SPENSER'S PICTORIALISM:
MOTIFS OF MARS & VENUS
& THE FINE ARTS

"FIERCE WARRES AND FAITHFULL LOUES"
EDMUND SPENSER'S PICTORIALISM:
MOTIFS OF MARS AND VENUS
IN THE FAERIE QUEENE
AND RENAISSANCE VISUAL ART

By

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Abstract

This thesis involves an exploration of the relationship between the pictorial nature of Spenser's The Faerie Queene and the visual arts. The doctrine of ut pictura poesis indicates that the affinity between the sister arts of painting and poetry was of fundamental concern in the Renaissance. The extent of Spenser's awareness of and familiarity with the visual arts is a contentious point, but there are indications of possible connections. There are many possible visual influences by which Spenser could have been acquainted with traditional modes of representation. Spenser's pictorial technique involves a pattern of painting a picture rich in emblematic detail and then withdrawing from description to comment on this easily visualized depiction. He thus sets up a system of clarification and doubt that requires a wary and alert reader. In discussing Spenser's pictorialism, the myth of Mars and Venus provides a good example, especially as the theme of love and war is common throughout the poem. Through the repetition of certain key elements together in one picture, a motif is set up so that the reader eventually recognizes this image as having meaning and significance in itself. Some of the individual features

are also present in visual depictions of the lovers, showing a shared tradition of the way in which a subject or figure was frequently portrayed. The negative aspects of the Mars and Venus story are demonstrated well by this motif. Each time it appears there are subtle differences that should alert the reader. There are also positive and humorous sides to the myth of Mars and Venus and just as there are characters who illustrate the negative side, so, too, are there those that are types demonstrating these other two aspects. Thus through an examination of the relationship between painting (and the other visual arts) and The Faerie Queene, added dimensions of meaning can be enjoyed by the reader.

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"Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song"

(1.pr.1)

Chapter One

Introduction:
The Relationship Between Spenser and the Visual Arts

Like finely cut crystal, Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene has a multitude of sparkling surfaces which catch the light of the reader's eye and reflect onto each other, creating intricate patterns of colour and new levels of meaning. Indeed, part of the attractiveness of this poem is its very complexity. Each new angle from which it is viewed yields added connotations and increases understanding and appreciation.

This thesis will involve an exploration of one aspect, one of the sparkling surfaces, of The Faerie Queene: the pictorial nature of its imagery. In particular, Spenser's use of certain iconographical characteristics of the myth of Mars and Venus will be discussed and parallels with the visual arts of the Renaissance suggested. For manageability, most examples will be taken from the first three books of the poem. I am not implying that individual paintings had a direct and immediate influence as a source of any particular section of The Faerie Queene. Rather I am proposing that there exists a common tradition, both of subject matter and of method of presentation, between poetry and painting. Therefore, to better demonstrate the continuity of certain themes or traditions, some paintings used as examples post-date The Faerie Queene. Mainly, however, works of art used are well known Renaissance mythological paintings, generally

Italian in origin, because of the great (and preserved) tradition of Italian Renaissance art.

In investigating Spenser's potential knowledge of details of mythology, consultation of source books he probably used[1] has been difficult due to problems with translations. I was unable to find an English translation of, for example, Natalis Comes' Mythologiae, or of any potentially relevant parts of Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium Libri.[2]

The relationship between poetry and painting in general, and in The Faerie Queene and the visual arts in particular, is one that over the years has caused a great deal of discussion. The very existence of so much controversy surrounding the doctrine of ut pictura poesis[3] shows how important a subject this is and was. The interpretation and application of Horace's enigmatic phrase by Renaissance artists of different disciplines indicates a fundamental concern about the relationship between the sister arts. Just what was meant by this term in the Renaissance? This is a question that is rather difficult to answer and on which critical opinion differs. To begin with, translations of the phrase vary: "Poetry is like painting"[4]; "as is painting, so is poetry"[5]; or "poetry should be like painting."[6]

Part of the problem is that Horace's words are used, almost in passing, as a comparison illuminating the relative merits of different types of poets and poetry

and in urging critics to be flexible. It seems highly unlikely that Horace meant his phrase to be taken out of context and he probably would be surprised by the tremendous amount of debate it has caused. His phrase was also combined with the maxim attributed to Simonides that "Painting is a dumme Poesie, and a Poesie is a speaking picture"[7], strengthening the connection between the arts. These statements also reflect the strong spirit of competitiveness that existed between poetry and the visual arts, each vying for the higher status.

One potential interpretation of the doctrine of ut pictura poesis is that Renaissance writers and critics used the phrase as a license to write what was essentially merely decorative or imitative verse. Using Spenser as one of her examples, Rosemond Tuve convincingly refutes this point of view, saying that "Understanding the ways in which poetry may resemble painting would lead to neither slavish copy nor decorative unfunctional images."[8] It is the "expressiveness" behind the image that is important. There will inevitably be examples in both poetry and painting that seem to adhere to the lesser standards, but masterpieces such as The Faerie Queene do go beyond mere copying.

The assumption behind the attitude implicit in Tuve's statement represents a not uncommon viewpoint: that there is essentially something wrong with "pretty" poetry. It is as if poetry that is enjoyable because of

its sheer beauty cannot, by corollary, be anything more. While Spenser does use his poetry to more purposes than just giving pleasure, it is undeniably and seductively beautiful poetry. The notion that all poetry must be functional is, it seems to me, a bit extreme. Decorative images do have a place, even if their only purpose is beauty. However, beauty was also seen in the Renaissance as a means to achieving truth. Neoplatonic thought emphasized the idea of beauty as a ladder. "Examples of beauty" were to be used

> as steps to ascend continually with the absolute beauty as one's aim, from one instance of physical beauty to two and from two to all, then from physical beauty to moral beauty, and from moral beauty to the beauty of knowledge, until from knowledge of various kinds one arrives at the supreme knowledge...[9]

Behind Spenser's surface glory there is also a great deal of intricate meaning, which if properly deciphered, can lead the reader to knowledge and, perhaps, truth.

The negative attitude in the idea that ut pictura poesis means poetry could be only imitative or decorative is hardly complimentary to the visual arts, which enjoyed a lower status than that afforded poetry. Indeed, art critics of the time and later applied ut pictura poesis in order to raise the status of their field. To avoid being considered as merely artisans who worked with their hands rather than their minds,

> the painter's inventions were to be comparable to those of the poet in power, depth, or beauty...This profound relationship with poetry was enough to give to painting the prestige of a liberal art.10

Rensselaer Lee's study of this topic examines art critics' use of the phrase, and he concludes that

> The critics who fashioned the doctrine of ut pictura poesis thus ranked painting with poetry as a serious interpreter of human life.11

Painting can be far more than merely a static copy of life. Admittedly it cannot move and change before the eye, as do Spenser's tableaux, but it can be infused with meaning and spirit beyond the surface representation.

That Spenser himself felt poetry superior to painting is evident from scattered comments throughout The Faerie Queene. In the proem to Book 3 Spenser talks of

> Poets wit, that passeth Painter farre
> In picturing the parts of beautie daint.12

Neither art, however, is thought to be as good as life itself. The Poet frequently protests that he cannot match the beauty and reality of life. When, for example, Spenser finds he must "write of Chastity/That fairest vertue" (3.proem.1), he wonders "If pourtrayd it might be by any liuing art" (3.proem.1). When Guyon explains

the significance of his shield to Arthur, he says

> if in that picture dead
> Such life ye read, and vertue in vaine shew,
> What mote ye weene, if the trew liuely-head
> Of that most glorious visage ye did vew?
> (2.9.3)

This is praise indeed of Elizabeth, but also illustrates the idea that art, even as practised by two revered ancient models "Zeuxis or Praxiteles" (3.proem.2), cannot adequately portray nature or life. These statements are also part of the topos of inability which occasionally surfaces throughout The Faerie Queene. By stating that something, such as describing a character's beauty, or Elizabeth, cannot be done and then proceeding to do it, Spenser brings attention to his poetic ability. In effect, he is paying himself an elaborate compliment.

Throughout the poem there are many references to the conflict between art and nature. Art is generally only seen as bad when it tries to compete with nature. This happens in the Bower of Bliss where

> Art at nature did repine;
> So striuing each th'other to vndermine.
> (2.12.59)

This struggle results in much beauty, but it is a false, "painted" (2.12.58) beauty, trying to outdo nature herself but where nothing is actually real.

Fulfilling the two traditional criteria for poetry, The Faerie Queene both teaches and delights,

often teaching through, and because of, the delight. One of the most delightful aspects of the poem is the pictorial nature of its imagery. Frequently Spenser's images occur in the form of icons full of significant visual details. Spenser uses these icons to reveal certain underlying meanings in his story and characters. The pictures are as important as the ostensible narrative, especially as they encompass a large portion of the poem. These icons stimulate the reader, allowing him to participate in the poem as he identifies the often very subtle dimensions of a portrait or scene. They are also important to character interpretation, for significant details are often disclosed that are essential to an understanding of each figure. Motifs recur throughout The Faerie Queene, gaining in significance as they reappear. Often there are subtle changes made from one occurrence to the next, which require an aware and alert reader. In particular, because the poem is so suffused with classical mythology, Spenser's use of mythological icons can be very revealing.

Spenser must have intended his readers to be able to identify many of the features of his images. Numerous details are easily recognizable as traditional iconological attributes. The pervasive use of classical mythology in The Faerie Queene indicates that he must have been very familiar with the ancient stories of gods and heroes, for they are woven so tightly into the text

as to be an integral part of the poem. Spenser's literary sources of myth, including, for example, Renaissance dictionaries, Boccaccio's Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri, and Natalis Comes' Mythologiae Sive Explicationis Fabularum Libri Decem,[13] partially explain his mythological portraits. However, Spenser's use of myth also indicates a familiarity with visual conventions of the time. With typical Renaissance style, Spenser does feel free to embellish at will. He twists and manipulates conventions, often conflating pagan and Christian traditions. However, despite this use and over-use of convention, The Faerie Queene reveals that Spenser is working from a common stock of images available to both poets and painters in the Renaissance. These images and conventions are abundantly demonstrated in emblem books, medals, engravings and in paintings. There are frequently allegorical meanings which are almost formulaically attached to these images. In her treatment of the iconology of Book V, Jane Aptekar recognizes this aspect of Spenser, saying that

> In effect, many of Spenser's verbal pictures are allegorical images, or emblems; they visually resemble allegorical illustrations and paintings, or emblems.[14]

The pictorial element of The Faerie Queene has long been recognized by readers of the work, even if it has not always been a point of admiration. Alexander Pope

once remarked that

> After reading a canto of Spenser two or three days ago to an old lady, between seventy and eighty years of age, she said that I had been showing her a gallery of pictures.15

This brief anecdote has been followed over the years by many similar comments. In Leigh Hunt's "Spenser Gallery", for example, are hung selected stanzas of the poem with "the name of the painter [attached] of whose genius it reminded"[16] him. Hunt's flights of fancy are full of encomniastic sentiments, liberally sprinkled with exclamation marks and appreciative, though hardly critically helpful, comments such as "What a lovely line that is!"[17] His highly inventive and indeed rather whimsical parallels have caused much negative reaction despite the fact that Hunt only says these passages remind him of the individual artists. The painters are used by Hunt as "a new set of commentators."[18]

The correspondences Hunt makes, though, do indicate a close affinity between the spirit of Spenser's poetry and painting, for his type of "identification" is very easy to make. For example, the following stanza might be added to Hunt's gallery:

> And she her selfe of beautie soueraigne Queene,
> Faire Venus seemde vnto his bed to bring
> Her, whom he waking euermore did weene,
> To be the chastest flowre, that ay did spring
> On earthly braunch, the daughter of a king,
> Now a loose Leman to vile seruice bound:

> And eke the Graces seemed all to sing,
> Hymen iö Hymen, dauncing all around,
> Whilst freshest Flora her with Yuie girlond crownd.
> (1.1.48)

The temptation here is to recall that most complicated of Renaissance mythological paintings, Sandro Botticelli's Primavera, 1478 (figure 1). The centre figure of that canvas is Venus (1.2) who, despite being on a plane behind the other figures, is in the middle of the painting and is the viewer's first focal point. She directs the action of the painting. At left forefront are the three Graces, "dauncing all around" (1.8) in their traditional closed circle. "That false winged boy" (1.1.47), Cupid, flies above his mother's head, aiming a flame tipped arrow at the middle Grace. Botticelli's Flora (1.9) scatters roses on the ground. She wears a crown of spring (1.4) flowers and, around her neck, a garland (1.9) of Venus' sacred tree, myrtle. Hymen (1.8), a god of marriage, could perhaps be seen as an allusion to the Primavera's possible identification as a painting celebrating the spring wedding of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de'Medici.[19] The very sensual nature of Botticelli's three exquisite Graces, and of Chloris who is pursued, and indeed caught, by her "Leman" (1.6), the spring wind Zephyr, is also in keeping with the subject of this section of The Faerie Queene -- the attempted physical seduction of Redcrosse by the false Una.

This type of parallel between painting and poem

is, of course, impossible to prove as cause and effect and because it is so easy to do, can be seductively dangerous. For example, one problem here is that despite the unusual combination of figures in the Primavera, and its uncertain and much disputed meaning, there are literary sources (Seneca, Lucretius, Ovid, Horace, Politian[20]) that could conceivably have been familiar to Spenser, making this type of identification rather foolhardy. Thus, in general, Spenser may have been influenced by the writers as well as, or even instead of, the painters. However, considering the eclectic nature of Spenser's sources and the creative way in which he uses and manipulates them, it does not seem unlikely that he might also have borrowed conventions and ideas available to him from examples in the visual arts.

Despite negative reaction to Hunt's gallery, (Mario Praz, for example, says Hunt "indulged in the most extravagant and haphazard parallels between painters and poets"[21]) there are many critics who see the pictorial as an integral element of The Faerie Queene. Rosemond Tuve, for example, adamantly states that

> ...no greater violence to the poetry of Spenser could be done than, by separating the two [the reader's fund of experience and his pictorial imagination] to turn the poem into one vast picture gallery. I do not find this separation possible, nor valid, nor intended, even in Spenser's...most vividly sensuous 'paintings'.22

Emile Legouis acknowledges this same element, colourfully suggesting that we

> Picture Spenser as a born painter who never held a brush in his hand. Fate gave him birth in a country where the plastic arts were not to flourish until nearly two centuries later. Had he been born in Italy he might have been another Titian, a second Veronese. In Flanders, he would have anticipated Rubens or Rembrandt. As it was, fortune made him a painter in verse, one of the most wonderful that ever lived.23

Legouis continues in the same rapturous vein, proposing that "The Faerie Queene is essentially a series of gorgeous decorations of splendid pageants."[24] Even Douglas Bush recognizes the visual element in The Faerie Queene, referring to the poem in passing as "an endless gallery of mythological paintings."[25]

But not all critics acknowledge value in Spenser's pictorialism. Over one hundred years ago, James Russell Lowell rather lightly dismissed Spenser, saying that

> The true use of him is as a gallery of pictures which we visit as the mood takes us, and where we spend an hour or two at a time, long enough to sweeten our perceptions, not so long as to cloy them.26

The assumption here as elsewhere seems to be that the pictorial elements in The Faerie Queene are mere frivolous decoration, with little purpose or underlying value other than to "sweeten" our mood. Even some more modern critics see little of value in the recognition and study of a pictorial element in

Spenser. This type of criticism reaches an extreme in, for example, Rudolf Gottfried's article which questions the very existence of "The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry."[27] Here the author states that "The pictorial interest...is actually a minor ingredient of Spenser's art" and "nine-tenths of Spenser's imagery is addressed to the ear rather than the eye."[28] This type of emphatic denial seems reactionary and a little difficult to support. Gottfried offers little or no proof that Spenser's imagery is aural rather than visual. His reasons for saying Spenser is not pictorial, or if he is his pictorial imagination is not good, seem to rest partially on there being few actual depictions of The Faerie Queene or scenes from it. (It might also be said, however, that Spenser's images are so vivid as not to need visual clarification).

Gottfried seems to assume, like many literary critics, that pictures cannot have any meaning or value beyond the merely superficial. Painting,like poetry, however, is frequently suffused with allegory and hidden implications. This is evident in paintings such as the previously discussed Primavera, a work five hundred years old whose meaning is still being deciphered and disputed by critics.

It is also important to make note of the way in which Spenser is pictorial. The types of pictures painted tend to change somewhat with the ages, reflecting

different ways of seeing the world and indicating what things are important to that age. The term pictorial should be used with this idea in mind. The pictures reproduced in Spenser's poetry are frequently the kind that reveal, through emblematic detail, aspects of the human condition. They are thus very much like a great deal of Renaissance visual art where the meaning behind the work, and the viewer's interpretation of it, are of extreme importance. Spenser does not simply paint abstract or static pictures.

Gottfried raises another important point about the relationship between Spenser and the visual arts when he states "Spenser cannot, in his time and country, have known much of what we call the Fine Arts."[29] Individual critics differ in their evaluation of the extent of Spenser's pictorial knowledge, from Gottfried's negativity to wistful assertions that the poet must have enjoyed the visual arts. It seems very difficult to gain any concrete evidence of what works of art Spenser may have seen. He spent his life in England and Ireland at a time when painting and the visual arts were not the most prominent art form. There was a tradition of portrait painting as practised, for example, by Holbein. Miniatures, such as those by Nicolas Hillyard, were popular as well. There are also examples of allegorical portraits, where the person portrayed is either dressed in costume rich in symbolism (the "Rainbow" portrait of Elizabeth I

(c.1600) for example) or where the background of a painting contains scenes or attributes representing aspects of the figure in the picture. This type of painting can be seen in Hans Eworth's portrait of Sir John Luttrell, 1550 (figure 2), where the subject of the painting is portrayed as a sea god and figures representing peace are shown in the upper left corner of the canvas. A ship in stormy seas is depicted in the upper right corner. These details perhaps allude to Luttrell's career as a soldier and trader, although the significance of all the allusions in the work is not known.[30] This type of painting illustrates the pervasiveness of the allegorical way of thinking.

There are many possible visual influences present in Britain. Spenser's probable familiarity with illuminated manuscripts, for example, is explored by Rosemond Tuve.[31] Frederick Hard discusses the relationship between the poet and tapestry.[32] As well, Spenser may have seen tilts and tournaments, with elaborately allegorical costumes, such as those devised by Sir Henry Lee or George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland.[33] He could have seen pageants and processions,[34] perhaps theatrical sets, church decorations, such as stained glass windows, engravings, medals, drawings, woodcuts, et cetera.

Spenser also has a strong connection with emblem books, an art form which rapidly grew in

popularity. While still a schoolboy, Spenser is reputed to have translated into English some poems, the "Sonets" and "Epigrams", from Jan van der Noot's A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings.[35] This is the first emblem book printed in English in England, the original being in French and Dutch. Although not named as a translator in the Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings, Spenser later published the "Visions of DuBellay" and "Visions of Petrarch" which were prefaced with the words "formerly translated."[36] These poems are intimately related to those in the earlier emblem book. The similarities indicate an association with the book and thus an awareness of certain pictorial and iconological traditions as demonstrated in emblem books.

By the time Spenser was writing The Faerie Queene in Britain in the sixteenth century, over one hundred years had passed since the emerging glory of the Renaissance in Italy (and most of the paintings discussed herein). It is not inconceivable that in that length of time ideas and images could have found their way north to Britain. Travellers may have returned from the continent bearing engravings, copies, or descriptions of the great masterpieces of art, for the Italian Renaissance was aware enough of its own glory to perhaps want to spread its high culture. Gottfried's objection that Spenser as a pictorial poet does not mention colour enough[37] could perhaps stem

from his not seeing original coloured versions of works (although this idea is a little far-fetched). There exists a book, Richard Haydocke's Tracte containing the Artes of curious Paintinge, Carvinge, Buildinge (1598) which is a translation of an Italian work on Mannerist art theories, but which also

> has an important preface mentioning many Elizabethan painters and referring to the fact that examples of the works of the best foreign masters may already be seen in English collections.38

Although dated only one year before Spenser's death, this book does indicate the presence in England of examples of art from abroad.

It is also not unreasonable to speculate that Spenser might have been interested enough in the life and times of one of his major sources, Ariosto, to have learned something about where and whom he served. Ariosto was connected with the great court of the d'Este family of Ferrara,[39] a family for whom many of the best known mythological paintings of the age were painted[40] (some of which are included in this discussion such as Mantegna's Mars and Venus, 1480s, figure22). As well, Spenser's acquaintance with the English Court and with men such as Leicester, Dyer, Rogers, Florio, Raleigh and especially Sidney, who not only visited Italy but also had his portrait painted by Veronese,[41] might have introduced the poet to the splendour of the Italian

Renaissance visual arts.

The comparison to the Italian paintings of the High Renaissance, especially to the Venetian colourists, made by Lowell, Legouis and Hunt, seems appropriate and irresistible. Rich in detail, allusion and beauty, Spenser's poetry and Renaissance painting, and in particular mythological painting, share a common spirit that is difficult to define. One similar aspect is the sensual element that is so prominent in The Faerie Queene, and which is also often a factor in secular painting. Poetry and painting are frequently assigned moral and allegorical meanings, but these sometimes seem to be merely an excuse for what can be seen as essentially an erotic, or even soft-core pornographic, portrayal. Even Botticelli's complicated mythologies have sensual features. How, for example, can the physical beauty of Venus in The Birth of Venus, c.1482 (figure 3), be ignored? The subject of a celestial Venus rising from the sea is a valid reason for painting what is also a lovely nude woman. Antonio Correggio's gorgeous mythological paintings, such as Jupiter and Io, c.1534 (figure 4), or Leda and the Swan, c.1534 (figure 5), also exhibit the extremely sensual nature that can exist in these pagan subjects. The sexuality of such works reaches an extreme in paintings such as Agnolo Bronzino's Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time, 1540 (figure 6). The allegorical title (which is not agreed upon by all

critics)[42] covers a highly erotic picture, with elements such as Venus depicted with her tongue between her teeth as Cupid kisses her and places his hand on her breast. There are, of course, religious paintings which also exhibit touches of physical beauty as shown by the not uncommon and ostensibly didactic subject of Susanna and the Elders. (There is also a connection between sex and violence in both secular subjects, as this is one way of interpreting the characters of Venus and Mars, and in religious subjects, as shown in the story of and depictions of, for example, Judith and Holofernes.) Spenser frequently uses mythological archetypes, as with the story of Mars and Venus, to suggest the sensual nature of his characters. He has no reticence about hinting at the sexuality of his "faithfull loues" (1.proem.1). The enjoyment of beauty, especially physical beauty, in and for itself is often frowned upon as somehow intrinsically sinful and immoral, perhaps as a result of a society dominated by religious strictures. Myth, and especially the loves of the gods, was seen as a way of circumventing moral tenets. These stories, being of ancient origin, also had a certain amount of authority to an emerging culture which revered the classical.

Of the many facets of The Faerie Queene, its relationship to the visual arts is one of the most contentious. The existence of the doctrine of ut pictura poesis demonstrates the interest aroused in the connection

between poetry and painting. It seems entirely probable that Spenser was subjected to many visual influences and that some elements of certain traditions are present in The Faerie Queene.

Notes to Chapter One

1 Spenser's many and varied sources are discussed in Henry G. Lotspeich, Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Spenser, (Princeton, 1932, 1965), p. 14.

2 The Preface, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium Libri have been translated into English in Charles G. Osgood, Boccaccio on Poetry (Indianapolis, N.Y., 1956).

3 Horace, Ars Poetica, ll. 361-65.

4 Allan H. Gilbert, ed, Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden (Detroit, 1962).

5 Rensselaer Lee, Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting (New York, 1967), p. 3.

6 Rosemond Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago, 1947), p. 50.

7 Jean H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray (Chicago and London, 1958), p. 58.

8 Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, p. 57.

9 Plato, The Symposium, trans. Walter Hamilton, (Harmondsworth, 1951), p. 94 211a ff .

10 Lee, Ut Pictura Poesis, p. 67.

11 Ibid.

12 Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (Harmondsworth, 1978), 3.proem.2. All further references to The Faerie Queene will be to this edition and will appear in parentheses in the text.

13 Lotspeich, Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Spenser, p. 14.

14 Jane Aptekar, Icons of Justice (New York, 1969), p. 3.

15 This passage is quoted in Rudolf Gottfried's article "The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry", ELH 19 (1952), 203.

16 Leigh Hunt, Imagination and Fancy (1844) (New York, 1972), p. 110.

17 Ibid., p. 111.

18 Ibid., p. 106.

19 Ronald Lightbown, Sandro Botticelli (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), Vol.I, p. 78. Some interpretive details of the painting are also from this source, Vol.I, pp. 77-81, Vol. II, pp. 51-53.

20 Seneca, De Beneficius, I.c.3; Lucretius, V, 735ff; Ovid, Fasti, V, 193-212; Horace, Odes, I, 30; Politian, Stanze, last octaves. From: ibid., Vol. II, p. 52.

21 Mario Praz, Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts (Princeton, 1970), p. 7.

22 Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, p. 59.

23 Emile Legouis, in The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Greenlaw et. al. (Baltimore, 1932), Vol. III, p. 392.

24 Ibid., p. 393.

25 Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry (Minneapolis, 1932), p. 86.

26 James Russell Lowell, in William R. Mueller, Spenser's Critics: Changing Currents in Literary Taste (Syracuse, 1959), p. 93.

27 Gottfried, "The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry", ELH, 19 (1952), 203-13.
Gottfried is not the only critic who disagrees with a pictorial assessment of The Faerie Queene, he is just the most convenient (and blatant) for my purposes. Although persuasively phrased, there seems to be little of substance, or that can be proven, behind his statements. Other critics who emphasize more the poem's moral purpose include Dowden, Renwick, Osgood, Davis and Watkins. This difference is discussed in Mueller, Spenser's Critics, pp. 14-16.

28 Gottfried, 212.

29 Ibid., 208.

30 Details are from Roy Strong, The Elizabethan Image (London, 1969), p. 23.

31 Rosemond Tuve, "Spenser and Some Pictorial Conventions" in Essays by Rosemond Tuve: Spenser, Herbert, Milton, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (Princeton, 1970), pp. 113-38.

32 Frederick Hard, "Spenser's Clothes of Arras and of Toure" (pp. 162-183) quoted in the Variorum Spenser, Vol. III, p. 395.

33 Strong, pp. 34-35.

34 See David M. Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642 (Columbia, S.C., 1971).

35 Louis S. Friedland, introduction to A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings by Jan van der Noot (Delmar, N.Y., 1977), pp. iii-xvii.
W.J.B. Peinaar, "Edmund Spenser and Jonker van der Noot" ES, VIII (1926), pp. 33-44; 67-76.
Leonard Forster, "The Translator of the Theatre for Worldlings", ES, 48 (1967), pp. 27-34.

36 Friedland, p. iii.

37 Gottfried, 211.

38 Strong, p. 67.

39 Barbara Reynolds, introduction to Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth, 1975), Vol. I, pp. 67-74.

40 Egon Verheyen, The Paintings in the "Studiolo" of Isabella d'Este at Mantua (New York, 1971).

41 Hagstrum, p. 75.

42 Michael Jacobs in Mythological Painting (New York, 1979), p. 52, for example, calls the painting Allegory of Love and Time.

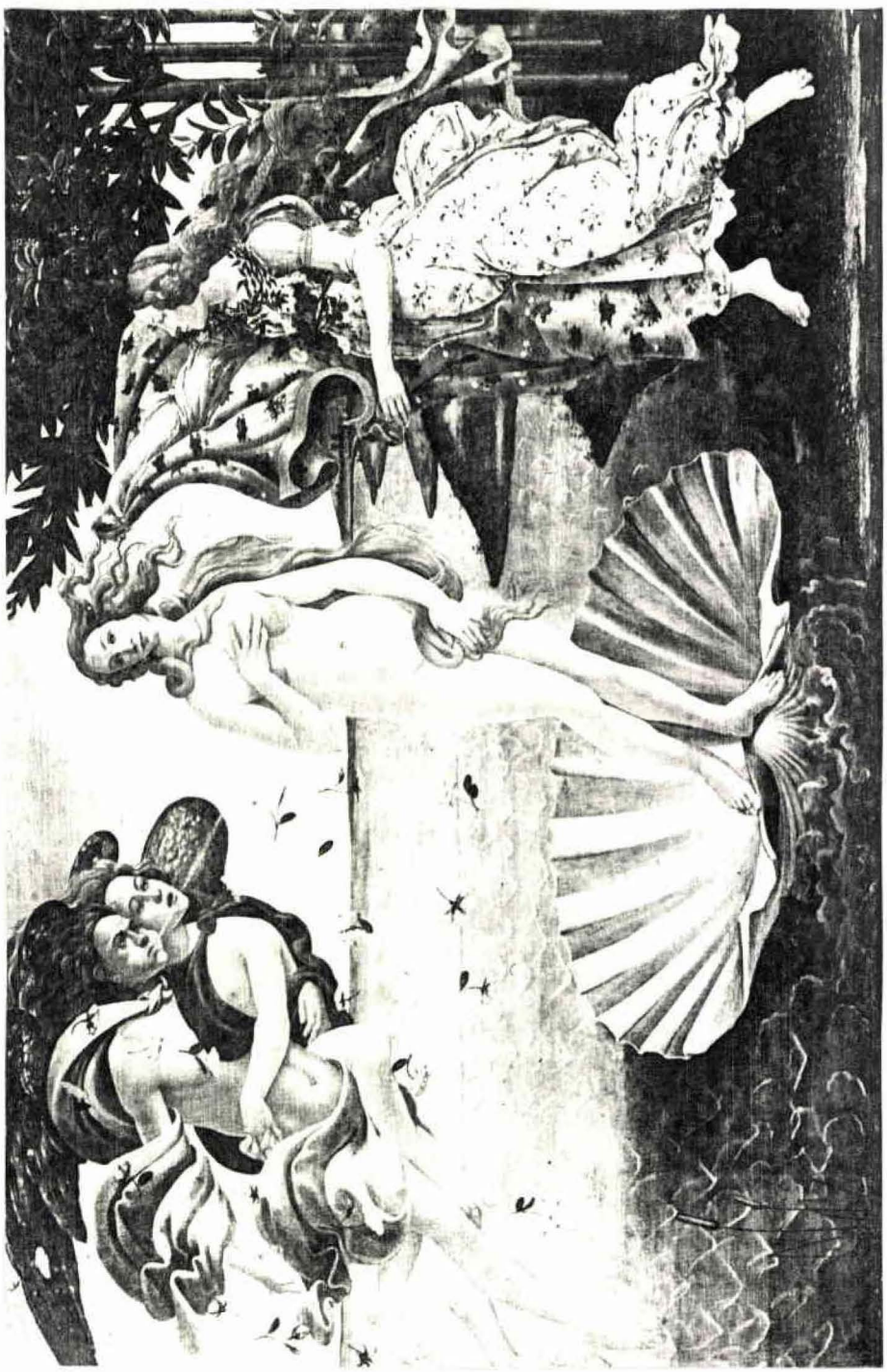
figure 1

Sandro Botticelli, Primavera, 1478

figure 2

Hans Eworth, Sir John Luttrell, 1550

figure 3



Sandro Botticelli, The Birth of Venus, c.1482

figure 4

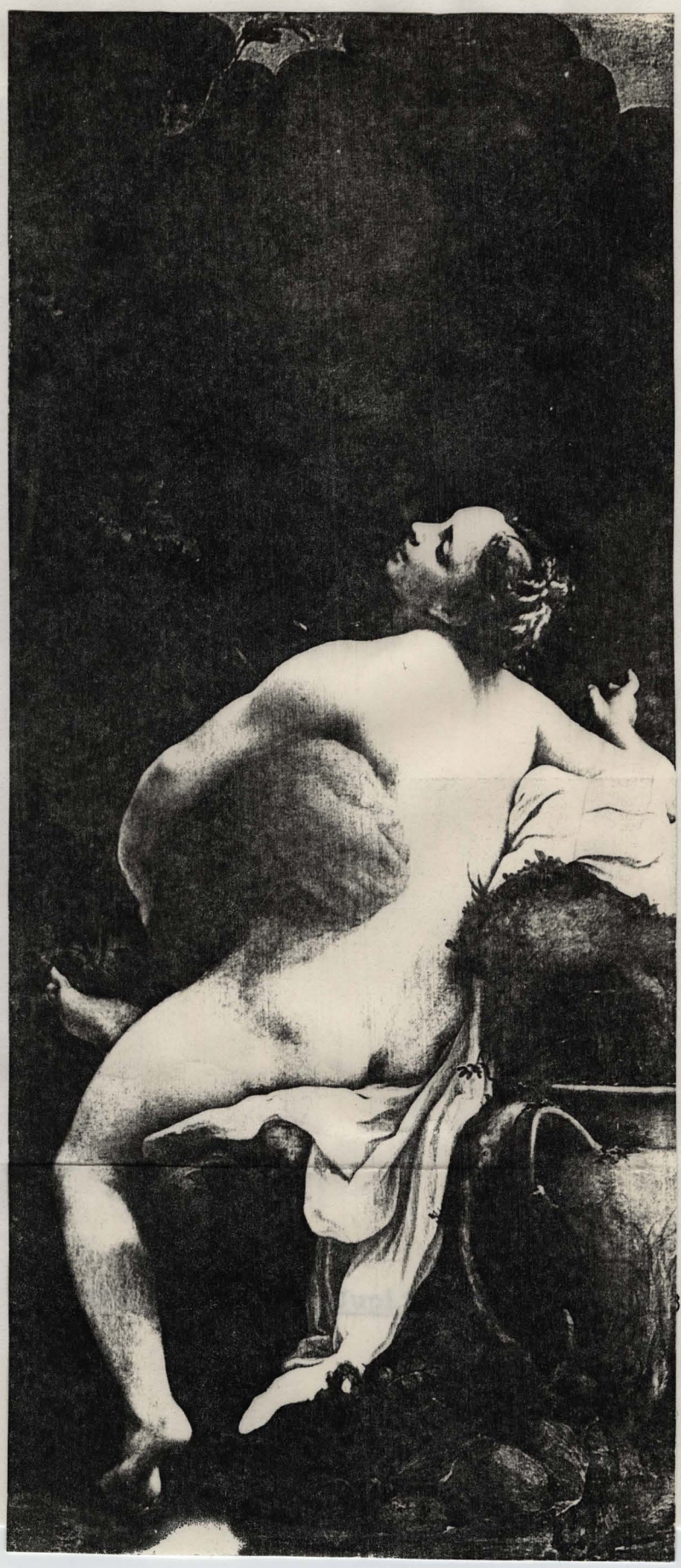
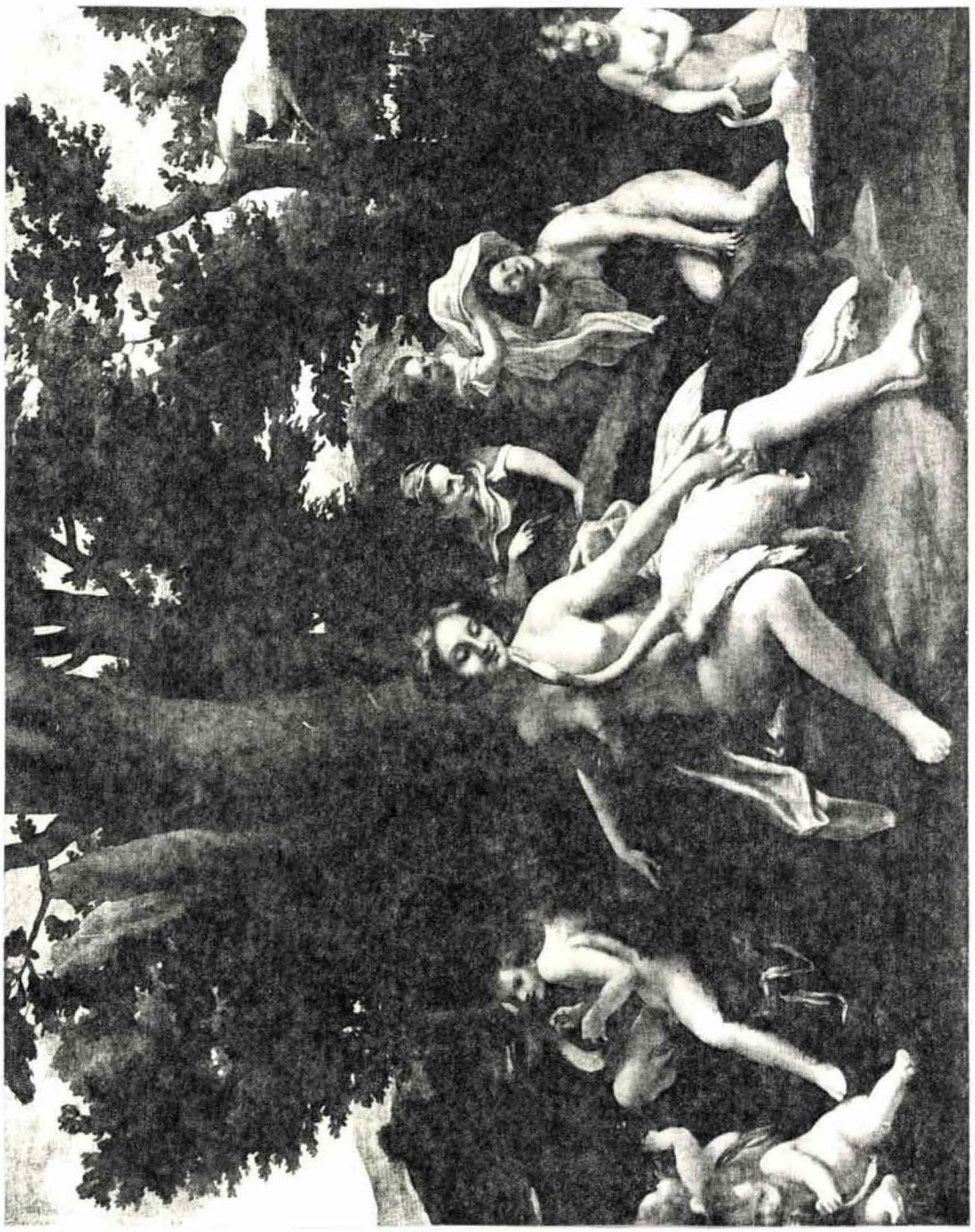
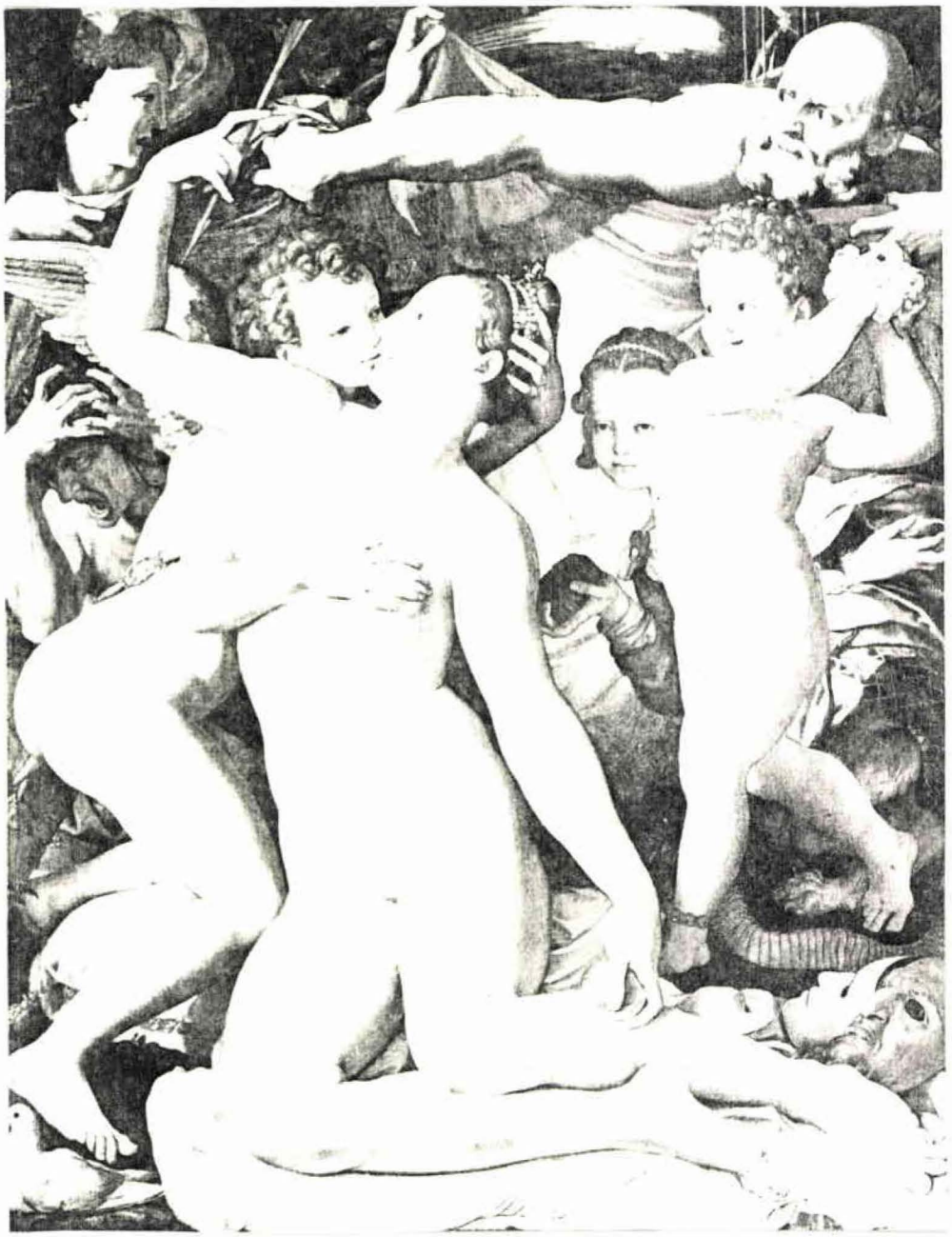


figure 5



Antonio Correggio, Leda and the Swan, c.1534

figure 6



Agnolo Bronzino, Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time, c.1540

Chapter Two

Spenser's Pictorial Technique

Before examining the specific motif of Mars and Venus, how Spenser uses it, and how it reflects visual traditions, it is expedient to explore the poet's "pictorial" method -- the way in which he presents his reader with visual pictures. Spenser's storytelling style involves frequent interruptions in the narration of action to describe settings and characters in great detail so that they are easy for the reader to picture in his mind. Individually these descriptions do not need to be of great length to be effective. In just a few lines Spenser can provide the reader with a memorable and meaningful scene or portrait. These pictures in effect become icons, not in the strict religious sense, but more as a pictorial representation or image. These icons are emblematic in nature because elements of the image are often symbolic of something behind the surface. (The words emblem and icon are used similarly throughout this thesis.[1]) Certain images become motifs because they recur throughout The Faerie Queene. Spenser's icons are almost like theatre sets, for in a number of different places the same poses are repeated together with accompanying properties. Like clues in a mystery story, each piece of information must be identified and interpreted by the reader.

The Faerie Queene is a rich mosaic of intertwining stories of knights, ladies and the evils they encounter. However, although the enchanting tales of fairyland are enjoyable on a purely literal level, the poem is also infused with meanings that go beyond the simple story line. Characters, events and places often represent a deeper aspect of life. In the "Letter to Raleigh" Spenser expresses this intention for the poem when he says,"The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline."[2] The allegorical stories Spenser tells are thus a guide to a proper, moral way of life.

Spenser's allegories can also be very complicated. At times, the poet deliberately misleads the reader as an attempt is made to decipher the meaning of the poem. The reader must remain wary at all times for an icon once encountered does not necessarily have to mean the same thing the next time it comes along. In fact, Spenser often plays upon and upsets reader expectations to emphasize a point. His pictures are not just static representations. Shifting viewpoint and circumstance often cause a portrait to change shape, to metamorphose, before the reader's eye.

The Faerie Queene is not a tale of three-dimensional people. While some characters do have complex psyches, there is essentially little realistic character development in the poem. The figures are

more generally representative of some quality or virtue. Una, for example, symbolizes truth, Redcrosse is the knight of Holiness, Guyon of Temperance, and Britomart of Chastity.

In many places in The Faerie Queene there is also a feeling that what characters see, the people and things they encounter, may be more of an internal allegory, a vision of their state of mind or being, than any real place. For example, when Redcrosse, in a suicidal frame of mind, meets Despair in Book 1, he is facing the moral condition he is in as much as another character. Only when Redcrosse physically picks up a dagger does Una intervene to stop him from killing himself (1.9.52). Thus until the knight makes a physical move, Una is not involved, as if the discussion with Despair took place within the mind of Redcrosse. These episodes, however, are frequently described in easily visualised detail so that the poet paints a picture of the state of a character's mind.

Like an artist who dabs paint on canvas bit by bit, Spenser builds up his pictures by adding visual detail onto visual detail. The reader watches while Spenser paints verbal pictures. But Spenser does not always dwell for long on a portrait or scene. There are, of course, sections of the poem dedicated to long descriptions, such as those of Una or Britomart.

Generally, however, Spenser sketches a picture for a few lines then moves from this description to narration or action (itself usually easy to picture), or commentary. The reader observes the picture and assimilates the details. Then the "painterly" description is withdrawn, allowing for moralising and thought. In this way Spenser's poetry achieves and surpasses the accomplishment of painting. The poet can thus bring about certain effects that are closed to the painter -- a point which relates to the spirit of competitiveness between the arts mentioned in the foregoing chapter.

A rhythmic pattern is thus set up whereby Spenser gives the reader visual pleasure in the form of a picture and then denies that satisfaction by retreating into commentary. This process is not overt, nor is it a strictly regular system without deviation (which would be intensely monotonous). Spenser's observations can be very subtle and are often tricky clues to upset what the reader has been unwittingly lulled into thinking. He sets up a pattern of clarification and doubt that the reader must interpret correctly.

The fundamental pictorialness of Spenser's writing style and the way in which he uses this method to moralise can be observed through a close analysis of any part of The Faerie Queene. Here, the first few stanzas of the opening canto will be used to demonstrate his technique.

Perhaps the most famous part of The Faerie Queene is the opening stanzas of Book 1, canto 1, which are justifiably admired. In stanza 1 the reader is first introduced to the "patrone" of "Holynes"[3], the Redcrosse Knight:

> A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
> Y cladd in mightie armes and siluer shielde,
> Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,
> The cruell markes of many a bloudy fielde.
> (1.1.1.1-4)

Thus far the reader is given a picture of an heroic figure dressed in well worn armour. But the next line provides a puzzling element, for it is learned that "Yet armes till that time did he neuer wield" (1.1.1.5). The reader is thus left questioning how a knight wearing used armour can as yet be untried in battle.

The portrait of Redcrosse continues with a picture of his horse:

> His angry steede did chide his foming bitt,
> As much disdayning to the curbe to yield.
> (1.1.1.6-7)

This description of a fiery steed is full of details which imply that all is not as it should be. A rider controlling a horse is traditionally emblematic of reason (man's mind) controlling passion (his animal nature). But Redcrosse's mount is not at all happy, nor, despite the next line which states that the knight "faire did sitt," does Redcrosse have perfect mastery of his angry

horse. In fact, by suggesting the horse has in effect almost a personality, and certainly has emotions such as anger, Spenser manages to hint that the knight and the horse are equals, when Redcrosse should be far superior to an animal. As anger later emerges as one of Redcrosse's major problems, Spenser is very early on, and by subtle details, suggesting the nature of this knight. Thus the first stanza, while ostensibly giving the reader a picture of an heroic knight, incorporates thought-provoking clues about Redcrosse's virgin status as a knight and casts doubt on his moral condition as well as his martial ability. Spenser uses a picture to introduce his knight and then subtly hints that perhaps things are not as they first seem. The contradictions even within one stanza puzzle the reader and must make him wary.

In stanza 2 Spenser depicts Redcrosse's identifying armour. He explains the doctrinal origin of the red cross on both the knight's breast and shield. Spenser introduces a perplexing element in the second stanza when he says Redcrosse "did seeme too solemne sad." This statement conflicts with the "Full iolly knight he seemd" to be in the opening stanza. The key word of doubt, "seem", is a clue to the reader to question what is being said. Again, though, Spenser has presented visual detail and then hinted that there is something wrong with the picture.

Stanza 3 withdraws from visual description.

After the reader has been enticed into the poem by the intriguing picture of Redcrosse, Spenser now elucidates the reason for the knight's journey: his commission from Gloriana, Queen of Fairyland, to fight a "Dragon horrible" and his desire "To proue his puissance in battell braue". The picture the reader is first given thus sets the scene, and then Spenser fills in details necessary to the storyline afterwards.

Spenser returns to pictorial description in the next stanza. Here, Una is most idealistically portrayed:

> A louely Ladie rode him faire beside,
> Vpon a lowly Asse more white then snow,
> Yet she much whiter.
>
> (1.1.4.1-3)

Her purity is suggested by the whiteness, as are the qualities of truth and faith.[4] There are also religious implications in this portrayal, as the lady on an ass hints at an association with Mary or with Christ's entry into Jerusalem. These, and subsequent, clues suggest one of Una's allegorical functions as the true church. The lamb that Una leads also has a typological purpose, suggesting the Eucharist and Christ's role as a shepherd. Spenser's details here thus operate on both a narrative and exegetic level.

In stanza 5 Una's genealogy is set forth and her virtuous nature again extolled. More fragments of background information are given to further clarify Redcrosse's

quest. Here, again, pictorial description is absent after the previous, extremely emblematic, stanza.

The first part of stanza 6 completes the picture of this unusual trio of characters, for

> Behind her farre away a Dwarfe did lag,
> That lasie seemd in being euer last,
> Or wearied with bearing of her bag
> Of needments at his backe.
>
> (1.1.6.1-4)

One comment frequently made about these three figures is that, travelling at different speeds as they are, Redcrosse "pricking on the plaine" aboard his "angry steede," Una journeying "vpon her palfrey slow" and the Dwarfe lagging behind on foot, they will never stay together for long. However, in a poem where symbols, motifs and stories frequently have more than one, and sometimes completely opposite, meanings, there seems to be no reason why Spenser must be consistently logical throughout. Also, being set in Fairyland where it seems anything is possible, the natural laws of our world do not necessarily need to apply to the world of the poem. Part of the attractiveness of the poem is its shifting meanings and the mental gymnastics the reader must perform to reach any understanding.

In his denial of the pictorial element in Spenser, Rudolf Gottfried (whose article was discussed in the previous chapter) uses this incident of the three travellers to generalize that "Spenser subordinates the

pictorial element to the moral allegory."[5] However, rather than being subordinated, I feel that the pictorial element is an integral part of the moral allegory. Part of the problem, as mentioned before, lies in the question of by what criteria the term pictorial is defined. Spenser does not merely paint static pictures (which seems to be what Gottfried wants). Spenser is not pictorial in the sense that a painting or other work of art describes only the object portrayed. Spenser's "paintings" reflect more the tradition of Renaissance pictures such as those discussed in this thesis: works where the iconography is a vital and important part of the whole. The moral behind the painting is often mystified or disguised, to the extent that in some paintings (the Primavera [figure 1], for example) the meaning is no longer entirely decipherable, if indeed it ever was by anyone other than the artist or the person who commissioned the work. There are also Elizabethan examples of this puzzling type of painting. The reference made by the ship in the right corner of Eworth's portrait of Sir John Luttrell, 1550 (figure 2), for instance, is still uncertain. In the upper right background of the painting is found the allegorical configuration with which this thesis is especially concerned. Here "Venus curbs the wrath of war, symbolised by the horse, which she bridles with a bit."[6]

Thus the pictorial aspects of The Faerie Queene

add greatly to the shape of the whole poem. Spenser describes in detail often allegorical scenes and characters so that they are easy for the reader to visualise. He then supplies intriguing pointers that cause the reader to doubt what he has just seen. By this method of visual clarification and then puzzling comments, Spenser creates a poem that requires a very alert reader. There is a great deal of satisfaction in being able to see through the surface portrayals, and Spenser pays his reader a compliment by making the interpretation of his poem somewhat exacting.

Notes to Chapter Two

1 The terms icon, motif, symbol, emblem and image are difficult to entirely separate because they are usually defined in terms of each other. In art history, the term iconography commonly encompasses the study of meaning in a painting and is thus used in a more general sense, as it is in this thesis.

2 Edmund Spenser, "Letter to Raleigh" (i.e. "A Letter of the Authors Expounding His Whole Intention..." et cetera) in Thomas P. Roche, Jr., ed., The Faerie Queene (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 15.

3 Spenser, "Letter to Raleigh", p. 16.

4 I am indebted here, as throughout the thesis, to Dr. T.H. Cain, and to his book Praise in The Faerie Queene (Lincoln and London, 1978) -- in this instance to pp. 60-63. Details of interpretation are also confirmed in A.C. Hamilton's edition of The Faerie Queene (London and New York, 1977), pp. 29-31.

5 Rudolf Gottfried, "The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry", ELH, 19 (1952), 210.

6 Roy Strong, The Elizabethan Image (London, 1969), p. 23.

Chapter Three

The Negative Interpretation of the Mars and Venus Myth

Often in The Faerie Queene a certain group of elements will appear together once and then recur throughout the poem in the same, or nearly the same, combination. These elements thus form a motif and the reader begins, by familiarity, to be able to identify the meaning behind the set-piece. Slight deviations in the original pattern, which might in themselves be significant, also soon become noticeable. In The Faerie Queene one repeated motif is that of Mars and Venus. Because of the theme of "fierce warres and faithfull loues"(1.1.1) that pervades the poem, these lovers, the god of war and the goddess of love, are particularly important in the poem.

Mars and Venus, representing as they do the contrary aspects of love and war (perhaps the two most important concerns of human beings) are popular figures in both literature and painting. Chaucer's Complaint of Mars, for example, speaks of the god of war and "Venus his love" who "hath take him in subjeccioun" and "brydeleth him in her manere."[1] In Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis, Venus tries to entice Adonis by bragging about her other lover:

> Who conquers where he comes in every jar;
> Yet hath he been my captive and my slave,
> And begged for that which thou unasked

shalt have.

> Over my altars hath he hung his lance,
> His batt'red shield, his uncontrolled crest,
> And for my sake hath learned to sport and dance,
> To toy, to wanton, dally, smile, and jest,
> Scorning his churlish drum and ensign red
> Making my arms his field, his tent my bed.
>
> Thus he that overruled I overswayed
> Leading him prisoner in a red-rose chain.
> Strong-tempered steel his stronger strength obeyed;
> Yet was he servile to my coy disdain.2

This passage has been quoted at length because of the many details that are in common with Spenser and with the traditional iconological way of representing the lovers. While only two in number, these examples show that Mars and Venus were not an uncommon subject for poetry, especially as Chaucer and Shakespeare are two of the major poets of the English language. The many paintings included in this thesis demonstrate that the visual arts also often depicted the famous lovers. Familiarity with the myth, its associations and the visual traditions surrounding the depiction of Mars and Venus often enhances an understanding of the allegorical pictures of them that Spenser paints.

As is common with Spenser's mythological figures, Mars and Venus appear throughout the poem in different guises, individually and jointly, connected with the varied legends that surround them. There are many incidental references to the two, often used as commonplace examples, similes or decoration. There are also, however,

characters in the poem that are Mars and Venus figures and who, by their actions or poses, resemble the two famous lovers. The clue to an allegorical identification of these figures is often found in parallels with visual representations of the famous pair as found in Renaissance art.

The relationship between Mars and Venus has been traditionally viewed in more than one way. As Venus was married to Vulcan, the lame and ugly god of forge and hearth, the relationship between Venus and Mars was on one hand regarded as illicit and adulterous. According to some authors,[3] it was from this union that the mischievous child Eros (Cupid) resulted, as well as the sons who drove Mars' war chariot, Deimus (Fear) and Phobus (Panic). In this negative interpretation of the union of Mars and Venus, the goddess is seen to have a great deal of power over Mars. It is the sensual passions, implicit in the meaning of the Venus figure, which cause Mars to neglect his warrior duties. Mars comes to Venus and abandons himself to carnal pleasure, forgetting his true purpose. In the pervasive Renaissance spirit of allegorizing mythology,[4] love (represented by Venus) is shown to be more powerful than, and indeed to be able to control, war (represented by Mars). By the superior strength of the sexual passions, Venus could cause the warlike Mars, in effect, to lose his martial identity. This represents a potentially chaotic loss of

control and is extremely dangerous. The figures of Mars and Venus thus relate closely to the important theme of identity and loss of identity that runs throughout The Faerie Queene. A knight must first know himself before he can successfully complete his quest, or on an allegorical level, man must first know himself before he can know God. If Mars, the god who controls war, loses this ability, then war itself can run rampant causing disorder and havoc. Perhaps a god of war is necessary to ensure that war is carried out in the extremely ritualistic manner of combat that is a feature of The Faerie Queene. Proper procedure in fights is an important aspect of a knight's character; honour is a mandatory attribute. This is shown, for example, in Book 2, where Guyon, "inflam'd with wrathfulness" at Archimago's lies about Redcrosse, rashly hastens to attack a knight who is not armed. There is disapproval implicit in the tone of this incident (2.1.25ff) and Guyon, who stops his attack when he sees the red cross on the knight of holiness' armour, is ashamed of his intemperate behaviour.

Venus' conquest of Mars is an aspect of the legend frequently illustrated, as, for example, in "April" or "Triumph of Venus" [1435/6-77][5] section of Francesco Cossa's Palazzo Schifanoia fresco in Ferrara (figure 7). This depiction is in the common form of a triumph. Pageant-like, Venus glides on the water in a vehicle drawn by swans. She is identified by a number of her

traditional attributes: doves, apples, roses and the three graces, and rabbits.[6] Mars, wearing his identifying armour, kneels in submission before Venus. Most importantly, he is physically chained to Venus' chariot, illustrating graphically the power that Venus has over Mars. Throughout The Faerie Queene there are a number of references to this chain. For example, when Archimago summons Redcrosse to view the false Una "staining her honour", the wicked magician (and the equally clever poet) plants the thought of wickedness in the knight's mind by saying that Redcrosse has been asleep

> whiles wicked wights
> Haue knit themselues in Venus shamefull chaine.
> (1.2.4)

Amavia describes Mortdant as being "In chaines of lust and lewd desires ybound" (2.1.54) to Acrasia. Females, too, can be affected by this chain of lust and love, for in the House of Busyrane, Amoret is tied to a pillar "And her small wast girt round with yron bands" (3.12.30). This is later described as "Amorets hart-binding chaine" (4.1.1). This chain probably derives from the "chain network"[7] that Vulcan fashions in order to entrap the lovers Mars and Venus and is also often a feature of visual depictions of the god and goddess. That Spenser includes such minute details shows, not only his familiarity with traditional ways of representing the

characters, but also the very visual nature of the pictures with which he supplies his reader.

These visual pictures are often related to the spiritual or psychological state of a character. Spenser's buildings and castles, for example, sometimes represent in concrete form the thoughts, feelings and personality of a particular figure. This is especially true in the episode of Amoret in the House of Busyrane, where that structure could be considered as a physical manifestation of Amoret's psychological fears of love and marriage. The decoration of Amoret's fantasy house of torture is full of visual description. The tapestry of "Cupids warres" and "cruell battels" (3.11.29) in the first room vividly portrays grotesque mythological stories of rape, bestiality and metamorphoses; stories which "maked meeke/The mighty Mars" (3.11.44). As soon as Britomart helps Amoret conquer her fear and the ladies turn to leave, they find that the rooms have "vanisht vtterly" (3.12.42) as if they were only created by her anxiety. Amoret's fears had been as debilitating and dangerous as Scudamore's uncontrollable lust. Such visual allegorizing is typical of Spenser's method.

The Cossa fresco also depicts Venus as crowned with a garland of roses.[8] Garlands play an important role in The Faerie Queene, usually as an attribute of a lady, as armour is of a knight. Alma, for example, is

described as "crowned with a garland of sweete Rosiere" (2.9.19). As Alma is "a virgin bright" (2.9.18), her wearing a garland of roses, a flower usually associated with Venus, poses a problem. This duality recurs throughout The Faerie Queene, for sometimes Venus is seen as a positive, progenerative force and sometimes as a less-than-exemplary representation of lust and uncontrolled passion. Explanation may be found in the concept of the two Venuses adopted by certain neoplatonist philosophers.[9] On the one hand is the terrestrial Venus or "Common Love" which is "physical rather than spiritual" and whose "only aim is the satisfaction of its desires".[10] Venus is thus a seductress who lures men into the sin of lust and takes advantage of them. The antithetical celestial Venus is more spiritual in nature. It is she who has the positive function of propagation and continuation of the race. These ideas are adopted, mystified and complicated by the neoplatonists.

The power that Venus has over Mars is frequently depicted in the visual arts. Botticelli's Mars and Venus, 1480s (figure 8) is perhaps the most famous rendition of the subject. It illustrates what will be seen as certain aspects of the "Mars and Venus" motif in The Faerie Queene. In the painting, two figures recline in a grove. At the left forefront Venus is identified by her pearl and ruby brooch.[11] She nonchalantly leans, fully clothed and wide awake,

on a red pillow. To the right, a satiated Mars sleeps with his head thrown back in total abandon. Of prime importance is Mars' state of undress, for only a cloth is draped across his loins. His identifying armour is spread about to be used as toys by mischievous satyrs. These humorous imps add a mocking element to the scene for Mars has indeed been disarmed by love. As well, Venus' puzzling expression seems rather contemptuous of her lover and perhaps the ease of her domination of him.

The Renaissance delighted in making learned references to other works of art that were intended to be recognized. This happens in The Faerie Queene with Spenser's deliberate echoes of Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso, showing not only that he is capable of achieving the effect of these acknowledgedly great poets, but also that he can surpass them by including what they have done and then going one step farther. This characteristic is also present in much Renaissance painting. In Botticelli's Mars and Venus, for example, the satyrs are suggested by a text of Lucian and the poses of the figures may come from an ancient sarcophagus depicting Bacchus and Ariadne.[12] The similarities between poet and painter demonstrate a common spirit. Like Spenser, Botticelli was "artistically impressionable... and open to every influence" "harmonizing"[13] a variety of sources. Every detail adds to an interpretation of the

painting. Even the wasps swarming around the sleeping god's head (detail, figure 9) can be seen as a reference to the coat of arms of Botticelli's patrons, the Vespucci, alluding to the work as a marriage painting or type of cassone.[14] The insects might also, however, reinforce the idea that war has been conquered, for in emblem books there is often a woodcut of a helmet with bees flying about it, 1586 (figure 10). This example is from Geffrey Whitney's Choice of Emblems but the same motif occurs, for example, in Andrea Alciati's emblem books.[15] There is also the Biblical text supporting these emblems for Samson saw "a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion" (Judges 14:8) and riddled that "out of the strong came forth sweetness" (Judges 14:14). There is thus more than one influence on varying aspects of Botticelli's painting and its subject.

Also typically Renaissance and another link with Spenser is that the painting needs interpreting. A moral or meaning can be and is attributed to the work by various critics (although it is not, as is most often the case in such matters, necessarily the same meaning for each critic) Erwin Panofsky, for example, grandly sees the painting as a "glorification of 'cosmic love' pacifying the universe."[16] E. H. Gombrich gives Mars and Venus "astrological and moral overtones"[17] relating it to Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on the Symposium:

> Mars is outstanding in strength among the planets, because he makes men stronger, but Venus masters him...Venus, when in conjunction with Mars, in opposition to him, or in reception, or watching from sextile or trine aspect, as we say, often checks his malignance...she seems to master and appease Mars, but Mars never masters Venus....18

Wind denies any astrological implication, calling the painting a "union of sweetness and sting...implicit in the discordia concors of Mars and Venus."[19]

A similar motif is found on a fifteenth-century mirror frame in the style of Antonio Pollaiuolo, which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1460-5 (figure 11). Here, again, Mars and Venus recline. Mars without armour or clothes slumbers on the right while on the left a nude Venus is significantly being crowned with a garland by putti. Above Venus, a putto rides a goose. (There are ancient depictions of Venus herself riding a goose or a swan such as Aphrodite riding on a goose, c.470 B.C. [figure 12] which might account for this putto's choice of mount.) Above Mars, another putto rides a dragon, a creature sacred to the god of war.[20] As was found in the Botticelli painting, there is again a precedent for the pose of one of the figures, Mars.

The motif of the two lovers reclining with Mars overcome by Venus occurs in a third rendition, by Piero di Cosimo again entitled Mars and Venus, 1498 (figure 13). The pose is very similar to that in Botticelli, although the lovers seem less involved perhaps because they do

not fill the canvas as totally as do Botticelli's pair, thus allowing more detail in the receding background. Venus also seems less aggressively critical of Mars than in Botticelli's version. In Piero di Cosimo's painting, Venus is less fully clothed but is more readily identified by the presence of her usual attributes: a rabbit nibbles at her hip, two doves (a dark and a light perhaps to emphasize the contrast implicit in Mars and Venus) touch beaks in the foreground, and Cupid leans against his mother. In the middle ground, putti cavort with the war god's armour for once again Mars is without his weapons. Of this work, Edgar Wind says that "no chain or ribbon is required to demonstrate the bondage of Mars. Venus has put his fierceness to sleep."[22] Present also in the di Cosimo painting is the element of water that will figure in Spenser's motif. In a later painting by Carlo Saraceni, Venus and Mars, c. 1608 (figure 14) some of these features are again present: putti cavort on the right side of the canvas, Mars' armour is piled in a heap on the ground, and a stream tumbles over rocks in the background.

The pervasiveness of these elements can be seen in an English miniature by Isaac Oliver of Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury c.1610-15 (figure 15). In a wooded glade Lord Herbert reclines on the ground beside a stream. His emblematic shield rests on his arm. In the background, a knight's armour is hung upon

a tree. While the associations with Mars are not overt, here, they should perhaps be kept in mind when examining the painting to give an added possible dimension of meaning.

The elements found in these works of art, with a Mars figure reclining on the ground overcome by circumstances and emotion, occur a number of times in The Faerie Queene, in effect, becoming an icon. Often the dangerous state of sleep is induced whereby the knight loses his ability to control events and himself. The main heroes of the poem are often Mars figures and are repeatedly delineated in terms of their armour and martial ability. Redcrosse, so designated because of borrowed accoutrements, is the only appellation used for the knight of holiness until near the end of the first book when he is named "Georgos" (1.10.66). Following this naming he is again referred to by his acquired, not his original, label. Guyon is also described in terms of military prowess, for he is called "Faire sonne of Mars, that seeke with warlike spoile" (2.1.8). The loss of armour that is a part of this motif is thus an extremely important indication that the knight in question is in a desperate and debilitating state.

Spenser's word choice often hints at a Mars and Venus association. In the House of Pride, for example, the poet envisions a setting where "The warlike youthes

on dayntie couches layd" (1.4.44). This line occurs in a stanza that is full of secret menace. These knights sleep as if drugged, at the bidding of Morpheus' "leaden mace", while Duessa sneaks away to create her mischief.

The icon of "Mars and Venus" is first encountered in an extended descriptive passage in Book 1, Canto 7. The injured and despairing Redcrosse is found in a pose that will soon become a familiar set-piece:

> he wearie sate,
> To rest him selfe, foreby a fountaine side,
> Disarmed all of yron-coted Plate.
> (1.7.2)

This is a dangerous move for Redcrosse. Although his armour is borrowed, it does give him some identity, if not an entirely correct one. His armour distinguishes his quest, giving an ultimate purpose to his wanderings. By casting aside the "yron-coted Plate" Redcrosse falls into a state of complete lethargy (although he is rather tired before he sits down). The removal of his armour leaves the knight formless, rather like the water spilling out from the fountain. Allegorically the physical shedding of his armour represents the moral dilemma Redcrosse is in. Like Mars and Venus, Redcrosse is about to become (or thinks he is about to become) engaged in an illicit rendezvous. Just as Venus -- another man's wife -- is the "wrong" woman for Mars, so too is Duessa, by her evil nature and by Redcrosse's commitment to Una, most

definitely the wrong woman for Redcrosse. That Duessa's Venus-like seduction of Redcrosse almost succeeds, however, indicates the dangerous "fallen" state of the knight.

The fountain that Redcrosse sits by whose waters cause "all that drunke thereof" to "faint and feeble grow" (1.7.5) is an element that is frequently a part of this negative Mars and Venus motif. This fountain is reminiscent of the "Well of Love" where Narcissus "Who having vewed in a fountaine shere/His face, was with the love thereof beguild" (3.2.44). At this fountain

> Cupid, Venus' son, there sows the seed
> Which taints the fountain, and 'tis there
> he sets
> His nets and snares to capture man and
> maid.24

As the Romance of the Rose is a very influential allegorical treatment of love, the fountain in the garden is a particularly apt analogy. The association with love, and especially with Cupid's entrapments, might warn a reader to be wary of events that occur near fountains. There are also visual renditions which associate a fountain with love. Two examples are fifteenth-century Italian engravings illustrating fountains of love. One, entitled Fountain of Love, c.1470-80 (figure 16), has maidens bathing in a tiered fountain. It appears that there are also young men in this version (although it is difficult to

distinguish gender), one on the left with his head in a lady's lap. The second engraving of The Fountain of Love, c.1470 (figure 17) is much more elaborate and it is tempting to imagine that it could sit in the Bower of Bliss. In this version a lady and a boy play musical instruments on opposite sides of the hexagonally shaped fountain. At the apex of the fountain stands Cupid, pointing his bow and arrow earthward. Just below him, two putti empty baskets of flowers, perhaps roses, on to the ground. On the north wall of the Sala di Psiche in the Palazza del Te, there is a depiction of Mars and Venus, 1527-28 (figure 18, left side)[25] bathing, in a pool that is very reminiscent of a fountain bowl. On the right side of this wall Venus tries to hold back Mars Pursuing Adonis, 1527-28 (figure 18, right side). It is interesting that there is also a fountain in the background of this work. In a similarly detailed English miniature, A Garden of Love[26] (figure 19), courtiers and ladies kiss and play music in a hortus conclusus at the middle of which is a fountain with winged putti on the tiers and bathers of both sexes playing in the bowl of the fountain. In a later painting by Rubens, significantly entitled The Garden of Love, c.1632-33 (figure 20) the fountain has become a statue of Venus herself, with liquid flowing forth from her breasts.

A fountain, however, can also be seen as an emblem of idleness, as in the story of Salmacis' seduction of her reluctant lover Hermaphroditus in Ovid's Metamorphoses.[27] This child of Venus cries to his parents to revenge him by cursing the pond:

> if any man enter this pool, may he depart hence no more than half a man, may he suddenly grow weak and effeminate at the touch of these waters.28

By analogy then, there is a suggestion that Venus is indirectly at least partially responsible for Redcrosse's predicament. Diana's out-of-favour nymph, who bids the water to flow slowly because she herself is tired (1.7.5), provides a parallel with the condition Redcrosse is in. The mention of Diana in connection with water also brings to mind the story of Acteon innocently coming upon the goddess while she was bathing. His resulting death, transformed into a stag and torn apart by his own hounds, serves as a reminder that fountains and pools can be very dangerous.

Fountains and water occur frequently throughout The Faerie Queene. Archimago's false "Hermitage" early in Book 1 is complete with all the accoutrements necessary to convince travellers such as Una and Redcrosse that it is a safe refuge including "a Christall streame...Which from a sacred fountaine welled forth

alway " (1.1.34). Poor Amavia is discovered by Guyon lying "Beside a bubbling fountaine" (2.1.40) and the Palmer warns "that secret vertues are infusd /In euery fountaine, and in euery lake" (2.2.5). The fountain in the middle of the Bower of Bliss is symbolically decorated with "curious imageree"

> and shapes of naked boyes,
> Of which some seemd with liuely iollitee,
> To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,
> (2.12.60)

which is rather reminiscent of the putti who are depicted in the paintings (figure 8, 13, 14) playing with Mars' armour. This fountain is important because it is an example of "art striuing to compaire/With nature" (2.5.29) and indeed to surpass it. The ivy, itself a symbol of lust, is painted in gold about the fountain competing with nature and

> so coloured,
> That wight, who did not well auis'd it vew,
> Would surely deeme it to be yuie trew.
> (2.12.61)

In typical Spenserian style there are also, of course, good fountains to match the bad. Redcrosse is renewed by "The well of life" (1.11.29). Baptism, always part of a possible meaning of water, is an important step on the road to grace.

Spenser reinforces the picture of Redcrosse's morally fallen state with many significant details no

matter how small or concise. It is important, for example, that when the knight is at the fountain that he is dismounted, for "by his side his steed the grassy forage ate" (1.7.2). As in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales where the mount each pilgrim rides usually matches or comments on his or her personality and profession, so, too, do the horses and their actions add meaning to The Faerie Queene. The horse is traditionally a symbol of passion; an unbridled horse thus signifies unbridled passion. A mounted knight indicates that he has a certain measure of control over his passionate or animal nature. Our first picture of Redcrosse "pricking on the plaine" (1.1.1) is of him manfully trying to control a spirited horse who "did chide his foming bitt,/As much disdayning to the curbe to yield " (1.1.1). That Spenser chooses to include such minute details as a rebellious horse indicates that our hero is having difficulty maintaining the facade of perfect knighthood. The Palmer in Book 2 is a perfect example of a man in control "Who taught [Redcrosse's] trampling steed with equall steps to tread" (2.1.7). It is relevant that Guyon spends a good deal of time wandering around on foot (without the Palmer) getting into various intemperate situations. And when Florimell flees from the witch's son:

> her white Palfrey hauing conquered
> The maistring raines out of her weary wrest,
> Perforce her carried, where euer he thought best.
> (3.7.2)

With admirable economy Spenser uses the steed which eats the "grassy forage" in the picture of Redcrosse at the fountain to suggest also the connection between food and appetite and the (in particular sexual) passions that runs throughout The Faerie Queene. (In Alma's castle, for example, the "kitchen" presided over by Appetite is the stomach or liver [2.9.27ff], the centre of the passions as the heart is of affections and the brain of reason.[29]) Because it is a traditional symbol of passion, the horse eating doubly reinforces the danger Redcrosse is in.

After Redcrosse sheds his armour he takes another fatal step:

> lying downe vpon the sandie graile,
> Drunke of the streame, as cleare as cristall glas,
> Eftsoones his manly forces gan to faile,
> And mightie strong was turnd to feeble fraile.
>
> (1.7.6)

The enfeebling waters have made the knight even weaker. It is in this pliable state that Redcrosse proceeds to woo the false Duessa:

> Yet goodly court he made still to his Dame,
> Pourd out in looseness on the grassy grownd,
> Both carelesse of his health, and of his fame.
>
> (1.7.7)

There are sexual implications hinted at here even if they are not expressly stated. Like Mars with Venus Redcrosse has "pourd out" his essential being. He lies

on the ground without his armour and like the water in the motif, seems formless and thus in a potentially chaotic state. The knight has misplaced his faith in his courtship of the enchantress and is playing the role of an amorous lover negligent of his knightly duties, which is not a suitable occupation for the knight of holiness.

It is at this point, when Redcrosse is defenseless, that Orgoglio descends on the unprepared knight. When the earth trembles with the giant's coming:

> Th'Elfe therewith astownd,
> Vpstarted lightly from his looser make,
> And his vnready weapons gan in hand to take.
> (1.7.7)

But before the knight can prepare himself properly by taking up his shield, he is set upon by Orgoglio. It is at this extreme moral and physical lowpoint that Redcrosse is described as "Disarmd, disgrast, and inwardly dismayde" (1.7.11). He is so weak at this point that the wind from Orgoglio's blow knocks him down in a faint (1.7.12). Duessa stops the giant from killing Redcrosse only by offering herself as a bribe. But the "hideous Geant" (1.7.8) still "tooke the slombred senceless corse" (1.7.15) that is what is left of the knight of holiness and throws him into a dungeon from which he cannot escape by his own powers. Redcrosse is so incapacitated that it takes the intervention of the mighty Arthur to free him from the prison his loose

behaviour has caused. Before this rescue is executed, however, Redcrosse's Dwarfe, who has witnessed his master's fight and capture, makes the final move that robs Redcrosse of his identity, but which still keeps it within his reach, for he,

> When all was past, tooke vp his forlorne weed,
> His mightie armour, missing most at need;
> His siluer shield, now idle maisterlesse;
> His poynant speare, that many made to bleed,
> The ruefull moniments of heauinesse,
> And with them all departes, to tell his great distresse.
>
> (1.7.19)

The ambiguity of the pronouns, so common in The Faerie Queene, throws even the ownership of the armour in doubt.

The Mars and Venus icon occurs elsewhere throughout The Faerie Queene. After its initial appearance in the Redcrosse incident, its repeated emergence allows the reader to identify the meaning underneath the surface more rapidly. Even Arthur, the stalwart rescuer of Redcrosse, finds himself in a similar predicament. Part of Arthur's problem is that, like Troilus, he boasts of his immunity to love. But the poet warns against this folly:

> who most trustes in arme of fleshly might,
> And boasts, in beauties chaine not to be bound,
> Doth soonest fall in disauentrous fight,
> And yeeldes his caytiue neck to victours most despight.
>
> (1.9.11)

That Venus, as the personification of love, is an important aspect of Arthur's quest is shown in the icon of Arthur that Spenser gives us when the knight first appears. Among his raiments is "one pretious stone" which "exceeding shone,/Like Hesperus emongst the lesser lights" (1.7.30). This invocation of Venus as the evening star indicates "the place and power of love in Arthur's quest."[30] Spenser's diction also hints that there may be a further parallel, for just as Venus outshines the other stars in the sky, so, too, does Arthur outshine the other hero-knights.

Arthur, however, is not immune to the powers of beauty or of a lady as indicated by the pose we find him in in Book 1. All knights must, of course, eventually rest, but as Spenser includes details for a purpose this picture of Arthur and the parallel with Redcrosse's situation must be important. Telling his own story, Arthur says:

> For-wearied with my sports, I did alight
> From loftie steed, and downe to sleepe me layd;
> The verdant gras my couch did goodly dight,
> And pillow was my helmet faire displayd.
> (1.9.13)

This is the pose we find both Mars in the paintings and Redcrosse in: a knight sleeping on the ground with at least part of his armour (the helmet) off. However, there is a difference in the consequences of this pose that, by contrast, reflects a fundamental difference

in the characters of the two knights. Whereas Redcrosse's paramour was the witch Duessa, Arthur has a more pleasant and positive vision. His lady is none other that the "Queene of the Faeries" herself, Gloriana. Redcrosse's dalliance with his false lady results in his being thrown into a dungeon; Arthur's results in a quest with a legitimate purpose. There is a sense that what Arthur sees is a positive illusion -- a heavenly vision. What Redcrosse sees, however, seems more like a real physical occurrence -- an earthly affair. Thus Una's maxim that "True Loues are often sown, but seldom grow on ground" (1.9.16) legitimizes Arthur's search for Gloriana. As well, Arthur attempts, while relating his story, to control his passion:

> Yet still he stroue to cloke his inward bale,
> And hide the smoke, that did his fire display.
> (1.9.16)

Redcrosse on the other hand finds this suppression of emotion rather difficult and falls into despair.

Spenser thus uses a pre-set icon to comment on the actions of his characters. Strengthened perhaps by parallels with visual art traditions, Spenser uses this motif in a typical way. He first sets up a norm and then, playing on reader-recognition and expectation, subtly changes it.

The Mars and Venus theme continues throughout The Faerie Queene. Sir Guyon, the knight of temperance

and hero of Book 2 is, as mentioned, identified as the "Faire sonne of Mars" (2.1.8). These words, however, come from the mouth of the arch-flatterer Archimago. Because they come so early in the book and from such a source the reader must wonder at their truth. But Guyon seems a little more alert than Redcrosse. Despite being unhorsed and separated from the reasoning voice of the Palmer, this knight is wary throughout the book. Even on Phaedria's wandering island Guyon resists temptation. The typical state that results from the seductive influence of sensual pleasure and the consequent abandonment of a knight's duty is suggested by the language Spenser uses to describe Phaedria's wiles:

> So did she all, that might his constant hart
> Withdraw from thought of warlike enterprize,
> And drowne in dissolute delights apart,
> Where noyse of armes, or vew of martial guize
> Might not reuiue desire of knightly exercize.
> (2.6.25)

But Guyon

> was wise, and warie of her will,
> And euer held his hand vpon his hart.
> (2.6.26)

He resists the enfeebling influence of this false love. Guyon does stop battling with Cymochles because Phaedria wishes it, but his immediate desire is to leave Phaedria's island, "Delighting all in armes and cruell warre" (2.6.37). Guyon is able to destroy the Bower of Bliss because he follows the Palmer's advice to

"your ready armes about you throw" (2.12.37), remaining the military knight to the end.

The Bower of Bliss itself, "Where Pleasure dwelles in sensuall delights" (2.12.1), provides another example of the Mars and Venus motif. When it first appears in the middle of Book 2, Atin finds Cymochles

> soiourning,
> To serue his Lemans loue: for he by kind,
> Was giuen all to lust and loose liuing,
> When euer his fiers hands he free mote find:
> And now he has pourd out his idle mind
> In daintie delices, and lauish ioyes,
> Hauing his warlike weapons cast behind,
> And flowes in pleasures, and vaine pleasing toyes,
> Mingled emongst loose Ladies and lasciuious boyes.
> (2.5.28)

It is fitting that a character that allegorically represents desire should be encountered in the Bower of Bliss in the pose that suggests Venus' triumph over Mars. To further this picture, Cymochles reclines in a spring-like arbour. "His pricking armes, entrayld with roses red" (2.5.29) are of no use to him here. As Venus' traditional flower, the red roses add to the allusions within this description. The debilitating water is also present in this picture in the form of a stream. Its inherent danger is evident in the words used to describe the effects of this water:

> The wearie Traueiler, wandring that way,
> Therein did often quench his thristy heat,
> And then by it his wearie limbes display,
> Whiles creeping slomber made him to forget

His former paine, and wypt away his toylsom sweat.
(2.5.30)

That Cymochles is a willing participant in this scenario is evidence of the allegorical nature of his character. In a parody of the usual convention, he is not necessarily put to sleep by the power of love, as were previous knights. Rather, "Sometimes he falsely faines himselfe to sleepe" (2.5.34) so that he can spy on the Damsels as they dance about in naked abandon. These maidens also mock the happy innocent dancers found in the poem, such as the nine muses (also found in Mantegna's Mars and Venus, 1497 [figure 22]), or "the Graces, daughters of delight,/Handmaides of Venus" (6.10.15) which frequently accompany the goddess (as, for example, in Botticelli's Primavera [figure 1] or Cossa's Triumph of Venus [figure 7]).

Although Guyon does eventually resist Phaedria in the Bower, her intervention to stop the fight between Cymochles and Guyon displays the great power that love does have. She usurps the language of war to explain how she wages battle:

Another warre, and other weapons I
Doe loue, where loue does giue his sweet alarmes,
Without bloudshed, and where the enemy
Does yeeld vnto his foe a pleasant victory.
(2.6.34)

In the next stanza the Mars and Venus parallel is clearly delineated:

> Of loue they euer greater glory bore,
> Then of their armes: Mars is Cupidoes frend,
> And is for Venus loues renowmed more,
> Then all his wars and spoiles, the which he did
> of yore.
> (2.6.35)

The idea of describing love in terms of war is not uncommon in The Faerie Queene. A sexual contest is often related as if it were a battle. When Sansloy is attempting to seduce Una, for example, Spenser uses military imagery to illustrate the coarseness of Sans Loy's unwanted and forced assault:

> So when he saw his flatt'ring arts to fayle,
> And subtile engines bet from batteree,
> With greedy force he gan the fort assayle,
> Whereof he weend possessed soone to bee,
> And win rich spoile of ransackt chastetee.
> (1.6.5)

In Paridell's seduction of Hellenore the same image is employed to suggest that Paridell wears down the resistance of Hellenore:

> No fort so fensible, no wals so strong,
> But that continuall battery will riue.
> (3.10.10)

There is also a suggestion that it is the ladies' fault that battles between knights take place:

> So loue does raine
> In stoutest mind, and maketh monstrous warre.
> (2.2.26)

At the same time, however, the females are also sometimes treated as if they were prizes to be won for prowess in

battle, as is the case with Scudamore and Amoret. There is a feeling that Amoret, like the "warlike spoiles" (3.11.52) hung on the walls in the House of Busyrane that so terrifies her, is almost a reward for Scudamore's winning of his identifying shield in the Temple of Venus (4.10).

The Bower of Bliss yields yet another example of the icon of Mars and Venus. References to Venus create an atmosphere of sensual delight. The fountain in the centre of the Bower flows into a lake. Guyon, like the luckless Acteon, happens upon some ladies bathing at this pool. But rather than being chaste nymphs of Diana, these "Damzelles" are compared to "that faire Starre, the messenger of morne" (2.12.65), or Venus. The analogy continues, with the bathers likened to "the Cyprian goddesse, newly borne/Of th'Oceans fruitfull froth" (2.12.65). These two short lines add to the eroticism of the Bower for, according to Hesiod's version, Venus grew from the white foam which surrounded the severed genitals of Uranus as they were carried on the waves to Cytheria.[32]

It is in this seductive Bower, full of hypnotizing sounds of birds, wind and water, that Guyon and the Palmer finally confront Acrasia. When they find her she is in a pose that becomes immediately recognizable because it has been encountered before on a number of occasions. Again, however, Spenser varies his picture with slight

changes of detail. Here Acrasia takes an active role, illustrating the destructive powers of rampant sexuality. She is seen

> With a new Louer, whom through sorceree
> And witchcraft, she from farre did thither bring:
> There she had him now layd a slombering,
> In secret shade, after long wonton ioyes.
> (2.12.72)

Rather like Venus who leans over Adonis in the tapestry in the wicked Malecasta's castle (3.1.36), Acrasia protectively, almost jealously, bends over Verdant smothering and indeed feeding on him. The references to roses (2.12.74,75) serve to enhance the portrait of Acrasia as a carnal Venus who "Vpon a bed of Roses... was layd" (2.12.77). Verdant, passively sleeping beside the temptress, completes the icon, for like Mars in the paintings he is armourless and thus defenseless:

> His warlike armes, the idle instruments,
> Of sleeping praise, were hong vpon a tree,
> And his braue shield, full of gold moniments,
> Was fowly ra'st.
> (2.12.80)

Although of a later date (c.1610-15) the miniature by Isaac Oliver of Edward Herbert (figure 15) illustrates a similar part of the motif for there is armour hung upon a tree in the background of the painting.

A further parallel to the story of Mars and Venus exists in the capture of Acrasia. To do so, Guyon and the Palmer use "a subtile net" (2.12.81) which

they throw over the evil lady. Guyon then ties her up "in chaines of adamant" (2.12.82). According to the myth of Mars and Venus this is what Vulcan does when he finds his wife and the god of war lying together. This aspect of the legend is also often illustrated, as for example in Antonio Tempesta's Metamorphoseon Sive Transformationum Ovidianarum..., 1606 (figure 21). This additional correspondence strengthens the idea of the Bower as a wicked and immoral place.

These examples of the motif of Mars and Venus demonstrate a common concern and theme in The Faerie Queene. The potentially destructive and chaotic power that love can have is an integral and important element in the poem. The icon of Mars and Venus, with a reclining or sleeping male figure minus his armour, a fountain and a (usually wicked) lady, serves as a reminder for the reader of this negative side of love. The connections with well-known visual renditions of Mars and Venus enhance the recognition and interpretation of the motif and theme each time it reappears.

Notes to Chapter Three

1 Geoffrey Chaucer, Complaint of Mars, ll. 31-2, 41, in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed, ed. F.N. Robinson (Boston, 1961), p. 530.

2 William Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis, ll. 100-112, in William Shakespeare, The Complete Works, ed. Alfred Harbage (Pelican Text Revised) (New York, 1969), p. 1407.

3 There is a variety of sources which refer to the myths of Mars and Venus -- Virgil, Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Ovid, Apollodorus, Apollonius of Rhodes, etcetera. Many of the stories are set forth in Edward Tripp, The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology (New York, 1970). I am aware of the varying traditions surrounding these two divinities and have used the stories relevant to this thesis.

4 Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods (New York, 1953), Book 1, Part One, Chapter III deals extensively with "The Moral Tradition" of art and literature, pp. 84-121.

5 The titles of many works of art are often not agreed on by different critics. The quotation marks around a title designate "the so-called". Occasionally, as here, life dates of the painter will be used when a more precise date for the work of art could not be located. These will be enclosed in square brackets.

6 Details of Venus' traditional attributes may be found in Geoffrey Grigson, The Goddess of Love (London, 1976), Chapter 11, pp. 184-208.

7 Homer, The Odyssey, translator E.V. Rieu (Harmondsworth, 1946), p. 129.

8 Although difficult to see because of the quality of photographs (and the worse quality of photocopies) Jean Seznec identifies the garland as being made of roses, p. 205.

9 Such as Marsilio Ficino and others, as in Ficino, Commentary, 2nd speech, section VII; Pico della Mirandola, Commento II, VIII. Critics on this subject include Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (New York, 1968), pp. 138-39; E.H. Gombrich, Symbolic Images (London, 1972), pp. 41-5; Erwin Panofsky, Problems in Titian, Mostly Iconographic (New York, 1969), pp. 114-15.

10 Plato, The Symposium, translator Walter Hamilton (Harmondsworth, 1951), p. 46 [180e ff].

11 Ronald Lightbown, Sandro Botticelli (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), Vol. I, p. 91.

12 Ibid.

13 Seznec, p. 115.

14 Gombrich, pp. 68-69.

15 Andrea Alciati, Emblematum Flumen Abundans (Manchester and London, 1871), Vol. V, p. 191, for example

16 Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology (New York, 1939), p. 63, n. 77.

17 Gombrich, p. 68.

18 From Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on the Symposium, Vth Speech, Section 8, p. 1339, S.R. Jayne, translator, University of Missouri Studies, XIX, I (Columbia, 1944), pp. 176-7. Quoted in Gombrich, p. 67.

19 Wind, Pagan Mysteries, p. 91.

20 Tripp, p. 72.

21 John Pope-Hennessy, Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Vol. I, p. 154.

22 Wind, Pagan Mysteries, p. 90.

23 Roy Strong, The Elizabethan Image (London, 1969), p. 67.

24 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, translator Harry W. Robbins, ed. Charles W. Dunn, (New York, 1962), (ll. 1615ff) p. 32, ll. 116-21.

25 There is some doubt as to who actually executed the decorations of the Sala di Psiche whether it be Giulo Romano or one of his assistants. See

Egon Verheyen, The Palazzo del Te in Mantua (Baltimore, 1977).

26 This miniature is taken from The Illustrated "Faerie Queene": A Modern Prose Adaptation by Douglass Hill (New York, 1980). There is some conflicting information given about the date of this work. At one point (p. 51) he calls it Renaissance, and at another (the back cover) it is termed Medieval.

27 Ovid, The Metamorphoses of Ovid, translator Mary M. Innes (Harmondsworth, 1955), 4.285ff, pp. 101-4.

28 Ibid., p. 104.

29 Details from A.C. Hamilton, ed. The Faerie Queene (London and New York, 1977), p. 252.

30 Ibid., p. 102.

31 Thomas P. Roche, Jr., ed. The Faerie Queene (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 1116.

32 Hesiod, Theogony, Works and Days, with Theognis' Elegies, translator Dorothea Wender (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 29. See also Tripp, p. 57.

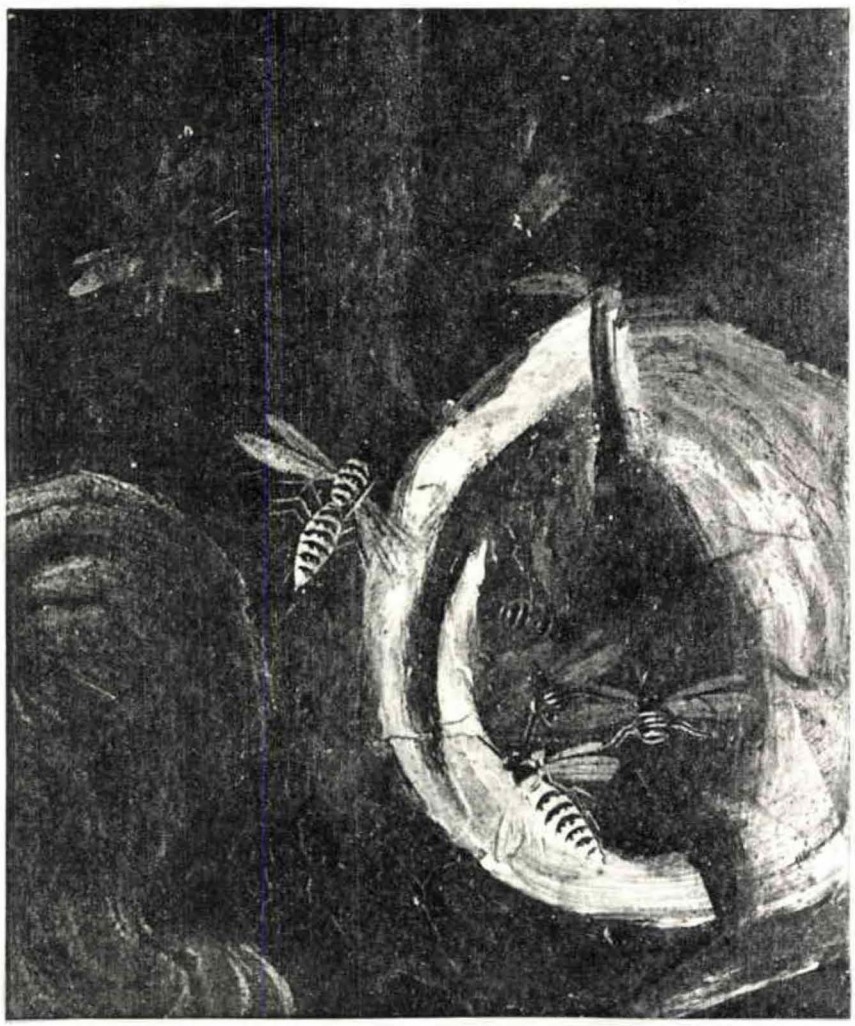
figure 7

Francesco Cossa, Triumph of Venus, [1435/6-77]

figure 8

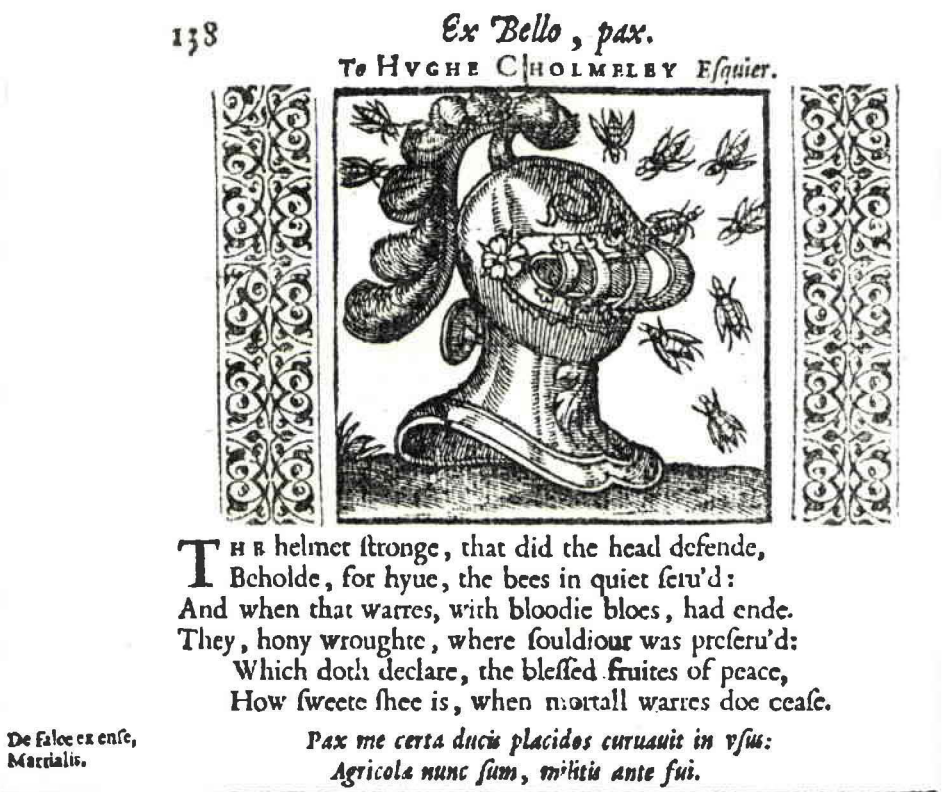
Sandro Botticelli, Mars and Venus, 1480s

figure 9



Sandro Botticelle, "Wasps", detail of Mars and Venus (figure 8), 1480s

figure 10



138 *Ex Bello, pax.*

To HVGHE CHOLMELEY *Eſquier.*

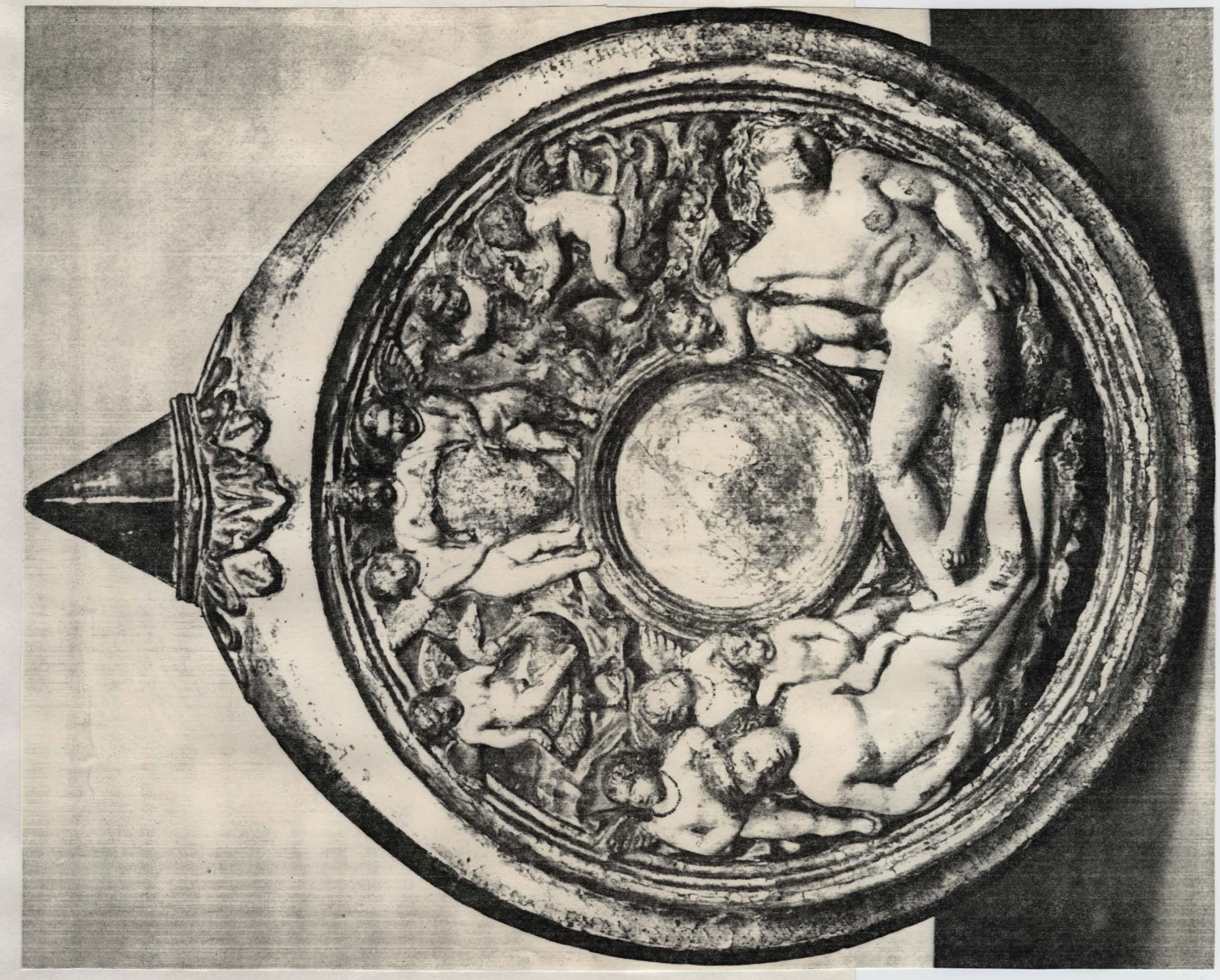
THE helmet ſtronge, that did the head defende,
Beholde, for hyue, the bees in quiet ſeru'd:
And when that warres, with bloodie bloes, had ende.
They, hony wroughte, where ſouldiour was preſeru'd:
Which doth declare, the bleſſed fruites of peace,
How ſweete ſhee is, when mortall warres doe ceaſe.

De falce ex enſe, Martialis.

Pax me certa ducis placidos curuauit in vſus:
Agricolæ nunc ſum, militis ante fui.

Geffrey Whitney, Ex Bello, pax, from Choice of Emblems, 1586.

figure 11



Style of Antonio Pollaiuolo, Mirror Frame with Mars and Venus, 1460-65.

figure 12

The Pistoxenos Painter, Aphrodite Riding on a Goose, c.470 B.C.

figure 13

Piero di Cosimo, Mars and Venus, 1498

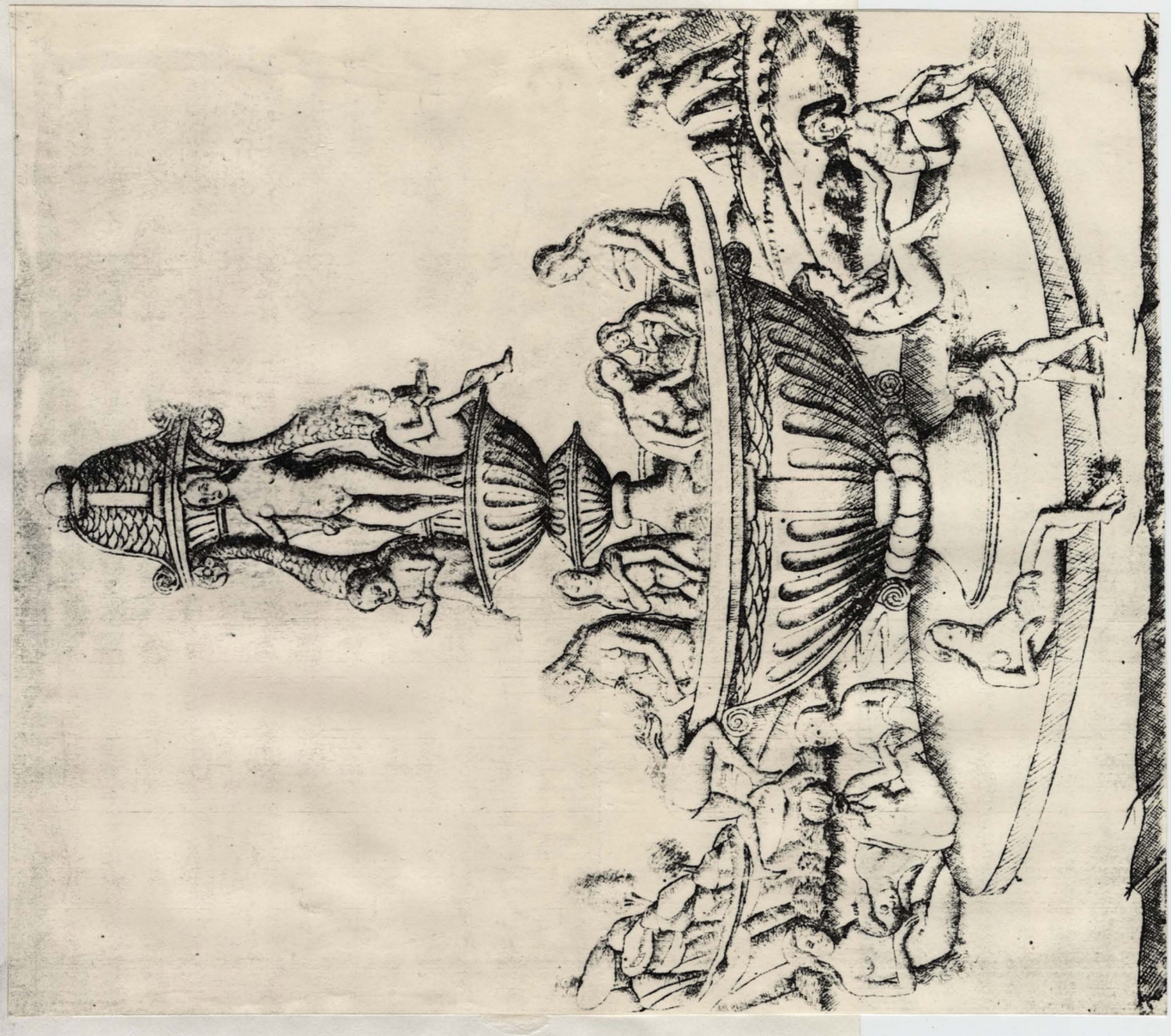
figure 14

Carlo Saraceni, Venus and Mars, c.1608

figure 15

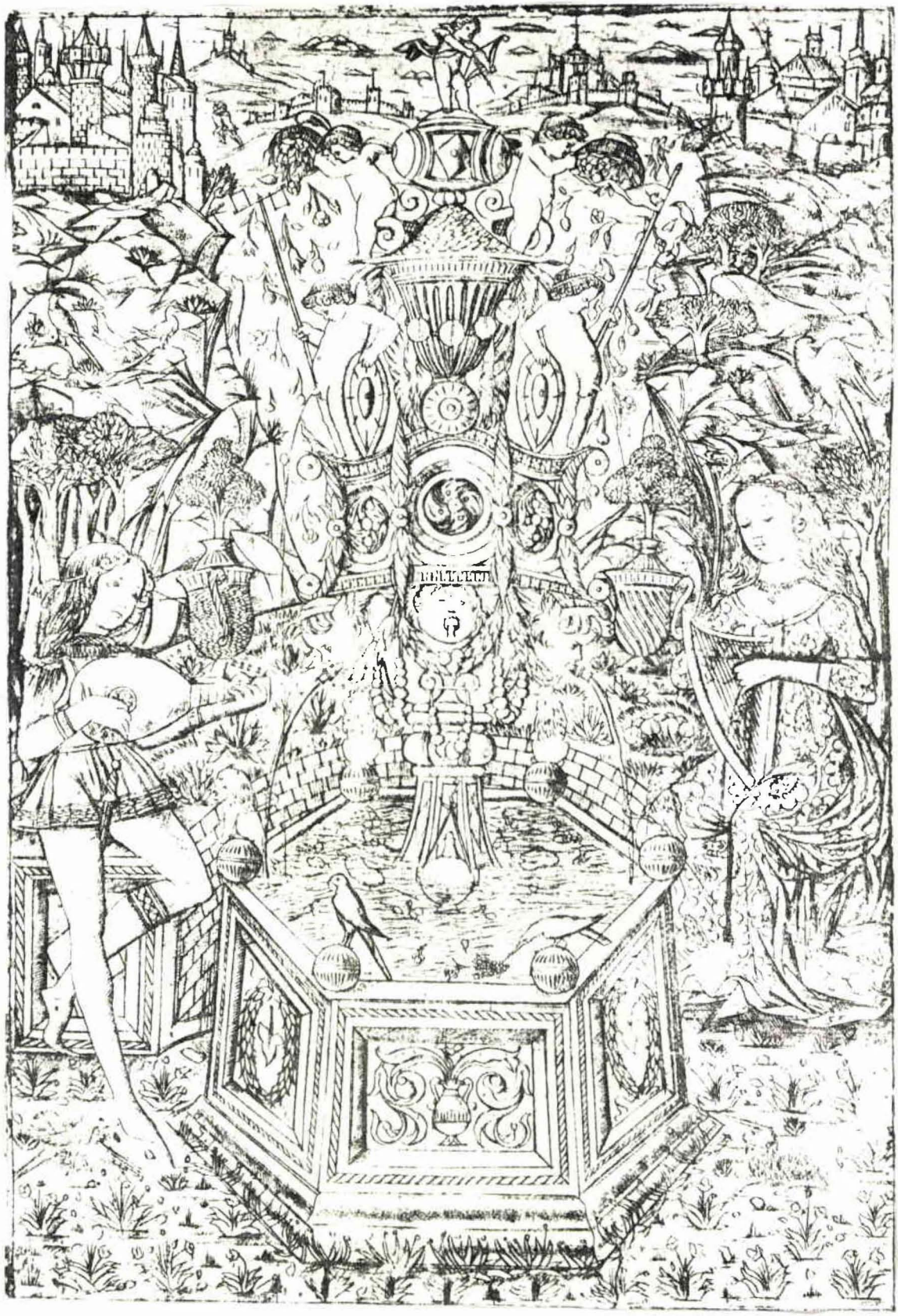
Isaac Oliver, Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury, c.1610-15

figure 16



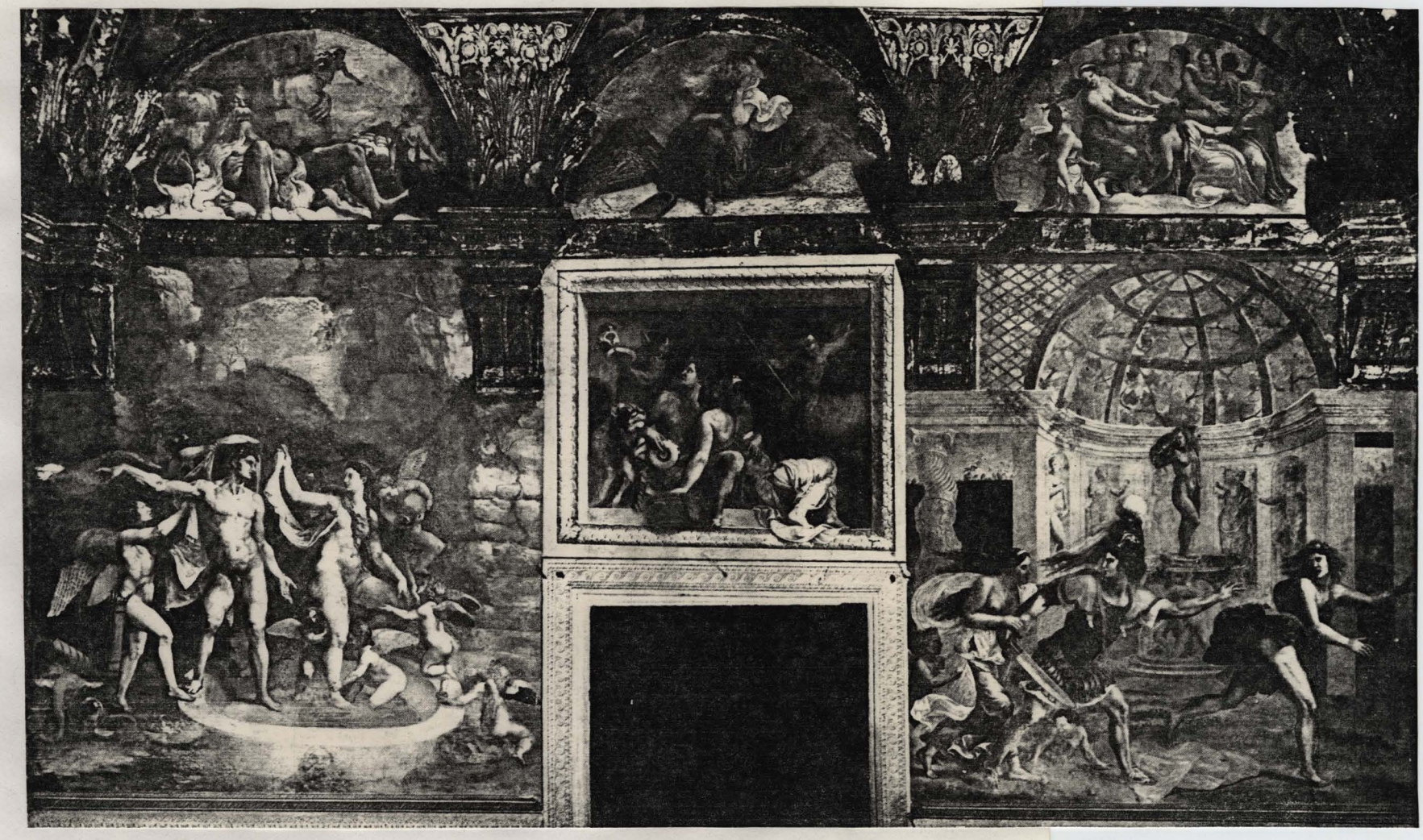
Probably Ferrarese, Fountain of Love, c.1470-80

figure 17



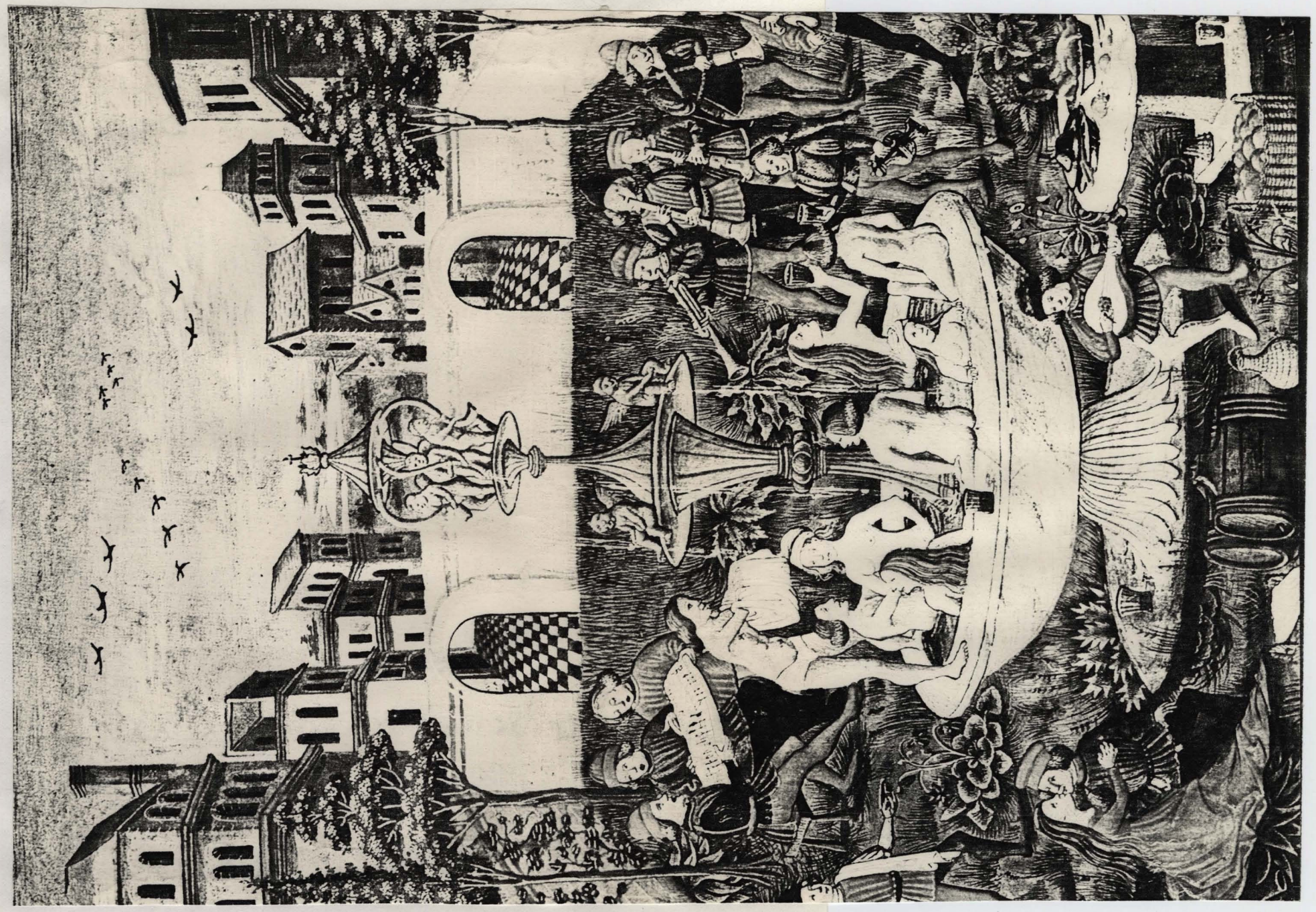
Probably Venetian, The Fountain of Love, c.1470

figure 18



Sala di Psiche, Palazzo del Te, Mars and Venus (left side), Mars Pursuing Adonis (right side), 1527-28.

figure 19



<u>A Garden of Love</u>, miniature, Renaissance or Medieval (?)

figure 20

P.P. Rubens, The Garden of Love, c.1632-33

figure 21

34. *Martem Veneremq; adulterantes Vulcanus reti ſuo implicat.*

Antonio Tempesta, "Mars and Venus Discovered by Vulcan", 1606

Chapter Four

The Harmonious Side of the Myth of Mars and Venus

In typical Renaissance, and indeed Spenserian, style the story of Mars and Venus is not viewed in only one, and so far negative, light. Despite the adulterous nature of the affair between the god and goddess, there are also positive connotations to the myth that have been overlooked neither by painters nor poet. Just as Spenser provides the reader with two interpretations of most stories and places, such as the myth of Venus and Adonis -- the negative side in the tapestry in Malecasta's castle (3.1.34-5) and the more positive version in the Garden of Adonis (3.6.29ff)-- so, too, do both aspects of the Venus and Mars myth emerge.

The union of the goddess of love and the god of war could potentially result in a peaceful world. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Mars and Venus' offspring include Deimus (Fear) and Phobus (Panic), who drive the war chariot of their father. But this illicit union also yielded the female child Harmonia. She is an indication that the relationship between Mars and Venus can have favourable implications. The combination of two extreme opposites thus results in the creation of a being or state that is highly desirable. If Venus' sensuality and gentleness can temper the military fierceness of Mars, and vice versa, then, in allegorical terms,

the two controlling passions of human kind, love and war, can, by mutual assistance, exist harmoniously in a world of absolute concord.

Renditions of this happy couple, representing an idealized state are not uncommon in the visual arts. Such a scene of unity is displayed, for example, in Andrea Mantegna's Mars and Venus (or Parnassus), c.1497 (figure 22). In this painting the title couple stand lovingly intertwined atop a triumphal arch surveying the peaceful realm that their harmonious union allows. Mars is attired in his identifying armour. Venus is nude, which is an indication of her "sacred" function and unashamedness. Behind Venus there is quince,[1] a fruit used to represent matrimony. In the foreground, poetry and the arts flourish. Apollo, the god of, among other things, youth, music and poetry, plays his lyre while his muses dance in gaiety. At the extreme right stands Pegasus, the winged horse, creator of Hippocrene, the fountain of poetic inspiration on Mount Helicon. Beside Pegasus stands Mercury, messenger of the gods, and who, according to one story, is also the inventor of the lyre.

Passion is carefully excluded from this idyllic garden, for Vulcan, although present as a reminder that baser instincts exist, is relegated to a rocky cave in the background of the canvas, definitely outside of the main area. The only one who pays any attention to him is Cupid, who has been tamed, again indicating an

exclusion of violent passion from this harmonious scene. Cupid retains his bow, but Venus holds his arrow by her side. Cupid's mischievous nature is difficult to subdue, though, for the winged boy aims a blow pipe at the genitals of Vulcan, suggesting perhaps the inappropriateness of lust in such an idealized world. Even the traditional symbol of passion, the horse, here represented by Pegasus, is particularly mild looking. He is bedecked with glass beads and lets Mercury lean casually against him. Even the composition of this painting is harmonious and balanced. The figures form a triangle with Mars and Venus at the apex, bodies curving inwards towards each other almost as if to form that most perfect of figures, a circle.

This painting of Mars and Venus exemplifies the type of harmony that can exist in the world. It is a state that is frequently promised in The Faerie Queene, but which, perhaps because of its ideal nature, is seldom totally fulfilled in the "real" world of Fairyland. Edgar Wind's supposition that Mantegna is hinting at the type of ridicule evoked by the Homeric story of Mars and Venus being trapped by Vulcan's net, seems a little far-fetched. He rather derogatorily calls Mars "a young gallant", somehow finds Venus' expression "humorous" and refers to four of the dancing Muses as "frivolous damsels."[2] This criticism seems rather arbitrary. There is nothing, it seems to me, manifestly humorous about

the goddess' facial features. She seems somehow more beatific and has an almost Madonna-like serenity to her expression, which is a long way from Venus' mocking gaze in Botticelli's Mars and Venus (figure 8). The original invenzione for Mantegna's Mars and Venus is not extant, as is the case for other paintings done for Isabella d'Este's studiolo,[3] so that the intended meaning of the work is not known for sure. The Lehmanns, however, say that

> The first painting commissioned by Isabella for her studiolo commemorates her marriage to Gian Francesco and, in mythological terms, their patronage of the arts, in particular, music.[4]

This assessment of the painting's purpose gives it a far more positive connotation.

Another harmonious rendering of the Mars and Venus myth is seen in Paolo Veronese's Mars and Venus "United by Love", [c. 1528-88] (figure 23). Here Mars is the epitome of the genteel courtier as he chastely covers up his lady. On his garments are what appear to be tiny lion heads, usually a symbol of strength or fortitude (from Hercules' defeat of the Nemean lion). A cupid unites the couple by tying their legs together -- a benevolent version of the chains that bind men to Venus, as in Cossa's fresco (figure 7) and the many chains and garlands of The Faerie Queene. As with Mantegna's work, here passion is excluded from the tender scene in the

foreground. Using Mars' sword, a second cupid bars a horse from the couple's presence. The horse is also bridled to indicate that passion has been and can be controlled. As well, a satyr (another symbol of lust) is a part of the broken statuary that forms a background to the scene and which is excluded from the main subjects in the foreground.

Edgar Wind suggests that Veronese's painting portrays "Fortezza" Submissive to "Carita",[5] partially because of the milk that flows from Venus' breast (and the already noted association with Hercules). Venus as a charity figure also occurs in The Faerie Queene. The nature of Venus frequently changes in the poem and this is one of the interesting variations. The icon of Charissa in the House of Holiness contains hints of the goddess of love, for

> by her side there sate a gentle paire
> Of turtle doues, she sitting in an yuorie chaire.
> (1.10.31)

The doves are traditionally one of Venus' attributes. Thus Venus, in a more progenerative, positive version, is pictured here. As the mother of the race she is a fitting parallel to a charity figure represented generously suckling and caring for her children.

In the visual arts there are also a number of marriage portraits with the couple depicted in the guise of Mars and Venus. The negative aspects of the myth are

thus ignored and the paintings depict what will hopefully be a state of harmony and marital bliss. In this vein, despite the negative aspects found in both Botticelli's and Piero di Cosimo's Mars and Venus (figure 8 and 13), the paintings could be seen as marriage cassoni,[6] partially because of their oblong dimensions. An example of this type of marriage painting can be seen in Titian's "Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos, Marchese del Vasto", 1533 (figure 24). Here the gentleman is dressed in armour which identifies him as a Mars-figure. The woman can be associated with Venus through the presence of Cupid, the myrtle that the woman representing Faith wears (directly behind Cupid with her hand to her breast), and the roses carried in the basket by the woman at the extreme right gazing upwards who is Hope.[7] The painting is interpreted by Erwin Panofsky as depicting "the Happy Union of a betrothed or newly married couple."[8] Titian's lovely work sparked imitations of a similar allegorical nature, such as Paris Bordone's Married Couple in the Guise of Mars and Venus, [1500-71] (figure 25).[9] There is even an ancient precedent for this kind of motif in a statue of a Roman Couple (figure 26) dressed as Mars and Venus.[10]

Spenser's tendency is not, on the whole, to give happy-ever-after endings to his stories. Even when a marriage or engagement takes place, the poet usually witholds some ingredient that would make the couple's

happiness complete. The case of Britomart and Artegall is a good example. We know early on in their story that their union is fulfilled, for it is Britomart's function to originate the Tudor line with her offspring. But the reader's satisfaction with this arrangement is tempered with the knowledge that Artegall's child is born posthumously.

Insofar as Spenser's happy endings go, however, the betrothal of Una and Redcrosse can be seen as an example of the harmonious version of the Mars and Venus story. Redcrosse, like most of the knights in The Faerie Queene, is recognizable as a Mars-figure because of the great emphasis put on his martial deeds. His very identity is tied to his armour. There is another, perhaps more tenuous, reason for associating Redcrosse with Mars. The god of war also has an (admittedly minor) function as a fertility or agricultural deity.[11] Thus Redcrosse's true name "Georgos" (1.10.66) or "one who tills the earth"[12] links him with the earth. His changeling upbringing as the son of a ploughman, and as a ploughman himself, gives the knight further agricultural connections. These are very favourable connotations for a knight who has been suicidal for a good part of Book 1. It is not until after Redcrosse has been cleansed in the House of Holiness, however, that he is given the name of one who creates and nurtures life and life-sustaining food.

Redcrosse is also able to slay the Dragon and free

Una's parents and their land after he has visited the House of Holiness. He is thus free to become betrothed to his beloved Una. This event is the culmination of the knight's arduous adventures in Book 1 and after the potential hazard of Archimago is once again swept away, Una's father

> to the knight his daughter deare he tyde,
> With sacred rites and vowes for euer to abyde.
>
> His owne two hands the holy knots did knit,
> That none but death for euer can deuide.
> (1.12.36-7)

The twelfth canto of Book 1 is, for the most part, a glorious celebration of this liberation of Eden and the resulting engagement of Redcrosse and Una. "Laurell boughes" (1.12.6) of victory are spread at Redcrosse's feet and Una herself is crowned with "a girland greene" (1.12.8). Redcrosse is showered "With princely gifts of yuorie and gold" (1.12.12) by the grateful people he has freed and there is joyous feasting. After the formal betrothal there is "sweete Musicke" (1.12.38) and "an heauenly noise...Like as it had bene many an Angels voice" (1.12.39); "all" is "perfumde with frankencense diuine" (1.12.38). In general "Great ioy was made that day of young and old" (1.12.40).

Into this delightful pastoral scene, however, Spenser does insert some disturbing notes. The presence of a

> sacred lampe in secret chamber ...

> Where it should not be quenched day nor night,
> For feare of euill fates,
> (1.12.37)

suggests that evil fates do exist, even in this happy setting. And the fact that the purpose of the music is "To driue away the dull Melancholy" (1.12.38) implies that this melancholy is there to be driven away.

There is a further damper thrown on the events of Una and Redcrosse's engagement. When Una's father suggests that Redcrosse has earned a well-deserved rest now that the dragon has been defeated, Redcrosse regretfully says that he must

> Backe to returne to that great Faerie Queene,
> And her to serue six yeares in warlike wize,
> Gainst that proud Paynim king, that workes her teene.
> (1.12.18)

Thus after the ceremony of betrothal Redcrosse takes himself off, to be occasionally discovered by the reader in later books, leaving poor Una behind.

There is an interesting further parallel with the myth of Mars in Redcrosse's slaying of the dragon and his return to the service of the Faerie Queene. The dragon that guarded a spring at Thebes was sacred to Mars,[13] and thus a dragon is somewhat symbolic of the god of war. In defeating Eden's dragon it is as if Redcrosse is conquering those rash, martial instincts within himself that he has been trying to learn to control throughout Book 1. He has, in effect, become Cadmus, the slayer

of Mars' sacred dragon. After Cadmus killed this beast he was required to serve Mars for eight years. He then married Harmonia, daughter of Mars and Venus.[14] Redcrosse, too, must work his indenture to the Faerie Queene after which he may marry his betrothed. This parallel reinforces the idea that the knight's world with his chosen lady will indeed be harmonious.

Individually Una can be seen as a Venus figure, but the parallel is not always clear-cut or consistent. Una is one of the female characters used by Spenser to praise Elizabeth. The satyrs, for example, "Do worship her, as Queene, with oliue girlond cround" (1.6.13). As such, she has many dimensions to her personality. Two aspects of her character are expressed in analogies made to both Diana and Venus. Sylvanus recognizes these contrary characteristics in Una when the satyrs bring her to him:

> Sometimes Dame Venus selfe he seemes to see,
> But Venus neuer had so sober mood;
> Sometimes Diana he her takes to bee,
> But misseth bow, and shaftes, and buskins to her knee.
>
> (1.6.16)

As the virgin huntress Diana, Una embodies the chastity and virginity admired and praised in Elizabeth. As Venus, however, Una is revered for her beauty and, paradoxically, for her progenerative functions, as Elizabeth rejuvenates Britain and originates the greatness of empire.

This duality is also seen in the betrothal ceremony. At first, before the actual vows are made, the people of Eden see Una "As faire Diana in fresh sommers day" (1.12.7). After Una's father has declared that Redcrosse and Una shall marry when the knight's six years of service to the Faerie Queene have passed, Una is compared to Venus as the morning star:

> As bright as doth the morning starre appeare
> Out of the East, with flaming lockes bedight,
> To tell that dawning day is drawing neare,
> And to the world does bring long wished light:
> So faire and fresh that Lady shewd her selfe in sight.
>
> (1.12.21)

The "bushy Teade" (1.12.36) or torch that is lit after the betrothal vows are made is identifiable as an attribute of Venus. The fire of the torch represents passion, an idea which is found throughout The Faerie Queene in numerous references to "the fire of loue" (1.2.35) and the baser inferences of lust, such as when at the sight of Una , Sansloy turns "wrathfull fire to lustfull heat" (1.6.3).

There is another aspect of Una's character that links her with Venus. In some places where Redcrosse fails in his role as the Christian knight of Holiness, Una picks up his symbolism.[15] When Redcrosse rides off by himself, Una assumes a quest of her own, for "after him she rode" (1.2.8). Her determination in pursuing her objective actually sets her up as a more successful

knight than Redcrosse:

> Yet she her weary limbes would neuer rest,
> But euery hill and dale, each wood and plaine
> Did search.
>
> (1.2.8)

Una's quest has a well-defined purpose, but Redcrosse seems to wander aimlessly. Redcrosse also does not give the reader a favourable impression of himself when he deserts his lady.

When these two aspects of Una are combined -- her identification as a Venus figure and her role as a "knight" with a quest -- she can be viewed as a personification of an armed Venus. This more minor function of the goddess also has representation in the visual arts. In an engraving by Marco Zoppo, now in the British Museum, entitled Venus Armata, [c.1433-c.1478] (figure 27), Venus stands holding a helmet in one hand and a lance in the other while three Cupids play with various pieces of armament. In a mid-sixteenth-century Italian medal, Venus Armed (figure 28), Venus stands in a typical pose gazing into a mirror. She wears armour over her chest and holds an arrow in her hand identifying her as Venus armed.

Although Britomart is the knight of chastity and thus perhaps a Diana figure, she, too, has a certain duality to her character and can also be seen as an armed Venus. The mirror in the Italian medal (figure 28) is a typical attribute of the goddess of love and

beauty. Venus' mirror also plays a role in Britomart's life, suggesting a parallel with the armed Venus. It is in "Venus looking glas" (3.1.8) that Britomart first catches a glimpse of and falls in love with Artegall, which results in the quest which allows her to ride through Books 3 and 4. Spenser gets the most out of this symbol for although he at times calls it a "mirrhour" (e.g. 3. 2.17, 3.3.6), he also describes it as "the glassie globe that Merlin made" (3.2.21):

> For thy it round and hollow shaped was,
> Like to the world it selfe, and seem'd a world of glas.
>
> (3.2.19)

Hamilton suggests this is a symbol of "fragile marital harmony in Renaissance iconography"[16], and is not a mirror at all. Thus, in Titian's "Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos, Marchese del Vasto" (figure 24) the globe on the lady's lap signifies the precious and delicate nature of the link that exists between the married couple, suggested especially in their guise of Mars and Venus.[17] However, there seems to be no reason why Spenser cannot be using Merlin's prophetic device to more than one purpose. The fact that it is called a mirror, and particularly Venus' mirror, when the reader first hears of it, does immediately bring to mind a parallel between Britomart and the goddess of love.

Britomart, like Una, is seen at different times,

and by different people, as both a Diana and a Venus figure. As Diana, she embodies the role of Elizabeth as the martial leader of Britain. As in the case of Una, the emphasis placed on Britomart's chastity is an extravagant compliment to the queen. As goddess of the moon, Diana also brings light to a darkened world, suggesting a parallel with Elizabeth who has brought the enlightenment of the Renaissance to England. This function of Diana and Britomart is suggested in the lovely comparison made when Britomart unveils her face in Malecasta's castle:

> As when faire Cynthia, in darkesome night,
> Is in a noyous cloud enueloped,
> Where she may find the substaunce thin and light,
> Breakes forth her siluer beames, and her bright hed
> Discouers to the world discomfited;
> Of the poore traueller, that went astray,
> With thousand blessings she is heried;
> Such was the beautie and the shining ray,
> With which faire Britomart gaue light vnto the day.
> (3.1.43)

Britomart's role as a Venus figure is sometimes more in the eye of the beholder:

> For she was full of amiable grace,
> And manly terrour mixed therewithall,
> That as the one stird vp affections bace,
> So th'other did mens rash desires apall,
> And hold them backe, that would in errour fall;
> As he, that hath espide a vermeill Rose,
> To which sharpe thrones and breres the way forstall,
> Dare not for dread his hardy hand expose,
> But wishing it far off, his idle wish doth lose.
> (3.1.46)

Britomart is thus seen as a rose, a symbol of the goddess of love. Of course, it is significant that this rose is protected by the thorns of Britomart's chaste and martial nature.

It is Merlin's prophecy and Britomart's destiny, however, that most suggests a parallel with the armed Venus. This "Faire martiall Mayd" (3.2.9) is the progenitor of the entire Tudor line. Britomart thus is related to Venus in her function as the goddess who presides over those instincts which result in the procreation of the species.

The idea of a martial female, that is presented with approval in Britomart and Belphoebe, also can have a negative side if taken to an extreme. In Book 5 Radigund, the "Queene of Amazons, in armes well tride" (5.4.33), is an example of the armed female in excess. When Radigund captures knights

> First she doth them of warlike armes despoile,
> And cloth in womens weedes: And then with threat
> Doth them compell to worke, to earne their meat,
> To spin, to card, to sew, to wash, to wring.
> (5.4.31)

Here, as in the myth of Hercules and Omphale, the female principle is overpowering the male. Thus Radigund's treatment of knights, stripping them of their identifying armour and forcing them to do demeaning "women's" work, represents a dangerous overturning of the proper order of the world.

It can be seen then that Spenser uses the myths of Mars and Venus to varied purposes. He not only provides the negative connotations of the story, but also the more positive possibilities. At the same time, there are hints given that allow a correspondence between certain characters and their actions, and the less common elements of the stories of Mars and Venus that reinforce the idea that the characters are allegorically Mars and Venus figures. The parallels in the visual arts strengthen and underline these correspondences.

Notes to Chapter Four

1 Details of the painting, such as the identification of quince, are from Phyllis and Karl Lehmann, Samothracian Reflections, (Princeton, 1973), p. 169 and Egon Verheyen, The Paintings in the "Studiolo" of Isabella d'Este at Mantua, (New York, 1971), pp. 35-38. For background information about Venus' attributes see Geoffrey Grigson, The Goddess of Love, (London, 1976), Chapter 11, pp. 184-208.

2 Edgar Wind, Bellini's Feast of the Gods, (Cambridge, Mass, 1948), p. 10.

3 Egon Verheyen, The Paintings in the "Studiolo" of Isabella d'Este at Mantua, pp. 28-9.

4 Lehmann, p. 135.

5 Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, (New York, 1968), p. 89.

6 Erwin Panofsky, Problems in Titian, Mostly Iconographic, (New York, 1969), p. 127.

7 Ibid. and Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, (New York, 1939), p. 160ff.

8 Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, p. 161.

9 Ibid. Panofsky does not date the painting by Bordone but he does mention it as following in the tradition of marriage portraits with the couple depicted as Mars and Venus, as in Titian's painting, p. 162.

10 E.H. Gombrich, Symbolic Images, (London, 1972), also does not date this work of art.

11 Edward Tripp, The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology, (New York, 1970), p. 72.

12 Thomas P. Roche, Jr., notes to The Faerie Queene, (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 1104.

13 Tripp, p. 72.

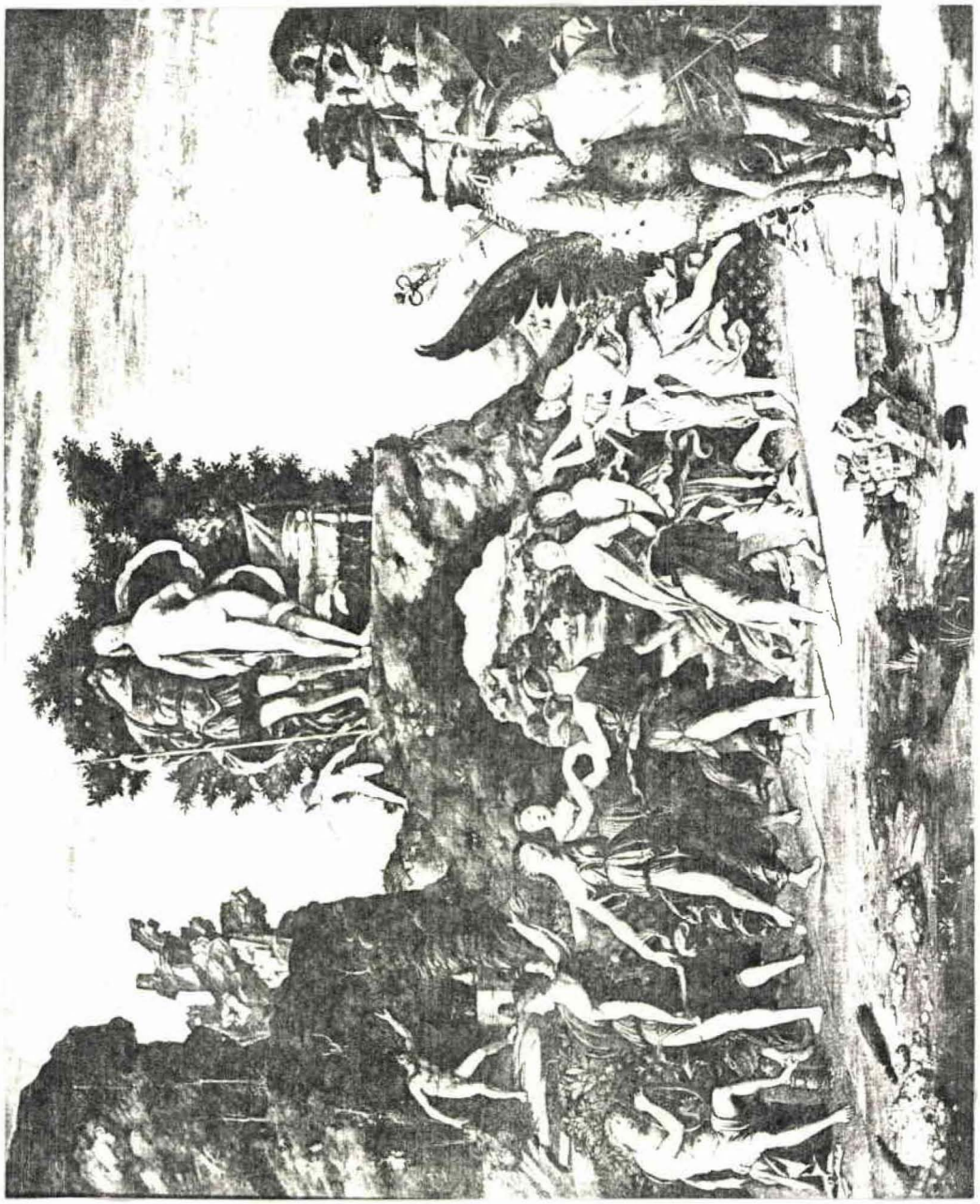
14 Ibid.

15 Thomas H. Cain, Praise in The Faerie Queene, (Lincoln and London, 1978), p. 60.

16 A.C. Hamilton, ed., The Faerie Queene, (London and New York, 1977), p. 320.

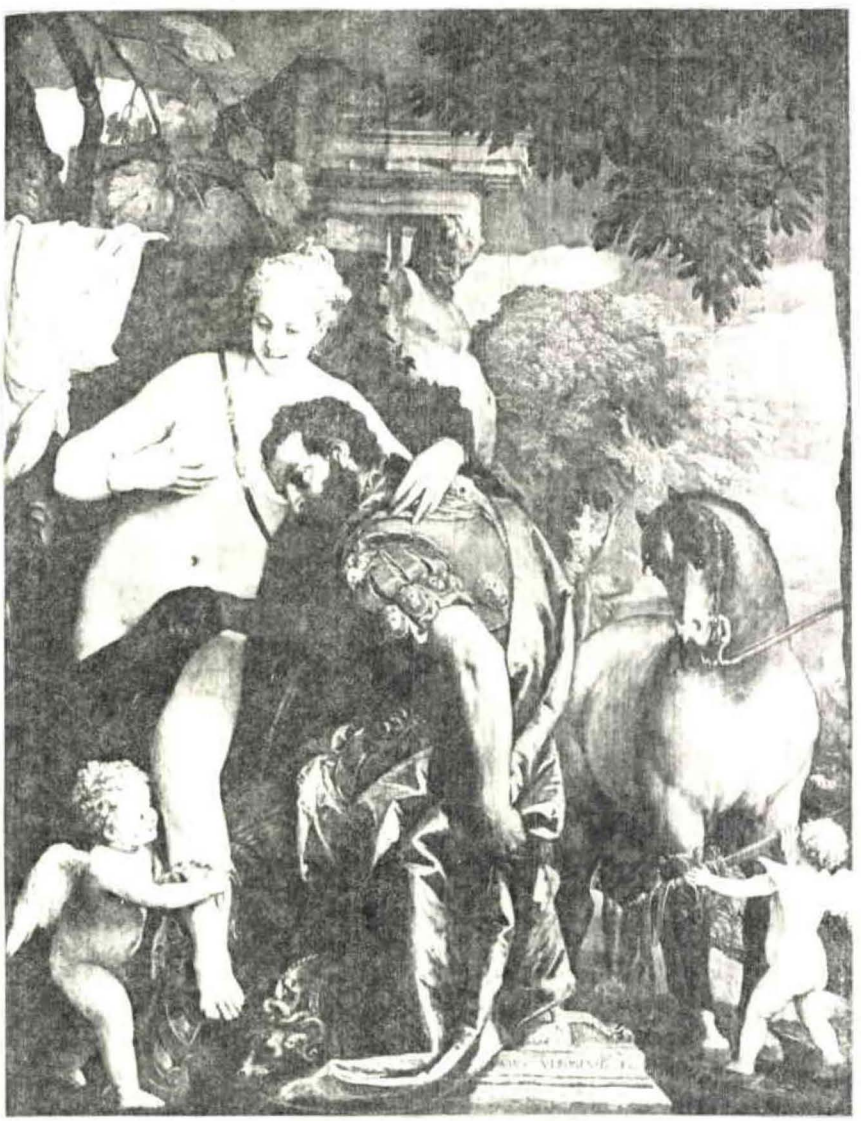
17 Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, p. 162.

figure 22



Andrea Mantegna, Mars and Venus, c.1497

figure 23



Paolo Veronese, Mars and Venus "United by Love", [c.1528-88].

figure 24

Titian, "Allegory of Alfonso d'Avalos, Marchese del Vasto", 1533

figure 25

Paris Bordone, Married Couple in the Guise of Mars and Venus, [1500-71]

figure 26

Roman Couple in the Guise of Mars and Venus

figure 27

Marco Zoppo, Venus Armata, [c.1433-c.1478]

figure 28

Italian Medal, Venus Armed, Second Quarter of the Sixteenth Century

Chapter Five

Some Humorous Aspects of Mars and Venus

Thus far the serious implications of the Mars and Venus story, be they positive or negative, have been examined. There is also, however, a lighter and funnier side to the circumstances that surround the two lovers. In Homer's Odyssey, for example, Vulcan and Apollo, first ensuring that they have an appropriate audience of fellow gods, expose Mars and Venus to the ridicule of these onlookers. When Mars and Venus are revealed together in bed, caught by Vulcan's cunning trap, "a fit of uncontrollable laughter seized these happy gods."[1] There is thus an aspect of farce to certain elements of the story of these two divinities.

Visual representations of the humour in the Mars and Venus myth are not as obvious or numerous as straightforward renditions. Recognition of the comedic element in a painting is sometimes problematic. Part of the difficulty is that humour seems to be a very individual element and is often hard to define. What one person sees as being funny, another person may not necessarily agree is quite so amusing. Painting, where facial expression is sometimes enigmatic at best, is, more so than poetry it seems to me, open to personal interpretation. The smile on Leonardo's Mona Lisa, 1503, exemplifies perfectly a facial expression whose equivocal nature has

caused discussion and controversy for centuries. Venus' gaze in Botticelli's Mars and Venus (figure 8) illustrates another example of a puzzling visage. As a more concrete example, Edgar Wind and others find elements of Homeric laughter in Mantegna's Mars and Venus (figure 22) which I find difficult to see.[2] As mentioned before, Venus' face seems more serene than mocking. Her almost Madonna-like expression suggests that there might be a tenuous parallel between depictions of Mary and the Christ child and portraits of Venus and Cupid. A comparison between, for example, Raphael's Madonna of the Chair (Madonna della Sedia), 1514-15 (figure 29) and, also as an example, Luca Cambiaso's Venus and Amor, 1527-85 (figure 30) reveals a similarity of mood. The exquisite nude Venus in Cambiaso's painting is subtly erotic, but there is also an air of tenderness and spirituality in the relationship between mother and child. Titian's many paintings which include Venus and Cupid (e.g. Venus and Cupid, c.1545, Venus and the Organ Player, c.1550, The Education of Cupid, c.1565, etcetera) impart a similar emotion. The touching tranquility and love which exude from Cambiaso's work are frequently also present in renditions of the Madonna and child, such as Raphael's where Mary's embrace of her son is loving and tender.

The idea of Homeric laughter, resulting, in the story, from the discovery by Vulcan of his wife Venus in bed with Mars, has often been depicted in the visual

arts by such artists as Giorgione, Titian, Paris Bordone, Parmigianino and many others.[3] The engraving from Antonio Tempesta's Metamorphoseon Sive Transformationum Ovidnarum..., 1606 (figure 21), illustrates just such a subject. As Vulcan throws his net over the startled couple, the spectator gods point to and laugh at the lovers. In a version by Jacopo Tintoretto, Venus Surprised by Vulcan, after 1538 (figure 31) Vulcan searches through the covers while Mars hides under the bed. In case he is not noticed by the viewer, a dog (perhaps used satirically as a dog is usually a symbol of fidelity) barks in the centre of the room. The idea of the fierce god of war hiding from the lame god Vulcan gives the painting a humorous and almost farcical atmosphere.[4]

A painting by Paolo Veronese entitled Mars and Venus [c.1528-88] (figure 32) which is in the Turin museum, contains elements that could be considered humorous. In this rather puzzling rendition of the couple, the god and goddess are depicted as being discovered, not by Vulcan as in the Homeric tradition, but by their own son Cupid. As in the motif discussed earlier, Mars' armour is lying carelessly on the floor. Cupid himself is shown leading a horse down some stairs on the left hand side of the canvas. The logic of this picture elicits a number of amusing questions. Where, for example, is the horse coming from and what is he doing about to enter what seems to be an inner chamber, complete

with bed? And most of all, how does a horse negotiate a rather narrow, circular staircase? The horse is bridled, which is usually an indication of controlled passion, but he is being led by Cupid. Cupid himself has many different guises, from the mischievous child with bow and arrow who is frequently depicted blindfolded, to the more mature lover of Psyche, or even the quasi-lover of Venus, as in Bronzino's Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time, (figure 6). He is often considered the agent of passion and here is perhaps shown bringing in the bridled horse to remind Mars and Venus to restrain their lust, as it can lead to disastrous consequences. Whatever the interpretation of the meaning of this painting, the scenario as depicted does seem humorous. The startled pose of both Mars and Venus as they gaze towards Cupid, the horse and the stairway, is somehow, undefinably, funny.[5]

Humorous aspects of the Mars and Venus theme can also be seen in Spenser's The Faerie Queene. In particular, events which surround and involve the female knight Britomart sometimes border on the comically absurd. There is a feeling that by the third book of the poem Spenser feels confident enough of his subject and work to offer the reader elements which parody that which has come before. Thus the crystal facets of the poem do reflect onto each other as the poet indulges in self-parody, creating a good deal of humour.

It is the old comic device of mistaken identity which is responsible for much of the humour in the episode of Britomart's sojourn in the Castle Joyous. The reader is well aware of the sex of the knight that Malecasta falls in love with and this knowledge allows the reader to enjoy with satisfaction Malecasta's doomed pursuit of Britomart. Spenser emphasizes the fundamental wrongness of Malecasta's infatuation, both by ensuring that the reader is the better informed and by stressing the lustful nature of Malecasta's desire:

> Whom when the Lady saw so faire a wight,
> All ignoraunt of her contrary sex,
> (For she her weend a fresh and lusty knight)
> She greatly gan enamoured to wex,
> And with vaine thoughts her falsed fancy vex:
> Her fickle hart conceiued hasty fire,
> Like sparkes of fire, which fall in sclender flex,
> That shortly brent into extreme desire,
> And ransackt all her veines with passion entire.
> (3.1.47)

Malecasta soon "grew to great impatience,"

> For she was giuen all to fleshly lust,
> And poured forth in sensuall delight.
> (3.1.48)

Spenser's word choice, with the mixture of fire and liquid imagery, two metaphors which run throughout The Faerie Queene, reminds the reader of other episodes of a similar nature discussed earlier in this thesis, such as when Redcrosse "Pourd out in loosnesse on the grassy ground" (1.7.7) or Cymochles, who "has pourd out his idle mind/ In daintie delices, and lauish ioyes" (2.5.28).

These antecedent situations suggested the negative aspects of illicit love. The use of parallel diction in similar circumstances reinforces the inappropriateness of the female Malecasta's attraction to the female Britomart. When Malecasta

> did faire Britomart entreat,
> Her to disarme, and with delightfull sport
> To loose her warlike limbs and strong effort,
> (3.1.52)

the similarity with the icon of Mars and Venus is increased.

Malecasta does not give up her prey easily:

> Still did she roue at her with crafty glaunce
> Of her false eyes, that at her hart did ayme,
> And told her meaning in her countenaunce;
> (3.1.50)

> And aye betweene the cups, she did prepare
> Way to her loue, and secret darts did throw.
> (3.1.51)

The humour heightens as Malecasta becomes more and more blatant in her attempts to arouse Britomart's interest. Britomart's inability to see or understand Malecasta's flirting -- she "would not such guilfull message know" (3.1.51), and "dissembled it with ignoraunce" (3.1.50) -- becomes increasingly comic. Malecasta "misconstruing" Britomart's courtesy for returned love adds to the farcical nature of this scene.

The danger inherent in sleep and night-time is

emphasized when all the knights retire for the evening to rest. This time of night when the all-important control of consciousness is surrendered is described in terms full of menace:

> all the world in silence deepe
> Yshrowded was, and euery mortall wight
> Was drowned in the depth of deadly sleepe.
> (3.1.59)

It is during this "guilty Night" that Malecasta tiptoes towards Britomart's bedchamber. The step-by-step detail in the narration of this episode allows the reader to picture easily what is happening and slowly builds up suspense as the reader anticipates with glee what is about to happen. The climax is reached when Malecasta ever so carefully creeps into Britomart's bed. There is great humour in Britomart's outrage as

> She lightly lept out of her filed bed,
> And to her weapon ran, in minde to gride
> The loathed leachour.
> (3.1.62)

Britomart has been too blind to see what has been happening.

The utter chaos that results from Malecasta's screams is very funny as knights rush in to protect the lady of the castle. The ensuing confrontation between Redcrosse and Britomart on one side and the knights of the castle on the other results in Britomart's wounding. It is not until after the fight, when Redcrosse and

Britomart are forced to flee, that she is finally able to arm herself (3.1.67). Even the knight of chastity has been wounded by the powerful force of lust and it is only with the help of the knight of holiness that she is able to escape. Thus, in an allegorical interpretation, perhaps chastity in and for itself is not totally admirable. Britomart is too selfish and involved with herself. Her chastity must have a purpose, as suggested by the assistance she receives from holiness.

Spenser is thus not without his humorous side. Even when he presents his reader with a comical episode, however, there are moral implications below the surface of the farcical events. The story of Mars and Venus does have many dimensions and, although not as common and a little more difficult to define, the potentially funny elements of the love affair between the goddess of love and the god of war are represented in the visual arts -- a fitting parallel for Spenser's comic incidents between lovers.

Notes to Chapter Five

1 Homer, The Odyssey, translator E.V. Rieu (Harmondsworth, 1946), p. 131.

2 Edgar Wind, Bellini's Feast of the Gods (Cambridge, Mass, 1948), p. 10.

3 See A. Pigler, Barockthemen, 2nd ed., 3 Vols. (Budapest, 1974) which is an excellent tool for research as, although in German, it lists paintings of all ages by subject, pp. 166-170.

4 Details of this painting are from Carla Lord, "Tintoretto and the Roman de la Rose" JWCI 33, 1970, pp. 315-17.

5 Except for brief comments in passing, I could find little critical comment in English on this version of Mars and Venus. Most books on Veronese are not in English (usually Italian) and the book in the bibliography by Giuseppe Fiocco was used only for plates.

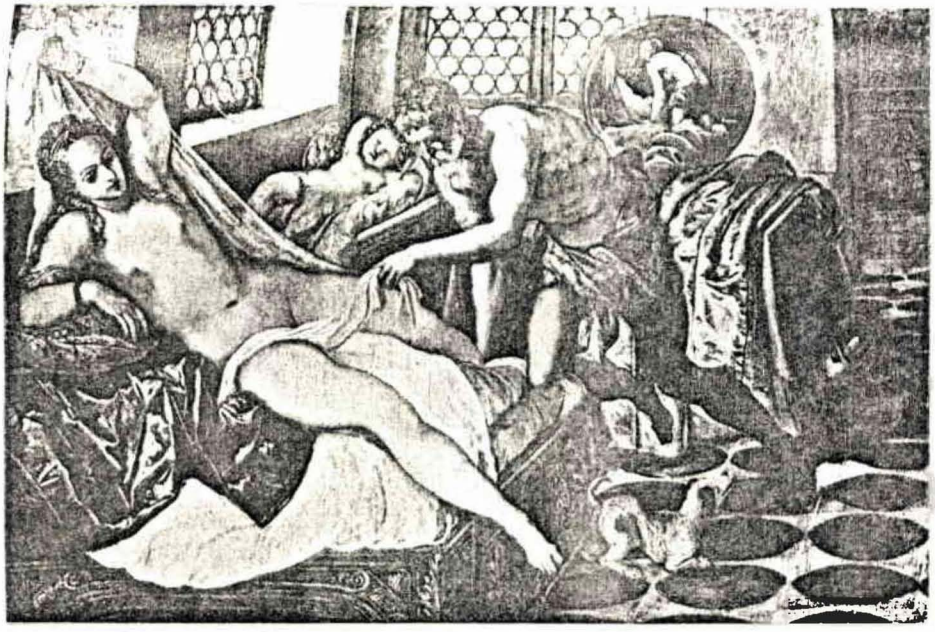
figure 29

Raphael Sanzio, Madonna of the Chair, 1514-15

figure 30

Luca Cambiaso, Venus and Amor, 1527-85

figure 31



Jacopo Tintoretto, Venus Surprised by Vulcan, after 1538

figure 32

Paolo Veronese, Mars and Venus (Turin), [c.1528-88]

Chapter Six:

Conclusion

> The Chian Peincter, when he was requirde
> To pourtraict Venus in her perfect hew,
> To make his worke more absolute, desird
> Of all the fairest Maides to haue the vew.
> Much more me needs to draw the semblant trew,
> Of beauties Queene, the worlds sole wonderment,
> To sharpe my sence with sundry beauties vew,
> And steale from each some part of ornament.[1]

This thesis has explored some aspects of Spenser's pictorial imagery. His use of emblematic detail adds greatly to the allegorical meaning behind his characters and situations. At the same time Spenser paints pictures that are often quite lovely in both the quality of the poetry and in the visual image supplied.

The relationship between The Faerie Queene and the fine arts, and in particular, painting, is problematical. As cause and effect, the connection is very difficult to prove concretely, although there are indications that Spenser had some familiarity with aspects of visual art, such as is demonstrated by his connection with the van der Noot emblem book. The existence of a doctrine of ut pictura poesis and the emphasis placed on it indicates a fundamental concern on the part of Renaissance artists of different genres. Spenser's very visual imagery reflects at least in part the tenuous correlation between the sister arts.

In The Faerie Queene Spenser creates a visual

feast. From his palette emerge figures rich in detail and association. These associations are enhanced by a comparison with visual art traditions. Added meaning can sometimes be discerned when customary modes of representation are kept in mind. This is the case with the motif of Mars and Venus that runs throughout The Faerie Queene. In a poem so suffused with mythology it is not surprising to find these important mythological figures used as archetypes for certain characters in the poem.

This type of study of the connection and reinforcing of themes and images between painting and poetry could easily be extended. An investigation of changes that occur in the last three books of the poem might well be pursued. In addition to Mars and Venus, an examination of the realationship between characters in The Faerie Queene and the stories and depictions surrounding other mythological figures such as Venus and Adonis, Adonis and related fertility myths, Cupid, and especially Hercules, could expand the already numerous levels of meaning inherent in the poem.

Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene is a poem of vast complexity which yields varied responses and interpretations. An exploration of its images, emblems, icons or motifs and their connections with the visual arts gives the sense of a shared tradition, a common stock, of means and manners of representation. The many sparkling surfaces of the imagery of The Faerie Queene

reflect not only onto each other, internally within the poem, but also perhaps gather light and meaning from the bright beam of Renaissance painting.

Notes to Chapter Six

1 Edmund Spenser, Dedicatory Sonnet "To All the Gratious and Beautiful Ladies in the Court" in The Faerie Queene, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr., p. 33.

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