

25634

NATIONAL LIBRARY
OTTAWA



BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE
OTTAWA

NAME OF AUTHOR.....ERMES P. CULOS.....

TITLE OF THESIS....The Lady of the Bower:.. A Study of Spenser's
Bower of Bliss in Relation to the Gardens of
Alcina and Armida in the Orlando Furioso and
in the Gerusalemme Liberata.

UNIVERSITY.....
SIMON Fraser University

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED... M.A.

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED.....1975.....

Permission is hereby granted to THE NATIONAL LIBRARY
OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies
of the film.

The author reserves other publication rights, and
neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be
printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's
written permission.

(Signed).....

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

[Redacted address block]

DATED... *May 27*1975

THE LADY OF THE BOWER - A STUDY OF
SPENSER'S BOWER OF BLISS IN RELATION
TO THE GARDENS OF ALCINA AND ARMIDA
IN THE ORLANDO FURIOSO AND IN THE
GERUSALEMME LIBERATA

by

Ermes Primiano Culos

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1971

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
English



ERMES PRIMIANO CULOS 1975

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

February 1975

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.

Approval

Name: Ermes Culos

Degree: Master of Arts

Title of Thesis: The Lady of the Bower: A Study of Spenser's
Bower of Bliss in Relation to the Gardens of
Alcina and Armida in the Orlando Furioso and
in the Gerusalemme Liberata.

Examining Committee:

Chairman: Jared R. Curtis

J. W. Lever
Senior Supervisor

Gerald Newman

Joseph E. Gallagher

Simeon K. Heninger, Jr.
External Examiner
Professor
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C.

Date Approved: March 21, 1975

2

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant to Simon Fraser University the right to lend my thesis or dissertation (the title of which is shown below) to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for multiple copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis/Dissertation:

The Lady of the Bower: A Study of Spenser's Bower of Bliss
in Relation to the Gardens of Alcina and Armida in the Orlando
Furioso and in the Gerusalemme Liberata.

Author:

(signature)

Ernes P. Culos

(name)

May 21, 1975

(date)

ABSTRACT

This paper is essentially a study of the Bower of Bliss in The Faerie Queene and of the Gardens of Alcina and Armida in the Orlando Furioso and in the Gerusalemme Liberata. The Bower and Gardens have not only a key function in the structure of the master works of Spenser, Ariosto, and Tasso, but they also reveal the bond that unites the imaginative experiences of these poets, as well as revealing the essential differences which exist between them. The paper looks first at the critical climate in Sixteenth-Century Italy (focusing on the Ariosto-Tasso controversy) in the attempt to determine the extent of its influence on Spenser and on his Italian precursors. Having observed that the ruling ladies of the Bowers -- Alcina, Armida and Acrasia -- all possess faculties evocative of those of the Homeric Circe, the paper then traces the development of the Circe-myth and analyzes extensively the manifestations of the myth in the works of Spenser, Ariosto, and Tasso. Finally, the paper considers the implications of the capture of Acrasia by Guyon and the Palmer at the end of Book II of The Faerie Queene. The analyses of the Bowers and of their ruling ladies suggest that the psyches of Ariosto, Tasso and Spenser, though they overlap in important ways, are fundamentally different one from the others. The poetry of the Liberata suggests that Tasso yearns for the kind of dissolution sought by Rinaldo

in the arms of Armida, at the same time that he strives toward the attainment of a transcendent, ideal state. The result is a tension which Tasso never fully resolves. In Ariosto the case is different: the either/or situation of Tasso does not seem to affect Ariosto. The management of the Alcina-Ruggero episode makes clear how fully Ariosto joys in the vagaries of human nature and in its refusal to fit in any given mould. The poetry of Spenser suggests that he is kin to Ariosto in his love of variety and to Tasso in his recognition of an absolute ideal in life. Unlike Tasso, however, who ultimately finds no fulfillment either in one form of experience or in the other, Spenser resolves the conflict by envisaging a state in which ethical demands and instinctual forces meet. Notwithstanding their psychical differences, however, each of these poets is drawn to the erotic in nature, each in varying degrees, the intensity of the attraction being itself largely responsible for the imaginative rendering of the motifs of the Bowers in their individual manifestations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank Dr. Lever, Dr. Gallagher, and Professor Newman for their assistance in the preparation of this paper. Dr. Lever, in particular, I wish to thank for suggesting the title and for providing many invaluable insights into the poetry of Spenser, Tasso and Ariosto.

Ogni vostro atto
Ho sempre con ragione laudato e laudo.
(OF XVIII)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. Introductory Remarks	1
2. The Critical Background: The Quarrel over the One, the <u>Dulce</u> and the <u>Utile</u>	3
3. The Bower Approached	23
4. The Lady and Her Sport	47
(a) Genesis of the Motif	47
(b) From Virgil to Spenser: Changing Patterns	51
(c) A Closer Look at Tasso, Ariosto and Spenser	79
5. The Capture of the Lady	99
6. Summary and Conclusion	119
7. List of References	125

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introductory Remarks	1
1. The Critical Background: The Quarrel Over the One, the <u>Dulce</u> and the <u>Utile</u>	3
2. The Bower Approached	23
3. The Lady and Her Sport	47
(a) Genesis of the Motif	47
(b) From Virgil to Spenser: Changing Patterns	51
(c) A Closer Look at Tasso, Ariosto and Spenser	79
4. The Capture of the Lady	99
5. Summary and Conclusion	119
List of References	126
Bibliography	135

LIST OF PLATES

	<u>Page</u>
Plate 1	17
Plate 1a	18
Plate 2	19
Plate 3	20
Plate 4	101
Plate 5	108

THE LADY OF THE BOWER - A Study of Spenser's Bower of Bliss in Relation to the Gardens of Alcina and Armida in the Orlando Furioso and in the Gerusalemme Liberata

Introductory Remarks

The Bower of Bliss in Book II of The Faerie Queene presents a special interpretive problem to readers of Spenser. No one emerges from a consideration of this episode unimpressed by the lyrical intensity which characterizes its descriptive passages. One feels instinctively that Spenser has put more of himself in this last canto of Book II than possibly in any other part of his major work. The charms of the Bower lure the reader on, as they do the Knight of Temperance himself; but neither reader nor hero is allowed to dwell long in this enchanted spot. The ruling spirit of the place -- the Lady of the Bower herself -- is soon subdued, and the Bower is ruthlessly levelled to the ground. What sort of inner conflicts causes Spenser to raise a fascinating edifice only to have it utterly destroyed? This is the sort of question that has received and continues to receive much attention from critics.¹ It is a question, indeed, with which this paper will be centrally concerned. The works of Ariosto and Tasso, long recognized as having influenced deeply the composition of The Faerie Queene², both contain episodes which are remarkably similar to Spenser's Bower and served as models for it. A full understanding of the Bower of Bliss is hardly possible without reference to the works which to a considerable extent inspired it. It is the purpose of this paper to take a close

look at these three episodes in the belief that an understanding of the models will prove helpful in understanding better those aspects of Spenser's Bower which are most puzzling. The essay will begin with a consideration of poetic theory in the 16th Century, in the belief that an acquaintance with this will reveal some of Ariosto's and Tasso's formative influences and, through them, Spenser's own. The implications of the use of similar motifs by different poets or artists will then be briefly considered. Thenceforth the paper will concentrate on the 'bowers' themselves and on their ruling ladies, Alcina, Armida, and Acrasia. The analysis, it is hoped, will not only throw light on the distinguishing features of these enchanted gardens, but also on the essential differences existing between the English poet and the Italians.

1. The Critical Background: The Quarrel over the One, the Dulce, and the Utile

How far do modern theories of literature influence the poetry of our day? One would be hard put, I think, to give a precise answer to this question. Without doubt, though, modern positions, such as that poetry is a spontaneous overflow of emotions, or the product of the relaxation of conscious forces, or even that it results from minds not suffering from memory blanks and capable of 'non-schematic' kinds of experiences³ must play a large part in shaping the poetic composition of today. The impact of these beliefs was but dimly felt in Renaissance times. The notion that eroici furori were motive forces of genuine poetry had not yet captured widely the imaginations of poets, or critics.^{3a} As will appear below, what we today regard as products of the superego, and hence to some extent spurious, were then generally accepted as authentic poetry. The critical climate which to a greater or lesser extent influenced Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser was therefore something considerably different from that which influences modern poets.

Let us see what 16th-Century literary critics had to say about the poetry of Ariosto and Tasso. A heated literary quarrel took place in Italy in the second half of the 16th Century, first over the peculiarities of the Furioso, and later, following the publication⁴ of the Liberata in 1581, over the relative merits of the two works. Bernard Weinberg,

who has carried out what seems to be an exhaustive study of literary criticism in the Italian Renaissance, summarizes the views of scores of prominent critics on the Ariosto/Tasso question.⁴ I want to try to capture some of the most salient points of the discussion.

First there is Aristotle (in each of the arguments a figure of massive proportions) and the problem of unity. Aristotle was regarded as having laid down quite specific and fixed rules for the structuring of an epic, and pre-eminent among them was the rule that the epic must imitate the actions of one man.⁵ Daring writers like Giraldi Cinthio stand up and claim that Ariosto's work cannot be judged by the same standards as, say, The Iliad, for it is a romanzo, and Aristotle had nothing to say about romances. A frame of reference different from that used to pass judgement on the classical epics is needed to evaluate a romance, and since usage is the best reference, Boiardo's Innamorato and Ariosto's Furioso establish the precedent for "all matters pertaining to the form," and "one must refer to them as the ultimate authority."⁶ The romance form differs from the epic basically in this, that it presents multiple actions. So, the integration of a multiplicity of plots is the solution settled for by Giraldi to absolve Ariosto from the charge of loose composition. And the charge, indeed, can be quite vehement, as may be seen in the following words of Minturno:

...Truth is one; and that, which is true once must be true forever and in every age, ...even through such change, truth remains in its unchanging state. Whence the variation in times, appearing subsequently, will not make it possible that we should treat in poetry more than one single matter, and of proper magnitude, with which all the rest fits and is conjoined according to verisimilitude and reason.⁷

In Minturno's view, Ariosto chose to write for the ignorant crowd, for "vulgar men, who do not know what poetry is, nor do they know in what consists the excellence of the poet."⁸ Instead of developing a unified action on Ruggero or Orlando, Ariosto chooses to treat both of them, along with "a great mass of persons and things."⁹ And so Minturno suggests that the Furioso results in poetic failure. The discussion over the relative merits of variety vs. unified action continues in a staggering number of other critics. There are some interesting variations. For example, the episodic (romance) nature of Ariosto appeals more to the multitude (ruled by the senses); Homer, Virgil, etc., instead, appeal more to "philosophers and those who know the laws of poetry."¹⁰ This is the view of an anonymous Vatican critic:

Ariosto merits approval in all things, provided that they be considered one by one and separately. But if you bring them all together into a universal composite, instantly your approval will vanish away. It is the mind which contemplates that broad and universal essence; it is the senses, though, which delight in things taken singly. So that it is not at all wonderful that Ariosto should be approved so warmly as long as single things hold the attention of the appetite, which does not bother to contemplate that universal composite; but on the contrary, it is unavoidable that the mind should blame and reject the whole in which it sees the universal object vitiated by various defects.¹¹

It is interesting that this writer intuitively accepts a premise that will be acclaimed on quasi-scientific grounds in the 20th Century: that it, that poetry appeals to, and perhaps emerges from, a layer of the psyche below the conscious mind. His attitude on the question of value, though, seems to be the exact opposite of that of a modern. At any rate, in Ariosto the pleasure afforded by variety lasts precisely as long as the mind does not enter into play, for then it becomes aware that there is "no whole which might satisfy its most basic needs."¹² One might, in other words, say that there is in Ariosto a lot that is dulce, but too little that is utile, thus upsetting the balance of those two elements, so important to the 16th-Century mind (see, for example, Sidney's emphasis on the need of poetry to delight and instruct, below) and so fundamental for an understanding of Spenser, as we shall see.

When Ariosto and Tasso are compared, the comparison is also carried out, as a rule, on the level of unity vs. variety, and judgement is passed accordingly. As spokesman for the Ariosto camp one may cite Salviati:

...the fabric, and not the threads, is what must be one in the epic, and such is that of the Furioso -- but a broad fabric, and magnificent, and full of many threads, all of which part from a single beginning and finish in a single ending of the aforementioned fabric; whereas Tasso's, rather than being called a fabric, should more readily be called a ribbon or, as they say in Naples, a 'zagherella'.¹³

And in support of Tasso Pellegrino's remarks will do as well as any:

One can see that even if Ariosto has observed, in certain parts of the Furioso, the teaching and the counsel of Aristotle, in the whole he has not observed them at all. Tasso, if not fully and completely, was a much better observer than he of the teachings of the philosopher. Therefore, just as he excels Ariosto in saying things according to verisimilitude and necessity, so he is not inferior to him in invention, in wonderment, in passion, in delight, in beauty, and in loveliness.¹⁴

As we can see, what these critics find hard to swallow is a poem, epic or romance, which departs from the fundamental principle of unity. And so Ariosto is either rejected outright, largely on this basis, or attempts are made, in the style of Salviati, to interpret Aristotle's remarks in such a way that Ariosto is found to adhere closely to them. This is facilitated somewhat by the emergence (speeded up, perhaps, by the necessity of having to deal with the work of Ariosto) of new conceptions of poetic mimesis.

If poetry imitates reality, and nature is reality, or at least itself a representation of reality, then questions as to the very nature of nature itself become significant, and the problem of unity can then in part be resolved on the basis of one's conception of nature. Weinberg summarizes two basic ways in which nature was viewed.

She may be taken to be uniform and static, to have provided from the outset a series of natural forms to which it is not possible to add and from which one must not depart -- to have determined kinds of audiences and the conditions of their response in such a way as to render deviation impossible. If she is so conceived, then the 'ancient' or traditionalist solution is the only acceptable one...

One holding such a view would naturally find it hard to accept the newness of Ariosto. However,

...she may also be thought of as infinitely varied in her manifestations, as constantly creating new shapes and new beings, as producing men and circumstances whose particular character justifies the invention of new literary genres. So conceived, Nature authorizes the 'modern' solution, consisting in change and innovation.¹⁵

So conceived, too, Nature easily justifies the multiplicity of plots and episodes in Ariosto's poem.

Aside from the question of unity, another aspect of poetry assumes tremendous importance for the late 16th-Century critic and for the poet himself: that is, its moral function. The century, as Weinberg tells us, tended to classify the art of poetry as an instrument of moral philosophy.¹⁶ For most theorists, the "defense of poetry on moral grounds was obligatory." In fact, the three critical traditions (Platonic, Aristotelian, and Horatian) were found to be at one on this point:

Such a seeking after moral ends immediately brought the theorists...in contact with Horace's 'utile', and this half of the dual goal stated in the Ars Poetica became indistinguishable from the Platonic utility [i.e. that poetry should be subordinated to the ends of the state.] What is more remarkable is that the same end should have been assigned to Aristotle's Poetics. But it was, and in the most specific fashion. Both the purgation clause¹⁷ in the definition of tragedy and the demand for 'goodness' among the requisites of character were interpreted as referring to moral aims. There was much diversity of interpretation, of course; generally, though, purgation was thought of as bringing moral improvement by tempering or by expelling undesirable passions, while 'goodness' provided examples of desirable forms of conduct.¹⁸

It is evident that these theories had no great influence on Ariosto (they tended to become more and more encrusted as the century progressed); but we can easily surmise how deep an influence they must have had on Spenser: his conscious intention in writing The Faerie Queene, as set forth in his prefatory letter to Raleigh, convinces us of this.

In general, the attitude of English critics toward the function of poetry does not differ substantially from that of their Italian counterparts. The positions of both John Harington and Sidney, for example, seem to be, in the main, reiterations of positions already debated by the Italians. In the preface to his translation of the Furioso, in fact, Harington claims that poetry has moral edification as one of its principal functions:

...this I say of it, and I think I say truly, that there are many good lessons to be learned out of it, many good examples to be found in it, many good uses to be had of it, and that therefore it is not, nor ought not to be despised by the wiser sort, but to be studied and imployed, as was intended by the first writers and devisers thereof, which is to soften and polish the hard and rough dispositions of men, and make them capable of vertue and good discipline.¹⁹

But the charge is often brought against the Furioso that it contains scurrilous tales. Harington's reply, though it provides evidence that a fair amount of Ariostan tongue-in-cheekness has rubbed off on him in the course of translating the Italian poet, is yet a typical defense of these loose episodes: it may be, he says, that although Ariosto -

write Christianly in some places, yet in other some, he is too lascivious, as in that of the bawdy Friar, in Alcina and Rogeros copulation, in Anselmus his Giptian, in Richardetto his metamorphosis, in mine hosts tale of Astolfo and some few places beside; alas if this be a fault, pardon him this one fault; though I doubt too many of you (gentle readers) will be to exorable in this point, yea me thinks I see some of you searching already for these places of the booke, and you are half offended that I have not made some directions that you might finde out and read them immediately. But I beseech you stay awhile, and as the Italian saith Pian piano, fayre and softly, and take this caveat with you, to read them as my author ment them, to breed detestation and not delectation....²⁰

(Poetry was not, quite evidently, always read for its morally edifying properties!) If Ariosto is at fault, continues Harington, then Virgil "committed the same fault, in Dido and Aeneas intertainment." And who is prepared to find fault in Virgil? On the question of unity Harington does not have much to say. For him, as we would expect, the episodic character of the Furioso and Ariosto's abrupt methods of transition are really more deserving of praise than of blame: here he accepts the variety-in-unity formula already developed by the Italian critics.

Sidney's defense of poetry is fundamentally the same as those already considered. For him too the essential purpose of poetry is to teach through delight, a position exactly like that set forth in the opening octaves of Tasso's Liberata:

Così al'egro fanciul porgiamo aspersi
di soavi licor gli orli del vaso;
succhi amari ingannato intanto ei beve
e dall'inganno suo vita riceve. (GL I.3)

(Thus do we offer to the ailing youth the rim of the cup, sprinkled with sweet liquor; meanwhile, deceived, he drinks bitter juices, and from this deception he gains life.)

The poet is better equipped than either the historian or the philosopher to move the reader to virtue, since the former deals with what is rather than with what should be, while the latter makes his teaching too obscure for most people. The poet instead -

...begins not with obscure definitions which must blur the margin with interpretations and load the memory with doubtfulness, but he comes to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with or prepared for the well-enchancing skill of music. And with a tale, forsooth, he comes unto you, with a tale which holds children from play and old men from the chimney corner, and, pretending no more, does intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue, even as the child is often brought, etc. (as in Tasso, above).²¹

Let us note the analogous position of Spenser:

The generall end therefore of all the booke (he tells us) is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline: Which for that I conceived should be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historical fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter, then for profite of the ensample....²²

The intended meaning of Spenser's, Sidney's, and Tasso's remarks is clear: unaware of what is happening to him, the reader is drawn toward virtue -- in each case the emphasis is on unconscious mental processes. Their remarks, however,

are double-edged: when we read poetic passages such as that of the Bower of Bliss, what is it that has a greater hold on our unconscious, the considerable charms of Acrasia or the explicit reminder that she is sinful? Sidney, Tasso and Spenser overlook the possibility that the reader may go no further than the enjoyment of the soave licor.

Let me try to summarize what appear to be the dominant concerns of the critics looked at. Of poetry in general the question prevailing -- and the one on which there is unanimity of opinion -- is that of its instructive nature: its basic function is to produce in the reader, or listener, a disposition towards virtuous conduct. Poetry can -- and should -- delight at the same time that it instructs, but the delight is not to be an end in itself, except insofar as the delight derives from a contemplation of the 'unity' of the work, of the proper (i.e. artistic) arrangement of the parts to the whole. In dealing with particular genres of poetry, e.g. the epic or the romance, -- or even more specifically, Ariosto's or Tasso's work -- the question of unity becomes of paramount importance, so much so that a work can stand or fall on this question. The authority of the ancients is seldom ignored or rejected. But there is a great deal of effort to interpret the formulations of the ancients in the light of emerging genres or emerging conceptions of reality itself. The belief that poetry, especially epic poetry, should adhere to a set of well specified rules reflects a belief in a

nature, or reality, which is also definable in terms of a set of laws equally well specified, since this, after all, is what the concept of poetic mimesis implies. But the belief in a fixed order of things is no longer upheld universally. The concept of mimesis itself undergoes modifications in accordance with changing views on the nature of reality. Certainly, the belief in the immutability of the laws governing nature and the imitative arts receives a de facto refutation in the poetry of Ariosto. The Furioso not only does not fit into any known category, but it also represents nature and human beings as unpredictable entities, not subject to specified laws at all. This is what made it so hard for so many people (for whom a concept such as that of the 'chain of being' was more than a quaint survival from scholasticism) to accept the idiosyncrasies of the Orlando Furioso. In our study of Spenser we shall see an imagination which attempts, perhaps, to synthesize or harmonize the two conflicting positions. And this, possibly, is the significance of his claim that he will 'overgo Ariosto'.

Evident in the foregoing remarks is the implication that there is a greater concern with the moral function of poetry in Tasso's and Spenser's time than in Ariosto's. What accounts for this? It is a simple thing

to say that in the period preceding the Counter-Reformation movement, and especially in 15th-Century Italy, the prevailing atmosphere was one of moral laxity, the Church and the laity being far more concerned with sensual enjoyment than with living according to paradigms of holiness or virtue. It is easy, true, to find individual examples of loose living in 15th-Century Italy; but, after all, even writers like Will Durant, who obviously feel that the 'life impulse' was stronger in that period of the Italian Renaissance than in the period which followed it, -- even Durant has to admit that, apparently, it is as easy to find instances of lawless individuals after the Council of Trent as before it.²³ Besides, it is not entirely accurate to say that the concern with providing patterns of good behaviour was purely a product of the post-Tridentine period. Model examples such as that of Vittorino da Feltre, not to speak of writers like Castiglione, whose treatises on the moral education of the young antedated and perhaps served as models for the works of later writers like Roger Ascham, are not hard to find. And even the imputation, often made, that the Counter-Reformation spelled the decline of the artistic spirit of the Italians is not easily upheld, as A. G. Dickens points out:

Admittedly, the growing limitations upon political liberty and freedom of expression blighted Italian

political and social thought. But in music, architecture and painting, the most illustrious figures abounded in great numbers throughout the period of Counter-Reformation, most numerous in Rome itself. That period also coincided with many masterpieces of Spanish literature...²⁴

This writer admits, however, that in the aftermath of Trent there were growing restrictions on 'freedom of expression'. Although he does not mention literature specifically in Italy, it is difficult to see how these limitations (which must have been keenly felt in the period following the accession of Paul IV and the establishment of the first Index of prohibited books in 1559, which included, for instance, all of Erasmus' works)²⁵ can have left literary figures unaffected. Painters and sculptors themselves (notwithstanding the fact that many of them -- e.g. Michelangelo -- were still at work producing masterpieces) were deeply affected by them.

Consider, for example, Bernini's celebrated 'Ecstasy of St. Theresa' in the Church of S. Maria della Vittoria in Rome. (See Plate 1) The 'Ecstasy', which we will have occasion to refer to many times in this essay, was produced when the spirit of the Counter-Reformation was well established: mid-17th-Century. It seems clear to me that Bernini employs a pagan motif (see the ensuing discussion of Panofsky) to convey the notion of sublime or mystical love, as conceived in Christian terms -- i.e. a divine ecstasy. Remove the seraph's wings, free Theresa's hair from the cowl which encloses it, and what we have here is

an unmistakable portrayal of sexual rapture. The sexual abandon of the reclining figure becomes thus little distinguishable from the surrender of, for example, Mars in Botticelli's 'Mars and Venus'. (See Plate 2) The difference between these two works is indicative of the distance separating the pre- from the post-Tridentine artist. The artistic impulse in both men, evidently, is the same; yet the purposes to which the impulse is directed are markedly different. Botticelli is intent in pointing out the power of love to subdue the God of War, i.e. that love can conquer strife. In the process he vividly renders the idea of the enjoyment derivative from the relinquishing of the higher faculties to the appetitive ones. Bernini makes use of substantially the same motif, but adapts it in such a way that what it is supposed to convey is the pleasure that comes from a love of a far different nature -- altogether sexless. The point I am trying to establish here will be of crucial significance in my discussion of the Bower. Hence it will not be misplaced energy to try to clarify it a bit.

In his introduction to Studies in Iconology, the art historian Panofsky illustrates what he believes to be the difference between the Medieval and the Renaissance mind by analysing the differences between two art works, a Medieval rendering of the "Rape of Europa" and a rendering



72. THE ECSTASY OF ST. TERESA. Central group of Plate 71.

Reproduced from Rudolf Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, Phaidon Press, London (1966).

PLATE 1



75. HEAD OF ST. TERESA. Detail of Plate 72

Reproduced from Rudolf Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, Phaidon Press, London (1966)

PLATE 1(a)



74. Botticelli: Mars and Venus. National Gallery, London



75. Piero di Cosimo: Mars and Venus. Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem

Reproduced from Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, Norton Library, New York (1968).



76. Veronese: Mars and Venus (*Ennèrga* submissive to *Cariad*).
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



of the "Rape" by Duerer, the latter possibly inspired by a poem by Poliziano. (See Plate 3) This is what he has to say about these two works:

In the medieval miniature Europa, clad in late medieval costume, sits on her inoffensive little bull like a young lady taking a morning ride, and her companions, similarly attired, form a little group of spectators. Of course, they are meant to be anguished and cry out, but they don't, or at least they don't convince us that they do, because the illuminator was neither able nor inclined to visualize animal passions. In Duerer's drawing, 'the literary source of Duerer's Rape of Europa is no longer a prosy text where the bull was compared to Christ, and Europa to the human soul, but the pagan verses of Ovid himself as revived in two delightful stanzas by Angelo Poliziano.²⁶

The Medieval miniature, with its utter lack of detail which might suggest an interest in the physical, is primarily if not wholly meant as allegory. The purely abstract interest is reflected in the ethereality of the image (what Panofsky calls the 'motif'). Duerer's conception of the Rape, nourished by a renewed interest in a nature understood as genuine reality (the affinity to Poliziano and hence to pagan antiquity has to be taken as indicative of this), gives new meaning to the content of the work. Indeed, what takes place here is a sort of reversal of values. What is felt to be truly significant in Duerer's interpretation is almost the virtual opposite of what is significant in the Medieval work.

As in the miniature, in Bernini's work also the pagan motif (the cupid wounding the reclining lady with the dart of love) is put to the service of the Christian ideology. Unlike the aerial quality of the miniature, however, the voluptuousness of every element of the 'Ecstasy' suggests very strongly that the motif itself remains of the highest importance to the sculptor. In other words, even in this period of intense Counter-Renaissance atmosphere, the spirit of the Renaissance lives on. As revealed in this work, Bernini's psyche is drawn more toward the pagan than toward the Christian-spiritual. The latter, however, makes heavy demands upon this essentially pagan genius and forces him to adapt to them. Conflict? No doubt. The heated quarrel over Ariosto and Tasso and the heavy emphasis on the moral function of poetry results, in large part, from this generally felt conflict. This is, we may find, the same sort of conflict operative in Spenser and Tasso which sets them apart both from each other and from Ariosto himself.

Ma le parole mie parervi troppe
Potriano omai, se piu' se ne dicesse:
Si' che finiro' il Canto....(OF XXVIII.)

2. The Bower Approached

The Orlando Furioso has often been thought to be a disorganized sort of work, consisting of countless episodes so loosely interwoven that the connective link between each other and the whole is not always clear. To get an idea of the complex tapestry of the Furioso, and how much The Faerie Queene owes to it, let us consider a plot summary of the first half dozen cantos. The poem opens with the narrator's promise that he will sing of 'ladies, knights, arms, loves, courteous deeds and daring acts':

Le donne, i cavallier, l'arme, gli amori,
Le cortesie, l'audaci imprese io canto...²⁷

In what follows the promise is abundantly kept. Throughout the poem the background for the chivalrous -- and not so chivalrous -- deeds of these knights and ladies (the 'romance' element) is provided by the wars between Charlemagne and the forces of the Infidels (the 'epic' element). Orlando is supposed to be the greatest of the Christian heroes, and of him we are promised "cosa non detta in prosa mai, ne in rima" ('things never told in prose or verse'). The motive force for the initial cantos is provided by the bewitching figure of Angelica. Taken prisoner by the Christians following the killing of her father, she causes numerous knights, both in

the Christian and in the African camps, to become deeply infatuated with her. As the action begins the emperor, to put an end to the increasing dissension among the Christian knights, especially of Rinaldo and Orlando, promises Angelica to the knight who will kill the largest number of Infidels on that day. But on that same day the Christians suffer a severe setback, and in the rout which follows Angelica gets on a horse and flees -- by far Angelica's most pronounced characteristic. In the woods she runs into Rinaldo, who is as madly in love with her through having drunk of the love potion as she is full of aversion for him through having drunk of the potion which produces the contrary effect. Alarmed she flees, encounters Ferrau (a pagan knight, also in love with her) and seeks his protection against Rinaldo. The two knights fight, and she flees. Under these circumstances they see the futility of continuing the fight; they jump on one horse and gallop after her together -- which provokes the narrator's celebrated exclamation:

Oh gran bontà dei cavallieri antiqui.... (OF I.22)²⁸

Angelica meanwhile meets Sacripante, another one of her hopefuls. A duel follows between him and an approaching knight, who turns out to be Bradamante. The latter downs him effortlessly, and continues on her way, leaving the astounded Sacripante behind to nurse his wounds and injured

honour. Another knight approaches who reveals the mysterious adversary's true (female) nature, thus aggravating Sacripante's already sizable humiliation. They see Rinaldo approaching, and Angelica urges Sacripante to flee. All this breathless action is compressed in the first canto. In the next, another fight ensues, and Angelica flees anew. She meets a hermit, who conjures up a messenger from the pages of his magical book. The latter is sent to tell the warring knights that they fight in vain, since Angelica is on her way to Paris with Orlando. A trustful soul, Rinaldo returns to Paris, and is immediately dispatched to England by the emperor to seek help. Meanwhile Bradamante (who all the while is searching for her lover, Ruggero) meets Pinabello, who tells her that his lady has been kidnapped by a knight riding a winged horse and imprisoned by him in an enchanted castle, together with Ruggero and a company of other knights, who had tried to rescue the lady from the enchanter (Atlante). Bradamante sets out to rescue Ruggero but, betrayed by Pinabello, falls into a dark pit. In the next canto (3) she encounters Melissa, who leads her to the tomb of Merlin, who predicts to her all the progeny that is to issue from her union with Ruggero, ending with the present Estense rulers. Melissa then leads Bradamante to the castle of Atlante. On the way she secures from Brunello the magic ring which will neutral-

ize Atlante's enchantment. Brunello, one of Agramante's lieutenants, had been given the ring by the African king for the similar purpose of freeing Ruggero from Atlante's hold and bringing him back to his lord. In Canto 4 Bradamante fights and overcomes Atlante. She destroys the castle, freeing Ruggero and the other knights. The lovers meet briefly, but Ruggero is soon kidnapped by the Hippogriff (a winged horse), who flies up into the air with him on its back. Bradamante sadly resumes her search. Rinaldo meanwhile lands in Scotland and hears that Ginevra, the king's daughter, will be put to death unless a knight intervenes (by set combat) to prove her innocence. Rinaldo hurries to her defense, and on the way meets Dalinda (Ginevra's maid) who, in the next canto, recounts to him how her lady has fallen into her predicament. Canto 5 is taken up almost entirely by the tale of Ginevra, Polinesso and Ariodante (later to be appropriated almost in its entirety by Spenser). The sixth canto brings us back to Ruggero, who has been brought by the Hippogriff to the island of the enchantress Alcina. He hears the voice of Astolfo, imprisoned in a myrtle bush. The latter tells Ruggero the genesis of his transformation, and warns him that a similar fate lies in store for him, unless he takes heed and flees to Logistilla's abode. Ruggero, however, falls victim to Alcina's wiles: he is led in the opposite

direction to the court of this enchantress. The description of Ruggero's sojourn at Alcina's court is the subject of the next canto (7). Meanwhile Bradamante seeks again Melissa's help in finding Ruggero. The latter goes to Alcina's palace, and thanks to the magic ring frees Ruggero, who now seeks out Logistilla's virtuous house...And so on, through a further forty cantos.

What emerges from this partial synopsis of the poem, clearly, is a convoluted account of what we have been promised in the opening lines of the poem. Is there a connecting thread in all this seeming maze? No, say many critics. And yet, even though Orlando the titular hero of the poem will not make his appearance for at least another canto, we are already beginning to see that these numerous episodes and characters are woven, albeit loosely, around the exploits of Bradamante and her elusive lover. I close this summary by pointing out merely that the hide and seek character of the Ruggero/Bradamante story continues until the very end of the poem, which closes with the defeat of Rodomonte and the lovers' marriage -- a conclusion which indicates the close connection between the epic struggle and the romance happenings of the poem. As it stands the outline may serve to suggest the affinity existing between Ariosto's poem and The Faerie Queene.

Books III and IV of The Faerie Queene are reputedly the ones which bear the greatest similarity to the

Orlando Furioso. Partly because the Ariostan elements in those books are well known, but mainly because in this paper I am largely concerned with the earlier books of Spenser's Poem, I will limit my observations for the moment to those aspects of Book I which also bear resemblance to the Furioso. I am for the moment merely concerned with establishing the fact that Spenser makes a much more extensive use of Ariostan motifs than might be inferred from the later books.²⁹

On the whole it can be said that Book I, the allegory of Holiness, contains the fewest ties with the Furioso, the latter being little concerned with the sort of spiritual quest which forms the essence of the legend of Redcross. Book I, also, contains a continuity in the narrative structure which is far from being similar to the tacking nature of the Furioso. Nevertheless, Book I does contain figures and episodes which bring to mind counterparts in the Furioso. Let us recollect, for example, Archimago, who parts Redcross from Una, and think of the hermit in the Furioso who uses his magical arts to keep (for motives as selfish as those of Archimago) Rinaldo from finding Angelica. How much also does the figure of Archimago draw inspiration from that of the enchanter Atlante, whose function, in the main, is to keep Bradamante and Ruggero apart? The many dangers of Una, too, may owe some-

thing to those of the flighty Angelica, as Florimell's will in later books. There are then the adventures of Ruggero and Bradamante, and their eventual union at the moment of the defeat of the enemy -- a parallel to the vicissitudes of Redcross and Una, and their union following the vanquishing of the dragon. Finally there is the Fradubio episode which parallels the Astolfo episode on the island of Alcina. But more of this later.

Needless to say, the purposes to which Spenser puts the material borrowed or adapted from Ariosto, or merely hinted at by him, are very different, sometimes quite opposed, to those evinced in the Furioso. Nevertheless, the choice of similar motifs is itself significant. Let me recall my remarks in connection with Bernini's sculpture of St. Theresa. There we find that ideologically Bernini expresses a concept which is diametrically opposed to the ideational content of Botticelli's 'Mars and Venus'. The employment of like motifs by both Botticelli and Bernini, however, indicates that there is a strong degree of psychological kinship between them. The character of these motifs, considered above, reveals the nature of this affinity. May I advance the suggestion that the psychological affinity goes even deeper in the case of artists who not only use like motifs, but are linked by conscious imitation, as is the case with Spenser and Ariosto, and, as we shall

see, Spenser and Tasso?

At the risk of being prolix I wish to consider another example of direct imitation. I have in mind Verdi's adaptation in his opera Falstaff of Shakespeare's Henry IV. Verdi's opera draws its strength from the compelling presentation of Shakespeare's voluminous rogue. The motif of the irrepressible knight, whose zest for living is as immense as his girth, is the same in both the English poet and the Italian composer. Both artists are quite obviously drawn to this figure. The handling of the motif, however, is ultimately quite different in the two works. Shakespeare's Falstaff is allowed to exercise his influence upon the youthful Hal (and upon the audience) only up to a point. The knight is eventually sacrificed to the forces of order. This happens especially in the second part of Henry IV, which ends with the humbling of Falstaff. The presentation of the fat knight is so powerful that we are not far wrong, I think, to assume that Shakespeare's deepest sympathies are directed toward him. Yet Falstaff is eventually sacrificed. Something happens between the writing of 1 Henry IV and of 2 Henry IV which seems to alter Shakespeare's position with respect to the creation which is the heart-beat of the earlier play. Those touches which endeared Falstaff to us in Part I, despite his obvious faults, are fewer in Part 2, having been replaced by an accentuation of Falstaff's

repulsive qualities. Why this happens is a moot point indeed. Perhaps Shakespeare felt he had given too much of himself in Part I, and wanted to correct the impression that deep down he was swayed by the qualities embodied in Falstaff. Just as likely the change was brought about by the historical situation which tended to promote, now the harmonious coincidence of opposites (a fusion of those elements constituting the personalities of Falstaff and Hal), now the collapse, or disintegration of those same tendencies (a separation of the Falstaff-Hal elements). In any case, what we see in Part 2 is a slow erosion of those attractive qualities of the Falstaff-motif that will render it compatible with the forces of political virtù: the dimming of Falstaff could very well be due to the recognition that the well-ordering of a society is only possible through the curbing of those powerful urges which characterize him. Verdi chooses the Falstaff motif because of a deep attraction to its intrinsic qualities.* He is little concerned with speculations as to the possible effects that could result from a freeing of the Falstaff element in society. Perhaps it is the romantic in him which, in his venerable old age (he was in his 80s when he composed the opera), re-awakens, and refuses to admit constraints. The result is a work of less dramatic intensity than Shakespeare's; but it is filled with the same

* I am assuming here that both Verdi and his librettist, Arrigo Boito, were equally attracted by the motif.

exultation in the unrepressed felt by the original creator of the motif, before the onset of conflicting claims.

Returning to Spenser, having determined that he uses motifs drawn from Ariosto (and from Tasso, as we shall also see) we can confidently assume that there is a considerable overlapping in the psychic make-up of these poets. It remains for us to look closely at a motif used extensively by each of these writers, to discover, we hope with some exactness, what brings them together and in what ways they retain their individual characteristics. We shall do this in connection with our study of the Bower, to which we now turn.

In the Orlando Furioso and the Gerusalemme Liberata, Alcina, Armida, and the insidious charms of their bowers are of key importance: they stand in the way of the hero's accomplishment of his ideal. Strictly speaking, the Bower of Bliss is of central importance only in Book II of the FQ; however, various embodiments of this figure appear throughout Spenser's poem: Duessa, Busyrane, etc.-- each will be seen to contain Acrasia-characteristics; moreover, the Garden of Adonis bears strong resemblance to the Bower. For this reason, or reasons, the Lady and her Bower can be regarded as playing a key role equal to that in the Italian poems. In each of these poems the

motifs (i.e. the images associated with Alcina, Armida and Acrasia, and their respective bowers) are strikingly similar to one another: indeed, in the composition of his own bower Spenser makes extensive borrowings from the other poets. An analysis of these passages will reveal much about the psyches of which they are projections; it will reveal also the degree of spiritual affinity of the three poets. We shall later compare closely the imagery of the bowers. Let us first look into the function of the bowers in the structures of the poems.

The hero of Book II of the FQ, after a brief encounter with Redcross, meets the dying Amavia, from whose story Guyon learns that her husband has fallen victim of Acrasia, a witch figure who draws men to her bower, where

Her blisse is all in pleasure and delight,
Wherewith she makes her louers drunken mad....(II.1.52)

Whereupon, "on them she works her will to uses bad". In falling victim to Acrasia, Amavia's husband has thus been destroyed, while she herself dies as a result. Since Book II is to be read as a journey through terrain filled with the embodiments of those psychological forces opposed to a temperate state of the psyche, it is allegorically fitting that Amavia should die following the death of her husband: in yielding to 'lust' he naturally

destroys the 'chastity' which she supposedly embodies. This incident in Canto I exposes Guyon already to the objectified destructiveness that ensues from a mind ruled by concupiscence. The encounter allegorically signifies that Guyon, too, is susceptible to the power of lust. Indeed, since the overcoming of Acrasia is the object of his quest,³⁰ we know that falling prey to the concupiscible part of himself constitutes Guyon's greatest danger. In going through the various adventures of the book, Guyon is assailed by numerous embodiments of intemperance: he encounters and -- with more or less success -- overcomes Furor, Occasion, Cymochles, Phaedria, and others -- all representations of irascible or concupiscible forces. He is then shown by Arthur the temperate condition in the house of Alma (the human soul). But mere knowledge of this condition is not equivalent to being in possession of temperance. Hence his greatest temptation is reserved for his confrontation at the end of the book with Acrasia and the charms of her bower. After some hesitation he captures the witch-figure and destroys the bower, helped on by his faithful guide the Palmer, a representation of human reason.

In Ariosto, the events leading up to Alcina's island, the eventual destruction of her enchanted grounds and the freeing of all the knights held thrall by her --

either in human, animal, or vegetable metamorphoses -- has already been summarized above. What I want to stress at this point is that in the structure of the Furioso Alcina's abode -- and Alcina herself -- has a function similar to that of her counterpart in the FQ. In a narrow (but significant) sense, she has the function of ensuring that Ruggero should not go out to the wars. Were he to do so (and he does ultimately), he would find death at the hands of a traitorous Christian, as is predicted by the magician Atlante.³¹ In a larger sense Alcina has the following function. We have seen that Acrasia functions in the structure of Book II as a representation of the major obstacle in the path leading to virtuous conduct. In the Furioso also, Alcina -- understood as a concept encompassing not only the individual Alcina, but also all those other women in the poem who incline the heroes toward sub-rational pleasures -- no less than Acrasia, stands in the way of the attainment of the ideal objective. If the ideal to be achieved in Book II of the FQ is the temperate state, in the Furioso it is heroism as manifested in the epic struggle between the two warring ideologies, the Christian vs. the Moslem, or pagan. By inciting the appetitive faculties in the individual warriors (on both sides of the ideological fence -- e.g. Rinaldo, Orlando, Ruggero and Rodomonte), Alcina

keeps them from exercising their higher duties, the latter exercise necessitating a subordination of ego-impulses to the collective will. Let us note here that heroism is closely linked to the collective will. One becomes a hero only when one takes up the aspirations of the group. A hero can be thought of as the embodiment of the collective wish: for example, the wish to conquer the Pagan foe. Understood in this sense, heroism transcends conduct motivated purely by the appetites. In appealing to the hero's appetites, Alcina weakens his desire to uphold the group-wish, thus undercutting his heroism and increasing the dominance of his appetite. How successfully this obstacle will be overcome by Ruggero and the other knights will be seen below. This, however, is the basic function of Alcina in the Furioso.

In Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata, Armida and everything associated with her hold a function which is analogous to that of Alcina in the Furioso. Within the epic encounter of the Christian and the Saracen forces engaged in the struggle for the preservation or liberation of the Holy City, and closely interwoven with it, we have the numerous chivalrous-romantic adventures of the heroes and heroines: the loves, for example, of Tancredi and Clorinda, of Olindo and Sofronia, but above all of Rinaldo and Armida. The figure of Armida herself assumes major proportions within this tapestry. Her beauty gives her immense power, and numerous Christian soldiers flock to her, enthralled by

her charms. Among these is Rinaldo, the one Christian champion who can put a stop to the changing fortunes of war and turn them definitely in favour of the Christians. In the structure of the Liberata, therefore, Armida has this crucial function, that she can exercise her seductive powers to keep a kind of balance in the struggle of contending ideologies. As in Spenser and in Ariosto, she stands as the major obstacle in the way of the ideal here seen as Christian victory.

In their respective poems, then, Alcina, Armida, and Acrasia are each an enemy of the epic ideal, and among many other enemies, they are by far the hardest to overcome. Acrasia is associated with her counterparts in the Italian poems not only because of a close correspondence in structural function, but also -- and perhaps even more important -- because she is closely tied to them in terms of imagery. To see the close similarity of the motifs (the imagery) of the bowers ruled by these ladies, let us compare the following representative stanzas, in which is described the entrance to the bower.

In Spenser this is the 'paradise' which confronts Guyon and his squire:

There the most daintie Paradise on ground,
It selfe doth offer to his sober eye,
In which all pleasures plenteously abound,
And none does others happinesse enuye:
The painted flowres, the trees vpshooting hye,

The dales for shade, the hilles for breathing space,
The trembling groues, the Christall running by;
And that, which all faire workes doth most aggrace,
The art, which all that wrought, appeared in no place.

One would haue thought, (so cunningly, the rude,
And scorned parts were mingled with the fine,)
That nature had for wantonnesse ensude
Art, and that Art at nature did repine;
So striuing each th' other to vndermine,
Each did the others worke more beautifie;
So diff'ring both in willes, agreed in fine:
So all agreed through sweete diuersitie,
This Gardin to adorne with all varietie.

And in the midst of all, a fountaine stood,
Of richest substance, that on earth might bee,
So pure and shiny, that the siluer floor
Through euery channell running one might see;
Most goodly it with curious imagerie
Was ouer-wrought, and shapes of naked boyes,
Of which some seemd with liuely iollitee,
To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,
Whilest others did them selues embay in liquid ioyes.

And ouer all, of purest gold was spred,
A trayle of yuie in his natiue hew:
For the rich mettall was so coloured,
That wight, who did not well auis'd it vew,
Would surely deeme it to be yuie trew:
Low his lasciuious armes adown did creepe,
That themselues dipping in the siluer dew,
Their fleecy flowres they tenderly did steepe,
Which drops of Christall seemd for wantones to weepe.

Infinit streames continually did well
Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
The which into an ample lauer fell,
And shortly grew to so great quantitie,
That like a little lake it seemd to bee;
Whose depth exceeded not three cubits hight,
That through the waues one might the bottom see,
All pau'd beneath with Iaspar shining bright,
That seemd the fountaine in that sea did sayle vpright.

(FQ II.xii.58-62)

I shall reserve comment on this passage until we have looked
at Ariosto and Tasso. In the Liberata Carlo and Ubaldo

(who come to the rescue of Rinaldo and are therefore the counterparts of the Palmer) enter Armida's garden and to their eyes is offered a sight whose resemblance to that of Acrasia's bower can be seen at a glance:

Poi che lasciar gli avviluppati calli
In lieto aspetto il bel giardin s'aperse:
Acque stagnanti, mobili cristalli,
Fior vari e varie piante, erbe diverse,
Apriche collinette, ombrose valli,
Selve e spelonche in una vista offerse;
E quel che 'l bello e 'l caro accresce a l'opre,
L'arte che tutto fa, nulla si scopre.

Stimi (si misto il culto e' co'l negletto)
Sol naturali e gli ornamenti e i siti.
Di natura arte par, che per diletto
L'imitatrice sua scherzando imiti.
L'aura, non ch'altro, e' de la maga effetto,
L'aura che rende gli alberi fioriti:
Co' fiori eterni eterno il frutto dura,
E mentre spunta l'un, l'altro matura.

Nel tronco istesso e tra l'istessa foglia
Sovra il nascente fico invecchia il fico:
Pendono a un ramo, un con dorata spoglia,
L'altro con verde, il novo e 'l pomo antico:
Lussureggiante serpe alto e germoglia
La torta vite ov'e' piu l'orto aprico:
Qui l'uva ha in fiori acerba, e qui d'or l'have
E di pipopo, e già di nettar grave.

Vezzosi augelli infra le verdi fronde
Temprano a prova lascivette note.
Mormora l'aura, e fa le foglie e l'onde
Garrir, che variamente ella percote.
Quando taccion gli augelli alto risponde;
Quando cantan gli augei, piu lieve scote;
Sia caso od arte, or accompagna, ed ora
Alterna i versi lor la musica ora.

(GL XVI.9-12)

(As they left the entangled roads, the garden unfolded itself in joyful aspect: Still waters, moving crystals, various flowers and plants, sundry grasses, sunny hills, shaded dales, woods and caves were at once offered to their

sight. And that which enhances the beauty and preciousness of the work, art, which makes all, is nowhere to be seen.

One would deem -- so mixed is the tilled with the uncared-for -- that ornaments and sites are solely natural. It seems nature's art that, to amuse herself, imitates in jest her imitator. The air, and all else besides, is effect of the enchantress -- the air, which makes the trees to blossom; with never-dying flowers the fruits endure eternally, and as the one buds, the other ripens.

In the selfsame tree, amid the same leaves, the fig-tree ages over the sprouting one; suspended from the same branch, one with golden peel, the other with green, is the new apple and the old. The twisted vine winds upwards, shooting luxuriantly where the sun shines most; here its grapes are still unripe, there it bears them golden and fiery and swollen with nectar.

Delightful birds modulate playfully their wanton notes in the green foliage. The air murmurs, causing the waves and the leaves to warble with its variable beat: when the birds hush, it answers loudly; when the birds sing, it strikes more gently. Be it chance or art, the musical breeze now accompanies, now replaces their verses.)³²

Spenser evidently owes much to these stanzas; indeed, his portrayal of the Bower owes more to Tasso than to Ariosto, as we shall see. For the present let us note that the voluptuousness of the places described in the passages just given is a powerful element also of the vision which opens before Ruggero's admiring eyes:

L'adornamento che s'aggira sopra
La bella porta, e sporge un poco avante,
Parte non ha che tutta non si copra
De le piu' rare gemme di Levante.
Da quattro parti si riposa sopra
Grosse colonne di integro diamante.
O vero o falso ch'all'occhio risponda,
Non e' cosa piu' bella o piu' gioconda.

Su per la soglia e fuor per le colonne
Corron scherzando lascive donzelle,
Che se i rispetti debiti alle donne
Servasser piu', sarian forse piu' belle.

Tutte vestite eran di verdi gonne,
E coronate di frondi novelle.
Queste, con molte offerte e con buon viso,
Ruggier fecero entrar nel paradiso:

Che si puo ben cosi nomar quel loco,
Ove mi credo che nascesse Amore.
Non vi si sta se non in danza e in giuoco,
E tutte in festa vi si spendon l'ore:
Pensier canuto ne molto ne poco
Si puo quivi albergare in alcun core:
Non entra quivi disagio ne inopia,
Ma vi sta ognor col corno pien la Copia.

Qui, dove con serena e lieta fronte
Par ch'ognor rida il grazioso Aprile,
Gioveni e donne son: qual presso a fonte
Canta con dolce e diletto stile;
Qual d'un arbore all'ombra, e qual d'un monte,
O gioca o danza o fa cosa non vile;
E qual, lungi dagli altri, a un suo fedele
Discopre l'amorose sue querele.

Per le cime dei pini e degli allori,
Degli alti faggi e degli'irsuti abeti.
Volan scherzando i pargoletti Amori;
Di lor vittorie altri godendo lieti,
Altri pigliando a saettare i cori.
La mira quindi, altri tendendo reti:
Chi temprà dardi ad un ruscel piu basso,
E chi gli aguzza ad un volubil sasso. (OF VI. 71-75)³³

(The adornment placed over the beautiful portal, which juts forward a little, does not have a single part that is not wholly covered by the most rare gems from the Orient. On the four corners it rests on great columns of pure diamond. Whether it appears true or false to the eye, there is no thing more beautiful or more pleasant.

On the threshold and around the columns wanton damsels play, who would, perhaps, be more fair if they were more lady-like. They all wore green gowns and were crowned with new leaves. With repeated offers and pleasant countenance, the damsels welcomed Ruggiero in this paradise.

For so this place may well be called, where I believe Love was born, and no one dwells if not in dance and play, and all in merriment are spent the hours. No hoary thought, great or small, may here dwell in any heart. Here discomfort or want does not enter, but Plenty with her horn is ever present.

Here, where with serene and joyful brow the gracious April always seems to smile, are gathered youths and ladies: some sing around a spring with sweet and delightful style; some in the shade of one tree, some of another, play and dance engaging in nothing low; and some, far from the others, disclose to some loyal friend their amorous complaints.

On the tops of the pine and laurel trees, of the tall beeches and shaggy firs playful Cupids fly; some joying in their victories, others preparing to shoot hearts, others tending nets: some temper darts by a stream below, and some whet them on a voluble stone.)

Let us now consider what are some of the most outstanding elements in these passages. In Ariosto, except for the portal leading to the bower, nature appears relatively unadorned. The paradise-on-earth motif is emphasized: no cares, eternal springtime. Youths and maidens are engaged in merry and amorous activities. The playful cupids add to the idea of an almost innocent sort of enjoyment afforded by the bower -- innocent in the sense of not receiving any serious hint of moral censure by the narrator, as is, instead, the case with Spenser's cupids. In Tasso there is an emphasis on the interplay of Art and Nature, each trying to imitate the other. There is also a significant use of plants and fruits which have sexual suggestiveness (figs, apples, grapes). There is, moreover, a strong emphasis on the harmony of all constitutive elements, though the conceits are perhaps strained just a little too much, as is his tortuous syntax -- points which we may find to be quite significant later on. The whole, at any rate,

produces a palpable atmosphere of voluptuousness. In Spenser also we have the idea of the interplay of nature and art. In fact, there is an almost literal borrowing here from Tasso. The difference seems to be that while in Tasso art and nature imitate each other, in Spenser each strives to outdo the other, the contention resulting in an even more seductive whole. In Spenser, moreover, there is a stress (barely hinted in Ariosto and not easily discernible in Tasso) on the negative charms of the Bower, due to its artificiality, its deceptiveness. As in Ariosto, but not in Tasso, Spenser makes use of the cupids, with, however, a stress on their lasciviousness (note: 'wanton toys', 'liquid ioyes', etc.) rather than on playfulness, as in Ariosto. Clearly, then, there is in this case a greater affinity between Spenser and Tasso than there is between Spenser and Ariosto. The reason seems to be Tasso's emphasis on the interplay of nature and art (which Spenser uses to suggest the idea of deceptiveness), and Tasso's languor and emphasis on 'lust' (not so pronounced in Ariosto) which Spenser uses to imbue his Bower with a greater suggestion of lasciviousness.

Do these passages reveal something fundamental about the psyches of these poets? We have already seen that the pleasures afforded by these bowers keep the central hero of each of the poems from finding easy passage to his ideal -- or, more accurately, to what the stories lay claim

to as being the ideal. Obviously, the very fact that the bowers impede the progress of the heroes implies a conflict between their deepest ego wishes (their instinctual leanings) and the demands of a transcendent ideal. But is the conflict felt by all the poets, or at least equally felt? The lyricism of Tasso's poetry (quite pronounced in the above passage) suggests that the pull which draws Rinaldo to the bower so irresistibly is a pull deeply felt by the poet himself. This certainly suggests that there is a conflict in Tasso which, if the continued intensity of the lyricism within the poem is any evidence, is never fully resolved. But the passionate lyricism that characterises Tasso's poetry is absent from much of Ariosto's poem, and is not very marked in the passage quoted. It is true that in the structure of the poem Alcina's bower is recognized as being 'negative'. Yet in the passage quoted (and elsewhere, as we shall see) there is very little evidence that Ariosto regards the charms of the garden of Alcina as evil in themselves. This suggests, rather than conflict, a kind of serene acceptance of one type of experience as of the other. The fact that in the quoted passage he seems to paint a picture of something that is intrinsically pleasurable, stopping at that, seems to give weight to this view.

Is Spenser as torn by conflict as is Tasso, or are we to see in him someone who has successfully resolved

his conflict in favour of the ideal, and is now painlessly capable of casting aside those elements which have so powerful a hold on Tasso, recognizing that they are mere 'deceptions', as the quoted passage seems to suggest? If Spenser is conflict-free, do we see in him the same sort of serenity that seems to characterize Ariosto? Or does he use Ariosto simply because in him he finds an inexhaustible source of stories and complications that he can use to advance his plot? We need to remember the observations made above in connection with Bernini's work and with the relationship found to exist between Shakespeare and Verdi. In the latter case we found that Verdi does not use Shakespeare just to avoid the trouble of coming up with a plot of his own. He uses him because of a deep attraction he feels for a central aspect of his work. And Bernini, I suggested, uses an essentially pagan motif to represent a Christian concept for the likely reason that his imagination is fired by the intrinsic qualities of the motif itself. If the same is true of Spenser, then the motivation for his use of Ariosto goes far deeper than the mere utilization of plot material. The same will be true of his use of Tasso. It is the purpose of the rest of this paper to attempt to answer these questions. We may return to these passages to find that they are revelatory of what lies deepest in each of these poet's psyches. What I want to do now is consider at

length another crucial aspect of the bowers: the ruling
Ladies themselves. But --

...non piu' di questo Canto;
Ch'io son gia' rauco, e vo posarmi alquanto.
(OF XIV)

3. The Lady and Her Sport

The ladies -- Armida, Alcina, Acrasia -- with whom we shall henceforth be largely concerned, all possess the power either to transform men into objects (animals, plants, springs, etc.) or to imprison them in these objects. We shall consider below the implications of these differences. For now let us simply accept the fact that each of these enchantresses is capable of exercising faculties evocative of those of the Homeric Circe. The myth of Circe occupies a pivotal position in the major works of Ariosto, Spenser, and Tasso: I propose, therefore, to study how the myth is employed by these writers and to point out, where possible, differences in attitude that can be gleaned from its individual interpretations. I shall look at other writers in passing, but only so that Spenser, Ariosto, and Tasso, can be placed within a more readily understandable framework.

(a) Genesis of the Motif: Homer

Let us begin with a look at the Odyssey, which may be the ultimate source of the myth for the writers we are considering. Of course, if we accept the views of Jung, the real genesis of this or any other myth is to be found elsewhere than in the pages of Homer. It does not simply come out of nothing and leap into the pages of these writers, nor does it find its way into the pages of The Faerie Queene

simply because Spenser's model(s) used it. Rather, the myth may appear in each of these writers because it has been there, in their unconscious minds, since time immemorial, needing only a suitable historical condition for its emergence into their conscious minds.^{33a}

We learn from Robert Graves that the myth has deep roots in Middle Eastern mythology:

Circe, 'daughter of Hecate' was the Goddess of Aea ('wailing'), a sepulchral island in the northern Adriatic. Her name means 'she falcon', the falcon being a bird of omen, and is also connected with circos, a circle, from the circling of falcons and from the use of the magic circle in enchantment; the word is onomatopoeic, the cry of the falcon being 'circ-circ.' She was said to turn men into swine, lions and wolves, and the children of Circe are probably women dressed as sows participating in a full-moon festival held in her honour and in that of Dionysus. Herodotus describes this ritual as common to Greek and Egyptian practice. At the Persian orgies of Mithras, which had a common origin with that of Demeter and in which a bull was sacrificed and eaten raw, the men celebrants were called Leontes (lions) and the women celebrants Hyaenae (sows). Possibly lion-men also took part in this kolabros as children of Circe.³⁴

Through Hecate, her mother, Circe is associated with night or death, but also with rebirth. Through her, Circe is associated with one aspect of what Graves calls the 'White Goddess', or the Triple Goddess; i.e. Goddess of Sky, Earth, and Underworld.³⁵

As Goddess of the Underworld she was concerned with Birth, Procreation and Death. As Goddess of the Earth she was concerned with the three seasons of

Spring, Summer and Winter: she animated trees and plants and all living creatures. As Goddess of the Sky she was the Moon. This explains why from a triad she was so often enlarged to an ennead. But it must never be forgotten that the Triple Goddess, as worshipped for example at Stymphalus, was a personification of primitive woman -- woman the creatress and destructress.³⁶

It is, perhaps, this last quality -- from which it is hard to separate the forces of sexuality -- that is so catching to the Renaissance imagination: creation and destruction, the power to do and to undo -- a quality which characterises not only the Homeric Circe, but also the central witch-figure in Spenser, Ariosto, and Tasso.

Allowing that the myth may have had a more or less amorphous existence in the minds of these writers, it is possible that just as its emergence in Ariosto may have been triggered by mention of it in Boiardo's Innamorato, so its passage from Spenser's unconscious to his conscious mind -- and hence to the pages of his masterwork -- may have been facilitated considerably by his reading of Ariosto, the latter acting as a catalyst. We shall consider some concrete evidence of this below. Let me now return to Homer.

Odysseus and his men come to the island of Aiaia, ruled by the goddess 'Circe of the lovely hair'.³⁷ Circe, 'singing in a sweet voice as she went up and down a great design on a loom' (which suggests creative rather than destructive powers), entices a number of 'Odysseus' men inside

her palace.

She brought them inside and seated them on chairs and benches, and mixed them a potion, with barley and cheese and pale honey added to Pramnian wine, but put into the mixture malignant drugs, to make them forgetful of their own country. When she had given them this and they had drunk it down, next thing she struck them with her wand and drove them into her pig pens, and they took the look of pigs, but the minds within them stayed as they had been before.³⁸

Circe later tries the same trick on Odysseus, but he, having drunk a neutralizing potion given him by Hermes, is able to withstand her power. He then agrees to go to bed with her, but not before he has extracted from her a promise that she devises no other 'evil hurt' against him.³⁹ If we read this episode as meaning that yielding to the sensual charms of Circe implies giving up one's rationality, and hence one's essential humanity, we immediately run into trouble, for, strictly speaking, this is not what happens. Though the men are turned into pigs, the minds within them remain what they were. Also, Odysseus, though he does not allow himself to be overcome by Circe, is certainly not averse to jumping into bed with her. He clearly has it both ways (which reveals something significant about pagan mentality): he obtains her oath and then says, rather pleased with himself, that he mounted the 'surpassingly beautiful bed of Circe.'⁴⁰ Unlike his own men, he does not succumb, and he is even able to get her to restore them to their former shapes. The essence of Circe's power seems to be that of imprisoning

the minds of men in the bodies of animals -- that is, of limiting the power of man's will through feminine seduction. However, the episode easily suggests the idea of complete metamorphosis of human into object; and it is very possible that this is the way it was read by the Renaissance poets we are studying. In any case, we have here the core of the myth which was later to appear under widely different guises in the writings of these men.

(b) From Virgil to Spenser: Changing Patterns

In Virgil we have no Circe myth proper, but we do have a situation analogous to the Fradubio episode in Book I of The Faerie Queene, to be further discussed below. Spenser is at least partly indebted to Virgil; the latter should, therefore, be looked at briefly here. In Book III of The Aeneid Aeneas is about to offer a propitiatory sacrifice to Venus on the site where he intends to erect his city -- the same site in which the King of Thrace, driven by "accursed gold-lust" had murdered Polydorus and seized his gold.⁴¹ Here something remarkable happens which causes Aeneas to give second thoughts to his decision to build his city on this spot. In his words:

I was confronted by a horrible and astounding miracle. For from the first bush which I tried to break off at the roots from its soil, blood oozed in dark drops, fouling the earth with its spots. I felt a cold shudder run through me; my blood seemed to freeze with horror... And then -- can I dare to utter it, or should my lips be sealed? -- a piteous moan came

from the base of the mound and I heard a human voice answering me: 'Why, Aeneas, must you rend a poor sufferer? I am buried here. Wound me no more, and do not stain your righteous hands with sin...Ah, make haste to flee these coasts of avarice, this land of savagery!'... At this my mind was crushed by uncertainty and dread. The shock stilled me; my hair stood stiff and my throat was speechless...When I was no longer too paralyzed to move I chose some of my companions, leaders of Troy, including, of course, my father. I told them about the miracle and asked them what they thought. With one mind they insisted that we should at once leave this wicked land, break off all contact with a place which had desecrated the laws of hospitality, and let the winds bear our ships away....⁴²

Worthy of note here is the fact that Polydorus retains his reason in his new shape. It is not very clear whether we should regard the plight of Polydorus as a metamorphosis into a plant or merely as imprisonment within one. What is clear is that, although the plant contains Polydorus, yet the latter has not lost in the transformation (or imprisonment) his human reason. Merritt Y. Hughes finds that the episode of Fradubio in Book I of the F.Q. and this Aeneid episode, coincide on several points, most of all in the atmosphere of horror and moral earnestness which pervades both.⁴³ The two passages are also congruent in another significant respect, not touched upon by Hughes. That is, one of the functions of the "tree" in both episodes is to instil doubt in, and give warning to, the unwary hero to flee this place and give up the activities he is about to engage in. Aeneas heeds the warning and leaves the cursed land to found his Aeneadae elsewhere; Redcross,

on the story level at least,⁴⁴ does not heed the warning. In The Aeneid, the transformation itself is not the product of exoticism, or woman's seductiveness, as in The Odyssey. Polydorus is turned, or imprisoned, into a tree, it seems, as a reminder that acts of violence had been committed on this site.⁴⁵ Since the plant's lament is provoked by the intended sacrifice to Venus, -- already initiated -- the reference to Venus itself can perhaps be accounted for by recalling Graves' remarks above in connection with the double function, protective and destructive, of Circe. Aeneas' intended sacrifice can thus perhaps be read as an appeal to the protective (creative) side of the goddess (in this case Circe could be understood as the protective Venus, a personification whom we find later in the Garden of Adonis), who responds to the appeal in the way described in the incident. Venus, then, appears as a protectress in The Aeneid, while as a Circe-figure in The Odyssey her function is considerably more ambiguous.

Dante's episode of Pier dalla Vigna, also, is not directly linked to the Circe myth, although, as in Virgil, it does contain the transformation-motif. For reasons which will manifest themselves below it is worth looking at nevertheless. The thirteenth canto of the Inferno opens with these verses:

Non era ancor di la Nesso arrivato,
quando noi ci mettemmo per un bosco
che da nessun sentiero era segnato.
Non fronda verde, ma di color fosco;
non rami schietti, ma nodosi n'nvolti:
non pomi v'eran, ma stecchi con toscò.
Non han sì aspri sterpi né sì folti
quelle fiere selvagge che in odio hanno
tra Cecina e Corneto i luoghi colti.
Quivi le brutte Arpie lor nidi fanno.... (Inferno,
xiii.1-10)

(Nesso had not yet arrived there when we entered a forest unmarked by any trail. No green branch was to be seen, but of a gloomy colour; nor straight ones, but gnarled and twisted ones; nor were there apple trees, but poisoned sticks. They have not so rough stumps, nor so dense, those vicious beasts that bear hatred for the cultivated fields between Cecina and Corneto. Here the ugly Harpies build their nests....)

Following the description of this horrid thicket, Virgil invites Dante to pluck a twig from a near-by thorn-bush, whereupon the bush bleeds and exclaims, as in The Aeneid: "Perche' me scerpi?/Non hai tu spirto di pieta' alcuno?" ('Why do you wrench me? Have you no feeling of pity at all?'). We then learn from the bush (Pier dalla Vigna) that his transformation into a plant is a punishment reserved for suicides. In this new form they are condemned to this forest where the Harpies feed on their bodies. The souls of the suicides will, on the Day of Judgement, arise, like other souls, to take possession of their bodies, but, unlike the others, they will merely be able to drag them back to this dismal place, where

...per la mesta
selva saranno i nostri corpi appesi,
ciascuno al prun dell'ombra sua molesta. (106-108)

('...in the gloomy forest our bodies will be hanged each
to the tree of his weary soul.')

Though they will never again be allowed to 'wear' their bodies, they will have them always suspended before them as reminders of the violence once done to them. Indeed, because of this self-inflicted violence they will be punished all the more by having their anguished souls look forever upon the ravenous Harpies' feeding on their bodies.

The episode points to an interesting concept. The view reflected in Dante is that body and soul have been joined together by God, to be separated only by death through natural causes. The relegation of suicides to the second circle of hell points to the recognition and acceptance of the union of spirit and matter. Rejection of the latter is a sin -- harshly punishable, as we have seen. Dante's position does not accord very clearly with medieval ideas of contemptus mundi. But we must note that implicit here is a stress on the hierarchy of values established by God. A suicidal act is an act of rebellion against a God-imposed order of things. The value given matter, therefore, is far from being the same as that given to it later by Renaissance thinkers. The concept thus remains in keeping with medieval thought, though it has its roots in the pagan

past.⁴⁶ We should note, too, that in the given order of things an undue emphasis on the physical is just as reprehensible as violence done to the body: the Paolo-Francesca episode provides us with a sufficiently weighty testimonial of this medieval orientation. Having outlined Dante's basic position, we can now turn to Ariosto who has all these models to draw from in his depiction of Alcina and of Astolfo's metamorphosis into a myrtle, in several ways the counterpart of the Fradubio incident in The Faerie Queene.

In the sixth canto of the Orlando Furioso Ruggero, the wavering hero of Ariosto's poem, is deposited on Alcina's island by Atlante's winged horse, as we have already seen. It is instructive to compare Dante's description of the woods in which he meets the troubled spirit of Pier della Vigna with Ariosto's description of the island, as it appears to Ruggero. For Dante the forest is of 'color fosco' and inhabited by Harpies. Alcina's abode, instead, offers an altogether different appearance:

Con Rugger seco il grande augel discese.
Culte pianure e delicate colli,
Chiare acque, ombrose ripe e prati molli.

Vaghi boschetti di soavi allori,
Di palme e d'amenissime mortelle,
Cedri et aranci ch'avean frutti e fiori
Contesti in varie forme e tutte belle,
Facean riparo ai fervidi calori
De giorni estivi con lor spesse ombrelle;
E tra quei rami con sicuri voli
Cantando se ne giano i rosignuoli.

Tra le purpuree rose e i bianchi gigli,
Che tepida aura freschi ogn'or serba,
Sicuri si vedean lepri e conigli,
E cervi con la fronte alta e superba,
Senza temer ch'alcun gli uccida o pigli,
Pascono o stiansi rominando l'erba:
Saltano i daini e i capri isnelli e destri,
Che sono in copia in quei lochi campestri. (VI.20-22)

(With Ruggero on his back the great bird alighted. Tilled fields and gentle slopes, clear waters, shady banks and soft meadows.

Pleasing groves of sweet laurel-trees, of palms and of pleasant myrtles, citron and orange trees bearing fruits and flowers put together in various and charming ways, provided, with their dense shades, shelter from the intense warmth of the summer days. And the nightingales flew and sang safely through those fronds.

Through the crimson roses and the white lilies, which a cooling breath keeps ever fresh, could be seen sure-footed rabbits and hares; and stags, with proud head held high, without fear that anyone would capture or kill them, fed themselves or stood brousing on the grass. Bucks and he-goats, lean-limbed, leap skilfully in these rustic grounds, where they abound.)

In this idyllic spot Ruggero meets Astolfo turned into the tree to which he binds the Hippogriff. Astolfo's transformation is Homeric in the sense that it is the result of erotic proclivity, but, since Astolfo obviously retains the full use of his reason, it is difficult to regard it as a metamorphosis proper -- unless we choose to do so in a Kafkaesque sense. The thought of Kafka does, after all, suggest a possibility. Gregor Samsa retains the use of his reason. One could say, indeed, that his consciousness is heightened by the knowledge of its being trapped inside the awkward shell of the giant bug into which his body has

been transformed. Gregor's plight is painful: he has a knowledge of infinite possibilities, but this knowledge is accompanied by the realization that because of his constraining shell, these possibilities can never be actualized. It is hard to imagine a position more alien to Ariosto's optimistic humanism. Yet we are probably meant to see something potentially like this in Astolfo's plight. But the handling of the episode is such that it is very difficult for us to sense Kafka's excruciating feeling of frustration in the image of Astolfo trapped in the myrtle. The analysis to follow will suggest why Astolfo's metamorphosis, and that of countless others who have also fallen victims of Alcina, is not deeply resented.

Having taken care of the winged horse, Ruggero lets himself go in a manner very similar to that of the Mars figure in the Botticelli painting considered above:

...quivi appresso ove surgea una fonte
Cinta di cedri e di feconde palme,
Pose lo scudo, e l'elmo da la fronte
si trasse, e disarmossi ambe le palme...

Bagna talor ne la chiara onda e fresca
L'asciutte labbra, e con la man diguazza
Accio' che de le vene il calor esca,
Che gli ha acceso il portar de la corazza. (VI.24-25)

(...here, close to where a spring issued, enclosed by citron trees and by fruitful palms, he laid down his shield; he removed the helmet from his brow and disarmed both his hands...He moistens now and then in the clear and refreshing wave his dry lips, and with his hand he splashes so that the heat -- kindled by the wearing of the armor -- will leave his veins.)

If we look back at the passage quoted from the Inferno, we will not fail to notice some interesting things. On the one hand, the detail, which is a distinguishing feature of Dante's passage, sets him apart from as thoroughly medieval a mind as that of Panofsky's miniaturist; on the other hand, the close observation of nature evidenced by the detail has failed to exert in Dante the same sort of attraction felt by Ariosto. Indeed, there is discernible in Dante's passage a kind of fear which is remote from Ariosto's imaginative experience. It is the sort of Angst already to be found in the opening lines of the Commedia: "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita/ Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,/ Che la via diritta era smarrita..." It is as if Dante stood midway between the miniaturist and Ariosto, revealing how difficult and painful is the movement from one pole of experience to the other. By the time we come to Ariosto, in whose work we witness, I believe, the spirit of the Italian Renaissance in its most positive form, the pain felt by contact with nature -- so fully expressed in the following lines -- is no longer experienced:

Oh quanto a dir qual'era e' cosa dura,
Questa selva selvaggia e' aspra e forte,
Che nel pensier rinnova la paura....(Inferno, I. 3-6)

(O how hard it is to retell what it was, this savage forest is cruel and harsh; the thought itself renews all fear....)

Instead we have the unabashed ease and enjoyment mirrored in those octaves of Ariosto quoted above. The anxiety felt by someone like Dante can be got rid of, in the end, only through attachment to the ideals of the Paradiso. In the Furioso, instead, a happy reconciliation is brought about. We are shown the totality of human experience, and little attempt is made to subordinate the actual to the ideal. The ideal, in fact, in its manifestations of loyalty to one's country, or to a set of moral or religious beliefs, can be a burden. Attempting to ease oneself of this burden results, in Dante's case, in an exchange of one burden for an even greater one -- the unbearable burden of sin. In the Furioso easing oneself of this burden has no such painful consequences: what it does instead is initiate a process of identification with the objects of nature. But in the Furioso this is not necessarily a bad thing. Astolfo, who has been turned into a myrtle by the witch Alcina, tells the mystified Ruggero how it all came about. His choice of words, as he tells him that Alcina has dealt with many others in the same way, is interesting, and we should look at them:

...perche' essi non vadano pel mondo
Di lei narrando la vita lasciva,
Chi qua chi la' per lo terren fecondo
Li muta, altri in abete, altri in oliva,
Altri in palma, altri in cedro, altri secondo
Che vedi me (i.e. a myrtle), su questa verde riva;
Altri in liquido fonte, alcuni in fera,
Come piu' aggrada a quella fata altiera. (OF VI. 51)

(...to prevent their going through the world telling of her wanton life, here and there through the fertile grounds she turns some to fir and some to olive trees, some to palms and others to citron trees, others still to the shape I'm in, on this green bank; others she turns to liquid spring, and some to wild animals as suits the fancy of this haughty witch.)

A comparison of this octave with those given above of the festive appearance of Alcina's island immediately suggests that these men are transformed into precisely those objects which lend not only fascination to the island but also, as we can see from the words underlined, suggestions of fertility and fruitfulness. We can -- perhaps ought to -- take this as a hint that all is not so bad with giving up those human faculties traditionally regarded as more deserving. Interesting also is the eventual re-transformation of these objects into their original state, a change brought about through the mediation of Melissa:

Gli antichi amanti ch'erano in gran torma
Conversi in fonti, in fere, in legni, in sassi...
A Logistilla si salvaro; et indi
Tornaro a Sciti, a Persi, a Greci, ad Indi. (OF VIII.15)

(The ancient lovers, who had in great throngs been converted into springs, into wild animals, into plants, and stones...found safety at Logistilla's; and thence turned back to Scythians, to Persians, to Greeks, to Indians.)

The emphasis on the last line is on the individuality of these 'saved' men. From objects beating with the pulse of nature, and inseparable from it, they are brought back once again to the status of responsible, moral beings, with their

national affiliations, duties and loyalties. At this point one is not so sure which is preferable: the guideposts are not so clearly discernible as in someone like Dante. As so often in Ariosto, we are dealing with an ironic undercurrent which seems to mock our efforts to secure a unique meaning out of these lines. If we claim that Ariosto is unquestionably supporting Melissa's path to salvation, then how do we deal with these lines: "Tutti del buon Rugger seguiron l'orma:/A Logistilla si salvaro..." ('All followed good Ruggero's footstep; They found safety at Logistilla's...')?47

To get an idea of the irony in these lines we have only to ask ourselves these questions: (a) How consistently does Ruggero himself follow the path leading to Logistilla?

(b) Does he really obtain salvation from her? Moreover

(c) what do we do with the adjective buon when we can still hear the echo of the earlier and celebrated line: "Oh gran bonta' dei cavallieri antiqui!"? In restoring reason and a sense of their long-neglected duties to Alcina's victims, Melissa reminds us of Odysseus who causes Circe to return the "pigs" to their former shapes; but the narrator's attitude throughout -- that hardly concealed smile that accompanies the narration of these events -- also brings to mind, irresistibly, the other side of Odysseus, the side that goes back to Circe and enjoys her on her "surpassingly beautiful bed." (Between motif and its function, as we remember,

there is a difference.) I shall come back to Ariosto. By way of summarization, let me now state that what I have argued so far amounts to this, that Ariosto differs from Dante in that Ariosto accepts nature joyfully and transforms it into something like an earthly paradise, while Dante sees its dangers and is mortally afraid of them.

In the Armida episode in Tasso, we have the same elements at work as in Ariosto, Dante, and Homer -- later to be seen at work in Spenser. How does Tasso's attitude toward them differ from his precursors'? In the tenth canto of the Liberata one of the Christian warriors, returned to Goffredo's camp after an interlude on Armida's island, describes Armida's enchantments thus:

V'e' l'aura molle, e'l ciel sereno, e lieti
gli alberi e i prati, e pure e dolci l'onde;
ove fra gli amenissimi mirteti
sorge una fonte, e un fiumicel diffonde;
piovono in grembo a l'erbe i sonni quieti
con un soave mormorio di fronde;
cantan gli augelli; i marmi io taccio e l'oro,
meravigliosi d'arte e di lavoro.

Apprestar su l'erbetta, ov'e' piu' densa
l'ombra, e vicino al suon de l'arie chiare,
fece di sculti vasi altera mensa,
e ricca di vivande elette e care,
Era qui cio' ch'ogni stagion dispensa,
cio' che dona la terra, o manda il mare,
cio' che l'arte condisce: e cento belle
servivano al convito accorte ancelle. (GL x. 63-64)

(There is the air soft, and the sky serene, and cheerful the trees and meadows, and pure and sweet the waves, where through the pleasant myrtle-trees issues a spring, and a meandering stream. Restful sleep

falls on the bosom of the grassy fields with a sweet murmur from the leafy branches. The birds sing. I say nothing about the marble and the gold, splendid work of art and skill.

On the mossy grass, where the shade is densest, and near the sound of the ringing air, (Armida) prepared a sumptuous table of sculpted vases, rich with choice and dear viands. Here was that which every season gives forth, which the earth bestows, or the sea gives, which is seasoned by art: and a hundred beautiful and adroit maidens were on hand to serve at the banquet.)

Here, as later in the 15th canto, art comes to the aid of nature to maximize its sensual appeal. As in the case of Alcina in the Furioso, all this splendour of ~~nature~~ is epitomized by the reigning Armida, in whom it is as it were distilled and concentrated. Rinaldo and a number of other knights are drawn to her irresistibly, their duties as warriors and Christians temporarily forgotten. Here the enchantress expostulates on her power over them. In the words of the returned warrior:

...io pensiero e voglia
sento mutar, mutar vita ed albergo.
(Strana virtu') novo pensier mi invoglia:
salto ne l'acque, e mi vi tuffo e immergo.
Non so come ogni gamba entro s'accoglia,
come l'un braccio e l'altro entri nel tergo:
m'accorcio e stringo; e sulla pelle cresce
squamoso il cuoio; e d'uom son fatto un pesce.

Così ciascun de gli altri anco fu volto,
e guizzo' meco in quel vivace argento.... (X.66-67)

(...my thought and desire I feel is changing, as changes my life and lodging. (Strange effect) novel thought attracts me: I leap in the water, I dive and sink.

I don't know how each leg is taken in, how first one then the other arm is taken in behind me. I tighten up and shrink; on my skin grow scales -- and from a man I'm turned into a fish. Each of the others was also changed thus, and flashed by me in that quick silver....)

Following this demonstration of her own power, Armida turns them back to their human shapes, and exclaims:

"Ecco, a voi noto e' il mio poter...
e quanto sopra voi l'imperio ho pieno.
Pende dal mio voler ch'altri infelice
perda in prigione eterna il ciel sereno;
altri divenga augello; altri radice
faccia, e germogli nel terrestre seno;
o che v'induri in selce, o in molle fonte
si liquefaccia, o vesta irsuta fronte...." (X.68)

("Lo! You have seen my strength manifested, and how fully my power extends over you. It lies in my will that some unhappy one lose in everlasting prison the serene heavens, that some become bird, and that some other take root and blossom in the bosom of the earth, or become hard as flint, or in a soft spring melt, or wear a shaggy brow....")

Clearly, Armida possesses the same Circean powers of Alcina. Like the latter, also, Armida turns men into objects only if they incur her displeasure. We recall that Alcina exercises her magical powers on her lovers only after she has transferred her infatuation to someone else. This would seem to present a problem, for it is then not precisely in the act of loving the enchantress that one is turned into an object. It is possible to read the transformations, however, in a sense which minimizes the problem. From the

moment one allows oneself to be carried away by the charms of an Alcina-Armida figure, one has, in effect, given up willed control of oneself. Henceforth one no longer acts, but is acted upon. The witch-figure waving her wand is then simply an emblem of man's relinquishment of his power of self-determination.

The myth, which has its roots in Homer, appears in modified form in Virgil and Dante, and plays so crucial a role in Ariosto and Tasso, first appears in Spenser in the second canto of Book I of The Faerie Queene, later to receive a full elaboration in the Bower of Bliss. Let us look at it in some detail. Having abandoned Una (i.e. truth) and taken Duessa under his protection, the blinded Redcross and his "seeming simple maid" rest under the shade of "two goodly trees" --

...that faire did spred
Their armes abroad, with gray mosse ouercast,
And their greene leaues trembling with euery blast,
Made a calme shadow far in compasse round:
The fearefull Shepheard often there aghast
Vnder them neuer sat, ne wont there sound
His mery oaten pipe, but shund th'vn lucky ground.
(I.ii.28)

Under the shade of these trees they are not to find rest or shelter from the scorching sun. Spenser's description of these woods is altogether unlike Ariosto's description of the woods in which Astolfo is turned into a myrtle-tree. With its unquiet and ominous atmosphere it is much more

like Dante's description, considered above. Intending to "frame a girlond" for Duessa, Redcross plucks a bough --

...out of whose rift there came
Small drops of gory bloud, that trickled downe the same.

Therewith a piteous yelling voyce was heard,
Crying, O spare with guilty hands to teare
My tender sides in this rough rynd embard,
But fly, ah fly far hence away, for feare
Least to you hap, that happened to me heare,
And to this wretched Lady, my deare loue,
O too deare loue, loue bought with death too deare.
(I.ii.30-31)

Horrified, Redcross asks the voice what led to the transformation. Fradubio explains that he was deceived by Duessa into abandoning his beloved Fraelissa in favour of the enchantress. Later, the truth about Duessa having been accidentally revealed to him, Fradubio was turned by her into this same plant, and will have to remain in this shape until he is "bathed in a living well". Greenlaw points out, quite rightly, that this Spenser episode is a blend of Virgilian and Ariostan elements:

The wounding of the tree, the manner in which its blood stains the ground, and the horror of the spectator is suggested by Virgil, and perhaps Tasso, but the transformation of a man into a tree by a sorceress, and the warning of another who is in like danger are borrowed from Ariosto. Also the revelation to Fradubio of the real ugliness of Duessa was suggested, it would seem, by the like revelation of Alcina to Ruggero, though Spenser was to make more detailed use of this suggestion in the final discomfiture of Duessa. This Fradubio episode illustrates the complete independence with which Spenser uses suggestions, for whereas Alcina merely discarded Astolfo when she tired of him,

Duessa first makes her rival, Fraelissa, appear deformed in the eyes of Fradubio, and when Fradubio, in turn, sees her own native ugliness, vents her malice by changing him into a tree to stand beside the discarded body.⁴⁸

Thus the blend is there, Nevertheless the atmosphere in Spenser's episode is far from being Ariostan in character: it is, in fact, decidedly Virgilian. The anguish of Fradubio (the Virgilian "fly, oh fly far hence away...") is completely absent in Ariosto. Notwithstanding his plight, Astolfo seems to laugh innerly as he warns Ruggero of what lies ahead, and his bemused doubt is unmistakably expressed in the line: "non ch'io mi creda che debbia giovarte" ('Not that I think this is going to help you in any way'). Astolfo does express some anguish over the fact of his transformation, but this anguish is not, like Fradubio's, caused by the realization of the error which led to it. It is rather more like the anguish felt by Francesca as she recollects the no longer to be relived happy moments with Paolo: -

nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi
del tempo felice nella miseria. (Inferno, V.121-123)

('no greater pain than to remember happy times in one's misery')

These are lines which could, except for the context which weakens them, almost be interchanged with Astolfo's:

Deh! perche' vo le mie piaghe toccando,
Senza speranza poi di medicina?
Perche' l'avuto ben vo rimembrando,
Quando io patisco estrema disciplina? (OF VI.49)

(Alas! why do I go on feeling my sore without hope of healing it? Why do I keep on remembering the good I've had when I'm here suffering extreme constraints?)

Obviously Astolfo, even in his present condition, continues to see in Alcina something immensely desirable, and he makes no bones about this fact. Alcina, as embodying everything that is most alluring in nature, does, however, have the regrettable fault of being inconstant.

In his commentary on this episode, Merritt Hughes states:

In the Orlando Furioso it is treated as a marvelous metamorphosis which, while it points no moral, yet adorns the tale. Spenser reinvested it with Virgil's atmosphere of moral earnestness. We may suppose that Ariosto's example was responsible for the appearance of the story at all in The Faerie Queene, and we can see that his treatment of it was vividly in Spenser's memory as he wrote, but we may surmise that Spenser was haunted by boyhood recollections of Aeneas' shocking discovery of the murdered Polydorus.⁴⁹

The atmosphere in Spenser is certainly more Virgilian than Ariostan. However, to say that the episode in Ariosto points to no moral, and is merely decorative, is not entirely accurate. It seems to me that this is one of the most obviously allegorical pages in the OF -- insofar as anything is "obvious" in Ariosto's poem. One does not have to be a 16th-Century moralizer of the Furioso to see the allegory in

the following lines, in which Ruggero asks Astolfo if there is any way he can keep out of Alcina's way:

...domandolli
Poi se via c'era, ch'al regno guidassi
Di Logistilla, o per piano o per colli,
Si che per quel d'Alcina non andassi.
Che ben ve n'era un'altra, ritornolli
L'arbore a dire, ma piena d'aspri sassi,
S'andando un poco inanzi alla man destra,
Salisse il poggio in ver la cima alpestra.... (OF VI.55)

(...he asked him if there was a way that led to the kingdom of Logistilla, either through the plain or through the hills, so as not to go through that of Alcina. There was another one, replied the tree, but full of jagged rocks, if he went on a little on the right side, and climbed the hill toward the rugged top....)

The path to virtue, or to a life lived according to right reason -- of which Logistilla stands as a symbol -- is no easy path, but that is the path to follow if virtue is what one wants to attain. The moral here is clear enough. This same image of the ruggedness of the path leading to felicity was to be used much later by John Donne in his Third Satire, and the moral in the stanza just quoted is no less clear than it is in Donne's poem: "The world's all parts wither away and pass/...and thou, loving this,/Dost love a withered and worn strumpet" -- a piece of advice which is essentially that of Fradubio to Redcross. Instead: -

...On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must and about must go;
And what the hill's suddenness resists, win so.
(Satire III)

So, the moral in both poems is pretty clear. However, merely pointing out a moral does not necessarily imply an acceptance of its conclusion.⁵⁰ In this sense Hughes scores a point: In Ariosto one is not at all sure that it is advisable to follow the path leading to Logistilla. In Spenser the moral is not only pointed out (Don't stick to Duessa, or else!), but fully endorsed. Let me explain this further. We have seen that Donne points out a moral and is convinced of the soundness of its conclusion: one either lives according to it, or one is in rough waters -- literally:

...those blest flowers that dwell
At the rough stream's calm head thrive and do well,
But having left their roots, and themselves given
To the stream's tyrannous rage, alas, are driven
Through mills and rocks and woods, and at last,
Consumed in going, in the sea are lost. (Ibid.)

In Spenser the situation is analogous to Donne's. By the time Fradubio recounts his tale of woes to Redcross, he has ceased to feel drawn to Duessa, and has long since recognized his error. The moral is explicitly pointed out to Redcross that in allying himself to Duessa, he is in effect loving a "withered and worn strumpet". Beneath Duessa's pleasing exterior, in fact, lies a "filthy foule old woman.../ Her nether parts misshapen, monstrous."⁵¹; and his regret at having been untrue to Fraelissa is keenly felt by him: "That ever I did touch (Duessa), I did deadly rew."

Hence Redcross is urged to "fly". Astolfo's warning to Ruggero differs significantly from Fradubio's. The moral imparted to Ruggero is not that in loving Alcina one loves a "withered strumpet", but that, rather, in loving her one lets oneself in for the painful disappointment of not being able to hold on to her. It is for this reason, not out of moral compulsion that Astolfo urges Ruggero to shy away from Alcina.

Like Fradubio Ruggero eventually turns away from Alcina because he sees her in a different and far less pleasant light. Fradubio's discovery of the ugly nature of Duessa may very likely have been inspired by Ruggero's similar discovery in the OF. But even here, a notable difference exists. Except for the intervention of Melissa -- who plays in the episode much the same part played by the Palmer in the episode of the Bower of Bliss, and who recalls Ruggero to his moral responsibilities -- Ruggero's voluptuous idyll in Alcina's island might go on indefinitely. Melissa finds him alone -

Che si godea il matin fresco e sereno,
Lungo un bel rio che discorrea d'un colle
Verso un laghetto limpido et ameno.
Il suo vestir delizioso e molle
Tutto era d'ozio e di lascivia pieno,
Che di sua man gli avea di seta e d'oro
Tessuto Alcina con sottil lavoro. (VII.53)

(enjoying the cool and clear morning along a pleasant stream that ran down a hillside toward a limpid and pleasing lake. His garment was soft and delicious,

and made entirely for ease and enjoyment: Alcina had woven it skilfully out of silk and gold with her own hands.)

Viewed from a moral standpoint there is little that is commendable in the deportment of Ruggero. But whatever the objection to this careless abandon, one must not forget that it is designed to safeguard the knight from precisely those dangers -- and eventual destruction -- which strict allegiance to his moral duties will bring upon him. In a figurative sense it is indeed true that in living the idle life depicted in the stanza just quoted, Ruggero is effectively relinquishing his higher faculties, retaining little more than vegetative characteristics. But if no worse fate is to befall Ruggero, one cannot see much that is destructive in Alcina. With respect to him her function is essentially protective. We recall that Atlante had sent Ruggero to the island of Alcina -

Perche' oblasse l'arme in quella corte:
E come mago di somma dottrina
Ch'usar sapea gl'incanti d'ogni sorte,
Avea il cuor stretto di quella regina
Ne l'amor d'esso d'un laccio si' forte,
Che non se ne era mai per poter sciorre,
S'invecchiasse Rugger piu' di Nestorre. (VII.44)

(so that he would forget his arms in that court. And as a magician of the highest order who knew how to use all sorts of spells, he had ensnared the heart of that queen in love for him with a noose so tight that she could never have freed herself, had Ruggero become as old as Nestor.)

Thus Alcina is no more reprehensible, in her own way, than is Venus in her desire to protect Adonis from the fate that awaits him if he goes out to fight the boar. True, Alcina will keep Ruggero from finding his way to Logistilla; but if that is a drawback, it is amply compensated by the untroubled and pleasurable days spent in the garden. Even the one blemish Astolfo finds in Alcina -- her inconstancy -- seems to have been removed by Atlante for the benefit of his ward. But Melissa enters and scolds Ruggero severely for having laid down his arms in that court and neglected his duties toward his betrothed and toward the "gloriosa e sopr'umana prole" (i.e. the Estense family) that is to spring from his union with Bradamante. Overcome with shame, Ruggero now sees only ugliness where everything had appeared beautiful to him before. It is significant that Ruggero sees a different Alcina through the magical powers of Melissa -- i.e., when he listens to moral imperatives. We are told that he now sees Alcina for what she really is; but actually it is Melissa who causes her to appear under a much more unpleasant guise: truth or illusion? Insofar as the episode leaves no doubt that an acceptance of Alcina leads to moral lassitude, the episode, as we see, does contain a moral. Even so an essential ambiguity remains. Given the conditions analysed, one is left very much in doubt as to the desirability of accepting the conclusion of the moral as a mode of conduct.

The sort of ambiguity just discussed has no part in Spenser's Fradubio episode (though something similar is to be found in the Bower of Bliss episode, as we shall see). In Ariosto there is a real opposition of values. The forces of virtue win, it is true, but the reader doubts the merits of this victory. This doubt is provoked not by the reader's particular inclinations, but by the poetry. There is a great deal of criticism of Alcina on the part of the narrator, but this criticism is balanced -- if not overshadowed -- by the sympathy poured on Alcina's side. We remember here the genuine concern of Atlante to protect Ruggero from the dangers attending virtuous conduct; we remember Alcina's beauty and the Eden-like appeal of her realm; we remember, moreover, Astolfo's unconcealed hankering after the enchantress -- in spite of the recognition of her merits; above all, we remember Ruggero's carefree sojourn on the island, before the restoration of moral sensibilities brought on by Melissa.

In Spenser it is no act of magic (equivalent to Melissa's ring) that reveals to Fradubio the ugliness of Duessa. It is an accident: Duessa eases by and by on the enchantments which had caused Fraelissa to appear less fair than she. Fradubio -

Tooke Duessa for my dame,
And in the witch vnweeting ioyd long time,
Ne euer wist but that she was the same,

Till on a day (that day is euery Prime,
When Witches wont do penance for their crime)
I chaunst to see her in her proper hew,
Bathing her selfe in origane and thyme:
A filthy foule old woman I did vew,
That euer to haue toucht her, I did deadly rew.
(FQ I.ii.40)

The effect of this is clear: we have here no external influence to cast a spell over Duessa so that she will appear differently. Duessa removes her garments to reveal herself for what she really is; and deformity and ugliness is what constitutes her essence. Thus the problem, "reality or illusion", which lingers on in the Furioso even after the vanquishment of Alcina, is short-lived in Book I of the FQ. True, the illusion persists for Redcross: the doubt which Fradubio ought to have put in his mind fails to find a place there. As the canto ends, Redcross leaves with Duessa, and -

too simple and too trew.../Oft her kist. (I.ii.45)

What really matters is the effect this has on the reader. For him the illusion is shattered. Everything is geared in the episode to provoke an alliance between reader and Fradubio, a reaction against Duessa, and a growing concern for Redcross, whose error is now seen in all its nakedness. Thus, the sort of manipulation (if one is allowed to use this metaphor) of the reader's imaginative response that goes on in Spenser is quite different from that which we find in Ariosto. The ultimate effect in Spenser approximates

that produced by Tasso. I have already quoted the lines from the Liberata which indicate that the metamorphosis has the painfully felt result of separating the victim from the "ciel sereno" -- or from the more highly desirable truths. This same painful separation from the ideal state brought about by Duessa's witchcraft finds its clear echo in Fradubio's words:

...Then brought she me into this desert waste,
And by my wretched louers side me pight,
Where now enclosed in wooden wals full faste,
Banisht from liuing wights, our wearie dayes we waste.
(I.ii.42)

In sum, in Ariosto's poem, allowing oneself to succumb to the wiles of the enchantress seems to mean little more than a shirking of one's responsibilities, attended by, at worst, the failure to find permanent fulfillment, but at least the possibility of finding it. In Spenser's Book I it means, if not a veritable death of the soul, at least the soul's imprisonment within confines from which it yearns to free itself.⁵² The lines just referred to are strongly indicative of this -- as is the Scriptural tone and significance of the lines which follow them:

...We may not change (quoth he) this euil plight,
Til we be bathed in a liuing well., (43:3-4)

As the editor of the Norton edition of Spenser's poetry suggests, these lines are reminiscent of the words of John

iv.14: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life".⁵³ The scriptural allusion, indeed, reminds us that the Fradubio episode is part of a context far different from that of Ariosto's poem, and even from Tasso's. Book I of The Faerie Queene is not structured around the sort of psychological allegory which characterizes Book II; the Christian-spiritual allegory of Book I which informs its structure, demands that those motifs used in both Book I and Book II, otherwise skeletally identical, have functionally different characteristics. We have seen above that Circe can exercise both protective and destructive powers. Because of the peculiar structure of Book I, therefore, the Circe motif which finds its place there, understandably takes on primarily negative hues. It is the spirituality of Spenser -- his allegiance to traditional Christian morality -- that stands out in the episode considered. To say at this point that the kind of eroticism which exercises so strong a pull in Tasso or Ariosto is absent from Spenser would be unwarranted. We have so far merely seen in him the analogue as it were of the Clorinda/Tancredi relationship, to be considered below. The structure of Book I of The Faerie Queene, though it indicates how powerfully Spenser's imagination is fired by the collective religious ideology of the period, has yet, because of its very nature, obstructed the overflow

of those qualities which we have seen exercise an immense appeal in the psyches of the Italian poets.

(c) A Closer Look at Tasso, Ariosto and Spenser

I have already indicated that the poetry of Tasso suggests that the poet longs for a kind of dissolution of his conscience into the physical, the sensual. We have seen a hint of this in the lyricism of those octaves quoted above (page 39). More convincing evidence for this position is to be found in Tasso's description of the "donzelle garrule e lascive" in GL XV.58-62, a passage used almost verbatim by Spenser in his own description of the "naked Damzelles" at the entrance of the Bower of Bliss. Let us look at these passages.

In Spenser this is the sight that, understandably enough, produces "secret plesaunce" in Guyon:

The wanton Maidens him espying, stood
Gazing a while at his vnwonted guise;
Then th'one her selfe low ducked in the flood,
Abasht, that her a straunger did a vise:
But th'other rather higher did arise,
And her two lilly paps aloft displayd,
And all, that might his melting hart entise
To her delights, she vnto him bewrayd:
The rest hid vnderneath, him more desirous made.

With that, the other likewise vp arose,
And her faire lockes, which formerly were bownd
Vp in one knot, she low adowne did lose:
Which flowing long and thick, her cloth'd around,
And th'yuorie in golden mantle gownd:
So that faire spectacle from him was reft,
Yet that, which reft it, no lesse faire was fownd:

So hid in lockes and waues from lookers theft,
Nought but her louely face she for his looking left.

Withall she laughed, and she blusht withall,
That blushing to her laughter gaue more grace,
And laughter to her blushing, as did fall:
Now when they spide the knight to slacke his pace,
Them to behold, and in his sparkling face
The secret signes of kindled lust appeare,
Their wanton meriments they did encrease,
And to him beckned, to approach more neare,
And shewd him many sights, that courage cold could reare.

On which when gazing him the Palmer saw,
He much rebukt those wandring eyes of his,
And counseld well, him forward thence did draw.
Now are they come nigh to the Bowre of blis
Of her fond fauorites so nam'd amis:
When thus the Palmer; Now Sir, well auisse;
For here the end of all our trauell is:...(FQ II.xii,
66-69)

In Tasso a sight as ravishing meets the eyes of Carlo and
Ubaldo:

Mosser le natatrici ignude e belle
De' duo guerrieri alquanto i duri petti,
Si che fermarsi a riguardarle; ed elle
Seguian pur i lor giuochi e i lor dilette.
Una in tanto drizzossi, e le mammelle
E tutto cio che piu la vista alletti
Mostro', dal seno in suso, aperto al cielo,
E 'l lago a l'altre membra era un bel velo.

Qual mattutina stella esce de l'onde
Rugiadosa e stillante; o come fuore
Spunto', nascendo gia da le feconde
Spume de l'ocean, la dea d'amore,
Tal apparve costei, tal le sue bionde
Chiome stillavan cristallino umore.
Poi giro' gli occhi, e pur allor s'infine
Que' duo vedere, e in se' tutta si strinse:

E'l crin, ch'in cima al capo avea raccolto
In un sol nodo, immantinente sciolse,
Che lunghissimo in giú cadendo e folto,
D'un aureo manto i molli avori involse.
O che vago spettacolo e' lor tolto!

Ma non men vago fu chi loro il tolse.
Così da l'acque e da' capelli ascosa
A lor si volse lieta e vergognosa.

Rideva insieme, e insieme ella arrossia;
Ed era nel rossor più bello il riso,
E nel riso il rossor che le copria
In sino al mento il delicato viso.
Mosse là voce poi sì dolce e pia,
Che fora ciascun altro indi conquiso:
Oh fortunati peregrin, cui lice
Giungere in questa sede alma e felice!

Questo è il porto del mondo; e qui il ristoro
De le sue noie, e quel piacer si sente
Che' già senti ne' secoli de l'oro
L'antica e senza fren libera gente.
L'arme, che sin a qui d'uopo vi voro,
Potete omai depor securamente,
E sacrarle in quest'ombra a la quiete;
Che' guerrier qui solo d'Amor sarete:

E dolce campo di battaglia il letto
Fiavi, e l'erbetta morbida de' prati. (GL.XV.59-64)

(The fair and naked swimmers did much stir the hardened breasts of the two warriors, so that they stopped to peer at them, while they kept on with their sports and pleasures. One meanwhile raised herself, and her paps and all that most delights the sight, from her breast up, she revealed naked to heaven, while the lake was a pleasant veil to the other members.

As the morning star issues dewy and dripping from the waves, or as once the Goddess of Love rose from the fruitful foam-- did the maiden appear, and so her golden hair dripped crystalline humour. She turned her eyes, and pretending just then to see those two, she drew herself all in.

And her locks, which she had gathered on her head in a single knot, she freed at once; which falling long and luxuriant, covered as if with a golden mantle the soft and candid limbs. Oh what fair sight is taken from them! but no less fair was that which deprived them of it. Concealed thus by the water and by her hair, she turned to them, bashful and glad.

She laughed and blushed at the same time, and her laughter by the blushing was made more fair, and by the laughter her blushing which spread over all her gentle face. Her voice then commenced sweet and soft,

that anyone else would have been won by it. Oh lucky wanderers, to whom is given to come upon this happy place! This is the port of the world; here is relief from its weariness; and one finds here that joy that was formerly found in the golden age by the ancients, free from all restraint. The arms, that ere now have been useful to you, you may now lay down without fear and consecrate them to the stillness of this shade; for here knights of Love only will you be.

And sweet field of battle your bed will be, and the soft grass of the fields.)

These are parallel passages in the two poems which have provoked heated discussions among critics.⁵⁴ Tasso's passage reveals something of the deepest significance about him. My remarks in the earlier chapters of this paper about the psychical affinity which exists between two artists, or poets, who employ identical motifs, even though they do so for different purposes, ought to be sufficient indication that what we will find to be true of Tasso may also be roughly true of Spenser. Spenser's translation of Tasso's passage is almost literal up to FQ II.xii.68:3; after that he goes pretty much his own way to emphasize the "unhealthiness" of the situation. Tasso instead, at that point, introduces the maiden's speech. Although Spenser utilizes this speech on another occasion,⁵⁵ his deliberate omission of it from this context is one of the really significant differences between the two passages. The voluptuousness of the playful maidens in Tasso's lines is immensely enhanced by the direct verbal appeal of the singing girl. The maiden is not merely described, as in Spenser.

The changed point of view enables us to hear her song, and the immediacy of the scene is thus rendered more powerful. Very revealing, too, is the closing couplet of stanza 62; "Oh fortunati peregrini, etc.". The reader's immediate reaction is to regard these words as a passionate exclamation arising from the depths of the poet himself. (Cf. also the line "O che vago spettacolo e' lor tolto!") It is only as the passage is carefully reread that it becomes evident that the words are spoken by the girl. But by then the impression has been created that the song expresses the feelings of the poet himself and his attraction for the realm where "s'ei piace ei lice" (Aminta). True, in stanza 65 Tasso states that "i cavallieri hanno indurate e sorde/ L'alme a que' vezzi perfidi e bugiardi" ('the knights have made hard and deaf/their souls to those lying and perfidious charms.') But this abrupt transition, though it startles us, does not succeed in erasing the impression already made. It merely gives us the added impression of someone suddenly awakening from a spell, from the contemplation of an impossible, perhaps, but nevertheless beautiful dream. Tasso bows down to his conscience, but his bow is a reluctant one. We shall find it instructive to keep these remarks in mind when we come to consider the function of the "subtile net"(P.105). So, in Rinaldo's and in the other Christian warriors' surrender to Armida, the attempt to achieve coalescence with a nature "ricca di vivande elette e care" ('rich with choice

and dear viands'), we are perhaps entitled to see the unconscious predilection of the poet.*

-
- * The tension in Tasso produced by conflicting desires is poignantly suggested by the story of Clorinda and Tancredi, and her death at the hands of the latter in the 12th Canto of the Liberata. Unaware of her identity (she and Argante have stolen disguised within the Christian camp under cover of night to set fire to the 'towers' which the Christians have used so devastatingly against the Infidels in the previous encounter) Tancredi fights with her, and delivers the fatal stroke:

Ma ecco omai l'ora fatale e' giunta,
Che 'l viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve.
Spinge egli il ferro nel bel sen di punta,
Che vi s'immerge, e 'l sangue avido beve;
E la veste, che d'or vago trapunta
Le mammelle stringea tenera e leve,
L'empie d'un caldo fiume. Ella già sente
Morirsi, e 'l pie le manca egro e languente.

Segue egli la vittoria, e la trafitta
Vergine minacciando incalza e preme.
Ella, mentre cadea, la voce afflitta
Movendo, disse le parole estreme;
Parole ch'a lei novo un spirto ditta,
Spirto di fe', di carita', di speme;
Virtù ch'or Dio le infonde; e se rubella
In vita fu, la vuole in morte ancella.

Amico, hai vinto: io ti perdon....perdona
Tu ancora, al corpo no, che nulla pave,
A l'alma sì: deh! per lei prega, e dona
Battesmo a me ch'ogni mia colpa lave.
In queste voci languide risuona
Un non so che di flebile e soave
Ch'al cor gli scende, ed ogni sdegno ammorza,
E gli occhi a lagrimar gli invoglia e sforza.

Poco quindi lontano nel sen del monte
Scaturia mormorando un picciol rio.
Egli v'accorse, e l'elmo empie' nel fonte,
E torno mesto al grande ufficio e pio.
Tremar sentì la man, mentre la fronte
Non conosciuta ancor sciolse e scoprio.
La vide, e la conobbe; e resto' senza

(Continued on Page 85.)

The foregoing discussion, suggests that there is considerable spiritual kinship between the two Italian poets. Yet the differences are notable. As we have seen Alcina's capacity for turning men into plants, etc., is recognized,

(Continued from Page 84.)

E voce e moto. Ahi vista! ahi conoscenza! (GL XII.64-67)

(But lo! the fatal hour is now come, that Clorinda's life to its end is due. In her fair bosom he thrusts the pointed sword; it plunges in, and it greedily drinks the blood; and her fair gold-embroidered robe, which kept her bosom softly pressed, it fills with a warm flood. She senses the coming of death; her legs fail her, weak and languid.

He follows up his victory, and presses hard against the pierced virgin. And as she fell she uttered with feeble voice her last words; words which a spirit new to her dictates, a spirit of faith, charity and hope: a virtue which now God instils in her, that if she has been a rebel in life, in death he wants her his maidservant.

"Friend, you have conquered: I forgive you...forgive me--no, not my body, which fears nought, but my soul: Oh! for this pray and bestow baptism on me, that may wash away my guilt." In these languid words resounds an indescribable feebleness and sweetness, which sings in his heart and allays all anger, and compels his welling eyes to weep.

Not far from there, in the bosom of a hill a tiny brook issued murmuring. He ran to it filling his helmet at the fountain, and returned mournful to his great and pious task. He felt his hand shake as he freed and discovered the countenance not recognized till then. He saw her, he knew her, and stood speechless and still. Oh sight! Oh discovery!)

The effect produced by the images of the encounter, the conversion of Clorinda at the moment of death, and the final recognition of Tancredi, is strikingly similar to that produced by Bernini's statue, though the latter lacks the tearing conflict suggested by Tasso's lines. The sublimation of Clorinda seems to be a value sincerely

(Continued on Page 86.)

and it receives considerable criticism, but the irony which accompanies this criticism prevents us from seeing a believable degree of seriousness in it. It is as if Ariosto were saying that, indeed, there are human pursuits which are much more to be commended than a life devoted to ease and pleasure; however, if that is the sort of thing that attracts you, there is really nothing wrong with indulging in it. What is hard to deny is that the sense of guilt found in Dante is thoroughly absent here. It is precisely this point which reveals the most fundamental difference between Ariosto and Tasso.

In his famous oration on the dignity of man, Pico della Mirandola states:

This is the culminating gift of God, this is the supreme and marvelous felicity of man...that he can be that which he wills to be. Animals, from the moment of their birth, carry with them, from their mothers' bodies, all that they are destined to have or be; the highest spirits...are from the beginning...what they will be forever. But God the Father endowed man, from birth, with the seeds of every possibility and every life.⁵⁶

Man is a dignified being, says Pico, because he can choose either to become a god or to become a plant. But implicit

(Continued from Page 85)

felt by the poet. It is significant, of course, that the conversion of Clorinda results from her physical death. The poet seems to be painfully aware that the necessity for the sublimation precludes the possibility of an encounter of a far different and far more desirable nature between the lovers.

in his statement is the suggestion that unless one exercises one's freedom of choice to become a god, one is an unworthy wretch. Ariosto appears to be more generous than Pico, for in him we find no such severe criticism of those who prefer the less aerial of the two alternatives. Tasso sees the paths diverging, one reaching up to the sky, the other losing itself amid fields and streams. He longs for the latter, but something holds him back. A good summarization of this conflict is to be found in Tasso's own later prose work, in a passage noted by T. Greene and A. M. Patterson, both of whom -- as many critics before them -- are struck by the tension in Tasso's work:

Any treatment of form (says Tasso) involves great obscurity and difficulty. For if we take the forms as separate entities, what the philosophers have called ideas, we may easily decide either that they do not exist or that they are of no use to our human devices and mortal doings. And if we are not thus persuaded, we may feel constrained at least by the opposite argument to abandon so lofty a matter of contemplation. Even in contemplating the forms of matter, we encounter tremendous difficulty; for matter is a source of uncertainty and obscurity, so that ancient philosophers compared it to the dark unfathomed deep. But if we separate them in imagination we get involved in falsehoods, or if not actually in falsehoods still our contemplation is directed to no sound purpose....⁵⁷

Greene stops here in his citation of Tasso, and sees reflected in it the essence of the conflict in the Liberata. According to him the poem "does not really represent the

serene fulfillment of spiritual love on earth. Rather than junction of Idea and action, it represents their tragic separation. It denies serenity to our world...."⁵⁸ The tension in Tasso is painful and bound to remain unresolved, for it arises, in Greene's view, from the poet's "knowledge of the Idea, particularly in the sphere of Platonic love, and the impossibility of its realization on earth."⁵⁹ Patterson goes further and glimpses a possible resolution to the conflict. She points out that Greene omitted an important statement which follows immediately the passage just quoted. That is,

...with words similarly the study of forms occasions uncertainties; to know and distinguish them is so hard that no harder task can be set a speaker. Still, it is a virtual necessity, since nature, or art, which imitates nature, has marked all things with their own characteristics.⁶⁰

Patterson sees in the complete passage not disillusionment or despair, as does Greene, but "Tasso's way of summarizing what he has learned...intellectual discipline" finally prevailing.⁶¹ So, faced with the dichotomy of form and matter, Tasso ultimately -- though not without effort, as Greene observes, and as is quite evident from the passage itself, -- opts for the "lofty matter of contemplation", recognizing that giving free rein to his capacity for sensual love would inevitably be attended by "uncertainty and obscurity".

Ariosto, on the other hand, actually gives the impression of condoning rather than condemning the Circean powers of Alcina. Like him, Tasso fully experiences imaginatively the conscience-dissolving powers of the "garden": there -

...piovono in grembo a l'erbe i sonni quieti
con un soave mormorio di fronde, etc. (see above, p.63)

But at this point he departs from Ariosto. Unlike the latter, he seems incapable of accepting these "sonni quieti" (gentle sleep) for what they are. He tends to view them from the perspective of what they negate. Unlike Ariosto who limits himself to demonstrating Alcina's powers without giving us her personal views, Tasso attempts to alienate us from Armida by putting into her mouth a commentary on her Circean powers which is entirely negative. Thus, the "sonni quieti" turn out to be not an enjoyable absorption into what is most pleasing in nature, but a prison, which deprives one of the sight of the "serene heavens":

...sopra voi l'imperio ho pieno,
Pende dal mio voler ch'altri infelice
perda in prigione eterna il ciel sereno. (See above, p.65)

Does Spenser share those qualities which we have found to be characteristic of the Italian poets? Let us consider again the appearance of the Bower of Bliss and how it really differs from Tasso's. A classic example of the

sort of commentary Spenser's borrowings from Tasso receives from critics is to be found in stanza 71 of FQ II.xii, which was first detected as a borrowing by Koepfel, then commented on by Durling, Lewis, and others.⁶²

The joyous birdes shrouded in chearefull shade,
Their notes vnto the voyce attēpred sweet;
Th'Angelical soft trembling voyces made
To th'instruments diuine response meet:
The siluer sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmure of the waters fall:
The waters fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, vnto the wind did call:
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all.

Tasso's octave is this, already given above on page 39.

Vezzosi augelli infra le verdi fronde
Temprano a prova lascivette note.
Mormora l'aura, e fa le foglie e l'onde
Garrir, che variamente ella parcote.
Quando taccion gli augelli alto risponde;
Quando cantan gli augei, piu lieve scote;
Sia caso od arte, or accompagna, ed ora
Alternata i versi lor la musica ora. (GL XVI.12)

Koepfel notes (and we have little trouble in seeing that his observation is quite correct) that Spenser has followed Tasso's text closely, but that the music in Spenser's passage is produced not by natural means only (i.e. by Augelli, aura, onde: -- birds, air, waves), but by voices and instruments also.⁶³ Durling suggests that this addition is highly significant, inasmuch as by adding the sounds produced by voices and instruments, Spenser emphasizes the artificiality, the unnaturalness, of the scene.

Durling -- following the lead of C.S. Lewis -- is bent on proving the thesis that what attracts in the Bower is a perversion of nature: nature there is 'wanton' and produces in the beholder unnatural desires. There are a number of details in the descriptions which do indeed suggest this. For example, the following detail, cited by Lewis,⁶⁴ certainly stresses the deceptiveness of the natural-seeming objects in the Bower:

...ouer all the purest gold was spread,
A trayle of yvie in his native hew:
For the rich mettall was so coloured,
That wight, who did not well auised view,
Would surely deeme it to be yvie trew. (II.xii.61)

But the artificiality stressed in these lines is something quite different from the artificiality suggested in the stanza 'translated' from Tasso.⁶⁵ What characterizes Tasso's image is a harmonious concentration of natural effects: the reference to Art in it emphasizes the notion of such harmony (we remember -- see Chapter I -- that for the 16th-Century mind Art is almost by definition the rendering of several parts into a harmonious whole: this is why, for example, there was such 'hassle' among critics over Ariosto, whose work was seen to lack precisely the kind of harmony expected of a work of art.) Durling is, after all, right in seeing an emphasis on 'unnaturalness' in Spenser's adaptation of Tasso's octave. The emphasis is there; but if we look at the stanza carefully, we will note that there

is nothing at all there (unlike other stanzas) which suggests that this sort of unnaturalness is in any way negative. In fact, something is added by Spenser to Tasso's basic motif which makes the harmony encompass not only the world of nature, but also that of the spirit: hence the emphasis on 'angelicall voyces' and 'instruments diuine'. Thus the stress in the stanza is not on something diseased, but on something entirely positive.⁶⁶

What we have just seen seems to characterize Spenser's use of Tasso in general. This kind of idealization of borrowed material can be seen at work even in Spenser's adaptation of the following madrigal of Tasso:

Come si' m'accendete
Se tutto ghiaccio sete?
E al foco, che mi date,
Voi ghiaccio, come voi non dileguate?
Anzi a sue fiamme, ah! lasso!
Di ghiaccio diventate un duro sasso.
O miracol d'amor, fuor di natura,
Ch'un ghiaccio altri arda, ed egli al foco indura!⁶⁷

(How can you kindle me so, if yourself are all ice? And how is it that you, who are ice, do not melt in the fire that you give me? But on the contrary -- alas! -- in its flames you turn to hard stone. Oh miracle of love outside all nature, that ice kindles another, and in the fire hardens itself!)

Spenser's rendering:

My loue is lyke to yse, and I to fyre;
how comes it then that this her cold so great
is not disselud through my so hot desyre
but harder grows the more I her intreat?
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
is not delayed by her hart frosen cold:

but, that I burne much more in boyling sweat,
and feel my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told
that fire which all things melts, should harden yse:
and yse which is congealed with sencelesse cold,
should kyndle fyre by wonderfull deuyse?
Such is the powere of loue in gentle mind,
that it can alter all the course of kynd. (Amoretti 30)

Beall⁶⁸ says that a comparison of these two poems shows a "direct imitation on Spenser's part, with little more freedom than was required to expand eight lines into a sonnet." The closing couplet of Spenser's poem, however, expresses a sentiment not found in the original, i.e. the suggestion that it is in 'gentle' mind that love has the given power. Lever says of Amoretti in general that they "celebrate...a courtship in which spiritual aspiration and natural desire were happily reconciled through a willed discipline of the psyche."⁶⁹ It is something of the sort, i.e. the internalization and idealization of experience, which distinguishes Spenser's sonnet from Tasso's madrigal, that seems to characterize the detail from the imagery of the Bower of Bliss, considered above.

But the suggestion, i.e. that the stanza referred to ('The ioyous birdes) etc. depicts something positive rather than negative (as claimed by Durling, etc.) raises rather than dispels difficulties. There can be no doubt that the sexuality that attracts Guyon to the Bower is meant to produce in us a negative response: nature here is 'wanton', the damzelles are 'lewd', and, after all, Guyon

and the Palmer eventually raze the whole to the ground. There seems then to be a contradiction not easily resolvable, for if the whole is bad, the part, being reflective of the whole, should also be bad. But it is not.

A way out of this impasse may be found by returning once again to the relationship existing between a motif and its function. That is, in the stanza under consideration -- no matter what happens at the end of the canto -- we see Spenser's imagination drawn by the power of the motif itself. We have here an indication that his imagination is not repelled by, but on the contrary attracted to, sexuality, but a sexuality that is not forgetful of the demands of the spirit -- idealized sexuality, if we will. The psychological structure of Book II, which after all is meant to suggest those aspects of concupiscence which are inimical to the temperate state, demands that at this culminating point of Guyon's struggle he should meet with those aspects of sexuality characterized by excess and unnaturalness. The sexuality of the Bower is therefore meant to be seen as such. This is why, for example, Spenser omits the maiden's speech ('Oh fortunati peregrini...!') This is why, also, he omits a number of highly significant lines which follow the 'song of the rose' in Tasso, though he borrows verbatim the lines which immediately precede them and follow them. The omitted lines are underlined:

Tacque; e concorde degli augelli il coro,
Quasi approvando, il canto indi ripiglia.
Raddoppian le colombe i baci loro;
Ogni animal d'amar si riconsiglia:
Far che la dura quercia e'l casto alloro,
E tutta la frondosa ampia famiglia,
Far che la terra e l'acqua e formi e spiri.
Dolcissimi d'amor sensi e sospiri.

Fra melodia si tenera, fra tante
Vaghezze allettatrici e lusinghiere,
Va quella coppia; e rigida e costante
Se stessa indura a i vezzi del piacere.
Ecco tra fronde e fronde il guardo inante
Penetra, e vede, o pargli di vedere;
Vede pur certo il vago e la diletta,
Ch'egli e' in grembo a la donna, essa a l'erbetta.
(GL XVI.17)

(He ceased, and in harmony with it the chorus of birds,
as if approving, the song then began anew. The doves
redouble their kisses, every animal is reassured into
loving. It seems as if the hard oak and the chaste
laurel, and all the copious leafy family, it seems as
if the earth and the waters form and breathe senses
and sighs of love most sweet.

In melody so soft, among so many alluring and promising
charms, that pair goes, and, rigid and constant, hardens
itself against the attractions of pleasure. There
through leafy branches the glance in front penetrates,
and sees, or thinks it sees -- it sees for sure the
confused one and his beloved, where he lies on the
lady's lap, she on that of the soft grass.)

In Spenser we simply have:

He ceast, and then gan all the quire of birdes
Their diuerse notes t'attune vnto his lay,
As in approuance of his pleasing words.
The constant paire heard all, that he did say,
Yet swarued not, but kept their forward way,
Throughmany couert groues, and thicketts close,
In which they creeping did at last display
That wanton Ladie, with her louer lose,
Whose sleepe head she in her lap did soft dispose.
(FQ II.xii.76)

Had Spenser included these lines, he would have excluded -- as part of all-consuming sexuality -- a sensuality which all of nature is partaker of, and through which it is made vibrant.⁷⁰ Spenser had no such intention, precisely because this kind of sexuality is not incompatible with his imaginative conception of it. Instead he makes it clear that the sexuality embodied in the Bower is undesirable because it is conscience-dissolving, because it is not married to spirit: it produces sleep, a reflection of death itself. Spenser's imagination is tinged very much with eroticism, but it rejects the sexuality implicit in the following lines -- and the Circean figure which is its embodiment:

And all that while, right ouer him she hong,
With her false eyes fast fixed in his sight,
As seeking medicine, whence she was stong,
Or greedily depasturing delight:
And oft inclining downe with kisses light,
For feare of waking him, his lips bedewd,
And through his humid eyes did sucke his spright,
Quite molten into lust and pleasure lewd;
Wherewith she sighed soft, as if his case she rewd.
(II.xii.73)

It is possible that no matter how we interpret the events of the last canto of Book II, the Palmer's and Guyon's deliberate act of effacement -- 'of the fairest late, now made the foulest place' -- is bound to remain somewhat unsatisfactory. I would recall my remarks above in connection with the narrator's spell-breaking intrusion on the occasion of Carlo's and Ubaldo's entrance into Armida's garden (page 83)

Something of the sort -- a brusque awakening from a pleasant reverie -- seems to characterize the ending of Spenser's Book II. Nevertheless, the throwing of the 'subtile net' remains enigmatic enough to warrant a close look at it. Before I turn to this however, let me conclude my remarks on the Circean qualities of the ladies of the Bowers.

The Circe myth is antithetical to the Neoplatonic belief in man's self-transforming powers: that is, it runs counter to the idea that man is master of his own being. And indeed, if Circean powers can be exercised upon him, then the whole Piconian principle that he can himself ascend or climb down the scale of being totters or falls. Spenser and Tasso make a conscious attempt to resist Circe (which we have learned to see as the embodiment of what is most voluptuous in nature), yet they are powerfully drawn to her. In the case of Tasso, the resulting tension is painful indeed. In the case of Spenser it does not appear to be so intense, but it is nonetheless quite pronounced, as we have seen in those passages just considered. Ariosto, instead, owing at least in part to the fact that he was writing before the onset of the Counter-Reformation and was able to let himself go more freely than either of the others, appears to show an attitude which, though cognizant of the validity, even desirability, of adding to one's spiritual stock, accepts more readily than the others the intrinsic

value of the erotic aspect of life -- and is thus quite willing to go along with the Lady's sport. A look at the 'subtile net' will strengthen the views already manifest above, at the same time that it attempts to uncover its function and significance.

Ma al fin del Canto io mi trovo esser giunto;
Si' ch'io fâro', con vostra grazia, punto. (OF 24)

4. The Capture of the Lady

In Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance Edgar Wind quotes a passage from Ficino in which the latter puts forth the concept of triplex vita, a life with three aspects:

"the contemplative, the active, and the pleasurable (contemplativa, activa, voluptuosa). And three roads to felicity have been chosen by men: wisdom, power, and pleasure (sapientia, potentia, voluptas)"⁷¹

To pursue any one of them at the expense of the others is, according to Ficino, wrong, or even blasphemous. For a life to be happy it is necessary that the three ingredients, wisdom, power, and pleasure be, somehow, intermixed. This is a view shared by Pico, who also states:

The true definition of Beauty...is nothing else than an amicable enmity and a concordant discord...in the constitution of created things it is necessary that the union overcomes the strife...for this reason it is said by the poets that Venus loves Mars, because Beauty, which we call Venus, cannot subsist without contrariety...Venus was placed in the center of heaven next to Mars, because she must tame his impulse which is by nature destructive and corrupting...⁷²

In general, the principle of 'concordant discord' seems to have been deeply felt by poets, artists, and philosophers alike in the Renaissance.

In Botticelli's "Mars and Venus", for example, Venus has tamed Mars to the point where he is shown sleeping, and satyrs are shown playing with his armour. (Plate 2).⁷³

In Cossa's fresco, Mars enchained by Venus, the idea of Mars' submission is even more powerfully rendered: Mars is kneeling before Venus and is chained to her throne. (Plate 4).⁷⁴ Both these examples render the idea of a kind of harmony, but clearly this sort of harmony is not the result of concordant discord. The discord here has in effect been done away with: Mars has relinquished his defining characteristics. The two paintings convey more properly the allegory of Amor vincit omnia than that of concordant discord.

Veronese's painting, 'Mars and Venus' (Plate 2), instead, gives the idea of concordant discord more effectively. Here Mars does kneel in submissive adoration before Venus, as in Cossa's fresco, but the gesture of the cupid joining the legs of both Mars and Venus by tying a ribbon around them suggests that Venus, too, is restrained by Mars. So we have restraint on both sides. Each side makes concessions to the other, but each retains its defining characteristics. Concordant discord effectively portrayed. In Wind's own words:

While Mars bends down in adoration and submission, his fortezza is characterized as a restraining virtue because it is he who holds up the garment of chastity that covers Venus, while she, by touching her breast from which milk flows reveals Castità as transformed into carità... The restraints of love imposed by a noble fortezza are playfully imitated on the right by a cupid using the sword of Mars to restrain the horse, which is already bound by its bridle.⁷⁵



77. Francesco Cossà: Mars enchained by Venus (detail).
Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara

If we recall Ficino's words quoted above, we will note that both Botticelli and Cossa represent a Mars who pursues one of the three aspects of life, the vita voluptuosa, to the ~~exclusion~~ of the contemplativa or activa. The pursuit is therefore wrong. In Veronese, instead, sapientia, potentia, and voluptas are rendered concordant.

Turning to Spenser, it is now perhaps possible to understand better the events at the close of Book II, by considering them in the light of the allegories just studied. Let us note closely how Acrasia and Verdant appear to Guyon and his guide:

There, whence that Musick seemed heard to bee,
Was the faire Witch her selfe now solacing,
With a new Louer, whom through sorcerie
And witchcraft, she from farre did thither bring:
There she had him now layd a slombering,
In secret shade, after long wanton ioyes:
Whilst round about them pleasauntly did sing
Many faire Ladies, and lasciuious boyes,
That euer mixt their song with light licentious toyes.
(XII.72)

As for Acrasia herself:

Vpon a bed of Roses she was layd,
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin,
And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
All in a vele of silke and siluer thin,
That hid no whit her alablaster skin,
But rather shewd more white, if more might bee... (XII.77)

Her snowy brest was bare to readie spoyle
Of hungry eies, which n'ote therewith be fild,
And yet through languour of her late sweet toyle,
Few drops, more cleare then Nectar, forth distild,
That like pure Orient perles adowne it trild
And her faire eyes sweet smyling in delight,

Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
Fraile harts, yet quenched not; like starry light
Which sparckling on the silent waues, does seeme more
bright. (XII.78)

There are many elements in this description that remind us of the painting of Botticelli: the reclining posture of Acrasia, the 'disarayd vele', the playful boys -- in short, the whole atmosphere of voluptuousness. Further details reinforce the thematic and imaginative association between these descriptive passages of the Bower and the quattrocento painting. Compare, moreover, the figure of the sleeping Mars with the cupids toying with his armour in the painting with the following description of the captive warrior in the Bower:

The young man sleeping by her, seemd to bee
Some goodly swayne of honorable place,
That certes it great pittie was to see
Him his nobilitie so foule deface;
A sweet regard, and amiable grace,
Mixed with manly sternnesse did appeare
Yet sleeping, in his well proportioned face,
And on his tender lips the downy heare
Did now but freshly spring, and silken blossomes beare.
(XII.79)

His warlike armes, the idle instruments
Of sleeping praise, were hong vpon a tree,
And his braue shield, full of old monuments,
Was fowly ra'st, that none the signes might see;
Ne for them, ne for honour cared hee,
Ne ought, that did to his aduancement tend,
But in lewd loues, and wastfull luxuree,
His dayes, his goods, his bodie he did spend:
O horrible enchantment, that him so did blend. (XII.80)

The association, it seems, is complete. In these descrip-

tions, as much as in the painting itself, the allegory represents a perversion of the Ficinian -- or, which is much the same, Cusanian -- principle of concordant discord. Both represent the complete triumph of Venus. If Spenser's Bower represents a 'diseased' kind of sexuality (as Lewis suggests) it is diseased in the sense that it keeps its victims from actualizing their full potentialities: that is, Acrasia keeps her victims from engaging in contemplative activities, dutiful endeavours, etc. Consciously, Spenser rebels against this sort of total submission suggested by these representations.⁷⁶ Unlike Botticelli's painting, in which the suggestion that the allegory represents perversion is, if at all, implied by such details as the general posture of the lovers, in Spenser this is explicitly indicated. Here we find the intrusion of words like 'pleasant sin', pejorative suggestions as in the reiteration 'arayd, or rather disarayd', or reminders that the youth defaces his nobility, etc. -- details all designed to suggest the negative qualities of the Venus-figure in the Bower. The negative quality of the figure is emphasized, moreover, by the use of Spenser's qualifier 'yet quenched not' in 77.8. In our attempt to understand this whole scene this qualifier presents a problem. What I mean is this: in Tasso, whom Spenser most likely used as a model for these stanzas, the suggestion of the unsatisfactoriness of this sort of love

is quite fitting. There we find, in fact, that even at the moment of his greatest self-abandon, Rinaldo's yearnings for satisfaction are left somewhat short of total fulfillment, as is very clearly suggested in this stanza:

E i famelici sguardi avidamente
In lei pascendo, si consuma e strugge.
S'inchina, e i dolci baci ella sovente
Liba or da gli occhi, e da le labbra or sugge,
Ed in quel punto ei sospirar si sente
Profondo si', che pensi: Or l'alma fugge
E'n lei trapassa peregrina.... (GL.XVI.19)

(And with the hungry looks, greedily feeding themselves on her, he ruins and consumes himself. She bends over him, and sweet kisses often she offers to his eyes, and draws them from his lips; at that moment he is heard to sigh so deeply, that one thinks: Now the soul flees and in her wanders....)

But in Spenser there is no indication that Verdant is not fully satisfied. Acrasia has worked on him and left him -- to all appearances -- 'quenched'. So, it is from a different level of experience that the significance of the qualifier 'yet quenched not' has to be grasped. I suggest that what is meant here is that the satisfaction lacks that which would turn in to total -- or ideal -- fulfillment: the spiritual element.

In any case, the most violent rejection of this sort of debilitating love is to be found in the closing stanzas of this canto, in the Palmer's act of throwing his 'subtile net' over the dallying couple:

...sudden forth they on them rusht, and threw
A subtle net, which onely for the same
The skilfull Palmer formally did frame.
So held them vnder fast, the whiles the rest
Fled all away for feare of fowler shame. (II.XII.81)

This a gesture which, together with the destruction of the Bower, has exposed Spenser to a great deal of harsh criticism from his commentators.⁷⁷ This gesture, in the same way as the phrase I have just discussed, does indeed appear to be unwarranted, and can only be understood symbolically as an attempt to convert the perversion of the Bower into something more closely akin to the principle of 'concordant discord! What happens, in fact, is that all those 'artifices' employed by Acrasia to seduce her victims are indeed destroyed; but Acrasia herself is not -- she is merely restrained by the net. This restraining enables Guyon and the Palmer not only to release the captive warrior, who duly receives 'counsell sage' from the Palmer (82:9), but also to free all those countless victims of Acrasia and to restore them to their proper functions. Spenser's sympathies are clearly on the side of Veronese in the recognition that a subdued Venus will be more fruitful than one whose power exercises unlimited control.⁷⁸ Herein lies the full significance of the net. It becomes symbolical in a very broad sense of Spenser's deeply felt inclination toward the principle of coincidentia oppositorum.

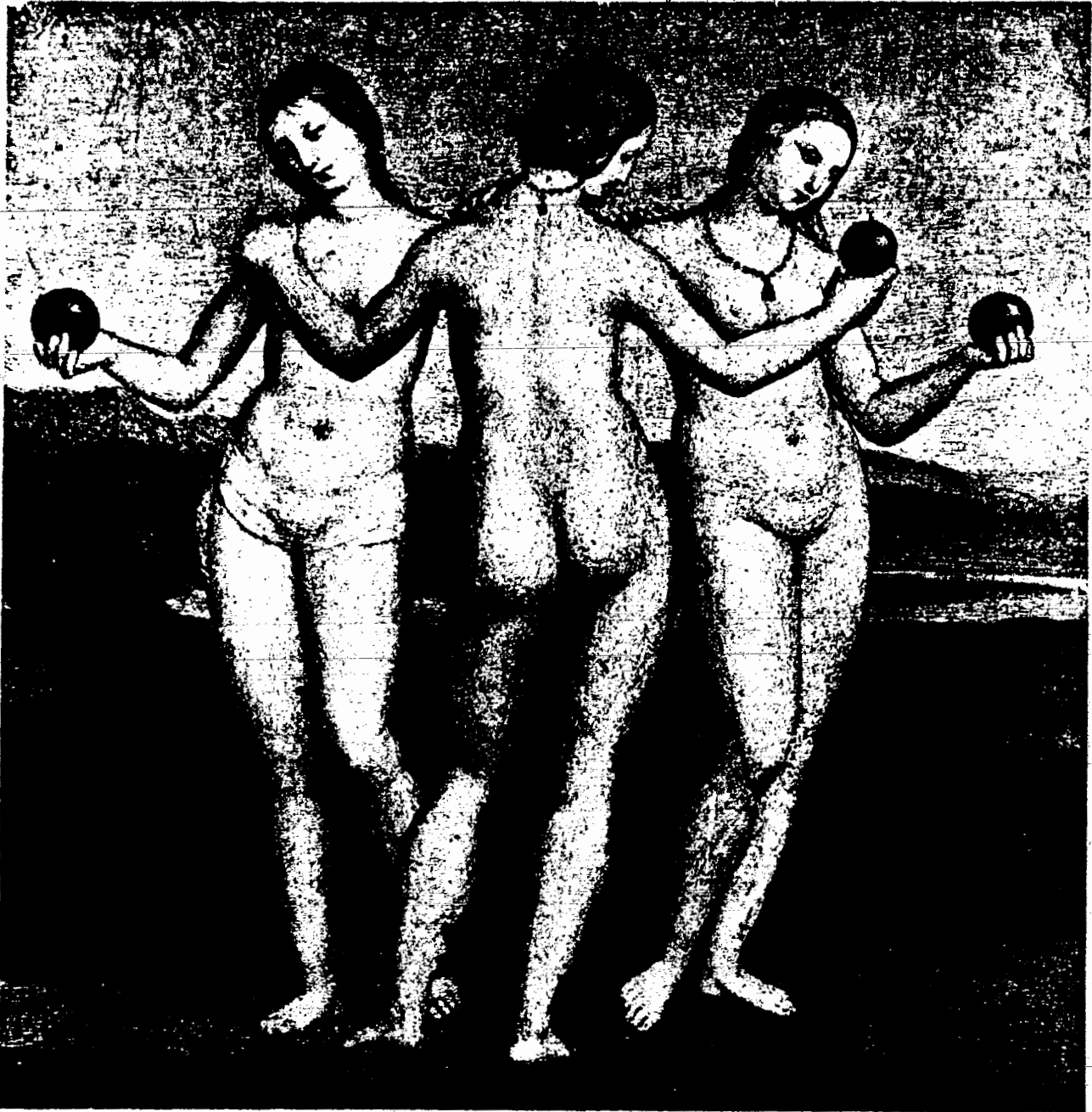
Having said this, I find it necessary to observe

that in Spenser as much as in Veronese it is possible to argue that the allegorizing of the principle of concordant discord is in the main an intellectual game. It is quite possible to argue that there is more intellectual ingenuity involved here than artistic imagination. Consider, as another example, Raphael's 'The Three Graces' (Plate 5).⁷⁹

To suggest the moral 'Beauty inclines Chastity towards Love' Raphael adds, in Wind's words, the following details:

Although the group retains its classical symmetry, the emphasis is decidedly on the right. Two apples are here offered, as against one; and the two little chains also add their weight. Only one foot of the left figure is clearly visible, so that her counter-movement has little support. And the landscape in the background sustains the asymmetrical action, the expanse of water flowing freely towards the right while it stops short behind the figure of Chastity.⁸⁰

Thus the allegory works, but it works through intellectual impact. Where does the imaginative experience enter here? Are the two, imagination and intellect, inseparable? If we look at this painting again we will not fail to notice (indeed, it may be the first thing we notice) the feminine charm of the figures, of Chastity as much as of Pleasure: the soft, round curves, etc., which imbue the figures with a voluptuousness that does more to suggest the artist's imaginative experience than the wit displayed in, for example, exposing one of Pleasure's breasts while keeping Chastity's concealed.⁸¹ (The reproduction of this painting



Reproduced from *The Complete Paintings of Raphael*, P. Lecaldano ed., Rizzoli (1966).

is in black and white; the colours in the original do even more to strengthen this suggestion.) If it is these less tangible aspects of the work which reveal the nature of the imaginative experience, then we find that, at least in the case of Raphael, intellect and imagination come to each other's aid; in other words, the motif and its function reinforce each other. Can the same thing be said of Spenser?

J.W. Saunders, who has taken up the problem of Spenser's dualism, offers an interesting solution.⁸² He finds that Spenser, as well as numerous other professional poets in Elizabethan times, was of two minds, doubtful whether to please in his writing the tastes of the Courtier, who, as Saunders supposes, appreciated an open approach to experience, or to please the tastes of his more numerous middle-class readers, who expected a didactic treatment of his material. He concludes that the result was a "dualistic attitude, a dichotomous form of poetry, and ethical ambivalence... Spenser's career was shaped by his determination to please both audiences."⁸³ Further on he adds:

[Spenser's] virtues and vices always parade in masques of conflicting colours, dazzling whites and guilty blacks, fertile golds and costly scarlets, and the moral and symbolical values attached to them tend to disappear, beneath the transforming power of his imagination, until only the sensuous brilliance remains vital and vivid and semantic in a context of fantasy far removed from moral truth.⁸⁴

Saunders supports his case by giving a powerful analysis of

the colour imagery in Spenser. But if he is correct, then the allegory we discussed above is tagged on merely for the benefit of Spenser's middle-class readers. As such it is not an expression of genuinely felt experience. This is very much what Saunders seems to be saying:

The unique wonders of the imaginative experience (and these represented Spenser's chief claim to genius and poetic fame) and the didactic truths of the moral allegory are like oil and water.⁸⁵

Saunders' argument is admittedly very strong, but it does not fully persuade. The allegorical streak in Spenser is ubiquitous and too overwhelming to be brushed aside as no more than a pretty tag to catch the "sober but unimaginative citizen".⁸⁶

Recall the Medieval miniature and Durer's drawing, as discussed above: in Durer's work the intellectual element, i.e. the myth as understood in Medieval times, is subordinated to the totality of the other elements (a landscape teeming with animated creatures) which suggests the stirring of the life force. Something pretty much the same can be said to be happening in Spenser. In him the counterpart of the Rape of Europa as sifted by the Medieval imagination (see page 21) is the allegory of 'temperance', i.e. the subduing of Acrasia. Intellectually there is a revolt against her captivating charms. It is a revolt not altogether unlike that of the Italian critics faced with

the sensual appeal of Ariosto's work, as discussed in the first chapter of this paper. But the imaginative form in which the Bower is conceived (the sensuous descriptions of the natural setting, of the maidens, and of Acrasia herself) gives a significance to the work which adds to -- indeed shapes the allegory itself. The two tendencies are not mutually exclusive; they coexist in a manner which will become clear below.

E. Cassirer tells us that in the middle ages the influence of antiquity was an influence of content.⁸⁷ In the Renaissance this changed. Content exercised its influence, of course, but "the new form into which this traditional content was poured was destined gradually to change the content."⁸⁸ This is precisely what Panofsky observed as happening in the case of Duerer, whose painting gives new form to an old content and decidedly alters it. The foregoing gives us a new insight into the nature of the imagination of Spenser and the other artists we have been studying. The allegorical temper is retained but the imagination which gives it form has undergone remarkable changes. "The miniaturist's imagination was fired simply by abstract, a priori considerations as to the nature and function of human beings and of the world. Duerer's imagination, as that of Spenser, Ariosto and Tasso, was fed and shaped by both these considerations and an accurate -- or at least

genuine -- observation of nature, which revealed, in the very act of observation, its fascination to them. The depth of the influence exercised upon the imaginations of these Renaissance figures by these opposed elements varied from case to case, but its impact was felt quite powerfully by all of them.

In the Renaissance theory of knowledge we may find other clues as to the attraction that seems to underlie Spenser's conscious objections to his material, or 'motifs'. The Cusanian principle of the 'coincidence of opposites' lies at the very heart of this theory. The theory tells us that

the act of knowledge and the act of love have one and the same goal, for both strive to overcome the separation in the elements of being, and return to the point of their original unity. Knowledge is nothing but a specific stage in this road... The highest intellect became a thinking consciousness only when it was moved by love to divide itself in two, and to confront itself with the world of objects of knowledge or objects of contemplation. But the act of knowledge that initiates the division... is also capable of overcoming it. For to know an object means to negate the distance between it and consciousness; it means, in a certain sense, to become one with the object....⁸⁹

In terms of this epistemological position, Spenser 'loves' his Acrasia and the Bower in which she dwells. We need not deny that he holds Acrasia and her charms, as absolutes, sinful -- or evil. But once we have made this observation, we must allow that he has obtained a full 'contemplative

knowledge that causes him to shrink from them. A look at the origins of the "net" image, and at Spenser's imaginative recreation of it will explain this.

As we have seen near the end of the last canto of Book II Guyon and the Palmer draw near the sleeping Verdant and his seductress, and --

Suddeine forth on them rusht, and threw
A subtile net, which only for the same
The skilfull Palmer formally did frame. (II.XII.81)

In a gloss to this stanza J. Upton⁹⁰ notes that a possible source for Spenser was OF XV.56, in which Astolfo uses a similar net to entrap the giant Caligorant who, in turn, used it to entrap strangers. In Ariosto the net

...era quella che gia' piedi e mano
Avea legate a Venere et a Marte.
La fe il geloso, e non ad altro effetto,
Che per pigliarli insieme ambi nel letto.

(...was that which had formerly bound the hands and feet of Venus and Mars. The jealous one made it, and for no other purpose than to catch them both together in bed.)

Ultimately, the image of the net is derived from Ovid's Metamorphoses:

...Vulcan's mind went dark; he dropped his work
And turned at once to subtle craftsmanship,
To make a net so light, so delicate,
So thinly woven of fine-tempered bronze
The casual, glancing eye would never see it --
Less visible than sleekest threads of wool
Or nets that spiders hang from the tallest beams.
He made it so it yielded at each touch,

Each trembling gesture or the slightest movement,
Then draped it as a sheet on his wife's bed.
So shrewdly was it made that when the goddess
Took to her bed within her lover's arms,
Both were caught up and held within the net.⁹¹

Both Ariosto and Spenser rightly tell us that the net was originally made for the specific purpose of entrapping unlawful lovers. But, even granting that there is a similarity between the use to which the net was originally put and the use the Palmer makes of it, the motivations for employing it are ostensibly quite different. The function of the net in Ariosto is not at all that of entrapping lovers, but that of catching wayfarers to be devoured by the giant. Since the motivation for making the net to begin with was jealousy, it is indeed hard to see Ariosto's own intention for bringing in a myth which seems so far removed from the present purpose. Moreover, the Palmer's motivation for weaving and using the net has nothing to do with jealousy, nor with waylaying strangers for the same reasons that Caligorant does. So where lies the connection? We need to look at Ariosto and Spenser more closely.

In the original myth the net is used, as I have already suggested, to ensnare those whose inclination is towards unbridled sensual love. Everyone feels the attraction of the sensual; but not everyone is equipped with the knowledge necessary to oppose it. Lack of this knowledge exposes many to the danger of self-destruction. Thus

Caligorant so sets the net, and

...nella trita polve in modo appiatta,
Che chi prima nol sa, non la comprende
Tanto e' sottil. (OF.XV.44)

(...in the fine dust hides so, that he who knows not
of it beforehand does not perceive it, so 'subtile'
it is.)

But Astolfo, thanks to the Hermit's warning (stanza 42) and to the infusion of the Logistilla element in him, is well prepared and has nothing to fear. Knowing about it beforehand enables him to use it against the one who would entrap him with it. One hates to squeeze allegory out of Ariosto, but, given the allegorical temper of the age, Spenser (aided by the late cinquecento commentators of the Furioso) is very likely to have seen the incident as being saturated with allegorical potentialities. In any case, what the incident may signify is that knowledge of a danger can effectually overcome the danger itself. Those who fall victim to Acrasia have to be understood as being unaware of the danger to their natures which yielding to her implies: loss of virtue, reversion to a non-rational state (as we have seen in connection with the discussion of the Circe-myth.) Hence the sleeping Verdant and the other knights turned into plants or animals by the sorceress. Guyon looks upon the unconscious knight and sees in him (as we do) an image of what he himself might become,

except for the guidance of the Palmer. The knowledge thus obtained (and we remember that the road that enabled him to attain to this knowledge has not been an easy one) of the danger to their natures inhering in the Bower enables Guyon and the Palmer to overcome, or control, the enchantress.

This suggests how Spenser reshapes imaginatively the traditional image of the net into one which reflects the Renaissance theory of knowledge, as discussed above. For Ficino, moreover, "matter is that with which all activity of the form must begin and through which the form (i.e. the Idea) must realize itself."⁹² Hence a contemplation of the object in itself (Verdant's total yielding to the voluptuous charms of Acrasia) and not for its possibilities of becoming (i.e. neglect of Acrasia's fruitful potentialities) is undesirable: the sleeping Verdant is an imaginative rendering of the concept of the cessation of becoming. Hence the net-throwing becomes a necessary action to liberate those who, like Verdant, have relinquished, in large part, their function as human beings -- which is more than a simple dissolution in the object.

I have suggested that the throwing of the net has to be understood as a restraining gesture, rather than a gesture symbolizing the annihilation of everything that the Bower of Bliss stands for. It is true that, in a literal sense the Bower is utterly destroyed. This fact is not

easily reconcilable with my suggestion that Spenser's imagination is not averse to retaining that which is most pleasurable in the Bower without at the same time letting it become soul-destroying. This interpretation is in fact not tenable if we confine our observations to the events of Book II, where, in the Bower episode, what happens is literally destruction, not search for a happy coincidence of opposites. And it is perhaps, ultimately, not tenable at all. However, if we look at these events from the perspective of later books of The Faerie Queene, then, perhaps, Guyon's and the Palmer's wilful act of destruction acquires a meaning unseen before. I have suggested that in terms of Renaissance thought the allurements of the Bower and of Acrasia, if allowed to run their full course, all lead to the cessation of becoming -- to the anesthetizing of the productive powers of man, as witnessed by the unconscious Verdant and the other victims of Acrasia turned into animals or plants. Were we to juxtapose the Bower to its recreation in the Garden of Adonis in Book III, we might see that the disparate elements of the Bower -- voluptuousness and sterility -- have undergone a permutation which is more productive and which accords well with the principle of the coincidence of opposites. Wedded love, moreover, which is the quest -- a strict alliance between spirit and matter -- of the heroine of Book III, is a manifestation of that very principle. Approached thus, the

events of the Bower; the Knight's deeds of turning the fairest place into the foulest, can be understood as attempts to expose the essential sterility of the uncontrolled voluptas of the place.

Ma mi par di veder, ma veggo certo,
veggo la' terra, e veggo il lito aperto...
(OF 46:1)

5. Summary and Conclusion

My study of Spenser and his Italian precursors in this paper has been restricted to an episode which has parallels in each of their poems. My purpose in undertaking this study has not, of course, been that of showing the extent of Spenser's use of the Southern poets. I have assumed this to be a fact known well enough already. My purpose has been, rather, to try to discover the urge that underlay Spenser's borrowings, feeling that certain aspects of Spenser's work would as a result be made more readily comprehensible. What we have discovered from the foregoing analysis of the pleasure gardens of the Orlando Furioso, the Gerusalemme Liberata, and The Faerie Queene can be summarized as follows.

We have discovered, first of all, that the motif of the 'bower', its structure and function, is strikingly similar in each of the three poems. The employment of almost identical motifs by them has suggested the possibility that, in spite of the notable differences that exist between them, the psyches of these poets overlap in at least one important respect: each is drawn to the erotic in nature, and the attraction itself is in large measure responsible for the imaginative rendering of the motifs. An analysis of the works of several painters and sculptors, and of

other artists, has supported to a considerable extent the hypothesis that, no matter the use to which the motifs are put, the use of like motifs implies a certain degree of psychical affinity among those who employ them. The degree of affinity, however, will be more or less, depending on how close, or how far apart are the individual interpretations of the motifs. A comparison of Alcina, Armida, and Acrasia has enabled us to see how Spenser differs from Ariosto and Tasso. We have seen how each of these figures mesmerizes the central hero into a state of more or less temporary inactivity, and keeps him from either the performance of his 'higher' duties (as in the case of Ruggero or Rinaldo) or from the attainment of his 'ideal' state, as in the case of Guyon. In each of the poems the Lady of the Bower represents a type of experience which lies at opposite poles from that of the ideal which the heroes try to achieve.

The poetry of the Liberata suggests that the sort of dissolution sought by Rinaldo in the arms of Armida is yearned for by the poet himself. But the force of his libido is not powerful enough to keep him at the same time from desiring the precise opposite of this, what Rank calls the "impulse to self-preservation from complete absorption of the ego in the collective."⁹³ In spite of Rinaldo's resolution of this conflict in favour of the ideal, the tension never seems to find release in Tasso. In Ariosto the case is

different: the either/or situation of Tasso hardly seems to affect him. The poetry of the *Furioso*, its episodic structure, the brusqueness of its transitions from the sublime to the commonplace to the ridiculous -- all these suggest a mind not prone to the prescription of a fixed and severe set of rules to be followed. Man's essential humanity is not made less by those impulses which refuse to be repressed by ethical demands. The management of the Alcina/Ruggero episode makes clear how fully Ariosto joys in the vagaries of human nature and in its refusal to fit in any given mould.

Spenser's poetry combines elements of both the *Furioso* and the *Liberata*, yet it differs from both. One could say, with Graham Hough,⁹⁴ that Spenser is kin to Ariosto in his love of variety and to Tasso in his recognition of an absolute ideal in life. What distinguishes him fundamentally from both, however, is his effective synthesis of the dulce and the utile. For Tasso there seems to be no reconciliation between the two. For Ariosto, both have their part to play in life, and each is left to play its separate part. It is only in the imaginative vision of Spenser that the two effectively join hands. The study of the Bower of Bliss has shown us that Spenser is not immune to feminine charms and, in general, to the erotic in nature. We have seen it, in fact, to be one of the formative influences of his imagination. Unlike

Tasso, however, who, torn by conflict, ultimately finds no fulfillment either in one form of experience or in the other, Spenser happily resolves the conflict by envisaging a state in which ethical demands and instinctual forces meet. The resolution implicit in the subduing of Acrasia in the Book on Temperance receives strength in the next book of The Faerie Queene.

It is not the purpose of this paper to carry out an extensive analysis of Book III. Another paper, larger in size than the present one, would be needed to do it some justice. A few observations, however, are not out of place. The structure of the book, which emphasizes the acceptance of the physical, fully supports the views expressed above. C.S. Lewis notes that the Garden of Adonis in Book III is the more healthy counterpart of the Bower of Bliss in the preceding book.⁹⁵ Though Lewis may not be altogether correct in his reading of these two pivotal cantos, one cannot fail to notice that although the Venus/Adonis embrace bears a strong resemblance to that of Acrasia and Verdant in the Bower, yet the former is distinguished from the latter by its close and significant juxtaposition to a complex of images associated with reproduction and fertility, altogether lacking in the composition of the Bower. In this sense Lewis's remarks ought not to pass unheeded. Moreover, the Garden of Adonis is the place where Amoret is raised and

trained -- and we remember that Amoret as much as, or more than Belphebe can be regarded as the projection of an important aspect of Britomart's psyche. The sexuality of the Garden is something which has to be accepted by, and become part of, the personality of Britomart. This sexuality, however, is distinguishable from that of the Bower in that it is not conducive to unproductive inactivity. The ideal to which Britomart aspires, after all, is union with Artegal; and marriage implies a harmonious joining together of two discordant elements: the spiritual and the physical. But the ideal will not be achieved unless Britomart is disposed to accept the sexuality requisite for such a union.

Britomart's movement toward a gradual acceptance of sexuality is, in the view of Maurice Evans,⁹⁶ precisely the movement we observe in the structure of Book III. I want to conclude this paper by lingering for a moment on the concluding episodes of this book, that is, on Britomart's freeing of Amoret from Busyrane's palace, which Evans, seeing in Amoret but an embodiment or an aspect of Britomart, interprets as Britomart's final release from an obsessive fear of sexuality. As Britomart enters the palace she is confronted by objects which are meant to inspire this sort of fear in the beholder. What Britomart witnesses (and

we do also) on the tãpestries on the walls of Busyrane's halls is in effect, an inversion of the Circe-motif, in which we see the Gods themselves undergoing a process of self-transformation in order to obtain sexual gratification. Here we see Jove

...leaving heauens kingdome, here did roue
In straunge disguise, to slake his scalding smart;
Now like a Ram, faire Helle to peruart,
Now like a Bull, Europa to withdraw: (FQ.III.XI.30)

Then we see him becoming a "golden showre" to view the "faire Danae" (stanza 31), or turning into a "snowy Swan/To win faire Leda" (stanza 32). We see also Neptune turning into a "Steare" and "fed on fodder, to beguile" the sight of Arne, Aeolus' daughter (stanza 42). We see also other gods engaged in like activities. The presentation of the power of Cupid in these tãpestries is ambiguous because in Busyrane's castle its purpose is to show to Amoret and Britomart how debasing is the sexual urge, if it succeeds even in corrupting the gods. But there is another way to interpret these drawings: the depicted metamorphoses can suggest that even the gods cannot find fulfillment unless they seek to go outside their own domain and mix with the human; and the mixing here has to be understood as the union of the physical and spiritual. The gods can truly go up and down the scale of being, but fulfillment is found only in encompassing the whole range of the scale -- not in re-

maining on one unchangeable spot, as for example do the animals and the angels in Fico's model, both of which fall far short of the ideal. This is Spenser's vision, and herein is to be found the point of divergence between him and the Italian poets.

Par che tutti s'allegriano ch'io sia
Venuto a fin di così lunga via. (OF.46:1)

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. E.g., C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, London (1959); G.Hough, A Preface to the Fairie Queene, Norton, New York (1963).
2. See Spenser's letter to Raleigh, which prefaced the first edition of the F.Q. in which he openly acknowledges his debt to the Italian poets. See also references in the Variorum edition of the F.Q.
3. E.G. Schachtel, Chapter on "Memory and Childhood Amnesia" in his Metamorphosis, Basic Books, New York (1959).
- 3a. It is true that the moderns (Romantics, Jungians, etc.) did not originate the idea of 'inspiration' to account for the subconscious workings of poetry. Cf. for example Shakespeare's comparison of the poet with the lover and the madman in Midsummer Night's Dream;

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.
One sees more devils than vast Hell can hold,
That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

Cf., also, the 'powder and jam' theory of Tasso and Sidney themselves (see text, page 11), in which the unconscious workings of poetry are explicitly referred to. The concept seems indeed to have been a commonplace in both Renaissance and Medieval times. Cf. E.R. Curtius, in European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, Appendix VIII; "The theory of 'poetic madness' is based on the profound idea of numinous inspiration -- a concept which reappears from time to time and is, as it were, an esoteric knowledge of the divine origin of poetry. For example, in the Florentine Platonism of the late Quattrocento... If we now look back at the Middle Ages, we can see that the theory of 'poetic madness' -- the Platonic interpretation of the doctrine of inspiration and enthusiasm -- lived on through the entire millennium which extends from the conquest of Rome by the Goths to the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks... The Middle Ages took this

(Continued on Page 126)

(Continued from Page 125)

on from late Rome, preserved it, and copied it to the letter, until the creative Eros of the Italian Renaissance reawakened the spirit in the letter." The difference between the modern and the earlier positions with respect to the concept of divine frenzy (eroici furori) has to be found, it seems to me, in the moderns' de-emphasis on the "divine" nature of the frenzy and their acceptance of the frenzy simply as an authentic expression of the individual's self. Thus, though the concept is shared by moderns and earlier poets alike, a reversal of values seems to take place.

4. Bernard Weinberg, History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance, The University of Chicago Press, Volume II, 1961, pp. 954-1073.
5. Ibid., p. 968.
6. Ibid.
7. Sebastiano Minturno, Arte Poetica (1563).. Minturno's rebuttal is a matter of principle, "based on a conception of poetic art which is opposed" to that of Giraldi Cinthio's. He claims that a romanzo is no poetry at all. Weinberg, p. 971.
8. Ibid., p. 972.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 980.
11. The work of this critic (Vat. Lat. 6578), is entitled Disceptatur cur Ariostus probetur omnibus qui tamen Aristotelis praeceptis non satisfacit. This writer attempts, in effect, to reconcile positions as unlike as those of Minturno and Giraldi: Weinberg (pp. 978-980) guesses the date of composition to be 1580.
12. Weinberg, p. 980.
13. Ibid., p. 1007.
14. Ibid., p. 1021.
15. Ibid., p. 712. It is interesting that Tasso, who is not very favourable toward Ariosto, yet holds a view of

(Continued on Page 127)

(Continued from Page 126)

nature which corresponds closely with Ariosto's imaginative conception of it. Consider, for example, this passage from the Discorsi, quoted in Hough, pp. 56-57: "For myself I consider unity in the heroic poem both un-necessary and possible to obtain, for, as in this wonderful masterpiece of God called the world the sky appears scattered over and divided by so great a variety of stars and, to descend then step by step the air and the sea appear full of birds and fishes and the earth harbours so many beasts wild and tame, the earth where are found brooks and springs and lakes and meadows and plains and woods and mountains, here fruits and flowers, there ice and snow, here dwellings and tillage, there wildernesses and terrors, yet for all this the world is one though folding into its bosom so many different things, its form and essence are one, and one the fashion in which its parts are joined and knit together with a kind of discordant harmony; and though nothing is lacking to it, nothing is there either superfluous or not necessary...."

16. Weinberg, p. 798.
17. "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions." Aristotle's Poetics, edited by Francis Fergusson, Hill and Wang, New York, 1966 reprint (1st edition 1961), page 61.
18. Weinberg, p. 799.
19. John Harington, Orlando Furioso, in English Heroical Verse (1591), Da capo Press, N.Y. (1970).
20. Ibid.
21. Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesy, Regents Critics, Louis Soens editor, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln (1970), p. 24.
22. Edmund Spenser's Poetry, edited by Hugh Mclean, Norton edition (1968), p. 1.
23. Will Durant, The Renaissance, Simon and Shuster, New York (1953), p. 690.

24. A.G. Dickens, The Counter-Reformation, Harcourt, Brace and World, (1969), p. 184.
25. Ibid., p. 119.
26. E. Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, Harper and Row, New York (1962). See also his "Renaissance and Renascences" (KR, IV.1944, pp.201-235) in which Panofsky compares Poliziano's poem with a medieval one and Ovid's own to illustrate the same thesis.
27. Ludovico Ariosto, Orlando Furioso, a cura di Pietro Papini, nuova presentazione di Giovanni Rencioni, Sansoni, Florence (1970). All references in this paper are taken from this edition of the OF.
28. Unless otherwise specified all quotations from the FQ are taken from Spenser, Poetical Works, edited by J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Press (1970). Ariosto's line is echoed in Spenser's more sober: "O goodly vsage of those antique times...(F.Q.III.13).
29. For an exhaustive account of Spenser's borrowings from Ariosto see R.E. Neil Dodge, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto", PMLA (1897), Volume XII, pp. 151-204. For a similar account of Spenser's borrowings from Tasso see Harold H. Blanchard, "Imitations from Tasso in The Faerie Queene", Studies in Philology, XXII(1925), pp. 198-221.
30. FQ II.ii.44.
31. OF.VII.44.
32. This and all further translations of the GL and the OF are my own attempts. Editions of the GL used are the one edited by Guido Mazzoni, Firenze, Casa Editrice "Nemi"; and the more recent one by Lanfranco Caretti, Einaudi Editore, Torino (1971).
33. As in (27) above.
- 33a. Jung also tells us that according to modern psychology fantasy-activity falls into two categories: fantasies of a personal character, and collective fantasies. If we regard the Circe myth as an archetype, then the episodes involving Alcina, Armida, and Acrasia are actually fantasies of the second type, even though they are invested with personal characteristics: "The fantasy-products of the second category...arise in a state of

(Continued on Page 129)

(Continued from Page 128)

reduced intensity of consciousness (in dreams, delirium, reveries, visions, etc.). In all these states the check put upon unconscious contents by the concentration of the conscious mind ceases, so that the hitherto unconscious material streams...into the field of consciousness.

C.G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol, edited by Violet S. de Laszlo, Anchor (1958), p. 118.

34. Robert Graves, The White Goddess, Faber and Faber, London, 1971. Reprint, p. 375.
35. Ibid., p. 386.
36. Ibid., my emphasis.
37. The Odyssey of Homer, translated by Richmond Lattimore, Harper and Row, Publishers, New York, (1967), p. 155.
38. Ibid., p. 158.
39. Ibid., p. 161.
40. Ibid.
41. Virgil, The Aeneid, translated with an introduction by W.F. Jackson Knight, Penguin edition (1956), III.26-62.
42. Ibid.
43. Virgil and Spenser, p. 368, Kennikat Press, New York (1969).
44. In terms of the allegory contact with Fradubio means, or is supposed to mean, that henceforth Redcross is assailed by doubt.
45. The King of Thrace "broke every known law of righteousness. He murdered Polydorus and forcibly seized the gold; no wickedness is beyond a man whom that accursed gold-lust drives." (The Aeneid, op. cit., p. 76.)
46. C.S. Lewis, The Discarded Image, Cambridge University Press (1971). In his discussion of the Christian prohibition against suicide, Lewis traces its roots in the pagan past, especially in the writings of Cicero's Republica and Plato's Phaedo. He quotes a passage from Cicero's work, which reads in part: "...Therefore you, Publius, and all good men must retain the soul in the

(Continued on Page 130)

(Continued from Page 129)

body's fetters and not depart from human life without the orders of him who gave you a soul. Otherwise you may be held to have deserted the duty allotted by God to man.
(p. 25)

47. O.F. VIII.82.
48. Edwin Greenlaw, in The Works of Edmund Spenser, Book I, Variorum, p. 204.
49. Hughes, op. cit., p. 369.
50. "We choose what we really know is good, but we have opinions on subjects about which we do not really know. It seems that it is not the same people who make the best choice that are best at opinions: some people are rather good at opinions, but choose the wrong things because of vice." Aristotle, Ethics, III.2.
51. F.Q.I.ii.40.
52. The imprisonment has some affinity with Ariel's imprisonment in a tree by the witch Sycorax in Shakespeare's Tempest, but the freeing of Fradubio in the F.Q. requires the intervention of a different sort of magic from that exercised by Prospero: in the one an act of faith is required; in the other an act of the imagination.
53. Maclean, op. cit., p. 29.
54. E.g. C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love; also, Robert N. Durling, "The Bower of Bliss and Armida's Palace", Comp. Lit. 6(1954), pp. 335-347.
55. Cf. The Sirene's Song in II.xii.32.
56. This quotation taken from Durant, op. cit., p. 122.
57. T. Tasso, Discourses on the Heroic Poem, translated by M. Cavalchini and I. Samuel, Oxford (1973), p. 171; but also quoted partially in T. Greene, The Descent from Heaven, Yale University Press (1963), p. 215 (footnote); and in A.M. Patterson, "Tasso and Neoplatonism: The Growth of his Epic Theory", St. in Ren. 18(1971), pp. 105-133.
58. Quoted from Patterson, op. cit.
59. Ibid.

60. Tasso, Discourses, p. 171.
61. Patterson, op. cit.
62. See Blanchard, op. cit.; also, notes in F.Q., Variorum, Book I.
63. Notes in Variorum, as in 62.
64. Allegory of Love, Oxford, London (1959).
65. I am indebted for these thoughts to Drs. Gallagher and Lever.
66. Tasso, too, suggests something like this sort of harmony, but, significantly, later, when Rinaldo's love for Armida has been converted from a love that is conscience-numbing to a love infused with ethical considerations: see G.L. XVIII.25:1-2.
67. Chandler B. Beall ("A Tasso Imitation in Spenser", MLQ 3.559-60), quoted in Variorum, The Minor Poems, Vol. II, p. 430.
68. Ibid.
69. J.W. Lever, The Elizabethan Love Sonnet, London (1956), p. 136.
70. Why, then, it may be asked, did he incorporate the stanza beginning with "loyous birdes", which we have found to be positive? As a conscious hint of the sort of sexuality approved of? But if that is the case, he ran the risk of excluding that, too, as part of the total negative effect intended. An unavoidable problem. However, it is not improbable that Spenser may, at times, be inconsistent: his imagination does not, after all, seem to be always governed by logic. The point of my analysis of this 'problem' stanza, including the discussion of the omitted lines, however, is simply to show that Spenser has nothing against sexuality, providing it is not totally self-absorbing -- at which point he does rebel imaginatively, as will be further shown in the rest of the paper.
71. Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, Norton Library N.Y. (1968), p. 82.
72. Ibid., p. 89.

73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., pp. 89-90.
76. Spenser's imagination, it seems, is a blend of ethical and instinctual forces. It may be that it is no use trying to find an unwavering consistency in his point of view. There are times when the pull of subliminal forces do more to shape his imagination than ethical ones. The depiction of the Bower of Bliss may point to one of these times. On the whole, though, it seems as if the conflict manifested in the episode is happily resolved in favour of the synthetic position, where instinct and morality achieve a kind of balance. As we shall see later, this seems to be true in the case of Books III and IV, where marriage -- the effective union of spirit and matter, of voluptas, sapientia and potentia, all embodied in Britomart -- forms the dominant motif.
77. See Variorum, The F.Q., Book II. Notes.
78. It may be of some significance that both Spenser and Veronese (who hold a similar position) are producing their major works in the second half of the 16th-Century, while Botticelli and Ariosto are both pre-Counter-Reformation figures.
79. Wind, p. 61.
80. Ibid.
81. J.W. Saunders, "The Facade of Morality", in That Sovereign Light, edited by W.R. Mueller and D.C. Allen, Baltimore (1952), p. 13.
82. This remains true, I believe, even though the sensuousness of the figures is somewhat qualified by the choice of very young girls.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 24.
85. Ibid., p. 21.
86. Ibid., p. 22.
87. E. Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, p. 159 ff. Trans. with an Introd. by Mario Domandi, N.Y. (1964).

88. Ibid., p. 160.
89. Ibid., p. 134: Theory developed by Patrizzi.
90. Variorum, F.Q., Book II, p. 393.
91. Ovid's Metamorphoses, H. Gregory's translation, Mentor (1958), p. 116.
92. Cassirer, p. 132.
93. Otto Rank, The Myth of the Birth of the Hero, ed. by Philip Freund, New York (1959).
94. Hough, op. cit.
95. Lewis, Allegory.
96. Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism, Cambridge (1970); see chapter on Book III.

Among works consulted but not cited in text: a) Comparative studies: P.T. Alpers, chapter on the use of Ariosto in The Poetry of the Faerie Queene (Princeton 1967); C.F. Brank, "Tasso, Spenser and the Orlando Furioso" in Petrarch to Pirandello, J.A. Molinaro, ed. (Toronto 1973); V. Kostic, "Ariosto and Spenser" (Eng. Misc. 17 -- 1966). b) Individual studies of the Italian authors: B. Croce, Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille; F. de Sanctis, Storia della Lett. It.; A. Momigliano, Saggio sull'Orlando Furioso.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Texts:

Ariosto, Ludovico, Orlando Furioso, a cura di Pietro Papini, nuova presentazione di Giovanni Rencioni, Sansoni, Florence (1970).

Spenser, Edmund, Spenser, Poetical Works, edited by J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford Press (1970).

The Works of Edmund Spenser, edited by Edwin Greenlaw, Variorum edition, Volumes 1-6.

Edmund Spenser's Poetry, edited by Hugh Mclean, Norton (1968).

Tasso, Torquato, Gerusalemme Liberata, a cura di Lanfranco Carètti, Einaudi Editore, Torino (1971).

Secondary References: Selected List

Blanchard, H.H., "Imitation from Tasso in The Faerie Queene", Studies in Philology, XXII (1925), pp. 198-221.

Cassirer, E., The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, translated and with an introduction by Mario Domandi, N.Y. (1964).

Croce, B., Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille, Russell & Russell, New York (1966).

Curtius, E.R., European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, Harper and Row, Publishers, New York (1963).

De Sanctis, F., Storia della Letteratura Italiana, Feltrinelli Editore, Milano (1964).

Dickens, A.G., The Counter-Reformation, Harcourt, Brace and World, N.Y. (1969).

Dodge, R.E. Neil, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto", PMLA (1897), Vol. XII, pp. 151-204.

- Durling, R.N., "The Bower of Bliss and Armida's Palace", Comp. Literature 6 (1954), pp. 335-347.
- Evans, Maurice, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism, Cambridge (1970).
- Graves, Robert, The White Goddess, Faber and Faber, London (1971).
- Greene, T., The Descent from Heaven, Yale University Press (1963).
- Harington, John, Orlando Furioso, reprint of 1591 edition, Da Capo Press, N.Y. (1970).
- Hough, Graham, A Preface to The Faerie Queene, Norton Library, New York (1963).
- Hughes, Merritt, Virgil and Spenser, Kennikat Press, New York (1969).
- Jung, Carl G., Psyche and Symbol, edited by Violet de Lazlo, Anchor (1958).
- Lever, J.W., The Elizabethan Love Sonnet, London (1956).
- Lewis, C.S., The Allegory of Love, London (1959).
- The Discarded Image, Cambridge University Press (1971).
- Panofsky, E., Studies in Iconology, Harper and Row, New York (1962).
- "Renaissance and Renascences", KR IV (1944), pp. 201-235.
- Patterson, A.M., "Tasso and Neoplatonism: The Growth of his Epic Theory", St. in Ren. 18 (1971), pp. 105-133.
- Saunders, J.W., "The Facade of Morality" in That Sovereigne Light, edited by W.R. Mueller and D.C. Allen, Baltimore (1952).
- Schachtel, E.G., Metamorphosis, Basic Books, New York (1959).
- Sidney, Philip, Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poetry, Louis Soens editor, Lincoln (1970).

Weinberg, Bernard, History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance, Vol. II, (1961), University of Chicago Press.

Wind, Edgar, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, Norton Library, New York (1968).