articulated by Marlowe's women through culturally-informed, gendered behaviors that are suggestive of Judith Butler's descriptions of the performative as a "*stylized repetition of acts*" (*Gender Trouble*, 191) that "achieves its effect through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (xv). By enacting, adapting and contesting this

"gendered stylization of the body" (xv), Marlovian women interrogate not only the various self-stylizings of Elizabeth and her representations in *The Faerie Queene*, but also the systems of power that promote their promulgation. Marlowe's drama queens thus affirm Butler's observation that the "power of discourse to produce that which it names is thus essentially linked with the question of performativity. The performative is thus one domain in which power acts *as* discourse" (*Critically Queer,* 17). It is this discourse of power -- gendered, pervasive, and seemingly impenetrable -- that Marlowe's drama queens challenge in performative ways.

With emphasis on this feminist approach, and guided by still-developing gender theory, this dissertation is not exactly a study of influence, but it is certainly sensitive to Robert Logan's helpful scholarly principles in *Shakespeare's Marlowe*. Therein, Logan reminds his reader that as with any study, but particularly those investigating the enduring enigma that is Marlowe, "influence cannot usually be reduced to uncomplicated explanations [and] much of it relies on deduction and conjecture rather than hard evidence" (2). Most significantly though Logan asserts: "the study of influence should never be considered an end in itself but primarily a *process,* one that expands critical inquiry through fresh perspectives and raises new issues about the theatrical and literary resourcefulness of each writer" (2). To that end, my thesis presents a thematic, character, and gender study -- usually ignored in relation to Marlowe and Spenser -- argued along historical and cultural lines, and offering a complementary reading to the explanations along lines of poetic career as argued extensively by Patrick Cheney. Previous generations of critics have viewed Spenser's women as idealistic fantasies, poetically powerful in the land of remote royal mythology, and Marlowe's women as ghosts, placeholders, or even thinly disguised men. In counterpoint, I argue that Marlowe's drama activates women as politically unsentimental and driven to succeed, while Spenser's poetry articulates and empowers women as dramatically political and poetically enduring. Both forms of characterization are developed performatively with the cultural presence of Elizabeth I ever-present within these images of power.

Beginning with Elizabeth I's famous image as the virgin queen typified in *The Coronation Portrait* (*Fig. 1)*, I explore Spenser's virtuous Una in conjunction with Marlowe's darkly comic portrayal of Abigail in *The Jew of Malta*. Regarded as a naïve pawn in the grandiose schemes of

her father, Abigail usually gets pigeonholed as the single moral touchstone of the play, embodying, as Anna Beskins puts it, all the “saintly traits of femininity during the early modern period” (133). In opposition to this outlook, I extend Joanna Gibbs’ perceptive reading in “Marlowe’s Politic Women” that goes part-way in arguing that, like other female characters in Marlowe’s canon who are typically and unfairly reduced to signs, Abigail’s characterization evidences a “complication of any simple reduction to servility” (173). As she enacts power performatively through self-styling as a religious virgin, I argue for a comprehensive reconsideration of Abigail as a character through whom Marlowe investigates the possibilities for unmarried early modern women to exercise resistance to pervasive male power. Through her repetitive self-creation as her father's daughter, as a nun, and back again, Abigail relates to the contemporary discourse on the nature and stability of individual identity. Barabas’ incredulous remark, “What, Abigail become a nun *again*?” (emphasis added 3.4.1) affirms the potency and flexibility of such adopted behaviors. Through her performance, Abigail literalizes what Butler observes as the performativity of gender: "what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylizations of the body” (*Gender Trouble,* xv).

Spenser’s dynamic nun-like heroine, Una, I argue, informs both Abigail’s outward appearance as well as her performative representation on stage. As engaged and demonstrative spiritual guide, Una famously urges the as-yet untested and unproven Redcrosse to "Add faith unto your force, and be not faint” (I.i.19.3). By insisting on having faith in his abilities as a knight in order to truly become one, Una's assertion solidifies the power of performed behavior to make permanent alterations to identity. Further, through their shared self-identification as nuns, both Una and Abigail repurpose a form of spiritual authority that draws from the earlier Christian precedents of powerful religious women, and also from the reigning monarch’s self-styling as religious virgin. This power, felt and understood by every man and woman in Elizabethan England, is evident in the painting *Elizabeth I when a princess* (*Fig.* 2) where the young future queen subtly displays the symbols of her religious devotion. Together, Abigail and Una draw into dialogue the real-world historical precedents of devout women, whose adaptive behaviors and

identities allowed them to carve a unique social niche. Despite inhabiting different social classes and literary genres, Una and Abigail articulate a behaviorally-crafted spiritual authority that manifests genuine female social agency.

Following discussion of religious virgins, I turn to consideration of what was for most early modern women the antithesis of a strictly spiritual life: courtship and marriage. Despite her stated preference for the former mode, Elizabeth was often implored to consider potential matches to a variety of foreign, and even a few domestic suitors. Frequently the subject of popular discussion and no small measure of dissention, Marlowe and Spenser both address royal forays into romantic and political courtship through their respective renderings of the titular *Dido, Queen of Carthage,* and her Virgilian-inspired counterpart, Belphoebe. Intimately enmeshed with what Louis Montrose terms the Elizabethan political imaginary, the Dido legend richly represents the "collective repertoire of representational forms and figures – mythological, rhetorical, narrative, iconic – in which the beliefs and practices of Tudor political culture were pervasively articulated" ("Imaginary", 907). The myth's cultural currency is evidenced in *The Sienna "Sieve" Portrait* of Elizabeth (*Fig. 3*), which employs miniature scenes from the *Aeneid* in a fascinating yet elusive iconographic puzzle. Framed in conscious reference to Virgil's epic, Spenser names Belphoebe in the "Letter to Raleigh" as an explicit avatar for the Queen, affirming her critical position alongside the classical tale in his mythopoeic vision. As "a literalization of the courtly ideal lady, whose inspiring virtues are the backbone, and even precondition, for all virtuous action and civilized order" (Woods, 149) Belphoebe facilitates the adaptation of the courtly love metaphor from a literary premise into a functioning political ideology, one that solidified relations of power by transforming them into relations of chaste and dutiful love. Offering counterpoint to the deceptive self-stylings of Venus that are enmeshed within both the Dido tale and the rhetoric of contemporary misogyny that surrounds it, Belphoebe eloquently rejects the artificiality of courtly life, tempering them with complimentary virtues. In his classic study, *The Analogy of the Faerie Queene,* James Norhnberg further asserts that Belphoebe represents Elizabeth's body natural by contrasting her with Gloriana as "allegorical presentation of Elizabeth Tudor and Elizabeth the First" (60) respectively. Belphoebe is then a metonymic figure for the politically troublesome fact

of Elizabeth's sex, and as such, further elaborates the particularly Elizabethan sensibilities of courtly love. Perhaps most suggestively, the depiction of the sylvan damsel in her hunting accoutrements references the Queen through her well-known love of bloodsports, while also alluding to her love of the "chase," in both the romantic and political senses. The famous woodcut, "Elizabeth I out Hunting" from *Turberville's Booke of Hunting, 1576* (133) (*Fig. 4*) encapsulates the motif, portraying the queen simultaneously assuming the rights and privileges of kingship, while symbolically enacting the role of Petrarchan damsel, forever holding a knife to the hart/heart. The disparate forms of the Dido myth exploit this same tension between the forces of love and the obligations of duty, making it ripe for artists like Spenser and Marlowe to draw into dialogue historical, political and gendered ideals pertaining to women, passion and power.

More than a vehicle through which to reposition ideology on pervasive concerns over Elizabeth's sex, marital status, or her ability to rule, Marlowe employs the Dido myth to stage a unique *citational* drama. By referencing both the Virgilian and classical strains of the tale, the play engages in strategy of double exposure that in turn highlights the work of gendered ideologies of power. The resultant plurality of meaning and possibility evinces the suggestion, as Leonard Barkan observes, "not of alternative explanations but of simultaneous ones" (323). Whereas Virgil's queen is love-struck from her first meeting with the Trojan warrior, emphasizing her helplessness against the power of love, Marlowe's Dido is initially emotionally distant rather than instantly enamored. Sara Munson Deats notes that through this subtle change, the playwright effectively "reverses the relationship of Virgil's two protagonists, rendering Dido more dynamic, dominant, and thus more conventionally 'masculine', while portraying Aeneas as more reticent and passive, and by extension, more conventionally 'feminine'" (168). This apparent androgyny, I argue, is demonstrably a cultivated effect, stemming from her conscious adaptation of behavioral codes and speech patterns that mimic those employed by the English queen, who as Mary Beth Rose observes, "cogently formulated and defined her authority … in explicitly gendered terms" (1077). Dido's courtship of Aeneas shows the queen performatively negotiating her authority through the discourse of love. Offering parody of the verbal and behavioral conceits of the courtly love discourse famously articulated by Spenser, the pointedly gendered inversions expose such

actions as culturally prescribed and actively, self-consciously adapted. As such, Dido's behaviors mirror the ethos through which Elizabeth herself secured political power, which as Stephen Orgel remarks "raised flirtation to an instrument of policy" ("Prologue", 18).

It is only after Dido's wounding by Cupid's fateful dart that the queen's behavior radically alters, challenging the implications of the Virgilian narrative that linked Dido's tragic fate to her libidinous female desire, and reframing it as the direct result of the meddling Olympians. By staging the moment of Dido's transformation, the play places the contrasting traditions of the Carthaginian queen into direct dialogue as distinctly juxtaposed halves. These dual streams of the Dido legend find modulated representation in *The Faerie Queene* through the reciprocal representations of Alma, who John Watkins observes as mediating "the Virgilian Dido's concupiscence and the historical Dido's self-directed irascibility" (*Spectre,* 131), and Amavia, who evokes the traditional, sympathetic regard of Dido as "the victim of a sudden, irresistible fury" (121). The performative sorcery employed by Dido to ensnare Aeneas aligns with Acrasia's witchcraft and the insidious contrivances of her Bower of Bliss. Like Acrasia, the Virgilian Dido has her speech severely limited by male forces that effect the destruction of her domain. In the drama, however, the citational act facilitates rather than restricts female speech because, as Emma Buckley recently argues, it "turns the authorizing power of *The Aeneid* against itself" (142). In so doing, Marlowe also draws into dialogue questions of authorship and origination, seemingly anticipating Derrida's sentiments on "originary performativity ... that does not conform to preexisting conventions, unlike all the performatives analyzed by the theoreticians of speech acts, but whose force of rupture produces the institution or the constitution, the law itself" (232). Thus by staging the classical and Virgilian forms in concurrent, destabilizing opposition, Marlowe interrogates the antecedents of gendered behavior, exposing them as both arbitrary and constructed. As innovators developing new forms on page and stage for a newly emergent English national consciousness, both Marlowe and Spenser herein demonstrate their interest in moving beyond mere replication of familiar myths to create wholly different narratives.

Despite the absence of a central female character in Marlowe's notorious "womanless drama", *Doctor Faustus,* my third chapter investigates representations of androgyny and the

performative magic of language to draw parallels with Spenser's depictions of mutably-gendered and magical performances. Although in *How to Do Things With Words* J.L. Austin asserted that "a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage" (22), I show that *Faustus* exploits contemporary superstitions and anti-theatrical sentiment to insist that on-stage, the power of words can achieve *real* potency. Andrew Sofer characterizes this as the "riddle" of Elizabethan theatre performativity, where staged acts emulating real-world events were thought to be not only *mimetic*, but also potentially *kinetic* in effecting real consequences. By inviting interrogation of this difference "between performing as feigning and performing as doing--precisely the distinction theatre seems uncannily able to blur" (Sofer, 10), the play investigates the magical power of performative language to define, shape, and transform the gendered self both on-stage and off. Through contingencies scripted by the playwright that tantalize character and audience alike, the notoriously fragmentary playtext reflects the instabilities articulated by the hero's psychomachia. Faustus' dramatization clearly echoes the representation of magic as a kind of performance that works not by means of words, but performatively through language and circumstance as portrayed by Spenser's magicians. Loosely enacting the spells of the shape-shifting Archimago to reference questions of deception and selfhood that reflect on contemporary anti-theatrical polemics, Marlowe's drama also adapts the apocalyptic final vision of Spenser's Merlin in its ultimate failure to offer meaningful salvation either to Faustus, or indeed, to his audience. In relation to Spenser's other significant magician, Busirane, I challenge the conclusions Susan Frye draws in her landmark essay "Of Chastity and Violence". Where Frye sees the poet-as-magus attempt to establish himself as successor in controlling ideological language, I show that it is in fact the Elizabeth-figure Amoret, in the role of the astute reader, who challenges the sorcerer's violent assertion of the seemingly inescapable ideology of courtly romance. Charging another Elizabeth-avatar, Britomart, to deconstructively reverse Busirane's spells, Amoret deciphers the magic of allegorical language that allows for a single entity to representatively become another or an ideal through verbal play of connected identifications. But as Patrick Cheney observes of Marlowe's response to both ancient precedent and his contemporary literary rival, the playwright instead "makes his hero a magus in order to

undercut the Spenserian idealism” ("Love and Magic", 101), and in so doing challenges the notion that the magic of language can offer escape from pervasive iconographies of power. Ironically, “Faustus eschews allegorical interpretation. He never reads past the letter, as it were, to search for the spirit; he never seeks what recedes beyond the textual mark” (Guenther, 71). Such limitations mean that Faustus is neither able to comprehend the performative nature of magic, nor is he able to decipher his own role in relation to it.

Faustus' soteriological crisis is rendered in absurdist terms so that the play dramatizes his conundrum not as simply a crisis of faith, but questioning of identity through transformative power of magic. Existing in a state of ongoing performative becoming, Faustus' identity is not simply a question of who he is, or even of what he may become, but rather of which iteration of self and subjecthood he is enacting at every moment. Trapped between generic, theological, and gendered polarities, Marlowe's conflicted hero is informed by the androgynous analogies of the Garden of Adonis, as well as the symbolic figure of the hermaphrodite, which together invite consideration of gendered identity as mutable and linguistically determined. In striving to construct himself as a “liberal humanist subject, … unified, autonomous, knowing, and masculine” (Deats, "Mark this show", 203), Faustus enacts the hermaphrodite's tale by failing to read his gender identity in mutable terms, thus rendering himself permanently estranged from cohesive selfhood. In this way, Spenser's configuration of Platonic divine love through the arresting image of hermaphroditic union featured at the close of the 1590 edition is expressly countered by the power-coded mutualism and interdependency staged between the magician and his diabolical familiar. Where Mephostophilis dutifully adopts the roles of confessor, caregiver, teacher, and even ersatz spouse, Faustus enacts corresponding roles as penitent, dependent, student, and paramour. The partnership between Faustus and his familiar is thus presented as an intentional travesty of marriage, where the Doctor and Mephostophilis even enact the bonds of a sacramental contract sealed by performative affirmations (2.1.91-2 &115), and secured by the dower of Faustus' soul. Such suggestive and flexible androgyny invites consideration of Elizabeth's consciously asexual self-representation in the little-known *Gripsholm Portrait* (*Fig. 5*) sent to Erik of Sweden. The image allowed Elizabeth to occupy "what was for her the strongest

possible representational position, that of a body neither distinctly male nor distinctly female" (Frye, *Representation*, 36), asserting a powerful and self-sufficient image of a young queen who had already set her mind against the proposed match.

Marriage, language and identity continue to be central in my subsequent inquiry into the representations of Florimell and Zenocrate of the *Tamburlaine* plays. Marlowe's iconic Scythian hero personifies, even as he also interrogates early modern aspirations for a uniquely English identity and influence on the world stage, prompting John Blakely to assert that Tamburlaine's meteoric rise to fame and power is a deliberate "deconstruction of [Spenser's] exemplary Christian hero" (48). Reflecting this intention, the story of the hero's bride, Zenocrate, serves to examine the ideological expectations placed not just on Spenser's heroines, but also on all early modern women, especially Elizabeth. The relationship between the princess and the hero consistently troubles Petrarchan sensibilities regarding gendered behavior, reflecting critically on the neo-Platonic ideal marriage represented by Florimell and Marinell in *The Faerie Queene*. Indeed, over the course of the two plays, Zenocrate and her counterparts Zabina and Olympia effect subversive parallel performances of Florimell and her doppelgänger, illustrating the ways in which women are imagined through performative discourse by their male counterparts, and in turn, how they understand themselves in relation to such politico-literary ideology.

The *Tamburlaine* plays include some of the best-known instances of inter-textual borrowings that hint at familiarity between poet and playwright. As Roma Gill notes of these instances, "this is not plagiarism; it is not even simple borrowing. Tamburlaine is *quoting* Spenser" (1190). Where Tamburlaine's self-styling deliberately reveals its provenance in Spenser's Arthur in order to scrutinize shared ideological underpinnings, I show that parallels can also be drawn between the idealized Florimell and much-hyperbolized Zenocrate. When she details the political status of her father and uncle, and the threat of divine sanction, Zenocrate names the sources of influence most applicable to women in a gendered economy – father, family and faith. In citing these avenues to power, Zenocrate implicitly identifies her place within what Gayle Rubin termed the "political economy" of Sex, where "women are given in marriage, taken in battle, exchanged for favors, sent as tribute, traded, bought and sold" (175). Ironically,

though Tamburlaine's audacious usurpations strike against entrenched systems of hierarchical organization, prompting Stephen Greenblatt to observe that “Marlowe’s heroes fashion themselves not in loving submission to an absolute authority but in self-conscious opposition: Tamburlaine against hierarchy” (*Self-Fashioning,* 203). Tamburlaine nevertheless employs those same hierarchies to secure Zenocrate’s “immobilization” (Whitfield, 88) within a prison of gender-based conventions. Just as Florimell’s identity is obscured behind the affectation of poetic conceits so that even her true love cannot distinguish the real woman from a demonic interloper (V.iii.19), so too is Zenocrate's political and personal agency occluded by ideological rhetoric. The princess' increasingly wordless watchfulness has prompted critics to reduce her function to “the embodiment of the idea of beauty” (Baines, 6), an estimation that misses the essential point: it is through Zenocrate's increasingly enforced silence that Marlowe registers the effect of violent patriarchal and poetic ideology as it enforces the objectification and abstraction of women's bodies, and the exclusion of their voices.

If “the central legacy of Petrarchism for the Elizabethans is the concept of the self” (38) as Reed Way Dasenbrock asserts, then both Spenser and Marlowe can be understood as examining a system of gendered relations that are intentionally and exclusively one-sided. Harry Berger observes that the issue becomes “how to redress the balance in a culture whose images of woman and love, whose institutions affecting women and love, were products of the male imagination” ("Book III", 236). Spenser's heroines are not merely reiterations of social and moral aesthetics, but subtle critiques of those conventions that seek to define women within narrow, arbitrary terms, and none more so than Florimell and her doppelganger, False Florimell. Robert Tate identifies these images of female beauty as "cultural markers” (207) as they routinely connote purity and chastity, but he argues that Spenser employs them self-consciously and ironically to critique neo-Platonic ideologies. The description of False Florimell as being formed from "purest snow" from "the Riphoean Hils" (III.viii. 6: 2 & 4), identified as the "the mountains in Scythia (n. 6) suggestively links both her substance and appearance with Tamburlaine's homeland and his bride, who is also said to be "Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills" (I *Tamb.* 1.2.89). The frozen imagery indicates not just the source of Tamburlaine’s inspired

rhetoric, but also his attempts to subsume Zenocrate within the same gendered ideological framework as that personified by Spenser's snowy damsel. As a pervasive "cultural marker", estimations of female "fairness" through images of whiteness and snow are pointedly employed in *The Ermine Portrait* of Elizabeth (*Fig. 6*). Featuring the creature who, it was thought, would rather die than soil its pure white fur, the presence of the crowned ermine not only connotes Elizabeth's royalty, but also her much-discussed commitment to chastity. Through False Florimell, a figure whose gendered appearance is determined through contrived appearance and devices of performative mimicry so that she perfects "untouchable lady of Petrarchan tradition" (Yearling, 139), Spenser's epic explores the cultural preference for falsely conceptualizing women within rigid, socially defined gender-roles as articulated in Petrarchan and neo-Platonic discourse.

Where Florimell and Marinell eventually deconstruct the deceptive façade of gendered identities that kept them strangers from one another, Tamburlaine and Zenocrate continue to inhabit the modes of an imitative philosophy at their own risk, exposing the violence of its power with the loss of their humanity and selfhood respectively. Zenocrate's agency is incrementally circumscribed and her identity slowly effaced, until subsumed within her mobile sarcophagus by Tamburlaine's ever-defining containment. The systematic erasure of her voice, her autonomy, and her life is symbolized in Olympia's chastity-preserving self-sacrifice, and reflected against Zabina's tragic self-determination, revealing the inescapability of gendered ideologies. In Part II Zenocrate's tragic legacy is repeated as Calyphas' life is lost to Tamburlaine's unyielding will to power, a descent into absolutism that ultimately proves fatal. By enacting the imperatives to conform to culturally sanctioned definitions of gender identity, the *Tamburlaine* plays literalize the destructive consequences of the hero's pathological ambition in death.

From women who perform as paragons of early modern femininity even at their own peril, I turn to those to those who performatively challenge gendered ideology in my fifth chapter, which centers on figurations of Elizabeth as warrior queen as addressed through Spenser's iconic Britomart and Marlowe's bellicose Isabella from *Edward II.* The poet's famously ambiguous intention, "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" as stated in the prefatory letter to Ralegh foregrounds Elizabeth as "not just *The Faerie Queene's* most

powerful reader, but also as its most powerful *gendered* reader" (Bellamy, 79). Britomart's unique status as a female knight is, therefore, a reflection not just of a relatively egalitarian approach of the readership of the English nation, but more specifically an acknowledgement of the complex gender identity of the Queen herself. Providing a foil to Florimell's emblematic, but defensive and reactive chastity with her stout resolve, Britomart is also distinct from Spenser's other notable martial heroine, Belphoebe, whose scrupulous guarding of her virginity against compromise contrasts with Britomart's pursuit of a new form of chastity in marriage. Understood as a developing hero in the same mold as Redcrosse in Book I and Guyon in Book II, who explore rather than exemplify their representative virtues, Britomart's development through Book V reveals her intellectual and emotional dynamism through a series of explicitly gendered performances. From her naive deception at Malecasta's castle, to her conscious duplicity as Amoret's rescuer, Britomart is shown to consciously experiment with her self-presentation, assuming not just the dress and skill of a knight, but also the behavioral signifiers that imply male gender. Her self-creation is facilitated and reinforced by characteristically Spenserian thematic mirroring that begins with her viewing of her "reflection", Artegall, in Merlin's mirror, and culminates in her battle with her apparent doppelganger, Radigund. Both "martial mayds" adopt and adapt behavioral markers of masculinity, creating through Butlerian self-stylizations androgynous identities that facilitate their respective quests for love. While Radigund broadly functions as bad example of the dangers of female rule, it is her close reflection of Britomart that provides her dangerous potency by dramatizing the performative power of women to effect real change.

With her performative facility, Spenser's martial heroine anticipates the same means to power as that adopted by Marlowe's Queen Isabella. Though long-standing critical assessments have routinely dismissed the characterization of the queen as a simple "presentation of woman as angel /devil" (Richmond, 37), and "a mere puppet" (Poirier, 1951), a few have observed Isabella's considerable skill in using "the roles others create for her ... as a means of levering herself into a position of influence" (Rutter, 95). Ranging from the benevolent Griselda figure she assumes in the opening scenes, through stylized images as warrior queen and mother to the future of the

nation, these cogent performances not only allude to the cultural stereotypes applied to women in general, they align with popular interest in the potential fluidity of the gendered self, especially in relation to the construct of the dual-natured monarch. Isabella's successive self-casting in gendered behavioral types is a method of performance through which she achieves and retains a remarkable degree of political agency. It is also the means to her survival in a court and culture that, as demonstrated through Zenocrate, would otherwise see her relegated to mute obsolescence. Though Isabella's expressions appear to fit standard gendered conventions of affection and subservience, her vocalized desire for dominion over king and country recalls the impressive power of *The Ditchley Portrait* where Elizabeth, standing on a map of England, conflates her body natural with the "body" of the nation (*Fig.7*). Metonymically inverting classical representation of the "body-state analogy" (329) that Linda Woodbridge observes "expressed fear of invasion through an insecure border" (340), in Marlowe's play, it is the Queen herself who becomes, like Radigund, a force that threatens to invert social order. Just as Elizabeth's performance as fearless warrior queen combined the disparate facets of her identity into a single, sovereign ideal, so too does Isabella function as a chimera, constructing for herself a composite identity through which she ruthlessly secures her political position. In a further reflection of Elizabeth's performative self-styling, Isabella consolidates power in her final role as mother to the nation. As guardian to her son, Prince Edward, Isabella styles herself as his only protector, his lone champion, his greatest source of love, and indeed, his whole world. In so doing, she seeks to perpetuate indefinitely the performative mechanism behind her sustained political control.

Elizabeth's self-representation as a symbolic mother to her people concludes my dissertation as I examine the malevolent Queen Catherine from Marlowe's final play, *The Massacre at Paris,* in conjunction with Spenser's characterizations of Duessa and Mutabilitie as representatives of Elizabeth's greatest rival, Mary, Queen of Scots. Despite contemporary panegyrics that emphasized their kinship, in her correspondence with Mary's son, James VI, the presumed heir to the English throne, Elizabeth employed the notion of metaphorical motherhood with caution, understanding its multivalent cultural significance. Although mothers were ideologically valorized for the self-sacrificing qualities symbolized in the iconic Pelican Portrait

(*Fig. 8),* Elizabethans simultaneously regarded their influence with such suspicion that, as Mary Villeponteux asserts, "the ideal mother is an absent or dead mother [because] a living, nurturing mother endangers her sons" ("Not as Woman", 216). Marlowe is no stranger to manipulative, dangerous mothers like Isabella, who plays Edward III as the ultimate prize in a high-stakes game of political chess. Yet Catherine goes further, repeatedly sacrificing her offspring for her own political gain. Thus while she consistently performs the political value of maternity to her advantage, she simultaneously challenges the expectations of her role and her sex. Like Marlowe's other heroines, Catherine's sustained power and influence is effected through performative means, adopting conventional behaviors only to expose their artificiality. With her singularity of purpose, inexorable ambition, and absolute commitment to power, even at the expense of her own offspring, the Queen rivals the claim of the Duke of Guise to be what Rick Bowers suggestively describes as a "pan-European Catholic terrorist" ("Massacre", 134). Marlowe's portrayal of Queen Catherine's murderous villainy accords with popular English regard for Mary Stuart.

As daughter-in-law to Catherine and niece to the despised Duke of Guise, Mary's genealogy links her religiously and ideologically to forces that represented an ongoing threat in the English national consciousness. Spenser's allegorization of Mary as Duessa in Book I locates her in dynamic contrast with Elizabeth as Una, rendering the two queens as clear opposites: singular purity and quintessential Englishness brought into direct contrast with wanton duplicity and threatening Otherness. In her trial, Duessa is indicted as much for her deployment of performative feminine wiles as for her acts of treason, affirming her role as a touchstone for cultural anxieties regarding female power in dynamic performance. However, Elizabeth as Mercilla is also rendered as engaging in a feminine performance of sensibility that delays the enactment of necessary justice. Though the figure on trial is nominally Duessa as Mary, the gendered imagery, together with the implications of the discrepancies between historical fact and poetic fiction form a judgment against all women rulers, and of Elizabeth's ability in particular. As such, John Staines insists Duessa's trial "casts a skeptical eye upon the very political rhetoric that sustained some of [Spenser's] own most deeply held beliefs" (284).

According to Andrew Hadfield, “the chaos of Book 6 is shown to stem directly from the failure to establish true justice in Book 5” (67). Though there are thematic ties between Marlowe's iconic poem, "The Passionate Shepherd", and Spenser's return to the pastoral mode in Book 6, the form's retrospective approach is largely at odds with the forward-looking dynamism of this project's energetic dramatic characters. Instead, I follow the spirit of Mary as consummate bad example of the dangers of female rule as she is reanimated in the *Cantos of Mutabilitie*. Herein, the allegorical projections of discord and dangerous female sexuality that Duessa articulates in the earlier books are, as Hadfield affirms, “transformed in to the ultimate threat to order” (69). The violence of historical precedent as well as the potential for future social strife is explored through Mutability’s escalating challenges to the Elizabeth-figure Cynthia and the mighty Tudor-Jove. Though Angus Fletcher likens this meeting between Jove and Mutability to a "rhetorical tradition of misogyny often used to instruct young lawyers: the ironic defense of women” (8), Spenser's presentation is subtler than a simple revisiting of the classic *querelle des femmes*, presenting instead an inquiry into the social world-currency of gender. Mutability offers a two-fold challenge: she not only interrogates Jove's right to succession by force of ideological violence, but she also embodies the contemporary fear that if gender is constructed through behavior and interpretation, then the social structure of patriarchy is equally illusory.

Variously gendered, politically attuned, and culturally suggestive, Marlowe's female characters creatively and dynamically respond to Spenser's poetically powerful women. Moving from religious virgins, fierce sylvan damsels, and androgynous archetypes, through to Petrarchan paragons, bellicose princesses, and malevolent mothers, I demonstrate the iconic, behavioral and inter-textual associations between poet and playwright in response to the subversive avenues of power accessed performatively by the contemporary Queen. Where Spenser's verse envisioned a multi-faceted woman of power, and in so doing created an epic Elizabethan worldview, Marlowe scripted lines of drama that put such multi-faceted drama queens into political play.

Figure 1. *The Coronation Portrait.*

Chapter 1

Abigail and Una: Virginity, Religion, and Power

It would please me best if, at the last, a marble stone shall record that this Queen having lived such and such a time, lived and died a virgin.

- Elizabeth to Parliamentary Delegation

I begin with the concept of singularity, the power that afforded Elizabeth I the right to rule. While her education and intelligence allowed her to claim exception from the detractions routinely launched against women as being weak in mind and spirit, it was her carefully crafted persona as virgin queen that made her unique. As a royal nun – pure, godly, and perpetually alone – her self-styling served to emphasize her religious devotion and spiritual stamina, the qualities necessary to defend her protestant island nation from the ever-present threat of continental Catholicism. These seemingly personal choices that functioned as truly powerful political facets of Elizabeth's public identity are reflected in Spenser's depiction of Una and in Marlowe's presentation of Abigail, the only child of his eponymous *Jew of Malta.* In this chapter I argue a comprehensive reconsideration of Abigail as a character through whom Marlowe investigates the possibilities for agency in unmarried early modern women. As she enacts power performatively through self-styling as a religious virgin, I show that Abigail's representation on stage is informed by the poetics of Spenser's dynamic heroine, Una whose role as engaged and demonstrative spiritual guide serves as revealing counterpoint. Together, Abigail and Una draw into dialogue the real-world historical precedents of devout women whose adaptive behaviors and identities allowed them to carve a unique social niche. Despite inhabiting different social classes and literary genres, Una and Abigail articulate a behaviorally-crafted spiritual authority that manifests genuine female social agency.

Overshadowed by the theatrical dynamism of Barabas, and largely excluded from critical dialogue over questions of genre, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, consideration of Abigail in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* typically dismisses her characterization as perfunctory. Regarded as a naïve pawn in the grandiose schemes of her father, Abigail is frequently pigeonholed as the play's single moral touchstone, thought to embody, as Anna Beskins puts it, all the "saintly traits of femininity during the early modern period" (133). While her Christianity and chastity could elicit

general approbation from contemporary audiences, Abigail's didactic function is complicated by her association with a version of Catholicism that is everywhere treated with marked irreverence -- from the cartoonish, lecherous friars to multiple sexual allusions to grotesquely unchaste nuns. A strictly symbolic reading of Abigail's role is, therefore, ultimately unsatisfying because of her early and unceremonious demise, which not only limits her function as moral counterpoint to just half of the play, but also offers any representative of Christian virtue scant means of recourse against Barabas' villainy. A few critics have approached the conundrum of Abigail's characterization, and sought to expand her role beyond that of a conceptual counterpoint to the play's pervasive Machiavellianism. Joanna Gibbs' perceptive reading in "Marlowe's Politic Women" goes part-way in arguing that, like other female characters in Marlowe's canon who are typically and unfairly reduced to signs, Abigail's characterization evidences a "complication of any simple reduction to servility" (173) by presenting some resistance to pervasive male power. Similarly, Jeremy Tambling locates in Abigail a gendered representation of alterity in conjunction with Barabas' ethnic parvenu and Ithamore's enslaved outsider. Yet both of these critics stop short of fully recognizing the nuances in Abigail's characterization, seeing her only as "a partially perceived figure in the play, a weakened challenge to its premises," (Tambling, 109) immersed in the pervasive network of patriarchal power relations.

And yet right from Abigail's initial appearance on stage, she immediately establishes links between female agency and performance: her first lines simper, "Not for myself, but aged Barabas,/ Father, for thee lamenteth Abigail" (1.2.229-230). Presenting herself as the loving and dutiful child whose concern is not for her own comforts, but for the well being of her elderly parent, her statements are gendered, manipulative and sycophantic. While her apparent selflessness seems to affirm the Christian virtues typically ascribed to her, this self-presentation is more than simply a reflection of inner piety; rather it is a calculated stance that deliberately encourages her father's affinity. That her behavior is studied rather than strictly natural is affirmed in the "But" that begins her subsequent statements. Hereby, she abruptly abandons her melancholic affect to offer energetic alternatives:

> But I will learn to leave these fruitless tears,

> And, urged thereto with my afflictions,
> With fierce exclaims run to the senate house,
> And in the senate reprehend them all,
> And rent their hearts with tearing of my hair,
> Till they reduce the wrongs done to my father (231-236).

Her proposed plan of action places a premium on dramatic performance and feminine stereotypes to achieve agency. She does not intend merely to appeal on her father's behalf, but rather to employ her own demonstrative abilities to "exclaim" "reprehend" and "rent" and otherwise exert her own will. Abigail's initial attempts at self assertion thus occur through the same performative means as her father: a stylized self-presentation notably displaying the same quick wit, zest for risky endeavor, and gift for dissembling. Moreover, by interrupting Barabas vengeful, solitary scheming, she moves from the periphery of the action to firmly re-inscribing herself at its center. Despite the romantic appeal of Abigail's suggested public protestation against Ferneze's injustice, Barabas brushes aside his daughter's proposal with a classically draconian imperative: "Be silent, daughter" (1.2.239). Though it may be presented light-heartedly as the efforts of an exasperated parent struggling to manage the impractical fancies of a wayward teenaged girl, this apparently simple command implicitly references the patriarchal insistence that women--wives and daughters both--be silent and obedient. Here then, Abigail offsets Barabas' hypocrisy: while he rails against the injustices committed against him at the hands of the Christian Maltese, he privately upholds the tenets of authoritarian patriarchy, essentially the same precepts that perpetuate his own social exclusion.

As a theatricalized overstatement of pervasive cultural xenophobia, Barabas' on-stage manifestation affirms even as it critiques the security of the dominant social discourse. By displaying what Rick Bowers describes as the "overwhelming obviousness of pernicious cultural types" (*Radical,* 24) the play generally and Barabas in particular assure the viewer that the outsider is identifiable. But as a beautiful young woman, one who is desired by gentle and gentile suitors, Abigail constitutes a much more serious, pervasive challenge to social mores. Through the suggestion that she may achieve restitution through her own means where her father cannot,

she implicitly challenges his authority. Already then, the open enmity that will develop between father and daughter is foreshadowed as each vies for power and self-determination within a social system that insists upon their exclusion.

The exchange that follows between Abigail and her father adds further layers of darkly comic irony, demonstrating that in spite of himself Barabas does value Abigail's verbal powers. Not only does he gain from Abigail's words and her wisdom--she is shown to be no quixotic naïf--indeed it is Barabas who is found to be poorly informed. His confidence in his store of jewels is dashed by Abigail's pronouncement, "Then shall they ne'er be seen of Barabas,/ For they have seized upon thy house and wares" (1.2.249-50). His conviction that his cache may yet be recovered is unequivocally contradicted by his daughter, who relates the further news, "of thy house they mean/ To make a nunnery" (1.2.54-5). That it is Abigail, and not the calculating Barabas who reveals this plan suggests much about their respective self-characterizations. Whereas Barabas claims to be the artful and duplicitous schemer, his ignorance of the latest developments concerning his former property, together with his general bungling of negotiations with the rapacious Ferneze, reveal that he is not nearly so artful or skilled as he might claim. In this regard, cultural conventions are implicitly affirmed, since once again through his comic inadequacies, Barabas' threat as social outsider is diminished, even dismissed as sheer buffoonery. However, Abigail's self-stylizing as emotional and romantic reveals itself as insidious: she strategically adopts gendered behavioral conventions to manipulate her father's reaction. Such posturing allows her to avoid being the subject of Barabas' wrath as the bearer of bad news, since her melodramatic behavior firmly underscores her devotion to him. While the sight of a teenaged daughter attempting to manipulate her parent before making outlandish requests or revealing poor tidings is universally familiar and might prove amusing on stage, Abigail's theatrics are more than simple deviousness: in controlling her father's perception of her, and in turn, his reception of the information she furnishes, Abigail's self-presentation as dutiful daughter neatly conceals her ability to garner information independently, to employ reason, and most significantly, to dissemble—even to mislead. For the time being, however, she conceals these actorly abilities that may manifest themselves as a challenge to her father and his authority.

Like Abigail, Una's first appearance in *The Faerie Queene* adopts the recognizable conventions of femininity in order to communicate gendered qualities about the heroine. She is described as a "louely Ladie" riding

> Upon a lowly Asse more white then snow.
> Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
> Vnder a vele, that wimpled was full low,
> And ouer all a blacke stole she did throw (I.i.4: 2-5)

Not only is the imagery employed unmistakably Marian, such description immediately evokes the self-presentation of "Queen Elizabeth [who] represented herself as beautiful, ageless and fair to evoke the idea of virginity and goodness" (Snook, 40). The centrality of this representation to Elizabeth I's self-stylizing is evidenced in the Queen's "Coronation" portrait (*Fig. 1*). As John Fletcher demonstrated, the portrait dates not from the time of the Queen's accession in 1559, but closer to 1600 at the end of her reign (qtd in Frye, *Representation,* 101), offering a powerful retrospective image that emphasizes the Queen's enduring youth and her much-mythologized imperviousness to age. The value placed on Una's "fairness" of visage is therefore designed to evoke this same dual sense of divine virginity and royal purity. This is reinforced by the description of her dress, where the black cloak and white veil clearly suggest the familiar garb of a nun. Abigail in the *Jew of Malta*, slips in and out of the habit to dramatic effect, but Spenser's presentation of Una draws attention to its stylized construction and allegorical function: "So pure and innocent … She was in life and euery virtuous lore" (I.i.5) emphasizes Una's transparently typological qualities. Attended by a "milk white lamb," and a dwarf, each suggesting quintessential qualities of purity and prudence, and defended by a lion, referencing natural law in sympathy with Christian truth, these allegorical elements foreground the stylized nature of Una's depiction. While critics have posited various specific sources for these iconographic elements, most broadly they function to adapt familiar themes from biblical, classic and folk sources "presented with variations that bring out … subtle spiritual significance" (Greenlaw, 515). While eclectic in derivation, Spenser's presentation of Una, specifically her naming, references specific elements of Elizabeth I's mythos. As Lawrence Rosinger long ago established, the Latin "una" was frequently

substituted for “eadem” (15) in the Queen’s famous motto that emphasized her steadfastness. Working against the popular maligning of women as volatile and capricious, the notion of Elizabeth as Una sought to establish her uniqueness among women, and more importantly, the singularity of her religious conviction. Spenser’s adoption of the moniker for the heroine of Book One links the “oneness of the religious truth Elizabeth espoused … as inseparable from the oneness of her own life and conduct” (Rosinger, 17). Una therefore serves as a compliment to and representation of Elizabeth’s spiritual leadership. The importance of the Queen’s role as spiritual as well as secular ruler cannot be overstated. As Mary Beth Rose points out with respect to Elizabeth’s speeches, the monarch sought to establish a dialogic authority precisely through figurations of herself as Protestant heroine (1079-81). The centrality of Elizabeth’s self-fashioning as willing martyr to her faith is evidenced in the determined placement of Foxe’s *The Book of Martyrs* in every English Cathedral in 1571, which featured details of the young Queen’s religious persecution and imprisonment (Frye, *Representation,* 76). It was as this figuration as spiritual sovereign, that Elizabeth actively asserted her authority over her Church and state.

Despite the fairly narrow definitive parameters, Spenser infuses Una with a degree of dynamism and resilience more commonly associated with plucky heroines who circumvent the restrictions of gender by adopting male disguise. Of course, Una’s costuming consists not of breeches, but a habit-like garb suggesting that as an alternative to feigned masculinity, religious devotion provides women with powerful agency. In the den of Errour, Una’s timely imperative, “Now Sir knight, shew what ye bee, / Add faith vnto your force, and be not faint:/ Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee” (I.i.19). combines the notions of spiritual power and personal agency with an unflinching pragmatism. Kathryn Walls argued recently that the reference to “faith” playfully combines Protestant ideas of religious grace being bestowed upon the knight by his muse, with an “idiomatic expression for ‘to give credence” (531). Una’s command to her champion therefore asserts the power of an individual’s self-determination, while simultaneously engaging the dialogue over pivotal tenets of Protestant doctrine that Elizabeth resolutely claimed as her political and spiritual protection. In both respects, Una’s assertion underscores powerful agency facilitated by female religious virtue.

In her unequivocal advocacy of violent force to combat Errour, Una's vigor correlates with Abigail's lusty assent to her father's plan to infiltrate the nunnery: "Father, whate'er it be, to injure them/ That have so manifestly wronged us,/ What will not Abigail attempt?" (1.2.273-5) Her words are so emphatic that Barabas responds, "Why, so" (1.2.276) as though taken aback by the swiftness and fervor of her dedication. Her approbation of any and all means to combat injustice in the interest of self-defense clearly echoes Una's kill-or-be-killed sentiments. Abigail's promise to "much dissemble" (1.2.288) in order to gain entry into the convent and convince the sisters she is genuine prompts her father to offer his famous advice: "As good dissemble that thou never mean'st/ As first mean truth and then dissemble it./ A counterfeit profession is better/ Than unseen hypocrisy. (1.2.289-292) By arguing that it is preferable to believe in an adopted disguise, Barabas unwittingly prepares the way for the later irony of Abigail's second, genuine conversion. That adopted behavior can fundamentally alter an individual is furthered by Abigail's request to the Abbess, "First let me as a novice learn to frame/ My solitary life to your strait laws,/ And let me lodge where I was wont to lie" (1.2.329-331). While intended to facilitate Barabas' plan to liberate his secret wealth, Abigail's entreaty references incremental behavioral changes that result in profound alteration to individual identity. Such gradual habituation may even be thought of as effecting her eventual, authentic conversion by allowing her to see the role of novitiate as a genuine means to escape from, rather than participate in her father's manipulations. In either case the absolutist nature of a nun's habit or vow—worn or sworn by Abigail or by Una—suggests powerful possibilities for female self-realization.

Implicit in the dialogue between Barabas and Abigail is the contemporary discourse on the nature and stability of individual identity. As Stephen Orgel notes, contemporary polemicists railed against the perceived "transvestitism of the Elizabethan stage", asserting that "the wearing of female garments necessarily resulted in an effeminization of the actor's masculine self, and from that to the corruption of the audience" (*Spectacular,* 36). If popular debate raged over the pernicious effect on actors engaging in gendered cross-dressing, the scenario of Abigail acting as a nun only to become one a few short scenes later offers logical parallel, even as it treats the scenario with ironic humor. In this regard, both Abigail's transformation and Barabas' famous

epithets on internalizing a “counterfeit profession” anticipate elements of Judith Butler’s articulation of identity as being performative. Arguing that gender is neither absolute, nor immutably tied to biological sex, but “performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results,” Butler emphasizes the behavioral and social influences on this key aspect of individual identity. In fact, Barabas’ incredulous remark, “What, Abigail become a nun *again*?” (emphasis added 3.4.1) clearly affirms and ironically recognizes the potency and flexibility of such adopted behaviors. Through her performance Abigail literalizes what Butler observes as the performativity of gender: "what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylizations of the body” (*Gender Trouble,* xv). So too does Una’s urging of Redcross, as yet untested and unproven, to have faith in his abilities as a knight in order to truly become one. Such assertion solidifies the possibility of performed behavior by asserting the possibility of behavior making permanent alterations to identity. Indeed, *The Faerie Queene* offers nearly innumerable instances of repeated actions resulting in new and transformed identities: from the creation of the allegorical figures of Mammon and Jealousy, to the more nuanced growth of the warriors who in each book, progressively hone their respective skills and attributes over a series of trials in order to achieve their quest and their knighthood. While Barabas’ characterization serves as an investigative critique of the cultural and ethnic stereotypes of which he is seemingly comprised, Abigail too presents a convincing parallel: in the gendered process of her identity construction, she employs all the social connotations of her youth, beauty and sex to countermand culturally-sanctioned subjugation, and the enforced will of her father.

The implications of Abigail’s first conversion are the subject of speculations and reflection by Mathias, and the governor’s son, Lodowick. While the less-than three dozen lines do serve a dramatic purpose in establishing the source of conflict that Barabas will exploit to their mutual peril, the words of the would-be suitors also provide more general comment on the social reception of religious women. Mathias’ immediate conclusion upon hearing of Abigail entering the convent is that her motives must be financial: “Her father’s sudden fall/ Has humbled her and brought her down to this” (1.3.2-3). While many orders are associated with vows of poverty, the

assumption that entering a nunnery would provide shelter from pecuniary concerns does not necessarily follow *quid pro quo*. Indeed, many orders famously required substantial monetary gifts equating to the sum of a dowry. Historically, the opportunities for poor sisters who lacked the resources to provide such sums were extremely limited and as a function of their scarcity, highly competitive (Schulenberg, 110). While Mathias' assumptions may be factually inaccurate, they effectively represent an outlook on female religious life that is reflective of the contemporary social milieu. Mathias characterizes Abigail's choice of religious life in stark terms, reflecting the Protestant privileging of marriage and family over religious vocation:

> Tut, she were fitter for a tale of love
> Than to be tired out with orisons;
> And better would she far become a bed,
> Embraced in a friendly lover's arms,
> Than rise at midnight to a solemn mass. (1.3. 4-8)

Emphasizing physical exhaustion from repetitive prayer and uncomfortable hours, Mathias extols what he sees as the relative merits of the secular world. While quintessentially that of a red-blooded young man, Mathias' opinion also evokes a larger contemporary discourse on the social concept of virginity and female chastity. The young Maltese espouses the common post-Reformation attitude that coupled Popish-suspicion, with a "fear of women sequestered together and running their own affairs … contributing to the arguments for disbanding what had become centers of female autonomy and learning" (Kelly and Leslie, 20). By privileging the apparent freedoms and pleasures of secular life, Mathias animates the "arguments against virginity [that] are the stock in trade of Renaissance lyrics by men" (Kelly and Leslie, emphasis removed, 19). Running counter to the Pauline tradition of extoling chastity over marriage as well as middle-English literary antecedents warning against the miseries experience by married women, yet congruent with the Protestant emphasis on marriage and family, Mathias' outlook would have voiced easy and familiar prejudices to contemporary English audiences.

And yet, despite being enmeshed within the patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church, convents functioned subversively as sites of considerable female power. Carol Baxter argues that

religious women were able to exercise autonomy and influence “by accepting the strictures of patriarchy and then subverting them to expand the boundaries of appropriate roles for religious women” (112). Through these means, some women were able to enter “spheres that were traditionally reserved for male theologians” (Baxter, 121). Similarly, Jo Ann McNamara asserts that as an institution, the convent afforded women “the opportunity to make a new place for themselves in the public sphere, one which would validate their condition and even, eventually, bring them praise for their way of life” (11). Further, Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg’s research demonstrates that throughout the middle ages, the convent and other religious communities for women were “large and impressive centers …[f]illed with women from wealthy and powerful families” (110) whose religious devotion often afforded them an “increased access to the corridors of power” (122). Indeed such power could be exercised politically, outside and in excess of family privilege. Particularly remarkable as centers of female learning, convents drew acclaim for the erudition and wisdom of their inhabitants: St. Bede notes of St. Hilda that “so great was her prudence that not only ordinary folk but kings and princes used to come and ask her advice in their difficultie and *take it*” (qtd in Schulenberg, original emphasis, 112). St. Hilda’s example thus extends the potential application of a nun’s erudition from traditional form as wise woman to that of political advisor at the highest executive level. Clearly then, the opportunities for not just spiritual, but also social and political agency through the convent door were significant, and as such, potentially socially destabilizing. Mathias’ objections to Abigail’s cloistering are therefore not simply expressions of personal investment intended to benefit dramatic action; nor are they solely representations of renaissance, Protestant sentiments challenging medieval Catholic mores. Rather, he references broad attempts to mitigate the very real challenge to patriarchal authority that convents offered to women for education, social influence and political agency, and most critically, for a degree of independence and personal autonomy.

Fraught with cultural superstitions and the subject of ceaseless innuendo, the nunnery and its inhabitants have long been subject to vilification as much as veneration. When Ithamore asks cheekily, “have not the nuns fine sport with the friars now and then?” (3.3.35-6), he vocalizes the popular perception comically played out on stage by the lascivious friars. Likewise,

Barabas' disparaging description of the nuns, "every year they swell and yet they live" (4.1.6), propagates the notion of nuns' wantonness resulting in repeated, secret pregnancies. The prevalence of such stereotypes serves as an indicator of more general, pervasive social concerns about female sexuality, and particularly the culturally-sensitive notion of chastity. In her investigation into the cultural significance of medieval and early modern virginity, Kathleen Coyne Kelly describes chastity as "'a quality of the spirit' while virginity is a 'physical technicality'" (3). Though generally thought of as concomitant with corporeal virginity, chastity is more precisely an outward, behavioral reflection of inner purity. As essentially a performative manifestation, chastity was not restricted to young women without sexual experience, but a quality and a virtue that could be consciously adopted at any stage of life, even by married women and widows. Kelly emphasizes Western preoccupations with chastity by linking it to "that other crucial but equally unknowable condition, paternity" and describing both as "essential to the workings of a feudal society that held the bulk of its wealth in private, aristocratic hands and passed on such wealth from father to son" (Kelly, 7). Chastity is, therefore, "a device designed to assert the Law of the Father but instead dramatizes the limits of the Symbolic in which "woman" has been made into a symptom (though designated as the cause) of man's own troubled subjectivity, which homosociality is designed to buttress and protect" (Kelly, 90). In her foundational essay, "The Virgin and the State", Sherry Ortner affirms the specific "ideological linkage of female virginity and chastity to the social honor of the group", so that "concern with the purity of women was part of, and somehow structurally, functionally, and symbolically bound up with, the historical emergence of systematically stratified state-type structures, in the evolution of human society" (23). Chastity is therefore a political as well as social signifier, an element that redoubled its import in relation to the codification of Elizabeth I's rule. Susan Frye asserts that in centering her personal iconography on her virginity, Elizabeth further "politicized" the language of virginity in seeking to establish ownership of her body, and her rule away from male definitions (*Representation,* 32). If her chastity was intended to assert her self-sufficiency apart from the demands of marriage, and as independent from the influence of her advisors, this constituted an enormous "challenge to the essentialist patriarchal sign system that presents gender identity as natural and immutable" (6).

By predicating her authority on her chastity, Elizabeth sought to redefine the boundaries of female identity and gendered power. Just as St. Hilda knew years before, and as contemporaneously exercised by Elizabeth, such female power effects are performed by the very different characters of Abigail and Una. As an aspect of identity that is demonstrated behaviorally and elected consciously, chastity empowered women through profoundly self-determined linkage of religious faith, personal autonomy, and social performativity.

Abigail's successful admission as a novice, following Barabas' gleefully farcical turn as outraged father, is a feint that ironically prefigures the genuine reaction. Despite Barabas' initial refusal to countenance a dramatic appeal to the governor, Abigail does assert agency through performance in front of the nuns and friars. In becoming her father's co-conspirator, and in adopting his undeniably theatrical methods, she shows herself capable of functioning as his heir, not in spite of, but through the gendered conventions of her sex. The remarkable similarity between the balcony scene in *The Jew of Malta* and the famous episode in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where the would-be lover also awaits the entrance of another beautiful young woman has long been noted. That Barabas is loitering beneath a window not for stolen glimpses of his heartthrob, but for his daughter and appropriated riches gives the scene an ironic, and undeniably comic twist. Barabas' exclamation, "But stay, what star shines yonder in the east?/ The lodestar of my life, if Abigail," (2.1.41-2) evokes the nearly identical phrase of Shakespeare's tragic Romeo: "But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun" (2.2.2-3). That Barabas' sentiments were so easily adapted in the later play speaks to the self-consciously romantic topos. The comic undercurrent of incest in the scene's overtly sentimental exchanges between father and daughter place further pressure on the integrity of such conventions, particularly in light of the double entendres in Barabas' ecstatic, "O Abigail, Abigail, that I had thee here too!/ Then my desires were fully satisfied./ But I will practice thy enlargement thence" (2.1.50-2). As uncomfortable and inappropriate as such sexualized banter might seem, it is in-keeping with Barabas' unabashed theatricality. As Harry Levin points out in his classic Marlovian survey, *The Overreacher*, Barabas is "always acting, always disguised" (73). Nowhere is this propensity for performance more pointed than through staging an ageing, Jewish

antihero as adopting the postures and dialogue of the romantic lover. As he undercuts each trope with his inflated apostrophes: “O girl, O gold, O beauty, O my bliss!” (2.1.54) Barabas’ *modus operandi* is made stark: he everywhere “radically, obnoxiously, truthfully and self-consciously performs himself” (Bowers, *Radical,* 29). The aspect of the scene that is typically overlooked, however, involves Abigail’s ready participation in the pastiche that reinforces her father’s dramatics. Her poetic request, “Then, gentle sleep, wheree’er his body rests,/ Give change to Morpheus that he may dream/ A golden dream, and of the sudden wake, / Come, and receive the treasure I have found” (2.1.35-38) is quintessentially that of a romantic heroine.

Combining her tender concern over a loved-one with subtle physicality in the references to the prone body of the beloved, and culminating with punning sexuality in her allusion to her “treasure,” Abigail is not merely an unwitting mannequin, but every bit her father’s partner in the creation of the tableau. Her complicity again references her ability to perform roles stereotypically ascribed to women, in this case, the closely-guarded damsel. By altering the convention to represent the participants as father and daughter rather than lovers, and by shifting the object of affection to the bags of gold and riches Barabas caresses lovingly on stage (s.d. 2.1.53-4), the playwright draws attention to the arbitrariness of both the scene and the constructed nature of the roles. Even further and as both Cambridge MAs Marlowe and Spenser would have known, at this momentary point in the play Abigail realizes through performance the very meaning of her name in ancient Hebrew as “her father’s joy”.

More than simply exploiting dramatic convention for comic effect, Marlowe’s presentation of Abigail and her father as consummate role-players, serves to establish both the affinity and tension between them as they seek to assert personal power increasingly at the other’s expense. Building on their commiseration in the first act, the comic conspiracy and attendant exploitation of the romantic tropes in the subsequent episode demonstrate emphatically that the daughter is her father’s unrecognized dramatic equal. Barabas’ daughter by birthright, Abigail is also demonstrably his gendered meme, able to exploit both the conventions of romance in the same way her father does the stereotypes of his ethnicity, matching his theatricality and cunning line for

line. In this way, she asserts a form of performatively based agency that shows she is her father's heir in spirit and savvy as well as in blood.

Figure 2. *Elizabeth I when a Princess.*

Implicit in the representation of this father-daughter dyad is reference to Elizabeth I's own self-styling as her father's daughter. Her frequent, controlled allusions to her continuation of her father's legacy were explicit attempts to consolidate her own power by drawing from his authority. Elizabeth sought to secure power and personal autonomy through a performative adaptation of paternal mythos. Her recourse to her father's influence manifested through a variety of means, generally ameliorating her contested primogeniture by emphatically figuring herself as Henry's progeny while also providing a link with ambiguously-gendered self-styling as ersatz Prince (Yates, 49). One such example, *Elizabeth I when a princess* (*Fig. 2*), features an inscription calling Elizabeth the daughter of the king, and depicts her as being surrounded by books that signify not only her own scholarly pursuits, but the keen interest in learning she shared with her father. Elizabeth's references to her paternity not only capitalized on the nostalgic perception of her father's reign, they employed the popular memory of the proverbial "Good King Harry" as a sign, the signifiers of which his daughter gendered adaptively to suit her need for populist power.

Unlike Elizabeth, Abigail's self-styling as her father's daughter is actively circumscribed by Barabas: despite her demonstrated loyalty and value as helpmeet, Barabas refuses to recognize her personhood, instead asserting his prerogative as absolute patriarch. Although he knows Mathias "loves my daughter, and she holds him dear," Barabas informs his newly-acquired henchman, Ithamore, "I have sworn to frustrate both their hopes/ And be revenged upon the governor" (2.3.145-7). For Barabas, Abigail is merely a pawn in his ongoing plot to seek revenge on Ferneze. Objectifying Abigail as his "diamond" (2.3.50), an inanimate, saleable commodity, Barabas claims to Lodowick, "I have one [diamond] left that will serve your turn" thereby creating a love-triangle between the two suitors with Abigail the unwilling center. His barbaric aside, "ere he shall have her,/ I'll sacrifice her on a pile of wood. (2.3.51-3), not only references the Old Testament paternal prerogatives of Abraham, it reveals that despite her proven abilities and loyalty, in her father's eyes, she is and remains a chattel, an object with value in potential trade, but only ever possessed by her father.

Barabas continues to employ his daughter to his own ends when he commands her to entertain Lodowick, the governor's son:

With all the courtesy you can afford –

Provided that you keep your maidenhead.

Use him as if he were a Philistine.

Dissemble, swear, protest, vow to love him;

He is not of the seed of Abraham" (2.3.228-233).

To this patently unethical scheme, Abigail agrees without protest, although her earlier scenes indicate that she is certainly capable of challenging and even contradicting him. Her unfazed compliance with her father's request to hoodwink the son of his enemy indicate that, as with the episode in the nunnery, such dramatic dissembling has been required by the father and achieved by the daughter before. Again, close attention to these details of Abigail's characterization contradicts the critical assumption that she is an uncomplicated representation of Christian virtues (Beskins, 134; Draya, 14). In fact, she is not at all averse to offering a performance to Lodowick, through behavior that intends both to deceive and to cause harm, and therefore constitutes a mortal sin. What Abigail does protest, however, is her father's specific, far more licentious demand: "Kiss him, speak him fair/ And like a cunning Jew so cast about/ That ye be both made sure ere you come out" (2.3.237-9). Yet her response, "O father, Don Mathias is my love!" (2.3.240) does not forward an ethical protest against this clear demand for duplicitous behavior, but rather a more self-interested objection that privileges her personal commitment to the suitor of her own choosing. Barabas vehemently disregards her preference and reiterates his patriarchal prerogative: "I know it; yet, I say, make love to him./ Do, it is requisite it should be so" (2.3.241-2). Through such insistence, Barabas asserts the absolute control patriarchal culture claims over the bodies and behaviors of women, particularly marriageable daughters. Abigail's asides confirm that when engaged in her father's schemes, her actions are compelled: "I smile against my will" (2.3.290) and later, "I cannot choose, seeing my father bids" (2.3.319). Not only does Barabas' use Abigail to engineer the fatal double-cross between Mathias and Lodowick he also deliberately deceives his daughter by telling her "Let [Lodowick] have thy hand,/ But keep thy heart till Don Mathias comes" (2.3.309-10), using her preference for Mathias to ensure her compliance in his demise. When she questions her father's scheme, his prevarication, "Are there not Jews enow in

Malta/ But thou must dote upon a Christian?" (2.3.362-3) makes clear he has no intention of allowing his daughter to marry either of the gentile suitors, let alone the one of her own choosing.

While teenage willfulness over appropriate romantic inclinations remains even now an everyday drama, as well as an ongoing topic of cultural comedy, at stake in the discord between Abigail and her father is the much more serious, contemporaneously sensitive issue of female self-determination. Following her father's orchestration of discord Abigail's declaration, "I'll make 'em friends again" (2.3.360) might seem facile, but her determination bears enough force of threat to Barabas' plans that he resorts to violence to restrain her. Her defiant reiteration, "I will have Don Mathias, he is my love," (364) should be regarded as a profound statement of self-assertion because it claims the very right of independent thought and action suspended by the structures of patriarchy. In her foreword to *Menacing Virgins,* Margaret Ferguson confirms that "the specter of an active virginity, which entails a repudiation of a husband's or a father's 'ownership' of a woman's sexuality, haunted English Protestant discourses on the household and its theoretically analogous sphere, the state" (8). Abigail's declaration is therefore a pivotal act, one that is directly relatable to contemporary politics in that it echoes the claim of the Queen for "the right to decide for herself whether or not she would marry, and whom she would marry. This was a highly unconventional position for Elizabeth to take, both as a woman and as a monarch" (Rose, 1079). By insisting on having choice in the matter of her husband, Elizabeth challenged not only the cultural conventions of royal marriage, but as Davide del Bello affirms the Queen sought to place herself "beyond the binding cultural negotiations of gender and above the manipulative reach of male suitors" (123). In so doing, Susan Frye argues Elizabeth could be seen "constructing her active, self-defining virtue in response to essentialist expectations that she marry, have children, or at least defer to militant advisers" (*Representation,* 98). This spur to autonomy through performative self-definition is presented as occurring in direct response to Barabas' sneering falsehoods and effective imprisonment of his daughter, actions intended to assert his dominion by denying his daughter verbal and physical forms of agency.

Barabas' physical confinement of Abigail, effected by his newly-acquired henchman, Ithamore, results in permanent estrangement between father and daughter, and foreshadows the

substitution of Abigail as Barabas' heir with an adopted and literal slave. In becoming a nun, Abigail seeks recourse to a self-determining form of female power, one that parries with Ithamore's usurpation as adoptive son along gendered lines. Through her self-directed choice to enter the convent on her own terms, Abigail signals a crucially performative -- and through performance, definitive -- departure, both from her father's authority, and pivotally, from her own subjugation to male power. As previous critics have noted, Abigail's devotional rather than domestic aspiration is unusual in early modern drama, which typically sees Jewish daughters escape their fathers' dominion through engagement to gentile suitors (Charney, 34). Rather than affirming conventional mores that reiterate the centrality of marriage and family in the social drama as enacted on stage, Abigail attempts to establish autonomy on her own terms:

> Hard-hearted father, unkind Barabas,
> Was this the pursuit of thy policy,
> To make me show them favour severally,
> That by my favour they should both be slain?
> Admit thou loved'st not Lodowick for his sire,
> Yet Don Mathias ne'er offended thee.
> But thou wert set upon extreme revenge
> Because the prior dispossessed thee once,
> And couldst not venge it but upon his son,
> Nor on his son but by Mathias' means,
> Nor on Mathias but by murdering me. (3.3.39-49)

Abigail's monologue capitalizes on the power of the spotlight to emphatically assert her individuality. Her bold address of her father by his given name, together with her unsentimental account of what may be considered the charges against him, positions Abigail as both prosecutor and judge. Her prophetic concluding allegation may be considered as not simply signaling her literal untimely demise, but rather alluding to the death of "The helpless daughter of a hapless Jew" (1.2.316), the dependent who had previously enacted Barabas' every will and command.

Newly self-conscious, she employs a hero's rhetoric to claim her own re-emergence as religious virgin, a woman who, however briefly, insists on self-determination through performance.

While neatly summarizing Barabas' process of effecting his "extreme" form of vengeance, Abigail's monologue demonstrates her ability to reason and follow through a chain of consequences, culminating in an ironic foreshadowing of Barabas' anticipated filicide. Against the fury of realizing her part in Barabas' plans, Abigail's cool logic sits in stark relief. While her reprimand does suggest the taking of moral high-ground, once again her anger is motivated less by standard Christian values than is it by personal-interest. Indeed, her reasoned exposition emphasizes personal damages rather than spiritual precepts. Chief among this litany of traumas is Barabas' use of his child as a tool in his schemes. Whereas in the opening scenes Abigail and Barabas formulated their retaliation together, with the daughter providing key information and support, by this the third act, Abigail only hears of the occurrences *ex post facto* through Ithamore. The estrangement between parent and child is emphasized by the slave's repeated query, "know you not?" (3.3.14 &16) regarding information to which he alone is now privy. Thus despite her best efforts to effect a gendered representation of her father, Abigail's place in his favor is usurped. Faced with evidence of her father's rejection, and having lost the typically dramatic recourse to elopement with a forbidden suitor, Abigail engineers for herself an alternative way.

By electing to place herself in the nunnery, Abigail not only poetically regains her familial home, she does so without the usual necessity of marriage and a husband. Although the Friar she petitions questions her motives, she claims a profound change in outlook, stating: "Then were my thoughts so frail and unconfirmed, / And I was chained to follies of the world;/ But now experience, purchased with grief, / Has made me see the difference of things" (3.3. 62-65). Although her lines are deliberately opaque, her suggestion of personal growth through experience and hardship directly correlate with Elizabeth's rhetorical stance, which drew authority from tribulation and spiritual clarity manifested in chastity (Rose, 1080). Here, Abigail goes on to offer, "My sinful soul, alas, hath placed too long/ The fatal labyrinth of misbelief, / Far from the Son that gives eternal life" (3.3. 66-8) the religiosity of which prompts the Friar to ask, "who taught thee

thus?" (69) In answering, "the abbess of the house" (3.3.69) Abigail demonstrates that she has a new model for her performative self-definition, as the Friar has correctly detected evidence of deliberate spiritual choice in the novitiate's phrases. That Abigail has turned her focus for behavioral approximation from the secular to the spiritual is further evidenced in her final line to the Friar, "My duty waits on you" (3.3. 79). In their studied deference befitting the obedience required of an apprentice nun, Abigail's words are again carefully crafted to project an identity framed by social presumptions and performed as conscious self-definition.

Jeremy Tambling argues that by becoming a nun, Abigail only "enforces the patriarchal bond … in passing from the male dominance of her father she goes further into the further dominance of a patriarchal religion" (107). This estimation overlooks the gendered transfer of authority from the patriarchal domination of Barabas -- or even that of a hypothetical husband -- to the matriarchal order of the convent and the authority of the abbess. Tambling's claim that Abigail "dies subject to both [father and Church], and a "virgin" having never used the only capital a woman possesses in such a society" (107) echoes Mathias' shortsighted view of religious women in failing to consider the distinctive enabling privileges of the cloister as outlined earlier in this chapter. Moreover, he misses the obvious correlation to the virgin Queen, who famously parlayed into power her sexual "capital" as predicated on her celibate chastity, which also performs as the self-defining virtue of a nun. As Susan Frye explains, "Elizabeth sought to control her representation in response to—and as the means to shape—political events … [she] engaged in a variety of practices that related the autonomy of her physical body to the authority of her political self, an autonomy represented allegorically as the virtue Chastity" (*Representation,* 98). Abigail signals dramatic multiplicity just as Una does figurative singularity, yet both represent aspect of a virtuosa's performance of power.

And yet, while Abigail actively *learns* the extent of her chastity, Una actively *lives* hers throughout. In reflecting the English monarch through the figure of Una, Spenser not only suggests spiritual authority through the familiar garb of a nun, but also repurposes her definitive costume as a signifier both of purity and protection. When Una's veil is snatched by Sansloy, she is presented as being in grave danger since, "Then gan her beautie shyne, as brightest skye,/And

burnt his beastly hart t'efforce her chastity" (I.vi.4). While the various symbolic veils in *The Faerie Queene* remain the subjects of considerable critical scrutiny, the implication of its loss signifies that she is open to assault and misconception. When intact, and emphatically proclaiming her commitment to purity, her wimple and veil function protectively, affording her the autonomy to traverse the mythopoetic landscape of Spenser's Faeryland with relative impunity. Una's self-presentation in the style of a nun clearly affords a degree of personal freedom that she would not otherwise enjoy. Moreover, she wears her dominant chastity from the beginning. Una, rescued from Archimago's advances by a "troupe of Faunes and Satyres" (I.vi.7). who "all stand astonied at her beautie bright,/ In their rude eyes vnworthy of so wofull plight" (9) performs as an icon of beauty and authority. The immediate reaction of the "woodborne people" to Una's beauty is to fall "all prostrate vpon the lowly playne,/ [to] kisse her feete, and fawne on her with count'nance fayne" (12). The didactic function of such idolatrous worship is humourously emphasized when, despite

> her gentle wit she plyes,
> To teach them truth, which worshipt her in vaine,
> And made her th'Image of Idolatryes;
> But when their bootlesse zeale she did restrayne
> From her own worship, they her Asse would worship fayn.(I.vi.19)

Not only does Spenser seem to imply general critique of heretical ritual here, the substitution of the white donkey for a golden calf seems to allude to the biblical example of the Israelites at Mount Sinai.

However, Richard Douglas Jordan argues Una's woodland encounter offers a much nearer reference to the Exodus story than is generally recognized. Jordan demonstrates precise allusion to Moses with the characterization of Sylvanus (127), and convincingly links contemporary stereotypes regarding Jewish people to Spenser's depiction of the satyrs. Pointing to idolatry as "one of the chief characteristics medieval and Renaissance writers found in pre-Christian Jews," (130) the depiction of the horned, cloven-hoofed satyrs, are deliberate references to an anti-Semitic tradition, "still very much alive in Spenser's time, of identifying Jews

with devils. Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* refers to Jews as devils on almost every page, not for polemic reasons only, but as a matter of firm belief" (125). While uncomfortable for modern readers, such imagery follows the didactic function of Spenser's Protestant allegory that presents Una as offering a message of Christian truth that goes unheard by those unable or unwilling to receive divine grace. Jordan suggests the attributes of the satyrs and woodland people were intended as immediately recognizable, satiric portrayals that would reinforce the allusion to scriptural allegory. There is unequivocal parallel with Palm Sunday when the satyrs and woodland people,

> Thence lead [Una] forth dauncing round,
> Shouting, and singing all a shepheards ryme,
> And with greene braunches strowing all the ground,
> Do worship her, as Queene, with oliue cround (I.vi.13)

Here, Una is clearly styled as a Christ-like figure, while the satyrs represent the people of Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week. Just as Jesus' teaching gets rejected and he is lost to his followers on Good Friday, so too is Una abandoned by the woodland people, "all were gone/ To doe their seruice to *Sylvanus* old,/ The gentle virgin left behind alone" (I.vi.33) and rescued by Satyrane who "learnd her discipline of faith and veritie" (I.vi.31). Here then *The Faerie Queene* presents an encounter between a religious virgin and representatives of Jewish people as an allegory of faith, predicating Una's rescue on successful reception of her teaching. In Marlowe's script, Abigail bears more than a passing resemblance to Una as a captive religious virgin who attempts to propagate Christian scripture. Moreover, Abigail's proselytizing figures as a rhetorical weapon in the battle with her father over their respective wills to power.

Where Abigail performatively engages in an incremental struggle that escalates from the temporal to the spiritual, the complementary performance by Una is figured through enduring, queenly chastity in the foreverland of Spenser's allegory. When Una's quest is concluded and she is relieved of her nun-like garb, the poet continues to emphasize her regal dignity and divine purity:

> Then on her head they sett a girlond greene

And crowned her twixt earnest and twixt game;

Who in her selfe-resemblance well beseene,

Did seeme such, as she was, a goodly maiden Queene (I.xii.8).

In contrast to the earlier mock-coronation with the olive garland by the woodland people, this more generic green garland symbolically reinforces Una's purity and chastity in natural terms of costuming and colour. It is also suggestive of Elizabeth's willing participation in various masques and pageants, where she was also ceremonially crowned within pastoral and powerfully mythopoeic spectacle.

Critics who see Abigail as representative of essential Christian virtue point to her seemingly generous statement, "O Barabas,/ Though thou deserves hardly at my hands/ Yet never shall these lips bewray thy life" (3.3.76-78). While her sentiments appear to suggest filial loyalty despite his mistreatment, both the specifics of her vow and her father's reaction to news of her latest conversion give cause for question. Abigail specifies the instrument of betrayal will not be her lips, metonymic shorthand for her voice never revealing her father's wrongdoing. Yet this description provides a loophole: her lips will not inform against her father, but her *pen* makes no such promise. Indeed, in the scene immediately following, Barabas is found reading a letter from Abigail where he discovers his daughter has again entered the convent;

What, Abigail become a nun again?

False and unkind! What, hast thou lost thy father,

And, all unknown and unconstrained of me,

Art thou again got to the nunnery? (3.4.1-4)

Unaware of the irony in his mocking questions about absent and abandoned fathers, Barabas repeats the arrogant pejoratives that were also assumed by Mathias. He is unable to perceive that his own actions have indeed "lost" him a daughter precisely because of his efforts to "constrain" her. Through the form of the letter and in the character of a devout nun, Abigail finds both a voice and a form that allows her to openly challenge her father. Barabas relates, "Now here she writes and wills me to repent" (3.4.5) and although the audience is not privy to the contents of the letter, the use of the transitive verb "wills" reveals a monumental shift in Abigail's

voice: Barabas does not say that his daughter “asks”, “petitions”, “pleads” or “begs”, or any word that implies deference. Instead, Abigail “wills” her father’s repentance, meaning she now insists upon her own opinion regarding her father’s behavior—a complete *volte face* from the earlier scene where the father’s words compelled the daughter’s behavior (2.3.290).

As a social institution, the nunnery provided women with rare access to literacy, and an opportunity to include erudite metaphysicality within their purview. Through such spiritual privilege, the convent provided one of the handful of acceptable recourses within which “the few women who dared to take up the pen performed an oppositional act against the conditions of privacy and silence to which they were bound” (Summit, 71). In her epistolary address to her father, Abigail thus adopts these two aspects of her newly-minted identity to achieve some measure of authority and autonomy. It is through the use of her pen that Abigail keeps her vow to never betray her father with her words, yet still manages to apprise the Friars of his wrongdoing. Knowing she has been poisoned and, given her intimate knowledge of her father’s cunning and malevolence – even, perhaps suspecting the source – Abigail reveals all in writing the details of Mathias’ and Lodowick’s deaths: “my father’s practice, which is there/ Set down at large” (3.6.28-9). While she claims that her revelations are intended as deathbed confessionals, and therefore the subject of privilege, her repeated, melodramatic entreaties, “Reveal it not, for then my father dies” (3.6.32) followed by “pray therefore keep [the knowledge] close” (3.6.37) suggest the opposite; she very much intends -- even entices -- the comically impious Friars to circumvent canon law. These same powerfully tactical and political qualities are characteristic of Elizabeth I in her public speeches, as well as through her more private writing, poetry and translation. As Jennifer Summit notes, “Elizabeth I presents striking example of how … privacy and enclosure could be cultivated and deployed to ends not normally associated with the ‘chaste, silent and obedient’ figure of popular conception” (95). By adapting salient features of a nun, chastity and erudition facilitated by protection from the profane world, Abigail emulates Elizabeth’s crafting of performative agency.

Una’s signature piety is examined through and highlighted against the creation of her false image as performed within the masquerading of Duessa. Similarly, Marlowe offers a dark

doppelganger for Abigail in the form of the courtesan, Bellamira. Abigail's chastity is first guarded by her father, who encourages Abigail to countenance any behavior with the lusty Lodowick, "Provided that you keep your maidenhead" (2.3.230), and then by the strictures of the cloister. In contrast, Bellamira complains with comic flippancy that a lack of trade means "now against my will I must be chaste" (3.1.4): her chastity is enforced by economic downturn, not by cultural convention or religious conviction. Further ironic parallels between the two women persist, and reinforce the thematic link between self-presentation and identity. The infatuated Ithamore exclaims of Bellamira, "O, the sweetest face that ever I beheld! I know she is a courtesan by her attire!" (3.1.27-8) His aesthetic adulation initially echoes that offered by Mathias' in his description of Abigail as "matchless beautiful" (1.3.19), but the second, rather quizzical statement points to sartorial considerations that correlate with each woman's choice of attire and the social function of dress. Where Abigail's adoption of the habit brings her some empowerment in the role of religious virgin as a function of her chastity, the obverse is also true for Bellamira: the clothing that signifies her lack of chastity affords her a certain degree of freedom. When still a maid, Abigail must employ her beauty at her father's behest, and as a nun, her features are concealed by her veil and wimple even as they are hidden behind the walls of the cloister. Bellamira, however, treats her beauty as a commodity solely for her own gain, as evidenced by her remark, "I know my beauty doth not fail./ From Venice merchants, and from Padua/ Were wont to come" (3.1.5-7). Fully cognizant of her allure, she wordlessly entices the gullible Ithamore into the aforementioned raptures with little more than a sustained, suggestive gaze (3.1.25-6). Paralleling Abigail's propensity for written correspondence, Bellamira parlays her beauty's entre with Barabas' slave into financial enterprise, entrapping the love-struck Ithamore with a letter. Then, together with her associate Pilia-Borza, she attempts to extort gold from Barabas by the same means. As the courtesan Bellamira's line, "Though woman's modesty should hale me back/ I can withhold no longer" (4.2.45-6) drips with irony, not only through her claim to modesty despite her expressed profession, but also arising from the knowledge that her professed illicit passion is a mere feint facilitating her blackmail plot.

Though clearly conceived as part of the “low” plot and ultimately falling victim to another of Barabas’ poison plots, Bellamira presents a serious counterpoint for scrutiny of women’s behavioral agency. As a woman who openly and unabashedly abandons socially-prescribed chastity for financial gain, Bellamira nevertheless enjoys considerable personal agency. Free from institutional demands, spousal obligation or familial control, her only concerns are monetary—a typically masculine preoccupation. Despite an initial, rather cursory objection, Bellamira is even admitted audience with the governor, an opportunity memorably denied Abigail by her father. In demonstrating this level of personal agency, the figure of the courtesan humorously interrogates the social value of chastity, emphasizing its conventional deployment in the cultural subjugation of woman.

Bellamira’s antithetical characterization also suggests the cunning of Spenser’s Duessa and wantoness of Lucifera, both personifications of feigned chastity. The depictions of the temptresses in *The Faerie Queene* conclude with their loss of power and agency, yet Marlowe’s courtesan suffers roughly the same fate as her virginal counterpart. Given the play’s tremendous mortality rate, comparable to that of Kyd’s infamously deadly *The Spanish Tragedy*, Bellamira’s eventual demise as a result of her attempted blackmail is hardly surprising. What remains remarkable, however, are the implications of her unabashed lack of chastity. By presenting a female character who so openly subverts the social conventions of female sexuality, even under the auspices of dark comedy, the play intimates that strict adherence to popular codes is less critical to personal autonomy than the recognition and behavioral manipulation of them. Where Bellamira flouts the conventions of chastity, Abigail feigns then fashions a new identity from them.

Abigail’s representation of gendered alterity functions in conjunction with Barabas’ ethnic and Ithamore’s racial investigations of the “Other”. Each character demonstrates self-reflexive awareness of the stereotypes that condemn them to outsidership, and each seeks to manipulate those social codes to their own advantage. Yet whereas the male characters can only capitalize on their relatively static identities, in her change from maiden to nun, Abigail’s behavioral manipulation of cultural conventions connotes a unique form of female social agency. Through elected self-identification as a nun, Abigail performatively crafts and repurposes a spiritual

authority that draws from the earlier Christian precedents of powerful religious women and, through implicit reference to Spenser's archetypal heroine, alludes even to the power of the reigning monarch's self-styling as religious virgin--a power felt and understood by every man and woman in Elizabethan England.

Figure 3. *The Sienna "Sieve" Portrait.*

Chapter 2

Dido and Belphoebe: Love, Speech, and Translation

There is no marvel in a woman learning to speak,
but there would be in teaching her to hold her tongue.

- Elizabeth I to the French Ambassador

While political and behavioral chastity was popularly understood, temperance suggested complexity reaching all the way back to the classics. As Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* were common to the public school curriculum, and Virgil's *Aeneid* a standard text of the University program, classical scholars like Marlowe and Spenser would have been fully conversant with the troubled literary exploits of Dido, the tragic queen of Carthage. In his introductory dedication to *The Faerie Queene* Spenser echoes Virgil in valorizing Aeneas as exemplar of one who places duty before passion, but it is Dido who remains the subject of sustained consideration through elemental characterizations that, according to John Watkins, "underlie every major female figure in Book II" (*Spectre,* 120). Though the drama's narrative structure closely follows the Virgilian tale, Marlowe's eponymous queen replaces the Trojan warrior as the play's hero, implicitly mirroring the "herstory" approach adopted in the *Heroides*.

Just as Ovid's letters are understood to engage in a "project of close imitation that almost parasitically insinuates its own preoccupations with metamorphosis back into the *Aeneid*, opening that text to destabilizing revision" (Buckley, 133), so too does Marlowe's play approximate with subtle difference the forms of the earlier narratives, opening them up to energetic challenge. Following a brief review of what Marlowe and Spenser each knew to be the multivalent renderings of the Dido myth, this chapter focuses on the central dynamic of love, language, and power at issue within the opposing Dido traditions. Both poet and playwright employ Dido's ancient legend to attend to contemporary fears over the governance of women. Spenser's complex allegory employs multiple representative figures to interpret competing ideologies of queenship. In contrast, Marlowe's relatively simple performances condense polarities evident in the various strains of legendary narrative, complicating the notion of sovereign female self-determination. In both poem and play, the tension between romantic and courtly love is embodied

in the figure of Dido and further informed by the personification of Venus, both figured in relation to Elizabeth I's strategies of personal and political representation.

In her article suggestively titled "Dido, Queen of England", Deanne Williams convincingly argues that the playwright continues the tradition of using the story to comment on contemporary politics, employing the famous saga of foresworn passion in relation to Elizabeth's apparently conscious choice of duty over love in deferring marriage. Likewise, Jennifer Caro-Barnes asserts that the play is effective in "illustrating the consequences of giving in to the pressures of choosing an unworthy mate" (11), thereby offering a compliment to the Queen's marital equivocation by way of negative exemplum. Yet the parallel between the English queen and her Carthaginian counterpart is fraught with interpretative contradiction, not least because the Tudor dynasty claimed genesis from the adventurer Aeneas. With reference to *The Sienna "Sieve" Portrait* of Elizabeth (*Fig. 3*) that employs miniature scenes from the *Aeneid* in a fascinating yet elusive iconographic puzzle, Diane Purkiss suggests "texts involving the figure of Dido tend to also invite the discerning interpreter to compare Elizabeth with Aeneas as well, even through this sometimes creates some troubling ideological waters" (154-5). By linking English history with illustrious, dynastic considerations of the Virgilian Aeneas, Emily Bartels affirms that Elizabethan myth-makers used the narrative as a frame for contemporary concerns regarding national identity as well as burgeoning colonial aspirations. Yet the potential associations with alternative versions of the tale that commiserate with a chaste Dido also offered considerable ideological promise. The polar subjectivities embodied by the various forms of the myth continued to resonate with the contemporary *querelle des femmes*, especially as it applied to women in positions of political power. More than simply a vehicle through which to register comment or reposition ideology on pervasive concerns over Elizabeth's sex and her ability to rule, the effect of the tale's plurality "is not of alternative explanations but of simultaneous ones" (Barkan, 323). As such, Dido's multivalent legend was intimately enmeshed with what Louis Montrose terms the Elizabethan political imaginary; the "collective repertoire of representational forms and figures – mythological, rhetorical, narrative, iconic – in which the beliefs and practices of Tudor political culture were pervasively articulated" ("Imaginary", 907). Whether as a prototype or a subtext, the presence of

Dido in Marlowe's drama and Spenser's allegory necessarily draws into dialogue a veritable maelstrom of historical, political and gendered ideals pertaining to women, passion and power.

Despite their differences, the divergent Dido narratives share an overwhelming interest in love, and particularly its effects on women. The romantic love that Virgil emblematizes in flames blinds his Dido to her duty, that is, her love for her countrymen and women. The obverse is true for the dutiful sacrifice of the earlier Dido, who eschews amorous advances and is instead bound by honorific love of her husband and realm. These apparently antithetical strains of love are integrated and tempered to political effect by the Tudor discourse of courtly love that pervaded Elizabethan cultural sensibilities. In *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love* Roger Boase offers a broad definition of the admittedly contentious titular term as a "social and literary fiction which had a moral and civilizing influence" (127). Congruent with Spenser's stated intentions in "A Letter of the Authors" to fashion a "gentle and virtuous reader", E.B. Fowler details the poem's meticulous adoption of mores drawn from medieval romance in *Spenser and the System of Courtly Love*. Yet the network of interactions and behavioral modes traced within the epic intend to do more than simply conjure an idealized mythic history, or even to present a programmatic system of social courtesy. Under the veil of allegory, *The Faerie Queene's* legends reflect contemporary social and political circumstances, while they also signify the poet's attempt to participate in the elaborate framing of Elizabethan ideology. Espousing a courtly dynamic of deferred love for an unattainable, idealized woman represented globally by Gloriana and refracted in Spenser's various heroines, the Petrarchan sensibilities of *The Faerie Queene* are "not just a lyric but also a dominant cultural form, a politicized lyric structure inscribed within the complex sexual politics of the exceptional rule of a woman in an otherwise overwhelmingly patriarchal culture" (Parker, 61). A chimerical salve for the notorious juxtaposition of the queen's legal and theoretical status as male, and her physical condition as a woman, Elizabethan mythography adapted the central premise of the courtly love metaphor, where the lover is vassal and the lady is lord, situating the queen at "the confluence of princely and maidenly grace, … a literalization of the courtly ideal lady, whose inspiring virtues are the backbone, and even precondition, for all virtuous action and civilized order" (Woods, 149). As Montrose observes, the

mythography of love was ideally “suited to the unique character of this ruler: a woman, a virgin, an anointed sovereign, and the governor of a reformed Christian church” ("Eliza", 166). Within the dynamic of courtly rhetoric, Elizabeth could performatively occupy a variety of positions, each with mutable gender signification.

Spenser’s mythopoeic vision thus facilitated the adaptation of the courtly love metaphor from a literary premise into a functioning political ideology that solidified relations of power by transforming them into relations of chaste and dutiful love. By constructing Elizabeth’s subjects “not only [as] her vassals in love, but her vassals in governance” (Woods, 149) the courtly love metaphor was a profound force since it represented a means to secure political allegiance. As such, it is small wonder the queen enthusiastically embraced courtly allegorization of political culture, cognizant of the fact that, as Stephen Greenblatt puts it, “behind all the cultic shows of love, in reserve but ready to be used when necessary, lies force” (*Self-Fashioning,* 169). Like any successful ruler, Elizabeth understood love as an instrument to secure and maintain the balance of power. But as sovereign queen she adopted representational strategies articulated in Spenser’s epic to negotiate that power within a gendered, inherently patriarchal political system.

Reflecting one of the favored representational forms adopted by Elizabeth, Marlowe’s play stages Venus, the goddess of love, as repeatedly intervening in the narrative for Aeneas’ cause. Her efficacious intrusions not only symbolically assert the profound effect of love on politics, her nuanced self-staging echoes the performative strategies employed by the queen. Venus’ initial appearance excites subversive tension as she interrupts Jove’s homoerotic pederasties with Ganymede, in a scene that prompts Sara Munson Deats to suggest the play involves itself with “undermining, even burlesquing the inflexibility and limitation of traditional amorous systems in the early modern patriarchal society” ("Subversion", 175). While the play certainly does showcase a variety of atypical trysts, the subversive energy they generate points to the playwright’s critical interest in the complex dynamic between love and power. Ganymede’s charms knowingly and brazenly usurp Juno’s status, with his selfish receipt of the queen’s wedding jewelry symbolically challenging the bonds of matrimony that underlie patriarchal power. In a characteristically Marlovian inversion of traditional power dynamics, Jupiter’s homoerotic

infatuation subverts Venus' emblematic, and implicitly heterosexual influence directly into power. Abandoning stereotypically female recourse to charm and indirection, Venus instead favors a masculine privileging of action and reason. She offers a substantial and skillful oratory designed to elicit pity and guilt and, ultimately, prompt action from Jove. Listing a veritable catalogue of woes and insults, she manages to characterize the Trojans and Aeneas, whose piety is dubious at best, as gravely wronged innocents. Intentionally overstated both in terms of the claims she makes and the persona she advances, Venus' performance accords with Brian Gibbons' observation that "the emotions of the gods are extreme, sudden and volatile; in their lives hyperbole is the normal mode" (37). In this respect, the relations of the Olympians, who themselves were intertwined by intricate bonds of filial and romantic love, correlate with the fiduciary and amatory fealties of the Elizabethan court.

Evocative of Elizabeth's own, uniquely gendered self-presentation, Venus' self-conscious performance is an effective political style. The efficacy of her performance is facilitated by her rhetorical eloquence, an accomplishment that invites further comparison with the contemporary queen who was renowned for her devotion to learning. The young Elizabeth's tutor, Roger Ascham, extolled her accomplishments: "French and Italian she speaks like English; Latin with fluency, propriety and judgment; she also spoke Greek with me … she read with me the whole of Cicero and a greater part of Livy" (Ascham qtd in Charleton, 209). Rigorous linguistic study was the most effective means to facilitate the literary and rhetorical mastery that was the goal of liberal, humanist educational programs. In his account of Elizabeth's studies, Ascham emphasizes as a pedagogical ideal "the fashioning of a learned and pious adult suitably prepared to enact a destined role in the commonwealth" (Ryan, 106). Despite the contemporary prejudices against her sex, it was in Elizabeth that Ascham found a most apt pupil. For Elizabeth as for all statespersons, advanced rhetorical erudition proved essential for legislators and governors who must "mediate between the past and present and between the imagination and the realm of public affairs" (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, 162). Even more critically, rhetorical training afforded the pivotal understanding that language is infinitely mutable, and perception eminently malleable. As Stephen Greenblatt observes, rhetoric "served to theatricalize culture, or rather it was the

instrument of a society which was already deeply theatrical … in the sense of both disguise and histrionic self-presentation" (*Self-Fashioning*, 162). It was this essential theatricality of rhetoric, communicated in the crafting of her public personae and concomitant with the ethos of courtly love, that was harnessed so effectively by Elizabethan mythmakers, and especially by the queen herself.

As a mechanism of interpersonal and social control, Marlowe's drama burlesques rhetorical posturing, beginning with the oratorical contestation in the proverbial battle of the sexes between Venus and Jupiter. Halting Jove's artful response, Venus' rejoinder is a pointed query: "How may I credit these thy flattering terms?" (1.1.109). Proving that she is no gullible naïf, but woman of wit and intelligence, Venus arrests the mollifying prognostication of the notorious rake, pressing instead for explicit action. Like Elizabeth whose "prodigious knowledge" meant she was "an accurate judge of what constituted true eloquence, whether in Greek, Latin or English" (Ryan, 106), Marlowe's Venus tempers passion with erudition, asserting herself as a formidable political agent, a woman whose dominion over love, assisted by her speech, is a direct result of her sharp, educated mind.

The adaptive self-representation and mutable gendering Marlowe scripts for his Venus finds correlation not only with the courtly ideologies of the contemporary queen, but also in the various representative epithets of the goddess' ancient aspects. In scripting Venus' contretemps with Jupiter, the classical scholar Marlowe did not reinvent the goddess' character so much as he effectively substituted one persona for another: his Venus temporarily abandons associations with beauty and sexual love encompassed within her role as *venus cestus*, in favor of the maternal preoccupations of *venus genatrix*, albeit co-mingled with the martial concerns of *venus victrix*. When she subsequently assumes Dianic disguise, the play follows Virgilian precedent alluding to her associations as *venus virgo*. In staging Venus variously as chaste virgin and protective mother, and attending to her role as beautiful seductress by way of mischievous subversion, Marlowe also articulates a familiar symbolic triad. In his analysis of the archetypal elements underlying the play's narrative structure, Ted Hughes affirms Venus' triadic representation, asserting the figure of the huntress is but "one aspect of the Great Goddess--of whom Venus is

another. So Venus is merely appearing, to her son, in one of her aspects: as 'total, unconditional, elemental love', but in its 'chaste' mode" (418). In this scene, the tri-form archetype is completed by Venus' claim to be chasing a wild boar, a symbol of the goddess' animalistic sensuality. The combination of Diana, Venus and the boar in a single image is repeated when Dido herself dons sylvan disguise in pursuit of her mark, Aeneas. In this way, the play establishes a dynamic between love and power that is articulated through performative discourse, the same as that employed by the reigning queen "at once to fashion her identity and to manipulate the identities of her followers" (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, 169)

The multiplicity of Venus' interpretative possibilities naturally made her an attractive referent for Elizabethan mythographers, who frequently employed the schema of the "tri-formation of the loveliness of Venus" (Norhnberg, 467). Spenser's epic romance is no exception, modulating her various forms from classical tradition and in so doing, the poem "recognized that her nature is inherently composite, containing a multiplicity of often mutually antagonistic qualities" (Manning, ES, 708). Often linked with the myth of Paris' fateful judgment, (Manning, 709) typological representatives of feminine virtues abound in *The Faerie Queene,* and tripartite depiction frequently accommodates instructive contrast between extremes. In "The Legend of Temperance", the triad of Medina and her sisters, forms illustrative example of those passions typically associated with Venus and her various personae. Medina balances on the "perilous mean between excess and defect", the Greek etymology of her sisters Elissa and Perissa respectively (Doerksen, 464). Zailig Pollock asserts, as part of the ruling metaphor of the temperate soul, that the three sisters indicate "very clearly the disastrous potential of the concupiscible and the irascible impulses when they rebel against the temperate rule of reason" (44). In so doing, they prefigure Guyon's eventual triumph as reason over the dual embodiment by Acrasia of "concupiscence in actuality and intemperance in potentiality" (47). In addition to her aspect as moral allegory, Medina figures as an idealized balance of Elizabeth I's personae, "successfully operating within the demanding liminal space between the world of the completely unknowing virgin and the fully aware matron" (McManus, 165). To mitigate the quarrel between her sisters' suitors, Medina displays facility with rhetorical strategy, employing "pitthy words and

counsel sad" (2.2.28) in conjunction with the queenly performance of intercession:

> The faire *Medina* with her tresses torne,
>
> And naked brest, in pitty of their harmes,
>
> Emongst them ran, and falling them beforne,
>
> Besought them by the womb, which them had borne (2.2.27)

Such display, with its emphasis on the nurturing breast and womb activates the chaste sexuality of Elizabeth I's own self-styling as national mother. Merritt Hughes in "England's Eliza and Spenser's Medina" observes that such conceptual maternity fosters linkages with the queen's additional sustaining role "as the mighty temperer of factions in the English Church and in society, [while] she must also have represented to the Elizabethans the queen's possession in her personal character of the moral virtue of temperance … the mother of all virtues" (5). Medina's embodiment of queenly temperance aligns her with the Aristotelian doctrine of the middle way, itself an integral aspect of the queen of Courtly Love design adopted by Elizabeth. Indeed, by balancing religious, political and personal extremes, Medina's representation of Elizabeth echoes the fact that the contemporary queen was herself as Hughes describes her: "a creature of extremes, surviving among the foreign and domestic dangers that threatened her only because she had been able to meet the extremes around her with her own extremes of cunning and prevarication" (6).

Tripartite female representation is also evident in Spenser's depiction of Belphoebe. As inspiration, Spenser may have drawn upon the triform Luna of the mythographers. Montrose adduces it thus: "In heaven she is called *Luna*, in the woods *Diana*, under earth *Hecate*" ("Imaginary", 926). As with Venus, references to the figure of Diana necessarily implicate contemporary royal self-presentation, since the steadfastly independent sylvan huntress provided a powerful, laudatory analogue for the resolutely virginal Elizabeth. Indeed, as Frances Yates observes, the "goddess of the moon under various names – Diana, Cynthia, Belphoebe – [was] the most popular of all the figures employed by Elizabeth's adorers" (72). Through his "goodly Ladie clad in hunters weed,/ That seemd to be a woman of great worth" (II.ii.21. 7-8), Spenser's homage to his queen modulates classical formulations with echoes of Virgil's epic. Indeed,

Belphoebe's first appearance is well established as alluding to Venus' disguised encounter with Aeneas. Whereas Virgil's Venus assumes the mantle of Diana, Spenser's beautiful and voluptuous sylvan heroine inverts the image of passion concealed in pastoral weeds, establishing herself as chastity clad in beauty. The characteristically dense Elizabethan iconography is disambiguated by Spenser through Belphoebe's behavior: she is invariably truthful and sincere, and her resolute chastity, especially in the face of Braggadocio's unseemly advances, establish her as human embodiment of Diana's grace. Susanne Wofford explains that it is precisely "through the allusion to Virgil, [that] Belphoebe is linked to Venus as well, and in a very Elizabethan way combines Venus and Diana" (113-4). Allusively associated with Venus' maternal virtues but carefully distinguished from *venus cestus*, whose cunning and deceptiveness is integral to her personification of amorous arts, Belphoebe is performatively linked to Elizabeth through the guileless Diana, who is also later revealed as her foster mother. As such, Spenser's huntress mediates even as she informs the tri-partite representational strategies of Elizabeth.

Spenser's depiction of his sylvan damsel with her hunting accoutrements also references the queen's well-known love of bloodsports, while it also alludes to her love of the "chase," in both the romantic and political senses. The famous woodcut, "Elizabeth I out Hunting" from *Turberville's Booke of Hunting, 1576* (133) portrays the queen about to perform the symbolic action of delivering the death-strike to the quarry, an honor reserved for monarchy. Literally "slaying the hart", Elizabeth's roles as sovereign Prince and Virgin maiden are conjoined: she simultaneously assumes the rights and privileges of Kingship while symbolically enacting the role of Petrarchan damsel, forever holding a knife to the hart/heart. In this regard, Belphoebe "shadows Spenser's queen in her aspect as unattainable virgin or Petrarchan cruel mistress" (Parker, 64). Further, James Norhnberg argues Belphoebe represents Elizabeth's body natural by contrasting her with Gloriana as "allegorical presentation of Elizabeth Tudor and Elizabeth the First" (60) respectively. Belphoebe is then a metonymic figure for the politically troublesome fact of Elizabeth's sex, and as such, further articulates the sensibilities of courtly love. Offering counterpoint to the deceptions of Venus, Belphoebe eloquently rejects the artificiality of courtly

life and the “filthy lust” (II.iii.42) of indecorous knights, countermands destabilizing passions, and tempers them with complimentary virtues.

Figure 4. "Elizabeth I out hunting" from Turberville's Booke of Hunting*, (1576)*

Where Virgil’s queen is instantly love-struck by Aeneas’ sudden appearance, described by the poet as “ravished with his grace” (I.867), Marlowe’s Dido asserts her power and dominion,

challenging the gendered gaze of the hero with thinly-veiled aggression: “What stranger art thou that dost eye me thus?” (2.1.74). It is not until Ilioneus clarifies the newcomer’s identity (2.1.78-9) that Dido extends a qualified welcome. Emphasizing the power of self-presentation in establishing identity, the queen remarks incredulously, “Warlike Aeneas, and in these base robes?/ Go fetch the garment which Sichaeus ware” (2.1.79-80). Dido’s attempt to clothe Aeneas in her late-husband’s garments, and later, to place him in her own place of honor has been seen as evidence of her immediate infatuation with the warrior resulting in a fatal loss of political regard. However, Jennifer Caro-Barnes offers a salient parallel between “Dido’s ability to wield complete power over the men of her court [and] the same power held by Queen Elizabeth, who could easily provide for her favorites or bankrupt them if and when they fell out of favor” (6). By dressing him in the manner she sees as fitting, and later, editing his words when they fall short of his fame, and even enforcing his identity upon him, Dido, like Elizabeth, retains the sovereign’s natural prerogative. In their respective performances of power, both queens employ the uniquely gendered favor of their affection with deliberation, and to political ends. Moreover, where Virgil’s queen is famously described as having her heart engulfed in flames, Marlowe’s queen is far more ambiguous in her response to the warrior, such that the predominant mode the playtext records for her actions and language is ambivalence, not inamoration.

Marlowe’s script presents Dido’s initial meeting with Aeneas in a manner altogether different from the thunderclap of fateful passion orchestrated by Virgil’s precedent. Dido’s relative emotional distance “reverses the relationship of Virgil’s two protagonists, rendering Dido more dynamic, dominant, and thus more conventionally ‘masculine’, while portraying Aeneas as more reticent and passive, and by extension, more conventionally ‘feminine’” (Deats, "Subversion", 168). Yet Dido’s apparent androgyny is demonstrably a cultivated effect, stemming from her adaptation of behavioral codes, and more specifically of speech patterns more typically assumed by men. Through consistent employment of the imperative mood with her guest, which subtly maintains the balance of power on her own side of the rhetorical equation, Dido’s adoptive behaviors constantly emphasize her relative power and denote her majesty. Her language is more in-keeping with that of a fellow warrior than a potential lover as she attempts to console and

cheer the melancholy Aeneas, instructing: “Be merry, man;/ Here’s to thy better fortune and good stars” (2.1.97-8). The studied, self-scripted nature of Dido’s performance is emphasized by her interjections on hearing Aeneas’ impassioned account of the fall of Troy. Contrasted with Aeneas’ melodramatic, emotional swoon part way through his tale, the queen’s abrupt, masculine command, “Nay, leave not here, resolve me of the rest” (2.1.160) affirms her claim to the prerogative of ruling authority regardless of her biological sex. Further, her apostrophes memorializing Hector, inquiring of Aeneas’ ingenuity, and protesting the indiginities suffered by Priam all demonstrate her considerations as political rather than romantic. Finally, her attribution of blame for precipitating the epic war squarely to Helen of Troy, another legendary female conventionally synonymous with unruly passion, aligns her sympathies not with a fellow woman, but with a typically male, even misogynistic viewpoint.

Laced with dramatic irony, Dido’s exclamation, “O had that ticing strumpet ne’er been born!” (2.1.300) emphasizes the marked differences between Virgilian and Marlovian incarnations of the Carthaginian queen. At this juncture, Virgil’s queen is already engaged in a mission of seduction that parallels the tale of Helen and Paris in fateful consequence. Marlowe’s heroine, however, condemns the pursuit of such self-interested passions, instead aligning herself in outlook with the chaste Dido of the classical tale who rejected ardor for honor. In terms of her controlled linguistic performance, Marlowe’s portrayal of Dido conspicuously echoes the rhetorical skills of his Venus while alluding to the famed qualities of his own queen. In line with Ascham’s contemporary observation, Sara Mendelson notes, Elizabeth was adept at modulating her speech patterns to suit not only the social class, but also the gender of her audience: “in the context of high politics, the queen spoke as a fellow participant in elite male educated discourse, employed a learned and judicious style of utterance adapted from humanist ‘civil letters’” (205). As Mary Beth Rose observes, Elizabeth thus “cogently formulated and defined her authority … in explicitly gendered terms” (1077), achieving a rhetorical position that was grounded in her experience and survivorship. In this regard too, Elizabeth shares affinity with the resilient Carthaginian monarch who escaped murder and tyranny to establish her own realm through virtue of her intelligence.

Book IV of the *Aeneid* is unequivocal in its presentation of Dido as consumed by her

infatuation, employing the famous imagery of emotional fire to describe the queen as "fed within her veins a flame unseen:/ The hero's valour, acts and birth inspire/ Her soul with love, and fan the secret fire" (IV.2-2-4). In direct contrast, Marlowe's queen eschews any violent reaction, requiring instead the device of Cupid's dart. Although Milena Kostic dismisses Cupid's role as "a convention, a trick" (110), her analysis misses its vital function in Dido's distinct emotional watershed. Whereas Virgil's queen is love-struck from her first meeting with the Trojan warrior, and listening to his impassioned saga only fuels her desire, the behavior of Marlowe's Dido remains that of a skilled politician, in control of the protocols of honor and obligation attending to her new guest. Still working to meet the needs of her realm, Dido is shown engaged in foreign policy disguised as witty banter with her predatory suitor, Iarbus. In response to his demands for physical passion instead of friendly affection, the queen demonstrates the mechanism of her successful rule that at once entices, humiliates and deflects her powerful neighbour:

> Iarbus, know that thou of all my wooers --
> And yet have I had many mightier kings --
> Hast had the greatest favors I could give.
> I fear me Dido hath been counted light
> In being too familiar with Iarbus,
> Albeit the gods do know no wanton thought
> Had ever residence in Dido's breast. (3.1.11-17)

By emphatically asserting her chastity, even as she glories in her ability to reject the advances of powerful suitors, Dido reveals her rule as predicated on mediations of the discourse of courtly love that was also the hallmark of Elizabeth's policy. Iarbus' rather petulant reiteration of his desire only meets with the queen's elusive, "Fear not, Iarbus, Dido may be thine" (3.1.19), which invites possibility even as it belittles the inquisitor. Such sentiments clearly position Dido as tantalizing yet elusive mistress within the same Petrarchan frame as Elizabeth's self-styling. While emulating Elizabeth's signature methods, Dido demonstrates her personal agency and political autonomy as predicated on performative methods.

It is only after Dido's wounding by Cupid's fateful dart, pointedly signified by Anna

exclaiming, “Look, sister, how Aeneas’ little son/ Plays with your garments and embraceth you” (3.1.20-1) that the queen’s self-control is compromised and her behavior radically alters. Referencing the image of Jupiter and Ganymede in the opening scene, the disguised god opportunistically wheedles an embrace from the queen, and like his predecessor, causes a paradigm shift in power dynamics. Up to the event of Cupid’s wounding, Dido is self-determined as the maidenly, competent leader congruent with medieval sources. Through her chastity and demonstrated self-restraint, she is aligned with the “virgin bride” aspects of Elizabeth I’s own self-presentation, while the gentle affection she performs with Ascanius correlates with the queen’s self-styling as benevolent mother. It is only after Cupid’s intervention that the queen’s characterization changes abruptly, and hereafter she succumbs to the destructive passions of her Virgilian fame and popular report. The critical scene with Cupid is the often-overlooked pivot point on which Marlowe’s characterization of Dido hinges, split between her divergent histories. Cupid signals the success of his mission by declaring his accompanying song was taught to him by Helen of Troy (3.1.28), a reference that indicates his influence on the aforementioned Trojan affairs while heralding the triumph of passion over circumspection. Almost immediately, Dido begins to vacillate between hysterically commanding Iarbus to leave, and then recovering herself enough to bid him stay, only to repeat her previous command with renewed vehemence. In presenting such wild extremes, the play humorously stages the exact moment of Dido’s bewitching. Dido herself affirms the arrow’s effects once in the thrall of her infatuation stating, “O dull conceited Dido, that till now/ Didst never think Aeneas beautiful!” (3.1.81-2). Together with the elaborate machinations that are largely of the playwright’s own invention, the deliberate staging of Cupid’s act clearly signals Dido’s abrupt change of heart. By staging the moment of Dido’s transformation and placing the now-distinct halves of the play in juxtaposition, the play highlights the contrasting traditions of the Carthaginian queen.

The dual traditions of the Dido legend find modulated representation in *The Faerie Queene* through the character of Alma. Where Medina embodies the in-process pursuit of temperance as she serves as representative of the rational course between two extremes, Spenser positions Alma and her castle as emblematic of achieved temperance. Walter Davis intercuts widely from

the poem to describe her as "the chaste, rational soul, the “fort of reason” (2.11.1) that “doth rule the earthly masse, /And all the service of the bodie frame” (4.9.2) (25). As such, John Watkins observes that Alma’s mediating position places her between the impulses embodied by “the Virgilian Dido’s concupiscence and the historical Dido’s self-directed irascibility” (*Spectre,* 131). Alma herself, in Spenser's words “a virgin bright” (II.ix.18) clearly intimates Elizabeth’s persona as Virgin queen. So too does the description of Alma being “wooed of many a gentle knight/ And many a Lord of noble parentage (II.ix.18) affirming the dual association with both the queens of England and Carthage who each entertained multiple suitors yet demurred from offers of marriage. Unlike Marlowe’s Dido, tricked by Cupid’s dissembling, Alma is depicted as having achieved temperance in part by taming Cupid: “From his fierce warres, and hauing from him layd/ His cruel bow, wherewith he thousands hath dismayd” (II.ix.34). Disarming the errant god, but affording him a place in her castle, Alma metonymically controls passion, while her confiscation of Cupid’s “cruel bow” articulates her own agency over her heart and her body

Alma’s castle is characteristically Spenserian in its dense overlay of associative possibilities: a counterpoint to the seductive Bower of Acrasia, the integrity of the castle affords flattering comparison with Elizabeth’s realm and contrasts with Dido’s dereliction of her duty to Carthage. In the course of the multivalent description of Guyon and Arthur’s castle tour, Spenser inserts deliberate reference to Aeneas’ and Achates’ exploration of Carthage, where both sets of explorers discover evidence of their own histories. However, the poet deviates from the classical and Virgilian subtext, employing Arthur as instrument of divine grace to safeguard Alma’s chastity. In this regard, Spenser both allegorically affirms the divine sanction of Elizabeth’s rule as predicated on the chastity enshrined in the courtly love ethos while he simultaneously offers poetic corrective to Aeneas’ dishonorable conduct. Arthur’s intercession allows Alma to resist attack from Malegar, whose "diseased" forces symbolize the assaults of sensuality on the chastity of Alma’s person and her castle. As such, Malegar alludes to both the suit of foreign princes for Elizabeth’s matrimonial hand as well as the aggressive pursuits by Iarbus of both Dido’s body and her realm. Alma’s role is thus doubly signified as both a figure for Elizabeth’s chastity and a reflection of Dido’s struggle against the forms of intemperance articulated in the Virgilian and

medieval traditions.

Similar to the poem's presentation of Alma, which links the opposing Dido narratives while adapting their ends to suit Elizabeth's mythos, Spenser's characterization of Amavia provides a touchstone mediating disparate estimations of Dido's culpability in her own fate. Precipitated by the death of her husband, Mordant, who is himself a victim of Acrasia's sorcery, Amavia's suicide echoes Dido's self-destruction. Placed in contrast with the representations of temperance evidenced in Medina and Alma, at one allegorical level Amavia and Mordant together could form tragic exemplar of extreme, irascible behavior, a warning against the destructive potential of love. Yet the treatment the couple receives within the poem resists moralizing condemnation. The Palmer emphatically limits Amavia's culpability in succumbing to her emotions, asserting:

> When raging passion with fierce tyranny
> Robs reason of her dew regalite
> And makes it seruant to her basest part:
> The strong it weakens with infirmitie
> And with bold furie armes the weakest hart (II.i.57)

The poem resists a strict, Christian interpretation of suicide, instead mediating the classical approbation of the act in the name of honor to frame Amavia as noble and self-sacrificing. Hereby, Amavia evokes the traditional interpretation of a Dido whose suicide was regarded as honorable for its preservation of her own chastity and veneration of the memory of her husband, Sychaeus. In this respect, Amavia's tragedy reassesses "the long-standing debate over Dido's responsibility for her passionate outrage" (Watkins, *Spectre,* 124). By establishing Amavia's essential virtue through the Palmer's insistence that she may be buried in "honorable toombe" (II.i.58, 9), Spenser analogously redirects popular estimation of Dido's depravity. In this, the poet is more nearly aligned with Virgil's characterization, which views Dido with sympathy as "the victim of a sudden, irresistible fury" (Watkins, *Spectre,* 121). In addition, Syrithe Pugh argues that through Amavia, Spenser asserts an additional, essentially Ovidian subtext. Noting that it is Amavia herself and not an interlocutor who relates her tragic tale, Pugh asserts a parallel with Dido's narrative agency in the *Heroides*, one that seeks to rectify the silence and erasure to which

Dido is subject in the course of Virgil's transformation of her into an icon of a patriarchal ideology (173). With respect to both Virgilian and Ovidian traditions, and in dialogue with popular estimation, Amavia is a cipher for concerns of agency and intentionality in the Dido narrative. These same issues are creatively articulated by Marlowe's staging of an active, demonstrably powerful Cupid.

Transformed by Cupid's wound, Dido's actions run diametrically opposed to her earlier cogency and circumspection. Abandoning prevarication, she emphatically rejects the advances of her main suitor (3.1.76), even though such rashness jeopardizes the political protection accorded to her realm. Next, she declares she will spare no expense in repairing Aeneas' crippled fleet, even though such extravagance may "empty Dido's treasury" (3.1.125). Taken aback by her sudden change of demeanor, the warrior interrogates her one caveat, "Wherefore would Dido have Aeneas stay?" (3.1.133). Her response, "To war against my bordering enemies" (3.1.134), does not ring true as a measured political response, since her borders are only threatened by her recent acts of favoritism that risk alienating her allies. Protesting against what is already obvious, she declares:

> Aeneas, think not Dido is in love;
> For if that any man could conquer me,
> I had been wedded ere Aeneas came. (3.1.135-7)

Dido's words bear more than a passing resemblance to the deferrals offered by Queen Elizabeth to the question of her marriage although they serve a very different end. Her denials form paradoxical entre to showcasing her gallery of suitors, the famous men who petitioned in vain the once-circumspect Dido. By highlighting the perceived faults of a few of her former beaux, Dido attempts to convey not her imperviousness, but rather her desirability. Reveling in the effects of Cupid's poison, her behaviors become a charade recognizable as that familiar lovers' trope: the jealousy routine. Though her shameless self-advertisement as neither amorous nor attainable is congruent with the role of the courtly lady adopted by Elizabeth, Dido's courtship subverts the ideology's intended harmony, instead intending to inflame Aeneas jealousy through feigned disinterest and gall his ego through reference to more illustrious swain. The queen's performance

in pursuit of love attempts to emulate her disinterested demeanor prior to the prick of Cupid's arrow, and thus may be considered a form of performative meta-theatre. As the love-struck queen begins to perform her own alter ego, her stylized self-representation offers a sly nod to the competing strains of her literary genesis, as well as exposing the highly-constructed nature of the gendered behaviors so adeptly handled by the contemporary queen throughout her reign.

Marlowe adapts an exchange featured in Virgil between Venus and Juno to further parody the verbal and behavioral conceits of the courtly love discourse. Presenting their confrontation not as a courtly repartee between political opponents, but as a burgeoning street brawl of the sort with which the playwright himself was all too familiar and reported in the documentary biography of William Urry (65-7), the goddess' interchange verges on bathos even as it irreverently takes aim at the pretensions of class. Discovered preying upon the helpless Ascanius, Juno conceals her murderous fury beneath an ill-fitting façade of conciliatory friendship. While Venus' insults and grotesque vows are tempered by her opponent's rhetoric, she clearly gives the words small credit, offering a conditional and equally dissimulating response:

> Sister of Jove, if that thy love be such
> As these protestations do paint forth,
> We two as friends one fortune will divide. (3.2.53-5)

By characterizing Juno's words as "painted", Venus reveals her doubts of Juno's sincerity while alluding to stylized performance. As Venus removes Ascanius for safe-keeping, clearly not trusting her sister-goddess, her skeptical remark, "Sister, I see you savour of my wiles" (96) reflects her awareness of the false face being assumed by her old foe. Where Venus' performative dexterity self-reflexively draws attention to its pervasive use of Elizabethan political mythography, the duplicity evident in Juno's dissembling forms parodic critique of the ideological process. In their polarized representations of performance, the goddesses emulate the typological extremes rendered in the mythography of *The Faerie Queene*, while they also serve as point of reference for the stylized behavior employed by Dido herself.

Featuring the most dramatic instance of Dido's self-styling, the central hunting scene

emphasizes Dido's self-presentation as performance, and in so doing, interrogates the ethos of courtly love as ideological project. Paralleling the same episode in the Virgilian narrative, Dido invites direct comparison with Spenser's Belphoebe. Her reference to being attired as the huntress in "Diana's shroud" (3.3.4), as well as her request, "Fair Trojan, hold my golden bow a while,/ Until I gird my quiver to my side" (3.3.7-8), makes deliberate reference to Belphoebe's poetic description while it simultaneously makes clear that her appearance is deliberate and cultivated -- this in direct contrast with Spenser's figuration of his sylvan damsel as the embodiment of genuine self-presentation. Further, Dido claims her hunting costume encourages conventions of rank and gender that afford her greater camaraderie with all her guests, in opposition with the stultifying conventions of the court likewise derided by Belphoebe. In this regard too Dido's self-presentation is quickly revealed as a ruse: to Aeneas she insists, "We two must talk alone" (3.3.3-9). In counterpoint to Belphoebe's independence and avowed chastity, Dido's adoption of the relaxed and likely more alluring costume allows her freedom to pursue not just the deer or boar, but her main quarry--Aeneas himself. Although Dido deliberately likens herself to Diana, Achates instead links the recurring figure of the huntress with Venus' earlier appearance before her son (3.3.54), correctly connecting the enraptured Dido with the sorcery of the goddess of love. Achates' observation also articulates criticism of the queen's performative duplicity since like Venus, Dido adopts the behavior and costuming of Diana as a means to exert control over Aeneas and his men. Inverting the signifiers of Venus and Diana so carefully attenuated to compliment Elizabeth through her avatar, Belphoebe, the play presents subversive critique of the performance of love.

Far removed from the grandiloquence of epic romance, the lovers' ensuing courtship is pained and halting as they negotiate a linguistic minefield of destabilized social convention. It is Aeneas, and not the queen who performs the typically feminine action of offering his hand in marriage (3.4.42), inverting Marlowe's famous lyric, "Come live with me and be my love", in agreeing to make *her* home his domicile. For her part, Dido bestows gifts upon the warrior not of arms or other martial accoutrements, but jewelry, most notably the wedding ring she received "wherewith my husband wooed me yet a maid" (62). Usually associated with the dower of brides,

not bridegrooms, this further unorthodox act emphasizes the irregularities of their engagement. Such inversions expose entrenched gendered behaviors as cultural conditioning, codes that are further interrogated when Dido names Aeneas “King of Carthage” (59), and “King of Libya” (63), but does not abandon her own power to rule. In making clear these honors are bestowed, “by my gift” (63), and in so doing, establishing Aeneas as consort rather than ruler, Dido challenges doctrinal expectations that wives defer to their husbands. Aeneas’ autonomy is further eroded by her insistence that, “‘Sichaeus’, not ‘Aeneas’, be thou called” (58) and “not ‘Anchises’ son” (59), an adoptive moniker that not only excises the warrior’s personal identity, it erases the name of his father and replaces his own with that of her dead husband. These unconventional engagement rites reveal that Dido performs “the role of the courtly lover rather than the coy mistress: she initiates and directs the action, she praises Aeneas, she gives him gifts” (Deats, "Subversion", 167). In performatively negotiating her authority through the discourse of love, Dido’s courtship of Aeneas mirrors the ethos through which Elizabeth secured political power. By inverting the signifying gender behaviors, the drama exposes such actions as culturally prescribed and actively, self-consciously adapted. In this regard, the drama’s gender inversions echo those of Acrasia’s bower, offering parallel interrogation of both realms where female domination, both sexual and social, constitutes direct challenge to social order.

Just as Aeneas is ensnared by Dido’s performative sorcery, the libidinous witchcraft of Acrasia and her Bower of Bliss is characterized as both insidious and predicated on contrivance. Acrasia’s lustful ensnaring of wayward knights in her sylvan retreat also echoes the drama’s engagement scene while referencing the exotic charms of the besotted Dido of Virgilian fame. Further, Acrasia is an emblematic reference to Dido whose maledictions on her faithless lover were the legendary source of the Punic Wars. As a figure of a woman driven mad by abandonment, Spenser’s witch alludes to the famous desertions of Circe and Medea who are her inspirations (Pugh, 169, 160). Indeed, as the embodiment of unchecked sensuality, Acrasia’s characterization presents points of comparison with nearly every other character in the Legend. As sovereign female rulers of domains under threat of invasion, Alma and Acrasia share similar challenge, but their antithetical characterizations as temperance and concupiscence respectively,

implicate the divergent Dido narratives: where Alma is, as noted, a revision of the chaste Dido's fate, aided by the fortuitous arrival of Arthur, Acrasia's bondage intimates the fiery prison of Virgil's queen. As counterpoint to Belphoebe's essential characterization as authentic and chaste, Acrasia is everywhere associated with artifice and licentiousness, a dynamic that in turn implicates the polarized aspects of the goddess of love. In the detail of Acrasia's sparkling eyes that "thrild/fraile harts, yet quenched not" (II.xii.78), the poem provides direct, topical opposition to the gaze of the huntress's "fyrie beames" which quench desire (II.iii.23. 3-9). Belphoebe's glances mitigate lust in a similar manner to Alma's decommissioning of Cupid's bow, whereas Acrasia's concupiscence serves to fuel its own desire. Spenser thus positions Belphoebe as chaste Venus who articulates love as a constructive vision, and in opposition to Acrasia who is associated with the most dangerous aspects of Venus, the power of love to degenerate into a destructive, even deadly passion.

Congruently, Belphoebe's natural woodland domain is positioned as antithetical to Acrasia's Bower, which forms testament to contrivance, being "A place pickt out by choice of best alyue/ That nature's worke by art can imitate" (II.xii.42). By artificially constructing nature and yet concealing evidence of its art, the aesthetics of the Bower recall the famous precepts of Castiglione's Courtier, who employs "a verie arte that appeareth not to be arte" (46). Though the ethos of courtly love is underpinned by the imposition of artistic form upon unruly nature in social and political spheres, Greenblatt argues "Spenser deeply distrusts this aesthetic, even as he seems to pay homage to its central tenets; indeed the concealment of art, its imposition upon an unsuspecting observer, is one of the great recurring evils in *The Faerie Queene*" (*Self-Fashioning*, 189). The beauty and artistry of the Bower mean it is a veritable "Paradise on ground" (58), yet the result is not a laudatory evocation of the pre-knowledge innocence of the Garden of Eden, but rather as Harry Berger long-ago noted, a sinister parody that establishes Acrasia as "an enemy of God, competing with Divine Creation" (qtd in Campana, 473). Thus, even as it participates in the artistic construction of powerful courtly credo, the poem almost paradoxically warns against its own seamlessness, suggesting the ideology of love must be subject to rational temperance lest it become destructive.

Though the descriptions of unnatural artifice of both Acrasia and her Bower find multiple classical and literary correlatives, figurations of Venus echo through the description of the supernatural garden and its mistress as both libidinous emblem and chaste counterpoint. Noted points of comparison are through the depiction of the goddess' temple in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where "sweete diuersity" and "all variety" also thrive unchecked, as well as in details of the goddess and her garden of love in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*. Indeed, Acrasia's enchantments over both her lover and her isle are repealed only after she is caught in the Palmer's net, a device that echoes the one used by Vulcan on the unfaithful Venus. More sustained correspondences between the witch and goddess occur in the detail of Acrasia kissing her lover's eyes while "right ouer him she hong,/ With her false eyes fast fixed in his sight" (II.xii.73. 1-2), an image that deliberately suggests the similar pose of Venus with her Adonis. While the episode from the *Metamorphoses* ultimately portrays passion as implicated in the destruction of the beloved, the tragedy is experienced equally by Venus who is unable to save her beloved; this in contrast with Acrasia's willful violence against, and even destruction of her paramours. Described as "greedily depasturing" her victim, the witch's actions imply predation and cannibalistic consumption more than affection, meriting critical characterization as "vampirish". Indeed, in evoking the actions of a succubus, drawing forth the soul and with it, the agency of the male victim, the poem implicates contemporary anxieties pertaining to the folkloric tales of cannibalistic witches and sexually voracious Amazons. Such figures gain cultural notoriety through implied threat to masculine autonomy and agency. Under Acrasia's direction, the Bower likewise represents grave temptation for the abrogation of male duty and destiny, such that "the masculine body [is released] from the constraining rhetoric of heroic, virtuous labor" (Campana, 473). Acrasia's pose as both "a doting lover and controlling mother to a subordinate, passive or infantilized male" ("Spenser", 926), further links her to Venus, embodying the goddess' traditional role as seductress, while at the same time referring to her maternal possessiveness towards Aeneas. In so doing, Acrasia's actions emphasize the power, but also the attendant danger posed by women in positions of maternal and sexual dominance. Such power epitomizes the complexity of Elizabethan power—a power complicated by and communicated through the

vigorous poetry of Marlowe and Spenser.

In allowing himself to be distracted and indefinitely detained by Dido, the perceived effeminacy of Virgil's Aeneas is vehemently decried through Jove's messenger, Hermes: "Degenerate man!/ Thou woman's property" (*Aeneid*, IV.389-90). In the drama, Achates repeats the reminders of perceived emasculation, urging with irritation:

> This is no life for men-at-arms to live,
> Where dalliance doth consume a soldier's strength
> And wanton motion of alluring eyes
> Effeminate our minds to war. (4.3.33-6)

Achates' speech thus establishes the same mutual exclusion between active masculinity and resting pleasure articulated in conjunction with Acrasia's Bower. As Aeneas recalls that Dido herself refuses to be bound by the recipes of gendered behavior: "Each word she says will then contain a crown,/ And every speech be ended with a kiss" (53-4), the nature of his dilemma is revealed.

Retaining her authority as regent, Dido controls her lover with both sexual and political power, resulting in what Aeneas tellingly deems "female drudgery" (55). Registering his awareness of his own effeminization at Dido's hands, Aeneas voices the tenor of complaint made by Elizabeth's courtiers who found their autonomy circumscribed. The contemporary allusion is borne out when the queen, whom the warrior now describes as "princely" (4.4.17) referencing the favored terminology of Elizabeth I, offers: "Wear the imperial crown of Libya,/ Sway thou the Punic scepter in my stead" (34-5). Seeming to anticipate Aeneas' objections that she retains true power while he is relegated to the role of consort, she calls for a magnificent spectacle to publically recognize Aeneas "as Dido's husband" (67) so that the people will "wait upon him as their sovereign lord" (69). Though she intends a public coronation to connote regal power and prestige, her envisioning meets with skepticism. Even the loyal Anna queries, "what if the citizens repine thereat?" (70). To which Dido replies:

> Those that dislike what Dido gives in charge,
> Command my guard to slay for their offence.

Shall vulgar peasants storm at what I do? (4.4.71-3)

Dido's answer is broadly suggestive of the tyrannies of female rule of the sort prognosticated by John Knox. Her speech prompts consideration of historical parallels with Knox's target and Elizabeth I's predecessor, Mary Tudor. Dido's appetite for violence and punishment of rebellious citizens alludes to the infamous "Bloody Mary" who not only garnered notoriety for her persecution of Protestant adherents in the name of her ardent Catholicism, but also willingly alienated her people with her choice of husband in King Philip of Spain. By insisting that "Aeneas ride as Carthaginian king" (4.4.78) however unpopular, and failing to value the goodwill of her citizens, Dido comes perilously close to repeating Mary's errors. These oversights implicitly affirm Elizabeth's policy of deferred marriage in favor of sustained courtship of her English public. Under the rule of emotion, Marlowe's Dido personifies the cultural anxiety over female rulers: she abdicates duty for love, maligning and threatening her citizens, and manipulating her husband for private comfort rather than public good.

Implied comparisons to the publicly vilified Mary I emphasize the danger that Dido's unrestrained power poses, both politically to her nation, and personally to her paramour's sense of gendered identity. Her dominion over each is brought to an end through a reversal of the form of agency employed by Venus: Dido is deprived of her ability to speak. In the epic, her words are abrogated by the pronouncement: "Fate, and the gods, have stopped [Aeneas] ears to love" (IV.637); together the warrior, his gods and, even the poet, conspire to render Dido mute, stripping her of agency. Although the dramatic Aeneas is far less resolute in his determination to pursue his quest, Marlowe's Dido finds that like Virgil's queen, her impassioned pleas fall on deaf ears: her lover's final words are: "In vain, my love, thou spend'st thy fainting breath,/ If words might move me, I were overcome" (5.1.153-4). Dido's enforced muting by external, male voices parallels the relative aphasia experienced by Acrasia who, unlike many of the poem's other villainesses, is not permitted to speak in her defense. When ensnared, she "tryde all her arts, and all her sleights, thence out to wrest" (II.xii.81.9), attempting to use cunning and charm to outwit her captors, but conspicuously, she is not recorded as employing any sort of seductive rhetoric. As representative of concupiscent female power, Acrasia's domain is confined strictly to the

somatic. Her wordlessness links her to the form of her rejected lovers: just as they were condemned to animal bodies, Acrasia's absence of language is equally dehumanizing. Guyon's defeat of Acrasia thus symbolically echoes Aeneas' rejection of Dido's rhetoric of love: as Patricia Parker notes, in both narratives, "a female ruler is both surpassed and overruled" (63)

Where the epic follows the warrior's continuing voyage to Italy, the drama remains focused in Carthage. Marlowe's Dido quotes the Virgilian queen in an act of literary self-reflexivity, calling for centuries of martial vengeance before committing herself to the pyre: *Sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras* "Thus, thus I rejoice to go down into the shadows" (313). In the original context, the queen embraces communion with the "shades" of the underworld, eerily anticipating Gayatri Spivak's observation that since she "cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (83). The Virgilian Dido, like Acrasia, has her speech severely limited by male forces that effect the destruction of her domain. The citational act in the drama, however, facilitates rather than restricts female speech because as Emma Buckley recently argues, it "turns the authorizing power of the *Aeneid* against itself" (142). By intentionally revealing the script's source, the play underscores the plurality of the narrative's aggregate history, a legacy that also accommodates "varying kinds of erotic experience and attitudes to passion" (Gibbons, 45). It is this mutability and interpretive possibility within the dynamics of love that Spenser capitalizes on when employing Dido's legend as subtext to investigate "the intensely labile roles that Queen Elizabeth I chose and was expected to perform" (Williams, 32). Within the complexity of their poetic realizations, neither Spenser nor Marlowe could fully articulate temperate female agency as performative ideal. Such power was open only to the multivalent complications of Elizabethan monarchy and its lived political ideals.

Figure 5. *The Gripsholm Portrait*

Chapter 3

Mephostophilis and Amoret: Magic, Language and Gender

I have ever used to set the last Judgment Day before mine eyes, and so to rule as I shall be judged to answer before a higher judge.

- Elizabeth I, The Golden Speech, 1601

A card trick, a white rabbit emerging from a top hat, a demonic spirit--from elaborate spectacles to basic sleights of hand, even perceived discomfort, magical illusions suggest that words have the power to effect and distort the laws of nature. In so far as it may be said to exist, the real magic of transformation is accessible through certain kinds of language: performative language alters the identities of people and things by naming them, marrying them, or creating a bond of duty. Similarly, allegorical language allows for a single entity to represent another or an ideal through verbal play of connected identifications. In both the fictive realm of the magician and in the everyday magic of speech, Marlowe's notorious "womanless drama", *Doctor Faustus* creatively engages the power of language to define, shape and transform awareness of the gendered self. Faustus' tragedy involves not his stubborn refusal to repent and avoid damnation, but rather his failure to recognize the magical power in language to transform constructions of the self that would allow him to see his own potential for salvation. Trapped between generic, theological, and gendered polarities, Marlowe's conflicted hero is informed by the symbolic figure of the hermaphrodite, as well as the androgynous analogies of the Garden of Adonis, which together invite consideration of gendered identity as mutable and linguistically determined.

To Elizabethan audiences familiar with the didactic ends of the medieval Morality play genre, Faustus' ultimate salvation, or some other form of edifying restitution might seem a foregone conclusion, despite his repeated assertions of belief to the contrary. Yet the contingencies scripted by the playwright tantalize character and audience alike with both possibilities, playing a will-he-or-won't-he guessing game that re-inscribes the Morality subtext with distinctly Renaissance potentialities, even as it challenges the notion of categorization itself. In this regard, the notoriously fragmentary playtext that exists in two distinct forms can be seen as reflecting the instabilities articulated by the hero's psychomachia. Though critical preference has typically favored the A-text, this chapter references Mathew Martin's recent edition of the B-text

since, as Sara Munson Deats has noted, "the B-text, even more than the A, supports the connection between drama and magic" ("Mark this Show", 19, 24). Indeed, the splintered text may not simply be the inevitable result of theatrical alterations to an original, authorial text, but rather an intentional effect generated through the creation a series of loosely connected scenes “that might be linked in different ways in different performances” (Healy, 189), and may even--through the magic of theatre--result in different ends. Not only would such flexibility allow actors the range--and audiences the freedom--to respond to one another, such a design highlights the unique moment and space of the theatre. By embracing the power of contingency, this notion of an “improv Faustus” reinforces the play’s thematic investigations into “ideas of illusion, roleplaying, and theatricality around humanity’s imagined identities” (Healy, 189). By crafting a playtext that is by-design dynamic, unstable and responsive, Marlowe can be seen to engage meta-theatrically with the volatilities associated with the performative language of magic and the theatre. The magic of Faustus' theatrical world is revealed as existing in a suspended state of performative becoming--a place where literally anything might happen.

The tale of the historical Johann Faust who was put to death for his use of the “diabolical” technology of the early printing press almost certainly provided the young dramatist with imaginative fodder to link language and magic. So too did the escapades featured in the German *Faustbook*, which offer the outline of many of the play’s scenes of magical conjuration. As modern editor Mathew Martin points out: "In the doubly constituted figure of John Faustus, magic and one of the key technologies of what would become the Scientific Revolution intersect to reveal early modern culture's profound ambivalence towards one of Marlowe's play's major themes: the production and dissemination of knowledge, both secular and divine, through the medium of print" (18-19). Yet in addition to these rudimentary source texts and cautionary themes, the details in the dramatization of *Doctor Faustus* offer clear reference to, as well as imaginative interrogation of the representations of magic articulated in *The Faerie Queene.*

Faustus' dramatization loosely enacts the spells of the shape-shifting Archimago, referencing questions of deception and selfhood that reflect on contemporary anti-theatrical polemics. Adapting Arthurian legend, Spenser’s Merlin offers deep and illustrious, political

prognostication, but his apocalyptic final vision finds clear echo in the pessimism of Marlowe's play that ultimately fails to offer meaningful salvation either to Faustus, or indeed, to his audience. The Doctor's famous apostrophe to Helen of Greece finds precedent in Spenser's cautionary tale of Hellenore and Malbecco, an allegory that interrogates the ideal of companionate marriage through bad example. Perhaps most intriguingly, the wizard Busirane performatively connects the role of conjurer with that of author with his macabre "penning" of the Elizabeth-figure Amoret. Though Britomart in the role of the astute reader challenges the sorcerer's violent assertion of the seeming inescapability of ideology as articulated through art, architecture and drama, the vision of looming, immortal forces is repeated in Faustus' oft-iterated sense of an assured doom--and the limits of language to provide a means of escape. Herein, Spenser follows the example of Plato's *Symposium* where Love is allegorized as a magician to present married love as a divine and magical force. However, Patrick Cheney further observes Marlowe, in response to both ancient precedent and his contemporary literary rival "makes his hero a magus in order to undercut the Spenserian idealism" ("Love and Magic", 101), challenging the notion that the magic of language can offer escape from pervasive iconographies of power.

From his very first appearance on stage, Faustus demonstrates an acute love of language stemming from its special, performative capacity to transform intention into action. His fellow scholars describe him as "wont to make our schools ring with '*sic probo*'" (1.2.1-2). They identify him with the Latinate term meaning, "Thus I prove it" which, as a conclusion to rhetorical debate, functions as a performative accomplishing the thing it describes. By employing the expression as a personal catchphrase, Faustus affirms his identity as consummate academic since, as the Cambridge-educated playwright could well attest, such rhetorical mastery was the ultimate test of scholarly achievement. In engaging the magic of performative language to prove his academic credentials and achieve fame amongst his scholarly contemporaries, Faustus foreshadows the nature and direction of his ambitions as being predicated on his proclaimed love of "Lines, circles, letters, characters" (1.1.51). In this, Marlowe slyly links his dramatic hero with his historical predecessor, whose mastery of those same lines and letters through the then-new

and seemingly magical technology of the printing press resulted in his trial and execution as a necromancer (Martin, 17). For Faustus such published *sic probo* mastery is only a beginning.

This connection between written magic and the magic of writing is allegorized in Spenser's depiction of Errour as a printing press, whose inky toxicity literalizes the dangers of the magical written word even as it satirizes centuries of literary hegemony by the Catholic Church. Slain by the Red Cross Knight, Errour releases into the world:

> A floud of poyson horrible and blacke[...]
>
> Her vomit full of bookes and papers was,
>
> With loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lacke (I.i. 20).

With this nightmarish image, partly drawn from the description in Revelation 16.13 of "unclean spirits like frogges come out of the mouth of the dragon ... the beast [and] ... the false prophet", the representation of Errour promulgates and conflates virulent religious-political propaganda with the dark magic putatively contained in the black mass. As demonstrated typologically by Errour, the magical capacity of the written word to transmit and to conjure falsehood extends itself further with reference to Archimago, who is depicted as studying "His magick books and artes of sundrie kindes" (I.i.36). The centrality of writing to magic is emphasized in the details of his ceremonial practice:

> Then choosing out few words most horrible,
>
> (Let none them read) thereof did verses frame,
>
> With which and other spelles like terrible,
>
> He bad awake *Pluetoes* griesly Dame,
>
> And cursed heuen, and spake reproachful shame
>
> Of highest God, the Lord of life and light " (I.i.37: 1-6).

The poet-speaker's refusal to repeat even as he describes the magician's incantations paradoxically emphasizes the potential power of the spoken word. The enormous power of forbidden magic words looms, tantalizing and inscrutable, like the Latin scripts of Catholic priests enacting the mystery of transubstantiation. Instead of the much-disputed real presence,

Archimago's incantations serve politically to call forth "Legions of Sprights" to "To aide his friends, or fray his enimies" (I.i.38). To read them is to fear them, or--terribly--to join them.

Such descriptions of magical conjuring practices are later echoed in the details of Merlin's "baleful Bowre" (III.iii.8: 9): "It is an hideous hollow cave (they say)" (III.iii.8: 3), that is populated by a "thousand sprights with long enduring paines" (III.iii.9: 4). Herein, Merlin gets retrospectively witnessed by Glauce and Britomart, "writing strange characters in the grownd,/ With which the stubborne feendes he to his seruice bownd" (III.iii.14: 7-9). Merlin's consummate power is enunciated in the description that, "For Merlin had in Magick more insight,/ Then euer him before or after liuing wight" (III.iii.11). Much after the fact (or *not* in terms of magical fantasy), Archimago connects magic with identity at the personal, interpersonal and allegorical level, with spells that change his own appearance and the perceptions of others. However, his self-styling is directed towards mundane and political pursuits, in contrast with the power of Merlin's idealist magic capable of transforming national identity, which runs parallel with Spenser's own laureate and myth-making aspirations.

The final cantos of Book III introduce yet another magician, Busirane, who effectively supersedes Archimago as representative of black magic. Archimago's simpler, typological representation of a dark magician is absorbed and embellished by Busirane's markedly more sinister motivations and depraved acts that ultimately make him a truly villainous wizard. Like his predecessors, Busirane's magic functions by manipulating appearances, a mechanism emphasized by the repetition of the word "seeming" in association with his spells, and symbolized by the enchanted firewall surrounding his castle that is revealed as illusory when it yields to Britomart (III.xi. 25-6). Where Archimago creates false versions of individuals and interrupts relationships, Busirane operates at the grand scale of ideology, asserting not only his will over the Elizabeth-figure Amoret, but dictating the discourse of love as the "sad range of possibilities offered male and female psyches by the centuries of erotic experience crystallized in pagan, medieval and Renaissance institutions" (Berger, "Busirane", 101). Busirane is also intimately associated with language: he is shown laboring at length over "wicked bookes" (III.xii.32), and "Figuring strange characters of his art" (III.xii. 31) in the "liuing blood" (III.xii. 31) drawn from the

wound of his victim, a macabre image suggesting a kind of sado-masochistic cruelty much more immediate and disturbing than the relatively remote, almost comic false visions of Archimago. Hereby, Busirane's magical lines, circles and boundaries articulate not simply arcane spells, but also dramatize the Masque, imprisoning his victim and underscoring the connection previously established with Archimago and Merlin between magic and language. Through his authorial "penning" of poetic and dramatic lines, Busirane, like the other two magicians, suggestively implicates the figure of the poet himself within his performative spells and incantations.

Marlowe's depiction of Faustus with his bookish lair, devilish helpmeet and use of written spells draws heavily, even self-consciously from the precedents set by Spenser's magicians. While the academic setting of Archimago's study and Busirane's ornate House echo that of Faustus' University of Wittenberg, details from the description of Merlin suggestively conflate the identities of both Faustus and Marlowe with the magic of artful illusion. Beyond mere orthographic similarities, Marlowe's contemporary Robert Greene connected the name of the playwright with that of the iconic English mage by alluding to "such mad scoffing poets, that haue propheticall spirits, as bred of *Merlins* race" (qtd. in Weil, 3). Indeed, in the evocatively titled *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet*, Judith Weil compares the playwright's art to the "prophetic mirror" (21) of Merlin through which each "could tantalize and manipulate the imaginations of an audience in a masterful fashion" (1). Like Merlin's illusions that speak so eloquently and powerfully to Britomart, the dramatist's wizardry with words means "Faustus owes his seemingly tragic stature to an elaborate series of rhetorical deceptions" (Weil, 6). When Faustus declares that becoming a "studious artisan" of magic will mean, "All things that move between the quiet poles/ Shall be at my command" (1.2.56-7), he is implicitly attempting to achieve Merlin's power: "For he by wordes could call out of the sky/ Both Sunne and Moone, and make them him obay (III.iii.12). Marlowe's sorcerer continues the connection with Spenser's evocation, borrowing the detail: "Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please […]/ I'll have them wall all Germany with brass" (1.1. 78; 87) from the poet's description:

> Before that Merlin dyde, he did intend,
>
> A brasen wall in compas to compyle

About Cairmardin, and did it commend

Unto these Sprights, to bring to perfect end. (III.iii. 10)

By adapting key elements from descriptions of each of Spenser's magicians in the opening scenes of *Doctor Faustus*, the playwright gives the audience cause to entertain the possibility that this sorcerer could follow either example. As Genevieve Guenther notes, it is the “possibility of repentance provides the suspense that makes the play *dramatic* rather than merely iconographical” (Guenther, 82-3). Marlowe, in employing the precedents set in *The Faerie Queene*, suggests that his sorcerer may use magical symbols to achieve "a world of profit and delight,/ Of power, of honor, of omnipotence" (1.1.53-4) for good like Merlin, or for self-satisfying evil like Archimago and Busirane. In so doing, Marlowe scripts a uniquely Renaissance Morality play, where anticipated salvation is far from certain, and all didactic ends are open to interpretation.

When Mephostophilis tells Faustus that to secure his magical powers he must "write a deed of gift with thine own blood” (2.1.34), his instructions echo the details of Busirane's practice, when he inscribes his art in the blood and into the flesh of his victim. Busirane's vivisection of Amoret in the name of love is adapted by Faustus' self-mutilation:

Lo, Mephostophilis, for love of thee

Faustus hath cut his arm, and with his proper blood

Assures his soul to be great Lucifer's (2.1.52-4)

Marlowe emulates Spenser's trope by having Faustus bequeath his soul in a writ of his blood for the "love" of Mephostophilis, but his adaption places the would-be magus in an intermediate position that emulates both magician and victim to query Faustus's identity still further. When the Doctor declares, "My blood congeals, I can write no more” (2.1.61), and tries again and again to complete the deed, wondering incredulously, "What might the staying of my blood portend?” (63), the scene exploits to dramatic effect the ironic difference between Faustus' aspirations to metaphysical knowledge and his manifest abilities. Demonstrating his inability to move beyond sacred texts and their precincts, the Doctor quotes from the bible even as he declares:

Consummatum est. This bill is ended,

> And Faustus hath bequeathed his soul to Lucifer.
>
> But what is this inscription on mine arm?
>
> *Homo fuge.* Whither should I fly?
>
> If unto heaven, he'll throw thee down to hell.
>
> My senses are deceived, here's nothing writ.
>
> O yes, I see it plain, even here is writ
>
> *Homo fuge*. Yet shall not Faustus fly. (2.1.73-80)

Though Faustus assumes the contract is now complete, the appearance of a different kind of magical script, now written on his own flesh, further transposes his identification from being akin to Spenser's mage to alignment with the sorcerer's victim. This reversal is affirmed when Faustus reasserts erroneous belief in his assured damnation, causing the inscribed words to reappear in a final effort at contradiction. By once again failing to read the significance of this stigmatic sign, Faustus' soteriological dilemma is thus presented not as a crisis of faith, but as a drama of signification where his identity as magician, as well as his salvation, is predicated on his ability to truly understand the language he adores.

The magical potential in language, and particularly in performative utterance, is explored further when Faustus prompts Mephostophilis, “Did not my conjuring raise thee? Speak” (1.3.43). The Demon clarifies, “That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*” (45), revealing that Faustus’ long series of Latinate spells and incantations (16-23) were, to borrow a term from speech-act theory, “inefficacies”. What really summoned the demon was Faustus’ performance of belief in the devil and his rejection of God's power in favor of the illusory promise of his own autonomy. In this, Faustus presents thoughtful consideration of the nature of blasphemy that goes beyond the intent to "disparage the divine goodness" articulated by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* (qtd. in Flynn, 31) that became the standard medieval definition; he enacts what T.S. Eliot termed "first rate blasphemy ... one of the rarest things in literature, for it requires both literary genius and profound faith, joined in a mind in a peculiar and usual state of spiritual sickness” (56). Despite Mephostophilis' patient corrections, in his "spiritual sickness" Faustus fails to comprehend that the lines and symbols he fetishizes are, in and of themselves, powerless: “Faustus eschews

allegorical interpretation. He never reads past the letter, as it were, to search for the spirit; he never seeks what recedes beyond the textual mark" (Guenther, 71). Such limitations mean that Faustus is neither able to comprehend the performative nature of magic, nor is he able to decipher his own role in relation to it. Instead, the Doctor persists in assuming a one-to-one relationship between the sign, however elaborate or fantastical, and the magical appearance of the signified, refusing to entertain the idea that real magic is contained in the slippage that activates performative speech. "Recalling the belief that black magic has the power to transform physical as well as psychological form," Deats observes, "in *Doctor Faustus* Marlowe inserts a "how to" guide on shape-shifting as one of Lucifer's first gifts to Faustus. Depending on one's persuasion, therefore, magic during this period was seen as a protean force that could either catapult the individual up to the angels or plunge the human down to the beasts" ("Mark this Show", 15) --or the damned. This, the play asserts, is the essence of magic: the power of language to magically transform and to entertain plural possibilities, if only we read between the lines.

Like Archimago's Sprights, Mephostophilis is summoned not by a precise linguistic formula, but by the potential for transgression signaled in all performance, but most especially (and literally) in the "performance" of blasphemy. In his 1632 anti-theatrical polemic *Histrio-mastix*, William Prynne reported the appearance of additional devils "on the stage at the Belsavage playhouse, in Queen Elizabeth's days (to the great amazement of both the actors and spectators) while they were there profanely playing the History of Faustus (the truth of which I have heard from many now alive, who well remember it)" (qtd in Guenther, 62). Still remarkable more than thirty years after the event, the continued notoriety of such spectacles alludes to, even as it interrogates, ongoing anti-theatrical debate that worried the distinction between efficacious and inefficacious performatives. Contemporary productions courted this sensationalism by planting actors in the audience, thereby immersing spectators--and potentially implicating them--in Faustus' illicit conjuration, so that the diabolically-inspired process of conjuring becomes elided with participation in the play of performative signs. If, as the demon claims, the "shortest cut for conjuring/ Is stoutly to abjure all godliness/ And pray devoutly to the Prince of Hell" (III. 50-52),

then the depiction of Faustus' sorcery on stage teases the boundaries between theatrical and actual performatives.

J.L. Austin's modern, foundational assessment demarcated performative speech on stage as necessarily inauthentic: "a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. [...] Language in such circumstances is in special ways--intelligibly--used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use--ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language" (22). However, these measured qualifications reflect a twentieth-century estimation of the power of dramatic language, one that was not necessarily shared by early modern audiences who favored a more superstitious, but surprisingly nuanced anxiety that on-stage, the power of words can achieve *real* potency. Andrew Sofer argues that on "the Elizabethan stage, the term *conjure* always carries a whiff of danger about it, for to adjure something--to address or call upon it solemnly--is to risk calling that thing into existence, just as to perform any act onstage--a laugh, a belch, a curse, a consecration--is to risk actually doing it" (9-10). Such potentially-real effects accord with contemporary anti-theatrical debate on the nature of the actor, inviting interrogation of the difference "between performing as feigning and performing as doing--precisely the distinction theatre seems uncannily able to blur" according to Sofer (10). This "riddle" of Elizabethan theatre performativity, where staged acts were known to be both *mimetic*, that is emulating real-world events, as well as potentially *kinetic*, having real consequences, activates the potential in language to implicate not just the actor, but also the audience in Faustus' damnation.

In his depiction of Faustus' sorcery, Marlowe echoes the representation of magic as a kind of performance that works not by means of words, but performatively through language and circumstance as portrayed by Spenser's magicians. Archimago's study of spells and his uttering of taboo incantations is shown to be activated only when the magician "cursed heuen, and spake reprochful shame/ Of highest God, the Lord of life and light" (I.i. 37) and "dar'd to call by name/ Great Gorgon, prince of darkness and dead night" (I.i. 37) in order to summon the devilish servants through whom he works his illusions. Faustus too calls on Demogorgon (1.3.18) as he attempts to enact spells to conjure Mephostophilis performatively. Though he specifically enjoins

that Mephostophilis rise and appear as a dragon (Martin, 191, 77), he is both horrified and surprised by the results, declaring instead:

> I charge thee to return and change thy shape,
> Thou art too ugly to attend on me.
> Go and return an old Franciscan friar,
> That holy shape becomes a devil best (1.3.124-7).

Beneath the obvious anti-Catholic gag line, the meta-theatrical reference hereby acknowledges both theatre and magic are predicated on deceptive appearances.

Illustrating Renaissance belief that magi exert insidious control of subjects through imaginative falsehoods, the magicians of *The Faerie Queene* operate by means of illusions and intoxicating visions. In particular, the altered versions of history and perceptions of reality presented by Busirane through the images and masque of Cupid (III. Xi and xii) emphasize sorcery as an elaborate deception that is activated by language and speech. In this, magic is seen to function much like the work of the "spiritual magicians, enchanters, and conjurers" referenced in Martin Luther's description of "papists", "who go about with blessings, magic, and false faith" (Waters, 281, 283). Indeed, Archimago's symbolic temptations of the Knight of Holiness articulate common Protestant warnings against the "seductive methods, message, and power of the Roman Catholic false teachers" as well as what Waters refers to further as "the gradual process of Romish seduction through custom or false teaching that makes error in judgment possible" (288). Archimago, deceitfully mimicking what Spenser's audience would have regarded as the false teachings of Catholicism, and satirizing the Latinate mysteries of the Roman Mass, suggestively conflates religious trappings with the methodologies of stagecraft.

The connection between magic, theatre and the spectacle of religious practices is explored through the richly decorated rooms in Busirane's House. Here, church-like altars and iconographic images pay homage to Cupid with intricate details of his conquests:

> And eke all Cupids warres they did repeate;
> And cruell battailes, which he whilome fought
> Gainst all the Gods, to make his empire great;

Besides the huge massacres, which he wrought

On mighty kings and kesars, into thraldome brought (III.xi.29)

Here architectural iconography and persuasive graphic art demonstrate an insidious ability to alter not just singular ideas but complete ideologies. Yet the terms that assert Cupid's extraordinary power over Jove and the divine realm of the gods, as well as posing more immediate danger to mortal "Kings Queenes, Lords Ladies, Knights and Damsels gent" (III.xi.46) are so daunting that they become counter-productive, prompting query rather than eliciting intended awe. For all their artistic impact, the altar, the gilded rooms, the lush tapestries and painted scenes convey suspiciously slanted, even artistically over-heated, histories. Harry Berger summarizes, "So blatant a flourish of mumbo jumbo ... and theatrical display amounts to a flaunting of power" ("Busirane",106). As the reader's representative, Britomart models the correct response to these pagan visions styled in distinctly Roman Catholic terms by reading them critically with what is repeatedly termed "earnest wonder" rather than unquestioning acceptance. Religious paraphernalia is thus exposed as a kind of theatrical language in Busirane's House, just as religious language is revealed as essentially theatrical by Archimago's styling. Yet, this iconoclastic critique applies to all religious and dogmatic practices, not just Catholic traditions. As Brad Tuggle observes, the universal "emotive and memorial significance of sacred architecture in medieval monasticism suggests one powerful way of understanding how poetry moves its readers" (122). Art, architecture and drama are therefore regarded as another kind of magical language, one that must be read critically, with an understanding of its power to assert alternative meanings that can educate, but which also has the potential to deceive.

Archimago's deceptions are literalized through his masquerading in various disguises including as a hermit (I.i. 29-35), as Red Cross Knight (I.ii.11), as a pilgrim (I.vi. 34-9), and as Duessa's anonymous messenger (I.xii.24-8). Like an accomplished actor, the magus does not merely dress as Red Cross, he transforms through magic to become him: "But now seemde best, the person to put on/ Of that good knight" such that "when he sate vppon his courser free,/ *Saint George* himselfe ye would haue deemed him to be" (I.ii.11). By "putting on the person", Archimago represents complete performative transfiguration that alters not just the appearance,

but also the essence of a person or thing. Through the language of magic he can manipulate his own form and appearance: "For by his mighty science he could take/ As many formes and shapes in seeming wise,/ As euer *Proteus* to himself could make" (I.ii.10). It is this deceptive ability that makes performative and theatrical language both fascinating and dangerous. Moreover, in Elizabethan parlance, to be a "Proteus" was to be a virtuoso professional actor, a term that suggestively links theatrical performance with performative transformation.

Drawing from ancient anti-theatrical criticism that assumed genuine change occurred from the donning of costume, polemicists often demonized the practice of dramatic transvestitism, one of the most notorious conventions of the English Renaissance stage. As Stephen Orgel notes, such critics argued from "both platonic and patristic examples that the wearing of female garments necessarily resulted in an effeminization of the actor's masculine self, and from that to the corruption of the audience" (*Spectacular,* 36). Contemporary attacks asserted the power of the theatre, and particularly of salacious plays and evil characters to "metamorphosize, transfigure, deform, pervert and alter the hearts of their haunters" (F. Clement, qtd. in Deats, "Mark this Show", 16). These polemical challenges reflect the "assumption that magic is a kind of theatre [which] is embedded in the consciousness of the time and the fear of the power of representation, on the stage or in the witches' Sabbath, was a source of considerable anxiety during the early modern period" (Deats, "Mark this show", 17). Going further, in *Men in Women's Clothing: Antitheatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642*, Laura Levine describes the contemporary ideological link between theatre and magic, and particularly the occult, where actors and effigies alike "can alter the things that they are only supposed to represent" (4-5). While the notion that the costumes of boy actors could actually change the gender of their wearers may seem spurious to modern readers, Levine argues such anxieties stem from a surprisingly nuanced consideration that gender "may exist only in the theatricalization of itself, only insofar as it is performed" (8).

In typically Marlovian fashion, *Doctor Faustus* capitalizes on such popular anxieties while it offers redress to such charges in subtle and not-so subtle ways. When the clowns attempt to

perform magic stolen from Faustus' spellbook, Mephostophilis transforms them, punishing their impudence as much as their presumption:

> MEPHOSTOPHILIS: To purge the rashness of his cursed deed,
>
> [To Dick] First, be thou turned to this ugly shape,
>
> For apish deeds transformed to an ape
>
> ROBIN: O brave, an ape! I pray, sir, let me have the carrying of him
>
> about to show some tricks.
>
> MEPHOSTOPHILIS: [To Robin] And so thou shalt. Be thou transformed to a
>
> dog and carry him upon thy back. Away, be gone. (3.2.38-46)

Despite the severity of the punishment, the curses have almost no effect; indeed the jesters seem to regard their state as having been improved, with Robin remarking: "A dog? That's excellent! Let the maids look well to their porridge pots, for I'll into the kitchen presently. Come, Dick, come" (3.2.47-9). Recalling the magical alteration of Acrasia's conquests, particularly that of Gryll who actually preferred to "haue his hoggish mind" (II.xii.87.8), the play hereby offers a comic expose that hyperbolizes depictions of transformation to discredit them. The wry humor of both the poetic and dramatic events implies that the changes in appearance, however grotesque, are not truly substantive since they reflect and confirm the bestial identities of Robin, Dick and Gryll. Mephostophilis' actions dramatize common perceptions about foolhardy would-be magicians and the ends they meet, revealing such concerns about both magic and theatrical transformation as inherently ridiculous. The scene returns scrutiny to audiences who, like the clowns, have read magical language literally by flocking to the theatres on the spurious promise of being witness to, or even becoming implicated in the diabolical performance. And yet through the meta-drama of performance the audience is indeed connected to the transformative power of poetry and play.

Renaissance anxiety over the potential for magical transformation is not only hyperbolized in *Doctor Faustus* with the use of staged effects, but the notion of transformative magic in language is addressed by the crisis of identity faced by the Doctor himself. Enacting the familiar Morality dilemma of a soul torn between divine salvation and eternal damnation, Faustus counsels himself to:

Despair in God and trust in Beelzebub.

Now go not backward, Faustus, be resolute.

Why waverst thou? O, something soundeth in mine ear,

'Abjure this magic, turn to God again.'

Why, he loves thee not. (2.1.5-9)

Far from evoking the idea of serious contemplation or genuine anguish, Faustus' abrupt double volte-face, and his frequent, highly theatrical apostrophes all build towards a parody that sharply undercuts familiar Morality form, especially when the expected transformation of the repentant sinner fails to materialize. What *does* materialize instead involves dramatic illusions and performative play. By displaying such essentially comic behavior at moments of high seriousness, the identity of both the play and its eponymous hero are drawn into question.

Indeed, the play renders Faustus soteriological crisis in absurdist terms, dramatizing his conundrum not as a crisis of faith, but one of identity. Observing that "not only heaven and hell but God and Lucifer, the Good Angel and the Evil Angel, are polar opposites whose axes pass through and constitute human consciousness" (qtd in Duxfield, 106), Jonathan Dollimore suggests that the play articulates Faustus' struggle to locate identity in the grey area between theological and ideological absolutes. Faustus' tendency to refer to himself in the third person is suggestive of a splintered identity, a duality that mirrors the play's generic hybridity at the level of the individual character who is the "victim of living on the fault line between a medieval scholastic world that promotes faith and piety and a Renaissance humanist world that demands individualist endeavour" (107). Rick Bowers goes even further, observing "Faustus simultaneously parodies an old academic world of faithful belief, an emerging academic world of discovered knowledge, and a new academic world of multiple ironies" ("Almost Famous", 113). Existing in a state of ongoing performative becoming, Faustus' identity is not simply a question of who he is, or even of what he may become, but rather of which iteration of self and subjecthood he is enacting at every moment.

Faustus' psychomachia presents an especially suggestive Renaissance representation of the struggle for independent subjecthood. As such, the Doctor's attempt to assert his identity as

powerful, educated and masculine correlates with the Platonic single-sex model popular in Early Modern discourse that framed human and especially male gender identity not as innate, but as the product of lifelong development away from a hermaphroditic conceptual starting point. Jon Quitslund explains that the Renaissance mindset would have understood such dualistic identities “as a way of being and a way of knowing human nature in its original form” ("Melancholia", 312). Positioned at the gateway of Early Modern discourse on the nature of the self, a hermaphroditic form serves as a point of developmental contrast against which polarized performances of masculinity, as well as its conceptual counterpoint femininity, may contrast not just with themselves, but against a differently gendered other.

Familiar to Early Modern audiences from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the tale of magical transformation into a dual-sexed person was employed in Renaissance discourse to suggest ways in which gender is, as Donald Cheney puts it, linguistically based and ideologically framed (192-3). As the etymology of the name suggests, the original "Hermaphrodite" was the child of the love goddess Aphrodite and Hermes, the God of language and persuasive speech. This lineage clearly intertwines ideas of the magic of love with the power of language in a single form. Though the Hermaphrodite's transformation was precipitated by a resistance to love that correlates to a rejection of the maternal and feminine, it only became permanent when he rejected the nuances of language that would allow him to mediate his new identity as a differently gendered other. By recognizing only the differences between male and female, Hermaphroditus "excludes his own sexuality and effectively castrates himself” (Silberman, 52). In broader terms, the figure of the hermaphrodite articulates the process of growth and individuation that is the hallmark of adolescence, and as such, offers further political allegory resonating with nascent imperialistic projects. Like the double-edged colonial project that tantalized contemporary culture with the possibility of enormous wealth, but only at tremendous cost, the story of the hermaphrodite offers two distinct interpretive avenues. First in Cheney's words, as a cultural union of contraries represented, "either statically in the single figure or dynamically in the wedded pair” (195), suggesting Scudamore and Amoret's hermaphroditic union near the end of the third book of *The Faerie Queene.* But a distinctly second view involves "awareness that such union occurs in a

watery context of dissolution where rational and moral distinctions are no longer operative" (Cheney, D, 195). Hereby, Marlowe's play dramatizes this latter path of individual disintegration resulting from a fateful misinterpretation of the language that constructs the gendered self. Mephostophilis describes both Lucifer and Faustus in surprisingly gendered terms of desire and affection.

Book III of *The Faerie Queene* inscribes images of hermaphroditism as analogies of human development and idealized symbols of marital union. Indeed, C.S. Lewis declared the Garden of Adonis the "allegorical heart of Book III" (qtd in Silberman, 40). As an examination of the construction of gender in historical and literary terms, the allegory of the Garden functions "both as corrective to Platonic dualism of body and spirit and as pretext for questioning Aristotelian gendering as male form and female matter" (44). Angus Fletcher notes in his influential investigation of allegory that the representation of the Garden is dual-gendered since it "maintains an equality between polar opposites" (321). Jon Quitslund concurs, affirming, "at every turn in the Garden's labyrinth we encounter gendered dualities, reminders [of] the 'one-sex model' basic to Renaissance constructions of gender" (*Supreme Fiction,* 218). Similarly, Judith Anderson describes the Garden as "doubly or (ambi-) sexed", a label she employs to distinguish it from the associated "humanized forms which may be considered hermaphroditic" (*Intertext,* 215). Herein, the Garden's topography supports such gendered dualities, with descriptions of the "stately Mount" of Venus implying both male and female anatomy (214). The "strong rocky Caue" (48.8) at the base of the Mount has frequently been interpreted as an iconographic representation of the apocryphal *vagina dentata* (Silberman, 48; Anderson, *Intertext*, 222), but the menacing aspect of this mythical physiognomy is tempered, replacing its traditional implication as a means of castration, with its function as a locus of protection. By imprisoning the boar that attacked Adonis, the cave becomes what Lauren Silberman terms, an "icon of venereal power" (48), articulating the ability of the goddess, herself a hermaphroditic entity, to protect, nourish and sustain her beloved from the ravages of time. As such, the Mount and Cave, together with the "dualism of spirit and matter, permanence and change, male and female" (Silberman, 48) support

interpretation of the Garden as a place of hermaphroditic origins that the poetry employs as subtext to broader allegorization of companionate marriage.

The framing tale of Belphoebe and Amoret complements the dualistic figuration of the Garden as a source of self-sustaining life. Conceived through several generations of spontaneous, hermaphroditic "virgin births", the girls' lineage supports Renaissance ideation around hermaphroditism as an original state of human nature implying wholeness and unified identities. Here though, the unitary qualities of mother and grandmother are divided in the offspring, a process of individuation emphasized in their upbringings: whereas Belphoebe is raised as Diana's nymph "vpbrought in perfect Maydenhed" (III. vi. 28), Venus' new daughter is "vpbrought in goodly womanhed" (III.vi. 28. 7) in Adonis' Garden. By having each goddess rear her protégé as a reflection of her own image, the allegory facilitates a kind of early modern anthropological experiment: as Richard Neuse observes, "through Belphoebe and Amoret, Venus and Diana act out Spenser's project of fashioning a 'virtuous and noble person'" (9). The gendering of Spenser's allegory reintroduces positive female attributes into the Renaissance discourse of hermaphroditic ontology, which works to counter the misogynistic anxiety generated from "representing androgyny as a gaining of feminine traits" (Quitslund, *Supreme Fiction,* 24). Where Spenser's poetic imagery articulates human development in balanced gendered terms through the allegorical figure of the hermaphrodite, it underscores contemporary appreciation for expressions of gender not as innate, but as learned behaviors that are the product of social paradigms instilled as early as infancy. These suggestive androgynies invite consideration of Elizabeth's consciously asexual self-representation in the little-known *Gripsholm Portrait* (*Fig. 5)* sent to Erik of Sweden. The image allowed Elizabeth to occupy "what was for her the strongest possible representational position, that of a body neither distinctly male nor distinctly female" (Frye, *Representation*, 36), asserting a powerful and self-sufficient image of a young queen who had already set her mind against the proposed match. Herein, Elizabeth's ambiguous self-representation was both politically significant and personally powerful.

Throughout Book III, Spenser creatively reworks the positive aspects of the myth, employing it as subtext through which to offer a corrective to the absolutist view of gender. Where

the allegory of the Garden corrects the mistake of Hermaphroditus by demonstrating that gender is naturally ambiguous, with masculine and feminine attributes resulting from social and pedagogical processes, the close of Book III illustrates the corollary potential for synthesis. When Amoret and Scudamour embrace in the final stanzas, their happiness spurs Britomart's recollection of the ancient myth of hermaphroditic unification:

> Had ye them seene, ye would have surely thought,
> That they had been that fair *Hermaphrodite*,
> Which that rich Romane of white marble wrought. (III.xii.46a. 1-3)

Articulating more than just partnership between two individuals, the image of the hermaphrodite becomes an emblem of an ideal, synthetic union of body and soul through companionate marriage.

Negotiating complex tensions between images of gendered polarities, *Doctor Faustus* offers a creative reinterpretation of the hermaphrodite myth that effectively revises and subverts Spenser's ideal harmonies. Instead, visions of estrangement and perpetual dislocation intrude and assert themselves. Throughout the play, Faustus seeks to define himself in relation to his elusive, androgynous familiar who, far from the stock character of medieval Morality, is by turns fearsome and friendly, prudent and predatory. Where Mephostophilis dutifully adopts the roles of confessor, caregiver, and teacher, Faustus enacts corresponding roles as penitent, dependent and student. Such power-coded mutualism and interdependency between the magician and his diabolical familiar offers an arresting image of hermaphroditic union, one that expressly counters Spenser's configuration of Platonic divine love with ironic knowledge that such coupling can only result in, at best, imbalance. At worst, it ensures damnation and destruction.

When Faustus scoffs at Mephostophilis' descriptions of the torments of hell, belittling what he perceives as effeminate "passion", he reveals not only his foolishness, but also his desperation to affirm his fragile gender identity, much like an adolescent schoolboy who projects onto others the very thing he himself most fears. In this, he is understood to be engaged with that quintessential Renaissance project of fashioning himself as a (gentle)man. Faustus' noted fissured identity is a product not just of the generic instability and religious anxiety that infects the

world of the play, but of the struggle of adolescence to emerge from an ambiguously gendered state. Against such pressures that further emphasize hermaphroditic imagery, Faustus' claims to possess such "manly fortitude" (1.3.83) that he may resist the torments of Lucifer. In his proclaimed desire for a wife because he is "wanton and lascivious" (2.1.141), he reveals a transparently jejune attempt to establish a hyperbolized sexuality. Long since estranged from unnamed "parents base of stock" (Chorus, 11) and thriving on male academic competition, Faustus not only attempts to "play the man", but performatively enacts "an exaggerated masculine ideal and the total rejection of its feminine complement" (Deats*, Sex, Gender and Desire*, 208). And yet, in striving to construct himself as a "liberal humanist subject, … unified, autonomous, knowing, and masculine" (203), Faustus enacts the hermaphrodite's tale by failing to read his gender identity in mutable terms, thus rendering himself permanently estranged from cohesive selfhood.

In the context of presenting identity as an aggregate achieved over time, both *Doctor Faustus* and *The Faerie Queene* offer suggestive conflations of time and space. Notably, the Garden of Adonis exists in an atemporal state where there is "continuall Spring and haruest there/ Continuall, both meeting at one tyme" (II.vi.42.1-2). The repetition of "continual" underscores the Garden's unending genesis, a spontaneous generation that requires no intervention from the "sharp steele" of a "Gardiner to sett, or sow/ To plant or prune: for of their owne accord/ All things, as they created were, doe grow" (34.1-3). Since time is not linear but cyclical, beginnings and ending are elided in the Garden. This circularity means that stark divisions between seasons are erased, a blending-together that also correlates with notions of gender as fluid and changeable. For Doctor Faustus, "bleeding-together" means something quite different. Even as Faustus' blood congeals and runs again to sign the contract, Mephostophilis rhetorically asks, "What will I not do to obtain his soul?" (2.1.72), suggesting the inclusion of *any* devious, bloody or otherwise radical possibility.

The Faerie Queene offers endless accommodation in more positive terms. Correlating with the descriptor of Adonis as the " Father of all formes" (III.vi. 47. 8), male and female both, the demigod is characterized as "eterne in mutabilitie,/ And by succession made perpetuall" (47.5-6).

Eternity is thus a product of repetition and discovered through continual change. The control over time and mortality that is elsewhere associated with magicians and their craft is effectively transferred by the analogy of the Garden to the author. First mentioned in the second book as part of a myth of literary creation where the protean poet discovers his magical, creative spark, Kenneth Gross observes that the device of a garden was common in Renaissance thought as a means to "link the work of the human maker or thinker to the work of a creating God, a thinker of the first idea" (359). Thus, the image of the Garden would have been readily interpreted by Spenser's readership as a landscape of creative possibility activated by the magical power of poetic language.

This special nature of time explored in the unique space of the Garden is reflected in the metaphysical discussions of Faustus and Mephostophilis. When Faustus asks, "how comes it then that thou art out of hell?" (1.3.73), the Demon replies,

> Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.
> Think'st thou that I that saw the face of God
> And tasted the eternal joys of heaven
> Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
> In being deprived of everlasting bliss?" (1.3.74-78).

The remark suggests that hell is not a location or destination, but a mediated state of mind forever deprived of heavenly blissful contact. As such, escape is impossible for the damned like Mephostophilis, but yet attainable for sinners who repent. Like his demonic familiar, Faustus is incarcerated in a prison of conscious perception, where his demonstrably faulty belief that he is always, already damned results in his becoming so indeed. By attempting to read his fate in the same absolute terms as he does his gender identity, *Doctor Faustus* not only animates contemporary theological dilemmas, it challenges unsophisticated readings of ideologies, be they religious or political, literary or dramatic.

Amoret's appearance in the Masque of Cupid represents the climax of a series of works of art presented in Busirane's House that are designed to forward his particular and demonstrably slanted reading of romantic love. As modern critics have noted, this version of romance is not

only tantamount to a series of classical rapes (Silberman), but also functions as an indictment of Petrarchan courtly aesthetics (Quilligan). As such, the magical artistry Busirane presents allegorizes love in a way that runs counter to the vision of companionate, chaste marriage offered throughout Book III. To defeat Busirane's enchantments, the poem presents two readers and two versions of reading through the figures of Britomart and Amoret, who work in complementary ways to achieve a single purpose. As witness to Busirane's casting of spells, Britomart becomes privy to the language of magic, an understanding supported by her critical reading of the allegorical art elsewhere in the House. Such circumspection mitigates the effect of the sorcerer's "wicked weapon" (III.xii.33. 2), so that,

> Vnwares it strooke into her snowie chest,
> That litle drops empurpled her faire brest.
> Exceeding wroth therewith the virgin grew.
> Albe the wound were nothing deepe imprest,
> And fiercely forth her mortall blade she drew,
> To giue him the reward for such vile outrage dew. (III.xii.33. 4-9)

In contrast, Busirane's magical allegory holds Amoret literally and figuratively within its thrall: she is "seeming transfixed with a cruell dart" (III.xii.31.5), or rather, deluded by the magical visions presented by the poet-sorcerer.

In her dramatic presentation as a profaned sacred heart, Amoret becomes an allegorical representation of undying love within a romance frame. Violently scripted into Busirane's art against her will, Amoret's resistance within a misogynistic world of courtly romance paradoxically means that, the greater her resistance, the greater her acceptance of her Petrarchan role as unwilling beloved (Silberman, 61-2). However, as the text demonstrates, Amoret's prison also becomes her means of escape as she is redeemed by learning to read allegorically: having spent so many months viewing the typological versions of herself in the nightly masques, Amoret realizes her freedom can only come from the deconstruction of Busirane's writing. She stays Britomart's vengeful sword to insist that the magician un-ravel his scripts: "his chamres back to

reuerse" and "those same bloody lynes reherse" (III.xii.36. 2 &7). By reading through his allegory, Amoret undoes the magician's "cruel penning" that confined her within his romantic lyrics.

In her landmark essay, "Of Chastity and Violence: Elizabeth I and Edmund Spenser in the House of Busirane", Susan Frye argues that the poet attempts to establish himself as the magician's successor in controlling the language that supports the ideology of marriage and the social roles for women--especially for Queen Elizabeth. While this reading offers suggestive historicist interpretation, neither the implied misogyny nor attempted poetic hegemony are fully supported by the poem. Britomart's infiltration of the sorcerer's lair effectively represents a woman and an Elizabeth-figure as having the power to be a critical reader, considering, evaluating and ultimately dismissing ideology that runs counter to her chaste sensibilities. Significantly, her partner in this endeavor is also female, one who learns through personal experience the hazards of allegorical reading, but who yet triumphs, thus reinforcing the idea that as astute readers, women are not bound by allegories that seek to control them. Though Frye suggests that Spenser asserts his own ideological outlook as poet-magician by rewriting the Masques staged at Elizabeth's court in which the Queen self-consciously presented herself as Chastity rescuing another chaste damsel, the defeat of Busirane and the triumph of the women readers in literally dispelling the ideology of Cupid locates agency firmly within the grasp of the reader herself. As Susanne Wofford notes, "Spenser's narrator may tell his readers what his allegory means, but his readers continually find that his inscribed interpretations do not reflect the experience of the characters" (15-16). Indeed, the defeat of Busirane, the erasure of his spells, and the magical disappearance of his artwork signals a wry acknowledgement that the author loosens absolute control over the process of signification, placing onus for ideological challenge on the educated reader.

In contrast, Faustus' lack of sophistication as a reader is articulated dramatically when he requests a wife but instead receives what the stage directions reveal to be "*a Devil dressed like a woman, with fireworks*". The resulting physical comedy prompts Faustus to exclaim, "Here's a hot whore indeed! No, I'll no wife" (2.1.146). Since Faustus reads gender only in absolute terms, for him all women fall into the categories of virgin or whore, so that the pun simultaneously critiques

while it reinforces the naive misogyny of the Doctor's binaristic thinking. Believing he has sufficiently dissuaded the Doctor, Mephostophilis chastens, "Marriage is but a ceremonial toy" (2.1.147) In part, Mephostophilis' recalcitrance stems from unstated but implied knowledge that marriage is a sacrament, and as such, not something the Demon who works in the name of the Devil can provide. Yet, his rejoinder concerning marriage, "If thou lovest me, think no more of it" (2.1.148) not only reinforces the implied intimacy between the fallen angel and the Doctor, it invites scrutiny of the institution of marriage and the companionate marital bond. In addition to the rendering of their relationship in hermaphroditic and deeply ironic terms, the partnership between Faustus and his familiar is presented as an intentional travesty of marriage, where the Doctor and Mephostophilis even enact the bonds of a sacramental contract sealed by performative affirmations (2.1.91-2 &115), and secured by the dower of Faustus' soul. Further, the final term of comparison concerning sexual partners is surprising: "Were she as chaste as was Penelope,/ As wise as Saba, or as beautiful/ As was bright Lucifer before his fall" (2.1.152-5). As such, divine marital union valorized by Spenser meets with such parodic scrutiny that Patrick Cheney argues the play forms "a powerful indictment against Spenser's idealism, with its optimistic balance" ("Love and Magic", 107). For Marlowe, such balance is merely an ideological illusion that ultimately "degenerates into diabolism" (107).

Though long-deferred, Faustus' request for "the fairest maid in Germany" (2.1.140) is finally realized in the conjured form of "Helen of Greece". Gazing on the quintessential symbol of female beauty, Faustus offers the legendary lines:

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
>
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? (5.1.92-3)

Yet in Marlowe's representation of the classical tale, Faustus neither figures as the dashing Paris, nor as the constant and resolute Menelaus. Instead, in his short-sightedness he recalls Spenser's churlish Malbecco. Cuckolded by his nubile wife, Hellenore, who exploits his avarice against him, the tale features yet another magical transformation through language as Malbecco becomes the typological representation of jealousy. Distinguished from the images of complementary mutualism articulated by the fusion of Amoret and Scudamour, such unhappy and oppositional

couplings evoke the medieval model of political marriages that contracted beauty for wealth and status for power. In seeking to possess an icon of female beauty, and through her, the attendant implications of masculine power, Malbecco's loss of everything he holds dear, even his humanity, foreshadows the fatality of Faustus' epic desire:

> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
>
> Her lips suck forth my soul. See where it flies! (5.1.94-5)

In his appeal to what is literally a devil in disguise, Faustus falls victim to the same error as Malbecco: in desiring the superlative beauty in his quest for power over all things, even death itself, Faustus consigns himself to an infinity of torment. In declaring his enduring love, the Doctor unwittingly enacts a performative seal, effecting the final step in consigning his soul to what the audience knows, but he little realizes, is an agent of Lucifer. In both texts, the figure of Helen functions as an allegorical symbol for the fatal urge to possess power, riches and prestige. Staged as another damned spirit performing the role of Helen, the famous apostrophe emblematizes Faustus' devotion to language that reinforces rather than deconstructs ideological binaries of spirituality and gender. As Sophie Grey recently noted, "*Faustus* brings to light a different kind of magic that is rooted in language. This magic is associated not with the certainty of the necromancer's spell but with the ambiguity of limitless interpretation" (54).

Faustus' terrible marriage to Hell[en] will be performed forever. And yet, through the repetitive nature of theatrical performance, the unstable nature of the text, and the performative nature of the self, the playwright allows his audience to entertain the possibility that in his next iteration, Faustus may find the words through which to free himself. In this regard, the outlook of Marlowe's play finds accord with Spenser's unending poetic ideology. Though Book III and the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene*, closes with the image of the hermaphrodite, the effect of conclusion is necessarily qualified since the heroine, Britomart, remains unfulfilled in her quest. As Lauren Silberman observes, the concluding scene only serves to "question the very possibility of closure" (54). Indeed, in the subsequent edition, the stanzas featuring the hermaphroditic embrace of Amoret and Scudamour will be erased and their marriage deferred indefinitely. Such

magical erasure, delays and suspensions, suggest that perfect union, like that of the gendered self is always a work of performative process.

Figure 6. *The Ermine Portrait*.

Chapter 4

Zenocrate and Florimel: Identity, Marriage, and (In)Action

I do, yet dare not say I ever meant,
I seem stark mute but inwardly do prate.
I am, and not; I freeze and yet am burned,
Since from myself another self I turned.

- from "On Monsieur's Departure", Elizabeth I

The first of Marlowe's plays to be performed on the London stage featured the dynamic, larger-than-life figure of Tamburlaine who captured the attention of contemporary audiences and proclaimed the arrival of a new style of English poetry for a new kind of English nation. At once an everyman of humble origins and a superman capable of vanquishing armies, a simple shepherd and a gifted scholar-orator, an exotic, holy book-burning barbarian and a poetic soul moved to the semblance of mercy by love, the title hero is an enigmatic protagonist reflecting the often-conflicting ideals of an emergent national consciousness. Tamburlaine personifies, even as he also interrogates Early Modern aspirations for a uniquely English identity and influence on the world stage. If, as John Blakely recently argues, Tamburlaine's meteoric rise to fame and power is a deliberate "deconstruction of [Spenser's] exemplary Christian hero" (48), then the story of his bride, Zenocrate, serves to examine analogous theories regarding female behavior, beauty and agency represented in Spenser's heroines. The relationship between the princess and the hero consistently troubles Petrarchan sensibilities regarding gendered behavior, reflecting critically on the Neoplatonic ideal marriage represented by Florimell and Marinell in *The Faerie Queene*. Indeed, over the course of the two plays, Zenocrate and her counterparts Zabina and Olympia effect subversive parallel performance of Florimell and her doppelgänger, illustrating the ways in which women are imagined through performative discourse by their male counterparts, and in turn, how they understand by themselves in relation to such politico-literary ideology.

First witnessed attempting to escape from the personification of the forest's dangers, the "griesly foster" (III. i. 17.2), Florimell experiences the narrative arc of her story as a series of challenges to her chastity: having eluded the forester and rebuffed the well-meaning Arthur (III. iv. 47-53), she attracts the attentions of the witch's son from whom she flees (III.vii.1-19), seeks rescue from the witch's hyena by the fisher, who in turn harasses her (III. viii. 20-7) until she is

rescued by Proteus, only to become his prisoner (III. viii. 29-43). This motif of a startled female traveller encountering wild, lusty and terrifying would-be suitors is replicated in the first encounter between Tamburlaine and Zenocrate. Clad in the garments of a lowly shepherd when he arrests the princess on her journey from Media to Egypt (I *Tamb*. 2.1-16), Tamburlaine presents himself in a disguise that is deliberately suggestive of Spenser's bucolic alter ego, Colin Clout. However, where Spenser's famed idyllic poetry framed a virtuous and pious everyman as a new, uniquely English identity for an emergent nation, the mighty lines scripted by Marlowe and spoken by his shepherd-warrior establish a wholly different archetype: lowly yet erudite, heretical but divinely blessed. Likewise, the tale of Spenser's shepherds provides a measured satire of ecclesiastic controversy, but Marlowe's evocation demonstrates atheistic contempt by burning holy books and daring the Prophet out of heaven (II *Tamb.* 5.1.186-90). Tamburlaine's "shepherd's weeds" are not employed as a sartorial demonstration of the absence of affectation, but instead as a disguise to be thrown off to reveal the armour beneath in relation to his own conquering ambitions as well as to the political possibilities of his beautiful prisoner:

> Lie here, ye weeds that I distain to wear!
> This complete armour and this curtle axe
> Are adjucts more beseeming Tamburlaine.
> And, madam, whatsoever you esteem
> Of this success and loss unvalued,
> Both may invest you empress of the East (I *Tamb*. 1.2.41-6).

Unlike the wild and lusty would-be suitors harassing Florimell, Tamburlaine declares himself to Zenocrate with performative finality from their first encounter.

Critics have long noted that Tamburlaine's self-stylizing echoes that of Spenser's Arthur. Where the Briton prince is notable for his costume that includes "Vpon the top of all this loftie crest,/ A bounch of heares discoured diuersly,/ With spincled pearle, and gold full richly drest," (I.vii.32. 1-3), Tamburlaine offers deliberate sartorial mimicry: "I'll ride in golden armour like the sun,/ And in my helm a tripe plume shall spring,/Spangled with diamonds dancing in the air" (2

Tamb. 4.3. 115-7). This textual indebtedness is further emphasized in the descriptions of Arthur's plume as being:

> Like to an Almond tree ymounted hye,
> On top of greene *Selinis* all alone,
> With blossoms braue bedecked daintily
> Whose tender locks do tremble euery one
> At euerie little breath, that vnder heauen is blowne. (I.vii. 32)

As though to emphasize, and even signal the source of Tamburlaine's inspiration, his descriptive self-styling goes on to echo the simile nearly word for word:

> Like to an almond tree y-mounted high
> Upon the lofty and celestial mount
> Of ever-green Selinus, quaintly decked
> With blooms more white than Erycina's brows,
> Whose tender blossoms tremble every one
> At every little breath that thorough heaven is blown. (2 *Tamb.* 4.3. 119-125)

As Roma Gill notes in her extended essay in *The Spenser Encyclopedia,* "This is not plagiarism; it is not even simple borrowing. Tamburlaine is *quoting* Spenser—deluding himself that he belongs to the same medieval chivalric tradition as Arthur, and that his approach to Samarcanda is comparable to Arthur's relief of Una" (1190). Tamburlaine's speech, with its emphasis on costume, appearance, and form is a performative playbook, deliberately adopting and adapting the epic vision of Arthur for his own ends. As Patrick Cheney has argued, this citational borrowing by Tamburlaine constitutes part of Marlowe's literary challenge to his rival, which he describes in Derridean terms as "deconstructive" (*Counterfeit,* 16) for its tendency to inhabit forms only to subtly alter their meaning. Such inter-textual play is not restricted to the speeches of hero-shepherds, but extends through figurative representation to their respective paramours: just as Colin's Rosalinde is a Petrarchan shadow-figure, her true identity cryptically concealed, and Arthur's Una is a composite figure representing a host of idealized female virtues, so too is Florimell's real identity even more pointedly obscured behind the affection of poetic conceits such

that even her true love cannot distinguish the real woman from a demonic interloper (V.iii.19). Where Zenocrate's often-wordless watchfulness has prompted critics to reduce her function to “the embodiment of the idea of beauty” (Baines, 6), they miss the essential point: it is through Zenocrate silence that Marlowe dramatizes this violence of patriarchal and poetic ideology as it enforces the objectification and abstraction of women's bodies, and the exclusion of their voices.

Faced with the sudden attentions of the shepherd-warrior and lacking the ability either to fight or to take flight, Zenocrate attempts a third and very Marlovian way: she speaks directly. She asks for her captor's mercy while imparting details of her family's considerable influence (I *Tamb.*1.2. 12) and her powerful guardian, "the mighty Turk” (15). When Tamburlaine remains unmoved, insisting that Zenocrate and her retinue, "shall be kept our forced followers” (66), she tries another line of argument, warning that: “The gods, defenders of the innocent,/ Will never prosper your intended drifts/ That thus oppress poor friendless passengers” (68-70). Detailing the political status of her father and uncle, and then threatening divine sanction, Zenocrate names the sources of influence most applicable to women in a gendered economy – father, family and faith. In citing these avenues to power, Zenocrate implicitly identifies her place within what Gayle Rubin termed the “political economy” of Sex, where “women are given in marriage, taken in battle, exchanged for favors, sent as tribute, traded, bought and sold” (175). However, Zenocrate’s appeal represents a powerful attempt to actualize her political value as determined in relation to the bond she represents among three significantly linked powers: the Arabian, Turkish and Egyptian empires. Ironically, these are the very structures of power against which Tamburlaine wages war, claiming his right to rule not through divine or genealogical predestination, but through performative action. Tamburlaine applies performative speech acts to power, as evidenced in his early claim to a self-fulfilling pedigree when he declares: “I am a lord for so my deeds shall prove” (I.1.2. 34). He hereby performs the very actions that he names, actions that afford him license to challenge social hierarchy by courting the Egyptian princess and assuming the privileges of nobility. If as Rubin declares, “kinship is organization, and organization gives power” (174), Tamburlaine’s quest to achieve kingship is not merely an audacious usurpation but an ideological challenge that strikes against the systems of hierarchical organization. Moreover,

Tamburlaine engages with even as he defies the same structures that are encoded by but also interrogated within *The Faerie Queene.*

Zenocrate distinguishes herself from the wordless, headlong flight of Florimell, by attempting to employ her own voice to refuse her captor's charming rhetoric. Yet the threat Tamburlaine presents is not simply robbery or the possible compromise of her chastity, but imprisonment within the conventions that would freeze her within a gendered frame. In "'Divine Zenocrate', 'Wretched Zenocrate': Female Speech and Disempowerment in *Tamburlaine I*", Pam Whitfield argues that Tamburlaine employs Petrarchan sensibilities that result in Zenocrate's "immobilization" (88) within a prison of gender-based conventions. If, as Reed Way Dasenbrock explains, "the central legacy of Petrarchism for the Elizabethans is the concept of the self" (38), then both Spenser and Marlowe can be understood as examining a system of gendered relations that are intentionally and exclusively one-sided. As Harry Berger observes the issue becomes "how to redress the balance in a culture whose images of woman and love, whose institutions affecting women and love, were products of the male imagination" ("Book III", 236). By repeatedly labeling her "fair" and associating her in his soliloquy with concordant images of silver, snow, ivory and silk (I *Tamb*.1.2.82-105), Tamburlaine articulates the threat to women that is broader and more insidious than any physical restraint. By denying her the ability to self-identify or to adapt gendered economy to her advantage, he controls her identity by transforming her through his "working words" (I *Tamb.* 2.3.25) into an image of a woman of his own design.

Employing the language of orators and poets, Tamburlaine proves that his facility as leader and hero lies not just on the battlefield, but also in his ability to control the hearts and minds of his subjects, even eventually that of his intelligent and independent bride. The ideological language of poetic praise, especially as it extols women for their beauty conflated with fairness and chastity, is here identified as a finely tuned weapon not just for romantic conquest, but for political and even revolutionary means. Corinne Abate argues that Tamburlaine recognizes Zenocrate as "an economically viable asset, powerfully connected to a political and social establishment to which he has no other legitimate access" (19). However, he does not ally himself with Zenocrate to gain power through the conventional means of an advantageous match,

but rather to prove the transcendent nature of his authority. As Stephen Greenblatt observes “Marlowe’s heroes fashion themselves not in loving submission to an absolute authority but in self-conscious opposition: Tamburlaine against hierarchy” (*Self-Fashioning*, 203), so that where his military conquests challenge established political systems, his romantic ones work to deconstruct the gendered economy by defining female virtue and value in his own terms.

As Tamburlaine repeatedly praises Zenocrate for her "fair face and heavenly hue" (I *Tamb.*1.2.36), his studiedly poetic sentiments closely echo descriptions of "Florimell the Fayre" (III.v.8.7), whom the poet also compares to a celestial object, likening her to a comet: “All as a blazing starre doth farre outcast/ His hearie beames, and flaming lockes dispredd” (III. i.16. 5-6). The description of Florimell’s abduction by Proteus, “Shepheard of the seas of yore” (III.viii. 30. 1), who attempts “To winne her liking vnto his delight: / With flattering words he sweetly wooed her,/ And offered fair guiftes, t’allure her sight” (38. 5-7) parallels Zenocrate’s detainment by the Scythian shepherd, who likewise promises “My martial prizes, with five hundred men,/ Won on the fifty-headed Volga’s waves,/ Shall all we offer to Zenocrate” (I *Tamb.*1.2.102-4). Both women are described as having pale visages: Florimell is said to be "as white as whales bone" (II.i. 15. 5) and riding "Vpon a milk-white palfrey" (II.i.15.2), while Zenocrate is likened to "rocks of pearl and precious stone” (I.3.3.118) and envisioned being drawn "With milk-white harts upon an ivory sled” (I.1.2.98). Further, each are presented as clad in materials suggesting both purity and rarity: Tamburlaine tells Zenocrate, "Thy garments shall be made of Median silk,/ Enchased with precious jewels" (I *Tamb.*1.2.95-6), and Florimell's clothes likewise appear "wrought of beaten gold,/And all her steed with tinsell trappings shone” (II.i.6-7). In "'Haunted by Beautified Beauty'" Tracking the Images of Spenser's Florimell(s)", Robert Tate identifies these images of female beauty as "cultural markers” (207) as they routinely connote purity and chastity. As a pervasive "cultural marker", female "fairness" as represented through associations with pristine whiteness is pointedly employed in *The Ermine Portrait* of Elizabeth (*Fig. 6*). Featuring the creature who, it was thought, would rather die than soil its pure white fur, the presence of the crowned ermine not only connotes Elizabeth's royalty, but also her much-discussed commitment to bodily and spiritual purity. But Tate also argues that Spenser employs them self-consciously and ironically to critique

neo-Platonic ideologies: for example, Florimell's dwarf, Dony, is understood to employ these markers to identify his mistress precisely because he "knows the significance of 'cloth of gold' when it comes to 'beseeming' a noble mayd,' and he knows that whiteness is 'the surest sign' of his lady's identity and unparalleled fairness" (Tate, 207). Indeed, as Patrick Cheney argues, "Spenser uses a cultural art familiar to his audience not merely to reflect his culture's beliefs " ("Doubted", 339), but to highlight the errors created when men perceive women solely within an ideological frame. The descriptions of Florimell, like those of Spenser's other heroines, are not merely reiterations of social and moral aesthetics, but critiques of those conventions that seek to define women within narrow, arbitrary terms.

Insofar as Tamburlaine's lyric praise of Zenocrate alludes to the figurations also presented in relation to Florimell, Marlowe not only emulates familiar poetic conceits, but performatively and subversively engages in the Petrarchan practice of *imitatio*, which Abigail Brundin identifies as a practice that shapes "both the inner and outer man" (10). Though such practice originated as a medieval religious technique for developing a cohesive group identity, it was adopted within Petrarchan genre and subsequently co-opted by neo-Platonic modes of thought. Brundin notes that the "stress on interiority and individual responsibility for nurturing an active faith find clear resonance in the Petrarchan program" (9). Consequently, it is unsurprising that Spenser should adopt imitation in form, even as he offers a corrective to its unsophisticated deployment. However, with the further knowledge that "Platonic philosophy itself had been bastardised and adapted to suit the requirements of particular literary genres and social groupings" (Brundin, 9), Marlowe goes further, deconstructively inhabiting the modes of an imitative philosophy to expose the mechanism and violence of its power.

Where the similarities between Zenocrate and Florimell indicate a shared criticism of aesthetic traditions, the parallels between the Sultan's daughter and the False Florimell implied by both poet and playwright suggests that the performance of these women be understood not just as literary and thematic, but cultural and sociological. Created by the witch for her broken-hearted son after the real Florimell escapes his lecherous advances, the False Florimell is more than merely a passable substitute, but a rendering even more perfect than life because she

represents a composite female ideal. The details of the interloper's composition emphasize the artifice in her creation, both literally and linguistically: "in stead of eyes two burning lampes" were set "in silver sockets, shyning like the skyes" (III.viii.7. 1-2) and "in stead of yellow lockes …golden wyre to weaue her curled head" (5, 6). More than simply highlighting her deliberate and even mechanical construction as an entity designed to please the eye, in relaying the process of her conjuring, the poet indicts the common conceits of poetic praise. False Florimell is more than just another cautionary symbol for unrealistic, falsified beauty. As Tate argues, she functions as "a highly specific and insidious phantastic representation" (207), one that illustrates the "discursive construction" (205) both of herself and her inspiration. Both Florimell and her doppelganger have their identities defined in terms of their outward appearance, such that who they are is dependent upon whom they appear to be to an external, implicitly male, observer. This, as Ann Rosalind Jones explains, is a feature of "Neoplatonism and Petrarchism [that] were systems of metaphor and rhetoric organized around a male gaze, constituting and affirming male erotic fantasy as the governing frame of reference" (4). That even Marinell has difficulty distinguishing his true love from her conjured reflection emphasizes the pervasiveness of regarding women in culturally-imagined, androcentric terms: "He gazed still vpon that snowy mayd;/ Whom euer as he did the more auize, / The more to be true Florimell he did surmize (V.iii. 18 7-9). Because like the other onlookers, Marinell imagines 'Florimell the Fayre' not as a real person but as an abstraction, he is deluded by the conjured Spright. It is only when the real Florimell is placed in direct comparison to the False that forgery is revealed. Unlike the reflective duplicity of Duessa, which is exposed as hideous and half-formed (I.viii.46-9), the False Florimell "melted as with heat" (V.iii.24.7), suggesting that when poetic images are compared to real individuals, their abstractions evaporate as a dream – or nightmare – exposed to the light of day.

As Sheila Cavanagh notes in *Wanton Eyes & Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in "The Faerie Queene"*, the poet both establishes and interrogates the "bond between females deemed "fairest" and those found to possess "virtue" […] when the narrator calls the "female" virtue chastity "that fairest virtue" (III. Proem, I. I)" (138). This ideological connection is examined symbolically in relation to the two Florimells through their magical girdle. An outward

representation of “the virtue of chast loue,/ And wiuehood true” (IV.v.3.1), the girdle challenges critics to account for the evidence that False Florimell both wears (V.iii.24.9) and, incongruously, is not able to wear it : “about her middle small/ They thought to gird, as best it her became;/ But by no means they could it thereto frame” (IV.v.16.3-5). A.C. Hamilton argues the girdle is not simply a textual inconsistency but instead a deliberately misleading symbol, one that demonstrates the shifting relationship between the sign and the signified (547). Extending Hamilton’s idea, Rebecca Yearling has more recently argued that the girdle serves to make a nuanced statement regarding perceptions of chastity and its symbolic identification such that “the value of chastity in itself is brought seriously into question” (140). False Florimell demonstrates a perfunctory form of virtue, one that is a reflection of her gendered behavioral conditioning and not a natural result of the inner purity of spirit as displayed by the trials of the real Florimel. Those knights who only look to symbols rather than behavior to establish identity thus consider False Florimell virtuous enough to be able to wear the girdle, only realizing their error when she is placed in direct comparison with the authentic Florimell, whereupon she evaporates leaving: “ne of that goodly hew remained ought, / But th’emptie girdle, which about her wast was wrought” (V.iii.24.8-9). When viewed critically, the poet implies, abstractions melt away and the reader is left with only authentic representations. The controversial presence and absence of the girdle means False Florimell becomes a symbol not just for false beauty or truth, but a means of exploring a cultural preference for falsely conceptualizing women not as and for who they are, but through social and cultural conceptions inscribed upon them and performatively enacted through iterative behavior.

In describing Zenocrate as "Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills" (I *Tamb.* 1.2.89) the playwright refers to the same descriptive conceits as Spenser’s snowy eidolon, who was formed from "purest snow" from "the Riphoean Hils" (III.viii. 6: 2 & 4), the location that the 1596 edition identifies as the hero’s homeland, "the mountains in Scythia (n. 6). Tamburlaine also describes Zenocrate’s eyes as “brighter than the lamps of heaven” (I *Tamb*. 3.3.120), a detail that accords with False Florimell having “instead of eyes two burning lampes” (III.viii.7.1). Extending the metaphor of Zenocrate's snowy purity, Tamburlaine tells her: “Thou shalt be drawn amidst the

frozen pools/ And scale the icy mountains' lofty tops, / Which with thy beauty will be soon resolved (I *Tamb.*1.2.99-101). By connecting Zenocrate's “fairness” with the recurring images of frozen landscapes, Tamburlaine's descriptions signal more than simply an intention to return with her to his homeland, the northerly and mountainous Scythia. Instead, the frozen imagery signals Tamburlaine’s attempts to subsume Zenocrate within the same gendered ideological framework as that personified by Spenser’s snowy damsel. By replacing the Egyptian princess before him with a version of the Petrarchan female ideal, his personal chimera of a Scythian snow queen, Tamburlaine’s words erase Zenocrate’s personal identity. When Tamburlaine declares, "this is she with whom I am in love" (I *Tamb*.1.2.108) he is employing not just a familiar romantic conceit, but a turn of phrase connected with an ideology that imprisons women within a restrictive paradigm. Though it may appear to be indicative of the power of love at first sight, his instant ardor reveals more about the hero's own deliberate mythologizing: he is in love not with Zenocrate herself, but with the image of her that he has himself created. Remarking, “I must be pleased perforce, wretched Zenocrate!” (I *Tamb*.1.2.259) the princess herself acknowledges that in substituting her real person for an idealized image, Tamburlaine circumscribes her ability to voice opposition in her own words.

By refusing to immediately acquiesce to Tamburlaine’s ‘working words’ that seek to strip her of identity and reframe her within a worldview of his own devising, Zenocrate’s reaction stands in stark opposition to that of Theridamas. Hearing the Scythian warrior’s valiant rhetoric, the Persian soldier declares himself to be "Won with thy words and conquered with thy looks,/ I yield myself, my men and horse to thee" (I *Tamb*.1.2.228-9). Tamburlaine responds with a form of marriage vow:

> Theridamas, my friend, take here my hand,
> Which is as much as if I swore by heaven
> And called the gods to witness of my vow.
> Thus shall my heart be still combined with thine
> Until our bodies turn to elements
> And both our souls aspire celestial thrones (I *Tamb*.1.2.232-7).

With its strong emotional charge, and even hints of sexual chemistry in the word “yield” and suggestions of unity of “bodies”, the interchange appears to subvert the reaction to Tamburlaine’s personal and rhetorical charm that might be traditionally anticipated from Zenocrate. Curious though it may seem, this substitution very nearly mirrors the reactions of Florimell and her double: where the real Florimell is resistant to the advances of anyone, even the well-intentioned Arthur (III.iv, 45-53), False Florimell so dutifully plays the part of chaste, courtly damsel that Yearling observes that her actions more nearly align with the expectations of romance tradition than those of her inspiration, where she even demonstrates the requisite “fidelity in her amorous attachments” (139) by returning to Braggadochio after the tournament. Yet False Florimell’s adherence to chivalric code form is complicated by the details of her genesis: she is enlivened by a *male* demonic sprite, one who, the reader is told, needs no instruction for his gendered dissembling:

> A wicked Spright yfraught with fawning guyle,
> And fayre resemblance aboue all the rest, [...]
> Him needed not instruct, which way were best
> Him selfe to fasion likest Florimell
> Ne how to speake, ne how to vse his gest;
> For he in counterfesaunce did excell,
> And all the wyles of wemens wits knew passing well (III.viii. 8 1-2, 5-9).

That False Florimell’s behavior more perfectly approximates that of the “untouchable lady of Petrarchan tradition” (Yearling, 139) than the manners of the real Florimell signals the poet’s acknowledgement that female behavioral identity is indeed a performative construct generated for and perpetuated by a male viewpoint. In crafting False Florimell as a figure whose gendered appearance is determined not by biological sex but through behavioral performance, Spenser’s epic suggests the potential danger posed by rigid, socially defined gender-roles as articulated in Petrarchan and neo-Platonic discourse. Likewise, Theridamas’ parallel demonstration of the expected female response to Tamburlaine’s Petrarchan-inspired poetics, coupled with his martial / marital loyalty, reveals Marlowe’s interrogation of the idea that language and behavior typically

gendered as female is a natural representation. Instead, he presents such gendered behavior as a conventional cultural assignment that can be adopted and adapted to suit a variety of means.

The process of behavioral adaptation in response to the pressures of social and cultural mores is dramatized by Zenocrate when her grief stricken advisor, Agydas, remarks, "Tis more than pity such a heavenly face/ Should by heart's sorrow wax so wan and pale" (I *Tamb*. 3.2.4-5). Inquiring as to the cause of her sorrow, Agydas suggests that she has "digested" her "offensive rape", which the glossary defines as "seizure", but which nevertheless implies a compromise to her chastity in symbolic if not literal terms. Though Zenocrate absolves Tamburlaine of any wrong-doing, she acknowledges:

> A farther passion feeds my thoughts
> With ceaseless and disconsolate conceits,
> Which dyes my looks so lifeless as they are
> And might, if my extremes had full events,
> Make me the ghastly counterfeit of death" (I *Tamb*. 3.2. 14-17)

Instead of beauty, her "fairness" now accords with disconsolate worry, a suggestion Agydas momentarily assumes to mean that she contemplates the route to preserve her virtue routinely applauded in classical literature – suicide: "Eternal heaven sooner be dissolved […]/ Before such hap fall to Zenocrate!" (18- 20) he exclaims. Indeed, Zenocrate's sentiments and the change in her appearance from signaling fair beauty to a pale reflection of the sorrow of her circumstance certainly suggest the possibility that death might be preferable to a dishonored life. Marlowe exhibits a fascination with this ideal of honorable self-sacrifice, as evidenced in his exploration at several junctures throughout the two *Tamburlaine* plays, but the near parallel of Zenocrate's circumstance offered by Olympia in the sequel presents particular comparative resonance. Echoing the Petrarchan sensibilities of Tamburlaine's lofty promises, Theridamas attempts to cajole Olympia with the assurance of becoming "queen of fair Argier,/ And, clothed in costly cloth of massy gold, / Upon the marble turrets of my court" (2 *Tamb*.4.2.39-41). When Olympia issues her infamous refusal: "I cannot love to be an emperess" (49), she demonstrates opposition to Zenocrate's amorous compromise. Exposing the thin veil of romantic posturing, her would-be

lover abandons the postures of civility, insisting “I’ll use some other means to make you yield, / Such is the sudden fury of my love,/ I must and will be pleased, and you shall yield” (51-3). Rather than be subject to her captor's nefarious demands, Olympia employs trickery to effect her own death, anointing herself with “the essential form of marble stone” a substance which, she claims, confers invincibility: “Nor pistol, sword, nor lance can pierce your flesh” (II *Tamb*. 4.2.62;66). When Theridamas foolishly stabs her “anointed” throat, he not only ends her life, he symbolically enacts the silencing that he himself effected through the violence of framing her within Petrarchan ideology. Olympia and Zenocrate both suffer the rapine of war-faring men who promise wealth and prestige to their captive queens. Marlowe hereby renders Olympia as foil to Zenocrate illustrating the impossible choice presented to both women who are confined within an androcentric frame that forcibly inscribes a gendered identity upon them.

Though she appears like Olympia to be poised in fatal contemplation, Zenocrate ultimately reveals to Agydas that her changed appearance is prompted by her decision to “live and die with Tamburlaine” (I *Tamb*. 3.2.24). As Adygas counsels, “Let not a man so vile and barbarous, /…/ Be honoured with your love *but for necessity*” (emphasis mine, I *Tamb*. 3.2.26, 30), Zenocrate’s responses reveal her concordant determination to perform herself into love as the safest course. She does not offer passionate protestations of love, but rather the milquetoast opinion that his hospitality “might in noble minds be counted princely” (I *Tamb*.3.2.39), thus mitigating the suggestion of impropriety while implying that Tamburlaine’s mastery of performative language affords Zenocrate a qualified way to accept his claims of affection and aristocracy. Further, she argues “higher would I rear my estimate/ Than Juno, sister to the highest god, / If I were matched with mighty Tamburlaine” (53-5), revealing that she believes her personal stature would benefit from a union with the Scythian warlord. In her likening of her role more as “sister” rather than “wife”, she affirms that her considerations are indeed more survivalist than sentimental. Anticipating the calculating nature of her conclusion, Agydas advocates for circumspection, imploring her to “let the young Arabian live in hope” (57) since she may yet be ransomed, or alternatively, that Tamburlaine’s ardor may wane: “Now in his majesty he leaves those looks,/ Those words of favour, and those comfortings,/ And gives no more than common

courtesies" (61-3). When Zenocrate offers the requisite response of female protagonists by greeting Agydas' treacherous warning with tears, and the studied claim that she is "Fearing his love through my unworthiness" (65), she signals her willingness to adapt her language and self-presentation for a new audience. When their exchange is interrupted Tamburlaine himself who, having overheard much of the dialogue, takes Zenocrate "*away lovingly by the hand*" (I.3.2.65-6.sd), she makes no comment, nor offers any reaction at all, leaving open the possibility that in revealing her shifting sensibilities to her one-time advisor, the Egyptian princess also found a way to communicate her loyalty to her new husband-to-be. Indeed loyalty to Zenocrate is disloyalty to Tamburlaine, silently indicated at the conclusion of the scene when Agydas is presented with a dagger. Through this mute display of condemnation and power which forcibly and ironically inverts the earlier suggested suicide of Zenocrate while anticipating contrast with the noble desperation of Olympia, the play signals the compelling role of performative language, even when unspoken.

As Corinne Abate notes, once Zenocrate accepts Tamburlaine's proposal, "she is included in every aspect of his glory-seeking career … [appearing] in every scene in which Tamburlaine does throughout the rest of the play" (23). Indeed Zenocrate's conspicuous presence produces both a form of apprenticeship and a means of comprehensive indoctrination. As Tamburlaine prepares to go into battle, he gives Zenocrate his crown and makes his bride-to-be his representative, an action that suggests a display of love and trust, but is in fact Tamburlaine's way of molding her speech and behavior as he pleases. He instructs her to defy the Turkish empress, to "manage words with her as we will arms" (I *Tamb*. 3.3.131) and to act "as if thou wert the empress of the world" (125). He thereby closely conditions her speech and behavior to match his own. This Tamburlaine-created opportunity requires that she prove herself his equal and demonstrate her loyalty through the same performative means that Tamburlaine established in his own rise to power. But she must do so within a distinctly gendered frame. In "'I cannot love to be an emperess': Women and Honour in *Tamburlaine*", Sarah Emsley detects an essential difference between the two women: Zabina "shows the fiercest independence and sense of her own position in their battle of words, while Zenocrate only attempts to follow

Tamburlaine's orders" (180-1). While this discrepancy suggests that Zenocrate may yet be playing a role as she convinces herself of her new love, it also represents starkly differing ideologies regarding the function and ability of women in a political realm. Reinforcing her rank by calling Zenocrate a "base concubine" (I *Tamb.* 3.3.166) and deriding Tamburlaine, as "the great Tartarian thief!" (171), Zabina's insults convey a strictly hierarchical self-definition, one that represents the entrenched political arrangements that Tamburlaine's self-determined ascent seeks to destroy. Further, Zabina's demonstrated ability to participate and even creatively magnify her husband's vitriol implies a marriage partnership of relative equals, one that reflects the ideal companionate marriage explored by Spenser through the eventual union between Florimell and Marinell. Both as a figuration of female power and as a partner in a political marriage, Zabina performs the antithesis of what Tamburlaine's behavioral conditioning seeks to produce with Zenocrate. Zabina acts under her own volition and, when her husband is literally denied the ability to act, she functions as a regent in her own right. However, Zenocrate's speech, behavior and even her identity are effaced through Tamburlaine's paradigmatic performative signification so that her words can only match his actions rather than her own thoughts. By insisting that Zenocrate function as his "paragon" (I *Tamb.* 3.3.119), that is, not as his partner but as a perfect exemplar crafted by him, Tamburlaine engages in the same dark magic as the witch in Spenser in fashioning a woman, a "snowy Lady" whose sole purpose is to fulfill the desires and ideological designations of men.

When Zenocrate initially petitions for mercy, asking "Yet would you have some pity for my sake,/ Because it is my country's, and my father's" (I *Tamb*. 4.2.123-4), Tamburlaine denies her request stating "Not for the world, Zenocrate, if I have sworn" (125). Having formally pronounced the doom of Damascas and its Governor, "But if he stay until the bloody flag,/ Be once advanced on my vermillion tent, / He dies" (I.4.2.116-18), Tamburlaine cannot now rescind his guarantee lest his words lose their famed illocutionary power and jeopardize his claimed destiny to "confute those blind geographers/ That make a triple region in the world" (I.4.4.78-9). He intends to unite the world under his control. Pam Whitfield argues that Tamburlaine's disinterest in his fiancée's pleas for mercy represent a product of his arrogant misogyny, such

that “Zenocrate is doomed to be subservient to Tamburlaine’s will – an absolute will that leaves no room for another’s volition” (88) because her speech “provides a contrasting point of view” (88). As with her earlier attempt at rhetorical persuasion, Zenocrate’s words represent the political and ethical ideologies that Tamburlaine opposes. In petitioning for mercy for her father and country, she reiterates the ties of kinship that underpin the very structures of power that Tamburlaine seeks to erase and the kind of religious morality at which he scoffs. Instead, as he does with everything else, Tamburlaine seeks to inscribe his speech and worldview on Zenocrate.

Faced with the inefficacy of her words, Zenocrate instead employs her husband’s performative methods and for a brief moment affects some degree of influence. In his famous soliloquy on the power of beauty, Tamburlaine recounts how Zenocrate performs her grief “in silence of thy solemn evening’s walk” (I.5.1.149). With her “hair disheveled”, “watery cheeks” (139), and “flowing eyes” (146), Zenocrate resembles the beleaguered Florimell, who likewise evinces her despair being “ruffled and fowly raid with filthy soyle, /And blubbred face with teares of her faire eyes” (III.viii.32.2-3). Where the misery Florimell manifests showcases her beauty despite her dire circumstance, the False Florimell is shown to present only a dissembled emotion, where she “seemd for feare to quake in euery lim” (III.viii.15.8) despite, as the reader well knows, she experiences no real danger as a conjured creation and not a real woman. Similarly, Zenocrate’s performance is set in contrast with that of the Damascene virgins whose formulaic petitions are swept aside by Tamburlaine’s performative declaration: “Virgins, in vain ye labour to prevent/ That which mine honour swears shall be performed” (I.5.1.106-7). Though by definition they represent that quintessential feminine virtue -- chastity -- the Virgins’ generic beauty is akin to the scripted charms of the False Florimell whose hollow performance cannot generate authentic reaction or emotion. Though he declared his idealized love for her at their first meeting in richly romanticized terms, Tamburlaine finds he cannot through the conceits of courtly poetics express a version of love that he has not himself prescribed. Indeed, somewhat to his surprise, in witnessing Zenocrate’s wordless expression of her despair he realizes his inadequacy like the poets whom he scorns, reaching for “One thought, one grace, one wonder at the least, / Which into words no virtue can digest” (I.5.1.172-3).

Here, Tamburlaine's epiphany echoes that of Marinell, who is likewise disabused of his conventional understanding of women and of love only when he bears witness to Florimell's genuine emotion: "his stony heart with tender ruth/ Was toucht" so that "then gan he make him tread his steps anew,/ And learne to loue, by learning louers paines to rew" (IV.xii.13. 1-2, 8-9). Marinell also enacts his grief physically, starving himself so that "His cheeke bones raw, and eie-pits hollow grew, / And brawny armes had lost their knowen might" (IV.xii.20. 3-4), in a loss of masculine strength and vigor that compares to Tamburlaine's own observed condition that his love for Zenocrate makes him "harbor thoughts effeminate and faint" (I.5.1.177). Tamburlaine counters the challenge to his rigid notion of gender identity with the realization that "in beauty's just applause" (I.5.1.178) he discovers "That virtue is the sum of glory/ And fashions men with true nobility" (189-90). Marinell likewise must reconsider his own identity together with his assessment of women: "And with vile curses, and reprochfull shame/ To damne him selfe by euery euill name; / And deeme vnworthy or of loue or life, / That had despised so chast and faire a dame" (IV.xii.16. 4-7). Though he proves his valor at the tournament in defense of Florimell's honor, Marinell's motivation, "to maintaine, that she all others did excel" (V.iii.4.9) receives corrective when the false Florimell appears with Braggadochio (V.iii.10), who likewise aims to prove the worth of his fraudulent "snowy" lady. It is only with Artegall's help that the two frauds are exposed (V.iii.24), compelling Marinell finally to distinguish the genuine Florimell from her false representation. This exposure of Braggadochio by Artegall combines with allusion at the close of tournament to "that wofull couple, which were slaine" (V. iii.31) to offer a tripartite reflection on the nature of ideal love as conceived by the poet. Hereby, Florimell and Marinell negotiate the middle path between their earlier love characterized by reactionary tendencies of running and repulse, the cautionary tale of Amavia and Mordant who loved each other excessively, even to the exclusion of life itself (II.i.55), and the charade of love and honor presented by the knight in stolen armor along with his snowy damsel.

Just as Florimell and Marinell slowly deconstruct the deceptive façade of gendered identities that kept them strangers from one another, so too do Tamburlaine and Zenocrate discover who and what lies behind their performatively enacted identities. Tamburlaine's

gendered preconceptions are altered when he finally sees his bride-to-be not in idealized terms whose beauty signifies virtue in the abstract, but as a virtuous woman through the staging of her genuine grief. Zenocrate too discovers that beneath the veneer of his poetic apostrophes and vaulting rhetoric resides a deadly and dangerous ambition over which she has only a limited ability to temper and restrain. Upon seeing the destruction visited on Damascus by her warlord fiancé, and in particular the bodies of the innocent girls, "heavenly virgins and unspotted maids" (I.5.1.325), Zenocrate wonders, "Ah, Tamburlaine, wert thou the cause of this, / That term'st Zenocrate thy dearest love" (335-6). Her reflection attempts to reconcile the brutal violence of Tamburlaine's actions with "his talk much sweeter than the Muses' song" (I *Tamb.* 3.2.50) that clothe his barbarism as nobility. However, it is not just the deceptive conceits employed by Tamburlaine to construct and conceal his identity that Zenocrate comes to understand in the aftermath of battle, but her own. As she begs pardon for the same "contempt/ Of earthy fortune and respect of pity" (I.5.1.364-5) displayed by the Scythian warrior's "conquest ruthlessly pursued" (336), she also comes to realize her own complicity. When witnessing the broken bodies of Bajazeth and Zabina, Zenocrate laments for the Emperor and his thrice "great", but ultimately "hapless" empress (354, 357, 362; 368), exclaiming, "Blush, heaven, that gave them honour at their birth,/ And let them die a death so barbarous!" (I.5.1.350-1). Though critics have claimed Zenocrate represents Christian virtues of mercy and gentleness (Richmond, 38), and Tamburlaine idolized her corollary pale virtues, Zenocrate herself contradicts these assertions, instead indicting herself with selfish disregard for suffering: "And pardon me that was not moved with ruth / To see them live so long in misery./ Ah, what may chance to thee, Zenocrate?" (I.5.1.369-71). As with her contemplation of the fate of the virgins who resemble her own potential destiny, Zenocrate's response upon witnessing the death of Zabina is also grounded in an acute sense of the hubristic nature of their fall and what it may portend for her own destiny. Despite Anippe's attempts to console her with the unlikely (though ultimately accurate) estimation that, "your love hath Fortune so at his command/ That she shall stay, and turn her wheel no more" (I *Tamb.* 5.1.373-4), Zenocrate is now aware of the consequences of her actions. Indeed, her complicity presents her with an unwinnable situation that she articulates rhetorically: "Whom

should I wish the fatal victory,/ […]/ My father and my first betrothed love/ Must fight against my life and present love" (I *Tamb.* 5.1.384,87-8).

Following the death of Arabia, her sometime fiancé, Zenocrate declares herself a "cursed object/ Whose fortunes never mastered her griefs" (I Tamb. 5.1. 413-4), confirming that her love of Tamburlaine represents a bargain in which she traded her loyalty for her life. In this regard, her choices stand in contrast to those of Zabina and Olympia, who demonstrate the same kind of fierce loyalty to their husbands for which Florimell is praised:

> Eternall thralldome was to her more liefe,
> Then losse of chastitie, or change of loue:
> Dye had she rather in tormenting griefe,
> Then any should of falseness her reproue (III.viii.42. 1-4)

This courageous if desperate choice is made by women who refuse to yield to the threat of force, but who have no other means to escape the violence of male discourse. Zenocrate even acknowledges that such valor stands in abrupt contrast to her over-subscribed loyalties: "the change I use condemns my faith/ And makes my deeds infamous through the world" (I.5.1. 389-90). While the scene shows how she is made aware of the violent and barbaric character beneath her future husband's poetic veneer, it also demonstrates that she disabuses herself too late of the ideological fictions that subvert her every attempt at independently determined agency.

Where the conclusion of Florimell and Marinell's relationship allegorizes the poet's thesis regarding "all that marriage should be: the willing submission of virtuous equals to each other, who will complement each other's strengths and weaknesses and admit their mutual dependence" (Yearling, 140), the marriage pact between Tamburlaine and Zenocrate that concludes the first play offers a radically different ideological denouement. Though Tamburlaine claims Zenocrate "hath calmed the fury of my sword" (I *Tamb.* 5.1. 437) and thus spared the Sultan's life, he performs mercy secure in the knowledge that Zenocrate's agency is heavily circumscribed by the conditions placed upon her by his own ideological framing. Indeed, Zenocrate's acceptance of Tamburlaine's marriage proposal with the cryptic, "Else I should much forget myself, my lord" (I *Tamb.* 5.1. 500) suggests that she is herself aware that to become his

wife, she has had to submit to Tamburlaine's vision of who and what his wife should be. Zenocrate's imprisonment within a paradigm of the hero's devising is literalized when even in death, she is subject to his pervasive signification: "We both will rest and have one epitaph" (II *Tamb.* 2. 4. 134).

In Part II, the re-introduction of Zenocrate, now a mother to three boys, begins with the intimation that her legacy will continue through the figure of her eldest son. Both parents acknowledge that their sons "have their mother's looks" (II *Tamb.* 1.3.35) and while the Empress asserts the boys possess "their conquering father's heart" (36), their subsequent behavior gives query to her diplomacy. In particular, Zenocrate's first-born more nearly emulates his mother in his attempts to achieve an identity that is at once distinct from the ideological prescriptions of gender and independent of his father's zealous predeterminations. While his younger brothers dutifully seek to impress their father with their performative claims to "Have under me as many kings as you/ And march with such a multitude of men/ As all the world shall tremble at their view" (II *Tamb.* 1.3. 55-8), and "Be termed the scourge and terror of the world" (62), Calyphas instead requests:

> Let me accompany my gracious mother.
> They are enough to conquer all the world,
> And you have won enough for me to keep (66).

Tamburlaine's resultant rage, "Bastardly boy, sprung from some coward's loins/ And not the issue of great Tamburlaine" (69-70) implicitly connects performative gendered identity with the political order he seeks to establish in his own dynasty. Despite his earlier expressed knowledge of Zenocrate's virtue, Tamburlaine would rather regard Calyphas' behavior as evidence of his illegitimacy than as a challenge to his own identity and to the expectations for action he places upon his sons.

So great is his preoccupation with his sons' performances of gendered identities that align with his own self-styling and underpin his ongoing political ambitions that Tamburlaine threatens to alter the traditional protocols of birth-order:

> My royal chair of state shall be advanced,

And he that means to place himself therein

Must armed wade up to the chin in blood. (II *Tamb.* 1.3.82-4)

With this redoubled emphasis on the importance of action to prove meritorious kingship, the warrior's admonishment of his eldest son echoes contemporary pedagogical theories. Just as Tamburlaine insists that "he shall wear the crown of Persia/ Whose head hath deepest scars, whose breast most wounds" (II *Tamb.* 1.3.74-5), writers like Montaigne, Elyot and Ascham each emphasized the value of strict and even perilous forms of militaristic education that sought to construct masculine gender in behavioral terms (Williams, 67, 70). Indeed, Tamburlaine's display of a self-inflicted wound that evidences his masculine invincibility even in the face of his grief at Zenocrate's death constitutes what Carolyn Williams describes in "'This Effeminate Brat': Tamburlaine's Unmanly Son", as a "course in advanced theoretical manliness" (63). Though his bravado is met with wonderment and deference by Amyras and Celebinus, Calyphas' remark, "Methinks 'tis a pitiful sight" (II *Tamb.* 3.2.130) demonstrates the potential failure of such regimes when applied to individuals who resist their ideological footings. Far from being impressed by and seeking to emulate his father's resistance to pain and discomfort, Calyphas recoils and expresses much the same skepticism as the authoritative Elizabethan pedagogue Richard Mulcaster who observed: "I do not hold *Tamerlane,* or any barbarous, and bloody invasions to be means to true nobilitie, which come for scourges" (*Positions* (1581) qtd in Williams, 65).

Indeed, though Calyphas is roundly condemned for his apparent cowardice and self-indulgence, his thoughtful and sensitive approach to the brutal and unforgiving world of warfare of his father suggests he would make an empathetic if unconventional leader. His observation "I know, sir, what it is to kill a man./ It works remorse of conscience in me./ I take no pleasure to be murderous" (II *Tamb.* 4. 1. 27-29) stands in poignant contrast to his father's increasingly pathological zeal for human destruction. That Calyphas is not, in fact, lacking in courage so much as the opportunity to display his ability is evidenced in his remark, "I would my father would let me be put in the front of such a battle once, to try my valour" (II *Tamb.* 4.1.72-3). Together with the acknowledgement from Amyras that their father "beats down our foes to flesh our *taintless* swords" (emphasis mine 26), such details suggest that despite their eagerness to emulate their

father's heroics, Tamburlaine's compulsion to lead, do battle and destroy leaves his sons mired in a permanent state of performative failure; always attempting to emulate their father's actions and always falling short of the version of extreme masculinity he represents. Faced with such a Sisyphean task, Calyphas may be understood to have elected to withdraw from the unwinnable race, absenting himself from battles he is never permitted to lead and from articulations of a gendered identity that denies humanity in favor of displays of utter invincibility. As Williams observes, Calyphas' much-debated role in the play functions as "a sardonic comment on the excesses of Renaissance self-fashioning, especially when it involves the fashioning of others" (76).

In *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642* Laura Levine notes that much like Tamburlaine's compulsively iterative performance, early modern writers commonly conceived of "masculinity as needing to be performed in order to exist", a condition which she maintains reveals in turn a sense of "threat that there is no real masculinity, no masculine self" (8). Such underlying anxiety, particularly in a character whose soaring successes are everywhere predicated on his performative abilities to actualize himself as the pinnacle of human and specifically *male* achievement, does much to explain both his treatment of his sons and his own eventual death. While Tamburlaine's murder of his son may be viewed as an extreme representation of the Scythian's Machiavellian commitment to ensuring the security of his empire by eliminating an heir who fails to prove himself in battle, Calyphas' willful disobedience can also be understood as presenting a direct challenge to Tamburlaine's absolute performative self-definition. Calyphas' stubborn resistance to his father's will makes him not merely an embarrassment to his patronage, but a grave danger. The warrior declares:

> In sending to my issue such a soul,
> Created of the massy dregs of earth,
> The scum and tartar of the elements,
> Wherein was neither courage, strength nor wit,
> But folly, sloth, and damned idleness,
> Thou hast procured a greater enemy

Than he that darted mountains at thy head. (II *Tamb.* 4.1.122-8)

Tamburlaine disowns his son and justifies his murder on the grounds that Calyphas' systematic refusal to perform the identity his father determines as fitting for his heir constituted a fatal challenge.

Unlike Agydas, Zabina, Olympia or even Zenocrate, Calyphas is permitted no final speech, no words to stay his father's hand or reconcile his fury. Instead, his death is met with nothing but silence, signaling the end of any potential resistance to or tempering of Tamburlaine's voracious pursuit of glory. In this regard, his death resembles False Florimel's uncanny evaporation, as both characters leave behind only the haunting awareness of what their presence revealed about those with whom they interacted. Where remembrance of False Florimel serves as warning for setting store by unnatural perfection, the ghost of Calyphas' presence highlights a similar observation on the dangers of an identity that cannot tolerate challenge.

In the absence of Zenocrate's skillful mediations and even Calyphas' satirical subversions, the remainder of the play relates Tamburlaine's increasing extremism. Tamburlaine's unmitigated quest to become "the scourge of God and terror of the world" by "apply[ing] myself to fit those terms,/ In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty" (II *Tamb.* 4.1.154, 155-6), that is, through his performance of absolute masculinity, results in his ultimate downfall. As Williams observes, Tamburlaine's symptoms, "veins full of accidental heat/ Whereby the moisture of your blood is dry" (II *Tamb.* 5.3.84-5) "are best understood as the physical expression of his supreme masculinity" (63). Just as False Florimell's extreme representation of gendered behavior is shown to be divisive and ultimately self-destructive, so too does Tamburlaine's relentless pursuit of the ideal, be it in terms of identity, family or power, serve to precipitate his end. Echoing the famous line inscribed on Marlowe's portrait, *quod me nutruit me destruit*, "that which nourishes me also destroys me", the very force that created and fostered Tamburlaine's many successes -- his performative articulation of an extreme identity expressly gendered in ideological and political terms -- ultimately vanquishes the Scythian hero.

As both exemplar of performative self-actualization and cautionary tale illustrating the toxic effects of his unwavering extremism, Tamburlaine functions as an unlikely mirror for the

emergent sense of English national identity. As Daniel Vitkus relates in *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Mutlicultural Mediterranean*, “Marlowe probes the ideological complications, anxieties, and uncertainties that arose from Christianity’s confrontations and engagement with Islam in a specifically post-Reformation context” (46). Tamburlaine was then a fitting avatar for English aspirations not in spite but *because of* his exotic birth and heathen customs. Where the prologue invites Tamburlaine’s audience to “View but his picture in this tragic glass,/ And then applaud his fortunes as you please” (Prologue, I. 7-8), the playwright also encourages reflective scrutiny by the playgoers themselves to consider “a distorted, fantasmic version of themselves – a spectacle that was both admirable and frightening” (Vitkus, 65). In his use of an exotic, Islamic figure to act as both representative and foil for English identity Marlowe was by no means unique. As Justin Kolb explains, many other writers of the period employed “the Muslim other as a figure in a transhistorical drama” to the degree that appropriating aspects of this part-historical, part-imagined identity for English self-fashioning, “were central to the construction of both the Turk and the Englishman in Elizabethan literature” (195).

Indeed, Kolb draws parallels in his article “‘In th’Armor of a Pagan Knight’: Romance and Anachronism East of England in Book V of *The Faerie Queene* and *Tamburlaine*”, between Marlowe’s representational strategy and the methods employed by Spenser in his rendering of the figure of the Souldan in Book V. Describing the “proud Souldan” as having “presumpteous cheare,/ And countenance sublime and insolent” (V.viii.30.3-4), the poet evokes the manner of Tamburlaine’s high astounding terms and infamous bravado. While comparing Arthur and the Muslim warrior, the epic acknowledges their similarly “fierce minds” (2), but distinguishes the Souldan as seeking “onely slaughter and auengement” (5) whereas Arthur fights “for honour and for right, Gainst tortious power and lawlesse regiment” (6-7), aligning him with the text’s stated nationalist and Christian principles. Further, by affecting the defeat of the mighty Souldan through Arthur’s use of his mirror-like shield (V.viii.37-8), the hero symbolically employs performative mimicry to vanquish his foe, so that Kolb argues “Spenser seems to articulate the mimetic and performative process through which the Islamic threat was mitigated, controlled and shaped in the emergent English national consciousness” (198). The poet’s rendering of the comparative

battle between English sensibilities and Islamic exoticism is complicated by Artegall's being clad "in the'armour of a Pagan knight" (V. viii. 26. 2) and his temporary assumption of the identity of a Muslim warrior.

In fact, by inverting the identity-confusion experienced by Marinell over the real and false Florimells, Artegall deceives Samient and the Souldan by performing the identity of his enemy. This deliberately-mistaken identity, Kolb argues, acknowledges that "the Christian English self is built from the same materials as the infidel tyrant, calling into question the very distinctions they were meant to define" (200). Artegall's seamless embodiment of the form and manner of an Islamic warrior, together with Arthur's defeat of the Souldan through representational mimicry implies that just as "Tamburlaine highlights the dangers romantic syncretism poses to a stable conception of identity" (Kolb, 203), so too does the poet articulate the potential for both development through but also dissolution into the ideologically-suggestive identity presented in the figure of the Muslim-other and challenged by representations of the extreme.

Outside the world of the page and playhouse, the surprisingly close relationship between the emergent English national consciousness and that of the ancient Turkish Empire is illustrated in the exchange of letters between Elizabeth I and the Ottoman ruler. Not only did the Queen's correspondence emphasize the common political ground shared between the two leaders, but also her phrasing mimics the performative style of his language: his identification as "he who is granted victory always" is deliberately echoed in her self-description as "the most invincible and most mightie defender of the Christian faith against all kinde of idolatries" (Vitkus, 51). Just as the Tudor monarch adapted the performative language of the Sultan to assert herself as his equal, so too do representations of romanticized Islamic figures in contemporary literature provide a model for a developing national identity.

Both Spenser and Marlowe adapted these popular figurations to interrogate not only the allure of the exotic Other, but also the dangers and drawbacks posed by such imitative self-styling. Where *The Faerie Queene* offers an obvious reflection of these tensions through the battle between Arthur, Artegall and the Souldan, the epic provides more nuanced interrogation of the violence enacted through imposition of ideologically constructed gendered identities through

Florimell, her false reflection and her true love Marinell. Likewise, *Tamburlaine* shows the hero deconstructively inhabiting structures of power while altering their attendant ideologies for his own ends. While fantastically effective on the battlefield, such methodologies are shown to have great personal costs: Zenocrate's agency is circumscribed and her identity is slowly effaced in Part I while in Part II her tragic legacy is repeated as Calyphas' life is lost in the name of Tamburlaine's absolute will to power through a rigid gendered identity that permits no variation. Together with the reflections of their desperate struggle articulated through Olympia and Zabina, mother and son demonstrate the extent to which individuals are placed under the imperative to conform to culturally-sanctioned definitions. Each ultimately literalizes in death the destructive consequences of non-compliance. For his part, Tamburlaine's ascent emblematizes the power such paradigms offer to those who would engage in "friendly" self-fashioning on his terms, while his own hubristic death offers subtle warning of the dangers of non-negotiable political and personal extremes.

Figure 7. *The Ditchley Portrait.*

Chapter 5

Isabella and Britomart: Image, Reflection, and Power

I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman;
but I have the heart and stomach of a king,
and of a king of England too.

– Elizabeth I, Speech to the Troops at Tilbury, 1588.

More than any of her other public engagements, the speech at Tilbury has been regarded by contemporary historians and modern critics alike as the incident during which Queen Elizabeth I's performative self-definition coalesced into a single iconographic representation. In his now-classic biography, J.E. Neale quotes the Earl of Leicester's description of the queen as being "full of princely resolution and more than feminine courage … she passed like some Amazonian empress through all her army" (297). Though recent scholars consider it apocryphal, the popular image of the queen as armor-clad and bedecked in a white velvet gown and plumed headdress continues to endure as historical and biographical motif, suggesting that the degree to which it is reiterated as a cultural artifact overrules its strict truth value. Whether Elizabeth was indeed so dressed before those few thousand witnesses is less important than the enduring impact that the suggestively defiant presentation had on the English psyche. With the image of a warrior queen, Elizabeth articulates not just the aspirations of her people threatened by but ultimately victorious over the Spanish fleet, but also the negotiated set of gendered descriptors that underpinned her life-long struggle to justify her rule. Indeed, Elizabeth's layered performative political policy reads as palimpsest of the romanticized figure of a bellicose princess: her father's daughter, a male soul within a female body, a seemingly ageless virgin at once capable of nurturing a nation as mother and defending it as indefatigable warrior. It is this striking image, contradictory yet powerful, that Spenser explores and expands in *The Faerie Queene* through Britomart. Through his iconic warrior princess, the poet scrutinizes the implications of his Queen's famous chastity and her role as his ultimate reader.

In *Edward II* Marlowe likewise explores the motif of a martial woman defining her ability to rule in gendered terms through the characterization of Queen Isabella. Though long-standing critical assessments have dismissed characterization of the queen as crude, simplistic and

unsubtle, her successive self-casting -- variously as the patient Griselda figure she adopts in the opening scenes, through the stylized images as mother to the future of the nation, and most notably as warrior queen – facilitates her pursuit of power through performatively crafted agency. Taken in conjunction with Gaveston's creative adaptations of gendered behaviors, Marlowe's play aligns with popular interest in the potential fluidity of the gendered self. Other contemporary plays like *The Roaring Girl* explored the function of androgynous, frequently pugnacious women and sensationalized the fears inherent in popular polemics that indicted the theater's dual violation of sumptuary laws pertaining to class and sex. Unsurprisingly, Marlowe examines the subject in the most incendiary manner possible: in relation to the construct of the dual-natured monarch and the political contract that supports the divine right to rule. In so doing, the playwright taps into the fears of cultural and gendered disorder that pervaded the national consciousness with regard to Elizabeth's self-definitions, and which Spenser examines through Britomart with her reflective androgyny. The dramatic potential inherent in these widely held cultural anxieties exposes both the entrenchment of the sexual economy within the class system, as well as the pervasive nature of the systems of power behind gendered self-representation.

The poet's famous intention, "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" as stated in the prefatory letter to Ralegh "complicates our understanding of his readership [because it …] reveals how much Elizabeth's accidentally female but politically powerful presence deflects and richly complicates the usual relations between the writer and the reader of an epic" (Quilligan, 38-9). Despite his nominal address within the poem being to Gloriana, and the ambiguity in his stated readership, Spenser's audience is always ultimately his Queen, an intention he later clarifies in the Proem to Book IV: "To her this song most fitly is addrest,/The Queene of loue, and Prince of peace from heuen blest" (IV. Proem. 4). In "The Gender of the Reader and Problem of Sexuality [in Books 3 and 4]", Maureen Quilligan asserts that Spenser's redirection in the 1596 edition serves to "dismiss a male reader, select a paradigmatic female one, and then reconstitute the canceled full-gendered readership … within the 'androgynous queen'" (145). In this way, the poet foregrounds Elizabeth as "not just *The Faerie Queene's* most powerful reader, but also as its most powerful *gendered* reader" (Bellamy,

79). Therefore, it is imperative on modern readers of the epic to understand Britomart's unique status as a female knight as a reflection not just of a relatively egalitarian approach of the readership of the English nation, but more specifically an acknowledgement of the complex gender identity of the Queen herself.

Kantorowicz' famous articulation of the ideological construct of monarchical dualism finds both genesis and complication in Queen Elizabeth's political self-definition. As Marie Axton observes in her book suggestively titled *The Queen's Two Bodies*, the chief source of the king's two bodies metaphor is widely acknowledged as Plowden's *Reports* (20). Written during the early years of the Elizabeth's reign, the metaphor was employed not as a schema that functioned in her favor, but rather as political weapon launched against the Queen by her detractors. Nevertheless, the legal metaphor afforded Elizabeth the opportunity to adapt the gendered terms of her self-definition in key ways. As Mary-Beth Rose explains in her article on the political rhetoric of the Queen's public speeches, Elizabeth "cogently formulates and defines her authority, and she does so in explicitly gendered terms" (1077), though not exclusively through the conventional images of herself as virgin and mother. Rather, "Elizabeth articulates a consciousness of herself as a survivor", and in so doing juxtaposes her steady rule with the reckless "negative values of male heroism" (1080). By the time of *The Faerie Queene's* publication, Elizabeth was able to justify "her decisions as emanating from her own agency and wisdom, wisdom that could be attained only from immersion in lived, personal experience" (1080). Rose's analysis reveals that Elizabeth's self-identification evolved over the course of her reign, and with it, so too did the signifiers of her gender. While the choice to represent Britomart as dual-sexed certainly "powerfully reinforces her relationship with Elizabeth so that Britomart may "mirror" her more accurately" (Abbott-Bennet, 5), a process of reciprocal reflection and gazing that is thematized throughout the poem, Spenser's warrior princess is far from a static avatar for his queen. Instead, Britomart's quest is a tale of intellectual and emotional growth, a literary voyage of discovery that charts the figurative mutations in Elizabeth's political performance of gender.

At her first appearance in *The Faerie Queene*, Britomart unhorses Guyon who is unaware that the armor-clad knight who bests him is the British princess. Once their initial enmity is

diffused by the wise counsel of the Palmer, so that instead of bloodshed, “reconcilement was betweene them knott,/ Through goodly temperaunce, and affection chaste” (III.i.12.1-2) the knights reach a swift fealty together with Arthur. Yet these bonds of honor and friendship that prompt the poet to praise “those antique tymes/ In which the sword was seruant vnto right;” (13.1-2) conspicuously ignore the very un-traditional element in this romantic friendship: the presence of a woman warrior. Whether through indifference to her sex or, as the later comic scenes of mistaken identity suggest, ignorance of it, Arthur and Guyon treat Britomart as they might any other (male) knight, travelling together “through countreyes waste, and eke well edifyde,/ Seeking aduentures hard, to exercise/ Their puissaunce” (14.2-4), suggesting that in the romantic world of fairyland, Britomart’s transvestitism affords her inclusion within the homosocial bonds of male friendship. Yet just a few stanzas later, the poet reveals that for all the camaraderie between the knights, there remains an essential difference between Britomart and her companions: upon witnessing Florimell’s flight from the forster, Arthur and Guyon immediately give chase “To reskew her from shamefull villany” (18.5), however “The whiles faire Britomart, whose constant mind,/ Would not so lightly follow beauties chace,/ Ne recke of Ladies Loue, did stay behind” (19.1-3). While even a cursory reading of the scene recognizes the humor intended by two male knights recklessly pursuing a damsel in distress while their female companion remains behind, less motivated by beauty than by a keener estimation of need, critics have routinely pointed to this episode as particularly revealing of Britomart’s identity both as knight and woman.

Britomart is unique amongst the other women of *The Faerie Queene* not simply in her choice of attire, but also in her status as the titular subject of her own quest in *The Legend of Britomartis or Of Chastity*. Unlike Florimell, another emblem of female chastity, whose series of pursuits and narrow escapes facilitate the pun on her being both chaste and chased, Britomart conducts herself “With stedfast courage and stout hardiment; / Ne euil thing she feard, ne euil thing she ment” (19.8-9), providing a foil to Florimell’s defensive and reactive chastity with her stout resolve. Yet Britomart is also distinct from Spenser’s other notable martial heroine, Belphoebe. While both women are presented as reflections of Elizabeth’s famous chastity, Belphoebe’s scrupulous guarding of her virginity against compromise meets with the poet’s subtle

corrective: where Spenser praises the example of his Sylvan damsel, his wish that “Ladies all may follow her ensample *dead*” (III.v.54.9, emphasis mine) offers what Maureen Quilligan describes in *Milton’s Spenser* as “the simultaneous criticism of such perfection” (190). In contrast, not only is Britomart’s quest to locate her future husband understood as being directed to the eventual loss of her virginity and the achievement of a new form of chastity in marriage, her understanding of that chastity, and with it, her emergent sense of her identity as gendered and powerful, is presented as being an incrementally developing process.

While she may be understood as a developing hero in the same mold as Redcrosse in Book I and Guyon in Book II, who explore rather than exemplify their representative virtues, Britomart’s development in Book III, together with her continued growth in Books IV and V functions as a site of theoretical metamorphosis. The Aristotelian philosophy that still influenced Early Modern rhetoric regarding the difference between the sexes held that “the role of women is limited to that of a kind of walking womb: they can transport “conception”, but cannot “conceive” themselves” (Abbott-Bennett, 4). Yet despite contemporary estimations regarding the limits of biological sex to demonstrate virtue through moral-decision-making, Kristin Abbott-Bennett argues that through the warrior princess Spenser articulates a “significant shift … in his representation of the power of the feminine intellect” (22). By permitting Britomart the opportunity to “conceive the knowledge necessary to make a moral choice” (19), the poet offers a radical counterpoint to polemicists like John Knox who infamously stated that as compared to men, all women were weak, sick and impotent, as well as “foolish, mad and frenetic” (15) in order to decry what he regarded as “a monster in nature that a woman shall reign and have empire above man” (5) in *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. But even more remarkable is the figuration of Britomart’s intellectual and emotional dynamism through a series of explicitly gendered performances. As Mary Villeponteux observes, Britomart’s adoption and subsequent adaptation of an androgynous identity and habit of being “is potentially subversive in what it suggests about the nature of power and authority – that they are constructs that can be adopted, even by a woman, rather than innate and “natural” traits of maleness” ("Displacing", 64-5).

Initially, Britomart's chastity is guarded by her sheer innocence: at Castle Joyous she utterly fails to interpret Malecasta's wanton flirting, her "false eies, that at her hart did ayme,/And told her meaning in her countenaunce", and instead "dissembled it with ignoraunce" (III.i.50, 7-8, 9). It is only when Malecasta climbs into Britomart's bed, comically unaware of her intended-lover's sex that Britomart learns something of the nuances of sexual desire. Temporarily un-armored, Britomart is wounded by Gardante, the allegorical representation of "loving glances upon beauty" (n.III.i.45), symbolically manifesting the "inner wound by the sight of Artegall" (n.III.i.65) that she received whilst gazing in her father's enchanted mirror. In response to the unwanted advances of sexual love, Britomart clearly sets herself apart from her correlative avatars: where Florimell and Belphoebe take flight and Amoret sharply recoils, Britomart, even though she is still "al in her snow-white smocke, with locks vnbownd" (III.i.63.7), that is, presenting as female, and specifically youthful and virginal, offers a distinctly masculine response to her aggressors: she becomes "enrag'd, fiercely at them flew, / And with her flaming sword about her layd,/ That none of them foule mischief could eschew" (III.i.66.1-3). This aggressive response to Malecasta's affections is not presented as Britomart's innate character, but rather as something that has developed over the course of her quest and as a result of her performative gendering.

The inception of Britomart's quest and the concordant genesis of her identity as a martial female is explored in the subsequent canto which, in revealing details of the princess' encounter with the image of Artegall in Merlin's magic mirror, also reveals the degree of development her character has already undergone. This act of witnessing a reflection of the self as other, and particularly as a *differently gendered* other has generated significant critical commentary (Bellamy, 88). Britomart's initial viewing of herself references Spenser's conceit of the poem as a looking glass for his Queen, a self-reflective theme that suggests the active construction of an emergent identity. Yet it is her second glance, in which she views the prophetic image of Artegall that precipitates the princess' quest, though not in the manner that might be expected of a warlike heroine. Having viewed the mysterious image, Britomart is plunged into what Jessica Murphy convincingly establishes as "greensickness", an affliction of young, sexually inexperienced

women, rather than "lovesickness", a disease more typically associated with the romantic frustrations of young men (111). This diagnosis confirms Britomart's chastity, but sets her apart from her correlatives Belphoebe, Amoret and Florimell in her longing for rather than rejection of sexual fulfillment. Yet Britomart's initial reaction to Artegall's image is not one of bold address, nor is her character shown to be innately that robust or assertive. Instead, the poet demonstrates that she is given to timorousness and hypochondria, describing her as a "feeble spright" (III.ii.47), who is given to night-terrors (29), "suddein ghastly feares" (31), tears and "trembling ioynt" (34), and who requires Glauce to coddle her in the manner of a much younger child (47). As Donald Stump observes in "Fashioning Gender", the "outgoing and aggressive qualities she displays later develop only gradually" and that "rather than responding to love with a desire for action, as men such as Scudamour and Artegall do, [Britomart] is inclined to be "sad, solemne, sowre, and full of fancies fraile" (27, 99). Such performance reinforces the idea that, like her gender identity, Britomart's character is the result of behavioral adaptions. Herein she demonstrates her considerable martial ability as the result of recent learning rather than innate aptitude or life-long dedication. Though to Redcrosse she claims to have been "trained up in warlike stowre" (III.ii.6) since childhood, it is only at Glauce's urging that her "weake hands" have achieved their combative skill since "need makes good schollers" (III.iii.53). These details serve to show that the studied androgyny Britomart presents when "shee her sexe vnder that straunge purport/ Did vse to hide, and plane apparaunce shonne" (III.i.52. 7-8) during the feast at Castle Joyous is a self-conscious performance of gender, one that the heroine actively employs as a means to achieve agency.

With regards to her performatively established and uniquely gendered identity, Spenser's martial heroine anticipates the same means to power as that adopted by Marlowe's Queen Isabella in *Edward II.* Though long-standing critical assessments have routinely dismissed the characterization of the queen as a, a simple "presentation of woman as angel /devil" (Richmond, 37), and "a mere puppet" (Poirier, 1951), a few have keenly observed Isabella's considerable skill in using "the roles others create for her ... as a means of levering herself into a position of influence" (Rutter, 95). Ranging from the benevolent Griselda figure she assumes in the opening

scenes through the stylized images as warrior queen and mother to the future of the nation, these cogent performances not only allude to the cultural stereotypes applied to women in general, they reflect on the guises assumed by and presumed of Elizabeth I in particular. Indeed, Isabella's successive self-casting in gendered behavioral types is a method of performance through which she achieves and retains a remarkable degree of political agency. It is also the means to her survival in a court and culture that would otherwise see her relegated to mute obsolescence.

Isabella's first appearance on stage signals both her flair for the dramatic as well as her political acumen. Attracting attention, she crosses paths by apparent accident with the noblemen who have already expressed their vexation with her husband's favoritism and poor governance. Somewhat abstractedly, the queen claims to be heading to the forest, "To live in grief and baleful discontent" (2.48). Her palpably enacted melodrama is prompted, she asserts, by Edward's forsaking of her for his male lover, Gaveston. As revealed in Mortimer's query, "Madam, whither walks your majesty *so fast*?" (emphasis mine 2.46), her intention is clearly to solicit the aid of the peers against the king, their common adversary. Quite opposite to her pitiable claims, Isabella's rapid and determined gait demonstrates that this meeting is no chance interruption. Reinforcing her self-stylizing as a saintly, mistreated wife, a damsel in distress in need of the noblemen's assistance, she declares:

> ... rather than my lord
> Shall be oppressed by civil mutinies,
> I will endure a melancholy life,
> And let him frolic with his minion(2.64-7)

By casting herself as the victim of Edward’s ill-fated dalliance, Isabella effectively allies herself with the peers against her husband, even as she verbally affirms her wifely duty. Isabella’s final utterance in this scene, “Farewell, sweet Mortimer, and for my sake/ Forbear to levy arms against the king” (2.81-2) underscores the deft psychology at work in her performance: by emphasizing queenly virtues of fidelity and self-sacrifice through her apparent allegiance to the king, while simultaneously working to inflame the already aggravated sensibilities of the nobles, she prompts them to take treasonous action against a king whom they are sworn to defend.

More than just an elaborate pastiche or comic interlude, Isabella's performance reveals a systematic approach to achieving courtly influence and political agency. When Edward's public mistreatment prompts her to cry, "Witness the tears that Isabella sheds/ Witness this heart that, sighing for thee, breaks," (4.164-5) the queen's display of her private emotion becomes a powerful political spectacle. By performing in ways that Sara Munson Deats observes fit the "role of the conventional feminine ideal, the patient Grisela" ("Androgyny", 32) the queen embodies the classical exemplum of wifely duty and constancy famously reiterated in Chaucer in *The Clerk's Tale*. In so doing, Isabella articulates for the benefit of the court a pointed reminder of the very patriarchal social order -- with its valuation of noble and masculine absolute will -- that Edward's affair openly flouts. Through her manipulation of gender stereotypes, Marlowe's queen effectively "exploits the ideology of femininity to construct herself in an acceptable model of early modern womanhood" (Deats, *Sex, Gender and Desire,* 171). By emphasizing these socially significant behaviors, Isabella's self-creation anticipates Judith Butler's descriptions of the performative, the notion that we "perform ourselves, under external discipline, into what we become" (Hillis Miller, 224). Isabella's cogent performance of the behaviors socially ascribed to wives allows her recourse to the political agency denied her by Edward's disavowal of precisely that relationship. Pembroke's witnessing remark, "Hard is the heart that injures such a saint," (4.190) at once affirms the conventions that Isabella employs in her dramatic performance, and assures her of the attention and sympathy of the influential noblemen. In the absence of political affirmation by her husband, Isabella engineers what J. Hillis Miller defines as a central function of the performative: "legitimation by an exercise of power, whether by denotative or prescriptive utterances" (224). Whether denotative or prescriptive, Isabella can perform at will.

Having secured the nobles' sympathy with her performance as tragic, abandoned queen, Isabella parlays her influence into action. Ostensibly petitioning on behalf of her estranged husband for Gaveston's pardon, the queen invites the influential baron Mortimer to, "sit down by me a while/ And I will tell thee reasons of such weight/ As thou wilt soon subscribe to his repeal" (4.225-7). Though the particulars of her performance go unheard, they do not go unseen. Looking on with the other nobles, Warwick's detailed account of the queen's behaviors--her earnestness,

her smile--further suggest her politic employ of gendered stereotypes. The queen's gestures also evoke the well-established political role of queen as intercessor; a politically scripted duty performed by the historical Isabella who the chroniclers noted went “on her knees to intercede with her furious husband on behalf of baronial opposition” (Wilson, 31). This potent image of the queen pleading before Mortimer signals redirection of her performance from the ears of the king, who is deaf to all but Gaveston, to the receptive ascendant lord. As Warwick correctly anticipates, the effect of the private conference between the queen and the nobleman is profound: Mortimer returns to the group with new energy and information, an abrupt reversal that signals he has become the conduit for the queen's political scheming. Mortimer postulates that were Gaveston to return to England, he could be “accidentally” killed. “How easily might some base slave be suborned/ To greet his lordship with a poniard/ And none so much as blame the murderer” (4.265-7), he asks, a suggestion the audience should understand as being the content of Isabella’s whispered counsel. Indeed, the plot's true origin and the subtle power of Isabella's persuasion is underscored by Mortimer's response to Lancaster’s incredulous query:

LANCASTER: Ay, but how chance this was not done before?

MORTIMER JUNIOR: Because, my lords, it was not thought upon.

Isabella not only “thought” of it, she communicated it to Mortimer and forced the duplicitous repeal of Gaveston.

Hereby, Isabella’s performance in her role of ill-treated, tragic queen allows her to conduct a many-sided coup: while seeming to make good on her promise to rescue Gaveston for the king, she cements her influence over Mortimer, and converts the nobles to her cause without appearing to interfere or usurp their leadership. Lancaster’s reflection, “Look where the sister of the King of France/ Sits wringing of her hands and beats her breast,” (4.187-8) and later his admonition to the king, “Thy gentle queen, sole sister of Valois/ Complains that thou hast left her all forlorn” (6.171-2) highlights both the international implications and subtle efficacy of the queen's performance. By performing the role that contemporary society would credit as appropriate to women, Isabella manipulates and reorders the broad cultural preconceptions ascribed to her as queen. In so doing, she translates the loss of her authority as queen as

occasioned by Edward's abandonment into a potent and decidedly dangerous but socially acceptable form of female agency.

Isabella's series of brief soliloquies provide further evidence that she not only adapts her behavior in specifically gendered ways, but that her adaptations evolve in response to political pressure. Initially, the queen frames herself as trapped by the conventions of being a dutiful wife, able only to "fill the earth / With ghastly murmur of my sighs and cries" (4.178-9) at Edward's abandonment, only to remain "forever miserable" (186). Though she protests, "Heavens can witness I love none but you" (8.15) her words are less an assertion of romantic feeling than a redirection to her impeccable behavior in response to her husband's charge of infidelity. Though critics have employed Isabella's displayed favor towards Mortimer as evidence of her long-standing adultery, the source for the suggestion of her duplicity is none other than Gaveston. While his words are deliberately salacious, the favorite could also be assured that Isabella's potential political infidelity would be of more concern to Edward than her sexual promiscuity:

EDWARD: Fawn not on me, French strumpet; get thee gone.

ISABELLA: On whom but on my husband should I fawn?

GAVESTON: On Mortimer, with whom, ungentle Queen --

I say no more; judge you the rest, my lord. (4.145-8)

Though Edward is already cognizant of Isabella's rhetorical skill, charging her with securing Gaveston's pardon on his behalf (4.156) and promising, "I'll hang a golden tongue about thy neck" (4.327) in metonymic literalization, Gaveston's charge reveals the keen awareness that Isabella's stylized behavior is a political performance. As Sara Munson Deats observes in *Edward II: A Study in Androgyny*, "from the beginning of the play, Isabella's Griselda mask fits loosely, and a penetrating glance may discern beneath this camouflage a very different kind of woman -- a forceful, disciplined, calculating female" (32). Gaveston intuits her dangerously impatient agency by instinct; the audience learns of it over the course of the play.

While Isabella's expressions of affection appear to fit the standard conventions of feminine love, they actually betray her desire for possession of the entirety of the kingdom, as well as absolute control over the inclinations of the king:

O that mine arms could close this isle about,

That I might pull him to me where I would,

Or that these tears that drizzle from mine eyes

Had power to mollify his stony heart (8.17-20)

Though they emphasize her longing for marital harmony, Isabella's described actions are gendered performances asserting a control over her husband in geographic terms. In particular, her vocalized desire for dominion over "this isle" recalls *The Ditchley Portrait* (*Fig. 7*) where Elizabeth, standing on a map of England, conflates her body natural with the "body" of the nation. Though such metonymic representation has ancient and classical precepts, Linda Woodbridge observes the often-gendered "body-state analogy" (329) was particularly potent in Elizabethan England, which "conceptualized itself mainly as the "feminine" society" and as such frequently "expressed fear of invasion through an insecure border" (340). However, in Isabella's rendering, this "ideology of feminine endangerment" (348) is inverted and the Queen becomes the threatening force, suggestively enclosing her husband's island nation and ruling his heart with her all-encompassing performance of feminine grief.

Once Isabella ascertains the nobles' conviction to do her bidding against Gaveston, she remodels her self-stylizing, directing her performances by whatever means necessary to regaining the power and authority denied her. Her subsequent soliloquy reveals her cogent and carefully reasoned plan of action, one that is conspicuously devoid of feminine emotion. Demonstrating a measured consideration of Mortimer's political utility and his potential as co-regent she acknowledges that could ally herself with Mortimer, allowing that "so well has thou deserved sweet Mortimer,/ As Isabel could live with thee forever" (8.59-60). But she is politically astute enough to recognize that such a union would likely result in a civil war that "threatens her as well as the king and Gaveston" (Boyette, 45), so like any accomplished strategist, she weighs her options very carefully. Determining to make a final attempt to coax Edward away from his dangerous obsession with Gaveston, she reasons, "If he be strange and not regard my words, / My son and I will over into France, / And to the king my brother there complain" (8.64-6). Her plan reveals not just her acute awareness of the power of her performative agency to sue for recourse

in a foreign court, but also of her forethought in retaining key political currency through the physical custody of her son, the heir to the English throne. Isabella's self-presentation is, therefore, an extended exercise in adaptive self-realization intended to retrieve the power and privilege of both her birthright and marriage rites. In this way, her discrete performances take on the constitutive quality of the performative, which as Derrida observed are possessed of the unique "force of rupture [that] produces the institution or constitution ... that appears to guarantee [itself] in return," (qtd in Miller, 232). Through her self-reflective soliloquies, perhaps performed before a looking-glass, Isabella's reiterated performances as distressed, forsaken, yet avowedly loyal queen are designed to be seen, and seen publicly. Through them, she intends to consolidate her personal sway over key individuals, and reestablish both her social and political position.

Like Isabella, Britomart's self-creation through gendered performance may be understood as a process of self-reflection and creative self-creation. The third canto reveals that Britomart's quest was occasioned by her own introspection, literalized by looking in a mirror identified as "Venus looking glas" (III.i.8). Mirrors are salient symbols within the poem's pedagogical program: Elizabeth as Gloriana is invited to view herself as "mirrour of grace and maiestie diuine" (I Proem 4. 2), and to engage in self-reflection through the "glass" of the poem's art that offers clarity of vision. Merlin's mirror is remarkable not just for being "rounded and hollow shaped ... like to the world it selfe, and seemd a world of glas" (III.ii.19.8-9), but for its ability to bestow the gift of foresight so that Britomart's father might see "foes his kingdome might inuade/ [...] reasons could bewray, and foes conuince" (III.ii.21.3, 8). More remarkable still, Spenser's presentation extends the poetic possibilities offered through mirrors not just to predict but also to *enable* the future union between Britomart and Artegall. In his authoritative text, *The Mutable Glass,* Herbert Grabes notes the connection between Spenser's use of Venus' looking glass and the mythologized "characteristic of the astrological glass" which, it was believed, "could forecast the weather in the mirror of the moon or [...] recovery from illness" (130). Further, Grabes observes that astronomy was dubbed "the science of mirrors ... because of its ability to forecast the future and avert disaster" (130). Britomart's eventual ability to ascertain Artegall's identity stems from

this prognostic function in Merlin's glass. While the poem attributes this key representative shift to the mirror's providential role, noting "It was not, *Britomart,* thy wandring eye,/ Glauncing unwares in charmed looking glas,/ But the streight course of heavenly destiny,/ Led with eternall providence, that has/ Guided thy glaunce " (III.iii.24.1-5), the combined processes of reflection, prediction, and fulfillment suggest a performative process.

By presenting first Britomart's own reflection and "vertues rare" (III.ii.22.7) followed by the image of "A comely knight, all arm'd in complete wize" (III.ii.24.2) who subsequently lifts his visor to reveal his face, the poem anticipates not just the princess' destiny but also the performative manner through which she will achieve it. Vested as an armored knight, Britomart represents the reflection of that which she pursues, so that her quest becomes a pursuit of both the romantic other as well as of the self. This creative mirroring also allows Britomart to avoid the pitfalls of self-love, the fate of Narcissus that she initially fears (III.ii.44) as she falls in love not with her exact reflection but with what Glauce terms, "the semblant pleasing most your mind" (ii.40). In this way, Britomart not only fashions herself as other, she also creates the other as a reflection of herself.

The process of romantic mirroring and the resultant creation of doubled identities is similarly reflected in Marlowe's tragedy. Herein, Edward invites reflective comparison with his favorite when he describes himself as "Thy friend, thy self, another Gaveston" (1.141). This twinning is anticipated by Gaveston's promise to construct a courtly masque to watch with the king at their reunion:

> One like Actaeon peeping through the grove
> Shall by the angry goddess be transformed,
> And running in the likeness of an hart,
> By yelping hounds pulled down, and seem to die. (1. 65-8)

Through the allegory of the myth, Edward and Gaveston are presented as one another's mirrors, each viewing and taking pleasure in being viewed. Both Gaveston and Edward fulfill the role of Actaeon, each joyfully gazing upon each other, and each tragically devoured by the pack of ravenous peers. In *Marlowe's Edward II as Actaeonesque History,* Christopher Wessman

demonstrates that in addition to his role as Actaeon, Edward also performatively echoes the role of Diana: the King "repeatedly expresses himself in a Cynthian parlance of exclusive, privileged sight; symbolic displays of power; metamorphic reprisal; and dismembering punishment" (7). However, in contrast to Elizabeth's revels that resolutely equated the goddess' famous chastity with the enduring sanctity of the nation, Edward is "a failed Diana, [who] displays and gives away the bodies natural and politic-his own physical privacy and the kingdom's wealth and power" (Wessman, 8).

By eliding the desires of the body natural with the duties of the body politic, Edward fails to maintain the integrity of his performance as sovereign. His fatal oversight, however, resides not in indulging his passion for his favorite, since as Mortimer Senior maintains, "The mightiest kings have had their minions" (4. 390), but rather as Mortimer Junior insists, the violation of social hierarchy and privilege:

> But this I scorn, that one so basely born
> Should by his sovereign's favour grow so pert
> And riot it with the treasure of the realm
> While soldiers mutiny for want of pay (4.402-5).

Indeed, Gaveston is understood to take great pleasure in this violation of order and degree, with Mortimer scathingly providing details of his rich and exotic outfits "Larded with pearl, and in his Tuscan cap/ A jewel of more value than the crown" (4.413-4). However, more significant and more dangerous than his sartorial excess is Gaveston's close communication with the king and his palpable contempt for the peers themselves: Mortimer fumes, "the king and he/ From out a window laugh at such as we" (4.416). Where Edward ultimately fails to understand that his performance of sovereignty is vital to the sanctity of his claimed birthright, Gaveston is acutely aware of the power of performance: his mirroring of the King and ironic reflection of the trappings of wealth constitute an emphatic, sustained challenge to the social codes and systems of law represented by and insisted upon by Mortimer and the peers. Gaveston thus usurps both the privilege of gazing and the power of being gazed upon, a doubly-reflective act suggested in Marlowe's play on words: as a reflection of Actaeon, Piers Gaveston peering into the world of the

king-as-Diana, only to be pierced by the fangs of the Peers in vengeance for his over-peering. As Rick Bowers observes in his response to Wessman's article, "Gaveston over−peers the peers in terms of brazen disregard for authority ... he superciliously *overlooks* them because they are so predictable with their phony impresa, legal technicalities and blustering protests before the King" ("Edward II", 246). By adopting the habits of dress and refinement of manners that allow him more nearly to mirror the image of the King, Gaveston performs a powerfully ironic challenge to the nobles by revealing the performativity inherent in their own presumptions to power.

Though critical discourse has expounded on the ways Edward and Gaveston self-consciously perform as mirror images of one another, a further refraction of Marlowe's doubling representation has remained overlooked: the split image of Isabella and Gaveston. Their mutual loathing stems not simply from the fact that they each seek affection and recognition from the same source, the King, but from the resounding similarities that make them political as well as personal enemies. Both hail from France, a genealogy that invariably inspires English xenophobia, and which in turn affects each of their political careers. Gaveston plays into the stigma of being a foreigner and outsider by courting suggestions of treasonous spying, a further facet of the mythological paradigm of dangerously illicit observation. In contrast, Isabella employs the uniquely female prerogative of marital bonds to emphasize her naturalized loyalty: even as she is planning for the execution of her husband, the King of England, the former French princess insists "care of my country called me to this war" (18.74). As avowed political rivals, Isabella and Gaveston even echo one another's lines as they trade barbs:

ISABELLA: Villain, 'tis thou that robb'st me of my lord.

GAVESTON: Madam, 'tis you that rob me of my lord. (4.160-1)

Implicit in this exchange is the mutual knowledge that each is employing the same performative means to consolidate their power through control of the King. Though their similar histories and temperaments might have made them allies, their shared thirst for power and acute familiarity with the politically-motivated performance of the other make the Queen and Gaveston the deadliest of rivals.

Once she has dispensed with Gaveston through her operative, Mortimer, the Queen adapts her persona again, this time offering the clearest reflection of both Marlowe's contemporary Queen and Spenser's evocation through Britomart. Presenting herself as warrior for justice, and subsequently delivering a rousing speech to assembled troops on English soil, she parallels Britomart though Elizabeth I's own mythologized appearance. Isabella even declares publicly of monarchs, "Of thine own people patron shouldst thou be" (17.13), directly courting the favor of soldiers and common people in a way that alludes to Queen Elizabeth's populist appeal at Tilbury: "I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects" (17). In the same way as her performance has defined her throughout, Isabella's power rests critically on her rhetorical prowess both to inspire and frame popular perception.

As Alan Shepard notes in *Marlowe's Soldiers,* the staging of an inspiring war speech not only invites rhetorical appreciation, it "acknowledges that, at some level, war *is* theatrical" (98). Just as the English sovereign was said to have performatively enacted the metaphor of dualism with her troops at Tilbury, Isabella plays the soldier too. Her impassioned speech implies a keen understanding of the tension between the bodies natural and politic: "Misgoverned kings are the cause of all this wrack" (17.9) she states, charging Edward with abandoning his duty as king, allowing his body natural to supersede so that "looseness hath betrayed thy land to spoil" (11). Yet just as her words build to a crescendo, seemingly intending to step into her husband's armor, literally and figuratively Mortimer interrupts her: "Nay, madam, if you be a warrior,/ Ye must not grow so passionate in speeches" (15-6). Though Sara Munson Deats argues Mortimer's intervention is intended to prevent Isabella from rambling into politically dangerous vitriol ("Androgyny", 34), such an observation runs counter to Isabella's characterization as consummate performer. Instead, it is rather more likely that Mortimer interrupts her not to avoid a tactical error but, acutely aware of the power of the Queen's words to command hearts and minds, to prevent the Queen from commandeering his own prideful rebellion. Shepard suggests that as a way to recover "the very 'dignities and honours' Mortimer claims to be able and ready to restore to her ... [Isabella] subsumes herself in Mortimer's identity" (100). Yet hers is less a willing

retirement from the spotlight than a keen appreciation that real power is demonstrated not in showy public speeches but in meaningful private conversations.

In appearing to demurely accept the more-private role as mother and protector to the heir, Prince Edward, Isabella becomes representative of the Crown's enduring authority, the immortal, Body Politic, leaving Mortimer to assume the very real risks of becoming the monarchy's de facto body natural. In this way, Isabella and Mortimer together assume the profoundly dualistic identity of the monarchy. Though the nobleman fatuously instructs, "Be ruled by me and we will rule the realm" (22.5), he fails to observe that the obverse is actually true as Isabella continues to manipulate him with Machiavellian exactitude. Offering the honeyed but hollow response, "Sweet Mortimer, the life of Isabel,/ Be thou persuaded that I love thee well" (22.15-6), the Queen redirects him to matters of state: "Conclude against his father what thou wilt/ And I myself will willingly subscribe" (22.19-20). In this way, as I argue more fully in "Perform to Power: Isabella's Performative Self-Creation in *Edward II*," Isabella employs Mortimer as her unwitting henchman, subtly prompting him to draw conclusions that he foolishly mistakes for his own, while distancing herself from the act of regicide.

Just as Queen Elizabeth's performance as fearless warrior queen combined the disparate facets of her identity into a single, sovereign ideal, so too does Isabella establish herself as a figure of inviolable and enduring justice, even as she ruthlessly secures her political position. Marlowe subtly elaborates this reflection on his own contemporary Queen when Isabella prompts Mortimer to arrange for Edward's death. Responding to Mortimer's request for directive on the fate of Edward, "Speak, shall he presently be dispatched and die?" (22.44), Isabella commands by a form of indirection: "I would he were [dispatched], so it were not by my means," (22.45). Here her equivocation is strongly reminiscent of Elizabeth's oblique requests to "ease her burden" (Richards, 132) with respect to the analogous execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. Like all renaissance princes, warrior queens must perform by shadowy means as well as public pronouncements in effecting their rule.

In her final role as guardian to Prince Edward, Isabella extends her performance to become mother to the nation, a further reflection of Elizabeth's performative self-styling. Isabella

parlays her maternal prerogative into enduring possession of both prince and power, indoctrinating her son to believe that she alone can protect him from a world of threats even as she consolidates her own power: “Fear not, sweet boy, I’ll guard thee from thy foes. /Had Edmund lived, he would have sought thy death” (24.110-11). Such sentiments echo the words of Queen Elizabeth, who famously employed the allegory of maternal love with respect to her people:

> Though after my death you may have many stepdames, yet shall you never have any a more natural mother than I mean to be unto you all ... And though you have had, and may have, many mightier and wiser princes in this seat, yet you never had, nor shall have any that will love you better (qtd. in Brownlow, 3)

Where Elizabeth sought to ground her authority in a parent-like devotion to her country, Isabella harnesses her maternal love for her son for political gain. Her words do more than accuse a single enemy; they transmit a powerful message that no one but she can be trusted. In so doing, she attempts to make the young prince see her as his only source of love, his only champion, and his whole world. By isolating the future King from anyone who may dilute the power of her influence, Isabella perpetuates with her son the performative mechanism behind her sustained political control.

The play's final scenes reveal that Isabella succeeds in crafting a reflection of herself in her young son. When he resists Mortimer's inclusion (22.109), the young Edward III demonstrates that he has learned from his mother the political value of private conferences. When he demurs, "Mother, persuade me not to wear the crown” (22.91), Isabella's protégé shows that he too understands that true power is privately held, not publicly demonstrated. As he wrests power from his mother's grasp, petitioning for "the aid and succor of his peers" (26.21), he succeeds through the use of his mother's signature political tactics: private agreements and performative dissembling. Even his emotional command as he consigns his mother to jail “Away with her! Her words enforce these tears,/ And I shall pity her if she speak again,” (26.85-6) echoes the weeping performances before the court that guaranteed Isabella’s popular support.

The prince's refusal to look at his mother also finds parallel in his father's words as he relinquished the crown:

> And Isabel, whose eyes, being turned to steel
> Will sooner sparkle fire than shed a tear
> Yet stay, for rather than I will look on them,
> Here, here" (20.104-7).

Suspecting Isabella's hand in his downfall, Edward abdicates rather than suffer seeing his wife in her self-created role as de facto sovereign. For the deposed king, Isabella's visage would be as a mirror, both revealing his own foolishness and an envisioning of the monstrosity engendered by corrupt royal power.

As Isabella consciously adapts her performance over the course of the play to emphasize key aspects of her queenly persona -- variously as wife, warrior and mother -- in a process that reflects gendered power dynamics, so Britomart in *The Faerie Queene*, also realizes the drama of witnessing a reflection in the flesh, as well as the horror of coming face-to-face with its monstrous distortion. Like Marlowe's queen, Britomart's self-presentation is also adaptive, presenting the Princess' engaging in reflection as a process of responsive learning. Beginning in Book III, Britomart not only assumes the garb of a knight, she also adopts androgynous form, learning the manner and habits of knighthood with briskness that perhaps strains credibility, but which nevertheless adequately facilitates her quest. On the few occasions Britomart removes her armor, such as with her noted encounter with Malecasta, or later with Hellenore and Malbecco (III. ix, 20-4), the discrepancy between her armored androgyny and her female natural body result in what Susan Woods identifies as a "double perspective", a dual image of the Briton princess that is "frequently reinforced by Spenser's alternation of our view of her first as a warrior, then as woman ... then as warrior again, until the apparent contradiction of warrior/woman seems entirely natural" (151). In this regard, the poet seems to allude to his contemporary queen's self-definition and her popular if unconventional conception as warrior queen. More than simply a dual image connecting to the hermaphroditic form that concludes the 1590 version of the text, or even an allegorical reflection and inversion of Elizabeth I, this double perspective Woods' identifies is

suggestive of the life-long and iterative process of performative gender. If gender is understood in Judith Butler's terms as being "in no way a stable identity or locus of agency ... [but] an identity tenuously constituted in time ... through a *stylized repetition of acts*" ("Performative Acts", 187), then Britomart's fluid adoption and adaptation of her gender signifiers through her behaviors suggest a means through which Early Modern women might achieve agency. Butler expands her description of performative gender as follows:

> Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. ("Performative Acts", 187)

It is through these successive stylizations that Britomart not only tackles her quest at its inception, but through them continues to respond to its challenges both as warrior and as woman. Her successful rescue of Amoret from Busirane allows her to investigate the politics of romantic love, and at the close of the 1590 edition, provides a model of marital harmony through the image of the hermaphroditic embrace between Amoret and Scudamor. The androgynous knight is hereby presented with a further reflection of herself as she both pursues and enacts her destiny.
In the 1596 edition with its famously altered conclusion, the removal of the union between the lovers affords Britomart opportunity to learn more about the romantic love she seeks, particularly in light of the "wound" of knowledge she received from Busirane.

Book IV describes Britomart's responsive engagement in performative gender through a set of behaviors that both echoes the modern theories advanced by Butler, and reflects on the deliberate self-stylings of Isabella. Britomart is shown to consciously experiment with her self-presentation, assuming not just the dress and skill of a knight, but also behavioral signifiers that indicate male gender:

> 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 (IV.i.7. 3-6)

Expressly a response to the "wound" of erotic knowledge she received from Busirane, Britomart's behavior is figured as a result of the challenge presented to her still-fledgling understanding of her sexuality. Together, the two women form inverse reflections of one another, with Britomart presenting aspects of masculinity and Amoret offering clear hallmarks of feminine behavior:

> For Amoret right fearfull was and faint,
> Lest she with blame her honor should attaint,
> That euerie word did tremble as she spake,
> And euerie looke was coy, and wondrous quaint,
> And euerie limbe that touched her did quake (IV.i.5.4-8)

However, their dual dissembling lasts only until their honorable reputations -- both Britomart's as knight and Amoret's as woman -- are questioned, whereupon Britomart abandons her male deportment by revealing the "silken veile" (13.4) of her hair. Britomart's developing self-awareness is indicated in her shifting facility of gendered expression. As Judith Anderson notes, "this new Britomart behaves differently from the one in Book III; she reveals her erotic beauty voluntarily and for a socially constructive purpose" ("Britomart", 84). Like Isabella, Britomart can be understood as deliberately adapting the signifiers of her gender to suit her purpose.

In response, Amoret "now freed from feare/ More franke affection did to her afford" (15.6-7), and the two women spend the night together:

> Where all that night they of the loues did treat,
> And hard aduentures twixt themslues alone,
> That each the other gan with passion great,
> And griefull pittie priuately bemone (16. 1-4)

Though a clear reflection of the earlier episode with Malecasta, one which critics have long noted for its potential homoeroticism (Stephens, 36), this later encounter emphasizes Britomart's growing self-knowledge while highlighting the difference between chaste love and licentious behavior that accords with the poem's grand narrative. Though the double entendres are certainly suggestive, Dorothy Stephens asserts the encounter between Britomart and Amoret more clearly emphasizes the sense of security and friendship over a "foolishly anachronistic" (76) approbation

of same-sex love by observing the poet's humor in attempting to answer "the time-honoured riddle about what women discuss when men aren't around" (38). Indeed, the bond between the two women is that of kindred spirits, a quality emphasized by the poet's reflection that though "Long wandred they, yet neuer met with none, /That to their willes could them direct aright,/ Or to them tydings tell, that mote their harts delight" (16. 7-9). The friendship between Amoret and Britomart is cemented by mutual exchange of their shared struggles -- their "hard aduentures" and "griefull pittie" -- forming an image not of sexual union but symbolic self- reflection. As Anderson observes, the scene showcases an "unfolding of Venus from within Mars" ("Britomart", 84) as Britomart as *venus armata* is presented in parallel with Amoret as *venus virgo*.

When Britomart finally meets Artegall, the realized image of her enchanted reflection, the process of mirroring that she explored with Amoret is inverted. Initially, Britomart and Artegall appear as reflections of one another, two knights nearly equally matched as they engage one another in exhaustive battle: "Thus long they trac'd, and trauerst to and fro,/ Sometimes pursewing, and sometimes pursewed" (IV.vi.18. 1-2). It is only when a fateful blow to Britomart's helmet reveals Britomart's "angels face" (19.5) framed with "her yellow heare/ Hauing through stirring loosed heir wonted band,/ Like to a golden border did appear" (20. 1-3) -- the same feminine face and flowing hair that revealed Britomart's identity to Amoret -- that the illusion created by her gendered behavior is dispelled. When Artegall's visor is removed, Britomart witnesses a reflection doubly come to life as she gazes upon both the man she first saw in Merlin's mirror, as well as the reflection of her own performative self-realizations. Her unwilled reaction, "She arm'd her tongue, and thought at him to scold; Nathlesse her tongue not to her will obayd,/ But brought forther speeches myld, when she would haue missayd" (IV.vi.27. 7-9) is not only humorously suggestive of women's predilection for scolding their husbands, it reflects the reputation of Marlowe's "golden tongued" Queen Isabella and the near-magical effects of her mild yet powerful speech.

Against the magic of destiny unfolding, occasioned by Britomart and Artegall's fateful meeting, the heroine's final battle against her future-husband's captor, Radigund, presents reflective counterpoint. Both royal, martial women, and both suffering from the wounds of

unrequited love, Radigund and Britomart are explicitly detailed as reflections of one-another. The extreme vehemence with which they do battle attests to the evenness of their match, and thus to the extent of their similarity: "so long they fought, that all the grassie flore/ Was filed with bloud, which from their sides did flow" (V.vii. 31. 5-6). Both adopt and adapt behavioral markers of masculinity, creating through Butlerian stylizations androgynous identities that facilitate their respective quests for love. To that end, both fall in love with Artegall and, as Susan Woods affirms, he is in turn defeated by them in nearly identical ways: "On the surface, Artegall's encounter with Radigund (V.v) parallels the encounter with Britomart in Book IV. They fight. Artegall's blows shatter Radigund's shield and helmet and rip her clothes. As her female beauty is revealed, Artegall is unable to raise his sword against her" (153) While Elizabeth Harvey argues that within the allegory "Radigund's embodiment of both masculine and feminine characteristics is seen as a source not of strength but of perversity [while her] ... supremacy is designed not to celebrate women's heroism but to demonstrate its perils " (967), the poet's detailed and relatively sympathetic characterization of the Amazonian queen resists reduction to simple allegorical representations. Although Radigund is often regarded as little more than the vehicle for Britomart's triumph over the specter of unchecked female power, Mihoko Suzuki argues that the poet avoids making her a "convenient scapegoat" (183) for female rule. Instead, Suzuki asserts that Spenser "develops and complicates Radigund beyond a personified abstraction into something closer to a dramatic or novelistic character" (184), inscribing her with a personal history of romantic trauma (V. iv. 30) and depth of characterization that allows her to be read as an even more close reflection of the introspective and love-lorn Britomart. Indeed, Radigund registers as dangerous not because she employs her fierce beauty strategically to secure her own share of power, or even as a result of her willful and resolute inversion of social order; instead, the threat she represents is simply that all these anxiety-producing qualities are shared by Britomart.

When the two warlike women meet, the poet stages their battle not as a conflict between the forces of good and evil, but as a face-off between Britomart and a further reflection of herself.

The close affinity between the two women is indicated in the description of Britomart's bloodlust at her defeat of Artegall:

> ... she full of wrath for that late stroke,
> All that long while vpheld her wrathfull hand,
> With fell intent, on him to bene ywroke,
> And looking sterne, still ouer him did stand,
> Threatening to strike (IV.vi.23.1-5).

With these words, the poet reveals the uncomfortably close parallel between his heroine and the misandric Amazonian Queen, seething with an unbridled power that resists the conventions of chivalry. By seeming to reject Artegall's knightly deference, and with it his dominion over her, Britomart hereby stands on the verge of becoming Radigund and using her performatively-crafted identity as female knight to insist on a new social order. It is only after Glauce's intervention (IV.vi.25) stays her vengeful hand until Artegall's identity is revealed, that the essential difference between the two "martial mayds" is determined: though each might do battle and rule kingdoms on their own terms, Britomart alone makes the choice to accept Artegall and the social order he represents. As A.C. Hamilton affirms in his classic study, *The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene*, "in terms of the allegory [Britomart] changes from her role as Radigund -- one who occasions Artegall's fall -- to one who restores his power" (189). Though Kristen Abbott-Bennett suggests Britomart's vanquishing of her reflective counterpart Radigund can be attributed to emotional and cognitive development that sees her "recognizing virtue and determining fair punishment" (21), the details of the battle reveal that it is not rational thought but her newfound love for Artegall that ensures her victory. The description of the "griesly wound" that Britomart receives that "bit/ Vnto the bone" (V.vii.33.2-3) applies not just to the force of Radigund's sword, but to the taunts about Artegall that prompt her to cry angrily: "Lewdly thou my loue deprauest" (32.8). Ultimately, this physical wound reflecting psychological trauma allows Britomart to summon the strength to mortally wound her foe:

> For hauing force increast through furious paine,
> She her so redely on the helmet smit,

That it empierced to the very braine,

And her proud person low prostrated on the plaine.(33.6),

Indeed, Britomart's considerations before meting out her final blow rest not on refined moralities, but on the growth of her love for Artegall and her dedication to him:

In reuenge both of her loues distresse,

And her late vile reproch, though vaunted vaine,

And also of her wound, which sore did paine,

She with one stroke both head and helmet cleft. (34. 3-6)

Ironically, when she rescues him from Radigund's enslavement, Britomart discovers a further inverted reflection of herself: "that lothly vncouth sight,/ Of men disguiz'd in womanishe attire" (37.6-7). Affronted by the disruption of the social order that Artegall himself represents for Britomart, she is "abasht with secrete shame,/ She turnd her head aside, as nothing glad,/ To haue beheld a spectacle so bad" (V.vii.38. 3-5). Like Marlowe's Edward, Britomart turns away when faced with evidence that goes beyond the effects of female authority left unchecked, to register the knowledge of what might have been had she chosen differently. Thus while Radigund broadly functions as bad example of the dangers of female rule, it is her close reflection of Britomart that provides her dangerous potency by dramatizing the performative power of women to effect real change.

Though Isabella and Britomart outwardly appear to be markedly different -- the former displays a historically and culturally sanctioned femininity where the latter enacts a learned and adoptive androgyny -- both characters engage deliberately gendered performances in order to achieve unprecedented agency. Both characters seek a traditional union in marriage with the men who have already been sanctioned by their actual or ersatz fathers, and both adapt gendered behaviors in an attempt to secure that marriage. Despite their traditional goals, the methods employed by both women serve to reflect on cultural anxiety about gender and performance, and gender *in* performance. Moreover, the performative self-styling of both Britomart and Isabella, reflecting as it does a multi-faceted Elizabethan mirror of authority, explores a fear occasioned not just out of the potential malleability of behavior and appearance,

but for what such gender fluidity revealed about the nature of all social bonds. If in early modern England, women could act as knights and commoners could behave as kings, then the key representative performatives that order a society -- the marriage vow, the coronation ceremony -- might well be revealed as equally arbitrary.

Figure 8. *The Pelican Portrait*.

Conclusion

Massacre and Mutability: Motherhood, Succession, and Legitimacy

"Yet shall you never have a more natural mother than I mean to be unto you all"

- Elizabeth I, Speech to the Commons, 1563

In his final play, the dramatically titled *Massacre at Paris*, Marlowe presents his English audience with a composite reflection of their greatest fears: a female, Catholic, Machiavellian Prince. Feared and reviled as the real power behind the successive reigns of three French kings, Marlowe's evocation of Catherine de Medici capitalizes on popular English sentiments that regarded the Queen Mother of France as a true descendant of the Florentine ruler who inspired *The Prince*, and whose dynasty infamously parlayed a reputation for unmitigated ruthlessness into a reach of power that stretched across the continent. Though recent scholarship has shown Catherine's historical legacy of peacemaking to be at odds with her contemporaneous reputation for sectarian violence, it has affirmed the extent of her political might (Knecht, xii). Largely excluded from executive authority during the reign of her husband, it was in the role of mother to the Kings of France that Catherine exercised sweeping authority, a fearful scope of influence Marlowe exploits to dramatic effect. With her singularity of purpose, inexorable ambition, and absolute commitment to power, even at the expense of her own offspring, the Queen rivals the claim of the Duke of Guise to be what Rick Bowers suggestively describes as a "pan-European Catholic terrorist" ("Massacre", 134). Where the play examines with brutal immediacy the retributive violence performed by both Catholic and Protestant factions, refusing to afford the consolation of moral superiority to either, it is through Catherine's performance as a *de facto* ruler that the playwright challenges his audience to once again consider not just a woman's ability to rule, but the gendered means through which such women of power exert authority.

Marlowe's portrayal of Queen Catherine's murderous villainy accords with the popular regard for another contemporary queen: Mary Stuart. As daughter-in-law to Catherine and niece to the despised Duke of Guise, the simple facts of Mary's genealogy link her religiously and ideologically to forces that represented an ongoing threat in the English national consciousness. Spenser's allegorization of Mary as Duessa in Book I locates her in dynamic contrast with

Elizabeth as Una, rendering the two queens as clear opposites: singular purity and quintessential Englishness brought into direct contrast with wanton duplicity and threatening Otherness. As Douglas Waters' classic study, *Duessa as Theological Satire* demonstrates, Spenser's representation in Book One merges "Protestant concepts of symbolic lust and symbolic witchcraft ... which personified the Roman Mass as a whore and witch" (2) into a tightly knit allegory that fuses structure, symbol and meaning. Yet the poem's subsequent invocations of Mary go beyond even this densely layered representational iconography to suggest an evolving consideration of what Andrew Hadfield asserts is "a central problem that the first edition of *The Faerie Queene* raises and attempts to negotiate [...] how we can separate true and false and good and bad queens" (57). Duessa's famous trial in Book V, and her suggestive reanimation as the disruptive goddess Mutability in the eponymous *Cantos* not only reflect critically on contemporary defenses of women, but also interrogate the ideologies of representation employed by, for, and against all women who wield power. In their factual and figurative representations of motherhood, both Marlowe and Spenser reveal maternity as a troubled site of cultural signification, one that simultaneously accords and limits female power. As such, motherhood, together with attendant notions of inheritance, succession and legitimacy are shown to be successfully employed by only the most skillful of political performers.

In Catherine de Medici, Marlowe presents a queen and a mother who consistently performs the political value of maternity to her advantage, while simultaneously challenging the expectations of her role and her sex. The violent performative nature of this Queen Mother's success is evident from her first appearance on stage, where she appears to approve of the union with Navarre, only to reveal barely a dozen lines later that she intends to "dissolve [it] with blood and cruelty" (1.25). On Marlowe's stage, Catherine's version of royal mothering is immediately revealed as a performance that exploits cultural norms to disguise the extent of her influence and corruption of her actions. Though she appears to guide and influence Charles in conjunction with his advisors, stating: "I hope these reasons may serve my princely son/ To have some care for fear of enemies" (4.21-2), his response reveals that what appears to be his will is actually her own: "Well, madam, I refer it to your majesty [...] What you determine, I will ratify"

(4.23 & 25). Charles' moderate sensibilities that tolerate differences of religion are sharply contrasted with Catherine's murderous intentions. He states

> ... my heart relents that noble men,
> Only corrupted in religion,
> Ladies of honour, knights, and gentlemen,
> Should for their conscience taste such ruthless ends. (4.9-12)

Catherine, however, rejects the quality of mercy he espouses. Instead she confidently insists on launching the ensuing massacre without delay.

In dramatizing the religious tension between mercy and law, Marlowe alludes to the contemporary controversies over Catholic recusants that inspired debate, and which made Mary, Queen of Scots such a source of civil strife. Though she frequently credits her "princely son" (4.26), Catherine's behavior affirms his role as effectively circumscribed by his mother's influence. She relegates him to a perfunctory position of giving the orders that obey her intentions. It is Catherine, and not her biological sons, the milquetoast Charles or oafish Henry, who most ably typify the qualities of their ancestor, Machiavelli's *Prince.* Contemporary Protestant publisher John Stubbes asserts the popular English perception of Catherine as occupying the preeminent place within the matrix of political power: “In this tragedy she played her part naturally and showed how she governs all Fraunce … [T]he mother as setter forth of this earnest game stood holding the book (as it were) upon the stage and told her children and every other player what he should say” (qtd in Martin, 127). Indeed, Catherine herself affirms the centrality of her political role when welcoming her son Henry back “to France, thy father’s royal seat” (14.3), she lists his assets as:

> A warlike people to maintain thy right,
> A watchful senate for ordaining laws,
> A loving mother to preserve thy seat (14. 5-7).

Ironically, the former two are effectively made redundant by the overwhelming influence of the latter.

Like Marlowe's other heroines, Catherine's sustained power and influence is effected through performative means. Though the circumstances of the play imply that Catherine herself poisons her son Charles, she exclaims: "O say not so, thou kill'st thy mother's heart" (13. 4), a stock performance of grief that capitalizes on presumptions of maternal love that are otherwise clearly false. The hollowness of her performance is revealed in the swiftness of her recovery at her son's death:

> What, art thou dead? Sweet son, speak to thy mother!
> O no, his soul is fled from out his breast,
> And he nor hears nor sees us what we do.
> My lords, what resteth there now for to be done,
> But that we presently dispatch ambassadors
> To Poland to call Henry back again
> To wear his brother's crown and dignity? (13.16-22).

Having watched her son die before her eyes -- and taken pains to confirm his death -- Catherine regains composure and authority with remarkable ease. Her actions reveal her concerns lie only with the maintenance of her own power, which she achieves through ruthless actions and gendered performances that capitalize on cultural assumption of motherhood.

Marlowe is no stranger to homicidal fathers and manipulative mothers: Tamburlaine murders Calyphas, Barabas poisons Abigail, Dido holds Ascanius hostage, and Isabella plays Edward III as the ultimate prize in a high-stakes game of political chess. In each case, the fathers seek to guard their legacy against what they perceive as the feminizing impulses of their offspring, and the mothers assert their own power through their children. Catherine is unique in that she combines both impulses, repeatedly sacrificing her offspring for her own political gain. She states without reservation:

> For Catherine must have her will in France.
> As I do live, so surely shall he die.
> And Henry then shall wear the diadem;
> And if he grudge or cross his mother's will,

I'll disinherit him and all the rest;

For I'll rule France, but they shall wear the crown,

And, if they storm, I then may pull them down. (11. 39-45)

Affirming her willingness to remove any and all obstacles from her path to power, Catherine presents herself in direct opposition to the traditional picture of the self-sacrificing mother. This ideal was symbolically realized in *The Pelican Portrait* (*Fig. 8*), the iconic image that displayed Elizabeth as a mother willing to shed her own blood for the sustenance of her people, her metaphorical children. In contrast, the Queen Mother of France acknowledges her willingness to spill the blood of her children for her own sake. In this, Catherine literalizes contemporary fears over the influence of mothers, who through their sway over their children may destroy the paternal line. As Simon Shepherd confirms of contemporary Elizabethan thought: "Mothers are said to have a supreme influence on framing children. This power comes from women's biological status, and it is politically dangerous because man cannot control it" (*Spenser,* 81). Such power is made manifest in Catherine's boast: "let me alone with [the king], / To work the way to bring this thing to pass (14.60-1). Though she must take care to retain the appearance of the king's status in public, in private conference, Catherine knows the absolute extent of her power to influence her son. However, she also notes:

And if he do deny what I do say,

I'll dispatch him with his brother presently,

And then shall monsieur wear the diadem,

Tush all shall die unless I have my will,

For, while she lives, Catherine will be queen (14. 62 – 66).

Though assured of her maternal power over her son, Catherine firmly states her willingness to remove her sons from their father's throne, and to replace them with a political ally in order to ensure her continued influence. Moreover, her third-person self reference above identifies her as a Marlovian villain-hero.

Catherine's chosen ally, the notorious Duke of Guise, functions both as the queen's dramatic counterpart and, even more suggestively, as her ersatz child. In terms of political

ambition, will to power, and ruthless disregard for life, even within their own families, Catherine and the Guise are shown to be equals in word and deed. Together, they each plot the deaths of spouses and children, conspire to arrange the massacre, and gleefully consolidate their power in its aftermath. The nature of their relationship is made clear when the Guise acknowledges Catherine's support, boasting:

> The mother queen works wonders for my sake,
> And in my love entombs the hope of France,
> Rifling the bowels of her treasury
> To supply my wants and necessity (2. 76-79).

Catherine's support of Guise is not just financial and political, but in placing "the hope of France" in his love, the Queen mother effectively makes him her heir. It is a role Henry ironically intimates when he remarks, "Guise, wear our crown, and be thou King of France,/ And as dictator make or war or peace" (19.54-5), knowing that through his own mother's influence, the Duke is already in possession of such power. Observing, "I ne'er was King of France until this hour" (21.97), Henry reveals it was not the death of his biological brother, Charles, but the demise of Catherine's chosen son, the Guise, that finally granted him power: "I slew the Guise because I would be king" (21.136). Upon learning of the Duke's demise, the performative nature of Catherine's motherhood with her biological sons is revealed in contrast. Absent are her stylized apostrophes and calm reappraisals of the political landscape. Instead she registers curses that expose the gulf between performed affectations of maternal care and the genuine emotion of a mother's love as she gasps, "I cannot speak for grief" (21.142). Then, turning against her biological son, she exclaims "I would that I had murdered thee, my son!/ My son? Thou art a changeling, not my son" (21.143-4), affirming the power of mothers to cuckold fathers, destroy and disinherit legitimate sons, and substitute heirs of their own choosing. Through Queen Catherine's performed behavior, Marlowe encapsulates within a single powerful, maternal figure cultural fears regarding mothers who exert such tremendous influence over their children that they can exercise power through them against their own fathers and even against the state.

Although mothers were ideologically valorized, Elizabethans simultaneously regarded their influence with such suspicion that, as Mary Villeponteux asserts, "the ideal mother is an absent or dead mother [because] a living, nurturing mother endangers her sons" ("Not as Woman", 216). In *The Faerie Queene,* Spenser's representation of maternal figures is equally contradictory. The narrative is replete with absentee mothers like Amavia and Chrysogone, unmentioned mothers such as Una's and Britomart's, and overseeing mothers, like the elusive Gloriana. There are also instances of bad mothers, ranging from Cymoent and the griesly Foster's witch-mother as archetypal possessive mothers, to the monstrous mother Errour who propagates evil through constant lies and political deceit. Though Duessa is never named directly as a mother, her relationship to maternity is implied through her representation of Mary, Queen of Scots, which was well established even in Book One and described fully in Richard McCabe's 1987 *ELR* article titled "The Masks of Duessa". With regard to such clear allegoresis, and particularly as a result of his thinly allegorized reimagining of Mary's trial, Spenser famously earned the condemnation of Mary's son, James. However, despite the bold and unflattering representation, once assured of the English throne, the Stuart king did little to prevent the poem's subsequent publication. This compliance indicates that at the time of publication, the "personal insult" James perceived as a result of the portrayal was less critical than his anticipated but by no means certain succession to the English crown through his mother's claim (McCabe, 224). Clearly, James understood the political import representations of his mothers -- both his biological one, Mary, and figurative mother, Elizabeth -- had on his perceived right to succession.

In *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England,* John Watkins quotes Francis Bacon's assertion of "a figurative kinship to Elizabeth and James" where the Scots king "walked in the steps of his mother and predecessor" (15, 16) as representative of the type of panegyric sentiments intended to diminish "the dynastic consequences of Elizabeth's failure to bear offspring" while it also "glosses over James' descent from her most celebrated enemy" (24-5). While many of the descriptions of Elizabeth as a metaphorical mother to James represent clear examples of political wish fulfillment, the English Queen did exert formative influence over her youthful neighbor. Elizabeth initiated a correspondence with her Scots counterpart when he was

nineteen that continued for nearly twenty years until shortly before her death. Their numerous extant letters reveal an often-tense political relationship that capitalizes rhetorically on ideas of familiarity, friendship and mentorship. James' early address of Elizabeth as "Madame and mother" (Mueller, 1065) is reciprocated in the Queen's self-styling as benevolent maternal figure who claims "only natural affection, *ab incunabulis* (from the cradle) stirred me to save you from the murderers of your father and the peril that their complices might breed you" (March, 1586). In advancing a conceptual motherhood with James, Elizabeth's rhetoric is congruent with her declaration of herself as a "mother" to her country as a metaphysical paradigm to both normalize and ratify her otherwise anomalous position as childless female prince. In her letters, Elizabeth extends an established aspect of her political self-presentation, so that in effect she performatively "staked, protected, and cultivated her momentous investment in James" (1067).

However, as the relationship between the two monarchs suffered strain over the trial and execution of Mary, Elizabeth's self-presentation increasingly appropriated the gender hybridity made famous in her later Tilbury speech. Her letter on the topic of the execution states her intention: "not to disguise fits most a king, so will I never dissemble my actions but cause them show even as I meant them" (14 February, 1587). Not only does Elizabeth label herself with a masculine noun, she vehemently rejects suggestion that her behavior bears the hallmarks of feminine disingenuousness. This shift in representation reveals that Elizabeth recognized the limitations, and potential detractions of maternal analogies. In her enlightening article on Elizabeth's public speeches, Mary Beth Rose observes that Elizabeth limited her self-identification as a mother to "her early speeches on marriage and succession" (1079). This is in marked contrast with her later dialogue that "constructs a position for herself outside the male dynastic system ... [and] seeks to occupy and to monopolize all dominant gendered subject positions" (1081). Similarly, Villeponteaux asserts that although Reformation principles accorded new precedence to marriage and maternity, "the power that a woman has in determining paternity, and thus inheritance, is negatively constructed in terms of suspicion and fear" (Villeponteaux, 216). In her correspondence with James as with her speeches, Elizabeth's self-representation initially employs metaphors of maternity, but replaces such constructions with

more neutrally gendered articulations of authority as her needs arise. As her rhetorical facility demonstrates, Elizabeth thus employed the notion of metaphorical motherhood with caution, understanding that its multivalent cultural significance could both help and hinder her aims. For James, the manner in which each of his queen "mothers" were represented reflected directly on his ability to succeed through their genealogical and metaphorical inheritance.

Critics like Kirby Neil have long regarded Duessa's trial as “little more than a highly poetic version of officially condoned Protestant literature” (202). More recently, Jonathan Goldberg’s analysis, mindful of the fact that Spenser’s representation is necessarily circumscribed by the constraints of Elizabethan censorship, concludes that the self-appointed poet-laureate is thereby forced to “speak only the language of power” (168). Susan Carter even goes as far as conflating royal policy with poetic intent, stating: “Elizabeth wanted to make it clear that Mary was not tried according to common law, and was found guilty on several counts; Spenser emphasizes this viewpoint in his trial of Duessa” (13). Yet more recent and alternative criticism resists regarding the scene as merely an obedient celebration of Mercilla’s benevolent mercy, asserting that such interpretation misapprehends both Spenser’s intent and the facility of his art. John Staines insists that such strictly representative reading misses “the ways in which Spenser translates the terms of propaganda into some of his most sinuous verse, poetry that casts a skeptical eye upon the very political rhetoric that sustained some of his own most deeply held beliefs” (284). Staines identifies the discrepancy between appearance and truth -- always the crux of any trial -- as the fault line where didactic representation and political scrutiny meet. The initial description of the prisoner provides an early signal for such discrepancies between physical image and inner qualities, with Duessa characterized as being outwardly beautiful but inwardly depraved:

> A Ladie of great countenance and place,
> But that she it with foule abuse did marre;
> Yet did appeare rare beautie in her face,
> But blotted with condition vile and base,
> That all her other honour did obscure,
> And titles of nobilitie deface:

Yet in that wretched semblant, she did sure

The people's great compassion vnto her allure. (V. ix. 38. 2-2-9)

While these details firmly identify Duessa as Mary, who was noted both for her beauty and also for her ability to elicit popular, particularly male, sympathy through performances of her grief and unhappiness, they also suggest the gendered potency of performances for which Elizabeth was equally renowned. Read associatively, the English Queen's famously artificial, highly stylized appearance, together with her legendary ability to defer and dissemble, can also be regarded as being the target of the verse's allusion.

Although Spenser's itemization of Mary's crimes "appears as merely the accepted defense of the English government", which held that the Scots Queen "constituted a national danger, and it was necessary that the claims of justice should supersede Elizabeth's policy of mercy" (Neill, 212), in the subtle alterations made to the factual events, the poet offers a more circumspect approach than strictly official representation. In the poet's re-envisioning, Mercilla is physically present as Duessa's judge, being neatly balanced as Hamilton notes in his edition, between Arthur and Artegall as representatives of justice and mercy. Elizabeth is thus doubly constructed both as a figure of mercy and in allusion to the goddess Astraea, so that her benevolent power is emphatically overwhelming, classical and metaphysical. However, this tableau represents a significant distortion of the then-recent trial's events, where Elizabeth was deliberately absent from the proceedings against her cousin. Further, while Mary argued forcefully in her own defense at her actual trial, Spenser's verse frames Duessa's defense as voiced through personifications. Though a familiar allegorical device, such substitution robs her of the opportunity to display the rational, rhetorical agency it simultaneously criticizes her for lacking. In setting Duessa at a remove, the poet avoids the problematic possibility of presenting Mary's defenses as in any way convincing or meritorious, but in so doing also obscures the various, legitimate reasons for Elizabeth's decades-long procrastination over the execution of Mary. Thus, both queens are judged not on the basis of their political actions and legal defenses, but rather on the degree to which they emulate or reject the standard complaints lodged against women of emotional, physical and intellectual inconstancy. Duessa's defense relies heavily on her gender to

elicit favorable emotion, offering "*Pittie*" (ix. 45. 3) and "*Regard* of womanhead" (ix. 45.4) together with her "*Nobilitie* of birth" (ix. 45. 7) and "*Griefe*" (ix. 45. 9) over her fate as flimsy, highly gendered rebuttals to the serious charges of treason, sedition and heresy presented against her. Only one defense, "*Daunger* threatening hidden dread,/And high alliance vnto forren powre" (ix. 45. 5-6), provides a political rationale for clemency, and even this is attached to outside forces under male volition. Mary as Duessa is thus indicted as much for her deployment of feminine wiles as for her acts of treason, affirming her role as a touchstone for cultural anxieties regarding female power.

The efficacy of Duessa's gendered defense is both affirmed and mitigated by Arthur's response: initially, "The Briton Prince was sore empassionate,/ And woxe inclined much vnto her part" (ix.46.2-3), but once the details of the charges are brought forth, he changes his estimation and his "former fancies ruth he gan repent" (ix. 49.2). Here, the epic highlights the differences between Mercilla and Arthur as representations of female and male rule: whereas Arthur makes his judgment in response to the evidence presented before him, Mercilla is paralyzed by her feminine empathy:

> Though plaine she saw by all, that she did heare,
> That she of death was guiltie found by right,
> Yet would not let iust vengeance on her light;
> But rather let in stead thereof to fall
> Few pearling drops from her faire lampes of light;
> The which she couering with her purple pall
> Would haue the passion hid, and vp arose withal (ix. 50. 3-9)

Elizabeth's avatar is not only shown to be at the mercy of her emotions, that notably feminine failing, but she is also rendered as engaging in a feminine performance of sensibility that delays the enactment of necessary justice.

Despite the evidence of guilt, and resultant knowledge of the action demanded, Mercilla symbolically hides behind her robe of state as she exits the courtroom. By picturing Mercilla as overcome with emotion, the poem implies that the tempering influence of Arthur's masculine

guidance is necessary for female princes who are otherwise likely to enact mercy over justice. As such, Lowell Gallagher asserts that the Mercilla episode offers, "one of the most penetrating and destabilizing "anatomies" of the economy of the Elizabethan power structure" (215). In the following canto, the three opening verses nominally extol Mercilla's eventual negotiation of justice, implying that despite her emotional response the queen has passed the necessary judgment. However, not only is the finality of Duessa's execution left conspicuously unrealized, the number of verses relates to the long months in which Elizabeth avoided acting on the trial's conclusion in an attempt to distance herself from the appearance of regicide (McCabe, 225). Thus while the substance and eventual outcome of the literary trial appear to accord with the historical outcome, the poet's embellishments and alterations do not offer a simple rehearsal of history. Though Richard McCabe maintains the poet's intent "to interpret policy in a manner generally favourable to his sovereign's interests" (237), he also confirms "Spenser's presentation of Duessa's trial is not merely an example of poetic license as some critics argue, but a carefully crafted distortion of fact" (237). Those distortions, particularly the discrepancy between Mercilla's and Arthur's responses, form a sharp critique not just of the Scots Queen, but also of Elizabeth and female rule. The poet levels criticism not just at his Queen's reluctance to make and abide by a firm decision on the subject of her cousin's trial, but of her ability to act fairly and swiftly to enact justice--a quality fundamental to her ability as monarch. Hence, according to Andrew Hadfield, "the chaos of Book 6 is shown to stem directly from the failure to establish true justice in Book 5" (67). Though the figure on trial is nominally Duessa as Mary, the gendered imagery surrounding the episode, together with the implications of the discrepancies between historical fact and poetic fiction form a judgment against all women rulers, and of Elizabeth's ability in particular.

While the trial of Book V constitutes Duessa's final named appearance, the spirit of Mary as consummate bad example of the dangers of female rule is later resurrected in conjunction with another form of legal proceeding. The allegorical projections of discord and dangerous female sexuality that Duessa articulates in the earlier books are reanimated in the *Cantos of Mutabilitie* wherein she is, as Hadfield further affirms, "transformed in to the ultimate threat to order" (69). The eponymous Titanesse usurps not only the Moon Goddess' throne, but seeks to oust Jove

through assertion of what she claims as her prior inheritance. In fact, her quest for complete authority, over “all their kingdoms sought” (VII.vi.18), Mutability reveals her aim as being identical to that of Mary, who likewise insisted on dominion over both Scotland and England with the suggestive and politically explosive nature of her quartered arms. In so doing, she not only directly and forcefully articulates the challenges posed by Mary Stuart’s competing claims to the throne, she also dramatizes contemporary fears of imminent disorder from the dynastic shift from Tudor to Stuart monarchies. As Supriya Chaudhuri recently affirmed, the *Mutabilitie Cantos* reflect "the anxieties of the Elizabethan succession, and the fear of chaos and disorder that threaten the apparent stability of Cynthia's reign” (180). Gordon Teskey goes further, asserting that when Mutability is referred to as "Bold Alteration" and "Proud change", she represents more than a hypothetical force or distant challenge, but that "in Elizabethan political code, this is highly charged language, evoking revolutionary possibilities” (Teskey, 179). Where Duessa articulated the contemporary anxieties over Catholic insurrection, foreign invasion, and civil disorder that haunted much of Elizabeth's reign, Mutability offers a similarly gendered performance that anticipates the question of the Queen's succession and the future role of poetry to influence the process of change.

Though Elizabeth's familiar guise as the moon goddess was associated with change through her various phases, the regularity of her celestial movements is presented in contrast with the anomalous, even chaotic, unpredictability of Mutability. In staging the meeting between Cynthia and the titaness, the poem again explores the implications of inconstancy as a charge leveled against women. Where Cynthia represents regular and enduring variation, Mutability displays erratic and dangerous alteration -- a distinction later be expounded upon by Dame Nature. Popular representation of Elizabeth as the changing but still-constant moon goddess links to both her motto *semper eadem*, and also to her self-presentation as the ageless Virgin Queen. In contrasting the seemingly ageless, constant Cynthia with the changeable and erratic Mutability, the poet appears to ratify Elizabeth’s insistence on her own exceptionality, which in turn affords her the right to rule despite the general misgivings associated with her sex. However, the comparison between Cynthia and Mutability is complicated by the manner in which the recklessly

ambitious Mutability, not content to be just “the face of earthly things so changed” (VII.vi.5.1), quickly and unceremoniously ousts the Queen's avatar, revealing that even she cannot resist the overwhelmingly destabilizing influence of the titaness. Cynthia, however, shows her outrage at Mutabilty’s audacity and “regarded not her threat,/ Ne yielded ought for fauour or for feare” (12.4-5), suggesting Elizabeth’s long refusal to acknowledge either her cousin’s claim to the throne, or the threats made by her supporters. Similarly, displaying further danger, Mutability’s willful arrogance, with her conviction that “Her selfe of all that rule shee deemed most condigne” (11.9) echoes Mary's sweeping claim to both the English and Scottish crowns. Ultimately, the relative size and strength of the “Giantesse”, suggestive of the number and influence of Mary's Catholic supporters, affords her the advantage so that:

> boldly preacing-on, raught forth her hand
> To pluck her downe perforce from off her chaire;
> And there-with lifting vp her golden wand,
> Threatened to strike her if she did with-stand” (13.4. 3-6).

In resorting to force to unseat Cynthia, Mutability demonstrates not only her greater strength, but also her tendency towards violence, a specter that loomed large as the question of Elizabeth’s succession grew ever-more pressing.

Although Elizabeth's self-consciously crafted presentation as Cynthia connotes constancy, agelessness and endurance, symbolically aligning her bodies natural with the body politic, Spenser’s allegorical staging of her encounter with Mutability betrays the myth of her infallibility. As the force of change that “wrong of right, and bad of good did make,/ And death for life exchanged foolishlie” (6.3-4), Mutability represents the inescapable knowledge that, despite the volumes dedicated to praising the Queen’s steadfastness, not only is her death assured, but that the question of her successor without an heir of the flesh may be answered not by right, but by violence. Such querying of Elizabeth's ability to retain control over her realm and to assure her succession prompts Maureen Quilligan to suggest that the later books of *The Faerie Queene* "posit evidence of Spenser's reversal of position in relation to his encomiastic subject, turning

praise of Elizabeth into blame" (208). Then, as now, at the highest executive level, blame is ever present.

The violence of historical precedent as well as the potential for future social discord is explored through Mutability's escalating challenge before Jove. Asserting her claim, the titaness insists:

> I am a daughter, by the mothers side,
> Of her that is Grand-mother magnified […]
> But by the fathers (be it not envied)
> I greater am in bloud (whereon I build) (26. 4-5, 7-8)

Here, Mutability names her powerful double inheritance in terms that evoke Mary's claim to the English throne through her paternal grandmother, Margaret Tudor. In response to Mutability's challenge, Jove reasserts his right

> by Conquest, of our soueraine might,
> And by eternal doome of Fates decree
> Haue wonne the Empire of the Heauens bright" (33. 5-7).

He threatens to treat Mutability "as the rest of her allies,/ And thunder-drive to hell" (VII.vi.30. 5-6). His ire is tempered, however, when he notices Mutability's "louely face/ In which, faire beames of beauty did appeare" (31.1-2). This recognition of her beauty intensifies the gendering of his treatment, labeling her a "foolish gerle" (34.1) and offering a nominal consolation, which Mutability indignantly refuses. In his earlier naming of her as "fraile woman" (25.7) and characterizing her claim as an "idle errand" (25.9), Jove extends to the titaness the misogynistic disparagements typified in the infamous "Homily on Marriage", namely that "woman is a weak creature not endued with like strength and constancy of mind ... and [so] more vain in [her] fantasies and opinions" (qtd in Fletcher, 8). Though Angus Fletcher likens the meeting between Jove and Mutability to a "rhetorical tradition of misogyny often used to instruct young lawyers: the ironic defense of women" (8), Spenser's presentation is subtler than a simple revisiting of the classic *querelle des femmes*, presenting instead an inquiry into the social world-currency of gender.

With "faire Cynthia", Mutability is described in relatively genderless terms as "bold" and "vncouth" (13. 8,9). Likewise with Mercury she is "strange" and "haughty" (17.4), but not markedly feminine. It is only in response to Jove's insistent maleness that Mutability's sex and her sexuality register. Richard Berleth affirms the shift in the "characterization of Mutabilitie who in earlier descriptions has conformed to the apprehensions of her victims" (37), revealing the performative process underlying both Mutability's identity and the manner in which she is perceived. If "Mutabilitie is woman magnifying the tendencies that male Elizabethans feared most in the opposite sex" (Berleth, 38), then she also reflects Judith Butler's definition of performativity, "which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, under, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (*Gender Trouble,* xv). Mutability therefore offers a two-fold challenge to Jove: she not only interrogates his right to succession by force of ideological violence, but she also embodies the contemporary fear that if gender is constructed through behavior and interpretation, then the social structure of patriarchy is equally illusory.

Spenser's exploration into the arbitrary gendering of law and power is literalized in the representation of Dame Nature, the adjudicator of Mutability's claim. In contrast to the polarized opposition of her petitioners -- feminine chaos and masculine order -- Nature's identity is occluded by the "beames of splendor" (VII.6.7) that surround her so that "by her face and physnomy,/ Whether she man or woman inly were,/ That could not any creature well descry" (5.5-7). Such ambiguity is both suggestive of the equanimity of her character and an anticipation of her ultimate decree. Since the natural world contains within it all forms of gender, Nature must also represent such diversity. Though Mutability claims dominion over all things that change, even ironically over Jove himself, Nature corrects her assertion:

> all things stedfastnes doe hate
> And changed be: yet being rightly wayd
> They are not changed from their first estate;
> But by their change their being doe dilate:
> And turning to themselues at length againe,
> Doe work their owne perfection so by fate (VII.58. 2-7)

It is Nature, not Mutability who encompasses changes from original through to eventual states, so that her androgyny reflects the form from which all things begin, and to which all things will eventually return. Though she insists Mutability must be "content thus to be rul'd by me" (59.2), Nature does not require her subjugation nor reparation. As Berleth concludes, Mutability triumphs in daring "to tear away illusions, to challenge male divinity … The Titaness stands up for women's importance in the conduct of physical life, for the triumph of feminine realism in the face of overarching schemes of male superiority and bamboozlement" (49).

Through citation of alternative history in combination with a performative challenge to the gendering of power, Mutability undermines not just Jove's authority, but also the ideological basis from which it is derived. By revisiting the "vniust/ And guilefull meanes" (VI.27. 3-4) through which the titans were overthrown, Mutability makes allusion to the inception of the Tudor reign, and with it the genesis not only of James' claim to the throne through Mary, but also the right of Elizabeth herself. By tapping into the collective memory of the Olympians, itself a social construct akin to emergent English national consciousness, Mutability counteracts what Teskey describes as the effect of "hegemonic amnesia" (173), a process through which the violence of conquest is obscured through the "compulsory forgetting by which visual forms are used to conceal the past" (184). Herein, Mutability's challenge and the poet's epic project combine, so that both are understood to be engaged in interrogating the violent process of shaping the national narrative. As a classical reanimation of the early history of the Tudor dynasty, the poet questions not just the terms of legitimate succession, but also scrutinizes the ideologies that support the right to rule of any monarch, male or female.

As a specific example of bad politics, *The Massacre at Paris* likewise examines collective, cultural memory and enforced, institutionalized forgetting. Indeed Mutability's global challenge closely accords with the social critique offered by Marlowe in his notorious play. As Rick Bowers observes, the playwright scripts scenes that "graphically illustrate the randomness, mindlessness, and embittered confusion of violent ideological action" ("Massacre", 136). By repeatedly obscuring clear identification of perpetrator and victim, Marlowe effectively invites his English audience to witness the struggles of their nearby, near-allied French neighbors: "take a

look at the enemy: it is *us*" (132). Though it is frequently cited as a play about political violence and social trauma, *Massacre at Paris* can equally be regarded as a drama of mutable obfuscation, where the second half of the play is curiously silent about the eponymous massacre, a meta-theatrical reflection of what Mathew Martin asserts is "the amnesia of *realpolitik* that the play has invited its audience to interrogate" (143). Though Catherine's last words in the play, "For since the Guise is dead, I will not live" (22. 160), indicate both her imminent death, and the demise of the Valois line, the play's narrative rejects the notion that Machiavels such as she and the Duke ever truly disappear. Indeed, Penny Roberts asserts that despite the contemporary popularity of Henry IV, the first of the Bourbon kings, the play highlights "the dubious series of events by which he had come to the throne; not so much demonstrating God's hand at work, as a political elite rotten to the core" (Roberts, 439). The presence of a new king and a new dynasty are figured as but a small ripple in a political system that the playwright regarded as endlessly repetitive and self-referential.

In his now-classic text, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning,* Stephen Greenblatt remarks, "Marlowe's protagonists anticipate the perception that human history is the product of men themselves, but they also anticipate the perception that this product is shaped in Lukács phrase by forces that arise from their relations with each other and have escaped their control" (*Self-Fashioning,* 209). Marlowe's female protagonists, however, know all too well that the structures of power are both arbitrary and made by men. Through her ruthless machinations and performative energies, Catherine insists on exerting her will to power in contradiction to the intrinsic paternalism of social and legal systems. In this, she accords with Marlowe's other heroines who employ gendered, performative agency to subvert or control extant systems of power. Like Abigail and Zenocrate's virginity, Dido and Isabella's fierce sexuality, and even Mephistopheles' suggestive androgyny, Marlowe's drama queens challenge cultural assumptions and patriarchal power dynamics. In his final queen Catherine, the playwright scripts the clearest articulation of the power of gendered performance in action in present-tense terms that his audience would variously fear and revile. Like Spenser's dramatic warrior queens, Marlowe's powerful female characters live in the moment, perform themselves with power, and live on within a performative

horizon limited only by their ambitions and by an early modern world unready for their inevitable gendered challenges.

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