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Approaching Busyrane: Episodic Patterning in *The Faerie Queene*

by Mark J. Bruhn

IN her recent essay, "Some Reflections on the House of Busyrane," Helen Gardner argues that critical treatment of this episode of *The Faerie Queene* often errs in focus.[1] Citing distillations of the final two cantos of Book III by Roche, Spens, C. S. Lewis, A. C. Hamilton, and Hankins, Gardner faults "almost all explicators" for the "use of Book IV to *explain* Book III."[2] She objects specifically to the interpretation of the Busyrane episode on the basis of details about Amoret and Scudamour that are literally presented after the fact, in Book IV. Straightening the chronology of Amoret and Scudamour's tale may uncover some dramatic logic for Amoret's thralldom to Busyrane, but this strategy, Gardner suggests, contradicts Book III's narrative logic and blurs the episode's chief interest. Like the Redcross knight's betrothal to Una in Book I and Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss in Book II, Britomart's liberation of Amoret is the climax of a discrete legend. Its first concern, as such, is "the triumph of Britomart, who endures the great test of her virtue,"[3] and not the conjugal difficulties of Amoret and Scudamour.

Gardner's point may be supported even more immediately. As

[1] Helen Gardner, "Some Reflections on the House of Busyrane," *RES* 34 (1983): 403–13.
[2] Ibid., 405.
[3] Ibid., 406.

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readers, we approach the House of Busyrane with Britomart, and our vantage is hers throughout the episode. Though Amoret and Scudamour have been mentioned previously in connection with the Garden of Adonis, they here make their first appearance as actors in Faeryland's narrative present, and only at the episode's commencement and close. Their subjection to Busyrane is not motivated, but *given* action; we could take it, therefore, simply as a pretext, an occasion for the narrative display of Britomart's attentiveness and craft, her courage and victory. Thus Gardner:

> I do not think we should weaken our response to what immediately captures the imagination in Britomart's adventure in the House of Busyrane by puzzling over Amoret, and trying to find some explanation for her torment.[4]

The objection to Gardner's argument is obvious enough: what if the thing that immediately captures our imagination is—as the very studies Gardner cites imply—Amoret's torment? A. Leigh DeNeef, for instance, seems taken by Spenser's first revelation of Amoret, her breast "entrenched deepe with knife accursed keene" (III.xii.20),[5] as by no other moment in Book III:

> The description is at once dramatic and shocking, and the detail with which Spenser loads it is clearly intended to pull the reader up short. Prepared for a metaphorically wounded Amoret, we are given instead a picture which emphasizes its own literalness. It is difficult here to adjust our focus sufficiently to see that the bleeding heart is Amoret's own willful perception and not simply ours, that it is a psychologically myopic extension of a terrified perspective (a psychomachia), not a perceptible fact. . . . [O]ur inability here to distinguish our perception from Amoret's perspective instructs us that the false view is very human.[6]

DeNeef's argument, here concluding, tracks "the key act of wounding which is repeated throughout the book [III]"[7] and amply justifies, without recourse to Book IV, this final emphasis on Amoret. His conclusion,

[4] Ibid., 408. Before the publication of Books IV–VI in 1596, Gardner notes, "Spenser's readers . . . had no reason to think of Scudamour and Amoret as anything but lovers" (406). Gardner, censuring Spenser's continuation of the Amoret story for having "nothing to capture the imagination" and his revision of the final stanzas of Book III for "marring the triumph of Britomart's return with the freed Amoret" (407–8), feels we should not think otherwise now.

[5] This and all other citations of *The Faerie Queene* are from *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1978, rpt. 1987).

[6] A. Leigh DeNeef, "Spenser's *Amor Fuggitivo* and the Transfixed Heart," *ELH* 46 (1979): 15–16.

[7] Ibid., 3.

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of course, would rattle Gardner: searching Amoret's wound, DeNeef loses sight of Britomart, who first sees, and thereby enables us to see, this "willful perception" that is "not a perceptible fact." Yet, even if he has misdiagnosed the action (and I believe he has), it is clear that for him and many others Book III virtually insists upon the interpretation of just this moment. Amoret's heart is, after all, the dramatic centerpiece of Busyrane's house and the goal of Britomart's adventure there. Unless we understand the cause and nature of its abduction, how are we to assess the significance of Britomart's "great test"?

Or even more pointedly: if we do not try "to find some explanation for her torment," how are we to account for Amoret's determining role in Britomart's triumph? When Busyrane wounds Britomart, her fierce response is nearly catastrophic:

> So mightily she smote him, that to ground
> He fell halfe dead; next stroke him should haue slain,
> Had not the Lady, which by him stood bound,
> Dernely vnto her called to abstaine,
> From doing him to dy. For else her paine
> Should be remedilesse, sith none but hee,
> Which wrought it, could the same recure again.
> Therewith she stayd her hand, loth stayd to bee;
> For life she him enuyde, and long'd reuenge to see.
> (III.xii.34)

DeNeef registers the "shock" that attends upon our first sight of Amoret, but this moment, I find, is even more arresting. Amoret starts suddenly to life here, is transformed in an instant from a static image of female suffering to a vital intelligence, intervening in and redirecting the narrative action. If Britomart's "endurance of her test" is "poetically equivalent to Guyon's achievement of his quest,"[8] then Amoret's intervention here is surely akin, poetically, to the Palmer's in the Bower of Bliss.[9] Britomart, no doubt, can vanquish Busyrane, but her achievement of the adventure depends, finally, on Amoret's knowledge and guidance.

I mention these two arguments not so much as a prelude to a reinterpretation of the Busyrane episode (though I will offer some reflections of my own), but rather because they provide a quick take on the multiformity of Spenser's narrative structure. Both critics maintain, in

[8] Gardner, "Some Reflections," 406.

[9] See particularly II.xii.63–69, where the Palmer's well-timed rebuke at Acrasia's fountain dampens Guyon's "kindled lust" and guides him to his quest's proper end.

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effect, the fiction of the first reading, discussing the action at the House of Busyrane as "a fine conclusion"[10] to Book III's legend and *not* as a beginning, *in media res,* of the tale of Amoret and Scudamour. Both focus principally on structural cues in order to weight the action at the House of Busyrane for interpretation.[11] But where Gardner attends to more explicit cues (the discrete divisions between books or hero's legends, the point of view in a given scene), DeNeef follows implicit ones (recurrent patterns of imagery, cruces in the reader's response to the developing action), and the discrepancies in their results suggest the sorts of interpretive problems *The Faerie Queene,* taken simply as a romance, presents. Both Gardner and DeNeef, I suspect, would offer their readings as answers to the methodological question A. C. Hamilton raised some time ago—"what interpretation does an episode invite, sustain, control"—but neither, I think, gives an accurate account of "how subtly Spenser manipulates the response of his readers."[12] In our *reading* experience of Book III, and of the Busyrane episode in particular, the most influential of Spenser's narrative structures is also the most obvious one: the episode.

Northrop Frye's distinction of two basic types of narrative structure can help us here:

> In realism the attempt is normally to keep the action horizontal, using a technique of causality in which the characters are prior to the plot, in which the problem is normally: "given these characters, what will happen?" Romance is usually "sensational," that is, it moves from one discontinuous episode to another, describing things that happen to characters, for the most part, externally. We may speak of these two types of narrative as the "hence" narrative and the "and then" narrative.[13]

Casting her argument in Frye's terms, we can say that Gardner objects to the rearrangement of the tale of Amoret and Scudamour into a "hence" narrative, in which the *critic* discerns the cause of Busyrane's "vile villany" in the predispositions of the couple. Book III, she maintains, *reads* as an "and then" narrative, and its final two cantos constitute

[10] Gardner, "Some Reflections," 406.

[11] A full study of the episode, of course, would address as well its mythical and allegorical contents, with reference, respectively, to Busyrane's "arras" and "goodly ordinance" and to his masque of Cupid. This study is confined, like Gardner's, to its dramatic contents.

[12] A. C. Hamilton, *"The Faerie Queene,"* in *Critical Approaches to Six Major English Works: Beowulf through Paradise Lost,* ed. R. M. Lumiansky and Herschel Baker (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 142, 160.

[13] Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study in the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 47.

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a discontinuous episode that describes, "externally," "things that happen to characters." With this much, we can readily agree. But in nominating the book's hero as the episode's necessary center of interest, Gardner fails to acknowledge that Britomart is conspicuously absent from nearly half of her own legend, disappearing after she wounds Marinell in canto iv, cropping up again, briefly, at Malbecco's castle in canto ix, and reappearing at last for the finale in cantos xi–xii. The diffuseness of the intervening episodes—the Petrarchan drama of Belphoebe and Timias, the mythical tale of Chrysogone, Diana, and Venus, the meditation on the Garden of Adonis, the vagaries of Florimell, the fabliau of Malbecco and Hellenore—cannot but diminish our immediate awareness of Britomart's centrality to the book or of her quest as its organizing principle. By the time we reach Busyrane, we are as readers quite prepared to scrutinize the "accidentals" of Spenser's "Legend of Britomartis. Or of Chastitie."

I mean here something more than a general readiness on the part of the reader for a new set of characters and a new field of action, for episodic discontinuity. Each episode is a configuration, a patterning, of the same conceptual materials—the abstract categories "male" and "female," "lust" and "love," "eros" and "chastity"—and each thus affords one in a series of perspectives on a constant but complex "matter." As episodes give way one to another, previous patterns of action, character, and imagery press forward, creating an irresistible context for the evaluation of the particular configuration at hand. We readily apprehend, for instance, that Amoret's thralldom is patterned to some extent after Florimell's, and from this we may intuit, as A. Kent Hieatt does, further correspondences:

> [A]s the sufferings of Florimell, culminating in a seven-month imprisonment beneath the sea at the hand of a being who was trying to make her love him, had been precipitated by the watery and cold defectiveness in love of the sea-descended coast-dweller Marinell, so the seven-month imprisonment of Amoret, by a being making an identical demand, in a house whose portal was filled with sulphurous fire, ought to proceed from an opposite defect in Scudamour: his fiery and demanding quality as a lover, bolder than he ought to be.[14]

Of course, Hieatt draws here on Book IV, both for the term of Florimell's imprisonment (IV.xi.4) and for Womanhood's "sharpe rebuke" of Scudamour "for being ouer bold" (IV.x.54); without this informa-

[14] A. Kent Hieatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton: Mythopoeic Continuities and Transformations* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), 96.

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tion, his analogizing could not be quite so pointed, so schematic. Still, the core of his analogy is nearly inescapable, and he sets it to work in the right direction, *forward.* Cued by the structural repetition of the "captive and sexually-constrained lady" motif, our more or less automatic recollection of Florimell's imprisonment by Proteus in III.viii, or at least of the affective commitment that action produced in us, bears instantly on our appraisal of who Amoret and Busyrane are and what they are about. It is this self-contextualizing and self-determining effect that I take to be the most salient feature of Spenser's episodic structure, that which most "manipulates," or controls, our immediate response to the poem.[15]

Depending on the reader's retentiveness and the prominence of the narrative pattern, a given episode can be contextualized and determined in this manner by any previous one in the poem. Florimell's near rape by the fisherman and her "rescue" by Proteus, for instance, may recall Una's near rape by Sansloy and rescue by satyrs in Book I. The episodes are extraordinarily uniform, not only in action, but in lexical, rhetorical, and stanzaic elaboration as well. The narrator allots both rapists four stanzas of effort, moving from direct description in the first three to reflection in the fourth (I.vi.3–6, III.viii.25–28). Each episode's next stanza does triple-duty: the narrator announces the rescue before it happens, attributing Una's to "eternall prouidence" and Florimell's to "the heauens . . . voluntary grace"; he then describes the given lady's "shrill outcryes and shriekes so loud" or "shrilling shriekes"; these, in turn, summon the rescuers, who are now identified (I.vi.7, III.viii.29). In the following stanza or two, the rescue arrives on the scene and the rapist exits under duress, and in the next the lady appears "with ruffled rayments, and faire blubbred face" (I.vi.8–9, III.viii.30–32). Two final stanzas, featuring an extended simile drawn from the animal world, describe the victim's new anxiety about her uncouth rescuer(s) and the efforts made to ease her mind (I.vi.10, III.viii.33). To be sure, these episodes are hereafter vastly disparate: the satyrs turn out to be uncharacteristically sensitive, Proteus unexpectedly villainous. But given the parity of the women's plights and appearances and of the verbal structures which contain them, we are clearly invited to read Flori-

[15] I am indebted here to A. C. Spearing's discussion of episodic structure in Middle English alliterative romances in "The Awntyrs off Arthure," *The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Bernard S. Levy and Paul E. Szarmach (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1981); and to Pamela Gradon's more general discussion of narrative forms in *Form and Style in Early English Literature* (London: Methuen, 1971).

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mell's character and predicament in light of Una's. Or, putting it the other way, the narrative itself seems designed to infuse Florimell at this point with whatever valuations attached to our earlier response to Una. It is this "infusion," I believe, which predisposes us as much as anything else to credit the narrator's rapt summation of Florimell's virtue and of her status as narrative ideal:

> Eternall thraldome was to her more liefe,
> Then losse of chastitie, or chaunge of loue:
> Die had she rather in tormenting griefe,
> Then any should of falsenesse her reproue,
> Or loosenesse, that she lightly did remoue.
> Most vertuous virgin, glory be thy meed,
> And crowne of heauenly praise with Saints aboue,
> Where most sweet hymmes of this thy famous deed
> Are still emongst them song, that far my rymes exceed.
>
> Fit song of Angels caroled to bee;
> But yet what so my feeble Muse can frame,
> Shall be t'aduance thy goodly chastitee,
> And to enroll thy memorable name,
> In th'heart of euery honourable Dame,
> That they thy vertuous deedes may imitate,
> And be partakers of thy endlesse fame.[16]
>
> (viii.42–43)

Because of the length and episodic diversity of the narrative, however, and the real limits of our retention, the patterning I am describing is perhaps most pronounced, or most determining of reader response, in Spenser's immediate juxtapositions of episodes. A fine example is the progress from Florimell's story to Hellenore's to Amoret's. Florimell encounters the fisherman/rapist and is rescued, sued, and enthralled by Proteus. Hellenore, effectively imprisoned by Malbecco, is happily "raped," as the argument to canto x has it, by Paridell. Amoret, "her small wast girt round with yron bands," is bound "vnto a brasen

[16] Not surprisingly, the narrator shifts next to Satyrane, who was originally introduced in I.vi to secret Una away from the satyrs. Though he does not enter here to liberate Florimell as he did Una, he nevertheless provides a bridge to the Malbecco episode and the second appearance of satyrs in *The Faerie Queene*. Harry Berger charges that Hellenore's adoption by these satyrs is "an outlandish solution" to her story ("The Discarding of Malbecco: Conspicuous Allusion and Cultural Exhaustion in *The Faerie Queene* III.ix–x," *SP* 66 [1969]: 144). If we recognize Spenser's patterning of Florimell's rape and rescue on Una's, I would counter, the ensuing appearance of Satyrane and satyrs seems somehow natural, even expected.

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pillour" and ravaged by Busyrane, while her true love, "the noble knight Sir Scudamour," waits helplessly nearby (xii.30, vi.53). These bare summaries reveal at once a recurrent narrative pattern based on character roles and types of action: each episode presents a more or less victimized female figure, in some fashion captivated and/or molested by one or both of two male figures. Structurally as well as sequentially, that is, Hellenore is set over against Florimell, Malbecco against Proteus, and Paridell, perhaps, against Proteus and the fisherman. Despite its discontinuity, the Malbecco and Hellenore episode should at least feel familiar, for we have already in our valuations of the Florimell episode a set of terms on which to take it. We have been previously disposed to the pattern's constitutive roles and actions, have taken, so to speak, some evaluative stock of them, even if it is not quite conscious. We make new valuations accordingly, and emerge from canto x with a greater intelligence about the pattern, a broader index to its ongoing argument about the relations of men and women and the virtue of chastity. On the basis of this intelligence and index, we then evaluate the patterned action and characters of the Busyrane episode. I would thus alter Donald Cheney's suggestion that "one might, in fact, see the concluding incidents of Book III as affording parallel and complementary stories, in which a woman is freed from a figure of abuse who attempts to imprison her and keep her from full womanhead."[17] As readers subject to Spenser's episodic structure, we cannot help but see, or rather respond to, such parallelism and complementarity, and in much more crucial ways than Cheney hints.

For instance: moving from the mythical depths of Proteus's "bower" and "Dongeon deepe" (viii.37–41) to the *terra firma* of Malbecco's castle, we perhaps first sense, not parallelism, but disjunction. The narrator's prefatory apology in the first two stanzas of canto ix prepares us for an "odious argument" about the "loose incontinence," the "fault" and "mis," of a "wanton Lady." She, we might expect, will be far other than that "most vertuous virgin" Florimell; she will be laid bare, in moral terms, by the sheer force of contrast. But though the ensuing fabliau could not be further in tone from the pathetic tale of Florimell, Hellenore, as James Nohrnberg observes, "seems to escape to something other than damnation," arriving instead at "a kind of innocent

[17] Donald Cheney, "Spenser's Hermaphrodite and the 1590 *Faerie Queene*," *PMLA* 87 (1972): 198.

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self-realization at the level of nature."[18] To some extent, Hellenore escapes damnation even before her tale begins, when the narrator's voice is supplanted by that of the Squire of Dames. Casting Malbecco as "a cancred crabbed Carle" and Hellenore as "a lovely lasse," the Squire prefatorily sketches the motivation of the action that follows:

> she does ioy to play emongst her peares,
> And to be free from hard restraint and gealous feares.
> . . . .
> [He] in close bower her mewes from all mens sight,
> Depriu'd of kindly ioy and naturall delight.
>
> (ix.3–5)

Taken alone, the couplets render the conventional polarities of a January–May marriage—Malbecco is old, fearfully possessive, and impotent, Hellenore young, free-spirited, and sexual—and place our sympathy, conventionally, with the lusty wife. But their phrasing summons other contexts from within the poem, aligning Hellenore's "hard restraint" "in close bower" with that of Florimell, and her sexuality with the metaphysical sort that animates the Garden of Adonis, from whence "all plentie, and all pleasure flowes, / And sweet loue gentle fits emongst them throwes, / Without fell rancor, or fond gealosie" (vi.41). So contextualized, Hellenore appears not as the chaste Florimell's moral antithesis, but as her erotic counterpart, similarly subjected to male desire. When Satyrane presently responds to the Squire's preface, it is clear that he too has glimpsed the episode's true moral pressure:

> It is not yron bandes, nor hundred eyes,
> Nor brasen wall, nor many wakefull spyes,
> That can withhold her wilfull wandring feet;
> But fast good will with gentle curtesyes,
> And timely seruice to her pleasures meet
> May her perhaps containe, that else would algates fleet.
>
> (ix.7)

"There is nothing perverted about her sexuality," to borrow Helen Cheney Gilde's words, "only about what causes her to express it in such ways."[19]

[18] James Nohrnberg, *The Analogy of The Faerie Queene* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 31.

[19] Helen Cheney Gilde, "Spenser's Hellenore and Some Ovidian Associations," *Comparative Literature* 23 (1971): 235.

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Despite their differences, I am arguing, Hellenore receives intact our suspended approval of Florimell, and our affective take on the patterned female figure is simply extended, not reversed. This is not to say that Hellenore herself incorporates any of Florimell's particular attributes. Quite obviously, her exuberant cuckolding of Malbecco—take the moment when she cries out that Paridell "would beare her forcibly, / And meant to rauish her, that rather had to dy" (x.13, cf. viii.42.3)—parodies in many ways the resolute virtue and helpless distress of Florimell; quite obviously, her "lustihed" was nowhere to be seen in Florimell. But because Spenser turns the parody throughout against Malbecco and, to a lesser extent, Paridell, he forestalls what would otherwise be our spontaneous judgment of Hellenore by the standard of Florimell. Thus, when Hellenore is finally subsumed in a pastoral idyll, only by straining could we summon any moral indignation:

> The iolly *Satyres* full of fresh delight,
> Came dauncing forth, and with them nimbly led
> Faire *Helenore*, with girlonds all bespred,
> Whom their May-lady they had newly made:
> She proud of that new honour, which they red,
> And of their louely fellowship full glade,
> Daunst liuely, and her face did with a Lawrell shade.
>
> . . . .
>
> All day they daunced with great lustihed,
> And with their horned feet the greene grasse wore,
> The whiles their Gotes vpon the brouzes fed,
> Til drouping *Phoebus* gan to hide his golden hed.
>
> Tho vp they gan their merry pypes to trusse,
> And all their goodly heards did gather round,
> But euery *Satyre* first did giue a busse
> To Hellenore: so busses did abound.
>
> (x.44–46)

The point here, as Nohrnberg finds, "is that Hellenore is morally safer among the jolly satyrs than with either her jealous husband or her 'learned lover' ";[20] such valuation, I would add, sustains, even reinforces, our evaluative sympathy for the besieged female, a sympathy founded, in Book III, on Florimell. In terms of their narrative patterning, these representatives of female eros and chastity describe the

[20] Nohrnberg, *Analogy*, 31.

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boundaries of a single role, now doubly approved. We accordingly approach Amoret, the chaste lover who lies somewhere in between, very much determined to take her part. Through episodic conditioning, we may reasonably expect that, just as Hellenore's confinement in figurative "yron bandes" and "brasen walls" weighed against Malbecco, so Amoret's captivity in actual ones will weigh, not against her, but against Busyrane, whoever he may be.

As this last analogy implies, Busyrane appears as a patterned successor to Malbecco, who likewise discourteously bars access to his castle and whose gate, too, is nearly engulfed in "vnquenchable fire" (ix.17). Malbecco, however, plays not only the possessive tormentor, but also the dispossessed lover, and insofar as this role anticipates that of Sir Scudamour, we will likely sense that Busyrane and Scudamour, both patterned to some extent on a single figure, share something more than simple enmity. With his woman whisked away and his treasure consumed by fire, Malbecco

> Into huge waues of griefe and gealosye
> Full deepe emplonged was, and drowned nye,
> Twixt inward doole and felonous despight;
> He rau'd, he wept, he stampt, he lowd did cry,
> And all the passions, that in man may light,
> Did him attonce oppresse, and vex his caytiue spright.
> (x.17)

He sets out to recover Hellenore, whom he believes to have been forcibly abducted by Paridell, and finds, after a fruitless search, Braggadochio and Trompart, who offer him, as Britomart will to Scudamour, "noble succour." Were it not for the enormity of his despair, Scudamour might fittingly reiterate Malbecco's reply:

> It is not long (said hee)
> Sith I enioyd the gentlest Dame aliue;
> Of whom a knight, no knight at all perdee,
> But shame of all, that doe for honor striue,
> By treacherous deceipt did me depriue;
> Through open outrage he her bore away,
> And with fowle force vnto his will did driue,
> Which all good knights, that armes do beare this day,
> Are bound for to reuenge, and punish if they may.
> (x.27)

The "revenge" of these "good knights," of course, is hilariously abortive (Braggadochio and Trompart, fleeing in terror at the sound of the

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satyrs, stop long enough to fleece Malbecco), and Hellenore, it turns out, wants no rescuing. Despite his particular delusions, however, Malbecco's pain and self-recrimination, which finally fix him as a mere personification of jealousy, look forward to those of Scudamour:

> Griefe, and despight, and gealosie, and scorne
> Did all the way follow him hard behind,
> And he himselfe himselfe loath'd so forlorne,
> So shamefully forlorne of womankind;
> That as a snake, still lurked in his wounded mind.
> (x.55)

Thus, as we turn to the Busyrane episode, we are predisposed not only to exonerate Amoret, but also to fault and to associate, through Malbecco, both Scudamour and Busyrane.

Canto xi begins, appropriately enough, with a rhetorical address that condenses the true emphases of the foregoing episode and places them as an interpretive context for the forthcoming one:

> O hatefull hellish Snake, what furie furst
> Brought thee from balefull house of *Proserpine,*
> Where in her bosome she long had nurst,
> And fostred up with bitter milke of tine,
> Fowle Gealosie, that turnest loue diuine
> To ioylesse dread, and maks't the louing hart
> With hatefull thoughts to languish and to pine,
> And feed it selfe with selfe-consuming smart?
> Of all the passions in the mind thou vilest art.
>
> O let him far be banished away,
> And in his stead let Loue for euer dwell,
> Sweet Loue, that doth his golden wings embay
> In blessed Nectar, and pure Pleasures well,
> Vntroubled of vile feare, or bitter fell.
> And ye faire Ladies, that your kingdomes make
> In th'harts of men, them gouerne wisely well,
> And of faire *Britomart* ensample take,
> That was as trew in loue, as Turtle to her make.
> (xi.1–2)

Its elevation notwithstanding, the first stanza responds directly to Malbecco's dire end, and the decidedly sensual rendering of "Sweet Loue" in the second, we must assume, looks back first to Hellenore and, through her, to the Garden of Adonis. Here reversing the evaluative stance he appeared to be taking in the preface to the fabliau, the narra-

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tor confirms his own moral forbearance toward Hellenore's sexuality and his own moral preoccupation with Malbecco's jealousy. And as he thus certifies our own responses to the Malbecco episode, he also poises them, literally, on the verge of the Busyrane episode, suggesting their pertinence to our reception of it. Again, we will be concerned with jealousy and sexual love, but in a new configuration of characters and action; again, our sense of pattern and figuration will prompt and guide our responses. Let me pursue this point for the moment by taking up the dramatic debut of Scudamour, after which I will return to the somewhat enigmatic matter of "faire Britomart's ensample."

When Britomart, tracking a gigantic male lust (Ollyphant), stumbles upon Scudamour, the evidence of episodic patterning weighs strongly against him. If we have Book II at all in mind, for instance, our first sight of Scudamour links him at once to figures like Verdant and Mordant, whose intemperance in the Bower of Bliss leaves them similarly "wallowed":

> there lay a knight all wallowed
> Vpon the grassy ground, and by him neare
> His haberieon, his helmet, and his speare;
> A little off, his shield was rudely throwne. . . .
> (xi.7; cf. II.i.41, II.xii.80)[21]

The posture is all wrong, and while Scudamour, we learn, has "disprofessed" (xi.20) knighthood out of grief and desperation rather than lust, both Book II (contextually) and Britomart (dramatically) argue that his displaced arms nevertheless signify a failure of character. This failure, as Scudamour's "bitter plaintes" suggest, is a lurking Malbeccean jealousy, which makes his "louing hart," to borrow the narrator's words, "with hatefull thoughts to languish and to pine, / And feed it selfe with selfe-consuming smart." Thus Scudamour, concluding his opening speech:

> Yet thou vile man, vile *Scudamore* art sound,
> Ne canst her ayde, ne canst her foe dismay;
> Vnworthy wretch to tread vpon the ground,
> For whom so faire a Lady feeles so sore a wound.
> (xi.11)

[21] The recollection of Mordant, I should note, simultaneously brings Amavia to mind, "in whose alabaster brest did sticke / A cruell knife, that made a griesly wound" (II.i.39). Again, the prefiguration prepares us in some way for the revelation of Amoret and disposes us sympathetically toward her.

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The contextual weight of Malbecco, I think, decides the alexandrine here, and Scudamour says more than he means: it is in some sense *because* of him that Amoret "feels so sore a wound," just as it is Malbecco who causes Hellenore's "wilfull wandring." By the end of the scene, after Britomart penetrates Busyrane's flames and Scudamour is again rebuffed, this episodic correlation of Scudamour and Malbecco is all but transparent. Scudamour, overwrought at the last with "greedy will" and "enuious desire," throws himself on the grass and beats and bounces his head (xi.26–27); despite the pathos of this excess, the image of Malbecco raving, weeping, stamping, and crying aloud cannot, I trust, be far behind. Not surprisingly, the first thing Britomart notices inside Busyrane's house is the "rich metall lurk[ing] priuily" in the "goodly arras" about the walls, lurking "like a discolored Snake, whose hidden snares / Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht backe declares" (xi.28). The simile itself declares the lurking presence of Scudamour's "ioylesse dread"—that "hatefull hellish Snake"—in the enthralling artifice of Busyrane, and it locates the patterned prototype of both in Malbecco's "hard restraint and gealous feares."

Again, let me be clear: I am not arguing that this figural identification of Scudamour should lead us to define him, in any literal way, as another embodiment of Malbecco, nor that such would be the case with any of our patterned responses. On reflection, of course, we may relate the two in analogical and conceptual ways: just as Malbecco's worst fear is realized in Hellenore's being "handeled" as a "commune good" (x.36), so Scudamour's is in his own powerlessness to recover Amoret from the "strong enchauntments" (xi.16) of another; both understand women as objects which can be possessed. But our response as *readers* of Spenser's romance is likely nowhere so precise. Rather, turning from the Malbecco episode with what Hamilton has called "released moral energy,"[22] we come abruptly upon the new characters and new actions of the Busyrane episode. We have at once to place that suspended energy and to find our bearings in this apparently unfamiliar narrative ground, and these needs are mutually answered by Spenser's episodic patterning. When through verbal and dramatic details we sense that Scudamour is "doing" Malbecco, we make simultaneously a recognition and a valuation, both tempered by the present narrative circumstances and tone. Surely, the psalm-like pathos of Scudamour's "plaintes" (cf. xi.9 particularly) mark him as a

[22] Hamilton, *"The Faerie Queene,"* 161.

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being of a different order from the cuckolded Malbecco, and derision would be an entirely inappropriate response to his plight. But surely, too, Scudamour here becomes suspect, and when, in response to his "threatfull pride," Busyrane's fire only "the more augment[s]" in "imperious sway" (xi.26), episodic patterning both urges us and gives us the terms to place Scudamour to one side of the continuum of envy and possessiveness, and Busyrane to the other. Having found both out, affectively, by virtue of Malbecco and, before him, Proteus, we will move in more perceptively on the nature of the "noble cheuisaunce" with which Britomart concludes her legend.

Two things are certain about Britomart's role at the House of Busyrane: she represents chastity, and she stands in for Scudamour. Scudamour himself, reacting to Britomart's vow to deliver Amoret "with proofe of last extremity . . . or with her for you to dy," suggests the way in which these roles coalesce:

> Ah gentlest knight aliue, (said *Scudamore*)
> What huge heroicke magnanimity
> Dwels in thy bounteous brest? what couldst thou more,
> If she were thine, and thou as now am I?
>
> (xi.18–19)[23]

Britomart appears to him (and throughout the episode) as a man, and he rightly interprets her virtue, not as the self-conserving "goodly chastitee" of Florimell, but as the self-sacrificing "magnanimity" of the "heroicke" knight. Scudamour, presumably, lacks precisely this quality, this *disinterested* commitment to threatened virtue; it is this precisely that fits Britomart to be the champion of Amoret's distinctly Florimellian chastity. With this much in mind, we can account for the narrator's sense of Britomart's "ensample" in the House of Busyrane (xi.2). His appeal to the "faire Ladies" has two more or less obvious literal meanings: as a female, Britomart will exemplify the wise governance of the male heart; as a male, she will exemplify the wisely governed male heart. The first statement is dramatically accurate only insofar as it refers to Britomart's rule of her own figurative male heart,

[23] This appreciation, I suspect, has something to do with Scudamour's "enuious desire" and "fell woodness" when the fire "yields" to Britomart (xi.25–27): if she liberates Amoret, Scudamour probably fears, she (or in his view, *he*) will prove herself the better knight and win, by "right," Amoret's love. Imagine his reaction were he to hear Amoret yielding herself, in thanks, Britomart's "vassall" (xii.39). Book IV, of course, takes up a patterned discussion of knights' "rights" to ladies' loves.

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her assumed identity of a "gentle knight."[24] The second, of course, describes essentially the same thing—Britomart's conduct as a male—but points as well to her role as the knight who explicitly replaces Scudamour and bears "trew" love to his "thrald . . . gentle make." "Faire Ladies"—and other readers—will find in Britomart, in other words, the image of the wisely loving male, governed neither by desire nor jealousy, but by pure devotion to chaste virtue. Such unmediated devotion, Book III leads us to conclude, is the prime mark of *male* chastity, without which Amoret's virtuous heart can be neither whole nor free.

I said earlier that each episode is a configuration of the same conceptual materials, and so it is here. Busyrane embodies male eros, drastically skewed toward possession; behind him stand Malbecco and Proteus. Amoret embodies chaste female erotic love, earlier termed "goodly womanhead" and "chaste affectione" (vi.51–52); behind her are Hellenore and Florimell. Scudamour embodies male erotic love, beleaguered by jealous dread; behind him are Malbecco and, by an inversion of his eros and jealousy, perhaps Marinell. And Britomart, finally, enacting a role new to the principal episodic pattern of the last six cantos of Book III, represents chaste male love, the one force that can resolve the central conflict variously manifest in all three episodes. We approach Busyrane and the conclusion of Britomart's legend under the tutelage of the poem's episodic structure, ready not only to appreciate this "highest flight of the romantic imagination in *The Faerie Queene,* combining mystery and horror with beauty," but also to understand the "deep moral feeling" with which it is "infused."[25] With Spenser's episodic ones in mind, we are well left to our own reflections.

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[24] Though she overrules Busyrane's heart as well, she does so neither wisely, as Amoret's "derne" interjection makes clear, nor from "trew" love.

[25] Gardner, "Some Reflections," 406.

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