

An Essay on The House of Busyrane

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Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, a book of “an anatomy of love”¹, has its centre in the Garden of Adonis, a place of fertility, as “an allegorical core”², and its “set-piece” in the House of Busyrane. As Hough says, the episode of the house of Busyrane could be said to be one of the greatest of Spenser’s set-pieces as it is dramatic as well as pictorial.³ In this episode, Spenser presents to the reader “a series of speaking pictures”⁴, and the dominant images are Cupid and his dart. In this essay, I would like to trace the images as the

1 Graham Hough, *A Preface to The Faerie Queene*, London, Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., p. 173.

2 C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Mediaeval Tradition* (1936), Oxford U. P., 1973, p. 334.

3 Graham Hough, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

4 Paul J. Alpers, *The Poetry of the Faerie Queene.*, Princeton U. P., 1967, p. 15.

“series of speaking pictures” unfolds, with the help of the pictorial tradition, and clarify the meaning of Busyrane and his House.

The story is as follows: Britomart, the Knight of Chastity, learns from Scudamour that Amoret, his love, is captured and tortured in the House of Busyrane. Scudamour found Amoret in the Temple of Venus and won her with his shield of love, but at the wedding feast, Busyrane brought in the “mask of love” (IV. i. 3) and conveyed her “quite away to living wight unknowen” (IV. i. 3). Britomart enters the Castle, penetrating the barrier of flaming fire, though Scudamour cannot, and rescues Amoret.

In the House of Busyrane, we see a room full of mythological tapestries of Cupid’s victory, a statue of Cupid, and the Masque of Cupid, through Britomart’s eyes. The first room of the House contains tapestries depicting the transformation of love:

And in that Tapets weren fashioned
 Many faire pourtraicts, and many a faire feate,
 And all of love, and all of lusty-head,
 As seemed by their semblaunt did entreat;
 And eke all *Cupids* warres they did repeate,
 And cruell battles, 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.

(III. xi. 29)

These tapestries depict “all Cupids warres”: the love of Jove and Helle, Jove and Europa, Jove and Danaë, Jove and Leda, Jove and Semele, Jove and Alcmena, Jove and Asterie, Jove and Mnemosyne, Phoebus and Daphne, Phoebus and Hyacinct, Phoebus and Isse, and loves of Neptune, Saturne, Mars and Buccus. They are full of Cupid’s triumphs, “cruell battels” (III. xi. 29), and “mournfull tragedyes” (III. xi. 45), the border is of broken weapons, and “a long bloody river through them rayled” (III. xi. 46). Everywhere, there is representation of suffering and pain.

The subject of the tapestries is very similar to what Arachne

chose as her subject when she competed with Pallas in the skill of weaving. Pallas' picture was the old dispute between Neptune and herself when they contended for the name of Athens that is, to determine who should be the city's diety. She depicted it in praise of the twelve great gods, with Jove in their midst.

Arachne wove love of gods; Europa cheated by the bull's disguise, Asterie clutched by an eagle, and Leda under the white swan's wings. She added how Jove, as Amphitryon, bedded Alcmena, fooled Danaë in a golden shower, and as a shepherd, snared Mnemosyne. She also added how Phoebus fooled Isse, how Bacchus deceived Erigone with bunches of false grapes, and how Saturn, as a horse, begot the centaur Chiron.

Arachne was such an audacious girl that she dared to compete with a goddess in the skill of weaving. It is only natural that she did not choose a subject in praise of gods. She depicted the misbehaviour of gods too fairly, and it naturally made Pallas angry.¹

What Spenser depicts in the tapestries is not a praise of gods. He depicts the misbehaviour or follies of gods not explicitly but implicitly.

People cannot maintain dignity when they are in pursuit of love. Gods are degraded and some mortals are transformed into flowers, some lose their former status, and others die. As Roche points out, the love of gods and mortals brings "debasement for the gods and possible destruction for the mortals."²

At the upper end of the room Britomart, who entered the House of Busyrane saying "so we a God invade" (III. xi. 22), sees a statue of a God:

And at the upper end of that faire roome,
There was an Altar built of pretious stone,

1 cf. Ovid., *Metamorphoses*, VI. 59–152.

2 Thomas P. Roche Jr., *The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's Faerie Queene*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964, p. 85.

On which there stood an Image all alone,
 Of massy gold, which with his owne light shone;
 And wings it had with sundry colours dight,
 More sundry colours, then the proud *Pauone*
 Beares in his boasted fan, or *Iris* bright,
 When her discolourd bow she spreads through heaven bright.

Blindfold he was, and in his cruell fist
 A mortall bow and arrowes keene did hold,
 With which he shot at random, when him list,
 Some headed with sad lead, some with pure gold;
 (Ah man beware, how thou those darts hehold)
 A wounded Dragon under him did ly,
 Whose hideous tayle his left foot did enfold,
 And with a shaft was shot through either eye,
 That no man forth might draw, ne no man remedye.

And underneath his feet was written thus,
Unto the Victor of the Gods this bee:

(III. xi. 47, 48, 49)

Panofsky points out that the little winged boy armed with bow and arrow was a very familiar figure in Hellenistic and Roman art. Only this figure was very rarely blind in classical literature, and was never blind in classical art.¹ According to Platonic belief, love is never blind, and could not be blind:

Beauty, as I said before, shone in brilliance among those visions;
 and since we came to earth we have found it shining most clearly
 through the clearest of our senses; for sight is the sharpest of
 the physical senses... but beauty alone has this privilege, and there-
 fore it is most clearly seen and loveliest.²

1 Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (1939), New York, Harper and Row, 1972, p. 103.

2 Plato, *Phaedrus*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by H. N. Fowler, Harvard U. P. and William Heinemann, p. 485, 250 D.

“Right process in Erotics consists in beginning with the love of beautiful things and continuously ascending... for the sake of Beauty itself” and the goal is “to behold Beauty itself clearly” and “to gaze upon the one divine and absolute Beauty.”¹ Love is love of beauty, and beauty cannot be perceived without eyes, whether they are physical eyes or the eye of the soul.

Panofsky relates the history of the image of Cupid. Propertius gives an allegorical explanation of the characteristic aspect of Cupid: the childlike appearance symbolizes the “senseless behaviour of lovers, the wings indicate the volatile instability of amorous emotions, and the arrows the incurable wounds inflicted upon the human soul by love.”² The moralizing interpretation of the image of Cupid was pessimistic from the start. The late antique authors proceeded on exactly the same lines as Propertius. However, blindness was not attached to Cupid then.

In the thirteenth century, blindness was added to the other attributes of Cupid by the immediate followers of Alexander Neckham.³ In Thomasin von Zerclaere’s *Der Wälsche Gast* (circa 1215), Love says, “I am blind and I make blind.”⁴ The allegorical interpretations of this newly acquired handicap are as follows: Cupid is blind because “he does not mind where he turns, inasmuch as love descends upon the poor as well as the rich, the ugly as well as the handsome. He is also called blind because people are blinded by him” or “Painters cover his eyes with a bandage to emphasize the fact that people in love do not know where they drive, being without judgment or discrimination and guided by mere passion.”⁵

According to the standards of traditional iconography, the

1 Plato, *Symposium or Supper*, trans. by Frances Birrell and Shane Leslie, The Nonesuch Press, pp. 80–81, 211 b. c. e.

2 Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

4 cf. A. von Oechelhäuser, *Bibl.* 232 p. 25 No. 19; Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

5 Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

blindness of Cupid puts him “definitely on the wrong side of the moral world.”¹ The Renaissance spokesmen of Neoplatonic theories refuted the belief that Love was blind.”² We can easily understand it from the previously mentioned statement of Plato that “the goal of love is to behold the Beauty itself clearly,” and “to gaze upon the one divine and absolute Beauty.”

In the Renaissance period, even a demoniacal image of Cupid appeared. This image of Cupid is not only blindfolded, but also with talons as used in the image of the Devil and sometimes of Death. The best known example of this type appears in the Giottoesque allegory of Chastity in S. Francesco at Assisi (circa 1320). This is a Cupid not only taloned but also girded with a string of hearts³ (fig. 1).

The “Assisi type” of Cupid (fig. 2) was humanized and through conscious imitation of classical models developed into the typical Renaissance Cupid: nude, boyish or even childlike, winged, armed with bow and arrows, his eyes covered with a bandage, and no longer marred by griffon’s talons.⁴

As we have seen, Panofsky reviews and summarizes the traditional complaints against Blind Cupid, and writes “the Renaissance spokesmen of Neoplatonic theories refuted the belief that Love was blind as emphatically as the mediaeval champions of poetic Love, and uses the figure of Blind Cupid, if at all, as a contrast to set off their own exalted conception.”⁵

However, Edgar Wind points out that there are notable exceptions Panofsky misses. According to Wind, the idea that the supreme form of Love is blind is plainly asserted not only by Marsilio Ficino, by Pico della Mirandola, by Lorenzo de’ Medici,

1 Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

2 *Ibid.*, Panofsky points that Natalis Comes discusses of “right” and “wrong” love, one blind and one clear sighted.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 115–116.

4 Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

but also expanded to inordinate lengths by Giordano Bruno.¹ For Pico, it is above all “the blindness in ultimate love that attracts his imagination, and he has a conclusion that Love is blind “because he is above the intellect,”² defining the blindness of supreme love as Orphic.³ His conclusion is far from being revolutionary, because it was almost commonplace among Renaissance theologians to say that the highest mysteries transcend the understanding and must be apprehended through a state of darkness in which the distinctions of logic vanish.⁴

The decisive passage by Ficino, on the blind Amor, completely agrees with Pico’s *Conclusio*:

... he [Amor] unites the intelligible intellect (...) to the first and secret beauty by a certain life which is better than intelligence. (...) The theologian of the Greeks himself [Orpheus] therefore calls this Amor blind... And Plato also seems to me to have found that god in Orpheus, where he is called both Love and a great demon...⁵

When Lorenzo de’ Medici observed that his nature contracted whenever he tried to comprehend God through the understanding but expanded when he approached him through love, he could be said to have in mind the blindness of love. In reducing the confusions of the senses to reason, the intellect clarifies but it also contracts, for it clarifies by setting limits; and to transcend these limits we require a new and more lasting confusion, which is supplied by the blindness of love. Intellect excludes contradictions; love embraces them.⁶

Giordano Bruno distinguishes no less than nine kinds of Amo-

1 Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (1958), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 53.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 56. Love is said by Orpheus to be without eyes because he is above the intellect. cf. Wind, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

5 Ficino, *Opera*, p. 1911 f. Wind. *op. cit.*, p. 57.

6 Wind, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–56.

rous blindness and the ninth and the highest of these is the sacred blindness produced by the immediate presence of the deity, "wherefore the most profound and divine theologians say that God is honoured and loved by silence than by words, and better seen by closing the eyes to images than by opening them."¹

There is not the conception of the supremacy of love in the image of Cupid that Spenser shows in the House of Busyrane. He adopts the image of a typical Renaissance Cupid, that is, a winged boy with a bandage, armed with bow and arrows. There is nothing new in the image of Cupid itself. He shows earthly Cupid. However, we should notice that the statue of Cupid is made of "massy gold" (III. xi. 47) and has a wounded dragon at his feet.

A wounded dragon under him did ly,
Whose hideous taylor his left foot did enfold,
And with a shaft was shot through either eye,
That no man forth might draw, ne no man remedye.

And underneath his feet was written thus,

Unto the Victor of the Gods this bee: (III. xi. 48, 49)

As C. S. Lewis points out, the key to the meaning of this particular dragon lies in a picture in Alciati's *Emblematum Liber*² (fig. 4). In the picture we find Minerva (or Pallas) with a shield and a spear in her hands, standing with a dragon as her attendant. The title of the emblem is "Custodiendas virgines (Unmarried Women Must Be Guarded)." The following verse explains the picture:

Vera haec effigies innuptae Palladis, eius
Hic Draco, quidominae constitit ante pedes.
Cur divae Comes hoc animal? custodia rerum
Huic data, sic lucos, sacraque templa colit,
Innuptas opus est cura asservare puellas,

1 Wind, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

2 C. S. Lewis, *Images of Life*, Cambridge at the University Press, 1967, p. 22. Andrea Alciati, *Emblematum Liber*, 1550.

Pervigili, laqueos undique tendit amor.

(This is the true image of Pallas; here is
 Her Dragon, which stands before the feet of his mistress.
 Why is this animal a companion to the goddess?
 The custody of things is given to him thus
 Groves and sacred temples are in his care.
 It is his responsibility to guard unmarried girls
 With ever-vigilant care. Love spreads its nets everywhere.)¹

This dragon guards unmarried girls from Love, which "spreads its nets everywhere." Alciati's book was so well-known that we might safely say that Spenser read it and made it his source. The dragon's vigilance is traditional. The Golden Fleece is guarded by a dragon; treasure is preserved in the cave by a dragon in *Beowulf*; and the golden apples of Hesperides are guarded by a dragon.

The origin of the word "dragon" is said to be Greek "*δρακων*", which means "to see clearly."² The name itself shows that a dragon can see things clearly, and clear-sightedness, which is essential for a guard, is an attribute of a dragon.

In the House of Busyrane, a shaft penetrates the eyes of a dragon. The shaft should be an arrow of Cupid, and no man can draw the arrow nor cure the wound. The guardian of virginity is maimed in the very organ which is essential to his duty. A statue of Cupid and a wounded dragon at his feet is offered "Unto the Victor of the Gods" (III. xi. 49), As the power of Cupid reaches not only mortals but also gods, and gods are sometimes subdued by Cupid, "the Victor" should be Cupid. We are looking at an image of an evil and cruel Love which has triumphed over the obstacles.

The second room is an even richer room than the previous one, and "with pure gold it all was overlayd" (III. xi. 51). The subject of the gold relief is similar to that of the tapestries except that it is mortal conquerors and captains over whom "cruell love" triumphs and shows his "merciless intent" (III. xi. 52). The walls

1 Translated by Dr Leedham-Green.

2 cf. *O. E. D.*

of gold and the spoils of mighty conquerors intensify the images of the tapestries. The room is dominated by “wasteful emptiness/ And solemn silence” (III. xi. 53).

The following night, Britomart sees the Masque of Cupid in the second room. After a shrilling trumpet sounds, and “a hideous storme of winde” (III. xii. 2) arises with “dreadful thunder and lightning atwixt/ And an earthquake” followed by “a direful stench of smoke and sulphure mixt” (III. xii. 2), “a stormy whirlwind blew throughout the house” (III. xii. 3), the Masque of Cupid begins. The Masque is presented by Ease, who is followed by six couples: Fancy and Desyre, Doubt and Daunger, Feare and Hope, Dissemblance and Suspect, Grief and Fury, Displeasure and Pleasance. Then Amoret is led between Cruelty and Despight:

She dolefull lady, like a dreary Spright,
Cald by strong charmes out of eternal night,
Had deathes owne image figurd in her face,
Full of sad signes, fearefull to living sight;
Yet in that horror shewed a seemely grace,
And with her feeble feet did move a comely pace.

Her brest all naked, as net ivory,
Without adorne of gold or silver bright,
Wherewith the Craftesman wonts it beautify,
Of her dew honour was despoyled quight,
And a wide wound therein (O ruefull sight)
Entrenched deepe with knife accursed keene,
Yet freshly bleeding forth her fainting spright,
(The worke of cruell hand) was to be seene,
That dyde in sanguine red her skin all snowy cleene.

At that wide orifice her trembling hart
Was drawne forth, and in silver basin layd,
Quite through transfixed with a deadly dart,
And in her bloud yet steeming fresh embayd:

(III. xii. 19–21)

After Amoret, instead of a statue of Cupid, the winged God him-

self:

Came riding on a lion ravenous,
 Taught to obey the menage of that Elfe,
 That man and beast with powre imperious
 Subdeweth to his kingdome tyrannous:
 His blindfold eyes he bad a while unbind,
 That his proud spoyle of that same dolorous
 Faire Dame he might behold in perfect kind;
 Which seene, he much reioyced in his cruell mind.

Of which full proud, himselfe up rearing hye,
 He looked round about with sterne disdain;
 And did suruay his goodly company:
 And marshalling the evill ordered traine,
 With that the darts which his right hand did straine,
 Full dreadfully he shooke that all did quake,
 And clapt on hie his colourd winges traine,
 That all his many it affraide did make:
 The blinding him againe, his way he forth did take.

(III. xii. 22, 23)

Behind Cupid follow allegorical figures: Reproch, Repentance, Shame, Strife, Anger, Care, Unthrifthead, Loss of Time, Sorrow, Chaunge, Disloyaltie, Riotise, Dread, Infirmitie, Povertie and Death. This is "a ritual of quiet and ordered cruelty" and we see all this erotic imagery through Britomart's eyes.¹

The Masque of Cupid is evidently a triumphal procession, the Triumph of Love (fig. 5). As Carnicelli points out, there are few similarities of detail between the Petrarchan trionfo and the Spenserian masque, yet the themes of both, that is, the triumph of Love, and its attendant personifications of Ease, Fancy, and Desire, are virtually identical.² The various allegorical figures represent the progress of love psychology. In the tradition of triumph of

1 C. S. Lewis, *Images of Life*, p. 28.

2 *Lord Morley's Triumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke*, ed. D. D. Carnicelli, Harvard U. P., 1971, p. 64.

Love, Cupid rides on a horse or in a chariot drawn by horses. However, Cupid in the Masque of Cupid is directly on the lion's Back. According to Arthur F. Marotti, the initial literary source for the Cupid-lion combination is found in *The Greek Anthology* as an image of Cupid riding in a chariot drawn by lions and Alciati, who is closer to Spenser's own time, seized upon this image for his emblem *Potentissimus affectus, Amor* (Love, the most powerful affection) (fig. 7). The image of Cupid directly on the lion's back as we find him in Spenser's Masque of Cupid, is in the second tradition of the Cupid-lion combination. In Lucan's *Dialogue of the Gods*, young Eros assures Aphrodite that he is not afraid of climbing up on the backs of lions and of making them do his will. Emblem writers and mythographers moralized this image and made it an illustration of *Amor Vincit Omnia* (Love conquers everything).¹

The House of Busyrane has aspects of hell; Scudamour says that Amoret is guarded by "feends" (III. xi. 16) in "dolefull darkness" (III. xi. 11); at the entrance of the House, there is a barrier of "a flaming fire, ymixt with smouldry smoke, and stinking sulphure" (III. xi. 21), which is reminiscent of hell-fire; "a long bloody river" (III. xi. 46) flowed in the tapestry room; just before the beginning of the Masque of Cupid, there also arises "a direfull stench of smoke and sulphur mixt (III. xii. 2). All the examples above mentioned suggest that Amoret is in "hell". She is led between Despight and Cruelty, like "a deadly spright, / Cald by strong charmes out of eternall night" (III. xii. 19), and her heart is taken from her bosom and is pierced with a dart in a silver basin.

There might be a remote association with the Assisi Cupid previously mentioned. The demoniacal Cupid has strung hearts, hearts pierced or hung by a string, as his ornament. A string of hearts is, needless to say, made of the hearts of those who are

1 Arthur F. Marotti, "Animal Symbolism in *The Faerie Queene*: Tradition and the Poetic Context", *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol. V, 1965, p. 74.

defeated by Love. However, in the House of Busyrane, Amoret is not completely defeated. The extracted heart is still alive and trembling, and she is walking, though nearly dying, near her own heart.

Amoret's heart is taken from her bosom and pierced with a dart. Hankins points out that the suggestion for this image comes from Francesco Piccolomini. In discussing the iconography of the Greeks, Francesco says:

Indeed, learned man formed an image of Vice bearing in one hand a sword, in the other a crown; so that whoever should overcome Vice should be honoured with a crown, but whoever should succumb should be transfixed with a sword, even to the inmost depths of the heart.¹

According to Hankins, the quotation above, concerning the transfixed heart, suggests that Busyrane is a form of Vice to which Amoret has partially yielded, though what transfixed Amoret's heart is not a sword but a dart. The interpretation is as follows: Amoret is true to Scudamour, however, she can not throw off the enchantment of Busyrane to break the charm. She can only suffer.² From Hankins' point of view, the dart is from Busyrane. However, I think the dart is allegorically from Scudamour.

Amoret with transfixed heart appears again when Britomart entered the room after the masquers disappeared:

No living wight she saw in all that roome,
Save that same woefull Ladie, both whose hands
Were bounden fast, that did her ill become,
And her small wast girt round with yron bands,
Unto a brasen pillour, by the which she stands.

1 Francesco Piccolomini, *Vniuersa Philosophic Moribus*, ix. 47, p. 540D; John Erskine Hankins, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 161.

2 Hankins *op. cit.* p. 162.

And her before the vile Enchanter sate,
 Figuring straunge characters of his art,
 With living 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 love,
 Ah who can love the worker of her smart?
 A thousand charmes he formerly did proue;
 Yet thousand charmes could not her stedfast heart remoue.

(III. xii. 30, 31)

The dart which pierces Amoret's heart is probably from Scudamour, and the "yron bands" which bind her body to the "brasen pillour" are the work of Busyrane, who has also cut her bosom and taken out her heart. He is not trying to destroy Amoret, but is trying to win her love. However, "a thousand charmes could not her steadfast heart remove." She is chaste to Scudamour. We should take notice of the third line from the last: "Ah who can love the worker of her smart?"

The House of Busyrane is in the realm of love psychology, and it is "a visual allegory of obsessive and torturing love."¹ Most interpreters have been in essential agreement that Amoret's problem is internal and Busyrane and his House are objectifications of her fear.² When Helen Cheney Gilde says Amoret is "frightened by the strength and force with which love... claims her"³, I think she is probably right. However, I would like to point that "Eros in

1 Hough, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

2 Among those who generally have this point of view are Graham Hough, *A Preface to The Faerie Queene* (1962); and Thomas P. Roche, Jr., *The Kindly Flame: A study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's Faerie Queene* (1964). Most recently, Sean Kane takes Roche's point of view in *Spenser's Moral Allegory* (University of Toronto Press, 1989).

3 Helen Cheney Gilde, "The Sweet Lodge of Love and Dear Delight", *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. L, No. 1, 1971, p. 68.

itself, besides its sweetness, contains an element of threat and fear”¹ and her fear is of cruelty of erotic love. When Busyrane cut the bosom of Amoret, takes out her heart, or binds her to the pillour, it is in order to win her love. However, it is nothing other than cruelty. Amoret is afraid of cruelty which Scudamour himself also cannot escape.

Amoret is immaculately conceived by the sun, “the father of generation” (III. vi. 9) and is born “unwares” (III. vi. 26) by innocent Chrysgonee. She is brought up by Venus in the Garden of Adonis, or more precisely, she is taken by Venus to the Garden, her residence on earth, and is brought up by Psyche, the wife of Cupid, and her twin sister Belphoebe is brought up by Diana, and each takes on the nature of her protectress. Belphoebe is “maidened” (III. vi. 28) and a virgin huntress, and Amoret is “womanhed” (III. vi. 28) itself nourished with love that is, they have the dangers that such divinely one-sided courses at development must incur when embodied in human flesh.² Amoret is perfected in womanhood in the Temple of Venus, and is taken out by Scudamour from the Temple. Scudamour, whose name means “shield of love” (*escu d’amour*), has a shield with a picture of Cupid on it, which he won as a reward of a battle he fought and defeated twenty knights of a Castle at the entrance of an island where the Temple is seated. The inscription says in front of the castle; “whose ever be the shield, faire Amoret be his” (III. x. 8). When a matron blames him for taking out Amoret, he answers “it fittest best, / For *Cupids* man with *Venus* mayd to hold” (III. x. 54) and shows her his shield on which was “Cupid with his killing bow/ And cruell shafts emblazond” (III. x. 55). Scudamour is a man of Cupid and Amoret is a maid of Venus. He who takes out Amoret from the Temple is none other than “Cupid”, and Amoret is a “glorious spoyle” (III. x. 55), though Venus herself smiles at Scudamour when he looks at her for fear of offending her.

1 Graham Hough, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

Therefore, both Scudamour and Amoret have a natural propensity for erotic love. That is why Scudamour cannot rescue Amoret. Only Britomart succeeds in entering through the fire barrier, breaking the charm, and rescuing Amoret. However, that does not mean that Britomart is free from erotic love nor Spenser denies erotic love¹. Britomart herself falls in love with Arthegall, looking into the Venus looking-glass. She suffers from lovesickness and fear that what she feels is “no usual fire” (III. ii. 37), is rescued by practical Glauce and by prophetic Merlin, and is assured that it is as heaven has ordained. Britomart is chastity in the Spenserian sense.

The triumph of Britomart should be understood in the tradition of the Triumph of Chastity. Iconographically, the Triumph of Chastity is depicted as a winged boy or a youth with or without a bandage (Cupid) under the feet of a young lady (Chastity) (figs. 8, 9, 10), though Busyrane is not a boy nor a youth, but a “wicked man” (III. xii. 35) and a wizard.

Britomart breaks Busyrane’s charm and:

At last that mightie chaine, which round about
Her tender waste was wound, adowne gan fall,
And that great brasen pillour broke in pieces small.
The cruell steele, which thrilled her dying hart,
Fell softly forth, as of his owne accord
And the wyde wound, which lately did dispart
Her bleeding brest, and riuen bowels gor’d
Was closed up, as it had not been bor’d,
And euery part to safety full sound,
As she were neuer hurt, was soone restor’d:

(III. xiii. 37, 38)

The dart which transfixes Amoret’s heart “Fell softly forth, as of its own accord/And the wyde wound... And euery part to safety full sound... was restor’d.”

The House of Busyrane is the House of erotic love, represent-

1 Helen Cheney Gilde, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

ing both joy and cruelty of erotic love as the figures in the tapestry room are divided between the two. Erotic love gives people joy, but it may destroy people with its cruelty. Love, even when sealed by marriage could be torturing and terrifying until it is qualified and completed by "friendship, fidelity, active affection and endurance",¹ the qualities Britomart embodies in her Spenserian Chastity. Amoret is rescued by Britomart, who is Spenserian Chastity, from the imprisonment and torture in the house of erotic love and is healed for the future happy union with Scudamour.

1 Graham Hough. *op. cit.*, p. 176.

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Fig. 1 Blind Cupid.



Fig. 2 Blind Cupid.



Fig. 3 Blind Cupid.

(29. Custodiendas virgines. 15)



Vera hæc effigies innupta est Palladis: eius
 Hic Draco, qui domine constitit ante pedes.
 Cur diuæ comes hoc animal custodis rerum
 Huic data, sic lucos, sacraque, templa colit.
 Innuptas opus est curâ afferre puellas
 Pernigili, læque os undique tendit amor.

Fig. 4 Minerva with a dragon.



Fig. 5 The triumph of Love.

Potentissimus affectus amor.
EMBLEMA CVI.



Fig. 7 Cupid riding
in a chariot.

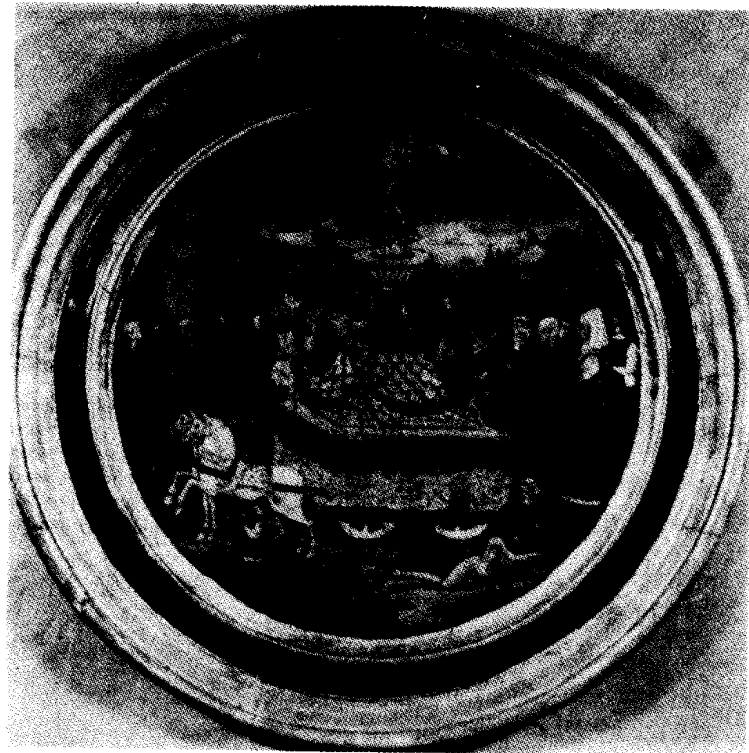


Fig. 6 The triumph of Love.



Fig. 8 The triumph of Chastity over Love.



Fig. 9 Tapestry, *The Triumph of Chastity over Love*, Victoria and Albert Museum; Flemish, sixteenth century.