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THE CHARMES BACKE TO REVERSE:
Deconstructing Architectures in Books II and III of
The Faerie Queene

Crystal Nelson Downing

Spenser's knights of Temperance and Chastity in Books Two and Three of *The Faerie Queene* are closely related, mirroring each other through their triumphs and temptations, creating a correlation between their allegories and the books that contain them. Correct reading of knights, allegories, and books is part of the *Faerie Queene* quest, causing the reader to emulate the knights in a pilgrimage of interpretation.

Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, begins his book in confrontation with Redcrosse, the hero of the preceding book. Britomart, the Knight of Chastity, begins her book in confrontation with Guyon, victor in Book Two. Both encounters serve as transitions from the trial of one hero, the trying of one quality, and the telling of one book to the trials, tryings, and tellings of the next. Guyon's belligerence toward the Redcrosse Knight is based upon a deception wrought by "that cunning Architect of cancred guile,"¹ Archimago, whose "faire filed tong/ With thousand other sleights" (II.i.3) convinces Guyon that Redcrosse has abused a woman. Guyon stops his attack on Redcrosse only when he sees "the sacred badge of [his] Redeemers death,/ Which on [Redcrosse's] shield is set for ornament" (II.i.27). Guyon, deceived by verbal art, is retrieved by plastic art; he knows how to read the symbol on Redcrosse's shield, to interpret the allegory of the ornament. His correct interpretation is confirmed when Redcrosse reveals his identity by lifting the visor on his helmet, establishing that a true Redcrosse was behind the red cross sign Guyon interprets. Thus, a figure of falseness is behind the words Archimago speaks. Guyon's dilemma of interpretation was one of surface vs. substance, of vehicle vs. tenor. And his dilemma embodies our own, causing us to question all verbal architectures, as Guyon must question all architects of words. A. Bartlett Giamatti, in his appropriately titled *Play of Double Senses*, explains:

¹ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (NY: Penguin, 1978), II.i.1. All succeeding references to *The Faerie Queene* will be indicated in the text.

For allegory is a way of talking about substances by way of surfaces, a means of focusing on the private, inner, and hidden through the public, available, and open. Such an approach to allegory (or to pageantry) means we must always absorb the surface, the literal level, in order to penetrate to the substance. We must learn to read the public writing of pageantry in order to grasp the common but submerged private significance. In allegory or in pageantry, the surface is never sacrificed to the substance; surface is, rather, at the service of substance. We must learn, as spectators, as readers, to read back from what is available to what is hidden. We must learn to read out of and into ourselves.²

The connection Giamatti makes between allegory and pageantry reinforces our ties with Guyon and Britomart. Both witness pageants as we witness the pageantry that contains them. That the words "page" and "pageant" are both related to the Latin *pagina* strengthens the ties.³ The pages of *The Faerie Queene* contain the pageants of Guyon and Britomart who, seeing pageants themselves, attempt to read them as they would words on a page.

The tension between surface and substance in Books Two and Three of *The Faerie Queene* is figured forth in the architectural structures that Guyon and Britomart enter at the end of their books. The walls surrounding the Bower of Bliss in Book Two and those defining the House of Busyrane in Book Three are covered with stories of a mythic past. The walls are pictorial pageants of action which each pilgrim reads, emulating and adumbrating simultaneously our reading of the action as Guyon and Britomart move inside the walls of the story. Neither knight, though, seems to understand the pageants of the walls until he or she has penetrated to the innermost part of the structure, to the substance behind the surface. Then, in acts of demolition unduplicated in the remainder of *The Faerie Queene*, the two knights deconstruct⁴ both substance and surface as they quit (in the

² A. Bartlett Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses: Spenser's Faerie Queene* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 83.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 82, note.

⁴ I am obviously using the word "deconstruction" (and its various forms) *not* in the way Derrida has made us regard it. It is a handy term for my exploration of architectures in literature that are destroyed—structures that are deconstructed. After all, even "destruction" is becoming somewhat ambiguous with increasing awareness of works such as Bove's *Destructive Poetics* and Orr's collection of essays called *De-structing the Novel*, etc. I choose the term "deconstruction" because of its multifarious evocations—one of which,

double sense of the term) structures containing the stories which detain them. Architectures define the temptations which confine them.

The journeys inward of Britomart and Guyon, as those of other knights in *The Faerie Queene*, display an increasing interiority of vision. Our two knights both pass through second portals once they have entered the walls of of their fictive structures. Inside this second interior is a statue which represents the allegorical significance of the place. The form in the Bower of Bliss is a fountain:

Most goodly it with curious imageree
Was ouer-wrought, and shapes of naked boyes,
of which some seemd with liuely iollitee,
To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,
Whilst others did them selues embay in liquid ioyes.

(II.xii.60)

The fountain is "wrought" all "ouer" with "curious imageree." But as is everything in the Bower, the imagery is "ouer-wrought"—it has reached a point of intemperance. The images are "wanton," like the "toyos" and the naked boys who play with them; indeed, the images are "shapes" of naked boys, whose action is only a seeming. The rime pattern of the last four lines of this stanza is also important to the structure of the Bower, and it is repeated at least two other times in the lines that border the Bower.⁵ The "ioyes" of the Bower are emasculating, making men mere "boyes," making knights mere "toyos" for "loose Ladies" (see II.v.28).

The fountain represents all that is inimical to the Knight of Temperance,

I must admit, is the contemporary criticism of "incarnationist" poetics which advances the "presence of the word." Mental constructs made by the play of words in literature must be broken—they must be deconstructed. But I do not choose Derrida's nihilistic wrecking ball to level our "prisonhouse[s] of language." I choose, rather the alternative Murray Krieger provides (whom I quote on pages 20 and 21 above). Krieger explains that poetic language "must derive its power from its own form in collision (and collusion) with its reader's acquiescence." The reader collides with the self-sustaining architecture of a poem's language as it sits in the road to referential signification—forcing him to see, as it were, the "architexture" itself; he also colludes with the poem, willing to enter it despite its self-acknowledged nature as illusion—a thing artficed only of temporally referential words. See *Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and Its System* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1976), p. 202.

⁵ After II.v.28, xii.60 and 72, the toyos-boyos-joyes rime scheme occurs only once in *The Faerie Queene*—in another description of architecture: the Temple of Venus (IV.x.42).

and it is here that Guyon suffers his greatest temptation: "wanton Maidens" (xii.66) toy with his lust as they play naked in the waters that flow from that fountain. They, like the fountain's imagery of "naked boyes," play "with liuely iollitee" as "them selues embay in liquid ioyes." The fountain figures forth the temptation it points to.

The pageant of playful wantonness that Guyon sees has its parallel in Britomart's experience in the House of Busyrane. The pageant performed for her is a wedding masque, played by personified qualities destructive to Chastity. The final player in the "euill ordered traine" is the "cruell," "full proud" Cupid (III.xii.22,23), an animate prosopopoeia of the statue at the core of the House, which embodies all that contradicts Britomart's character. The statue depicts Cupid as blindfolded, standing on a dragon whose eyes are "shot through" with Cupid's shafts (xi.48). Britomart's eyes, however, are fully functional and in constant use; she reads the words on the altar of Cupid just as she reads the "Be bold" over the door. As yet, though, she has trouble with interpretation; though she gazes and gazes, "her fraile senses" are "dazed" in their reading (xi.49). Her "sences" "could not find what sence it figured" (xi.50). The word "sence" connects her act of reading—her senses—with the point of interpretation—its sense. Though she can't interpret, Britomart continues her journey of interiority, the "prosecuting of her first intent" (xi.50). She participates in the allegory by being bold; by going "forward with bold steps into the next roome" (xi.50) she does what words advise. So also Guyon prosecutes his intent—even though he is not able to fully interpret his experience and must look to the Palmer for words of caution and explication.

In *The Poetry of The Faerie Queene*, Paul Alpers explains that Spenser transforms his narrative materials not into arranged worlds but into "arrangements of words."⁶ Interpretation, therefore, is not applied to pictorial descriptions, for Spenser "has no desire to be visually convincing. He uses sensory impressions to give a quasi-physical presence to images and words that express value."⁷ As readers of Spenser's architectures, we must "be

⁶Paul J. Alpers, *The Poetry of the Faerie Queene* (NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), p. 36.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 13. Martha Craig's unpublished dissertation, "Language and Concept in *The Faerie Queene*," part of which Alpers prints in his *Elizabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism* (NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 447-72, also emphasizes the importance of Spenser's word choice. She says that "individual words are allegorical; they contain hidden meaning or implied metaphors" (p. 453).

bold" to enter doors of meaning that Spenser's word arrangements open for us, exploring the groupings, juxtapositions, alliterations, and rhymings that are the materials of Spenser's construction. As Britomart reads the walls of Busyrane and Guyon deciphers the materials of Bliss, we perceive the structures in the stanzas that contain them.

The words that create the Bower of Bliss embody its decadence—a "decay" of both time and matter which is figured forth by a singer inside the walls:

So passeth, in the passing of a day,
 Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre,
 Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
 That earst was sought to decke both bed and bowre,
 Of many a Ladie, and many a Paramowre:
 Gather therefore the Rose, whilest yet is prime,
 For soone comes age, that will her pride deflowre:
 Gather the Rose of loue, whilest yet is time,
 Whilest lowing thou mayst loued be with equall crime.

(II.xii.75)

The "deflowre" of line seven is the actual activity of the "bowre"—with which it rimes in line four. The word suggests a negative view of sexuality, rape rather than sexual consummation. The word also reflects a negation of nature itself. Surreptitiously hiding behind natural flowers are unreal ones, "deflowred" by being only "painted flowres," "wrought" by art (II.xii.58). Insinuating itself among natural ivy is "coloured" "metall" (xii.61); intermixed with fruitful grapes are ones "of burnisht gold" that "ouer-burdened" the "weake" vines on which they were insidiously "lurking" (xii.55). The "deflowre" also reflects a destruction of nature seen in deconstructed puns two stanzas earlier. Of Acrasia is written:

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

Wherewith she sighed soft, as if his case she rewed. (xii.73)

Acrasia's "delight" is consuming, as the word "depasturing" denotes. But violence toward nature, towards elements of the pastoral, is echoed in the "de-" prefix of separation and cessation. Indeed, the scene in the garden is a

deconstructed pastoral. It has pastoral elements: a rural location with beautiful maidens and handsome lovers—in a romantic context of eternal spring where someone sings of their love. But health and innocence are missing; the pastoral has been “deflowered.” It is artifice and excess which define and delimit the Bower of Bliss. The artifice of what should be natural is excessive; the excess of what should be blissful is artificial.

The juxtaposition of “depasturing” and “delight” makes us see the latter word in ways more than its denotation. Even “light” in this garden is subject to destruction. “Light” reminds us of the light of truth which is known through the spirit; but the “spright” in this stanza (ln. 7) is being consumed—depastured—“sucked” up through the eyes, the vehicle of sight. Vision in the Bower, as in the House of Busyrane, is distorted so that “sight” (ln. 2) can no longer construct an accurate perspective on reality. An altogether different definition of “light” is provided in line five, only to be destroyed as is “delight.” For Acrasia’s “kisses light” turn out to be of such power that they draw Verdant’s essence from himself—they are excessively artificial. The “light” rimes of Stanza 73 are as much depastured as is the delight with which they rime.

At the same time that flowers are denatured in the Bower of Bliss, the nature of sexuality is deflowered through a process of continual emasculation. With her lips to the eye, Acrasia sucks the spirit of manhood out of those who fall prey to her depasturing activity. Knights thus lose their identity as their virility is drained. Amavia describes Mordant’s victimization by Acrasia:

Him so I sought, and so at last I found,
 Where him that witch had thralld to her will,
 In chaines of lust and lewd desires ybound,
 And so transformed from his former skill,
 That me he knew not, neither his owne ill;
 Till through wise handling and faire gouernance,
 I him recured to a better will,
 Purged from drugs of foule intemperance;
 Then meanes I gan deuise for his deliuerance. (II.i.54)

The movement through the “ill” rimes shows how Mordant’s “skill” as knight turned “ill” as he became governed by the willful intemperance that defines Acrasia’s nature. The “ill” is reversed only when another “will” in the verse, Amavia’s, provides healing, restoring the ill to its original rime.

The depasturing of manhood and language continues in the description of Verdant:

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

(II.xii.79)

The grammatical duplicity of the phrase at the end of line one speaks to the duplicitous nature of the Bower, a place in which all is but a "seeming," where good surfaces hide evil substance. When we first read "seemed to bee," it appears to complete "sleeping," so that the young man only seems to be sleeping by Acrasia. But the enjambment of the line shows us that the "seeming" refers to his character as a "goodly swayne." Verdant has, indeed, lost his character; his "nobilitie" has been consumed just as "face" in line seven is consumed by the word which contains it in its rime: "deface." Verdant's face, his character, has been "defaced."

The defacement continues in the next stanza:

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

O horrible enchantment, that his so did blend. (II.xii.80)

Defacement, in the common sense of the word, has occurred to Verdant's shield. The figures on its surface, the "signes" that would normally point to the substance of his identity as a brave knight, have been erased ("ra'st"). He has also lost the face, the identity, of a knight by caring no more for honor. In fact, he has wasted his whole "bodie" in "luxuree." This justifies the ambiguity we read in line one; we can't tell which "armes"—his body's or his armour's—are idle instruments. The enjambment with the first half of line two supports the reading of physical arms, since we have just read in stanza 79 that he is sleeping. But the second half of line two tells us that the "armes" must be part of his armour, for they are hanging

upon a tree. Yet, as the stanza continues to show us, both readings are correct; his body and his shield have been defaced.⁸

An earlier experience of Cymochles in the garden reveals much about the bliss of the Bower:

He, like an Adder, lurking in the weeds,
 His wandring thought in deepe desire does steepe,
 And his fraile eye with spoyle of beautie feedes;
 Sometimes he falsely faines himselfe to sleepe,
 Whiles through their lids his wanton eies do peepe
 To steale a snatch of amorous conceipt,
 Whereby close fire into his heart does creepe:
 So, he them deceiues, deceiu'd in his deceit,
 Made drunke with drugs of deare voluptuous receipt. (II.v.34)

The repetition of the "de-" words in line eight emphasizes the deconstructive circularity of his situation: though he thinks he is deceiver, he is moved to this denatured role by the deception of the place in which he lurks. The continued alliteration in "drunke with drugs" confirms the deception, until we see that the only thing he gains, his only "receipt," is artifice. "Receipt" can be read differently, however. It can be the "recipe" for the drugs on which he is made drunk, or it can mean the drugs themselves. In Spenser's day, "receipt" could also mean "a place of reception or accommodation; a place of refuge."⁹ Thus, the drugs were "of"—a part of—this place of "voluptuous" accommodation. Cymochles' reception, though, is built of deception, as are the walls that contain it.

As the nemesis to intemperance, Guyon is the mote that enters the eye of Bliss, destroying its form, the excess of its artifice: "But all those pleasant bowres and Pallace braue,/ Guyon broke downe" (xii.83). In *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic*, Giamatti explains that "the early paradise convention in the Renaissance epics demand the destruction of the delightful, evil place. . . . Guyon is not destroying Pleasure in its best sense here; he is

⁸ Alpers affirms that "structural ambiguity is a genuine poetic resource for Spenser, not just a freakish by-product of his loose sentence structures" (*The Poetry of The Faerie Queene*, p. 85), and he cites enjambment as one means by which Spenser achieves such meaning-filled ambiguity.

⁹ See "receipt" in the *OED*, especially definition iv.13. Spenser's use of this word seems all the more significant in light of the fact that it appears nowhere else in *The Faerie Queene*.

restoring it."¹⁰ If Guyon does not break out of the Bower, he will become a permanent fixture of it; for Acrasia turns all of her lovers into literal beasts, unable to exercise human will. As a beast, Guyon would remain confined by a Renaissance epic convention, unable to break out and read the symbol of "goodly workmanship" on the walls of the Bower (xii.83). There is, in fact, one "seeming beast" who resents his transformation back into a man:

But one aboue the rest in speciall,
That had an hog beene late, hight Grille by name,
Repined greatly, and did him miscall,
That had from hoggish forme him brought to naturall. (xii.86)

Grill desires to be a part of the story "forme" in which he was placed, rather than to achieve the self-referentiality of a man who can rise above his situation to read it.

We are finally ready to interpret for ourselves the walls of the Bower which Guyon destroys at the end of his quest:

Yt framed was of precious yuory,
That seemd a worke of admirable wit;
And therein all the famous history
Of Iason and Medea was ywrit;
Her mighty charmes, her furious louing fit,
His goodly conquest of the golden fleece,
His falsed faith, and loue too lightly flit,
The wondred Argo, which in venturous peece
First through the Euxine seas bore all the flour of Greece.

Ye might haue seene the frothy billowes fry
Vnder the ship, as thorough them she went,
That seemd the waues were into yuory,
Or yuory into the waues were sent;
And other where the snowy substaunce sprent
With vermell, like the boyes bloud therein shed,
A piteous spectacle did represent,
And otherwhiles with gold besprinkeled;
Yt seemd th'enchanted flame, which did Creüsa wed.

(II.xii.44,45)

Written on the thin ivory walls of the Bower is a tale about the depasturing love of Jason. She, like Acrasia, is a life destroyer, out of control, for she dismembers her brother and later her children in response to her love. The

¹⁰A. Bartlett Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic* (NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 281.

unnaturalness of her "fit" is reflected in its alliteration with other unnatural elements: "the golden fleece," Jason's "falsed faith" and "love too lightly flit." Indeed, Jason's "flit" of love creates Medea's "fit" as the one *endrime* contains the elements for the other.

The walls depict a scene that is as tainted as the scene Guyon sees when he passes inside. In fact, the surface of the walls gives substance to elements of the story: the waves seem like ivory in the narrative of Medea, but that is because the very medium of the narrative is ivory. The ivory in the water of the narrative is tainted with "vermell" blood because of Medea's actions, just as the ivory bodies in the Bower's fountain waters, inside the walls, are tainted with sin as the maidens attempt to seduce Guyon. Of one maiden is said:

And th'yuorie in golden mantle gownd:
 So that faire spectacle from his was reft,
 Yet that, which reft it, no lesse faire was fownd:
 So hid in lockes and waues from lookers theft,
 Nought but her louely face she for his looking left. (II.xii.67)

The ivory maiden is described as a "spectacle" as was the ivory story on the Bower's walls. The golden mantle and the waves that cover her body remind us of the "gold besprinkled" on the "waves" of the Jason and Medea story; the structure of the Bower, its walls, reflects its subject. Thus, as Guyon breaks down the structure, he deconstructs the subject—temptation to intemperance. In fact, the deconstruction goes so far as to turn the story in which he stands, in which he has suffered very real temptation, into an allegory external to himself, seen when he must ask the Palmer for an interpretation (xii.84).

We as readers of the Bower of Bliss have gone through a process similar to that of Guyon. In stanza 44, we are told that the walls "seemed a worke of admirable wit." The ambiguous "of" in this phrase may refer to authorship, a wit who made the walls, or to content, the admirable history of Jason and Medea. Our reading of the Bower of Bliss is a seeing of Guyon's situation, as the narrator affirms with the first line of stanza 45: "Ye might haue seene the frothy billowes fry." He then begins stanza 46 with: "All this, and more might in that goodly gate/ Be red; that euer open stood to all." The "red" describes our experience of the Bower construction; we read a story on the walls and gate. But the "red" can also point back to something we have "seene" in the previous stanza: ivory walls with red color on them because they embody the story of ivory waves with blood in them. The structure is the story for us, until Guyon deconstructs the tale with the help of the

Palmer's allegoresis.¹¹ What follows this allegoresis, for us, is an ivory page, untainted with structures that can be "red," until the next books of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* begins.

And it begins with Britomart, whose quest is a chaste chasing of Artegall. Just as Guyon, a male, had destroyed the power of a female architect (Acra-sia), Britomart, a female, will bind the power of a male architect (Busyrane) by rescuing her female counterpart, Amoret. When Britomart first sees Amoret, the latter has a deep knife wound in her chest from which blood freely flows. At the wound she holds a silver basin in which lies her heart speared through "with a deadly dart" (III.xii.21). Britomart receives a similar wound from Busyrane, which seals the identification between her and the chaste Amoret. But, just as Guyon's lust was not as great as Verdant's, Britomart's "wound were nothing deepe imprest" (xii.33). She still has strength to battle the captivity of Chastity, a captivity which precludes the possibility of fulfilled love. Strictures to chastity fall away only when the structures of Busyrane's house crumble. And the walls of that architecture speak to the perversion of the love it contains.

Thomas P. Roche, Jr., explains that the tapestry on the walls of Busyrane's House depict mythic gods "debasement themselves in pursuit of love. Jove appears in all his animal metamorphoses, ravishing his mortal loves."¹² Britomart encounters these tapestries in the first room she enters:

For round about, the wals yclothed were
 With goodly arras of great maiesty,
 Wouen with gold and silke so close and nere,
 That the rich metall lurked priuily,
 As faining to be hid from enuious eye;
 Yet here, and there, and euery where vnwares
 It shewd it selfe, and shone vnwillingly;
 Like a discoloured Snake, whose hidden snares
 Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht backe declares.
 (xi.28)

¹¹ Alpers, also, sees a connection between the activities of knight and reader. He says, for example, that when Spenser presents Amoret's torture, he "directly identifies our psychological experience with the process of reading." He says Spenser also "makes it explicit that Britomart's quest is not an action we observe, but is identified with our experience of reading" (*The Poetry of The Faerie Queene*, pp. 18 and 19).

¹² Thomas P. Roche, Jr., *The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's Faerie Queene* (NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), p. 84.

The artificiality of the Bower of Bliss is echoed on the walls of Busyrane's House. In both places the medium of artifice is a "burnisht" "metall" so duplicitous that it must "lurke" in its "faining."¹³ As the pastoral elements of the Bower are "depastured," the pictorial elements of Busyrane's tapestries are "discolourd." As unnatural beasts inhabit Acrasia's Bower, a bestiality inheres Busyrane's tapestry portraits. The threads are compared to a snake, traditionally the most evil of animals, which winds through the arras with insidious intent. Though the thread "lurke[s] priuily" and fains "to be hid," it yet "declares" itself in the stories the tapestry depicts. In fact, the tapestried walls become a self-referential declaration, an ephrasis of warning to Britomart about the art of love their art declares:

And in those Tapets weren fashioned
 Many faire pourtraicts, and many a faire feate,
 And all of loue, and all of lusty-hed,
 As seemed by their semblaunt did entreat;
 And eke all Cupids warres they did repeate,
 And cruell battels, which he whilome fought
 Gainst all the Gods, to make his empire great;
 Besides the huge massacres, which he wrought
 On mighty kings and kesars, into thraldome brought. (xi.29)

Words about language, such as "entreat" and "repeate" above, recur throughout the description of the tapestried walls. In fact, the greatest "feate" of the arras is the "entreat" and "repeate" with which it rimes. Cupid may have "wrought" huge massacres, but what is more impressive is how those "battels" are "wrought" on the arras itself. We are more amazed by the "thraldome brought" on "kings and kesars" by enthralling them in "pourtraicts" on the surface of the wall, than with the battles themselves.

References to the telling or showing of a story are repeated in the tapestry descriptions: "Therein was writ" (xi.30), "Then shewd it" (33), "Wast there enwouen" (36), "was most liuely writ" (39), "Long were to tell" (44). Thus, the transformations of Jove are wrought through the formations of portraiture:

Then was he turned into a snowy Swan,
 To win faire Leda to his louely trade:
 O wondrous skill, and sweet wit of the man,

¹³ See II.xii.55 and 61 in which similar words are used to describe the artificial vegetation of the Bower as are used here to describe the threads in the arras. The ambiguity of the word "faining" adds to our sense of artifice. There is a desirousness, a "faining," to be "feigning."

That her in daffadillies sleeping made,
From scorching heat her daintie limbes to shade. (xi.32)

A god can be turned into a swan by the "wondrous skill, and sweet wit of the man" who sews a picture of him in the new form. Delight is thus rendered to those in the story and to those reading the story, both by the craftsmanship of the poet: "Wondrous delight it was, there to behould,/ How the rude Shepherds after him did stare" (34). Britomart delightedly beholds the delightful "stare" of the shepherds while we, as readers, assimilate them both. There is a threefold seeing here, reinforced in the next stanza with: "on earth great love these pageants playd" (35). The pageants are the stories Jove enacts, they are the tapestries which depict those stories, and they are the pages upon which we read them.¹⁴

As Britomart continues gazing on the tapestry and the stories it tells, the telling of it on our page assumes a heartbeat of quickened movement and heightened intensity through a repetition of phrases, thus embodying what Harry Berger, Jr., describes as the "*busy reign* of the male imagination [which] becomes busier and more frenzied as the feminine will recoils in greater disdain or panic."¹⁵ Once again the walls become an index to the story they contain:

And thou, faire Phoebus, in thy colours bright
Wast there enwouen, and the sad distresse,
In which that boy thee plinged, for despight,
That thou bewray'dst his mothers wantonnesse,
When she with Mars was meynt in ioyfulnessse:
For thy he thrild thee with a leaden dart,
To love faire Daphne, which *thee loued lesse*:
Lesse she thee lou'd, then was thy iust desart,
Yet *was thy loue her death*, & *her death was thy smart*.

So louedst thou the lusty Hyacinct,
So louedst thou the faire Coronis deare:

¹⁴Once again a connection is made between knight and reader. Britomart sees walls of threads while we read walls of words—the pageant of our page. Alpers' claim for another canto can be applied to this one: "What Spenser makes us "see" is not a fixed image, an emblem in the usual sense, but a transformation of turbulence and fury into order and beauty. Our experience is specifically an experience of words and is modulated and developed in the very act of reading" (*The Poetry of the Faerie Queene*, p. 14).

¹⁵Harry Berger, Jr., "Busirane and the War Between the Sexes: An Interpretation of *The Faerie Queene* III.xi-xii," *ELR*, 1 (1971): 106.

Yet both are of thy haplesse hand extinct,
Yet both in flowres do liue, and loue thee beare,
 The one a Paunce, the other a sweet breare:
 For grieft whereof, ye mote haue liuely seene
 Thy God himselfe rending his golden heare,
 And breaking quite his gyrlond euer greene,
 With other signes of sorrow and impatient teene.

Both for those two, and for his owne deare *sonne*,
 The *sonne* of Climene he did repent,
 Who bold to guide the charet of the *Sunne*,
 Himselfe in thousand peeces fondly rent,
 And *all the world* with flashing fier brent,
 So like, that *all the walles* did seeme to flame.
 Yet cruell Cupid, not herewith content,
 Forst him eftsoones to follow other game,
 And loue a Shepherds daughter *for his dearest Dame*.

He loued Isse *for his dearest Dame*,
 And *for her sake* her cattell fed a while,
 And *for her sake* a *cowheard vile* became,
 The seruant of Admetus *cowheard vile*,
 Whiles that from heauen he suffered exile.
 Long were to tell each other louely fit,
 Now like a Lyon, hunting after spoile,
 Now like a Hag, now like a faulcon flit:

All which in that faire arras was most liuely writ.

(III.xi.36-39, italics mine)

This section closes with a statement drawing us outside of the mythic pageants in a line about the written page of the arras. The repetitions remind us of the serpentine threads, weaving in and out, doubling back upon themselves to create this illusion of love.

The repetition beings in a chiasmus of sound and sense in stanza 36. Phoebus, who is addressed in line one as standing apart from the arras, is told he is woven into it in line two. Thus, "thy colours bright" in the first line can refer to both the colors of his godlike character and to the colors used to portray him in the pageantry of thread. He is hit with a "leaden dart" of unrequited love (ln. 6), which creates the "smart" of line nine—as any arrow is expected to do. When we read the last line, though, we discover that it is actually Daphne's death that creates the smart; and what creates her death is Phoebus' love. The imperfect chiasmus of that line forces us to equate the love with the smart, yet we know that the love was created by a leaden dart. Thus, "dart" is directly related to its rhyming "smart"—

but only through the word "love." And that is the fulcrum word with which Britomart must deal.

The emotion of love and the pain of a dart are also pulled together in one word in the middle of the same stanza: the "thrild" of line six. In Spencer's day, "thrill" meant "to affect or move with a sudden wave of emotion," and also "to cause (an arrow or a dart) to pass." The thrill of Cupid's arrow causes the thrill of love in Phoebus. The word could also mean "to make a thrall of, enslave." Our first two senses of "thrill" have both made a thrall of Phoebus.¹⁶

Midway through 37, the address changes from Phoebus to ourselves, pulling us out of the pageant of the arras and reminding us that these are but "signes" of a story. Substance and surface are brought together in the next stanza with the repetition of "all the world" with "all the walles." The story of the world—the way of love—is imaged forth on the surface of Busyrane's walls. The mimetic effect is so great that when the arras depicts "flashing fier," it seems as if the walls themselves are flaming (38.5,6).

The tapestry is "So lively and so like" (xi.46) that its grammar—that with which it is "most lively writ" (39)—is as duplicitous as the grammar that describes it to us (which is, in turn, as duplicitous as the love-relationships woven therein). Of the story about Cupid retaliating on Mars, we're told that "There was he [Mars] painted full of burning darts" (44). We can read this two ways: the actual body of Mars, as depicted, is covered (painted) with blood because of the darts piercing his skin; or, the figure of Mars is depicted (painted) on the arras "full of burning darts." The story cannot be separated from the images that paint it.

In the same way, the story of a perverted love is imaged forth out of Amoret's blood by the architect of her fate:

And her before the vile Enchaunter sate,
 Figuring straunge characters of his art,
 With liuing bloud he those characters wrate,
 Dreadfully dropping from her dying hart,
 Seeming transfixed with a cruell dart,
 And all perforce to make her him to loue.
 Ah who can loue the worker of her smart?

¹⁶See "thrill" in the *OED*. Spenser often plays with the doubleness of this word which can embody emotional and physical piercing at once. See, for example, its use in I.viii.39, II.i.38, and VI.iv.18. He also plays with the ambiguity of "thrall" as the past tense of "thrill" in VI.xi.44, where it is the "thrill" of spirits passed that are enthralled: "her spirits thrall."

A thousand charmes he formerly did proue;
 Yet thousand charmes could not her stedfast heart remoue.

(xii.31)

"Love" (ln. 6) comes between the "dart" and the "smart"—just as it does in the tapestry of Phoebus and Daphne in xi.36, discussed above. The smart of this dart is wrought through Amoret's heart by the art of Busyrane. The connection in the sound of the words confirms a very real connection in sense. This "penning" of Amoret, a writing of her fate according to unchaste expectations of love, relates her directly to the walls of the house which "pen" her.¹⁷

Before Britomart can free the "little love" left in Amoret (whose name means "little love"), she has yet another room of imaged walls to pass through:

Much fairer, then the former, was that roome,
 And richlier by many partes arayd:
 For not with arras made in painefull loome,
 But with pure gold it all was ouerlayd,
 Wrought with wilde Antickes, which their follies playd,
 In the rich metall, as they liuing were:
 A thousand monstrous formes therein were made,
 Such as false loue doth oft vpon him weare,
 For loue in thousand monstrous formes doth oft appeare.

(III.xi.51)

The doubleness of the word "Antickes" in the middle of the stanza speaks to the double message of the "monstrous formes." An antick, in Spenser's time, could be a figure or a "ludicrous gesture, posture, or trick" (*OED*)—either something stilled or a movement. Indeed, these figures are in the midst of movement because of their mimetic role: "as they liuing were." The doubleness of "antickes" lends doubleness to the phrase that follows it. "Their follies playd" may have as subject the "antickes" as figures, so that we read, "The antickes played their follies in the rich metal lining the room." But the phrase may also take antickes as object, with "follies" as subject. Thus we read, "Their follies played antickes (ludicrous gestures or tricks) in the rich metal." "Follies" as subject is possible when we consider its definition as

¹⁷Maureen Quilligan discusses the "pen"- "penning" polysemy in *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1979), p. 84. She provocatively suggests that Busyrane's penning of Amoret is through Petrarchan images of love, conventions that Britomart must destroy.

"any costly structure considered to have shown folly in the builder" (OED). The builder of this "richlier" room overlaid "with pure gold" does indeed operate out of "wickedness, evil, mischief, harm,"¹⁸ as confirmed by Britomart's address to him late in Canto xii: "Thou wicked man, whose meed/ For so huge mischiefe, and vile villany/ Is death" (35).

The playing of the antickes is a "false love" because it is only a "figured" image of love—like the "straunge characters" which Busyrane is "figuring" in Amoret's blood (xii.31). The falseness of these images embodies the falseness of love that is presented in pageant to Britomart and in page to us. It is interesting to note that in Spenser's time "antick" could also mean "a grotesque pageant or theatrical representation."¹⁹ These antickes on the wall, themselves a pageant, are a metonym for the antickes of the wedding masque, depicting false love, soon to follow.

Because images are the main oppressors of Amoret, the walls of Busyrane's House are the enemy that Britomart must conquer—along with their architect. Busyrane magnifies her task when he produces a wedding pageant: he translates (in the double sense of the word) the images on the walls into the personified form of Desire, Doubt, Danger, Fear, Hope, Dissemblance, Suspect, Grief, Fury, Despight, Cruelty, and "full many moe like maladies,/ Whose names and natures I note readen well" (xii.26). The writer of our page and the seer of that pageant both have difficulty with reading. Britomart and Amoret escape the walls of perverted love forms only when Britomart forces "Th' Enchaunter selfe, which all that fraud did frame" to reverse the verse of his spell.²⁰ The conquering of the architect-versifier by "his charmes back to reverse" (xii.36) is emblemized by a reverse journey of Britomart through the rooms, the constructs of verse, she had recently traversed:

Returning backe, those goodly roomes, which erst
 She saw so rich and royally arayd,
 Now vanisht vtterly, and cleane subuerst
 She found, and all their glory quite decayd. (xii.42)

The false forms of love have been destroyed; the lines of verse that created them have been "subverst," enabling Britomart and Amoret to once again enter the world of Romance, where they are eventually united with their lovers. And we enter that world with them. Busyrane's House had confined

¹⁸Note definition 2 of "folly" in the *OED*.

¹⁹Note definition B3 of "antic" in the *OED*.

²⁰Quilligan makes this point dramatically in her work cited above. Though I reached the same conclusion before I read her, I cannot compete with her very stimulating explication of III.xii.36. See page 84.

us as well as them; the image-covered walls were the verse-covered pages that contained us for the space of a quest.

In the Bower of Bliss and the House of Busyrane we've seen the playing of two diverse pageants of love which have been encapsulated for us on the walls that contain them. Thus, the architectures that Guyon and Britomart destroy become synecdoches for the adventures they enter and move beyond—a movement we analogically duplicate as our eyes adventure into the text and press against the white margins that wall its words. But the walls fall down as we recognize that the Bower of Bliss and the House of Busyrane are metaphoric worlds that contain us only for that magical instant when we imaginatively forget that the struts and frets of this architected hour upon Spenser's stage are only words. He, like Busyrane, is simply manipulating and "Figuring straunge characters of his art."

Seeing the Bower and the House as synecdochic for Spenser's own poetic structure, we understand the ambiguity Spenser creates for us toward them. They are beautiful artifices, yet they are deceptive in their artificiality. At the point of its destruction, for example, the Bower is described with wistful remorse over the loss of its beauty:

But all those pleasant bowres and Pallace braue,
 Guyon broke downe, with figour pittillesse;
 Ne ought their goodly workmanship might saue
 Them from the tempest of his wrathfulnesse,
 But that their blisse he turn'd to balefulnesse:
 Their groues he feld, their gardins did deface,
 Their arbors spoyle, their Cabinets suppressse,
 Their banket houses burne, their buildings race,
 And of the fairest late, now made the fowlest place. (II.xii.83)

Murray Krieger evokes a similar ambiguity when he describes a literary work in its character as metaphor:

It is both a constructed emblem that contains the world and a deconstructed breath of air that does not begin to describe it. What it denies about itself at no moment detracts from the fullness of affirmation to which its every element contributes. Its paradoxical capacity to combine self-affirmation with self-denial—to see itself as the world and to see the world as anything but itself—is its most brilliant manifestation of its commitment to literature as illusion, illusion as that so persuasive as-if reality which seems to

be all the reality there is while it reveals its merely make-believe (dare we say counterfeit, even fraudulent?) character.²¹

The counterfeit Bower and fraudulent House, like the literary work, must be deconstructed in order to free the reader-knight from the escapist attractions of their pageantry. Contrived containment must be broken to create a new vision of the world. Architecture must dissolve to deliver meaning beyond its margins. Guyon, in order to restore manhood to Acrasia's metamorphosed lovers, must break down the walls of the Bower of Bliss; Britomart as she frees Amoret from Busyrane's abusive love, sees the walls of his house deconstruct around her. Both walled structures were covered with the forms of a story—Guyon's engraved in ivory, Britomart's woven in tapestry. Thus, as the knights read their context, we as readers make a pilgrimage of interpretation through the text. The structures that contain Guyon and Britomart are the stories themselves, until the tales end in the falling walls of the architectures.

How we read the pages of Spenser's pageants depends upon the nature of our wit:

Wonder it is to see, in diuerse minds,
 How diuersly loue doth his pageants play,
 And shewes his powre in variable kinds:
 The baser wit, whose idle thoughts alway
 Are wont to cleaue vnto the lowly clay,
 It stirreth vp to sensuall desire,
 And in lewd slouth to wast his carelesse day:
 But in braue sprite it kindles goodly fire,
 That to all high desert and honour doth aspire. (III.v.1)

The "baser wit" will not be able to break out of the Romance to see the allegory beyond; he will remain caught in the form, like Grille in the Bower. The "brave sprite," however, will understand the honor to which the allegory points, and will aspire towards it.²² Thus, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* reads us, rending the effect of page on the pageant of our lives.

²¹ Murray Krieger, "Literature as Illusion, as Metaphor, as Vision," in Paul Hernadi, Ed., *What Is Literature?* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978), p. 185.

²² This, indeed, seems to be what Spenser had in mind when he wrote his letter to Raleigh, "expounding his whole intention in the course of this work" of *The Faerie Queene*. See page 15 of the Thomas P. Roche, Jr., edition.

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The discussion of Spenser printed here is one of several projects in which Crystal is exploring how architectures described in literature can be seen as synecdoches for the literary structures that contain them.

This fall Crystal is serving as an instructor on a semester-long study tour of England, sponsored by Westmont College.