

“BEAUTY’S RED AND VIRTUE’S WHITE”: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BEAUTY/  
VIRTUE TOPOS IN BOOK III OF EDMUND SPENSER’S *FAERIE QUEENE* AND  
AEMILIA LANYER’S *SALVE DEUS REX JUDAEORUM*

A Thesis  
by  
EMILY ANN JOHNSON

Submitted to the Graduate School  
Appalachian State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

May 2012  
Department of English

“BEAUTY’S RED AND VIRTUE’S WHITE”: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BEAUTY/  
VIRTUE TOPOS IN BOOK III OF EDMUND SPENSER’S *FAERIE QUEENE* AND  
AEMILIA LANYER’S *SALVE DEUS REX JUDAEORUM*

A Thesis  
by  
EMILY ANN JOHNSON  
May 2012

APPROVED BY:

---

Susan Staub  
Chairperson, Thesis Committee

---

David Orvis  
Member, Thesis Committee

---

Jennifer Wilson  
Member, Thesis Committee

---

Jim Fogelquist  
Chairperson, Department of English

---

Edelma D. Huntley  
Dean, Research and Graduate Studies

Copyright by Emily Ann Johnson 2012  
All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

“BEAUTY’S RED AND VIRTUE’S WHITE”: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BEAUTY/  
VIRTUE TOPOS IN BOOK III OF EDMUND SPENSER’S *FAERIE QUEENE* AND  
AEMILIA LANYER’S *SALVE DEUS REX JUDAEORUM*. (May 2012)

Emily Ann Johnson, B.S., Appalachian State University

M.A., Appalachian State University

Chairperson: Susan Staub

The representation of beauty was a primary focus of the early modern author, and in the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions, outer beauty was a reflection of interior virtue; however, this signification seems to be questioned and manipulated by early modern authors like Edmund Spenser and Aemilia Lanyer. Throughout Book III of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, beauty and virtue are inextricably connected as a result of Spenser’s use of the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions. In Book III, the “Book of Chastity,” Spenser provides a plethora of representations that reinforce the connection between beauty and virtue within these traditions; however, the paradox associated with this connection becomes evident when corporeality, or the female body, is introduced. In *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Aemilia Lanyer also takes part in the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions, but she also seems to manipulate and question this paradox. Both authors utilize the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions to fashion their own concepts of virtue: Spenser utilizes this connection to prescribe the Protestant concept of married chastity for early modern women, and Lanyer utilizes this connection to author a defense of women.

## DEDICATION

In loving memory of J.K. Tharpe, Jr., who truly believed in the value of education and who encouraged me every step of the way.

(May 1925 – December 2011)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was a collaborative effort, and it would not have been completed without the guidance and encouragement of my thesis committee members. I would like to thank Dr. Susan Staub, my mentor and advocate, whose encouragement throughout my undergraduate and graduate career allowed me to recognize my potential as a student and an academic. Her continuous support on this project was instrumental to my success. I would also like to thank Dr. David Orvis, who provided supportive feedback and encouragement even when I was unsure of where my ideas might take me, and Dr. Jennifer Wilson, whose insightful feedback helped me to clearly articulate my ideas. Their dedication to my success with this thesis has been invaluable.

I am also deeply indebted to the many faculty members at Appalachian State University who fostered my love of learning and encouraged me to continue my education. I found a valuable mentor early in my undergraduate career in Dr. Thomas McGowan; his encouragement helped me to persevere. I would like to thank Dr. Lynn Searfoss, Dr. Colin Ramsey, Dr. Kim Gunter, Dr. Jill Ehnenn, and Dr. Holly Martin for their continued support and words of encouragement. Their interest in my research endeavors and success provided me with the motivation to continue working hard to achieve my goals.

I would like to thank my fellow graduate students and friends, particularly Alicia Andrzejewski, with whom I shared ideas about early modern literature, early modern constructions of the female body and beauty, and early modern representations of rape.

Peaches Hash, Brandon Johnson, Sarah Horne, and Amanda Bond Mitchell also encouraged me to discuss my ideas about my thesis, teaching, and the frustrations and successes of graduate school in general.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their continuous support while I worked on my thesis. Without the work ethic I learned from my mother, father, and grandmother, I would not possess the motivation and dedication that it takes to be successful, and without the unwavering support of my fiancé, Joseph Roberts, and his help with synonyms, this thesis would have never reached completion. My family encouraged me on a daily basis and provided a much-needed outlet for me to share thoughts, frustrations, and achievements.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vi
Chapter 1: An Introduction to Representations of Female Beauty and Virtue in Early Modern Literature .....	1
Chapter 2: ‘Be bold, be bold . . . . Be not too bold’: Beauty and Chastity in Book III of Edmund Spenser’s <i>The Faerie Queene</i> .....	17
Chapter 3: ‘A woman’s will . . .disposd to go astray’: The Violated Female Body in Book III of Spenser’s <i>The Faerie Queene</i> .....	36
Chapter 4: Aemilia Lanyer’s ‘taske of Beauty’: <i>Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum</i> and the Challenging of Tradition.....	59
Works Cited .....	76
Vita.....	81



## Chapter 1

### An Introduction to Representations of Beauty and Virtue in Early Modern Literature

Beauty is everywhere in early modern literature. The beautiful body of the sonnet tradition is repeatedly displayed via blazon for the reader to see. Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Donne blazon unnamed mistresses, and Shakespeare blazons a beautiful boy in *Venus and Adonis* and a beautiful and chaste woman in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Among other women particularly noted for their beauty, there are Marlowe's Hero, Middleton's Bianca, Sir Phillip Sidney's Stella, Pamela, Philoclea, Urania, and Zelmane, and Edmund Spenser's Britomart, Belpheobe, Amoret, and Florimell, not to mention Milton's Eve. Of course, this is only the start of a list of beautiful female characters within the literature of the period, but it reflects the fact that the representation of beauty was a primary focus of the early modern author.

Interestingly, the beauty of these female characters is typically connected to virtue, which is commonly represented within early modern literature as counterbalancing beauty and protecting chastity. In Milton's *Comus* and in sections of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, chastity is represented as embodied and seems as concrete as Britomart's armor; however, other female characters from this period are not so fortunate. The virtue of Shakespeare's victimized Lucrece is a point of contestation because her chastity does not prevent the rape, and her suicide potentially implicates her soul and mind in the "yielding" of her body to Tarquin's attack. In Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, Bianca is portrayed as becoming significantly more corrupt as she is passed from her father to her husband to her

lover, the Duke, and her beauty ignites desire, which eventually results in the corruption of multiple characters. Throughout the literature of early modern England, the chastity of beautiful female characters is varyingly portrayed as embodied, questionable, or lacking; and beauty itself is portrayed as an impetus of desire, a mask of deception, or the outer sign of inner virtue. The complicated and varying constructions of female beauty and virtue in early modern literature are a result of changing social, theoretical, and religious ideologies, which encouraged authors to question and re-evaluate these constructions.

Neo-Platonism provided the most influential theory on beauty and love for the early modern period. In Neo-Platonic thought, virtue was inextricably linked to female beauty because female beauty was meant to inspire divine love. What begins with Plato as a differentiation between the realm of ‘Forms’ or ‘Ideas’ and the realm of the real or particulars eventually becomes a tradition which fuses the ‘Form’ of goodness with physical beauty and creates a paradoxical connection between beauty and virtue. Neo-Platonism provided the idea that mankind could transcend the earthly condition through the contemplation of beauty via the ladder of love. According to Anne Sheppard, “In *The Symposium* it is love (*erōs*) which provides the driving force behind the soul’s progress from interest in beautiful bodies to concern for beauty of character and beauty of mind and so at last to a vision of true and unchanging Beauty, the Form itself” (10). An individual ascends the ladder of love through the contemplation of a beautiful object, which eventually leads to the contemplation of the Form or Idea of Beauty, and ultimately transcends the earthly condition.

Petrarchism furthered the influence of Neo-Platonism on early modern literature because Petrarch’s blazons of the unattainable Laura incorporated this Neo-Platonic thought,

idealizing beauty and presenting it as spiritual. Within the Petrarchan tradition, the contemplation of the unattainable Petrarchan lady, whose beauty is extolled and whose body is blazoned, is meant to allow the poet and the reader to reach spiritual transcendence; however, the tension between physical and spiritual within this tradition is felt by the poet and the reader. Corporeality often corrupts any attempt at transcendence because physical desire subverts it.

As a result of the influence of the Neo-Platonic tradition, beauty came to signify virtue and beautiful women were thought to be virtuous. This influential line of thought, which was incorporated into the writings of Petrarch, resulted in the many early modern literary representations that focus on the connection between beauty and virtue; however, this connection, the beauty/virtue topos, does not hold up under close scrutiny because corporeality, or the body, complicates it. Within this literature, beauty is idealized, yet it is also distrusted; as soon as idealized beauty becomes associated with the female body, the ideal collapses, and this suspicion sometimes leads to corruption and the desire to destroy beauty.

My intention is to examine two early modern texts – Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, Book III, and Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* – with this dilemma in mind in order to investigate the implications that these representations had on the women of the period. Spenser presents an image of beauty and virtue that reinforces the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions but that does not seem to differentiate between the beautiful female body and the beautiful female soul or the virtuous female mind. In contrast, Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* presents an image of female virtue that is problematized by beauty; the beautiful women of Lanyer’s text are condemned for various reasons as a result of their

beauty, and Lanyer's praise of virtue within the poem separates and privileges the mind over the body. I chose Spenser's poem because it contains numerous representations of women who demonstrate varying aspects of beauty and virtue, and I chose Lanyer's poem because it seems to question Spenser's representations. These two texts provide interesting examples of the problematic link between beauty and virtue in different ways, and an investigation into these depictions will reflect the social implications for early modern women in patriarchal early modern society.

Since this research is primarily concerned with the implications that this tradition had for women, and since numerous scholars have written on homoeroticism within these traditions, my discussion of homoeroticism in the sonnet tradition will be limited. My discussion of many of the canonical sonnets will also be limited for the same reasons; Petrarch's influence on the structure and love conventions used in the English sonnet tradition has been established and discussed frequently. Rather, this research endeavor will examine representations of beauty socially and culturally, and it will focus on how these constructions comment on the early modern female body and early modern female interiority (the mind and soul). It should be noted that I do not intend to conflate the mind and the soul within this study; however, I do associate the soul and the mind with female interiority for the purposes of this study because female interiority was a site for concern within the period, and this concern is evident in the literature. I will use the term "female interiority" to reference the unidentifiable inner workings of the female mind and soul, and I will use the term "mind" in the modern sense but also to refer to Augustine's concept of will, which implies a cognitive decision or intellectual control. I will use the term "soul" in the modern sense to refer to the inner part of humankind that is thought to leave the body after death.

The differentiation between mind, body, and soul is necessary for this study because the Neo-Platonic connection between outer beauty and inner virtue is being questioned within early modern literature. Despite its prevalence, the ideal that “beauty signifies virtue” was questioned during this period, as noted by Susanne Fendler in “The Emancipation of the Sign: The Changing Significance of Beauty in Some English Renaissance Romances.” As Fendler explains, Neo-Platonic notions regarding beauty were being replaced by ideas of individuality (269). Fendler argues that certain texts from the period, including Sydney’s *Arcadia*, demonstrate a move from the “nominalist” to the “realist” perspective, which allows for beauty to become simply an individual characteristic rather than a signifier of virtue (271). This shift seems to be the case with a variety of literary representations from this period. For this change to take place, however, there must have first been some acceptance of the original ideology: an acceptance of the idea that outer beauty is a reflection of inner virtue and that beauty exists because virtue exists. This treatment of beauty is problematic, to say the least, simply because it categorizes and limits the experiences of those who lack what is privileged. For this reason, beauty as a construct results in discrimination and categorization, even if this result is unforeseeable.

It should be noted that transcendence through the contemplation of beauty was not always associated with the contemplation of *female* beauty. As pointed out by numerous scholars, including Jill Kraye, Platonic love was transformed during the Italian Renaissance when Plato’s texts were widely read. Authors of this period sought to merge Platonic thought with Christian thought and create an image of Plato’s philosophy which minimized the homosexual nature of writings within the tradition. Authors such as Pietro Bembo, Marsilio Ficino, and Baldesar Castiglione assisted in the transformation of the Neo-Platonic tradition,

as did the poetry of Petrarch. Ficino enforced the ideal that love between men was a “higher form” of love than love for women because it was intellectual as opposed to corporeal (Kraye 78). In this sense, homo-social relationships were relationship between equals. Bembo presented both divine and human love as unequivocally heterosexual; thus, female beauty became the object of Platonic love (Kraye 81). In Castiglione’s work, Kraye argues, “there is a progression from the sensual love of youth to the spiritual love of old age, both directed exclusively towards women” (83). All of these men accepted the Neo-Platonic idea that outward beauty was a reflection of inner virtue, but the appreciation of beauty transformed during this period to reflect a move towards an appreciation of *female* beauty. This focus on female beauty and the need to reconcile the appreciation of beauty with corporeal love was accompanied by a suspicion of women and a condemnation of female beauty as a corrupting force. Because procreation was important within society, corporeal love was necessary, yet corporeal love endangered the souls of men who sought transcendence (Crawford 7). This paradox that existed as a result of the need to reconcile corporeal love and procreation with the appreciation of beauty and transcendence explains part of the reason for the distrust of female beauty and corporeality. If men thought that corporeal desire for female beauty and the female body placed them in danger of damnation, a distrust of female beauty and the female body is an inevitable result.

While many aspects of Neo-Platonism were compatible with Christian ideology, the conflicts inherent in the merging of two systems of belief is reflected in the contradictions that are present in the literature of the period. According to Gabrielle Starr, “Platonism offered the most significant account of beauty through the end of the Renaissance, but particularly in England, Platonism is subject to fusion and revision; not only is it strongly

Neo-Platonic (as we call it now), but it was blended, ad hoc, with Aristotelian or Augustinian views, and with ideas that seem to contradict Platonism – various kinds of materialism, Petrarchism, or Ovidian views on love and sex” (296). What results from these conflicting ideologies is a concern over the nature of beauty and the women who possess it. St.

Augustine, whose writings were central to the Renaissance, had a major influence on the merging of Neo-Platonism with Christianity. Augustine’s ideas of the hierarchical nature of the world extended from the soul to society, and he viewed the body and the material world as obstacles to “man’s ascent and fulfillment” (Coleman 30). Augustine’s influential ideas include passion’s subjection to reason in order to maintain order within the body and the parallel between order in the body and order in society. From Augustine’s perspective, “the soul was to be seen as the battlefield of turbulence and the flesh, now neutral, became corrupted by the sins of the soul, by its various lusts” (Coleman 36). Perhaps one of Augustine’s most influential ideas was his emphasis on human will, or human agency. Augustine asserts that the body should be the instrument of the mind, and that the soul is not affected by things done to the body. The most famous example of Augustine’s emphasis on human will is his opinion regarding the rape of Lucretia: he asserts that only human will can provide consent and that innocence should not be accompanied by shame. Augustine also condemns suicide and associates it with a guilty conscience, which in the case of rape associates suicide with consent (Augustine 30).

The collapse of the beauty/virtue topos in relation to the idea that virtue is determined by the mind, particularly the idea of chaste will, is a result of early modern ideas about conception, consent, chastity, and female interiority. It was commonly believed that conception resulted from both male and female fluids produced during the enjoyment of the

sexual act; therefore, according to Michael Dalton: “a woman cannot conceive with child, except she do consent” (Dalton 281-2). This reveals the early modern belief that if a woman became pregnant as a result of rape, she must have consented because she enjoyed the act. The female body is used in instances such as these as evidence of interior motive and consent, and the notion of will becomes irrelevant because, as we know now, the female mind cannot will the body to prevent pregnancy. This emphasis on the female body to provide physical evidence of interior motive was extremely problematic; however, the emerging interest in the inner physical workings of the body and emerging medical theories about how the body worked placed emphasis on bodily evidence, and the primary female virtue, chastity, was also largely a matter of the body.

The matter of chastity and the competing definitions of virtue in early modern England further reflect the competing ideas about how to identify or judge virtue in relation to interiority and in relation to the body. According to Unhae Park Langis, “virtue was the hub of the Renaissance discourse of ethical action, grounded on the ancient examinations of the good life, the realization of human potential” (1). In Platonic thought, goodness and beauty were one and the same. According to Anne Sheppard, the Greek word ‘*kalos*,’ used by Plato and often translated as “beautiful,” is a general term which “can be used to indicate moral goodness or noble birth, just as well as aesthetic attractiveness” (14). “Virtue,” on the other hand, according to Langis, “derives from the Latin *virtus* signifying manly excellence” (1). While linguistically exclusionary, virtue as a concept evolved into gendered categories. Langis explains this evolution:

Virtue as described thus far [in the ancient tradition] referred to the excellent action of those allowed to participate fully in the public sphere, i.e., male



citizens, with the exclusion of women and slaves. Women, subject to patriarchal control, were relegated to a different, passive conduct of virtue. By Shakespeare's time, virtue had divided along gender lines to designate female chastity (OED 2c) and manly excellence including courage and valor (OED 7). (20)

Chastity in this context is interesting and somewhat complex. In Neo-Platonic thought, a virtuous or good life meant a life ruled by reason, in which the soul was raised by contemplation rather than dragged down by corporeal experience and passion. In early modern thought, this would imply an ability to control one's passions as defined by the Galenic theory, which posited that emotions were affected and temperament was determined by the balance of fluids or humors in the body. In neither of these situations does virtue imply physical action; in the context of the Neo-Platonic tradition, virtue simply implies a need for contemplation and self-governance.

As noted earlier, however, the early modern definition of chastity was extremely dependent upon the body as proof of its existence. The definition of chastity was changing within the early modern period, but throughout the period virginal chastity was defined as virginity and married chastity was defined as sexual inexperience outside of marriage; in both instances the reputation for chastity was as significant as chastity itself. For early modern women, chastity was both a public and private matter. Paradoxically, the public nature of chastity required modest and reserved behavior in public, requirements that seemingly confined women to the domestic setting, but the bodily nature of early modern chastity made it highly suspect. The courts employed women who claimed that they could identify a virgin by inspecting her body, and it was not uncommon for these women to

attempt to locate the female hymen as evidence of virginal purity. The fact that chastity ended with one sexual encounter, which then reflected upon the reputation for virtue that a beautiful woman might have had, was extremely paradoxical, especially if women who were notorious for lack of virtue remained beautiful when their lack of virtue should have made them ugly or deformed in some way. Laura Gowing identifies the problems inherent with this mode of thought. She asserts that female chastity, married and virginal, was thought to be visible in the appearance of the body by explaining that early modern lore suggested that “unchastity left real marks on the female body,” including pox marks (31). According to Gowing, “The language of insult, prevalent on the streets and echoed in texts and images, constructed whores as public women, like the ‘strange women’ of Proverbs: they had twinkling eyes and trampling feet, and they could be distinguished by the facial marks of syphilis, by their dress, by their blatant immodesty in gesture and appearance” (31). The desire to locate virtue in appearances and physical evidence reflects the anxiety that accompanied the inability to identify or see virtue. Because the mind and the soul were not visible and goodness was not verifiable, female beauty and the female body were sites of concern and anxiety for early modern culture. As a result of this anxiety and concern over the female body and female beauty, the beauty/virtue topos is not sustainable within early modern literature and the competing ideas about beauty and virtue result in the collapse of the idea that beauty is a reflection of virtue. With the need to differentiate between these definitions in my discussion, I will use “chastity” to refer to the integrity of the female body and reputation, and I will use “virtue” to refer to the integrity of the mind and soul to imply goodness or moral integrity. I will differentiate between body and reputation as necessary.

Petrarch's acceptance of and participation in the Neo-Platonic tradition further problematized the beauty/virtue topos because his writings embodied and objectified the images of the beautiful woman. Sarah Hutton asserts that "the doctrine of Platonic love was assimilated into secular love poetry, especially into the Petrarchan poetry so fashionable in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries where it became an essential element of the language of courtly love" (Baldwin and Hutton 72). Petrarch's representations of Laura are representations of an unattainable lady whose beauty is lauded but whose body is objectified. Petrarchism, like Neo-Platonism, is meant to extol female beauty and promote love for divinity through the praise of beauty; however, this admiration of female beauty within Petrarchan sonnets becomes problematic because Petrarch is seemingly unable to separate the physical from the spiritual within his poetry and transcendence is corrupted by corporeality and physical desire. Within the Petrarchan tradition, the poet presents an ideal version of beauty by representing nature's perfect creation. As noted by Nancy Vickers in "The blazon of sweet beauty's best': Shakespeare's Lucrece," the art of the poet embellishes and praises the art of God within this tradition; however, the body again complicates these attempts to ennoble beauty because the blazon fragments and idealizes beauty thus objectifying the female body and figuring it as a commodity. According to Vickers, description is a form of display, and "the canonical legacy of description in praise of beauty is, after all, a legacy shaped predominantly by the male imagination for the male imagination" (96). Vickers' discussion of the problematic nature of the blazon identifies the reader and author as male and the book and the object of the male gaze as female. In this way, the book and the female object of the blazon are commodities in an exchange between men, which reflects the problems inherent in an ideology which places the female body on

display. Furthermore, the objectification of the female body frequently incites desire as opposed to divine love, and such a focus often leads to the destruction of beauty or virtue as a result of male frustration. The corruption of Neo-Platonic disembodied contemplation is a result of the introduction of the body into the tradition, and as noted earlier, with the introduction of the body the beauty/virtue topos is unsustainable.

At this point, inherent problems within these competing traditions are easily recognizable. Neo-Platonism seeks to elevate the soul through contemplation of beauty and through the ability to maintain control over passion through reason, and Christianity successfully claims that salvation, or the elevation of the soul, can be reached through divine love and God's grace; however, these traditions must be reconciled with corporeal love. Petrarchism also has inherent flaws such as the need to reconcile idealized beauty with natural beauty and the necessity to reconcile appreciation for beauty with love for a particular woman, such as Laura. The problematic ideal of chastity and its significance in relation to beauty must also be considered. As a result of these competing social, religious, and theoretical ideologies, the idea that beauty signifies virtue and that virtue protects chastity was challenged in a variety of ways in life and in literature, and the early modern author could not overlook this paradox. Many early modern authors recognize and utilize these discrepancies to create texts that question these traditions.

For this reason, I will focus on two texts that are steeped in the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions: Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Lanyer's poem delineates several ways that beauty and virtue are constructed; therefore, using her poem to re-evaluate and interrogate a text written by a male author from the period is a reasonable way to situate early modern constructions of beauty

and virtue. This research endeavor utilizes selected stanzas from Lanyer's invective against outward beauty unaccompanied by inner virtue (stanzas 24-31) to interrogate Spenser's text because Lanyer recognizes the complexity of the beauty/virtue topos within early modern literature. Her invective identifies how beauty is privileged in literature and society; alternatively, she privileges virtue in her poem because she recognizes that beauty without virtue is a damning combination for women.

Spenser's text provides representations of women that, while arguably ambiguous, advocate marriage and help to "reestablish firm definitions of gender," in the words of Heather Dubrow (55). Dubrow does not include Spenser in her study of Petrarchism and its counter discourses within the sonnet tradition, but she does identify a trend within the sonnet tradition that reacts to the power-struggle of the Petrarchan tradition by reasserting power in some way. Spenser's text clearly works to regain power through the reestablishing of firm definitions of gender by prescribing marriage for early modern women. While Britomart may seem to be the independent, virginal representation of Queen Elizabeth or an emancipated female knight seeking adventure, the adventure that Britomart seeks is marriage, a marriage which is standardized according to Protestant ideas. Moreover, Britomart is not the only female figure who must find her way through Faeryland, and the experiences of the other female characters within the text suggest that the vulnerable female body is constantly in danger and in need of male direction, protection, and control. Aemilia Lanyer, on the other hand, recognizes that certain aspects of the tradition are extremely problematic, and she makes this explicit and seeks to rewrite or revise the tradition through her poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*.

In Chapter 1, I will argue that although Book III of *The Faerie Queene* seems to privilege virtue, Spenser's representation of Britomart is problematic because it relies as heavily on the integrity of the female body as it does on the integrity of the female mind, which leaves the reader questioning why a virtuous mind is not deemed sufficiently indicative of virtue. In the case of his protagonist Britomart, Spenser creates a paradigm of beauty and embodied virtue which reinforces the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions but which also redirects the traditions to incorporate the Protestant concept of married chastity. While many scholars argue that Spenser's representations of chastity undermine the decision made by Queen Elizabeth to remain virginally chaste, these representations also prescribe marriage as the normative behavior for early modern women in general and have serious implications because they reinforce popular ideas about the vulnerability and appropriation of the female body. The use of the term "appropriation" is important within my discussion of Spenser's text because of its connotations and denotations. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, to "appropriate" means "to take possession of for one's own, to take to oneself" and "to devote, set apart, or assign to a special purpose or use." The women in Spenser's text are frequently appropriated by men in both of these ways: they are often taken as possessions or property by men, yet they are just as frequently assigned to one man for a purpose. In the case of Britomart, she is appropriated to Artegall by God and society, and her embodiment of chastity, which is figured as armor, must protect her body until her quest for Artegall is complete. Even though Britomart embodies chastity, she is not invincible and she is not entirely independent. I will also compare the representations of Britomart to those of Belphebe, since Belphebe's chastity is also praised but is not directed towards married chastity.

In Chapter 2, I will argue that the violated female bodies in Book III of Spenser's text advocate male control of the female body. I will provide a discussion of the violated, exploited, and appropriated female bodies of Hellenore, Florimell, Duessa, Chrysogone, and Amoret, arguing that they exist as a warning of the vulnerability of the female body and soul to women like Britomart. These images of violated, abducted, or exploited female bodies certainly advocate marriage, but more than that, they seem to exist as representations of the suspicion and anxiety that drives patriarchal culture to identify these women and force them to accept their given roles. The bodies of these female characters also demonstrate the desire to know and identify the gap that exists between the "real" and "fake" chastity and beauty that men encounter.

In Chapter 3, I will argue that Aemilia Lanyer privileges virtue and condemns beauty explicitly in her poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, but I will also argue that Lanyer manipulates the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan tradition to comment on the beauty/virtue topos in early modern literature. While Lanyer chooses religious subject matter and forgoes the blazon of the beautiful woman in exchange for the feminized body of Christ, she also privileges and praises the virtue of women (over their beauty). Her reversal of the typical Petrarchan praise of the beautiful female body provides an all-female audience with a beautiful object that is much more likely to lead to divine love than the blazons of beautiful female bodies which so frequently incite desire and lead to rape. Moreover, Lanyer's focus on feminine virtue privileges female interiority: it aligns virtue with the moral integrity of the mind and soul and identifies the body as problematic. In privileging the female mind over the body, Lanyer rewrites or revises the stories of women, as well as the Petrarchan and Neo-

Platonic traditions, and argues for a superior place for women within religion, literature, and culture in an interesting response to texts like Spenser's.



## Chapter 2

‘Be bold, be bold . . . Be not too bold’: Beauty and Chastity in Book III of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*

Both Aemilia Lanyer and Edmund Spenser take part in the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions, and both of their texts, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and *The Faerie Queene* respectively, provide representations of female beauty and virtue; however, each text seems to privilege beauty and virtue in different ways. In *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Aemilia Lanyer’s invective against outward beauty unaccompanied by inner virtue privileges virtue. She states:

A mind enrich’d with Virtue, shines more bright,  
 Addes everlasting Beauty, gives true grace,  
 Frames an immortall Goddessse on the earth,  
 Who though she dies, yet fame gives her new berth. (59)

In these few lines, Lanyer clearly recognizes that virtue is more important than beauty; beauty fades, but fame of virtue outlives the mortal body. Lanyer also associates virtue with the mind, rather than the body. It may provide women with “true grace,” and it may add “everlasting beauty,” but Lanyer’s criticism of outer beauty emphasizes the fact that beauty can exist without virtue even if it is not obvious, and Lanyer seems to differentiate between the body and mind in a way that other authors from the period do not.

Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* also seems to privilege virtue; however, the virtue that is most valued within the text is a productive virtue, or chastity that will allow for

procreation, and the representations of the female protagonist, Britomart, reveal the unsustainability of the beauty/virtue topos because they rely as heavily on the integrity of the female body as they do on the integrity of the female mind, suggesting that the virtue of the body is privileged over the virtue of the mind. In the case of his protagonist Britomart, Spenser creates a paradigm of beauty and embodied virtue that reinforces the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions but that also redirects the traditions to incorporate the Protestant concept of married chastity. Many scholars argue that Spenser's representations of chastity undermine the decision made by Queen Elizabeth to remain virginally chaste; perhaps more importantly though, these representations prescribe marriage as the normative behavior for early modern women in general. Spenser's representations of women have serious implications for the early modern woman because they reinforce popular ideas about the vulnerability and appropriation of the female body.

Spenser's reinforcement of the ideal that outer beauty is a reflection of inner virtue is clearly Neo-Platonic. The beauty of the virtuous female characters within Spenser's text shines forth from inside and is praised in terms that identify these characters as good: there are no ugly virtuous women in *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser's praise of Britomart's beauty is directly connected to her chastity, and she is beautiful because she is chaste. She is consistently described in terms of her "constant mind" and her virtue, but she is also consistently described as "faire" (3.3.16). Britomart's mind is categorized as chaste because it keeps her from being corrupted by lust and allows her to stay focused on her quest. While Arthur and Sir Guyon follow Florimell and Timias follows the Foster in an attempt to intercede in the chase, Britomart, "whose constant mind, / Would not so lightly follow beauties chase," is not so easily swayed from her course (3.1.19). She also continues on her

quest alone when the Redcrosse knight leaves her in order to proceed on his own journey in the beginning of Canto IV, and the narrator reiterates Britomart's virtue by declaring that the various warrior-like women of Homer "Cannot with noble Britomart compare, / Aswell for glory of great valiance, / As for pure chastity and vertue rare / That all her goodly deeds do well declare" (3.4.3). This narrative commentary on Britomart's virtue suggests that Britomart's body is the instrument of her mind. She mindfully chooses to proceed with her quest rather than becoming distracted by beauty and the chase or by assisting others in their quests. The idea that the body should be the instrument of the mind is an Augustinian concept. Augustine's influence on Neo-Platonism is evident here because Britomart refuses to allow her body to rule her intellect. Janet Coleman asserts that according to Augustine's Neo-Platonism "the body's rightful place in the hierarchical cosmos is as an instrument: its purpose is to enable intellect's work in the rational order as it is expressed at the lower levels of being" (30). Britomart's embodiment of chastity allows her to successfully achieve her quest because her body is an instrument ruled by her mind, and there is very little differentiation within the text between the two as a result of her embodiment of chastity.

While Britomart's inner virtue is evident in her deeds, it is valorized by her beauty. Within the text, the contemplation of Britomart's beauty often results in awe and appropriate love, which is reflective of the intent of the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions. When Britomart removes her armor, after unhorsing Paridell outside of Malbecco's castle, the knights are smitten by her beauty: the narrator states that they "with wonder of her beauty fed their hungry vew" (3.9.23). Yet, these knights do not lust after Britomart; instead, they contemplate her beauty as a reflection of her virtue:

Yet note their hungry vew be satisfide,

But seeing still the more desir'd to see,  
 And ever firmly fixed did abide  
 In contemplation of divinitie:  
 But most they mervaild at her chevalree,  
 And noble prowess, which they had approved. . . . (3.9.24)

The knights are equally as impressed with her chivalry and her honor as they are with her beauty, and her beauty incites contemplation of divinity as it should. Moreover, the knights are intrigued by the masculine prowess and chivalry that Britomart possesses; they are admiring her virtue as they would admire a man's virute. According to Katherine Crawford in her article "Marsilio Ficino, Neoplatonism, and the Problem of Sex," the desire to seek God through beauty is "non-corporeal, non-sexual 'Platonic love'" (6). Platonic love in this sense refers to affection unadulterated by lust or corporeal desire, and this is the reaction that the knights have to Britomart's beauty. In this instance, Britomart's beauty is enriched by a virtuous mind, just as in Lanyer's invective; Britomart's beauty is amplified by her deeds, and her embodiment of virtue seems to warrant admiration and affection rather than lust. Yet, it seems to benefit Britomart that she has masculine prowess; the knights are intrigued by Britomart and "seeing still more desir'd to see," but her ability to unhorse Paridell seems to suggest that her armor and her masculine abilities work to distance the men in some way from her body.

The Petrarchan influence is also evident in Spenser's text because of his utilization of the blazon to describe his female characters. Although the knights who view Britomart's beauty when she removes her armor outside of Malbecco's castle do not react with lust, her

body is still appropriated to their view. It is her body that it blazoned within this portion of the text:

Her golden locks, that were in tramels gay  
 Upbouden, did them selves adowne display,  
 And raught unto her heels; like sunny beames,  
 That in a cloud their light did long time stay. . . . (3.9.20)

This image of Britomart's hair loosely falling down to her heels is followed by a blazon of the clothing that covers her nakedness:

She also doft her heavy haberieon,  
 Which the fair feature of her limbs did hyde,  
 And her well plighted frock, which she did won  
 To tuck about her short, when she did ride,  
 She low let fall, that flowd from her lanck side  
 Downe to her foot, with careless modestie. (3.9.21)

The eyes of the men and the eye of the reader appropriates Britomart's body and follows her disheveled tresses down the line of her body to her feet, and the frock reveals the "fair feature of her limbs" in a way that the coat of mail does not. While the knights do not react in lust to this image, these images of Britomart certainly "fed their hungry vew," as noted earlier (3.9.23). This objectification of Britomart's body is problematic to say the least. The blazoning of even the chastest female character suggests that women are objects to be admired and obtained by men.

The other chaste characters within Book III are also blazoned in this way, and the way that these characters are described further reflects Spenser's contribution to the Neo-

Platonic and Petrarchan traditions. Anne Paolucci argues that “Spenser’s favorite technique is detailed visual description, elaborate word-painting focused, as a rule, on facial features and dress” (20). In this way, Spenser incorporates Petrarchan blazons that identify the beauty of the woman being described and thus emphasize her virtue. The fleeing Florimell is described as a “goodly” lady, “Whose face did seeme as cleare as Christall stone, / And eke through fear as white as whales bone” (3/1/15.3-5). This blazon of Florimell’s face emphasizes its whiteness and its smoothness, comparing it to the whiteness and smoothness of whales’ bone. According to Farah Karim-Cooper, “For [early modern] Neo-Platonists, beauty is still a measure of virtue, but it stems from the light and purity of the soul . . . . Correspondingly, the idea of woman’s beauty is drawn out in very similar terms: she is bright, white, even figured as silver, gold, and shining marble” (8). Thus Florimell’s virtue is evident in the whiteness and smoothness of her face. Moreover, her virtue is emphasized by her fleeing in fear to avoid being accosted. Even as Florimell is fleeing from the Foster, her beauty is blazoned: “Still as she fled, her eye she backward threw, / As fearing evill, that pursewd her fast; / And her faire yellow locks behind her flew, / Loosely disperst with puffed of every blast” (3.1.16.1-4). This Petrarchan image focuses on particular aspects of Florimell’s body and emphasizes the inability of men to attain her, but these descriptions also dehumanize her and fracture the beauty being described. The comparison of her face to whales’ bone and the way in which “her eyes she backward threw” are not erotic descriptions of Florimell; they provide a fleeting glimpse of beauty that inevitably incites desire. The same virtuous beauty is evident in Britomart’s shining face; the beauty emitted from her face when her visor is raised is comparable to the “silver beames” of Cynthia and is figured as “the shining ray, / With which faire Britomart gave light unto the day” (3.1.43). While the images of beauty

provided within these blazons often work to praise beauty and virtue, the emphasis within each image is on the body and the face, and the spectacle provided by Britomart's half-naked body, for instance, seems to privilege and objectify female beauty. As noted by Nancy Vickers, in "'The blazon of sweet beauty's best': Shakespeare's Lucrece," the blazon is typically reserved for descriptions of female beauty, and particularly the female body; she asserts that this reflects "a battle between men that is figuratively and then literally fought on the fields of women's celebrated body" (96). The female body and female beauty are objectified within this tradition, and this presents a problem because as Vickers argues, description is "a gesture of display, a separating off and a signaling of particulars" (96). This fracturing of female beauty and the female body separates the corporeal from the non-corporeal in such a way as to suggest that virtue is not significant within this framework. So, while Spenser does not seem to differentiate between Britomart's chaste body and her chaste mind within specific descriptions, the text as a whole certainly privileges physical beauty through the incorporation of the blazon.

Since the primary focus of Book III is chastity, this section of the text provides numerous representations of the unattainable Petrarchan lady as well as the suffering lover who wastes away as a result of his love. When Timias falls in love with Belpheobe, his love for her causes more suffering than the physical wound he has endured. His love for her "hurt his hart, the which before was sound" (3.5.42). The narrator states that "still his hart woxe sore, and health decayd: / Madnesse to save a part, and lose the whole" (3.5.43). Timias loves Belpheobe in Platonic fashion: his love for her is madness. According to Anne Shephard, "The *Phaedrus* puts the madness of the poet and the madness of the lover in the same

category,” yet this is a beneficial type of madness (13). As a result of this beneficial madness, Timias is able to test the power of his mind to overcome bodily passion:

Long while he strove in his courageous brest,  
 With reason dew the passion to subdew,  
 And love for to dislodge out of his nest. (3.5.44)

If Timias successfully stifles this passion, which he attempts in later books (Books IV and VI), although sometimes in vain, his virtue will prevail and reflect the victory of intellect over passion and mind over body. Within the Petrarchan tradition, however, this battle between reason and passion is accompanied by suffering, and this is evident in the descriptions of the struggling lover of Petrarchan poetry. In the case of Timias and Belphoebe, it is evident that Timias will be forced to love her without corporeal satisfaction, and Spenser makes this clear in the description of Belphoebe’s rose, “whose flowre / The girlond of her honour did adorne” (3.5.51). Belphoebe’s choice of steadfast virginal chastity identifies her as the unattainable Petrarchan lady whose love will never be won, and Timias suffers deeply, much like the Petrarchan poet does, as a result of Belphoebe’s choice. While Belphoebe’s virginal chastity is praised within Book III, it is recognized by the reader as an unproductive form of chastity because it does not produce children or heirs. Timias is not able to transcend the physical condition within the text, and Belphoebe, unlike Amoret, has not been reintroduced to the world. Her chastity is protected by her remaining in the forest, and her choice of virginal chastity only hurts Timias, who wishes to be with her. While Amoret and Britomart will eventually find productive avenues for their chastity through marriage, Belphoebe will not.



The relationship between Britomart and Artegall also takes a Petrarchan form; however, in an interesting reversal of gender roles, Britomart is presented as the lover who suffers as a result of her love for Artegall, and it is Britomart's virtue that is tested. In Canto IV, Britomart is figured as a ship tossed about on the sea, using a common Petrarchan topos, and in various parts of Book III it is evident that she struggles to control her passion. When the Redcrosse knight asks her about her past, she "with hart-thrilling throbs and bitter stowre, / As if she had a fever fit, did quake, / And every daintie limbe with horreur shake" (3.2.5). She suffers like the typical Petrarchan lover, and much like Timias, she has to overcome her passion in order to proceed with her quest. She tells Glauce:

But wicked fortune mine, though mind be good,  
 Can have no end, nor hope of my desire,  
 But feed on shadowes, whiles I die for food,  
 And like a shadow wexe, whiles with entire  
 Affection, I doe languish and expire. (3.2.44)

Thus Britomart plays the role of the lover/poet within this section of the text, and Artegall is the object of her affection. Intriguingly though, Artegall's beauty is not blazoned in the same way that female beauty is blazoned. Instead, he is primarily described in terms of his "Heroicke grace" and "honorable gest," and the parts of Artegall that are described in detail are his face and his armor (3.2.24-25). Britomart's beauty is blazoned throughout the text, however, and her "fortune" and "mind" play an important role in her quest; they suggest that her stint as the Petrarchan lover will not be permanent. She will not suffer indefinitely as Timias does. This is suggestive of the purpose of Britomart and Artegall's relationship, but it

also reflects the problematic nature of the Petrarchan tradition; it displays and appropriates the female body to the reader's view.

The reinforcement of the appropriation of the female body and female chastity is further reflected in Spenser's adoption of the Neo-Platonic concept of love, as it had been adapted in the Renaissance and as it is further developed by Spenser to meet the needs of the developing Protestant concept of married chastity. This Protestant adaptation of Neo-Platonic true love drives Spenser's text; it is the underlying outcome for all "good" relationships, and when this true love is denied or when it is corrupted, bad things happen to the characters involved. One has only to follow Hellenore as she is passed from her husband to Paridell and then to and among the Satyrs to see what happens to women who lack virtue and to see how Spenser differentiates between true love and lust. Paridell and Hellenore's shared attraction is certainly not true love, according to the narrator. Their exchange of glances in Malbecco's castle identifies their flirtation as lust-driven: "She sent at him one firie dart, whose hed / Empoisoned was with privy lust, and gealous dred" (3.9.28). The narrator not only makes it clear that these glances are motivated by lust rather than love, but also implicates both Hellenore and Paridell in the adulterous action:

With speaking looks, that close embassage bore,  
 He rov'd at her, and told his secret care:  
 For all that art he learned had of yore.  
 Ne was she ignorant of that lewd lore,  
 But in his eye his meaning wisely read  
 And with the like him answerd evermore. . . . (3.9.28)

Within this passage, Paridell's experience with past lovers is made explicit and Hellenore's lack of ignorance is representative of a lack of virtue. Paridell's lust for Hellenore is in direct contrast to Timias's love for Belphoebe and Britomart's love for Artegall. Timias's love for Belphoebe is characterized by his attempt to control his passion and his conclusion that he could never have her, and Britomart's love for Artegall, while also a battle between mind and body, is driven toward mutual affection and married chastity.

Britomart's purpose is made evident immediately upon her introduction in the text. In stanza 8 of Book III, Britomart is described as "the famous Britomart," "Whom straunge adventure did from Britaine set, / To seek her lover (love farre sought alas,) / Whose image she had seene in Venus looking glass" (6-10). Britomart's journey will lead her to her future love, and this gives Britomart's chastity new meaning. She is not preserving her chastity for her own benefit; she is preserving her chastity for her future husband. Her constancy to true love and her purity allow her to defend herself and others. When she defeats the six knights who are defending Castle Joyeous, she tells them: "Now may ye all see plaine, / That truth is strong, and trew love most of might, / That for his trusty servants doth so strongly fight" (3.1.29.7-10). Britomart's strength lies in her devotion to her purpose, just as with any knight, but Britomart's purpose is strikingly different: she will not defend and protect her true love; when she finds him, she will be obedient and chaste within the confines of her marriage.

Britomart is the ideal form and allegorical figure of Chastity in Spenser's text. In the introductory poem to Book III, Spenser writes: "It falles me here to write of Chastity / That fairest virtue, farre above the rest . . . / Sith it is shrined in my Soveraines brest" (383). The introductory poem identifies Britomart as the allegorical figure of Chastity, but it also alludes

to chastity as the primary virtue of Queen Elizabeth. Spenser implies within this dedication that Book III is meant to praise female chastity, and in turn, Queen Elizabeth because of her choice of chastity; however, as many scholars note, Spenser's allegories are much more mysterious and complicated than they are straightforward. Elizabeth Heale explains:

To twentieth-century eyes, Britomart may at first seem a figure of female emancipation. She is a lone woman, fully armed like a knight, able to hold her own as she crosses the dangerous landscape of Faeryland. From another perspective, however, she represents a thorough critique of Elizabeth I's female authority and example. The virtue she represents is married chastity, a commitment to faithful marriage with all that that entailed in the sixteenth century in terms of female obedience and the wifely duty of child-bearing.

(10)

Thus, Britomart's knighthood will not last forever, and Britomart will not always need her armor. The text is advocating married chastity not only in a discreet way for Elizabeth, but also for all early modern women. Britomart's true love for Artegall is clearly not the Neo-Platonic non-corporeal affection that the reader sees between Arthur and Timias; nor is it the lust demonstrated by the Foster for Florimell or the unrequited love that Timias feels for Belphebe. Britomart's love for Artegall is ordained by God to be something more. Merlin identifies Artegall as "the man whom heavens have ordaynd to be, / the spouse of Britomart" (3.3.26). It is clear that Britomart's quest will end when she becomes Artegall's wife and that Britomart's marriage to Artegall is ordained by God. While Britomart is the poet/ lover and the errant knight of chastity, the text does not render her autonomous nor will her quest end with independence. According to Joanna Thompson, "Britomart is chastity exemplified, but

in accordance with the developing ideal of marriage that characterized Protestant social and domestic doctrine during the sixteenth century, she embodies a chastity which looks forward to its greatest expression in wedlock” (29). Unlike Queen Elizabeth, and Belphoebe, Britomart’s chastity will continue into a productive marriage.

This prescription of marriage as the normative option for Queen Elizabeth, and for early modern women in general, is problematic because it reinforces the idea that women are only complete when they become wives and mothers. It appropriates their bodies and their chastity to men, and it suggests that marriage is the only productive option. Britomart’s eventual marriage will be productive while Belphoebe’s virginity will not. As noted by Peter Stallybrass, in “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed,” “In societies where heterosexuality and marriage is prescribed, those privileges can only be conferred back on men, so the differentiation of women simultaneously establishes or reinforces the differentiation of men” (133). Thus, Britomart’s chastity is preserved and protected for Artegall’s sake, as Belphoebe’s chastity should have been preserved for Timias rather than for herself. The ultimate suffering of Timias is a direct result of Belphoebe’s refusal to marry him and thereby to confer on him the gift of her virginity that is praised by Spenser within the text. Spenser’s text, which is written in praise of Queen Elizabeth, certainly seems to contain veiled criticism of her choice to remain virginally chaste. Of the allegorical figures of Queen Elizabeth within Book III, it seems that Britomart, the allegorical figure for married chastity, is the privileged protagonist.

Yet it is not only the representation of Britomart’s embodied chastity and virtuous beauty that prescribe marriage as the normative behavior for early modern women. Spenser’s representations of Britomart’s vulnerability when she is without her armor is suggestive of

her inability to protect her body in two ways: firstly, it reflects a need for protection beyond what she can provide for herself. This suggests that marriage will serve as protection for Britomart when her quest is over and she no longer has a need for armor. Secondly, it is reflective of an inability of women to protect their vulnerable bodies even if they truly embody chastity (i.e., don armor). Both of these suggestions are problematic because they have serious implications; they reinforce popular ideas about the vulnerability and appropriation of the female body. As noted by Laura Gowing, “Defining femininity as private and domestic meant putting boundaries around the female body” (29). This is exactly what Spenser does within his text. Britomart’s embodiment of chastity is figured as armor, and this magic armor, along with Glauce’s ever-watchful eye, assists Britomart in protecting and preserving her chastity. The impermeability of her armor is reiterated throughout the text. In fact, the flames yield for Britomart when she enters the House of Busyrane to rescue Amoret. The narrator states:

Therewith resolv’d to prove her utmost might,  
 Her ample shield she threw before her face,  
 And her swords point directing forward right,  
 Assayled the flame, the which eftsoones gave place,  
 And did it selfe divide with equal space . . .  
 So to her yold the flames, and did their force revolt. (3.11.25)

Britomart’s embodiment of chastity is reflected in the ability of her virtue to part the flames. Just as Moses’ ability to part the Red Sea by raising his staff depends entirely on his faith, the ability of Britomart to part the flames depends upon the integrity of her virtuous mind and her virtuous body; a differentiation is not made between the two, and the vulnerability of her

body and her mind is marked by the need for armor in the first place. While her armor may simply be figured as her chastity, this representation still reflects a need to control, protect, and enclose the female body. It is also evident that the embodiment of chastity is not sufficient, since Glauce attends Britomart in order to help protect her and “attend her carefully” (3.3.61). It is not sufficient that Britomart don magic armor or be of chaste mind; she must be attended by a wiser woman who is aware of the dangers that Britomart might face. Stallybrass notes this as well: “When women were themselves the objects to be mapped out, virginity and marital ‘chastity’ were pictured as fragile states to be maintained by the surveillance of wives and daughters” (129). Glauce’s surveillance of Britomart serves the purpose of protecting her as much as the armor does, and in Glauce’s absence, Britomart quickly finds herself in trouble.

The vulnerability of Britomart’s body and its need for productive direction is most evident when the reader is allowed to see how her body reacts to her love for Artegall; at this moment, her body is mismanaged and something similar to a ‘miscarriage’ takes place (3.2.52). Her bleeding, passionate body must be dealt with in order for her body to become an instrument of her mind. It is not simply her passions that she must overcome; it is her physicality and materiality. Love is figured as a hook which has “infixd faster hold / Within [her] bleeding bowels” (3.2.39). Britomart is only appeased enough to sleep when Glauce says that if the sickness continues, she will help her to find Artegall; however, this does not stop Britomart’s pain and neither do the rituals or the herbs that Glauce administers. The pain continues even after her quest begins, as noted earlier, but her visit to Merlin and the news that she will “be heir to kings” provide her with a productive direction (3.3.22).

While Britomart's body may be the instrument of her virtuous mind and her beauty may very well inspire divine love, her body is still vulnerable when she removes her armor and at times her beauty inspires lust rather than affection. The tendency for beauty to incite lust typically comments on the virtue of the person who sees the beauty, and this mode of identification is used frequently by Spenser to differentiate between virtuous and non-virtuous characters. Reactions of lust can be expected from characters who lack virtue. When Britomart exposes her face upon her entry to Castle Joyeous, Malecasta is overcome with lustful passion. As noted earlier, Britomart's beauty is figured as shining forth from inside, and it is a reflection of her virtue. However, this does not deter Malecasta's "fickle" heart from resorting to lust; rather, "Her fickle hart conceived hasty fire, / Like sparkes of fire, which fall in slender flex, / That shortly brent into extreme desire, / And ransack all her veines with passion entire" (3.1.47). This reaction, in which Malecasta allows passion to overrule reason, is indicative of Malecasta's lack of virtue, but it is also representative of how beauty is not always a reflection of virtue. Malecasta is described within the text as "faire," though her lack of virtue is evident in her actions (3.1.59). In this instance, it is significant that Malecasta is a woman and that she is unaware that Britomart is also a woman. This suggests the wanton nature of women who lack virtue. Malecasta is similar to Hellenore in her inability to make good decisions once she is in control of her own sexuality. The sexual freedom experienced by Malecasta and Hellenore results in sexual licentiousness that negatively affects others. While the corruption that results in response to Britomart's beauty does not seem to be Britomart's fault, it does present the problematic nature of beauty and its connection to virtue within the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions because it reflects the vulnerability of female chastity or virtue. Britomart's vulnerability is recognized by Sheila



Cavanagh, who notes that “Britomart is portrayed as surprisingly dim-witted and she is plagued by repeated misapprehensions. . . . When she visits Malecasta’s castle for instance, the narrative offers a befuddled knight who never considers that the wanton woman’s lust might be deflected if the visitor revealed her sex; nor indeed does the knight even notice that her lovestruck hostess thinks she is entertaining an attractive young man” (141).

Interestingly, Britomart’s chaste mind and embodiment of chastity are useless within this instance because she does not recognize the danger that she faces. In a show of naiveté and ignorance, she undresses in her bedchamber and sleeps, but her inexperience makes her vulnerable, as noted in the text: “The bird, that knows not the false fowlers call, / Into his hidden net full easily doth fall” (3.1.54). As the unknowing bird, Britomart falls right into the net of seduction that Malecasta, with all of her knowledge, has set. Although Malecasta is a woman, the sexual experience and knowledge that she possesses is dangerous to the inexperienced and malleable virgin, Britomart. Interestingly, Britomart’s reputation is not injured by her stay at Castle Joyeous; there is little emphasis on reputation of chastity within Spenser’s text. However, Castle Joyeous certainly has the potential to corrupt the innocent Britomart, and her sudden departure seems to demonstrate that she has learned something from this experience. She gains knowledge about the dangers she might face and her overall vulnerability. This lesson is accompanied, however, by a very physical encounter. Britomart side is penetrated by Gardante’s arrow:

Which forth he sent with felonious despight,  
 And fell intent against the virgin sheene:  
 The mortall steele stayd not, till it was seene  
 To gore her side, yet was the wound not deepe,

But lightly rased her soft silken skin. . . . (3.1.65)

This act of almost penetration is certainly reflective of the physical danger that Britomart faces without her armor; however, it is also reflective of her overall vulnerability since a sexual encounter would change Britomart's sexual status immediately and affect her soul and mind as much as it would her body. As noted by Jocelyn Catty, even an unwanted sexual encounter changes a woman's status: "She is then no longer containable within the tripartite definition of 'good' woman: as virgin, wife, or widow" (3). Though the wound is not a deep penetrating wound, it does result in a stain on Britomart's white smock, and this stain is significant. This wound, like Britomart's experience with Malecasta's lust, is figured as sexual experience or knowledge that Britomart must gain in the process of her quest to find Artegall, but the wound is not significant enough to affect her sexual status. It only assists her in her quest as a warning of the necessity of avoiding lust. Regardless of the chastity of her mind, Britomart could easily become unworthy of Artegall before she ever finds him; thus, the need for armor is great, as is the need for protection by others, such as Glauce, Redcrosse knight, or eventually her husband, Artegall. After all, it is only with the assistance of the Redcrosse knight that Britomart successfully makes it out of Castle Joyeous with the integrity of her body intact; fortunately, he is there to assist her in defending herself from the Malecasta's knights. Once married and under the protection of her husband, Britomart's quest will end, as will her need for armor.

The inability of Britomart's embodiment of chastity and chaste mind to fully protect her is reinforced by the warning written above the doors within the House of Busyrane: "And as she looked about, she did behold, / How over that same dore was likewise writ, / Be bold, be bold, and every where Be bold," until, "At last she spyde at that roomes upper end, /

Another yron doore, on which was writ, / Be not too bold” (3.11.54). This warning is extremely significant for any woman who wishes to remain chaste, but especially for Britomart. Even with her protective armor and her chaste mind, it is dangerous to be too bold. She is too bold when she enters Castle Joyeous, but she is not too bold in seeking her future husband, as long as she remembers that beneath her armor she is still a vulnerable woman and as long as she is not deterred from her initial task.

Aside from this written warning, warnings of the vulnerability of the female body abound in the form of other violated, abducted, or exploited female bodies, which I will discuss in the following chapter. Other characters from Book III – Amoret, Florimell, Duessa, Hellenore, and Chrysogone – do not embody chastity in the same way that Britomart and Belphoebe do. As Sheila Cavanagh asserts, “Britomart represents the only female character capable of fulfilling the culture’s and the epic’s conflicting expectations of women” (13). With the exception of Britomart’s embodied chastity and Belphoebe’s unproductive chastity, none of the other characters within Book III remain unaffected by this threat, and none of them are entirely able to protect themselves from harm. In this way, Spenser’s text privileges virtue only in the form of married chastity because it belongs to and comments on men. While Spenser successfully rewrites the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions to incorporate the Protestant concept of married chastity, he does not seem to rewrite the patriarchal traditions of prescribing behaviors for women or appropriating and enclosing the female body. Rather, Spenser provides an image of the ideal woman that is impossible for the real early modern woman to live up to and a representation which collapses beauty and virtue into one in such a way as to suggest that women lacking one should or will certainly lack the other.

## Chapter 3

‘A woman’s will . . .disposd to go astray’: The Violated Female Body in Book III of  
Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*

Images of violated female bodies abound in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, and the connection between the violated female body and the beauty/virtue topos in early modern literature cannot be overlooked; the connection between beauty and virtue was recognized as problematic by many early modern authors including Spenser and Lanyer. Spenser consistently praises beauty and presents beauty as an impetus of desire: Florimell is beautiful, chaste, and chased. Yet, Lanyer recognizes that the connection between beauty and virtue cannot be sustained when it is associated with the body. Lanyer openly criticizes the type of female beauty that incites desire, in her poem *Salve Deus Rex Judeaorum*:

As for those matchless colors Red and White,  
Or perfit features in a fading face,  
Or due proportion pleasing to the sight,  
All these doe drawe but dangers and disgrace. . . . (193-6)

Lanyer makes evident the premise for many characterizations of women in early modern texts, including Spenser’s: beauty is dangerous. It draws “dangers and disgrace” to the women who possess it, and its connection to the soul contributes to the question of whether or not a yielding body is connected to a yielding mind. In her invective against outward beauty unaccompanied by inner virtue she uses the term ‘consent’ twice in one stanza in

reference to Cleopatra, which draws attention to the concept of yielding: “That heart that gave consent unto this ill, / Did give consent that thou thy self should’st kill” (224-5).

Lanyer connects Cleopatra’s suicide to her guilty conscience in much the same way that Augustine does in his opinions about the rape of Lucretia. Lanyer’s suggestion that Cleopatra’s suicide is associated with her guilt demonstrates that Lanyer recognizes how problematic this logic is and how complicated the situation becomes for women when beauty incites desire and leads to the destruction of that beauty. Lanyer also lists the names of notorious women whose virtue has been called into question: Helen, Lucrece, Cleopatra, Matilda, and Rosamund are all figured as possessing the beauty that led to their destruction, and early modern representations frequently allude to these women. Yet it is beauty that Lanyer seems to blame, more than the women who possessed it. She states:

Twas Beutie bred in Troy the ten yeares strife,  
 And carried Hellen from her lawful Lord;  
 Twas Beautie made chaste Lucrece loose her life,  
 For which proud Tarquins fact was so abhorr’d:  
 Beautie the cause Antonious wrong’d his wife  
 Which could not be decided but by sword:  
 Great Cleopatra’s Beautie and defects  
 Did worke Octaviaes wrongs, and his neglects. (209-216)

Only Cleopatra’s defects identify her as lacking virtue; in the other instances, beauty is to blame. Intriguingly however, this passage, with the mention of Lucrece and Helen, identifies the complexity of the relationship between beauty and virtue, the body and the mind, because it is so steeped in the period’s fascination with rape and female sexuality. In each of these

instances, female interiority and female sexuality is questioned. Shakespeare's Cleopatra demonstrates beauty as well as agency over her own sexuality, and her power over Antony makes the men in the play uneasy; thus, her virtue is questioned and attacked by the male characters in the play, even if love drives her action. Lucrece's encounter with Tarquin in Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* is certainly figured as a rape, but Lucrece herself questions her own guilt because she is painfully aware of the way that people will view her after the incident: her suicide is an action driven by redeeming her husband's honor. The various representations of Helen characterize her as an adulteress, even though Paris abducts her. The level of guilt that each woman should or should not feel is questionable, and Lanyer's commentary suggests that the dangerous nature of beauty endangers women and their reputations for virtue.

The conflation of rape with abduction and seduction in early modern literary texts and the legal attempts to differentiate between these three violations have been identified by many early modern scholars including Jocelyn Catty, Barbara Baines, and Karen Bamford. According to each of these scholars, it is clear that one of the primary concerns in these instances is the concept of consent. It is also clear that consent is problematic because of the differentiation, or lack thereof, between the body and the mind. A woman's mind may not yield during a sexual attack, but her body may provide contradictory evidence through pregnancy. As noted in the Introduction, the competing ideas about how to determine chastity and virtue result in conflicting evidence that works against an innocent victim. So, while medical texts assert that pregnancy proves consent, there really is no way to determine to what extent the female mind yields in these situations. In *Writing Rape, Writing Women*, Jocelyn Catty demonstrates why this issue is so complex. She asserts that "Whether the mind

and body are discreet categories or are mutually implicating is a vexed question in the early modern period, and one which is at the centre of thinking about interiority at this time. For women, the question of whether the mind is affected by actions done to the body also finds a context in a pervading suspicion of both” (15). The fascination with and suspicion surrounding the female body and female interiority, the mind and soul, is a direct result of what cannot be seen or identified.

Chastity was an early modern method of controlling female sexuality, and a way to identify the sexual status of women within society. As noted by many scholars, chastity is frequently figured as relating to both the body and the mind; it can be embodied or ideological or both. Britomart, for instance, is a paradoxical figure because she represents both; she is the perfect representation of both embodied and mindful chastity, and her body is an instrument of her mind even if her body is vulnerable. Yet many of the female characters in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* present a different picture. The embodiment of chastity is quite different for Hellenore, Florimell, Duessa, Chrysogone, and Amoret because the Neo-Platonic connection between soul and body reinforces the idea that true beauty exudes from the virtuous soul and that if it does not, it will be recognized as false, eventually. Kathryn Schwarz notes that “The particular threat posed by this virtue [chastity] reflects the possibility of a gap: between ‘fake’ and ‘real’ chastity, for example, or between social and moral imperatives” (271). In the same way, the existence of beauty and its connection to virtue reflects a need to differentiate between ‘fake’ and ‘real’ beauty, and the virtue that should accompany beauty is tested through the exploitation of the female body. The suggestion made by such exploitation is that it leads to truth; it uncovers something that was hidden before or proves the deceptive nature of the possessor. This happens frequently in

Spenser's text, and it attributes the vulnerable, sometimes naked, female body to a lack of male control.

In "Of Chastity and Violence: Elizabeth I and Edmund Spenser in the House of Busirane," Susan Frye identifies "Spenser as a central populizer, aestheticizer, and enforcer of marriage through the threat of rape," and she argues that "captivity provided a paradigm of control, at once temporal and physical, for enforcing an entire code of approved female behavior: passivity, silence, modesty, and consignment to a world hidden from the public eye" (52, 58). Jocelyn Catty takes this idea a step further by asserting that "the threat of rape is extended to virtually every female character within *The Faerie Queene*" (74). While Catty recognizes that rape is played out in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons within the text, it is clear that the vulnerable female body is not safe. As noted in the previous chapter, even Britomart is not safe without her armor, and many of the other female characters within the text, Hellenore, Florimell, Duessa, Chrysgone, and Amoret, exist as warnings to women like Britomart of the vulnerability of the female body and soul. These images of violated, abducted, or exploited female bodies exist as a representation of the suspicion and anxiety that drives the patriarchal culture to identify these women and force them to accept their given roles. Even the images of violated female bodies that do not advocate marriage seem to suggest that the female body, and the power associated with it, are in need of male control, direction, or intervention.

Laura Gowing in *Common Bodies* notes that in the early modern period the "gendered body" was conceived differently from the modern body: "The body's boundaries were imagined differently. Mental and physical subjectivity were entwined and emotional experiences made themselves manifest through the body" (2). This blurring of cognitive and



physical effects is most evident in the reaction of Britomart's body to her love for Artegall, as mentioned in the previous chapter, but the body's reaction to emotion and cognition is also evident in the varying reactions to lust that drive the text and the many exploitations of the female body that occur within the poem. The female bodies of *The Faerie Queene* demonstrate society's ambition in regards to knowing and identifying the gap that exists between the 'real' and 'fake' chastity and beauty that men encounter, and the representations of violated or exploited bodies reinforce the idea that the suspect female mind and body are in need of male regulation.

Spenser's representation of Hellenore, the adulteress, reflects one of the ways that virtue and beauty is tested within the text and reinforces the need for male regulation of the female body. Hellenore, who is clearly an allusion to Helen of Troy, is one of many appropriated and exploited female bodies in the text. Her connection to Helen of Troy suggests that while she may be beautiful, her virtue is questionable. Hellenore is implicated in the adultery that takes place, as noted in the previous chapter, but she is also a victim of her own body and of her husband's mismanagement of her body. Hellenore's virtue is tested by her body as she listens to Paridell tell his story, and her "greedy ears her weake hart from her bore" (3.9.52). Hellenore's physical reactions to Paridell, her "wondring eye" and "greedy ears," overcome her inner virtue and allow her to be lured into lust by the "many false belgardes," or glances, he sends in her direction (3.9.52). Interestingly, the problem that results from Hellenore's failed virtue is complicated: Hellenore's husband is partially to blame because he does not properly control his wife's body, and Paridell is partially to blame because he demonstrates a propensity for lustful endeavors, but the entire narrative of Canto IX is framed by Hellenore's body. It begins with her loose incontinence and ends with her

greedy ears. In the first stanza, the narrator states that “of a wanton Lady I do write, / which with her loose incontinence doth blend / The shyning glory of her soveraigne light, / and knighthood fowle defaced by a faithlesse knight” (3.9.1). Hellenore is not described in terms of her lack of skill or the defects of her mind, as her husband is in stanzas 3-6, nor is she described by her lack of virtuous behavior, as Paridell is. Hellenore’s shortcomings are described in relation to her body. The narrator notes that:

It is not yron bands, nor hundred eyes,  
Nor brasen walls, nor many wakefull spyes,  
That can withhold her wilfull wandring feet. . . .(3.9.7)

While this passage serves to implicate Malbecco in his wife’s actions because of his mismanagement of her body, Hellenore’s adultery is characterized by her “wandering feet” rather than her defective virtue. This indicates that Hellenore’s body is not an instrument of her mind. Her feet are “wandring” as if they have no knowledge of where they are going, yet this wandering is described as “willful,” which has connotations of stubbornness or deliberateness. Hellenore’s willfulness is in direct contrast to the obedience that is expected of virtuous wives, and the trouble that she wanders into is a direct result of this disobedience; however, her body remains the primary focus of the narrative. Later, after her chastity has been compromised and Paridell has abandoned her, Hellenore’s body is appropriated by the satyrs who continually use her body to satiate their lust. When the satyrs find her, she is “loose at random left” wandering about the forest and “Her up they tooke, and with them home her led, / With them as housewife ever to abide” (3.10.36). The satyrs taking of Hellenore at least keeps her from wandering, but her stint as housewife among the satyrs is accompanied by a subjection of her body to their desires, and it seems that Hellenore enjoys

her sexual escapades with the satyrs. As Malbecco lies silently observing his wife among the satyrs at night, the narrator notes that “Nine times he heard him [the satyr] come aloft ere day” and “That not for naught his wife them [the satyrs] loved so well, / When one so oft a night did ring his matins bell” (3.10.48). This reflects the damage that can result from unregulated female pleasure and desire; Hellenore’s virtue is irreparably damaged, and all of the restraint that she once had has vanished. Hellenore’s sexual escapades are characterized within the text as enjoyable, per the frequent ringing of “her matins bell”; however, it should be noted that this information is conveyed to the reader by at least two men, perhaps three if we count the narrator. Hellenore’s enjoyment of her sexual encounters with the satyrs is conveyed from her husband’s perspective to the narrator for the male reader to imagine, and Spenser’s imagination provides the material for the orgasmic description to begin with. In reference to the early modern need to control female sexuality, Laura Gowing asserts that since “female desire was thought to be a requirement for conception, it was in everyone’s best interest to encourage it, at least within marriage, but sexual order meant it also had to be restrained” (109). Hellenore’s passion is not properly restrained because her body is not properly protected by her husband or her mind, and her adulterous experience with Paridell has removed any restraint that she previously had. The implication of Paridell and Malbecco in Hellenore’s unraveling chastity is also significant because it reveals the fact that Spenser is commenting on masculinity and male responsibility within the poem as well. Paridell’s actions are not indicative of the primary male virtue, honor, nor are Malbecco’s. Neither of the men value women properly: Paridell values women for what they can temporarily offer and Malbecco values his money more than his wife. If female sexuality and desire are in need of direction within this scenario, then the male direction that is required must be

supplied by virtuous, or honorable, men. In the retelling of the ravishment, or abduction, of Helen of Troy, Spenser rewrites the story to implicate the female mind, reinforcing the idea that the female body is in need of patriarchal control and direction.

While Hellenore is represented as the unchaste, unrestrained adulteress, Florimell, is represented as chaste – and “chased,” in a pun Spenser seems unable to resist; however, her beautiful body still incites desire, and regardless of the integrity of her body, she is still presented as vulnerable to abduction and violation. Even though she attempts to flee for her safety, she is abducted and her body is passed from one man to another several times within the text. Florimell is characterized by her beauty, her chastity, and her love for Marinell when she is finally introduced in detail within Book III. The dwarf describes her in these terms:

The bountiest virgin, and most debonaire,  
 That ever living eye I weene did see;  
 Lives none this day, that may compare  
 In stedfast chastitie and vertue rare,  
 The goodly ornaments of beautie bright;  
 And is ycleped Florimell the faire,  
 Faire Florimell belov'd of many a knight,  
 Yet she loves none but one, that Marinell is hight. (3.5.8)

In this description virtue and chastity are directly connected to Florimell's beauty; they are ornaments of this beauty. These ornaments could easily belong to Marinell, but he refuses to accept them in Book III; the dwarf notes, “All her delight is set on Marinell; / But he sets nought at all by Florimell” (3.5.9). This assigning of the female body to male control fails

because Marinell refuses to accept Florimell; thus, Florimell's unprotected, unclaimed body is passed from one abductor to another, and she flees from the inevitable danger posed by desire and lust. If Marinell had accepted the responsibility of Florimell's love, and her body, she may not have been forced to flee from all the dangers that she encounters; she would have at least had an ally in her attempts to avoid abduction. According to Elizabeth Heale, "Florimell's panic-stricken flight from one danger to another is a direct consequence of Marinell's refusal to love" (82). Again in Spenser's didactic poem, the failure of a man to manage the female body properly and to direct it to productive means results in the female body being passed around among men.

Florimell's panic-stricken flight to protect her body becomes increasingly frantic as the text progresses, which is evident in her failure to control her white palfrey, and her attempts to protect her body from damage become increasingly futile as men's rough hands save her only to impose upon her later. Within the Neo-Platonic tradition, the horse is directly related to maintaining mindful control over the body. According to Unhae Park Langis, "In Plato's *Phaedrus*, the charioteer representing the rational soul drives two horses for the best governance of an individual and state: one white, representing disciplined will; the other black, representing unreflected passions and appetites. This Socratic and more importantly Stoic view of controlling the unruly passions passed on to the Renaissance" (2). With this in mind, Florimell's loosening of the reins takes on significance in an intriguing way. The fact that the horse "having conquered / the maistring raines out of her weary wrest, / Perforce her carried, where ever he thought was best," is significant in that the un-reigned horse seems to signify un-reigned passion; yet intriguingly, it is a "white palfrey" that Florimell rides (3.7.2). It is not clear whether this un-reigned horse is assisting Florimell in

her flight to save her chastity, but it is significant that Florimell unknowingly wanders right into danger in both instances because of her horse's exhaustion.

On the first occasion, Florimell takes refuge with the witch and her son, and later she is forced to find shelter in a fisherman's boat. In each instance, her body is exploited or appropriated in some way. Taking refuge with the witch results in the appropriation of her beauty, or image, in the creation of false Florimell. Elizabeth Heale also associates the creation of false Florimell with Marinell's refusal to love; and this association has implications for the female body (82). The stealing of Florimell's image and the corrupt purposes for which it is manipulated and imitated are possible because Florimell's image and body are left exposed, without protection or direction. This scenario suggests that if Marinell had accepted the responsibility for Florimell's body, it would have had the protection it so direly needs. With appropriate masculine protection or guidance, Florimell may have been protected from the "rough hands" of the fisherman and the "rugged hands" of Proteus, who steals Florimell away and keeps her captive in an effort to seduce her (3.9.25, 3.9.35). In each of these instances, Florimell's body becomes unclaimed and unprotected property that is claimed, used, and manipulated by men who desire her as a result of her beauty. The lack of intervention of honorable masculinity forces Florimell continually to flee from danger with no clear plan of action and no idea of where to seek safety. Florimell's need for male direction and protection is also suggested in her belief that Satyrane, Peridure, or Calidore would protect her if they were there to witness what was happening (3.8.28). The need for honorable masculine intervention in each of these situations is made more evident each time Florimell realizes that rather than being saved, she is only being transferred from one set of corrupt hands to another. This realization is experienced by the reader along with Florimell,

as the sense that she is being rescued gives way to the realization that her situation, instead of getting better, is only becoming more hopeless and more dangerous.

While Florimell's chastity seems to remain physically intact even after her many experiences, her reputation for chastity is destroyed by False Florimell, whose false beauty and false virtue are associated with Florimell's identity. None of the men within the poem can differentiate between the outward appearances of the two women, and the False Florimell is created to satisfy lust. As noted in the Introduction, the reputation for chastity is as significant as bodily evidence, and the public nature of chastity requires modest and reserved behavior in public. The potential danger that False Florimell constitutes in regards to Florimell's reputation relates to the public and private nature of the female body and chastity. According to Gowing, the female body is at once public and private; it requires enclosure and protection, yet is also requires the surveillance and regulation of members of society (30). Because the female body is a public and a private matter, the False Florimell creates a false image of the real Florimell's virtue, thus sullyng it. The False Florimell's misbehavior is associated with Florimell's public image, and this guilt by association has the potential to damage the real Florimell's reputation, as noted by Caroline McManus who argues, "The False Florimell constitutes a threat to Florimell's honor" (216). The feigned virtue that False Florimell produces is designed to cause disruption; she cries for help, but she then goes willingly each time her body is appropriated. When another knight sees her with Braggadoccio, she "seem'd for feare to quake in every lim, / and her to save from outrage, meekly prayed him" (3.8.15). Yet after she has been taken by this knight, she "made him think him selfe in heaven, that was in hell" (3.8.19). The False Florimell's power to trick men into desiring her is evident in her actions with these men. Her false beauty and false virtue

are extremely significant because they grant her the power to manipulate the men she encounters.

The creation of False Florimell also has significant implications for society because it provides another example of a lack of male control. According to Frances Dolan, Farah Karim-Cooper, and Edith Snook, the condemnation of the creation of false beauty can be located in the early modern debates about cosmetics and the broader art versus nature debate. False Florimell is an artful imitation of natural beauty and virtue, and none of the men in the text seems to recognize that she is false. She is described in terms of common materials used in cosmetics, but her beauty is entirely created; it is certainly not an ornament of her virtue. Her body is made of “purest snow,” which is a far cry from the lustrous and shiny complexion that designates virtuous beauty, according to Karim-Cooper, and the mercury and golden wire used in the creation of her beauty is associated with the ingredients of early modern cosmetic recipes (11). Interestingly though, the witch’s creation of False Florimell comments on a much larger issue: female agency and sexuality. As noted by France Dolan:

Two discourses, one about poetry and the other about women’s face painting, can be seen to constitute, oddly enough, a single debate that constructs complexly gendered limits on creativity. . . . When these texts – whether they privilege art or nature – cast doubt on human creativity, they do so by allying it with female agency, which, while granted a role, is constructed negatively. Both elite defenses of poetry and popular discussion of women’s personal conduct concede the threatening power women exert both as the object of desire and as desiring subjects. . . . (224)



The creation of false beauty and thus false virtue provides women with a power that makes the vulnerable body less vulnerable; this power is problematic for a patriarchal society that relies on the female body to protect bloodlines and produce heirs. The ability to feign beauty also provides women with the power to create the image that society sees, deterring identification and categorization. According to Karim-Cooper, anti-cosmetic treatises “admonished women to adorn their souls in order to improve their faces,” suggesting that beauty should occur naturally (10):

The early modern discussion of cosmetics is not, as it may seem, simply about face paint and female vanity. Neither is it a simplified collection of moralistic prescriptions. It is rather a register of contemporary attitudes towards women, art and visible power, and it contributed to the formation of individual and cultural identities. (35)

In this sense, the creation of False Florimell is a commentary on the power of the female body and the control that women possess over their own bodies and the image of the body that society sees.

The struggle to control the female power of creativity is further demonstrated in Spenser’s poem through the exploitation of Duessa’s naked body. In the stripping and voyeuristic condemnation of Duessa’s hideous naked form, patriarchal power is asserted over the female body and the female power of creativity. The witch from Book III, who creates False Florimell, and Duessa, who manipulates her own beauty in order to manipulate the men she encounters, both demonstrate unregulated power over the female body and the fear that women can manipulate their bodies to project virtue that is not real. Thus the exposure of Duessa’s true form works to insist that identification of false virtue and beauty can be

achieved through the stripping away of this power and the stripping and searching of the female body. The contrast between Duessa's naked, deviant body and Britomart's enclosed, obedient body assigns values to each. According to Peter Stallybrass, differentiation plays a role in how early modern society valued beauty: "The enclosed body is valorized by the demonized grotesque" (130). The value of Duessa's body, which transgresses the boundaries between human and animal form, is asserted within the poem through its exposure, and the value of Britomart's body is assigned through its enclosure. As a result of this contrast, the obedient, non-transgressive body is privileged and the spectacle of Duessa's transgressive and grotesque body is held up as an example of subversive power and disobedience. Her disregard for patriarchal order is challenged and regulation is introduced through exploitation. Duessa's nakedness is additionally figured as gruesome because of the ease with which her body is stripped and exploited. When the knights strip Duessa of her false ornamented beauty, it is certainly figured as exploitation: "Ne spared they to strip her naked all. / Then when they had despoiled her tire and call, / Such as she was, their eyes might her behold / That her mishaped parts did them appall" (1.8.46). They remove all of her clothes and proceed to degrade her through their shared view of her naked body, paying close attention to her breasts, "dried dugs, like bladders lacking wind," and genitals, "nether parts, the shame of all mankind" (1.8.47-8). She is also described in terms of her bald head, rotting teeth, marred complexion, and her monstrous feet. She is depicted in a way that contrasts sharply with the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan images of full breasts, flowing golden hair, clear white complexion, and dainty feet of virtuous beauty.

The shame that accompanies this degradation is often associated with rape, but the exploitation of Duessa's body is demanded within the text. It is Una who suggests that this be

the punishment that Duessa receives so that the men can see the false nature of Duessa's beauty, and the punishment that Duessa receives is justified within the text as a testing of the beauty / virtue topos. Una's recommended punishment further reflects the valorization of beauty suggested by Stallybrass; it reflects that fact that Una's virtuous beauty is real and it demonstrates her acceptance of patriarchal order. Una's acceptance of the idea that a lack of virtue is accompanied by physical evidence demonstrates the fact that women from the early modern period bought into the idea that false beauty could be stripped away to reveal the lack of virtue hidden beneath it. According to Laura Gowing, "The paradox of Neo-Platonic standards of beauty is that, although physical loveliness is meant to be a sign of virtue, purity, and simplicity, there is always a suggestion that it hides sinfulness" (9). Una's intervention into Duessa's punishment suggests that women are very much aware of how beauty can be manipulated and that women who possess true beauty, the kind accompanied by virtue, are able to recognize false beauty when they see it. Duessa's beauty incites desire but also suspicion, and the suspicion that her beauty might be false leads to the exploitation of her body. Interestingly, this stripping and searching of the female body was also associated with the necessary identification of witches within the early modern period and also with the searching of the bodies of unmarried women who were suspected of not being virgins. Through this exploitation of Duessa's body, Duessa is identified and characterized within the text. Her role within society is confirmed, and she is allowed to wander away: "Thus when they had the witch disrobed quight, / And all her filthy feature open showne, / They let her goe at will, and wander wayes unknowne" (1.8.50). The exploitation of her body satisfies the curiosity of those who wished to identify her, and the shame and denigration that accompanies it disempowers her. Moreover, this representation reaffirms the idea that

patriarchal control of the female body is necessary lest the body should breach its boundaries and that the beauty/virtue topos is not sustainable in this scenario; even virtuous female characters, like Una, recognize and accept this.

Duessa's exposed body does more than provide an example of vice for the female characters in the text like Una and Britomart; it provides a spectacle for the male reader, and it allows the male reader to witness the assertion of patriarchal control over the female body. The male imagination is prominent in this scenario, as it is in the violation of Chrysogone's body as she sleeps. These scenes are created by the male imagination for the male imagination, as noted by Nancy Vickers, and the male imagination seemingly delights in the female body's exposure, and perhaps even in the violation of the female body. Through the exploitation of Duessa's body, the male reader is allowed to participate in and enjoy the titillating spectacle of the naked, grotesque female body and the knight's assertion of control over that body and the power it possesses. Chrysogone's naked body, however, is represented quite differently. Her body is still violated and this violation disempowers her, but the utilization of Chrysogone's body is necessary to "foreground history or genealogy" and to "legitimate" the poem's heroes (Catty 78). Thus the power issue in regards to Chrysogone's body relates to the patriarchal order in quite a different way. Because she is the mother of Belphebe, the exemplar of virginal chastity, Chrysogone's "gentle" rape, according to Jocelyn Catty, is "the only chaste conception possible (lacking female desire)" (78). Even though the rape is figured as necessary to the plot, the male imagination is allowed to revel in the gentle claiming of the virginal female body for patriarchal purposes, and the conception that occurs suggests that the "gentle" rape is enjoyable for Chrysogone, who sleeps through the entire encounter.

Chrysogone's rape provides yet another example of what happens to exposed female bodies within Spenser's poem, and even though the text reiterates the fact that the encounter is not sexual, and that it is instead organic and painless, the sun is figured male and emphasis is placed on the penetration of the sun's beams into Chrysogone's womb. The text states that "When Titan faire his beames did display, / In a fresh fountain, far from all men's vew, / She bath'd her brest, the boyling heat t'allay" (3.6.6). Thus the sun is figured here as a male entity, and even though Chrysogone is "far from all men's vew," her naked body is still vulnerable to the male voyeuristic enterprise and male appropriation. As she lies naked on the bank of the river, "The sunne-beames bright upon her body playd. . . / And peirst into her wombe, where they embayed" (3.6.7). While this organic conception seems to rely heavily on Chrysogone's surroundings and the culmination of organic material, her wombe is "peirst" with the rays of the sun, and her body is violated by the sun; it becomes the playground for the sun's beams. Moreover, Chrysogone is overcome with shame, fear, and disgrace when she realizes that her body is changing in a way that is out of her control. The narrator states:

Yet wist she naught thereof, but sore affright,  
 Wondered to see her belly so upblowne,  
 Which still increast, till she her terme had full outgone.  
 Whereof conceiving shame and foule disgrace,  
 Albe her guiltless conscience her cleared,  
 She fled into the wilderness a space,  
 Till that unweeldy burden she had reared,  
 And shund dishonor, which as death she feared. . . . (3.6.9-10)

These stanzas provide a sense of the fear that overcomes Chrysogone when she realizes that her body has been used and that she is pregnant, even though she recognizes that she has done nothing wrong. Her conscience is clear, but her physical body provides evidence against her conscience; her body reads guilty. Moreover, the shame she feels as a result of the unknowing and non-consensual experience that resulted in conception makes her fear the dishonor that accompanies illegitimate pregnancy. So, while Chrysogone's physical experience may have been painless, it is not without some internal anguish that she retreats farther away from society to bear the children that she does not know how she conceived. While many scholars argue that this organic conception is a mark of the absence of society or that it is relegated to a mythological or allegorical phenomenon, Chrysogone's reaction to her changing body certainly reminds the reader that society still exists outside of the forest in which she remains hidden and that this patriarchal society would seek to identify and categorize Chrysogone if she did not hide for fear of dishonor. Moreover, Chrysogone's conception via the sun's beams suggests that the unprotected female body is vulnerable even if it is removed from society and placed "far from all men's view." Perhaps most importantly however, Chrysogone is no longer necessary after she gives birth to Belphebe and Amoret, so Spenser writes her out of the poem. Venus and Diana, who find Chrysogone in a swoon on the forest floor, take the babies away from her. The narrator states that "At last they both agreed, her seeming grieved / Out of her heavy swowne not to awake, / But from her loving side the tender babes to take" (3.6.27). Spenser figures Chrysogone as sleeping through perhaps the most important events of her life as a woman (according to Protestant thought), and Spenser leaves her violated body alone in the forest, written out of the remainder of the poem.

Each of the women in Spenser's text experiences some type of violation or exploitation which serves to remind them of the patriarchal order and which demonstrate that the female body is in need of masculine protection and direction. Hellenore is passed from one man to another and then among a group of men; Florimell similarly is passed from one set of hands to another even as she flees to protect her chastity; Duessa's naked body is exploited as an example of how false beauty can be manipulated to suggest virtue, and Chrysgone is reminded of the outside world when her body begins to demonstrate signs of pregnancy. The exception to this interpretation is the lone figure of Belpheobe, who seems to exist outside of patrilineal society as an Amazonian female figure; however, even her image is exploited through a voyeuristic blazon which figures as the intimidating yet prominent image of Canto 3 in Book II (2.3.22-30). As noted in Chapter 1, Belpheobe's virginity is not a productive virginity, however, and her possession of chastity seems less privileged within the text than Britomart's productive married chastity will be. Moreover, the blazon of Belpheobe's beauty in Book II is emasculating for Braggadochio and Trompart; they are happy to leave the forest after their encounter with her.

When Belpheobe's beauty is blazoned, it is clear that she is in command of her virginity, much like Queen Elizabeth. The narrator relates that Trompart's desire is quenched with one look from Belpheobe: "For with dredd Majestie, and awfull ire, / She broke his wanton darts, and quenched base desire" (2.3.23). She is able to stop his lustful gazing with one glance of her fiery eyes, and Trompart is terrified of her. He believes she is a goddess, and he even contemplates whether or not to run. Braggadochio feels the same way, when he finally crawls out from the bush where he has been hiding. The narrator states: "So when her goodly visage he beheld, / He gan himself to vaunt: but when he vewed / Those deadly

tooles, which in her hand she held, / Soone into other fits he was transmewed” (3.2.37). Both of these men fear Belphoebe and neither of them attempts to harm her, although Braggadochio does question her about why she remains in the forest, rather than coming to court. Belphoebe, much like her mother, isolates herself within the forest and is happy to remain distant from society, and this certainly works in her favor. She is the exception within the text, because her body remains undamaged and remains within her own control; however, the emasculating nature of Belphoebe’s control of her sexuality, while protecting her virginity, also makes her intimidating to men and identifies her as an allegorical figure of Queen Elizabeth.

It should also be noted that even though Belphoebe remains unharmed by the men in the text, her body is displayed for the reader to delight in. The blazon of Belphoebe’s beauty takes up eight stanzas, and the reader is provided an image of her eyes, her forehead, her breasts, and the light chemise she is wearing (2.3.22-26). Interestingly, while her glare might stop the gazes of Braggadochio and Trompart, it does not stop the reader from laying claim to her body, over and over again. This is extremely intriguing because Belphoebe is another of the allegorical figures that represents Queen Elizabeth, and Belphoebe’s beauty is displayed openly, including a description of her “daintie paps” which are “like young fruit in May” (2.3.29). This image of Belphoebe is far from intimidating for the reader, and as noted earlier, the reader gets to read and reread Belphoebe’s body as many times as he or she desires.

While Belphoebe’s body remains unharmed by the many male characters within the poem, her sister Amoret is not so fortunate. Amoret is brought back into society where she falls in love with Scudamore; however, before she can truly become his wife, her body is



abducted and damaged by one of the men she encounters: Busirane. Amoret is taken captive by Busirane, though the story of how she is taken is left untold in Book III, but her rescue culminates the Book of Chastity, and interestingly, it is Britomart rather than Scudamore who rescues Amoret from the house of Busirane. Elizabeth Harvey provides an explanation for why: "Amoret's plight and the theatrical displays that Britomart witnesses also represent female sexual experience. The chambers and the masque are focalized through Britomart's gaze. . . ." (104). According to Harvey, this suggests that the House of Busirane is a site of female and male erotic fantasy and anxiety (104). In this way, Amoret's gaping wound and the penetration of Amoret's heart with Busirane's dart gain significance. It is no coincidence that Britomart continues to be wounded superficially, and it is no coincidence that she controls the gaze as noted by Harvey. These grotesque images and superficial wounds are introductory experiences for the virginal Britomart, who must come to the recognition that her love for Artegall will be a corporeal love. She will need to remove her armor and submit her desires to Artegall's rule. The image of the wounded Amoret and the wound Britomart receives in her fight with Busirane serve to immediately remind Britomart of the penetration that is required in corporeal love, but they also serve to remind her, as they do the reader, of the vulnerability of the female body and the repercussions of male dominance and masculine control. While Amoret's wound heals after the enchantment ceases and Britomart's wound is "nothing deepe imprest," these women are reminded of the brutal nature of sexuality, lust, and the dangers associated with beauty. In their cases, both Britomart and Amoret are eventually assigned through marriage to men who will help to protect their bodies, and who will provide a productive direction for their love and sexuality.

Through the spectacle of these violated, abducted, or exploited female bodies, the reader is reminded that marriage is productive and legitimate and that the vulnerable female body, soul, and mind need patriarchal direction and protection in order to remain safe. Hellenore, Florimell, Duessa, Chrysogone, and Amoret exist as warnings to the female reader and they reflect the suspicion and anxiety that drives the patriarchal culture to identify these women and force them to accept their given roles. These representations also reflect the fact that the beauty/virtue topos is not sustainable when the female body is involved. Though each female representation provides the reader with a different characterization of gendered existence and virtue, the underlying message is the same: female bodies are no safer in Faeryland than they are in early modern society; thus, protection from exploitation is a necessity.

## Chapter 4

### Aemilia Lanyer's 'taske of Beauty': *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and the Challenging of Tradition

As I have attempted to show in the previous chapters, beauty is frequently praised in early modern literature as a reflection of inner virtue, and it is frequently represented as an impetus of desire. Beauty and virtue are also both presented as sites for concern because of the knowledge that women possess about how to manipulate beauty in order to feign virtue. Overall, however, the connection between beauty and virtue within the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions is not sustainable when corporeality is introduced. In Chapter 1, I attempted to show that it is evident that Britomart's embodiment of chastity is problematic because her body is still vulnerable even though it is an instrument of her mind and that Spenser does not truly differentiate between the body and the mind within *The Faerie Queene*. In Chapter 2, I attempted to show that the many violated bodies of *The Faerie Queene* further demonstrate the need for patriarchal order and direction in order to protect the female body, mind, and soul. In these representations, Spenser still does not differentiate between the female body and mind. In this chapter, I will attempt to show that Lanyer is aware of the faults within these traditions and that she manipulates these traditions in order to point out their unsustainability and to argue for a superior place for women within religion, literature, and culture, thus providing an interesting response to texts like Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

In “Religious Reconstruction of Feminine Spirituality,” Sue Matheson asserts that there are generally two “camps” into which most critics of Lanyer fall: those who investigate *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*’s significance in regards to the patronage system and those who read the text as a subversive proto-feminist work (51). This investigation would likely be categorized as belonging to the latter, as it seeks to prove that Lanyer provides an alternative text within the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions by reversing and challenging the dominant literary tradition. Sue Matheson’s investigation also falls into this category, as Matheson argues that Lanyer’s poem “should be read as a radical protest poem that demonstrates women’s spiritual worth” and locates Lanyer’s poem within its larger historical context by asserting that it is part of the *querelle des femmes*, or the debate about women (55). This statement reflects the seriousness that Lanyer brings to the *querelle des femmes* and other common debates about women during the period, including the Art versus Nature debate and the treatises condemning cosmetics, both of which are mentioned in the Introduction of this study. Literature takes part in these debates even if the statements made within the texts are not explicit. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, Spenser’s text takes part in these debates because women are represented as the weaker sex and their bodies, minds, and souls are in need of direction and supervision in his didactic poem. Lanyer’s *Salve Deus* provides a more direct response to these issues. She makes explicit the problems with the beauty/virtue topos and condemns the beauty that incites desire in order to redeem women.

With Matheson’s assertion in mind, it is easy to see why so many scholars are drawn to Lanyer’s poem. While Lanyer chooses religious subject matter and forgoes the blazon of the beautiful woman in exchange for the feminized body of Christ, she also privileges and

praises the virtue of women over their beauty. Her reversal of the typical Petrarchan praise of the beautiful female body provides an all-female audience with a beautiful object that is much more likely to lead to divine love than the blazons of beautiful female bodies which so frequently incite desire, lust, and even lead to rape. Moreover, Lanyer's focus on feminine virtue privileges female interiority: it aligns virtue with the moral integrity of the mind and soul and identifies the body as problematic. By insisting on this connection, Lanyer rewrites or revises the stories of women, as well as the Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic traditions, and argues for a superior place for women within religion, literature, and culture.

In her invective against outward beauty unaccompanied by virtue, Lanyer's assertions about beauty and virtue demonstrate an awareness of how beauty and virtue were constructed within literary works and within the patriarchal culture:

That outward Beautie which the world commends,  
 Is not the subject I will write upon . . .  
 Those gaudie colours soone are spent and gone:  
 But those faire Virtues which on thee attends  
 Are alwaies fresh. . . . (185-90)

It is clear that Lanyer does not value the "outward Beautie" that the world typically values; instead, she values "faire Virtues." Also, as mentioned in the previous chapters, Lanyer recognizes how the idealized beauty of the Petrarchan tradition, "those matchless colors Red and White . . . doe draw but dangers and disgrace" (193-6). She identifies the tradition of praising the outward beauty that frequently incites lust and often leads to rape, and she condemns this beauty for the violence it incites. Moreover, her mention of Lucrece, Helen, and Cleopatra demonstrates knowledge of how these women have been represented in history

and in literature. Lanyer is taking a position within the overall debate about women, and she is defending them. Lynnette McGrath is one of the many scholars to identify *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* as a feminist work of literature. McGrath asserts that Lanyer's work demonstrates an awareness of the "deficiencies of patriarchal culture" (205). McGrath's assertion is backed by a variety of scholars who agree that Lanyer is doing more than seeking publication; she is completely aware of the tradition and the culture within which she is writing. Naomi Miller agrees: "Women were faced on all sides with 'masculine parameters' and with definitions of female sexuality and subjectivity as 'other' in mirror-image relation to masculine standards and assumptions within male-authored texts ranging from handbooks for women to Petrarchan sonnet sequences" (146). Thus, Lanyer's subversive manipulation of the Petrarchan tradition is not surprising, even if her ambition is, because she would have been surrounded by texts like Spenser's that define or identify women in reference to men. While Lanyer still identifies women in relation to a male figure (Christ), the gendering of Christ as feminine makes Lanyer's poem different from texts that identify women in relation to husbands, fathers, or brothers.

While Lanyer's work is a feminist work that seeks to challenge the accepted constructions of beauty and virtue, it also takes part in the overall literary tradition of manipulating the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan conventions to advocate change. Just as Spenser utilizes these traditions to laud and advocate the Protestant concept of married chastity in *The Faerie Queene*, Lanyer manipulates them in order to advocate for and redeem women in *Salve Deus*. Susanne Woods also identifies Lanyer's work as a feminist manipulation of conventional literary forms, and she compares Lanyer's work to Spenser's to prove it. In her book, *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet*, Woods argues that Lanyer's

“practice shows thoughtful independence from masculine models of her time” (47). Lanyer’s ability to manipulate and challenge the tradition demonstrates a thoughtful consideration and knowledge of literary practices, from her bids for patronage to the contents of her poem. As Woods explains, “If Spenser represents the ease with which Elizabethan humanists combined Christian images with pagan, and with which they moved history toward their own rhetorical and moral ends, then Lanyer has a distinctly Spenserian approach to her materials” (43).

While in some places Lanyer’s treatment of love and beauty seem comparable to Spenser’s, such as in his dedicatory verses and *Four Hymnes, The Faerie Queen* significantly contributes to the tradition which Lanyer seeks to challenge, as noted in the previous chapters of this study (44). Spenser’s text privileges beauty and comments on the vulnerability of the female body, but Lanyer’s text privileges virtue and comments on the corrupt nature of men who seek to destroy beauty where they see it; thus *Salve Deus* functions as a direct response to the male-authored texts. As noted in the previous chapters, the beauty / virtue topos is not sustainable in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* because it inevitably leads to the destruction of beauty and virtue; in many places, the female body is not enobled or ideal but vulnerable; in *Salve Deus*, on the other hand, the failure of the beauty / virtue topos, where such failure exists, emphasizes the corrupt rule of men.

Lanyer’s choice of religious subject matter is fitting for women writers of the period. Protestant women were encouraged to read, write, and meditate on spiritual matters; however, the publication, or printing, of a work by a woman was an act which challenged acceptable practices because it moved the woman from the private to the public arena and it broke with the idea that women should be silent. Wendy Wall comments on Lanyer’s public voice in “The Body of Christ: Aemilia Lanyer’s Passion,” by asserting that Lanyer authorizes

her public voice through her focus on the body of Christ. The religious subject matter makes her public female voice more acceptable, but the poem also challenges the status quo by reversing the roles of the male reader and female object within the Petrarchan tradition. Wall argues that Lanyer “restructures the relationships among writer, text, and reader by figuring Christ as a commodified text and naming the reading public as women who righteously seek the printed object of their spiritual and textual desire” (329). The male reader and female spectacle are reversed, and this displaces the voyeuristic male reader with a female audience who witness the spectacle as a means of transcendence. Lanyer thus re-appropriates the Neo-Platonic ladder of love for spiritual women who truly seek to transcend the earthly condition. Lanyer makes this clear within the poem itself in an address to the Lady of Cumberland:

“Therefore (good Madame) in your heart I leave / His perfect picture, where it shall stand, / Deeply engraved in that Holy shrine, / Environed with Love and Thoughts Divine” (1325-8). In these stanzas, Lanyer’s purpose is clear; she hopes to provide an image of Christ and his perfection so that the Lady Cumberland, and the women patrons and female readers, can contemplate the beautiful, virtuous image of Christ that will successfully lead to the realization of His love. Lanyer’s addresses to her intended female readers also figure Christ’s body as a book: Lanyer wants her female audience to “reade his true and perfect storie” via his bodily image, and she desires “that he may be the Booke, / Whereon thine eyes continually may looke” (1331, 1351-2). By constructing Christ as a book, Lanyer is at once accepting and rejecting the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions. She utilizes the spiritual aspect of these traditions that insist that female beauty leads to an awareness of God to provide a feminized image for meditation that might actually allow transcendence. The spiritual aspect of these traditions seems subverted in most early modern literature: The



female body is almost always suspect rather than transcendent, and spiritual transcendence is typically corrupted by corporeality. Lanyer's subject matter provides religious iconography as opposed to entirely corporeal iconography because Christ's body is holy, but Christ's body is feminized within the poem. In her utilization of Christ's body, it seems that Lanyer allows her readers to be one step closer to the divine than if she had chosen the typical Petrarchan object regardless of the object's portrayal as feminine or masculine. Yet, her utilization of a feminized object for meditation in seeking transcendence takes part in the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions.

Lanyer's utilization of the broken body of Christ in place of the conventional Petrarchan blazon of the female body is her most daringly feminist move, as scholars who view her as a feminist emphasize. At the same time, scholars note that Lanyer is working within an established mythical tradition. Nancy Bradley Warren, for instance, associates the feminization of Christ with the practices of medieval female mystics in much the same way that historian Caroline Walker Bynum explains the maternal characteristics of Christ in *Jesus as Mother*. In Bynum's argument, Christ's characteristic compassion, teaching, and charity are associated with motherhood, and Christ is figured as the breastfeeding mother of mankind and the Pelican that pricks its breast to feed its young. As a result, Christ is associated with the feminine within the medieval mystic tradition and female mystics associated Christ's suffering with their own suffering bodies. Similarly, Warren asserts that, like medieval female mystics, for Lanyer "Christ's suffering flesh was female flesh" (53). The female readers of this text are expected to share in the pain of their feminine mother / sister, as Christ dies so that they might live. The reader's ascent via the ladder of love is more likely to be successful in this instance, rather than being corrupted by corporeality, because Christ's

body is blazoned to describe the pain and death that led to “the blessed Soules delight” (Lanyer 272). The contemplation of Christ’s Passion has traditionally been considered a passionate experience and is associated with bodily emotion and ultimately the transcendence of the body. It is the ultimate demonstration of divine love Lanyer’s women readers are contemplating rather than an isolated representation of beauty. The blazon of Christ’s beautiful body, then, is meant to elicit compassion and love: “His joynts dis-joynted, and his legs hang downe, / His alabaster breast, His bloody side, / His members torne, and on His head a Crowne” (1161-3). The specific aspects of Christ’s body are meant to align with his wounds; it is not his dainty foot or alabaster brow that the reader is contemplating. Lanyer reminds the reader of the role of faith in the reading of Christ’s Passion immediately after the blazon: “This with the eie of Faith thou maist behold” (1169). It is with a faithful eye, that the reader is reminded of the death of Christ and the love that is demonstrated through this death. The beautiful feminized body is the spectacle within Lanyer’s poem, but the female readers are meant to align themselves with Christ’s suffering, and this representation of beauty is limited to three stanzas; its primary purpose seems to be to demonstrate the virtue of Christ and the lack of virtue within the men who seek to destroy him.

The virtue of the female readers who are made analogous to Christ is demonstrated through the subjection and oppression that Christ’s body obediently endures, and the bloody and violent nature of the description of Christ’s body comments on the human condition as well as the violence of the Petrarchan tradition. The representation of Christ’s image in the first blazon figures the female body as broken, bloody, and conquered. This is not new, as we see with Amoret’s gaping wound and penetrated heart. The feminine is subject to male domination and violence within the literary tradition and Lanyer utilizes Christ’s body to

demonstrate this. She questions this type of representation by providing the most virtuous and virginal feminized body that has ever been destroyed by mankind, and she places the blame for the destruction of beauty and virtue on the men whose greed, doubt, and lust for power carry out the violence. Moreover, Christ's obedience and sacrifice for the good of patriarchal order further reflects his virtue and the virtue of the female readers whose bodies are associated with his.

In the second blazon of Christ's body within the text, Lanyer figures Christ as the "Bridegroom that appears so faire," and this blazon is reminiscent of the more traditional Petrarchan blazons, such as those that Spenser incorporates into his text (1305). This blazon focuses on Christ's face, cheeks, eyes, curled locks, sweet lips, and cheeks (1305-20). This section is identified as "A briefe description of his beautie upon the Canticles," thus this blazon relates to the "Song of Songs" or "Song of Solomon," the Old Testament book of wedding or love poems. This section figures Christ as the Bridegroom, and it has been traditionally interpreted in a variety of ways; however, as steeped in medieval mysticism as *Salve Deus* is, it seems probable that this blazon is a way for Lanyer to communicate the love that exists between Christ and the virtuous female soul. This interpretation is supported by Lanyer's emphasis on the virtuous soul and virtuous mind, but as noted by many scholars, the erotic language in the poem also associates spiritual desire with physical desire. Theresa M. DiPasquale recognizes the erotic language within the poem and asserts that the association of Christ with the object of female desire aligns marriage to Christ with liberation rather than restriction (163). Lanyer's poem suggests that female physical desire can be displaced onto Christ. This incitement of desire differs from Spenser's representations because the union that occurs is a union of equals: the union between the feminized soul of

Christ and the female soul is a closer union than can be achieved through corporeal or intellectual love between husband and wife. The displacement of physical desire onto Christ provides transcendence over the earthly condition, and marriage to Christ becomes a liberating experience because it frees women from the subjection of their desires to their husbands, and through transcendence the union of souls, rather than bodies, is a consummation. This displacement of physical desire does not seek to deny the physical; instead, it utilizes the physical and spiritual to move to the divine. With this progression in mind, Lanyer's poem seems to contradict the representations of female subjection to male rule and direction provided in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. The union of the female soul with Christ in *Salve Deus* is in direct contrast to the union between husband and wife in Spenser's text. Read in conjunction with Lanyer's poem, one might argue that Britomart's – or any woman's – bodily pain and physical passion could be transcended through a redirection of her passion toward the ultimate object of desire: Christ. While Spenser advocates a physical consummation of desire through marriage which figures the male as the head of the family, a union of souls between Britomart and Christ would elevate her in a way that her physical union and marriage to Artegall would not. In this way, Lanyer's poem seems to suggest an alternative to physical consummation, an alternative that allows the reader to seek transcendence through both physical and spiritual desire.

Lanyer identifies her work as a “taske of Beauty,” but her overall task seems to condemn the praise of beauty that incites desire and leads to violence and to redefine beauty by deemphasizing the body and by privileging virtue (1322). She utilizes the body of Christ to comment on the corrupt and tyrannous rule of the patriarchy by providing all too familiar images of the destruction of beauty and the violation of the virtuous body – she does this by

commenting on rape. The violation of the virtuous body in Lanyer's poem is similar to the images of violation provided by Spenser and various other early modern authors, but the image that Lanyer provides constitutes a much greater sin, and implicates all men as opposed to only one. Barbara Bowen remarks on this aspect of the poem in her article "Aemilia Lanyer's *Lucrece*," in which she argues that Lanyer's description of the destruction of Christ's beauty clearly alludes to and is associated with Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* and the rape culture of early modern England (112). Lanyer's poem does more than allude to Shakespeare's *Lucrece*; it addresses the issue of rape directly in a variety of ways, and Bowen recognizes this. As she explains, "Lanyer's own site of struggle, and one that she imagines as a radically collective project, may be expressive culture. Her poem is as much engaged with the traditions of representing rape as it is with rape itself" (122). This assertion recognizes that Lanyer's text enters into dialogue with other texts from the period, like Spenser's, in a way that questions the patriarchal literary tradition. Lanyer interrogates the tradition directly throughout her poem, but in her invective against outward beauty unaccompanied by inner virtue it is clear that Lanyer is commenting on the ways that rape is represented. She condemns beauty in her invective by asserting that "those Matchlesse colours Red and White" and "due proportion pleasing to the sight" attract nothing but "dangers and disgrace" (193-5). The praise of the colors red and white in the faces of beautiful women within the sonnet tradition take on new meaning for Lanyer because they are problematic for the women who possess them. These colors symbolize beauty, but they also precede conquest. Lanyer states: "That pride of Nature which adorned the faire, / Like blasting Comets to allure the eies, / Is but the thred that weaves the web of Care" (201-4). In these stanzas, Lanyer is very aware of how beauty is perceived and represented. She

compares beauty to the temporary attraction that a comet might produce because she sees that beauty does not last; it fades. Additionally, the comparison of beauty to a comet, which is a portent or omen, suggests that beauty foretells disaster for the possessor. Lanyer presents beauty as trapping women in the “web of Care” that makes them feel important when they are actually being objectified and their beauty is only appreciated momentarily. In this invective, Lanyer also asserts that “greatest perills do attend the faire,” and she condemns outward beauty as “gawdie colours” before she begins to provide a discussion of familiar instances of the danger, disgrace, and perils associated with beauty (205, 188). Lanyer associates these instances of greatest peril and “gawdie colours” with the praise of beauty, and her invective condemns such praise. In the invective she names Helen of Troy, Lucrece, and Cleopatra, among others, as women whose beauty has resulted in the loss of virtue, and with the exception of Cleopatra, it seems that it is beauty that she condemns for the loss of virtue these women experience. The repetition of the words “name” and “infamy,” “honor” and “dishonor,” and “shame” and “death” (or “poison”) serves to reiterate the dangerous position that each woman finds herself in and the stories that various rape narratives tell. It is not the women that Lanyer condemns; it is the praise of their beauty and the power that is given to this beauty through idealization and admiration.

It is important to note, however, that Lanyer does not associate Christ with these aspects of rape. Instead, Lanyer rewrites the violence, or rape, done to Christ’s body and the tradition of praising beauty by reversing the status quo of the rape narrative. Lanyer provides a narrative in which the innocent victim demonstrates no shame and in which beauty is solely a reflection of virtue. Lanyer asserts that Christ’s “innocencie” has been “made prey to sinne,” and she reiterates that the shame belongs to the men who violate Christ’s body (527,

558). Lanyer's association of shame with the men who condemn and destroy Christ reflects the idea that shame and the stain of sin associated with yielding do not belong to the victim. The shame and the stain of sin belong to the men who murder Christ in *Salve Deus*. In reference to Pilate, Lanyer questions: "Cans't thou be innocent, that gainst all right, / Wilt yield to what thy conscience doth withstand? / Beeing a man of knowledge, power, and might, / To let the wicked carrie such a hand" (929-32). Again, Lanyer reverses the status quo to place the sin of yielding on the perpetrator, the man who yields to his inner desire to destroy the beautiful virtuous object. The language used in this questioning of Pilate is reminiscent of the female victims in Spenser's text who run away from men who choose to chase them, barring all sense of right and wrong. It is also distinctly reminiscent Shakespeare's *Lucrece* and of Tarquin's mental turmoil when his lust overpowers his reason as he considers the sin that he is preparing to commit. The stain of sin that Lucrece is so worried about in Shakespeare's text is placed on Pilate in *Salve Deus*: "Washing thy hands, thy conscience cannot clear, / But to all worlds this staine must needs appear" (935-6). According to Lanyer's revised narrative of violation and destruction, Lucrece is not the one who should be concerned over what her face will reveal in the light of day. It is the perpetrator who will bear the stain. The same could be said for the perpetrators of violence in *The Faerie Queene*; each man is responsible for his own reaction to the beauty he encounters. Lanyer's Christ is an example of how the feminized body is dominated by patriarchy. Christ's reputation precedes him; it is asserted that he is King of the Jews, which challenges Herod's rule, and as a result he is given to Herod like a sacrificial virgin, much like Agamemnon offers Iphigenia as a sacrifice in exchange for good fortune on the sea (Lanyer 91). In these instances, the female body is valued and victimized by men to further their own

agendas, and Lanyer clearly places the blame for such victimizations on the men who perpetrate them.

By presenting the idea that shame does not belong to the victim and by presenting Christ as the victim of men, Lanyer is able to revise and rewrite the histories of women. Her apology for Eve reflects this strategy: Lanyer asserts that Eve was a victim as much as she was a sinner. She posits that Eve, “was simply good, and had no power to see” and that “undiscerning Ignorance perceav’d / No guile, or craft that was by him [the serpent] intended” (766, 770). In the “Apology for Eve,” Lanyer aligns Eve with the victim of rape, more specifically with Lucrece, because while ignorance signifies innocence and purity, these characteristics allow the fatal errors to take place in each scenario. Yet Lanyer takes this assertion one step further by addressing Adam’s role in the Fall and by associating it with the crucifixion; if men are the stronger sex, then women are even more blameless. She states: “But surely Adam can not be excusde, / Her fault though great, yet hee was most too blame; / What Weaknesse offerd, Strength might have refusde” (777-9). While it may seem here that Lanyer is only apologizing for Eve, these lines have a much greater weight than that. This same logic can be applied to Cleopatra’s defects. Cleopatra’s name is mentioned in Lanyer’s invective alongside Antonius’s name; Lanyer identifies Cleopatra’s beauty and “defects,” but she also mentions Antonius who “wrong’d his wife” (213-16). While Lanyer may draw attention to Cleopatra’s lack of virtue, Cleopatra is not alone in her sins, and what Lanyer so aptly infers is that what Cleopatra offered, Antonius should have refused. The same could be said for any of the beautiful notorious women within the Western literary tradition, and Lanyer seems to manipulate the literary tradition in order to make this suggestion.



While Lanyer's representation of Christ uses the tradition to pardon women's sins and make them blameless, the poem as a whole also privileges interiority, the virtuous mind and soul, over the body. It suggests that while reputation, particularly the reputation for virtue or chastity, is extremely important within society, the defamation of the body does not destroy the soul. Virtue exists apart from the body; it is mindful. This suggestion highly contrasts with the beauty / virtue topos in Spenser's text, which privileges the body by variously enclosing, exploiting, and appropriating it. Lanyer limits the blazons of the body in the text and instead focuses on beauty as virtue in relation to the moral integrity of the mind and soul. Lanyer praises Christ's beauty as his virtue; his virtue is beautiful. Christ is described as "the beauty of the World, Heaven's chiefest Glory" (641) and "Heav'ns beauty" (1464), but he is also described as the "Light and Truth" and his body is sacred and Holy (510). Christ's body is valued by the female reader and by Lanyer because its actions demonstrate his virtue; his sacrifice of his body for mankind shows his love, and that is what Lanyer privileges within the text when she praises Christ's body. She states, "The meditation of this Monarchs love, / Drawes thee from caring what this world can yield" (153-4). The idea that contemplation of Christ's holy body and his sacrifice will lead to an appreciation of goodness and beauty that signifies love reflects the sustainability of the beauty / virtue topos in Lanyer's poem, even if Christ's beauty is destroyed, because the virtue of Christ's soul continues to exist even after the destruction of His beauty. This focus on divine love versus earthly love is emphasized throughout the text, as is the privileging of virtue as it relates to the mind and soul. Lanyer contrasts earthly love with divine love in her representations of Cleopatra and the Lady Cumberland: "Great Cleopatra's love for Anthony, / Can no way be compared to thine . . . . Her Love was earthly, and thy Love Divine" (1409-1414). This contrast reasserts the de-

emphasis of bodily or corporeal love, even when Christ is figured as the bridegroom, and it reiterates the holiness of the body that is being contemplated within the poem. Lanyer describes Cleopatra's earthly love for Anthony as "leaden love unconstant, and afraid," in contrast to the uplifting constant love for the divine that provides reassurance for Lady Cumberland and the female readers of the text (1421). Earthly love is also represented by Saint Peter, whose "hot Love should prove more cold than Ice" (348). In each of these instances, earthly love is represented as inconstant love that does not last and that is not a reflection of virtuous love.

By offering a contrast, Lanyer is providing an example of what should be privileged. She does this again by comparing the characteristics of Lady Cumberland and Cleopatra: "No Cleopatra, though thou wert as faire, / As any creature in Antonius eyes; . . . / Yet with this Lady canst thou not compare, / Whose inward virtues all thy worth denies" (1425-30). In these stanzas, Lanyer asserts that Lady Cumberland's inner virtues make Cleopatra's beauty worthless. Again, the divine is more valuable than the earthly and virtue is privileged over beauty. Moreover, these "inward virtues" relate to the female mind. Lanyer describes the praises of the Lady of Cumberland as those "Which doe expresse the beautie of your mind" (1452). Lanyer continuously contrasts outer appearances to inner virtue in her praise of Lady Cumberland in order to demonstrate that outer appearances are part of corporeality that should not be a concern for Godly women. She references Lady Cumberland's "faire virtues" and "faire examples" as having healing powers for the soul, and she describes them as riches (1371-80). Yet, she also states that "Thou being thus rich, no riches do'st respect, / Nor do'st thou care for any outward showe" (1385-6). These lines extol Lady Cumberland's virtues and suggest that it does not matter that virtue is not visible in her outer appearances; she is

virtuous without regard for recognition. This representation is in direct contrast to representations of beauty that are meant to be a reflection of virtue. Lanyer's commitment to virtue of the mind suggests that virtue relates to interiority and that Christ's crucifixion is an example of how mankind privileges and reacts to outer appearance and corporeality.

For Lanyer, the female body is problematic. Men judge it and condemn it according to how it appears, and they use it to accomplish their own goals and further their own agendas. Lanyer uses the body of Christ and the Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic traditions to demonstrate the female body is problematic and to provide an alternative to the patriarchal literary tradition that challenges the status quo and defends women. In her letter "To the Vertuous Reader," Lanyer states that "I have written this small volume, or little booke, for the generall use of all virtuous Ladies . . . . And this I have done, to make knowne to the world, that all women deserve not to be blamed. . ." (48). Lanyer is clearly attempting to change the way that women are viewed within society, and her attempts to revise the stories of historical, literary, and religious women provides representations that suggest that there is an alternative way to view the female body and the beauty and virtue that ornament it. Her focus on feminine virtue privileges female interiority: it aligns virtue with the moral integrity of the mind and soul. In privileging and extolling virtue over beauty, Lanyer rewrites or revises the stories of women, as well as the Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic traditions. She also argues for a superior place for women within religion, literature, and culture in an interesting response to texts like Spenser's that utilize the Neo-Platonic and Petrarchan traditions and the female body to further their own agendas.

## Works Cited

- Augustine of Hippo, St. *The City of God*. Trans. Henry Bettenson. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- Baines, Barbara. "Effacing Rape in Early Modern Representation." *ELH* 65.1 (1998): 69-98. *Project Muse*. Web. 1 Jan. 2012.
- Baldwin, Anna and Sarah Hutton. *Platonism and the English Imagination*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1994. Print.
- Bamford, Karen. *Sexual Violence on the Jacobean Stage*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Print.
- Bowen, Barbara. "The Rape of Jesus: Aemilia Lanyer's *Lucrece*." *Marxist Shakespeares*. Ed. Jean E. Howard and Scott C. Shershow. New York: Routledge, 2001. 104-127. Print.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1982. Print.
- Catty, Jocelyn. *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech*. New York: Macmillan Press, 1999. Print.
- Cavanagh, Sheila T. *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in The Faerie Queene*. Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1994. Print.
- Coleman, Janet. "The Christian Platonism of St. Augustine." *Platonism and the English Imagination*. Ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton. New York: Cambridge UP, 1994. 27-37. Print.

- Crawford, Katherine. "Marsilio Ficino, Neoplatonism, and the Problem of Sex." *Renaissance & Reformation* 28.2 (2004): 3-35. *Historical Abstracts with Full Text*. Web. 24 Nov. 2011.
- Dalton, Michael. *The country justice containing the practice of the justices of the peace out of their sessions*. London, 1648. *EEBO*. Web. 23 March 2012.
- DiPasquale, Theresa M. "Sacred Eros in *Salve Deus*." *Refiguring the Sacred Feminine: The Poems of John Donne, Aemilia Lanyer, and John Milton*. Pittsburgh, Pa: Duquesne UP, 2008. 162-80. Print.
- Dolan, Frances. "Taking the Pencil out of God's Hand: Art, Nature, and the Face-Painting Debate in Early Modern England." *PMLA* 108.2 (1993): 224-239. *JSTOR*. Web. 1 Jan. 2012.
- Dubrow, Heather. *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995. Print.
- Fendler, Susanne. "The Emancipation of the Sign: The Changing Significance of Beauty in Some English Renaissance Romances." *Nominalism and Literary Discourse: New Perspectives*. Ed. Hugo Keiper, Christoph Bode, and Richard J. Utz. *Critical Studies Vol. 10*. Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997. 269-282. Print.
- Frye, Susan. "Of Chastity and Violence: Elizabeth I and Edmund Spenser in *The House Of Busirane*." *Signs* 20.1 (1994): 49-78. *LGBT Life with Full Text*. Web. 10 Oct. 2011.
- Gowing, Laura. *Common Bodies: Women, Touch, and Power in Seventeenth-Century England*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003. Print.

- Harvey, Elizabeth. "Spenser, Virginitie, and Sexuality." *Early Modern English Poetry: A Critical Companion*. Ed. Patrick Cheney, Andrew Hadfield and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. New York: Oxford UP, 2007. 102-112. Print.
- Heale, Elizabeth. *The Faerie Queene: A Reader's Guide*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.
- Karim-Cooper, Farah. *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006. Print.
- Kraye, Jill. "The Transformation of Platonic Love in the Italian Renaissance." *Platonism and the English Imagination*. Ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton. New York: Cambridge UP, 1994. 76-85. Print.
- Langis, Unhae Park. *Passion Prudence and Virtue in Shakespearean Drama*. New York: Continuum, 2011. Print.
- Lanyer, Aemilia. "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum." *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*. Ed. Susanne Woods. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.
- Matheson, Sue. "Religious Reconstruction of Female Spirituality: Reading Past the Praise in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*." *Things of the Spirit: Women Writer's Constructing Spirituality*. Ed. Kristina Groover. Notre Dame, Indiana: U of Notre Dame P, 2004. 51-68. Print.
- McGrath, Lynnette. "'Let Us Have Our Libertie Againe': Aemilia Lanier's 17<sup>th</sup> Century Feminist Voice." *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700*. Ed. Mary Ellen Lamb. Vol. 3 *Anne Lock, Isabella Whitney, and Aemilia Lanyer*. Ed. Micheline White. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009. 201-218. Print.

- McManus, Caroline. *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Reading of Women*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2002. Print.
- Miller, Naomi J. "(M)other Tongues: Maternity and Subjectivity." *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre, and the Canon*. Ed. Marshall Grossman. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1998. 143-166. Print.
- Paolucci, Anne. *The Women in Dante's Divine Comedy and Spenser's Faerie Queene*. Dover, DE: Griffon House Publications, 2005. Print.
- Schwarz, Kathryn. "Chastity, Militant and Married: Cavendish's Romance, Milton's Masque." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 118.2 (2003): 270-285. *JSTOR*. Web. 1 Oct. 2011.
- Sheppard, Anne. "Plato and the Neoplatonists." *Platonism and the English Imagination*. Ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton. New York: Cambridge UP, 1994. 3-18. Print.
- Snook, Edith. *Women, Beauty and Power in Early Modern England: A Feminist Literary History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.
- Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Eds. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. and C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print.
- Stallybrass, Peter. "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed." *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986. 123-142. Print.
- Starr, Gabrielle G. "Cavendish, Aesthetics, and the Anti-Platonic Line." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39.3 (2006): 295-308. *Project MUSE*. Web. 1 Dec. 2011.

- Thompson, Joanna. *The Character of Britomart in Spenser's The Faerie Queene*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001. Print.
- Vickers, Nancy. "'The blazon of sweet beauty's best': Shakespeare's Lucrece." *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. Eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman. New York: Methuen & Co., 1985. 95-115. Print.
- Wall, Wendy. "The Body of Christ: Aemilia Lanyer's Passion." *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993. 319-330. Print.
- Warren, Nancy Bradley. "The Incarnational and the International: St. Birgitta of Sweden, St. Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, and Aemilia Lanyer." *The Embodied Word: Female Spiritualities, Contested Orthodoxies, and English Religious Cultures, 1350-1700*. Notre Dame, Ind: U of Notre Dame P, 2010. 19-60. Print.
- Woods, Susanne. "Lanyer and Spenser." *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. 42-71. Print.



## VITA

Emily Ann Johnson was born in Traphill, North Carolina on September 22, 1982. She graduated early from North Wilkes High School in December of 1999, and was dually enrolled at Wilkes Community College and North Wilkes High School from August 1999 to December 1999. Emily reenrolled at Wilkes Community College in 2005, and transferred to Appalachian State University in the fall of 2007. In December of 2009, she was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in English, Secondary Education and obtained a N.C. Teaching License. In the autumn of 2010, she began working toward her Master of Arts degree in English. The M.A. was awarded in May of 2012. In August 2012, Emily plans to continue her teaching career and apply to PhD programs. Her parents are Tony Blake Johnson and Maxine Eller Johnson of Traphill, North Carolina, and her paternal grandmother is Walsie C. Johnson Tharpe of Ronda, North Carolina.