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LAND IN FAIRYLAND: EDMUND SPENSER AND EMERGING PERCEPTIONS OF ECOLOGY AND GENDER IN THE FAERIE QUEEN

by

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Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queen is an eloquent text brimming with images of nature, flowers, and gardening. Nature is not simply what is in the outdoors of the text or a passive backdrop for action to upstage; she is a character who has an active role in influencing the plot and characters of the story. Plants come alive through Spenser in many ways as he makes the natural world of his text into an enchanted fairyland. The imagery of nature is not only personified, but also actually personifies characters. Flowers found in The Faerie Queen are both plants and actual people, allowing Spenser to explore shifting perceptions of gender roles through natural spaces in his text.

The Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis are the most important natural spaces in Spenser's The Faerie Queen. These gardens have gender identity embedded into their flower beds. The Bower of Bliss, an evil space cared for by Acrasia, lures many men to their doom and threatens Sir Guyon, the hero of Book Two. Sir Guyon journeys to the Bower of Bliss, demonstrating that it is a foreign space. On the other hand, the Garden of Adonis is a positive domestic space found in the heart of Fairyland. The Garden of Adonis is formed around Venus's lover, Adonis, and its gardener is Dame Nature.

The standard critical interpretation of the relevance of the Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis is that the Bower of Bliss is an evil female space, and that the Garden of Adonis replaces the Bower of Bliss as a good male space. One critic that endorses this standard interpretation is Jennifer Munroe in her recent book, Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature. Munroe argues that Sir Guyon's "destruction of the Bower of Bliss in its final canto, act[s] as a preparative for 'reform' and 'replantation' in the Garden of Adonis" (48). The Bower of Bliss is definitely a female space that is evil;

to add to that it is influenced by more feminine evil through its female gardener. The Bower of Bliss represents cultural fears of women having too much control over gardens. In comparison, the Garden of Adonis is a good garden. This garden is named after a man, and formed for a man. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to view the Garden of Adonis as a male garden that corrects flaws found in the female garden.

However, this traditional reading of the Bower of Bliss and Garden of Adonis does not take into consideration evolving perceptions of women and natural spaces in early modern England. Women, during this time, were becoming independent through asserting their positions as gardeners. Traditionally women had been viewed in the natural world as objects of passivity, or flowers, in the garden. Rebecca Bushnell, in Green Desire: Imagining Early Modern English Gardens, makes clear the fact that women had been seen as the "objects of green desire" (131). She explores the history of Spenser's time and argues that women were challenging this stereotype by becoming gardeners. In Elizabethan England women came to play important roles in gardens of all classes. Spenser is aware of this social shift in his text as women associated with nature gain power by being gardeners and through their association with nature.

Women in Spenser's text are able to have control in natural spaces, and for the most part their control is seen as positive. Even though Acrasia is an evil female gardener, there are good female gardeners such as Gloriana and Venus. Both women have a huge impact on natural surroundings, and are exemplary gardeners in their different ways. More subtly, Spenser also creates women flowers who are not in need of gardeners. The main independent flower is a woman, Belphoebe, who demonstrates incredible competence in the natural world. It is highly significant that Spenser would

make an independent flower because by building off of normal perceptions of women, as flowers, their new strength is more apparent. Spenser addresses traditional ideas of women as flowers by having female flowers in the text. His traditional flowers are Amoretta and Florimell, beautiful women who are dependent on others. These flowers fade in comparison to Belpheobe's central role in the text as an independent flower. Spenser's use of nature gives women a sense of power through their relationship to the natural world in a stronger way than simply making them gardeners.

With so much evidence of Spenser's acceptance of women's influence in nature, it seems unlikely that the purpose of contrasting the Bower of Bliss to the Garden of Adonis would be to insult feminine power. Spenser clearly embraces the cultural notions of his time which place women in a position of power in the natural world, and the gardens of his text do not refute these positive ideas of women in gardens. The Bower of Bliss cannot be evil because of its femininity because the contrasting garden, traditionally viewed as a male garden, is in actuality also a female space. The good garden and gardener are Venus, Nature, and her Garden of Adonis. Venus is the creator of the garden, like Acrasia, yet her garden is good. The fundamental difference that makes the Garden of Adonis good and the Bower of Bliss bad is the location of the gardens.

As details from each garden are taken into account it seems that the distinction of good and evil is nearly always synonymous with foreign and domestic. The Bower of Bliss is a foreign garden, which is why it is evil. It is associated with lands that England thought of as colonies, and lands England felt needed civilization. On the other hand, the Garden of Adonis is a domestic space. It is inherently good because it is native to Fairyland. This garden is associated with Venus and Amoretta who are two good women

with English values. The Garden of Adonis is under the influence of the fairy queen, Gloriana. Gloriana is meant to be read as Queen Elizabeth I, and if the Garden of Adonis is influenced by her it can be associated with England. The difference is not in the gender of the garden, but in the location. Evil spaces are foreign and good spaces are domestic; gender in the gardens does not determine the values of the gardens.

The relationship between women and nature was actually thought of as a positive one, for the most part, during this time period. While Spenser does critique some forms of feminine power, The Faerie Queen actually endorses female power in natural spaces. Women have strong proactive influences in the natural world of Spenser's text, and their influence can be for good. Spenser's text supports the emerging idea that women should have power over natural spaces.

Women and Gardening in England

There were women at all levels of society in Elizabethan England who had a relationship with gardening. In order for women to gain power through associating with nature, it needed to be socially acceptable for them to work and be in gardens. Bushnell points out that "several scholars have unearthed the lives of 'servants-in-husbandry,' young men and women who were employed and boarded as agricultural laborers" (18). It is significant that gardening was a job that was respectable for both men and women. These women could control flowers and plants, and came to be viewed as gardeners.

Middle-class women were also viewed as gardeners as they were the ones responsible for the gardens at home. In 1577 Conrad Heresbach asserts women's place in the garden by writing that if "the Garden [was] out of order, the wife of the house (for unto her belonged the charge thereof) was no good huswyfe" (Bushnell 43). It is evident

that educated middle-class women had a role to play in the garden because of the existence of gardening books written for them. One of these books was William Lawson's *The Countrie Housewifes Garden, containing rules for Herbes of Common use* (Bushnell 52). The book gives simple directions on gardening because women of this middle class were not viewed as "skillful Artists," as Lawson puts it, in the art of gardening (54). A housewife was only meant to be a "practical gardener" (55). Despite housewives only being basic gardeners they were nonetheless gardeners. Literate women were gardeners who were intended buyers for Lawson's book, which clearly establishes the notion that educated women were seen as gardeners, as were working women.

Members of the higher class gardened, demonstrating that there were women gardening at all levels of society. There was an interest in botany because gardening was not just another chore; it could be a hobby. Bushnell states, "The 'occupation' of gardener was not limited to those men and women who made their living by garden work…we must also count gentlemen, scholars, clergymen, and aristocrats," as they also spent time working in the garden. Not only did gardening's popularity grown amongst the upper class, but "English botany and gardening also thrived in the intellectual circles" (25). Bushnell mentions how "nineteen known gardening books [were] published in the sixteenth century" (35). The publication and selling of these books shows there was a market for them as "they were small and cheap," and if there is a market for the books there has to be an interest in gardening (35). One thing is certain; women of all classes and education levels gardened in Elizabethan England.

Actual women gardened at this time, and visual art began to show them as gardeners. In art of the time women were depicted as gardening, and this gave them

more power (Bushnell 108). Because pictures were being painted of women gardeners, we can draw the conclusion that women were starting to be viewed as active gardeners. However, these creative visual representations of women gardeners did not represent opinions of women in gardens in all aspects of the world of art.

Literature of this time seems to be more ambiguous about what control is given to women when compared to the visual art that readily accepted them as gardeners. Rebecca Bushnell compares visual art to literary art; according to Bushnell, "literary culture…painted women both as flower gatherers and 'flowers' themselves," not as the gardeners in the paintings (110). Bushnell states, "More than any other type of early modern writing, literary texts compared people to plants in their common experience of growing, flourishing, and fading" (136). She expounds upon her point by saying, "Women from the Virgin Mary and the Virgin Queen down to the country maid were imagined as flowers" (136). In other words, women of all classes had come to be associated with nature. The traditional association of women with flowers was one that denoted a sense of helplessness or passivity because of the nature of flowers. Bushnell observes that in most literature, "women were seen as contemplating, maintaining, gathering, and bestowing flowers and fruit but not producing them, no matter how hard they may have been working at the time" (110).

However, Bushnell understands that perceptions of women and gardening in this time period were evolving. She discusses how gardening books that addressed women demonstrate that gardening was beginning to be recognized as women's work. However, those books depicted a woman as a "gentle female reader as the goddess Flora" (110). In the end, "it was the male reader who was seen to manage that garden" (110). Queen

Elizabeth, for example, was at times depicted "as the goddess Flora" who may not be a flower, but is not an active gardener as she is more of an entity of nature (118). Bushnell outlines "circumstances [that] combined to paint women as flowers, the object of green desire, rather than to depict them as those who cultivate them" (131). In other words, women were still being viewed as objectified flowers but they were also gaining independence by becoming gardeners.

A shift that led to women gaining power through their association with nature was the result of female authors who became gardeners in the literary world of the time. Women in literature started to be represented as the gardeners they were in their actual lives. Since women had such a solid position in gardening, this new identification with gardening was positive. Alison Findlay, in Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama, states "that early modern women's identification with nature did not necessarily carry associations of inferiority. Closeness to nature could also signify power" (72). Upper-class women authored texts about women in nature during Elizabethan England; in this way they were the ones to represent themselves in literature. These stories give some women power and take it from others. Three different examples of women authors can be found in Alison Findlay's text.

High-class women are allotted power in the natural world through female authored literary texts. A text by Aemilia Lanyer "presents Margaret Clifford, 'great mistress of that place,' in perfect harmony with her environment (68). When women fit into their environment, "The plants, hills, trees, streams, birds and animals create a venue where female community and learning can flourish equally" (68). Margaret Clifford is a woman who can gain knowledge and equality through the natural world, and Margaret

has strength in her surroundings. Findlay states that, "For most early modern women the garden outside offered a more open environment in which to nurture a unified sense of self" (69). In other words, her text argues that women had more power in the garden than almost anywhere else in society.

While some women gain power in texts by women, there are other texts that address the fear of women having too much power in natural spaces. This fear is explored in the Countess of Pembroke's *Dialogue Between Two Shepherds Thenot and Piers in Praise of Astrea* (Findlay 81). In this text the "references to nature and its imperfections" actually place the heroine "in earthly shackles" (82-83). It is interesting that a countess, a woman, would place the heroine of her text in a position of dependence. The Countess of Pembroke demonstrates a fear of having women in positions of power.

The most powerful woman in the world was ruling England at this time, and there were female authored texts celebrating Queen Elizabeth's power. In texts written specifically for Queen Elizabeth by Lady Mary Sidney Herbert and Lady Elizabeth Russell called *Speeches Delivered to Her Majestie this Last Progress at the Right Honourable the Lady Russels at Bisham*, the presence of the Queen in the natural world affects the other characters of the play. One example of how "The Queen's influence permeates the woods" is when her influence forces "Sylvanus to his cave" (80). The Queen's surprising power is confessed by a "wild man [who] admits that her presence has transformed him" (80). The wild man, after feeling the presence of the Queen says, "My untamed thought waxe gentle, & I feel in my selfe civility" (80). The book states that "the Queen's ability to tame nature reverses the usual model of husbandry in which the untamed feminine is trained to conform to patriarchal laws" (80). The Queen is like a

gardener in this instance, even if it is solely by her unseen influence. Elizabeth as Gloriana in Spenser's text can be seen as a gardener, the gardener of England.

The notion of having the ruler of England as the gardener of the country was not new at Spenser's time. In Shakespeare's Richard II England is defined as a garden, which makes it culturally logical that Spenser would make Queen Elizabeth the gardener of Fairyland in his text. In Shakespeare's text the garden or England is identified as "our sea-walled garden" (3.4.40). Richard is metaphorically the gardener in the play; he has an influence on the garden. Shakespeare critiques Richard through his influence on the garden as Richard makes a tree "Stoop with oppression" (3.4.31). Richard is not always physically in the garden, yet he has an influence over that natural space. Spenser's Gloriana, the queen of the fairies, also seems to be the key gardener, even though she does not have much of a physical presence.

Similar to Richard II the sovereign of The Faerie Queen is the gardener of the text. Gloriana gardens fairyland, and represents Queen Elizabeth as the gardener of England. Like Lady Herbert and Lady Russell, Spenser had Queen Elizabeth I in mind when he constructed The Faerie Queen and named her Gloriana, the queen of the faeries. Readers know that he meant to represent Elizabeth because Spenser wrote a letter to Sir Walter Ralegh saying, "For considering she [Elizabeth] beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady, this latter part in some places I doe express in Belphoebe, fashioning her name according to your owne excellent conceipt of Cynthia" (Norton 714). This letter tells the reader that Queen Elizabeth was meant to be seen as Gloriana, Belphoebe, and identified through them as Cynthia. Gloriana represents the ultimate female ruler while Belphoebe provides

a contrast to the queen and goddess in her ability to transcend class in her use of nature. Cynthia is another name for Diana, the goddess of the moon and chastity, who plays a large role in Spenser's natural space. As Queen Elizabeth was known as The Virgin Queen, Diana was an appropriate classical goddess to associate with her.

Spenser is careful with the power he allots women in his text, and for some women their identification with nature leads to their downfall. Women in power were feared, and the loss of some women's control in The Faerie Queen addresses society's worries. Although Queen Elizabeth was beloved by many of her people, her power was also feared by many, including her own Parliament and people who thought that she might lack steadiness of character by being a woman. Spenser recognizes this fear as he gives some women power, but makes other women lose their power or be powerless. He addresses this fear in his text through foreign women, like Acrasia, who are defeated in their natural environment, and he also has traditional women, like Florimell and Amoretta, who are associated with flowers that are powerless because of their flower-like state. Despite the addition of these weak women, Spenser maintains Gloriana as a majestic queen who is full of grace.

Gloriana, the domestic queen of the faeries, has a good influence that infiltrates The Faerie Queen. Gloriana is one example of how women can have a relationship to nature. Jennifer Munroe tries to argue that one of Spenser's points is to make "a critique of Elizabeth's authority" and that male colonizers or gardeners of Ireland do not need an absent Faerie Queen (68). Munroe is partially correct that Spenser does critique Elizabeth in his text, but that is not to say that he is completely dismissing her through the absence of Gloriana. Gloriana still has a presence, and still seems to dictate what her

faerie knights do even if we do not see her. What Munroe fails to take into account are texts of the time that depict the Queen as having a strong influence in natural spaces.

By representing Elizabeth as Gloriana and Belphoebe Spenser places his sovereign in an idealized position. His text gives women contingent power based on their moral character, and the women's moral character in his text is derived from the women being domestic or foreign. Spenser's text rethinks the idea of women's place in the world, and if their place is one that has a stronger identification with England or Fairyland they are inherently good. If women have a stronger connection to colonies like Ireland or America they are seen as evil. Like Spenser's text that reconstructs how women are viewed, Elizabeth was reshaping worldwide views of women in power and making her reign seem positive. Both Elizabeth and Spenser affected how people of the time viewed women's power in politics and nature.

Good Women in Spenser: Gloriana, Belphoebe, Amoretta, and Florimell

While Gloriana resembles Spenser's current ideal female sovereign, Belphoebe transcends class and displays the ideal chaste woman whom Elizabeth was seen as; both women in Spenser's text have control over people and nature. These women are viewed as flowers, but they are different from literary flowers that preceded them. Belphoebe is a flower like the "mighty Queen of Faery" who is described as "the flowre of grace and chastity" (2.9.4). Belphoebe is a new kind of flower who has a certain amount of power that seems derived from the natural world. An independent woman in control of her circumstances, Belphoebe's relationship with nature is in a way a reversal of personification as she takes on nature's characteristics rather than nature adopting her human attributes. In addition to being associated with flowers, she is described in such a

way that she is also connected with the natural cosmos. Belphoebe is not just a flower, but an embodiment of nature as a whole. It is her link to nature which keeps her from being put into a social hierarchy, and allows Spenser to identify women of all classes with her.

Belphoebe is described in terms of nature that links her to the sky, which makes her royal. Belphoebe is meant to represent Elizabeth, as previously stated, therefore her royal qualities fit. The sky is connected to Belphoebe through the description Spenser gives of her appearance; this depiction matters because it tells of the source of her "heritage of celestiall grace" (3.6.4). Belphoebe is the literal daughter of the sun, "Titan," because of her abnormal conception (3.6.6). The hair of Belphoebe is described as "golden lockes crisped, like golden wyre" (2.3.30). Belphoebe's golden hair could seem like the golden sun or a golden crown, displaying her royal presence. Belphoebe's skirt "Was hemd with golden fringe," which makes her extravagantly royal (2.3.26). She also is described as having "golden aygulets, that glistred bright, / Like twinkling starres" (2.3.26). Her jewels, when compared to stars, connect her to the sky. Belphoebe's face is "so faire" that it is described as being "Cleare as the skye," placing her metaphorically above the rest of the world (2.3.22). The sky is the highest component of nature, and through Belphoebe's connection to the sky she is royalty.

While Belphoebe possesses royal traits, she has other good characteristics which resemble the slightly lesser high-class woman. Belphoebe is identified with a class that is still high, but remains on the ground. The narrator tells the reader that "in her cheeks the vermeil red did shew / Like roses in a bed of lillies shed" (2.3.22). The flowers link Belphoebe to the earth in an elegant fashion, which tells readers she does not have to be

literally elevated to the sky to achieve grace. Belphoebe is dressed "in a silken Camus lylly whight" (2.3.26). The lily depicts purity, and it praises Belphoebe even if it is on the ground. Belphoebe is not wearing a royal purple, but an upper-class white. According to Bushnell, white flowers have "higher status" than other colors "because so many of them [white flowers] are imported from warmer climates and must be grown under glass" (132). Belphoebe certainly is not the type of character that had to be "grown under glass," but she does emulate the qualities of a high born lady. The subtle shift from royal to high-class goes unnoticed as both descriptions of Belphoebe are flattering.

A part of the reason Belphoebe cannot be assigned a class is that she embodies so much nature, and she is too complex. Belphoebe is described as a flower, but she also has a strong connection to plants and nature. While she ran "sweet flowers themselues did lap, / And flourishing fresh leaues and blossomes did enwrap" (2.3.30). The reader is presented with the image of these plants springing out to wrap themselves around Belphoebe, which makes her too large an element of nature to be defined. The flowers and nature seem to choose Belphoebe as they bind themselves to her. The plants independently become a part of her, and they belong to no particular class. Through Belphoebe's special relationship with plants she becomes firmly identified with only the natural classless world.

Belphoebe's encounter with Braggadocchio, who acts the part of a man that lives in court, shows that he is not fit company for her and conforming to class strictures would also disagree with her. Braggadoccio tells Belphoebe that "The wood is fit for beasts, the court is fit for thee" (2.3.39). Belphoebe certainly does not belong inside court because of her larger association with nature, but Braggadoccio does not understand that the wood

is the only place fit for Belphoebe. Belphoebe demonstrates her competence as an ideal socially undefined woman, and she independently rejects Braggadoccio's opinion. When Braggadocchio tries to "embrace" her in "his filthy lust," she "fled away apace" (2.3.42). Though she runs from this Braggadocchio, Belphoebe is still in control of the situation. Belphoebe is not like other female flowers in Spenser's text who run blindly in a crippling fear that only places them in more unfavorable situations. The notion that the high-class Braggadocchio could actually catch the great Belphoebe is laughable as she is more competent than he. Belphoebe is able to take care of herself without being assigned to a level of society. Spenser makes Belphoebe like a flower, but he is revolutionary in making her an independent socially complex flower that is the gardener of her own life.

The company Belphoebe chooses makes it clear that the natural world is the only place she belongs, but also could suggest that it is only nature, not civilization or class, that truly respects her. Braggadocchio does not give Belphoebe the respect she deserves. He represents people in court, and Belphoebe does not want anything to do with him. If she were not in nature she may not be as capable of controlling her life. Belphoebe wants to live in the woods, and she belongs there, which makes her character dependent on the natural world. Though she represents nature and flowers, she is not the type of flower who could be contained and limited in a royal court garden. This association with nature is clear when Belphoebe decides to "play" with "woody Nymphes" (2.3.28). This instance shows that nymphs, goddesses of nature, are clearly Belphoebe's associates. Another moment displaying how the company of Belphoebe does not need to be in court or even human is when, Belphoebe "did chace" the "Libbard," which is a leopard, for fun (2.3.28). This animal is her friend, just as the nymphs are her company; neither of them

would be found in court or in a court garden. Belphoebe is such an element of nature it is hard to imagine her in a class controlled environment.

Natural space is the only space that Belphoebe desires partially because of her comfort in it, and partially because she seem to have a vendetta against the court. The commentary of Spenser through Belphoebe could be taken as an attack on the social hierarchy because the classless woods are described as finer than court. Belphoebe tells Braggadocchio that a person in "proud estate" or in "courtly bliss, / Does waste his dayes in dark obscuritee" (2.3.40). Belphoebe and Spenser both seem to attack court life and idealize nature which does not rely on class. Spenser follows Belphoebe's attack on Braggadocchio by telling the reader that it is "In woods, in waues, in warres, she wonts to dwell" (2.3.41). Her desire is to live outside of court life, and as she is an enchanting main character in the text the reader agrees with her desire.

The properties of plants are no mystery to Belphoebe as she demonstrates her competence in her natural environment, which is knowledge that could link her to the middle and lower classes. Belphoebe is a woman who is able to be independent of men, and saves a man, which proves her ability as an herbalist in her natural environment. Belphoebe finds Timias as he "lay in deadly swownd" (3.5.29). She starts to revive him by "His double folded necke she reard vpright, / And rubd his temples, and each trembling vaine…/ And from his head his heauy burganet did light" (3.5.31). This instance of <u>The Faerie Queen</u> reflects the gardening abilities of women of all classes in England. Even though Belphoebe is for the most class described as high-class, most upper-class women would not know how to mix a remedy to block death, as they would have doctors to do that for them. Belphoebe represents the lower and middle classes, and

intellectuals of England in her knowledge of herbs. Through her, Spenser displays how the knowledge women had of plants during his time period could affect the social and political world. Even though she is extraordinary in her skill, Belphoebe performs those acts of mercy "Meekely," which shows that she does not flaunt her power (3.5.31). In order to save Timias she takes action. "Into the woods thenceforth in haste shee went / To seeke for herbes, that mote him remedy" (3.5.32). Belphoebe is able to find the correct herbs because she was "Taught of the Nymphe, which from her infancy / Her nourced had in trew Nobility" (3.5.32).

Belphoebe did not learn the medical properties of herbs from gardening books of the time, such as The Great Herbal or Lawson's gardening book for women, but she has a knowledge that exceeds that which could be written by men. Belphoebe's wisdom is gained from the nymphs teaching her about nature. The passing of the female knowledge from mother figures to their daughter proves to be better than any book on botany. Her upbringing allows her to cure him so that "By this [her care] he had sweet life recur'd agayne" (3.5.34). When she later tells Timias of her heritage she does not speak of her natural mother, but says she is a "daughter of a woody Nymphe" (3.5.36). It is through nature that women with wisdom can derive the most power.

Even though Belpheobe clearly does not need help from a male gardener, she is humble, which allows her power to remain and makes her seem like a proper woman. Once Timias asks what he can do for her, "she blushing said…[she wants] no seruice, but thy safety and ayd" (3.5.36). Even though it is Timias who has been rendered aid by Belphoebe she humbly asks for his (3.5.36). In this way she is showing traditional

feminine attributes without surrendering her power. Belphoebe is inherently good because she is a citizen of the Fairyland that is under the control of Gloriana.

Belphoebe is a woman who is in control of her life, even though she is connected to flowers. Spenser is using the imagery of flowers, nature, and gardens to empower Belphoebe. His idea is somewhat novel as traditionally women in literature who are flowers do not have power over their lives. Spenser addresses this traditional view of women through his text through Amoretta and Florimell.

Amoretta is Belphoebe's twin sister, and she provides a contrast to Belphoebe's independent character. Amoretta's future is dictated by Venus when the goddess finds her as a baby and decides to take Amoretta "To be vbrought in goodly womanhed" (3.6.28). Amoretta learns this "womanhood" under the care of "Psyche," Venus's daughter-in-law, to whom Venus entrusts Amoretta "with great trust and care" (3.6.51). Amoretta is brought up in the Garden of Adonis, and lives a sheltered life in that natural environment. Unlike Belphoebe, Amoretta does not learn independence in this setting, and as she lives in such an idyllic place she does not have any cause to have personal strength for most of her life. The problems arise when she is removed from the garden and her imprisonment renders her helpless. The enchanter who imprisons Amoretta is like a gardener who transplants a flower. Amoretta is not able to save herself from "th'enchaunter, which had her distrest / So sore, and with foule outrages opprest" (3.7.41). When she is rescued, "she fell prostrate, / Saying, Ah noble knight" and praises her hero (3.7.39). Amoretta is saved in her virtue and goodness by the chaste knight. Yet despite her happy ending, Amoretta is unable to save herself.

Belpheobe has independence while her twin sister, Amoretta, does not. That means that it is the environment that she was raised in that taught her independence. Belpheobe was not taken to the Garden of Adonis by Venus like her sister. Belpheobe's future was influenced by Diana, instead of Venus, which made her more independent. Diana "to a Nymphe her babe betooke, / To be vpbrought in perfect Maydenhed" (3.6.28). Unlike Amoretta who is to be raised "in goodly womanhed," Belphoebe is destined for "perfect Maydenhed" (2.6.28). Perfect maidenhood is a quality of Queen Elizabeth's, whose virginity was identified with that of Diana as well as Cynthia, the moon. Diana was a strong maiden goddess who never has a male lover, and was a skilled huntress. Belphoebe is like Diana in that independence. Venus is the goddess of love. Amoretta is in love with Sir Scudamour, but does not have much independence. Both girls are extraordinary, but Belphoebe has more power from her upbringing and chastity, which identifies her with Queen Elizabeth.

Amoretta is not the only traditional flower in Spenser's text; Florimell too emulates those qualities. By her name, the reader knows that Florimell is meant to be associated with flowers. Florimell is referred to as "the flowre of wemens pride" for her beauty and her goodness (3.7.31). Despite her virtue, Florimell is a woman who is constantly being acted upon or a flower that is being gardened by evil forces.

Men constantly force Florimell to flee; her life being determined by others, in a way, makes Florimell represent the passive flower. The reader first encounters Florimell as "she fled" (3.1.16) as "a grisly foster forth did rush / Breathing our beastly lust her to defile" (3.1.17). She is running from a man who is dictating her actions. When Florimell is seen again by a dwarf he recounts that he saw her "Carried away with wings

of speedy fear" (3.5.6). These instances of Florimell being forced to change her position show men's dominance over her. Florimell is praised as being "The bountiest virgin, and most debonaire," yet despite her good quality of being chaste she possesses no power (3.5.8). The dwarf tells Arthur that Florimell "All her delight is set on Marinell; / But he sets nought at all by Florimell" because he is "yslaine" (3.5.9). Since Florimell cannot be protected by the man she loves she is subjected to the cruelty of other men. "Florimell fled from that Monster yond," is a good description of the only action Florimell ever takes: running away. After leaving a witch's son Florimell jumps onto a fisherman's boat; she later has to be rescued from the fisherman, and goes with the sea god whom she is later imprisoned by "Downe in a Dongeon deepe" (3.8.41). She is incapable of choosing the course of her life because the men she encounters are stronger than she.

Florimell's name is not the only thing about her that connects her to flowers; she is adorned with flowers like Belphoebe, but in a passive way. Florimell is given "Girlonds of flowers sometimes for her faire hed" by the witch's lustful son (3.7.17). These garlands are different than the ones that spring onto Belphoebe, which made her more of a goddess of nature than a dependent flower. Florimell leaves the witch and her son "For feare of mischiefe, which she did forecast / Might by the witch of her sonne compast" (3.7.18). By leaving, she stops him from turning her into his flower. Yet, even though Florimell is able to leave the garlands and the home of the witch and her son she is still powerless. In the end it is still the witch and the son who dictate Florimell's actions just like the other men.

Despite Florimell's hopelessness she is protected in her goodness, and has some semblance of influence over others. The good domestic Florimell connects to flowers,

while the woman with the son who pursues Florimell is designated as a "witch [that] did dwell in loathly weedes" (3.7.6). "Weeds" means clothes in Spenser's text, but the word choice is important because Florimell is a flower and the witch would definitely be considered a weed (3.7.6). Yet, these "weedes" seem more powerful than the delicate flower at first glance (3.7.6). After Florimell left, the witch decided "To make another like the former Dame, / Another Florimell, in shape and looke / So liuely and so like, that many it mistooke" (3.8.5). In other words the witch creates a "wicked Spright" that looks like Florimell to appease her son (3.8.8). Such an imitation made by the weeds could damage the sweet flower's reputation, but the weeds do not prevail in the end. Although the witch can create a likeness of Florimell, the witch is unable to damage the real Florimell. Through her beauty, Florimell has some power over the men who see her. Evil men spend their time pursuing her, while good men try to save her. Both men are affected by her presence. After seeing Florimell pursued, Sir Guyon and Arthur "spurd after fast, as they mote fly, / To reskew her from shamefull villany" (3.1.18). They leave their present quest to go to Florimell's aid. Florimell does not have to ask for help; her femininity calls out for protection on its own. Even though Florimell does not have the power to run her life she is able to influence others with her beauty.

It is highly significant that Spenser juxtaposes the traditional dependent flowers, Florimell and Amoretta, with Belphoebe. Belphoebe is a strong and independent flower who chooses her own paths in life. This contrast demonstrates that women can have power in the natural world. Spenser presents traditional flowers, but clearly the reader does not identify with them as much as Belphoebe because they are minor characters. Spenser is revolutionary in making Belphoebe the gardener of her own life. Belphoebe

may be a flower like her sister Amoretta and the lovely Florimell, but the flower that Belphoebe emulates is one of strength.

Foreign Gardeners and Gardens: Acrasia and the Bower of Bliss

Timias calls Belphoebe an "Angell [sent] from her Bower of Bliss," which is an interesting way for the heroine to be defined as the only Bower of Bliss the reader encounters is one that has been corrupted by the witch Acrasia (3.5.35). Yet, in a way Belphoebe has come from nature and resides in nature not much differently than Acrasia. Belphoebe's "Bower of Bliss," as defined by Timias, is divine (3.5.35). On the other hand, Acrasia's "blis is all in pleasure and delight, / Wherewith she makes her lours drunken mad" (2.1.52). The primary difference between the two women is that Acrasia is explicitly defined as foreign. Belphoebe, as a double of Queen Elizabeth and Gloriana in the text, is solidly from fairyland. From the domestic land, Belphoebe draws power as Acrasia controls the foreign Bower of Bliss. Belphoebe is a domestic flower, and Acrasia is an Irish or foreign flower. Acrasia is evil because she is foreign, just as Belphoebe is good because she is domestic. Like Belphoebe, Acrasia is gains power from being aligned with nature.

Both Belphoebe and Acrasia alter the physical or emotional state of men through the power of nature. Unlike Belphoebe, Acrasia uses her power for evil. Whereas Belphoebe uses herbs to revive Timias, Acrasia causes Sir Mortdant's death (2.1.55). Acrasia "charmd" Mortdant to "death" through her knowledge of plants and witchcraft (2.1.55). Acrasia "with words and weeds of wondrous might, / On them [her victims] she workes her will to vses bad" (2.1.52). It is significant that this passage does not tell the reader that Acrasia uses flowers or herbs like Belphoebe, but "weeds" like the witch at

whose home Florimell stayed (2.1.52). "Weeds" as used in the text are always evil and unnatural. The weeds could connote a sense of the unknown as they are not as classified as are useful herbs and beautiful flowers. The word "wondrous" invokes the exotic, and Acrasia's "might" is not understood (2.1.52). The methods and means Acrasia utilizes to accomplish her goals immediately characterizes her as foreign as well as evil.

Not only does Acrasia use different material than Belphoebe, but she has a different relationship with nature than Belphoebe. Unlike Belphoebe, who seems to be created by nature, Acrasia is the creator of a garden. Acrasia is in control of her apparently natural space because it has been made by her. The Bower of Bliss is "her dwelling" (2.1.51). Acrasia possesses her natural space whereas Belphoebe and nature seem to possess each other. Rather than being a part of her environment, Acrasia controls her "ydl pleasures in her Bowre of Bliss" (2.5.27). The Bower of Bliss is under the direction of a woman who, like Belphoebe, is adorned with flowers. However, these are different types of flowers than the ones that grace Belphoebe. Acrasia puts the flowers on herself, unlike the flowers that cling to Belphoebe as she runs. Acrasia's flowers are more artificial in their ornamental fashion than Belphoebe's. "Sometimes her [Acrasia's] head she fondly would aguize, / With gaudy girlonds, or fresh flowers dight / About her necke, or rings of rushes plight" (2.6.7). Acrasia's relationship to nature is one that is artificial and forced. The relationships women have with nature are important, and since Acrasia's relationship is one that is not natural it is not good like that of domestic characters of the text. Nature in Acrasia's case seems to be more worldly, or unnatural, in following Acrasia's whims to entice people to pleasure. The important thing to keep in

mind is that Acrasia is inherently evil because she is not a domestic character. Acrasia's foreignness is made evident by the location of the Bower of Bliss.

Acrasia's foreign ways as a gardener and her unnatural relationship with nature are even more clearly represented in the defining qualities of the Bower of Bliss. The approach to the garden defines it as exotic, and suggests an allegory that the garden represents the colonial English lands of Ireland, the Americas, or both. The "Bowre of Bliss" is said to be "Within a wandring Island" (2.1.51). It is a "cursed land" in a "perilous gulf (2.1.51). Sir Guyon has to pass "The Rock of Vile Reproch / A daungerous and detestable place" to get nearer to The Bower of Bliss. Although the rock is an idea from medieval literature that Spenser's reader may have been familiar with, it had also been developed in narratives of discovery such as that of Sir Francis Drake (Jensen). Sir Guyon has more difficult things to get past, such as "great Quicksand" (2.7.18) and a "Whirelpoole of decay" (2.7.20). Guyon also goes around a monster with many heads, the "Spring-headed Hydres" (2.7.23). After that, Sir Guyon needs to get by fish-like opponents, "Bright Scolopendraes arm'd with siluer scales, /Mighty Monoceros, with immeasured tayles" (2.7.23). Sir Guyon has to overcome so many different elements of nature and monsters that his journey more fully replicates a colonial voyage.

Not only do exotic opposing forces of nature try to stop our hero on his way, but also foreign women try to ensnare Sir Guyon. Sir Guyon has to avoid Phaedria, an exotic woman, who is described as a "daintie damsel" who lives on a bank of the sea (2.7.14). Sir Guyon, who "all her vaine allurements did forsake," escapes that foreign female who wished to lead him to his doom (2.7.17). After the encounter with Phaedria, Sir Guyon is told that "here before a perlous passage lyes, / Where many Mermayds haunt, making

false melodies" (2.7.17). He has to get past these sirens who in classical mythology lure men to their death, and who were reported as seen by the Drake Expedition of 1578 near the Strait of Magellan (Jensen). These women represent the dangers to men of foreign travel in both Spenser's real world and his imagined one. Sir Guyon's journey is that of the English imperialist as he conquers what the boatman calls a "wandering" island and the woman who rules there (2.7.12). Sir Guyon's triumph is he conquers the foreign elements of the Bower of Bliss, leaving it in a state where it can then be domesticated.

The idea that the Bower of Bliss represents what England considered its territory is well prepared for at the beginning of Book Two. The introduction of Book Two mentions how "Many great Regioins are discovered," including "th'Indian Peru…// The Amazons huge riuer…/ Or the fruitfullest Virginia who did euer vew" (13-18). These places would have been mysterious to the ordinary reader of Spenser's time, and associated with colonialism. For instance, there was the lost colony of Roanoke in Virginia. Other stories of colonization explain the "Indian Peru" and the "Amazons huge river" (15-17). Spenser mentions these lands to introduce a mood for Fairyland, making the land even more mysterious by suggesting that "later times thinges more vnkowne shall show" (21). Spenser is introducing the reader to the notion that they will encounter even more "unknown" in this book than the exotic places that have already been found in the 16th century's voyages of discovery (21). He mentions "other worlds" in that same stanza before moving onto stanza four, where he talks specifically about "faery lond" (26-28). Even though not all of the natural spaces in the text are domestic they are all seen as a part of Fairyland; just as England saw Ireland, and was beginning to see North America, as part of its territory. The speaker in the introduction tells the reader that there

are “thine [the Queen’s] own realms in lond of Faery, / And in this antique ymage thy great auncestry” (35-36). These are places that can harm people as they are the dangerous gardens of lost colonies, lost ships, and rebellious natives.

The foreign and unnatural attributes of the Bower of Bliss are such that Sir Guyon is disoriented by the environment. In the Bower of Bliss there are “sweet smels al arownd,” and these smells draw victims into the pleasure of the garden (2.6.12). The sweet smells are exotic because Guyon does not recognize what entices him. In the Bower of Bliss, Sir Guyon sees that “The fields did laugh, the flowers did freshly spring, / The trees did bud, and early blossoms bore, And all the quire of birds did sweetly sing, / And told that gardins pleasures in their caroling” (2.6.24). These fields, flowers, trees, blossoms, and birds all sing about the pleasure of the Bower of Bliss. The singing is not positive or natural as it is Acrasia’s Bower. Everything in the garden is perfectly crafted to make it look as if there is

> No tree, whose braunches did not brauely spring;
> No braunch, whereon a fine bird did not sitt;
> No bird, but did her shrill notes sweetely sing;
> No song but did containe a louely ditt….” (2.6.13)

All of these trees, branches, and birds create an atmosphere that is seductive in a way that makes the Bower irresistible. Acrasia has manipulated everything to make the Bower of Bliss seem delightful: “Trees, braunches, birds, and songs were framed fitt, / for to allure fraile mind to carelesse ease” (2.6.13). Her negative influence on the seemingly perfect garden is more artificial than natural. Acrasia is the gardener who forces nature to draw the people’s minds into the Bower of Bliss, specifically the minds of men. “Careless the

man [Guyon] soone woxe, and his weake witt / Was ouercome of thing, that did him please; / So pleased, did his wrathfull purpose faire appease" (2.6.13). Men come into the garden with the "wrathfull purpose" of destroying it, but are weakened by its beauty and forget they came to righteously destroy the garden.

Acrasia, as a female gardener, is not what determines how bad the Bower of Bliss is so much as the garden's location. The Bower of Bliss is not domestic, and its location is from where evil flows. Acrasia cannot be forgotten, as her influence on the garden is the dominating force, but readers should also look for other women's influences that play a part in the conquering of the bower. Gloriana, the queen of the fairies, has control over Sir Guyon and his colonizing efforts.

Not only is the Bower of Bliss evil and foreign, but it may have a more specific meaning that comments on female leadership during the Elizabethan Era. Critics have consistently identified the Bower of Bliss with Ireland, which was a foreign land that the English had been colonizing, with limited success, for hundreds of years. Spenser himself was involved in this English effort as he owned his own plot of land in Ireland. The Bower of Bliss's role in the text can also be looked at as a commentary on imperialism and the female leadership of Queen Elizabeth. Munroe states, "Spenser's revision of the garden space in these episodes also reveals a critique of the way Elizabeth managed her colonial interests in Ireland" (48). Though Gloriana is a presence throughout The Faerie Queen, Sir Guyon seems to have more freedom from Gloriana than Spenser had from Elizabeth.

Sir Guyon is able to defeat the Bower of Bliss because he is good and the foreign bower is evil, but the methods he uses to destroy the Bower of Bliss can be read as a

critique of how Elizabeth handled Ireland. Spenser's colonizing efforts in Ireland were similar to Sir Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss; Spenser was trying to take land away from a foreign power and domesticate it like an orderly English garden. Spenser wanted Queen Elizabeth to allow violence in the colonizing effort, and he demonstrates this wish in the way that Sir Guyon overthrows the Bower of Bliss when "all those peasaunt bowres and Pallace braue, / Guyon Broke downe with rigour pitiless" (2.7.83). It is important Sir Guyon does not have pity, because Guyon had pity initially and that was what stopped him from doing the right thing. Elizabeth pitied the Irish and would not resort to violence in her colonizing efforts. It was the opinion of Spenser that his queen's pity is what hurt the process of turning Ireland into a more civilized countryside. Gloriana clearly approves of the violence that Sir Guyon uses, and Sir Guyon is successful. Munroe is correct when she argues, "Spenser's *View* advocates 'reformation' in Ireland 'Even by the sword'" (63). Sir Guyon is able to colonize the foreign land by violence and by force; Gloriana allows Sir Guyon to reform the bower with the sword as Spenser would have wanted Elizabeth to permit him to do.

The Bower of Bliss is not only far away and associated with Ireland, but the way it is described resembles another foreign land that explains Sir Guyon's righteous wrath and brings religion into play. Munroe states that "the gardens in the Bower of Bliss resemble those of Italian gardens from Rome—a reference that may well have also called to mind for Spenser's mindful reader the Catholic Church" (56-57). One of the main themes running through Spenser's text is how Protestantism is good and Catholicism is bad. Acrasia represents the Whore of Babylon, and is the essence of evil. Sir Guyon's overthrowing Acrasia and her Bower serves as a moral quest as well as one of

colonization. Spenser wants to domesticate the garden, but not because he has a problem with women gardeners. The problem comes from having this particular woman, the foreign Whore of Babylon, controlling the natural space. The Bower of Bliss is bad because it is foreign and Catholic, not because it is gardened by a woman.

The main problems with the Bower of Bliss have to do with location and religion, not women, as is seen in the destruction of the garden. Sir Guyon fights with a righteous wrath, which gives evidence for the garden being evil for its religious affiliation. "Their grouse he feld, their gardins did deface, / Their arbers spoyle, their Cabinets suppress, / Their banket houses burne, their buildings race" (2.7.83). This type of destruction with all of the burning is similar to what one would find in the Bible. Not only does Sir Guyon overcome a foreign power through his destruction, but his type of violence is linked to godlike morals of defeating the wicked. The Bower of Bliss is evil not because it is gardened by an evil woman, but because it is a Catholic garden.

The Bower is also paralleled to the earlier Garden of Proserpina, which is a representation of the most important garden in the Bible, the Garden of Eden. The beginning of Book Two tells how Guyon "departed out of Eden landes," which would imply that he would find women who represented sin or had allowed sin to overtake them (2.1.1). Women have often been viewed in early English literature as possessing original sin, starting with Eve, and that idea is not ignored by Spenser as he has women like Acrasia that fit the negative stereotype. Sir Guyon is painfully out of Eden lands when he eats fruit in the Garden of Prosperina. The golden apples from this tree succeed in making Sir Guyon, "vainely swincke," and they lead him to a helpless state from which Arthur later saves him (2.7.58). These apples could represent the forbidden fruit in the

Garden of Eden, which in most Christian faiths is thought to have brought death to humanity. This instance in the Garden of Prosperina could also foreshadow what will happen to Sir Guyon when he encounters Acrasia because that is another moment when aspects of a garden threaten him. Acrasia is a woman who has fallen from grace, and her Nature is clearly fallen as well. The Bower of Bliss is designed by "Natures cunning hand" (2.6.12). This "Nature" is seductive, not natural but artificial, like the evil women in the Bible (2.6.12). Munroe suggests, "The Garden of Proserpina is designed to lure Guyon to the same fate as others who dwell there" (60). The garden is deceptive as it seems to have good fruit, but like in the Garden of Eden the fruit can lead to death.

Proserpina's garden is a foreign garden, reiterating the point that being foreign makes spaces evil in Spenser's text. Proserpina is, in classical mythology, the Queen of the dead. As death is foreign to life, the garden complies with the notion that foreign gardens and gardeners are evil. Sir Guyon also has to travel to arrive at this garden, just as people have to metaphorically travel to meet death. This garden is not defeated or colonized, but remains an evil foreign place. Many of the efforts to colonize made by the English were disastrous, and this could be drawing a parallel to those failed attempts. Sir Guyon is rescued from this state by Arthur, and then he goes to free others that could fall into the enchantments of the main foreign garden of evil, the Bower of Bliss.

Domestic Gardens and Gardeners: The Garden of Adonis

The Bower of Bliss is a complex garden that is both female and foreign in Book Two, and it is not replaced in Book Three by a domestic male garden as some critics have suggested. The Bower of Bliss is the artificial space of nature that allows Spenser to explore the problems of England's failed attempts at colonization. The Garden of Adonis

is the other garden that is equal to the Bower's importance, as it provides a contrast to the Bower by being a domestic and natural garden. The Garden of Adonis is paralleled to the Bower of Bliss because these two gardens are the main gardens of the books; although they are twin gardens, they are not the same space. While Sir Guyon's conquering of the Bower of Bliss has parallels to the colonizing effort of the English colonization effort, the reader does not see the Bower of Bliss in its colonized state as the Garden of Adonis. Munroe argues that the "changes Spenser makes when he transforms the Bower of Bliss into the Garden of Adonis depict what we find in the View as the vision for civilizing and 'planting' the actual landscape of Ireland" (48). What Munroe fails to take into account is that one garden cannot replace the other because they reside in different places; the Bower of Bliss is located on the edges of Fairyland, while the Garden of Adonis is located at the heart of Gloriana's realm. Munroe is correct in stating that the Bower of Bliss is finished as a foreign garden and has the hope of being replanted in a domestic civilized manner, but not as the Garden of Adonis. Munroe also suggests the Garden of Adonis is male, while the Bower of Bliss is female (48). However, the Garden of Adonis is actually a female space. Spenser has not replaced an evil female garden with a good male space; he has created an idealized and domestic garden, which is also ruled by women.

The Garden of Adonis is created by a woman and gardened by a female entity, and therefore is a female space like the Bower of Bliss. The Garden of Adonis is created by a female goddess, Venus, who turns her male lover into a flower. Adonis draws a parallel to how women have been described as flowers that are in need of a gardener's care, because in this case it is a man that becomes a flower, cared for by a woman. The

Garden of Adonis is gardened only by a female, "Dame Nature" (3.6.30). Spenser's text opposes ideas argued by Findlay that the "strictures of that man-made environment" were rebuilt in the creating of a garden, as it is a female, Venus, who creates her own garden out of love (71). Part of the question of who has power over gardens is who designs gardens; if a male figure creates the natural spaces in The Faerie Queen then it would suggest that men have dominance over women even in those natural spaces. A part of Findlay's argument is that all gardens and nature domesticated by women are for the use of men, and that men "designed" the "patterns" women used to not only plant actual flowers but to embroider "flowers, leaves, and animals" (95). Some readers of Spenser have thought that Findlay's argument would fit with The Faerie Queen because the Garden of Adonis is centered on a man. However, these critics fail to note that Adonis did not design his garden.

Venus does create the garden to save a man, but the reason for the garden's creation does not take away from it being under her domain, especially as she dominates the man for whom the garden is created. The male figure is a passive flower who has had no decision in his fate. The reader is not sure if Adonis would have wanted to exist forever as a flower; that decision was made by the woman who becomes his gardener. The male Adonis's mind and body is changed through the female goddess and female nature. This fact contradicts the idea that the Garden of Adonis is a garden that rebuilds a man made environment, as Findlay argues, because it is a feminine space. Near the opening of Book Three the lover of Venus, Adonis, is mentioned as "Fayre Adonis, turned to flowre" (3.1.34). Nature starts to affect his mind and emotions at the beginning

of his relationship with Venus, and then she proceeds to alter his body. This instance in Spenser's text is clearly a display of the power held by women and Nature.

Venus inverts the traditional notion that it is the man who affects the woman through her influence on Adonis; she is the gardener and he is the flower. The narration describes how Venus "wooed him [Adonis] her Paramoure to bee; / Now making girlonds of each flowre that grew" (3.1.35). The making of garlands for lovers seems to be a common theme in The Faerie Queen. However, it is usually the female lover who has the garlands given to her. An earlier example is Florimell, who is given garlands from the witch's son. Venus reverses the laws of gender and nature starting at the very beginning of her relationship with Adonis. Venus eventually makes Adonis a literal passive flower similar to Florimell, but she first tries to make him happy with garlands similar to how the witch's son tried to please Florimell. Venus is the gardener of her male lover rather than the traditional male dominance found in relationships.

Venus is a gardener, and like Acrasia she is able to influence the mental state of men. Venus "secretly" bewitches Adonis while he sleeps with "sweet Rosemaryes, / And fragrant violets, and Paunces trim, / And euer with sweet Nectar she did sprinkle him" (3.1.36). Rosemary, violets, and pansies are all flowers associated with remembrance and love. Nature is a tool for evoking passionate feelings, and the skill Venus has is evident in her use of these herbs to get Adonis to love her. The primary difference between Venus and Acrasia is that Venus is not foreign because Venus uses flowers and herbs rather than weeds to influence Adonis. Even though the two women do essentially the same thing by altering the minds of men, Venus is justified in doing so because she uses pleasant plants like flowers, as does Belphoebe. Through her choice of plants the

reader can see that Venus is using nature in a natural way. Like Acrasia with Sir Mordant, Venus through her crafts "did…steale his heedelesse hart away" (3.1.37).

Adonis is not only mentally and emotionally influenced by Venus; he is changed physically as well. When Adonis is on the verge of death after being "Deadly engored of a great wilde Bore," Venus tries to save him in his human form. However, when she is unable to do so "Him to a dainty flowre she did transmew" (3.1.38). Adonis undergoes a physical change that makes him a literal flower, "in eternal bliss," so great is the power of nature and the goddess (3.6.48). Through Venus's power over Adonis and Nature, Spenser gives women strength. Adonis is emasculated through being reduced to a flower by a woman gardener, instead of being allowed to die in a masculine way.

Adonis is not the only man who has an association with a flower. "Prince Arthur" is also called the "flowre of grace and nobilnesse" (2.8.18). Adonis also has the "ioyous company" of other men who became flowers through love. Evidence for Spenser's text having multiple manly flowers is clearly expressed in this passage:

And all about grew euery sort of flowre,

To which sad louers were transformde of yore;

Fresh Hyacinthus, Phoebus paramoure,

And dearest loue,

Foolish Narcisse, that likes the watry shore,

Sad Amaranthus, made a flowre by late…." (3.6.45)

This passage provides evidence that men too had appeared as flowers in classical mythology, as they were flowers during the Elizabethan Era. The mention of all of these other men allows for Spenser to tell his reader that women are not the only flowers in his

text. Arthur can be seen as similar to how Adonis becomes in his independence. Arthur is completely competent in the text just as the garden that grows around the flower of Adonis, and carries his name, is beautifully self-sufficient. Adonis would not be a flower if it was not for Venus, and therefore he is not an independent flower. While men can make good flowers, the Garden of Adonis is not solely a male space. It is a female entity, Nature, who makes the garden independent, just as it was a female goddess, Venus, who began to plant the garden. Even though the garden is named for and constructed around Adonis, it does not emulate him.

The Garden of Adonis demonstrates the independence of Nature, and her independence is an example of the power Spenser gives to women in his text. Nature takes care of the Garden of Adonis, and in doing so demonstrates a high level of competency. All of the "goodly flowers" are provided for by "dame Nature" as she uses them to "beautify" herself; Nature is the key landscaper and caretaker of the garden (3.6.30). This is a garden that "Ne needs there Gardiner to sett or sow, / To plant or prune: for all their owne accord / All things as they were created were, doe grow" (3.6.34). The garden is not dependent on any other source than its original creator and itself; it does not need people to garden it, and the garden is not even dependent on a water source: "Ne doe they need with water of the ford, / Or of the clouds to moisten their roots dry; / For in themselues eternall moisture they imply" (3.6.34). The independence of the garden demonstrates Nature's capability. Nature is depicted as "Dame Nature," a female deity (3.6.30).

Nature is female in Spenser's text, which is significant because that means a female dominates all natural spaces. Nature is a female deity who empowers women through making powerful environments. Spenser says it is

> great Dame Nature, from whose fruitfull pap
>
> Their wellheads spring, and are with moisture deawd;
>
> Which feedes each liuing plant with liguid sap,
>
> And filles with flowers fayre Floraes painted lap…." (2.2.6)

By representing Nature in this self-sufficient way Spenser suggests that women are likewise competent in fending for themselves and one another.

Directly following the passage about how Nature and Flora care for the beings in Nature, Spenser tells a story that displays the power he accords women in nature. There is a nymph who is being pursued by a lustful "Dan Faunus" who "chaced her, that fast from him [she] did fly (2.2.7). This nymph does not run away in complete control like Belphoebe, nor does she seek help from other men like Florimell. The nymph is not able to completely escape the man on her own, and she calls on a female deity to help her. Diana responds to the cry for help and "transformd her [the pursued nymph] to a stone," to save the nymph's honor (2.2.6). In classical mythology it is Poseidon, a male god who saves his daughter, a nymph, by transforming her into a Laurel tree. By switching the hero from a male to a female deity Spenser gives women more power. Dan Faunus is unable to dominate women because of the goddess Diana, and Adonis is mimicked in him in that he is unable to control the goddess, Venus.

The goddesses in classical mythology are able to control the human world, despite their femininity, and it is appropriate that they wield power in Spenser's text as well. It is

significant that it is the classical goddess Venus who is the creator of the "male" garden that is dominated by feminine power, and that Diana is the other key goddess with power in nature because this feminine classicism was an important component in actual gardens of Spenser's time period. In an actual account given in 1599 of a garden, Thomas Watson describes "the entrance to the garden is a grove called after Diana, the goddess" (Findlay 74). Even though Venus and Diana are not English women, they have a real place in England through their identification with gardens. These women are domestic in Spenser's text because they reside in the middle of Gloriana's fairyland, which represents Elizabeth's England. Their presence would make sense in this imaginary land, and in England; these women have a place in both areas, imagined and real.

The powerful good women of The Faerie Queen are domestic women, and they retain their strength. The influence women gain affects men with whom they come into contact, and in The Faerie Queen women are more likely to keep their power if they use it for good. However, the power of women is not completely dependent on the men in the text as some critics, such as Alison Findlay think. Findlay argues, "Mother Nature must be inspired by divine virtue through the civilizing work of man" and that the garden is "a place where paternal law constrains natural instincts especially for female subjects" (70-71). The concept of women needing to conform to men's desires in tending to their gardens is in Spenser's text, but in a less direct way, as some women have men conform to their ways of gardening and not the other way around. In fact, The Faerie Queen ultimately suggests that all nature is controlled by the female deity, Dame Nature. There are also female gardeners, like Belphoebe, who chose not to conform to what men, like

Braggadoccio, may think is right. Even though women like Belphoebe and Gloriana only use their power for good, their abilities are in no way diminished.

Women in Spenser's The Faerie Queen find strength in natural spaces just as real women during the Elizabethan Era gained power over gardens. The emerging ideas about gender and gardens historically are not lost in Spenser's text, and his literary women find competence in the natural world just as actual women of all classes were redefining their roles in gardens. Spenser addresses traditional notions of helpless and fallen women in his text, but those women pale in comparison to Spenser's new independent women. He not only makes women gardeners, but makes nature, as a whole, feminine and has female flowers who are full of independence. The two most important gardens in The Faerie Queen are female, and they demonstrate female power in both negative and positive ways. Good and evil in the gardens are not separated by gender, but by location. By comparing foreign and domestic spaces, Spenser critiques his Queen while he simultaneously demonstrates his patriotism for England. Queen Elizabeth is, for the most part, revered and exalted through her literary representations in the text, showing Spenser's support of female leadership. Despite traditional readings of the text, it is evident that Spenser honors and respects women as he gives them a vast amount of power over the natural world in The Faerie Queen.

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