

"THE SAMPLE OF TRUE LOVE ALONE": SPENSER'S  
AMORET AS SECOND EVE

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SPENSER'S AMORET AS SECOND EVE

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Abstract: C.S. Lewis once stated that, "To understand the Garden of Adonis, you have to take it along with the whole myth of Belphebe and Amoret." This paper attempts to do just that, showing the role the Garden plays in defining the figure of Amoret in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* as a second Eve figure. It looks at how Spenser uses Amoret's birth narrative, the Garden, and Busirane's Castle to form Amoret in this image, mirroring the stories of the original Eve and of Christ, the second Adam. Spenser did this in order to portray a distinctly Protestant, pro-marriage figure of womanhood and chastity in place of the Catholic privileging of Mary as a distinctly virginal "second Eve." The end result is a figure who served as "th'ensample of true loue alone," an embodiment of everything a sixteenth century Christian woman ought to be.

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In *Spenser's Images of Life*, C.S. Lewis states, "To understand the Garden of Adonis, you have to take it along with the whole myth of Belphoebe and Amoret" (47), yet as he continues to write on this topic he fails to offer a satisfactory explanation for how this is the case.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the years other scholars have followed his example, giving ample attention to the Garden and to the sisters but not the way the Garden fits into the myth of Amoret as a whole. Many scholars have taken the Garden out of context, dissecting it for its philosophical aspects without looking at it as part of *The Faerie Queene's* larger mythos.<sup>2</sup> The same can be said for scholarship on Amoret. In general, Amoret is not discussed in terms of the Garden. Instead, most scholars focus on her time in the Castle of Busirane and, occasionally, the Temple of Venus.<sup>3</sup> There have, however, been some who have connected both Amoret and the Garden to the wider story. Lewis himself did this by connecting Amoret and her twin sister Belphoebe to Ficino's *In Platonis Convivium* and the Neoplatonic idea of the two Venuses. He uses this theory to connect Amoret to *Venus naturalis*, the Venus of generation and procreation (Lewis *Images* 50-52), and states that the Garden, "exists for the purpose of defining Amoret as against Belphoebe, the lover, wife, and mother as against the virgin huntress" (59). Thomas Roche built on this idea, reaffirming that, "Belphoebe is the Heavenly Venus, eschewing earthly love; Amoret is the Earthly Venus, beset by all the dangers love is heir to. Britomart is the human embodiment of both types" (102-03), and stating that Amoret "typifies the Christian woman as the embodiment of the Earthly Venus" (127). Dwight J. Sims built on this idea even further, acknowledging Roche and Lewis's reading of Spenser through Ficino but proposing that, "Pico's conception of three Venuses, not Ficino's

two is in fact the basis of Spenser's allegory of chastity" (435), but still reading Amoret as "the Venus of procreative love" (439-40). Nohrnberg, too, offers a Neoplatonic reading of Amoret and the Garden in his monumental *The Analogy of the Faerie Queene*. Rather than reading her as Venus, though, Nohrnberg claims, "The story of Amoret entails a female imitation of the cycle of Cupid" (595-96). All these scholars additionally admit the strong Christian influence on the shaping of Amoret, acknowledging that she is a Christian Neoplatonic representation of Venus/Cupid. Recent scholarship has either accepted these Neoplatonic readings and moved past them or has questioned them without providing a satisfactory substitute. Lauren Silberman, for example, challenges the views of Lewis and Roche by stating, "Spenserian otherworldliness is fundamentally Christian, rather than purely Platonic" (41), but then uses their ideas to show Amoret's story as a "fable between Platonic myth and Christian revelation" (43). Thus while all of these scholars have acknowledged Amoret as a Christian figure of womanhood and marriage, they have quickly moved to defining her presence in the poem through Neoplatonic/Platonic terms rather than further explicating her Christian roots. While they have undoubtedly deepened our understandings of Spenser's work, their readings neglect some of the strikingly Christian wording and imagery Spenser frequently uses to define Amoret's character and role.

What the scholarship currently lacks is a lens through which Amoret and the Garden can be read that explains this Christian phrasing, the way various events in the Amoret myth help to shape Books III and IV as a whole, and how both Amoret and the Garden fit into the sixteenth century culture in which they were written. Such a reading might be difficult to construct, but it is not impossible. Amoret and the Garden *can* be understood in these ways by reading Amoret not as Venus but as a Second Eve. In the New Testament, Christ is frequently described as the Second Adam, sinless and tempted, but unlike the first Adam, victorious over temptation and able, through suffering, to pay for not only the original Adam's sins but also those of all mankind. In this way, he is able to usher in new life and a new society in the form of the Church. This is the

role Spenser gives Amoret in his poem, casting her in an incarnational image that clearly imitates Christ [the Second Adam] and serves as a fictional literary substitute for the Virgin Mary [commonly referred to in the Catholic tradition as the Second Eve].<sup>4</sup> While any reading of Spenser inevitably has its weak points, the cultural and textual evidence for this interpretation are strong. It puts the various events of Amoret's story, particularly the three major ones in Book III, in clear relation to one another and the overall purpose of Spenser's work, further enriching our understanding of the poem.

In order to read Amoret in this way, we must first acknowledge that her character is not the primary actor of Books III and IV. The main characters of Spenser's poem—Redcrosse, Guyon, Britomart, etc.—are not ideals or allegories. Instead, they serve as the heroes of their tales, demonstrating the growth of their virtue as they interact with secondary characters who embody various attributes and serve as more fully allegorical figures. Amoret is a character belonging to the second class. She is womanly chastity embodied, an Ideal made flesh, and it is this secondary status that enables her to be written and read as Second Eve. Otherwise she, like the more fully human characters around her, would be weak and susceptible to temptation and mistakes. From this position, she would be unable to interact with Britomart as an embodied, unfallen Eve, and Britomart would not be able to learn from and grow through Amoret's experiences and example.

## I.

The figure of Amoret is, in many ways, necessitated by the culture in which Spenser wrote. The sixteenth century in England was one of great turmoil both socially and religiously. However, by the time Spenser began writing toward the end of the century it was reaching a place of fragile stability. This was still a debated stability, though, and the wealth of homilies, conduct manuals, and other texts published at the time show a society seeking to define itself and to figure



out what it now was. At the beginning of the century England had been a Catholic country, like every other in Western Europe, but at its close it found itself Protestant and still trying to define exactly in what ways and to what extent.

In the midst of these discussions on religion and society, the role of marriage and of women were both heatedly discussed. In the early 1500s, the majority of individuals had been married, it is true, but many daughters and younger sons of the nobility had also joined the church, choosing consecrated celibacy and virginity rather than marriage. As Lawrence Stone explains in his study on family life in the Early Modern period, "The ideal of virginity so valued by the Catholic Church provided the theological and moral justification for the existence of nunneries, which contained considerable numbers of upper-class girls placed there by their fathers in order to get rid of them" (38). Under a Protestant government this option was no longer available to them. Now marriage was the expected, correct, and, in many cases, only option available to young men and, especially, women of the upper classes.<sup>5</sup>

Treatises on marriage and the roles of husbands and wives within marriage therefore became very popular from quite early on in the century and continued in popularity until the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup> Some of the earliest of these treatises were by Catholic humanists such as Erasmus who were beginning to question the emphasis the church had put on virginity and celibacy in the middle ages.<sup>7</sup> However, as the century progressed these arguments were largely taken over by Protestant voices, such as Henry Bullinger,<sup>8</sup> who argued for marriage as the primary unit of both social and religious life.<sup>9</sup> These treatises usually described marriage as a command of God, pointing to Genesis and the Garden of Eden as its foundation. They then traced the Biblical emphasis on marriage through the Old Testament into the New, emphasizing Paul's instructions to both husbands and wives and pointing out that most of the apostles were, in fact, married and that even Mary and Joseph were wed. While these treatises did, for the most part, continue to hold the inviolate virginity of Mary, they downplayed it and instructed parents to

prepare their daughters for matrimony, to aid their children in choosing their spouses wisely but not put undue hurdles in their way, and to embrace and relay the sacred bliss and joy of married sexuality.<sup>10</sup>

Along with this new attitude toward marriage came a shifting attitude toward women. This was not necessarily a new attitude since, as many scholars have emphasized, women were encouraged to behave more traditionally than ever in this era.<sup>11</sup> However, it was a shifting and, at times, contradictory one. Protestantism in some ways empowered women by speaking out against medieval theological misogyny which had described them as less than human and as the ones largely responsible for mankind's fall. It described them as co-laborers with their husbands in raising godly children and in running a godly home, and it acknowledged that their souls were as valuable as those of men. Additionally, Protestantism encouraged the education of women and encouraged them to read the Bible and to teach it to their children. The Reformation used and emphasized women's voices to spread its points, and women were essential to the growth of Protestantism in England and the rest of Europe. However, it also did away with the nunneries as bastions of women's learning and influence. Women no longer had the option of joining a nunnery and living their lives fairly independent from male-governed society. Instead, they were now, as Colin and Jo Atkinson put it, "reduced to just wives."<sup>12</sup> Marriage became the only real option for women of the middle and upper classes. Exceptions to this rule, like Queen Elizabeth, only emphasized the importance marriage played in society. Indeed, during Elizabeth's rule she explicitly supported prescriptive texts that encouraged women toward marriage and taught them that being submissive, obedient wives was not only their personal duty but also their public and civic one.<sup>13</sup>

This new emphasis on women's duties as wives and mothers required new female role models. In the Medieval era, Mary and various virgin saints had served as role models. They had represented the importance of chastity, virginity, and religious devotion, and their cults,

especially that of the Virgin, had grown and thrived. Post-reformation, however, Protestants struggled with Mary's role in the church. She was no longer venerated as the "Queen of Heaven," and her choice of perpetual virginity even in marriage was a questionable example at best. Therefore Protestant writers had to consider new options. Many wrote conduct books that gave specific instructions on what made a good woman. Some, such as John Foxe, collected stories of female martyrs for the Protestant cause. Thomas Bentley in *The Monument of Matrones* collected writings of influential female authors and examples of godly Biblical wives.<sup>14</sup> Philip Stubbes used his wife, Katherine, as an example, memorializing her in his *A Christal Glasse for Christian Women* (Hull 205). Still others pulled examples from Greek mythology; Penelope was a popular choice as demonstrated by works like Robert Greene's *Penelope's Web*.<sup>15</sup>

Spenser added his own voice into this cultural milieu when he wrote *The Faerie Queene*. As his letter to Raleigh states, he wrote *The Faerie Queene* as a sort of poetic behavior guide for his readers, intended "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (714). Spenser clearly extended this goal to women in his seventeenth dedicatory sonnet, "To all the gracious and beautifull Ladies in the court,"<sup>16</sup> and through his female characters. Through these characters, he shows the dangers of whoredom and Catholicism, exalts Elizabeth and her royal virginity, and strives to show the perfect Protestant woman, the wife. His first example of Protestant womanhood is the character of Una in Book I. However, Una, as a symbol of the True Church, was too lofty a goal for his readers. Spenser needed a character that could be both exemplary and accessible, less shining in perfect holiness that protected her from all harm. Amoret, as the figure of marriage, provided this necessary character and fulfilled the prescriptive roles of womanhood.

In the text, Amoret and her twin sister, Belpheobe, "twixt them two did share/ The heritage of all celestiall grace" (III.vi.4.6-7). As the older of the two sisters, Belpheobe, the figure of absolute chastity, provides an acknowledgement of Queen Elizabeth's position and superiority.

However, she never interacts with or influences Britomart—the heroine of Book III and, therefore, the main character with which readers are intended to identify. Because of this, readers do not connect with Belphoebe. Rather than imitating her, readers were intended to adore her as a goddess-type figure. Unlike every other woman in the *Faerie Queene*, she lives in a state of perpetual virginity. The others all display some form of sexuality—either anticipatory or realized. Amoret, on the other hand, unites these latter two threads of sexuality, acting as both the anticipatory maiden/bride and, later, the fulfilled bride, enjoying the pure bliss of chaste love with her husband as exemplified in Book III's final image of the hermaphrodite. She is exemplary, but she is far from a virgin. She is a bride, trembling with the anticipation of her wedding night; and she is praised for being so.

## II.

To establish Amoret as a savior figure or Second Eve the blight of Original Sin must be removed. This was the first step to establishing her as an ideal. In order to be without Original Sin, however, Amoret—like Eve, Mary, and Christ—had to be conceived without an earthly father. Eve was created from Adam's rib in the Garden. Mary was conceived, according to the apocryphal *Book of James*, through a kiss. Christ was miraculously placed in his mother's womb through the work of the Holy Spirit. Spenser clearly drew on these all three of these miraculous traditions when he described Amoret's conception and birth, pulling some of his words directly from the account of Christ's Incarnation.

Amoret's introduction into the narrative is, appropriately enough, her conception:

Her birth was of the wombe of Morning dew,  
And her conception of the ioyous Prime,  
And all her whole creation did her shew  
Pure and vnspotted from all loathly crime,

That is ingenerate in fleshly slime  
So was this virgin born, so was she bred,  
So was she trained vp from time to time,  
In all chaste virtue, and true bounty-hed  
Till to her dew perfection she was ripened. (III.vi.3)

This language used to describe Amoret (and Belphoebe's) conception is incarnational. They are "virgin born" and, therefore, "pure and vnspotted from all loathly crime/ That is ingenerate in fleshly slime." This miraculous virgin birth gifts the sisters not only with a sinless nature but also a semi-divine status:

These two were twines, and twixt them two did share  
The heritage of all celestiall grace.  
That all the rest it seemed they robbed bare  
Of bounty, and of beautie, and all vertues rare. (III.vi.4)

They are the bearers, together, of "all celestiall grace," and of "bounty, and of beautie, and all vertues rare." In some ways, this simply reiterates that they are "vnspotted from all loathly crime," but it also shifts their sinlessness from being simply passive (vnspotted) to active (as bearers of grace, beauty, bounty, and virtue). Through this active sinlessness and virtue, the sisters mirror the triad of the other sinless individuals of Christian tradition (The Edenic couple, Mary, and Christ) as they are full of the potential and destined to bring "celestiall grace" into the world through their lives and actions. Additionally, their birth, like that of Christ according to Catholic Tradition, was painless: "She bore withouten paine, that she conciu'd/ Withouten pleasure" (III.vi.27.3-4). Just so Mary, according to Francisco Suarez, avoided "that troublesome weariness with which all pregnant women are burdened, she alone did not experience who alone conceived without pleasure" (Warner 192).<sup>17</sup> This description further emphasizes the similarities

between Christ and the twins. Here Chrysogonee is described in terms that, according to Suarez, belonged to Mary alone, some of the wording almost exact. Spenser clearly intends to evoke in his readers' minds the conception and birth of Christ.

Many scholars have noted the clarity and strength of this incarnational imagery. Lewis described it as, "an immaculate conception" in which "they were begotten without earthly father" (Lewis *Images* 48), and James Hankins explains the sources for Chrysogonee as an emblem of Chastity and discusses the ways in which this description of the twins' conception and birth are nearly parallel to contemporaneous descriptions of the conception and birth of Christ through the Virgin Mary (Hankins 278-79). However, Thomas Roche's explanation of the event is perhaps the lengthiest and most striking. He points out the multiple parallels between Spenser's wording and that of the Prayer Book, and makes the statement that, "this miraculous birth is an analogue to the Incarnation" (Roche 106). He takes this even further than the other scholars, too, in suggesting the reason for these parallels. As he writes, "it is, I believe, Spenser's way of suggesting the true genealogy of Christian virginity and Marriage," the two different types of Chastity (Roche 106). Thus nature of the sisters' birth aligns them with Christ and the Incarnation and offers them as an alternative to Mary, the Catholic embodiment of Chastity and Second Eve.

However, scholars fail to see how these images continue throughout the poem. Roche clarifies the scholarly consensus when he states, "Here the incarnational imagery ceases with no indication of the reason why it was used at all" (Roche 109), but despite Roche's assertion such is not the case. The incarnational imagery essential to Amoret's character does not end with the birth narrative; instead it introduces Amoret as Second Eve and segues into the description of her childhood in the Garden of Adonis.

### III.

In order to be an Eve Amoret must not only be of heavenly birth, she must also have her “Garden,” so Spenser gave her one, the Garden of Adonis. As noted in the introduction, the Garden has already been looked at from nearly every possible angle, and each word, phrase, and scene has been dissected and milked for philosophical and theological references, antecedents, and meanings. The present reading will not reiterate these. Instead, it will allow them to provide the foundation for a new reading—how Amoret's education in the Garden further shapes and establishes her as a Second Eve.

In the Garden, Amoret is raised without sin and trained up by Psyche, the true soul. These lessons train her “in trew feminitee” (III.vi.51.5) and “in all the lore of loue, and goodly womanhead” (III.vi.51.9), and through Psyche's instruction she grows and develops until:

. . . she to perfect ripenes grew,  
Of grace and beautie noble Paragone,  
She brought her forth into the worldes vew,  
To be th'ensample of true loue alone,  
And Lodestarre of all chaste affection,  
To all faire Ladies, that doe liue on grownd.  
To Faery court she come, where many one  
Admyrd her goodly haueouer and fownd  
His feeble hart wide launched with louses cruel wownd. (III.vi.52)

Her natural "celestiall grace" is shaped and instructed by Psyche, sharpening and refining her natural state, until she becomes a "Paragone" of grace. In this polished state, Amoret is "th'ensample of true loue alone,/ And Lodestarre of all chaste affection." She exemplifies not just any love but specifically "true loue alone." This emphasizes the earlier point that she in no way

engages in sinful or errant sexuality. Rather, she shines as an example of true sexuality and marital love, demonstrating to those she encounters in the text—most specifically Britomart and, through her, Spenser's female readers—what it means to be a true lover. Additionally, she serves as the "Lodestarre of all chaste affection." A lodestar is a fixed guiding light that shows the way and on which one's direction depends (OED). By giving Amoret this title, Spenser declares her the guiding light of those seeking to live lives of chaste affection; they look to her for hope, guidance as they navigate the complexities of romantic affection. Moreover, Amoret is "brought forth into the worldes vew" to be these things. In context of the poem Psyche brings her forth, sending her into the world once her training is complete. However, it is the Poet who truly brings Amoret "into the worldes vew." He shows her off through his writing and crafts her into both an ensample and a Lodestarre.

This description of Amoret, like that of her birth, strongly mirror descriptions of Christ in the New Testament. In 2 Peter 1:19, Christ is "the day starre," and in Revelation 22:16 Christ states, "I am the roote & the generacion of David, and the bright and morning starre," True, when Scripture refers to Christ as a star it general calls Him the morning star rather than the lodestar which was most commonly, though not necessarily, the north star. However, the star imagery as well as the emphasis on Christ as the hope and guiding light are still relevant. Additionally, multiple verses in the Bible make clear that Christ is the example of perfect holiness for all those who follow him.<sup>18</sup> Thus Spenser, once more, uses clearly incarnational imagery to describe Amoret following her training in the Garden. He also makes clear, though, that Amoret serves as the "ensample" and "Lodestarre" to a very specific group, "all faire Ladies, that doe liue on grownd." Thus she is an example of true Christian *womanhood*, and her example is one for all women, but for women alone.

If this is the result of Amoret's upbringing in the Garden, then the Garden must be read through this lens, looking for which parts of it shape Amoret into a perfect image of grace and



chastity. What is the "trew feminitee" (III.vi.51.5) and "lore of loue, and goodly womanhead" (III.vi.51.9) in which Psyche instructs her? The Garden serves as both site of her education and, in many ways, the education itself. In the process, it fulfills the role of a Second Eden for this Second Eve, forming and shaping her as it does everything else within it. Indeed, when Spenser first introduces the Garden in Book II he uses very Edenic terms:

That man so made, he called *Elfe*, to weet  
Quick, the first author of all Elfin kind:  
Who wandring through the world with wearie feet,  
Did in the gardins of *Adonis* fynd  
A goodly creature, whom he deemd in mynd  
To be no earthly wight, but either Spright,  
Or Angell, th'authour of all woman kind;  
Therefore a *Fay* he her accordine high,  
Of whom all *Faryes* spring, and fetch their lignage right. (II.x.71)

In this passage the first Elfe, newly formed by Prometheus, unites with the first Fay in the Garden, grants her a name, and with her begins the fairy race and peoples Faerieland. Thus the Garden of Adonis serves as the Eden of Faerieland, the source from which it originates. Importantly, it is also the formational location of Faerieland's women (Fays) and of marriage, just as the Garden of Eden in Genesis is the location of Eve's creation, but not of Adam's. Both of these accounts link women to the Garden, making it their home, point of origin, and domain. Additionally, and just as importantly, both accounts depict the Garden as the birthplace of matrimony, both in Genesis and in Faerie.<sup>19</sup>

The Edenic echoes in the Garden are further reinforced by its descriptions in Book III when Venus brings Amoret there:

She brought her to her iouous Paradize  
 Wher most she wonnes, when she on earth does dwell.  
 So faire a place, as Nature can deuize:  
 Whether in *Paphos*, or *Cytheron* hill,  
 Or it in *Gnidus* bee, I wote note well;  
 But well I wote by trial, that this same  
 All other pleasaunt places doth excel,  
 And called is by her lost louers name,  
 The *Gardin of Adonis*, far renowmd by fame. (III.vi.29)

The Edenic images here are clear. The Garden is a “iouous Paradize” and “So faire a place, as Nature can deuize.” Additionally, like Eden, its location is uncertain and undiscoverable by man. As Kathleen Williams explains, “the paradisal images suggest that it is a kind of Eden, where sensuality is spontaneous, frank, and blameless as in the prelapsarian garden” (111). Isabel MacCaffrey also acknowledges the Edenic aspects of the garden when she states, “In the Garden of Adonis, ‘wicked beasts’ do no harm, either because they cannot enter this magic place, or because no beast *is* wicked here. We are approaching a world of innocence where lions become golden and gentle” (261). The Garden embodies both sensuality and innocence, untouched by sin and with traces of both heaven and earth.

Free sexuality flourishes in The Garden, where everyone:

Should happy bee, and haue immortall blis;  
 For here all plenty, and all pleasure flowess  
 And sweete loue gentle fitts emongst them throwes  
 Without fell rancor, or fond gealosity;  
 Franckly each Paramor his leman knowes,

Each bird his mate, ne any does enuy  
Their goodly meriment, and gay felicity. (III.vi.41.3-9)

The paramours here have no sham in their lovemaking, nor any envy. Instead, pure joy abounds as every individual enjoys his or her proper mate. Meanwhile, Venus sets the example for these couples as:

There wont fayre *Venus* often to enjoy  
Her deare *Adonis* company,  
And reape sweet pleasure of the wanton boy.  
...  
But she her selfe, when euer that she will,  
Posseseth him, and of his sweetnesse takes her fill. (III.vi.46.1-3, 8-9)

And Adonis, too, participates as "There now he liueth in eternall blis/ Ioying his goddesse, and of her enjoyed" (III.vi.48.1-2).<sup>20</sup> Cupid and Psyche also partake in joyful coupling as Cupid, like Adonis, "playes his wanton partes,/ And his trew loue faire *Psyche* with him playes" (III.vi.49.9-50.1). Thus every lover in the Garden partakes, joyfully, in the sexuality it offers. This free sexuality coincides nicely with Hankins statement in his study on *The Faerie Queene* that some in the early church thought sex was instituted by God in the original Eden, and that the Fall introduced not only death but also lust, sullyng the joyful innocence of pre-lapsarian sexuality (Hankins 135-36). The Garden, however, strictly restrains the figure of lust. Here its symbol, "that wilde Bore" (III.vi.48.5)<sup>21</sup> has been,

. . . emprisoned for ay,  
...  
In a strong rocky Caue, which is they say,  
Hewen vnderneath that Mount, that none him losen may. (III.vi.48.6, 8-9)

The Garden similarly restrains the armed Cupid, a second symbol of lust. Within its walls he can be seen "laying his sad dartes Asyde" (III.vi.49.8-9).<sup>22</sup> With the disarmament of these two threats to true love, every relationship can be joyous and free from pain or danger. Love, in its sensual, erotic aspects, is rejoiced in as natural, pure, faithful, and committed, every individual with their mate and only with their mate. In this way the Garden depicts several images of the ideal marriage, a relationship which embraces the joy of sexuality within commitment and, in so doing, restrains and disarms lust, returning the pre-lapsarian enjoyment of pure, undefiled bliss in sensual love.

The physical and geographic aspects of the Garden further embody the embrace of perfect oneness and love. As Judith Anderson elaborates, the Garden is double-sexed. As many have discussed, the Mount at the Garden's center is an image of the *mons veneris*, the topographical version of the female genitalia (McManus 261-63). Anderson, however, points out that the Mount has "features that could be related to either sex. Put another, better, way, it appears ambiguously, or doubly-sexed" (103). She explains that this doubleness is "fulfilled and positive" (106). She falters, however, in claiming this doubleness is equivalent to ambiguousness and, furthermore, indicative of a tendency toward androgyny in Books III and IV of *The Faerie Queene*. Instead, this doubleness foreshadows the hermaphrodite image at the end of Book III,<sup>23</sup> an image that indicates not the loss of individual sexual features but the union of them. The sexual doubleness of the Garden does not deny either the masculine or the feminine. To claim this would negate the Garden's training of Amoret in "goodly womanhead." Instead, the doubleness is another picture of marriage, of the need of the sexes for one another in order to be complete and to fulfill their God-given directive of generation and productivity.

This directive for generation is essential to the pre-lapsarian love portrayed in the Garden. In Christianity, both sexuality and marriage originate from God's command in Genesis 1, in the Garden of Eden, when:

God created the man in his image: in the image of God created he him: he created them male and female. And God blessed them, and God said to them, Bring forth the frute and multiplie, and fil the earth, and subdue it, and rule ouer the fish of the sea and ouer the foule of the heauen, & ouer euerie beast that moueth vpon the earth. (Genesis 1:27-28)

As the Geneva gloss on this verse explains, "The propagacion of man is the blessing of God," the blessing that comes from married sexuality. Generation is an essential aspect of pure, chaste, guiltless sexuality like that seen in the Garden, and Spenser's text clearly communicates this. Nearly every stanza contains striking images of life and generation. Psyche and Cupid have a daughter, Pleasure. Venus and Adonis together give life to everything as they breed "infinite shapes of creatures" (III.vi.35.1). Indeed, Spenser's clearly echoes this verse in stanza 34:

Ne needs there Gardiner to sett, or sow,  
To plant or prune: for of their owne accord  
All things, as they created were, doe grow,  
And yet remember well the mighty word,  
Which first was spoken by th'Almighty lord,  
That bad them to increase and multiply. (III.vi.34.1-6)

Thus a free yet committed sensuality is productive, emphasizing the role of marriage in generation and, in turn, the potential of Amoret as mother. In Amoret's case, this potential remains unfulfilled, but that plays a part in her role as Second Eve. She bears the promise of productivity, the hope of new life. The realization is yet to come.

We understand the Garden as a Second Eden more fully when we remember that another space in *The Faerie Queene* is also devoted to sensual love and described in Edenic terms. Both Giamatti and Lewis discuss the ways in which the Garden contrasts with Book II's Bower of

Bliss. Spenser depicts the Bower, too, as a sort of Eden, but in its case this is a distinctly negative thing. The Bower ends in destruction. The Bower also similarly presents a false Second Eve, Acrasia, who desires to induce all mankind "to fall" (Giamatti 271). It presents a false Eden, Eve, and sexuality while the Garden reflects a true Eden where the young Second Eve can be trained faithfully in "trew feminitee." Both Lewis and Hankins agree the key difference between the two lies in the very subject we have been discussing, the way the two present love, life, and sexuality. Lewis states, "[The Bower] is artifice, sterility, death: [The Garden] nature fecundity, life" (*Allegory* 407),<sup>24</sup> and Giamatti seems to echo this when he says, "The Garden of Adonis is superior to the Bower in that it takes into account the laws of creation which the Bower denied" (289). Whereas the Bower presents a picture of female temptation leading to the fall, the Garden presents an image of the potential of sexuality and the female form to produce life.

In these multivalent presentations, the Garden aligns Amoret, as Second Eve and embodiment of chastity, with the prevailing Protestant view on marriage, and married sexuality, as holy and chaste and as formed primarily with the view of children in mind.<sup>25</sup> She is not trained to be a Duessa or an Acrasia, seducing men to sin through her sexuality. Instead, the Garden teaches her to embrace her body with its potential for sensuality and pleasure in the role of wife. By committing to a single man and merging with him she has the ability to defeat lust—both her own and that of her husband—and to generate new life. These are the lessons of "goodly womanhead" which Amoret learns in the Garden, and they are the lessons which, as the "Lodestarre" and "th'ensample" "to all faire Ladies," she is meant to communicate to the reader. They build on the incarnational imagery of her birth, showing that she, by embracing the chastity of married love, has the potential like Christ to create new life—His being the second birth and hers the first.

#### IV.

At the end of canto vi, the Garden canto, Spenser introduces a new challenge to Amoret. She is sent forth from her Garden nursery to the Faery court, and there,

. . . she to none of them her loue did cast  
Saue to the noble knight Sir Scudamore,  
To whom her louing hat she linked fast  
In faithfull loue, t'abide for euermore,  
And for his dearest sake endured sore,  
Sore trouble of an hainous enemy,  
Who her would forced haue to haue forlore  
Her former loue, and stedfast loialty,  
As ye may elsewhere reade that ruefull history. (III.vi.53)

This rueful history is the next step in Amoret's journey and her final appearance in Book III—and, therefore, in the original 1590 *Faerie Queene*. Through her experiences outside the Garden, Amoret fulfills her incarnational role, is victorious over her enemy, and brings the harmony of the Garden into her own relationship with Scudamore. Through these two actions she passes on, by example, the "lore of loue, and goodly womanhead" (III.vi.51.9) she learned in the Garden. Mirroring classic Christian tradition, she does this through suffering.

After the Garden, the reader next encounters Amoret in the Castle of Busirane, and, it shows us how she as incarnational image fares when faced by the realities of sin and temptation. In fact, Busirane embodies sexual sin and temptation as he holds Amoret captive and attempts to force her "to haue forlore/ Her former loue, and stedfast loialty." As Amoret's husband, Scudamore, states,

Why then is *Busirane* with wicked hand  
Suffred, these seven monethes day in secret den

My Lady and my loue so cruelly to pen?

My Lady and my louse is cruelly pend

In dolefull darknes from the vew of day,

Whilest deadly torments hoe her chast brest rend,

And the sharpe steele dothe riue her hart in tway,

All for she *Scudamore* will not deny. (III.x.10.7-11.4)

Even faced with this torture at the hands of Busirane, Amoret remains "chast," and refuses to "deny" her love for and devotion to Scudamore. The phrase here, "the sharpe steele dothe riue her hart in tway" is particularly compelling given our reading of Amoret as Second Eve. As Chih-hsin Lin states, "the image of a pierced heart reminds Christians of the Passion of Christ, whose heart is pierced by his enemy for love" (367),<sup>26</sup> and Emily Bernhard-Jackson echoes this statement when she draws parallels between Amoret and the iconography of the Sacred Heart of Christ, stating "Amoret's perforated heart is the textual equivalent of the pierced Sacred Heart . . . that features in the religious iconography of the period" (120).<sup>27</sup> Thus this image, once again, identifies Amoret almost explicitly with Christ. Christ endures his suffering for the sake of his bride, the Church, to sanctify her and his relationship with her. Just so, Amoret suffers out of devotion to her bridegroom and desire to defend and sanctify their relationship. Her suffering thus continues to define her as a second Eve in terms particularly relevant to her role as incarnate chastity and her marriage.

The descriptions of Amoret in Busirane's house continue to build a stronger relationship between her suffering and that of Christ. For example, in the Masque of Cupid,

After all these there marcht a most faire Dame,

Led of two grysie villeins, th'one *Despight*,



The other cleped *Cruelty* by name:  
She doleful Lady, like a dreary Spright,  
Cald by strong charmes out of eternall night,  
Had Deathes owne ymage figurd in her face,  
Full of sad signes, fearfull to liuing sight,  
Yet in the horror shewd a seemely grace,  
And with her feeble feete did moue a comely pace. (III.xii.19)

And, further,

At that wide orifice her trembling hart  
Was drawn forth, and in siluer basin layd,  
Quite through transfixed with a deadly dart,  
And in her blood yet steeming fresh embayed:  
And those two villeins, which her steps vpstayed,  
When her weake feete could scarcely her sustaine,  
And fading vitall powres gan to fade,  
Her forward with torture did constraine,  
And euermore encreased her consuming pain. (III.xii.21)

Amoret, like Christ on the way to Calvary, is paraded through the "streets," surrounded by the jeering manifestations of sin that come before her in the Masque and supported on either side by two "villeins," mirroring the two thieves on either side of Christ at the crucifixion.<sup>28</sup> Like Christ, she has been so weakened from suffering and blood loss that she can barely stand to walk in the Masque. All these descriptions reinforce her image as the suffering lover scorned her along with all she stands for, not, as many scholars have argued, because of her own fear or sin,<sup>29</sup> but out of

love for Scudamore and a refusal to give in to a sin that would compromise her chastity and her marriage bond.

The parallel with Christ again appears in the description of Amoret's torture in the Castle:

. . . that same woefull Lady, both whose hands  
Were bounden fast, that did her ill become,  
And her small waste girt rownd with yron bands,  
Vnto a brazen pillour, by which she stands. (III.xii.30.6-9)

This description of Amoret, bound to a pillour with hands bound, pierced and bleeding, conveys an image of crucifixion. She is crucified by the sinful desires of her captor, Busirane, who represents wrongful love, specifically, as several scholars have discussed in great detail, the poetry of courtly love.<sup>30</sup>

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

With his "pen," the "vile Enchaunter" prods Amoret with temptation, offering her freedom from her pain. He pushes for her to give in to his desires, exposing her to lust, sin, temptation, and suffering. He attempts to use her heart and desires to turn her to his will, just as Satan, the original "vile Enhcaunter," did first with Eve in Eden in Genesis 3, and then with Christ in Luke 4. In

response to her temptation, however, Amoret does not follow the first Eve by falling and taking all of mankind with her. Instead, she follows the example of the Second Adam, resisting the temptations posed by Busirane and defeating his power to destroy her marriage and her life. She gives the lady knight, Britomart, instructions on how to defeat Busirane and rescue Amoret from her captivity. In Busirane's Castle, Amoret suffered in Britomart's place, leading to the overthrow of Busirane and the threat he poses to chastity and marriage, both within the poem and without.<sup>31</sup>

Spenser rewards Amoret for her faithful suffering in the original ending to the 1590 version of *The Faerie Qveene*. She reunites with Scudamore outside of Busirane's Castle in an allegorical picture of holy Christian marriage, itself an allegory of Christ's relation to His Church (Ephesians 5:32).

Lightly he clipt her twixt his armes twaine,  
And streightly did embrace her body bright,  
Her body, late the prison of sad paine,  
Now the sweet lodge of loue and deare delight:  
But she faire Lady ouercommen quight  
Of huge affection, did in pleasure melt,  
And in sweete rauishment pourd out her spright:  
No word they spake, bore earthly thing they felt,  
But like two senceles stocks in long embracement dwelt.

Had ye them seene, ye would haue surely thought  
That they had beene that faire *Hermaphrodite*. (III.xii.45-46.2)

In this marriage embrace, Amoret and Scudamore unite in a figure reminiscent of “that faire *Hermaphrodite*.”<sup>32</sup> Free from shame and melting, joyfully, into one another's arms like the lovers

in the Garden, the couple embodies an image of innocent, full sexual pleasure. Through this, they become the perfect image of love and marriage, coming together to symbolize oneness and completeness and one of the purest pictures of Joy found in Spenser's poem, as she and Scudamore "Each other of lous bitter fruit despoile" (III.xii.47.2). Because of this endurance, she obtains salvific love in the arms of Scudamore and the most purely happy, fulfilled union that exists in the *Faerie Qveene* (at least until the 1596 version). In this union, Amoret as Second Eve has successfully defeated the sin around her to achieve a renewed, paradisal union with her husband. She has left the Garden, defeated sin, and been found by her Adam in a way that promises further fruitful completion.

This image deeply impacts Britomart who,

. . . halfe enuyng their blesse,

Was much empassiond in her gentle sprite,

And to her self oft wisht like happiness. (III.xii.46.6-8)

Thus the fruit of Amoret's suffering applies not only to her own marriage, but also to that of Britomart. In Amoret and Scudamore she sees the promise of what her own union with Artegall could be and is "empassioned in her gentled sprite." Through Amoret, Britomart encounters an example of who she wishes to be as a wife and is spurred to seek "like happiness." In their embrace, she sees the promise of the Garden of Adonis and of the hermaphrodite, the promise of a union so true and strong that the individuals become truly one, regaining the unity and joy Adam and Eve enjoyed before the Fall brought discord and pain into the marriage bond.

## VI.

While the 1590 Book III ends on a victorious note for Amoret, Spenser's later rewrite of its last few stanzas and addition of Book IV significantly complicate the image of her as Second Eve. As Silberman argues in *Transforming Desire*, Spenser shifts his focus in Book IV and,

seemingly frustrated with the reception of his 1590 work, "shows how the ideal of creative sexual harmony figured in the Hermaphrodite cannot be sustained in a culture of sexual hierarchy" (5).<sup>33</sup> Silberman has a point. Book IV presents many challenges to Amoret and the ideal of married love she embodies. However, these complications do not have to mean the abandonment of Amoret's ideal. Instead, continuing to read her as Second Eve can continue to provide fresh insights into Spenser's development of the ideas of marriage, chastity, relationships, and the struggles they face in a fallen world.

Throughout her adventures, Amoret serves as an ideal of womanly response, a perfect Eve through which women can find their way to following and imitating Christ. Hers is not a full character but an allegory of womanhood from the Garden, and she serves to develop Britomart into the living, breathing, earthly example of what women might strive to be. Her virgin birth leads her to the perfect, Edenic Garden of generation where she gains strength, knowledge, and wisdom in order to become "th'ensample of trew loue alone" to "all faire Ladies." This training equips her to face suffering at the hands of Busirane for the sake of that same "trew loue," and to win victory through this suffering, ultimately defeating her tormentor and tempter. From this victory comes a joyful reunion with her lover, embodying all of the ideas she was raised with in the Garden in a single embrace. Through both the suffering and the subsequent embrace, she provides development and growth for Britomart as a woman and more fully develops a Christ-like image in a poem that lacks a true Christ figure. Through her experiences, she emerges as a consummate image of the Second Eve, created and existing, unlike the first, in a fallen world where she must suffer and toil. Also unlike the original Eve, however, Amoret is victorious over her temptation, mirroring the image of Christ in Scripture as the Second Adam who "was in alle things tempted in like sorte, yet without sinne" (Hebrews 4:15). and, as with him, this distinction gives her the ability to bring regeneration and rebirth to the situations and characters she encounters.

## ENDNOTES

1. Lewis writes an entire chapter on the relationship between Belphoebe, Amoret, and the Garden, explaining that the Garden functions to distinguish the one from the other, aligning Belphoebe with Diana and Amoret with Venus as separate images of divine beauty. Lewis's argument is influential in shaping my own, but it is not a complete argument, only the beginning of one.

2. See Hankins 234-241 for a good overview of many of these philosophical readings of Spenser. Also, for more recent readings which separate the Garden from the rest of the poem but were, nevertheless, helpful in formulating the argument of this paper see Harry Berger "Actaeon at the Hinder Gate: The Stag Party in Spenser's Garden of Adonis," which looks at the role of feminine power and sexuality in the Garden. Also see Anderson who looks at the sexual-doubleness of the Garden.

3. Some excellent sources on this which have informed my own reading are Stephens, Berger "Busirane and the War Between the Sexes: An Interpretation of *The Faerie Queene* III.xi-xii"; Bernhard-Jackson; Cirillo; Gilde; & Lin.

4. For the most part in this text I will not be dealing with the relationship of Amoret to Mary except on a tangential basis. While there are similarities between Amoret and the presentation of Mary as second Eve in the apocryphal and Catholic traditions, these similarities seem to all be in cases where both were intentionally shaped to more closely resemble Christ. Thus the only direct similarity was the title "second Eve" and unique position as an example to

women. As such, I base my claim on Amoret being an alternative to Mary as second Eve rather than comparing the two. Information on Mary is based on Warner's study on the subject.

5. Also see Atkinson 291-92, where they state "The Protestant reformers had claimed that women would no longer be forcibly immured in convents but would lead more useful and godly lives as wives and mothers. . . . As the family became the fundamental Protestant religious unit . . . Protestant women 'dwindled into wives,' bereft not only of vocations and female communities but also of those saints who had looked after women's interests, especially their pattern and model, the Blessed Virgin Mary"; Cavanaugh 163, in which Cavanaugh discusses how the fall of Catholicism in England led to a loss of focus on virginity; Roche 114, where Roche traces the ways in which the dissolution of the monasteries and legalization of clerical marriage as well as the new Protestant emphasis on civil and familial engagement rather than solitary contemplation "tended to displace the medieval opinion of virginity as the Christian ideal."

6. For a discussion on these prescriptive works see Hull 47-56; Masek 146-147, also looks at various prescriptive words from the period; McManus 220 discusses the way prescriptive literature in the sixteenth century influenced women's thinking.

7. For the influence of these humanist writers, particularly Erasmus, Agrippa, and Vives on Protestant thinking of marriage in England see Yost. He looks at the way these writers spoke positively about marriage, but he acknowledges that their attitudes toward women (particularly those of Vives) and sex were still largely negative. Waduba also discusses the role of Vives in English conceptions of women in the sixteenth century.

8. See Bullinger, especially chapters 1-12 and chapter 25. For a discussion of the significance of Bullinger see Hull 49, 155; Waduba 121-24; Frye; and Lin.

9. Monter looks at the influences on constructions of women and marriage of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

10. For more on Protestant teachings on sexuality see Frye. He looks at the ways the Puritans, in particular, praised conjugal love in all of its aspects: both emotional and physical, stating "classical Puritanism inculcated a view of sexual life in marriage as the 'Crown of all our bliss', 'Founded in Reason, Loyal, Just, and Pure.'" He explores the way this is demonstrated through Luther, Calvin, and other, more specifically English, Puritan writers in the sixteenth century. He also gives specific examples of anti-marriage Catholic scholars in earlier centuries.

11. See Kelly-Gadol for a comprehensive study on how the Renaissance did (and did not) impact women's lives throughout Europe.

12. See Kelly-Gadol for a comprehensive study on how the Renaissance did (and did not) impact women's lives throughout Europe.

13. Wiesner gives a good overview of the state of women in the period, and Trill discusses the effects of various religious writings on women's understandings of self. She explores the way the Elizabethan government used homilies to shape women's behavior during Elizabeth's reign.

14. For a discussion of *Monument for Matrones* see Hull 149, and, for a more specific example of how Bentley uses Biblical figures in his work see Atkinson 289-300.

15. For a discussion of the role of Penelope in women's behavioral tracts of the sixteenth century see Ziegler.

16. For more on Spenser's female audience see Goss 259-61 Quilligan 175-244.

17. Warner also discusses other aspects of Mary's supposed painless pregnancy and labor.

18. A few key examples would be Matthew 16:24, John 13:13-16. Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 Peter 2:20-22, and 1 John 2:26.



19. Ronald Horton, "The Argument of Spenser's Garden of Adonis" in *Love and Death in the Renaissance*, eds. Kenneth R. Bartlett, Konrad Eisenbichler, and Janice Liedl (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1991), 523-25, discusses the idea of the Garden as birthplace of matrimony extensively. Nohrnberg, 439, also has some very insightful comments on the relationship between the Garden and marriage.

20. See Anderson 111 for a further discussion of the relationship between Venus and Adonis. Also, see Berger's "Actaeon at the Hinder Gate"; I largely disagree with Berger's assertion that the relationship between Venus and Adonis is one that threatens male sexuality by empowering the feminine, but he does make some interesting points about the nature of the pleasure Venus and Adonis enjoy.

21. For a discussion of the boar as an image of lust, see Humphrey Tonkin, "Spenser's Garden of Adonis and Britomart's Quest," *PMLA* 88, no. 3 (1973), 412; Horton 68-69; Anderson 112-13 also discusses the role of the boar; she does not explicitly label it "lust," but she does acknowledge it as a "bisexual" threat the relationship and explores some of its ambiguities.

22. See Horton, 69-70 for a further discussion.

23. S Anderson does acknowledge the similarity between her analysis of the Garden and the hermaphrodite on pg. 106, but she dismisses it, claiming "these belong to the visual fixity of statues and to the landscape of quest outside its gates." However, dismissing the hermaphrodite in this way ignores the wider image of the hermaphrodite in Renaissance ideals of marriage, a topic discussed in Roche 130-136 as well as by Cirillo in his article on the hermaphrodite.

24. Lewis continues the discussion of these distinctions for the next several pages, emphasizing it most strongly on pages 412-13 where he writes on the role of artifice in distinguishing chaste/married/good love from profane/sinful/adulterous love. Hankins also discusses this idea briefly on pgs. 134-35. He also returns to this discussion of the Bower in

comparison to the Garden in *Spenser's Images of Life*, pgs. 45-47. Tonkin also discusses the role of the Garden in responding to the Bower on pg. 408 as does Nohrnberg on pgs 492-493.

25. See Bullinger, Chapter 15 for a sixteenth century Protestant take on this.

26. Lin discusses this idea in great length in his article, even exploring the ways Amoret's/Christ's suffering is linked to marriage and a Protestant affirmation of the importance of marriage as an image of Christ and the Church.

27. Bernhard-Jackson additionally states, "it is unlikely that [Spenser] intended any direct correspondence between Amoret and Christ," but she nevertheless spends much of her essay looking at the clear Christological tones of Amoret's suffering in the Busirane episode, further stating on pg. 122, "Amoret so loves Scudamore that she gives her only begotten heart for that love."

28. See Bernhard-Jackson 126 for a further explication of this idea.

29. Gilde's article on Amoret gives a good overview of scholarship on this issue.

30. Lewis *The Allegory of Love*, 424-25; MacCaffrey 92-95; Nohrnberg 472-474; Bernhard-Jackson.

31. For an elaboration on the role Amoret's suffering plays in Britomart's self-knowledge and growth in emotional maturity in her quest see Mary Adelaide Grellner, "Britomart's Quest for Maturity." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 8 no. 1 (1968): 35-42.

32. For further information on the hermaphrodite image in renaissance thought see Roche 133-36 and Silberman 49-70.

33. Silberman spends a good amount of her book discussing this idea and also brings it up in her article "The Hermaphrodite and the Metamorphosis of Spenserian Allegory."

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