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Cruelly penned: rape and the subject of sexual violence

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Cruelly Penned:
Rape and the Subject of Sexual Violence

by

Jessica Lynn Winston

Thesis Recommended for Acceptance for Honors
by the Department of English

April, 1994

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Introduction

The wolf hath seiz'd his prey, the poor lamb cries,
Till with her own fleece her voice controlled
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold.

For with the nightly linen that she wears
He pens the piteous clamors in her head,
Cooling his hot face in the chastest tears
That ever modest eyes with sorrow shed.
O that prone lust should stain so pure a bed!

The rape scene in *The Rape of Lucrece*. (677-684)

This project began with the passage quoted above and the question, "Why in a poem of some 1900 lines is the rape -- the central event -- passed over in silence? Because *Lucrece* registers anxieties about the efficacy of language, in general, my first hypothesis was that the poem passes over the rape because of a failure of language itself. This explanation, however, failed to account for why rape, in particular, should be passed over in silence. So I turned to rape trials and pamphlets in the period to see if such a reticence about rape was built into discussions of rape during the period. It was not. In one trial, "The Trial of Lord Audley, Earle of Castlehaven," the victim describes in lurid detail the way she had to be oiled to be penetrated. In doing so, she inadvertently defines rape itself as penetration rather than abduction, the other major way of thinking about rape in the period. When she does this, she and the pamphlet that reproduces her words, implicitly define her as a person, rather than as property to be stolen away and, in making this distinction, provide a possible clue about the silence in *Lucrece*: Her words suggest that it is impossible to talk about rape in the period without also defining and taking a position on something else, what a woman is. Read in this context, what *Lucrece* shows is the difficulty, at least in the Renaissance, of talking about rape without talking about something else as well.

As I looked around to see if this was always the case, I looked to

Milton's *Comus*, a work in which a rape is resisted. I thought that knowing what makes it possible to avert a rape would suggest something about the nature of rape itself. I expected to find that the power of chastity makes it possible to resist rape, but I was lead instead to a new problem: in *Comus*, chastity does not have the power that everyone claims it does. The problem, for me, in the text then was not how to account for a silence, but how to account for the fact that the masque seems much more interested in the power of language -- even the villain's language -- than in the chastity that seeks to resist that power.

Book III of *The Faerie Queen* presents an even more troubling version of this problem. Here, language -- Busirane's "penning" of Amoret -- is presented as a kind of rape and this has disturbing implications for Spenser's own activity. I hoped that understanding something about averted rape would shed light on the nature of rape in *Comus*, so I turned in Book III to the repetition of rape, or attempted rape, to understand the nature of rape itself. Here, too, I was led "outside" the subject of rape to the historically specific issue of Spenser's attitude toward Elizabeth's chastity. One function of the repetition of rape is to isolate or contrast Britomart's chastity not only to victims like Amoret, who she rescues, but to Elizabeth herself. I found myself understanding rape as a vocabulary for something else. Here, the subject was not the nature of all women, but of one in particular, Elizabeth herself and her marriage policy.

What unites the works is that each one says something about the power of language, either as a failure ("unprofitable sounds") or as a force strong enough to damage the thing described (*Comus* "well-placed" words seduce the Lady, Spenser's words can "her excellence...marre"). But the works are linked by a problem that I find much more disturbing: the inseparability of rape from some "other" subject. Of course, it makes sense for a consideration of rape to lead to the subject of what women are, but it is also a disturbing phenomenon because it threatens to turn rape into a metaphor, to distract the reader from the fact that rape is an act of assault.

This phenomenon raises a series of questions: how does one discuss the subject of rape in its own right? Are there any moments in Renaissance texts that would make this possible? How could one arrive at an historically specific way of talking about rape in the Renaissance without reducing it to metaphor?¹ I found myself unable to answer these questions.

If I were to expand this project, I would look at visual depictions of rape, texts by women, and works -- such as *Titus Andronicus* -- where the rapes are very graphic. I would like to see if visual art, since it would have to depict and therefore capture a moment of the rape, might be less likely to pass over the entire event in silence. In addition, the visual representation of an assault, seeing a physical action, might make it more difficult than in literature to see the depiction as solely metaphorical. But it seems unlikely that I would find any representation of rape that did not become a metaphor for something else.²

One imagines that the only way to discuss the issue of rape in a historically specific way without risking turning rape into a metaphor would be to examine a court trial or first-hand account from a victim of or witness to a rape. But three examples of these type of texts from the period do not avoid the problem. In "The Notorious Life of John Lambe", when the speaker gets to the rape, there is literally a blank space in the text (see appendix). At the other end of the spectrum is "The Trial of Lord Audley". Far from passing over the rape in silence, the rapes in this text are so graphic that they lead the speaker to a discussion of the "great sin" of rape. Even, rape statutes use the word without ever clearly defining it, so, in the end, it is impossible to say anything about them without interpreting their meaning. Perhaps the next step, then, is to look at moments when rape becomes a metaphor and to trace what is lost in the process.

¹ Roy Porter discusses the difficulty of finding historically specific and culturally specific definitions of rape. "Rape -- Does it have a Historical Meaning." *Rape*. Tomasellin, Sylvana and Roy Porter, Eds. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. 216-236.

² For a discussion of the relationship between literature, violence, and metaphor see, Elaine Scarry's introduction to *The Body in Literature: Essays on Populations and Persons*. Scarry, Elaine, Ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

Chapter One

More than Power to Tell: Lucrece's Silence and The Definition of Woman

A curious aspect of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* is the poem's depiction of the rape itself. In the 1900 line poem, the actual rape takes place in less than nine lines of figurative language. Even more curious is the fact that, though the narrator describes Lucrece, and she describes herself, as "maiden world's unconquered" (408), as a walled "sweet city" (469), a "castle" (441), a "house", "mansion", and "temple" (1170-2),¹ these images of her as conquerable land or penetrable building are not the ones called upon in the attempt to represent the rape itself; rather, the metaphor is one of an animal (a wolf) catching another (a lamb). The almost negligible presence of the rape scene and the choice of the metaphor used to depict it raise two questions about the representation of rape in the poem: why does the scene have such a small presence in a poem with a rape as its central event? And what influences the choice of the metaphor during the rape scene? In the following pages, I will consider several possible answers to these questions: first, there is ample evidence within the poem to suggest a suspicion of language itself as implicitly dangerous. This evidence might suggest that the speaker passes over the rape in silence because any attempt to represent it will fail. (The problem with this explanation is that it does not account for why the poem is particularly silent about rape.) Second, a number of treatises written during the Renaissance suggest that rape itself may have been thought of as unspeakable and if this is so, then *Lucrece's* silence about the subject becomes symptomatic of a general pattern in discussions of rape during the period. (The problem with this explanation is that there are accounts in the period that describe rape with at least enough detail to suggest that silence on the subject is not universal.) Third, what rape law and the commentary on rape law during the period suggest, however, is

¹ All references to the poem come from "The Rape of Lucrece." *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Evans, Blakemore G., Textual Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974, 1722-1743.

a more promising lead for approaching *Lucrece*. Rape law itself was riddled with two radically different conceptions of woman. I will suggest in the following pages that Shakespeare's *Lucrece* is caught between these two models and that the silence at the moment of the rape is a visible sign of this conflict.²

I: More Than Power to Tell

There is ample evidence that the poem passes over the rape in silence out of a deep suspiciousness about the efficacy of language itself. On the most general level, the poem manifests this anxiety when *Lucrece* characterizes language as "idle words, servants to shallow fools, / unprofitable sounds, weak arbitrators" (1016-7). In another example, the poem shows how "idle" and "unprofitable" words are when *Lucrece* tries to use them to convince Tarquin not to rape her:

She conjures him by almighty Jove,
By knighthood, gentry, and sweet friendship's oath,
By her untimely tears, her husband's love,
By holy human law, and common troth,
By heaven and earth, and all the power of both,
That to his borrowed bed he make retire,
And stoop to honor, not to foul desire. (568-574)

² My reading differs from that of previous critics, first, because with the exceptions of Joel Fineman and Jonathan Crewe, no one has explicitly raised the issue of the meaning of the silence surrounding rape. See Fineman, "Shakespeare's Will: The Temporality of Rape." *Representations*, 20 (Fall 1987), 25-76 and Crewe, *The Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstructions from Wyatt to Shakespeare*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. More importantly, my reading accounts for the rift in criticism between those critics who see *Lucrece* as property and those who, in their fascination with the motives of her suicide, implicitly treat her as a character with her own subjectivity, a person. Rather than subscribing to either vision of *Lucrece*, I will argue that the poem is caught between these two ways of thinking about her, and women in general, and that the silence at the moment of the rape is the inevitable product of this conflict. For a discussion of *Lucrece* as property, see Coppélia Kahn, "The Rape in Shakespeare's *Lucrece*." *Shakespeare Studies*, 9 (1976), 44-72, Kahn, "Lucrece. The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity." *Rape and Representation*. Higgins, Lynn A. and Brenda R. Silver, Eds. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 141-159, and Nancy Vickers, "'The Blazon of Sweet Beauty's Best': Shakespeare's *Lucrece*." *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. Parker, Patricia and Geoffrey Hartman, Eds. New York: Methuen, 1985, 95-115. For a discussion of *Lucrece* as responsible for her suicide, see D.C. Allen. "Some Observations on *The Rape of Lucrece*." *Shakespeare Survey*, 15 (1962), 89-97, Roy W. Battenhouse. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Its Christian Premises*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1969, 3-41. For a defense of *Lucrece* as person that disagrees with both Kahn and Allen, see Laura Bromley. "Lucrece's Re-Creation." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34:2 (1983), 200-211.

In this passage, Lucrece invokes so many different kinds of language -- including "oaths", "human law", and "common troth" -- and begs Tarquin in so many different ways -- including appealing to his sense of knighthood, gentry, and friendship -- that the failure to convince shows not that Lucrece's pleadings fail, but that language itself is insufficient; it is nothing but a "shallow" and "weak abrbitrator".

More specifically, the poem suggests the inadequacy of language not merely to work (to effect, prevent, inhibit), but actually to represent. An example of this inadequacy occurs at the beginning of the poem when Tarquin thinks about Collatine's inability to describe the beauty of Lucrece:

Now thinks he that her husband's shallow tongue,
The niggard prodigal that prais'd her so,
In that high task hath done her wrong,
Which far exceeds his barren skill to show. (78-81)

One might argue that in this passage, Collatine's linguistic incompetence ("shallow tongue", "barren skill"), not language itself, results in the inability to describe Lucrece's beauty. But the sense of the word "tongue" as language ressurects the possibility that the failure lies in language itself. Similarly, when Lucrece, looking at Hecuba "swears [the painter] did her wrong, / To give her so much grief, and not a tongue" (1462-3), the poem suggests the larger way in which certain experiences cannot be articulated. Lucrece herself defines as hell the condition of not being able to speak when she describes her situation as "more...than I can well express" (1285): "And that deep torture may be call'd a hell, / When more it is than one hath power to tell" (1286-7).

Perhaps more disturbingly, the poem suggests that language not only fails to represent, but actually risks damaging the thing represented. The most clear example of the damage brought about by the attempt at representation occurs as a result of Collatine's boasting about the beauty of Lucrece. When Collatine unlocks "the treasure of his happy state" (16), when he reveals the beauty of Lucrece to the crowd of men, the description sparks the chain of events that lead to the rape of Lucrece. Collatine's attempt at

representation ends ultimately in the rape of, the damage of, the thing described.

The poem's suspiciousness of language suggests a way to account for its silence about rape. If the poem subscribes to a view of language in which every representation is a misrepresentation, it will have to be silent about rape in order to avoid such a misrepresentation, to avoid precisely the kinds of consequences that occur when Collatine boasts about Lucrece's beauty. The problem with this answer is that it fails to account for why the poem specifically refuses to describe the rape, especially since it does provide extended descriptions of other events, in particular, a long description of Lucrece's beauty (64-84). If the speaker were really afraid of replicating the damage caused by Collatine's boast, then he would have to be more reticent about Lucrece's beauty. The question then is, "why does the poem pass over rape in particular?"

II. For Modesty's Sake

A fair amount of evidence from treatises about rape during the Renaissance suggests that rape was something that was simply not discussed, and certainly not graphically described. Accounts of rape from trials in the period show that pamphleteers passed over descriptions of rape even when it was the very thing that they were writing about.

The 1628 pamphleteer in "A Briefe Description of the Notorious Life of John Lambe" is silent when he gets to the moment of the rape that he is interested in.³ The full document includes a reprint of the testimony against Lambe from the trial in which he is accused of raping eleven year-old Jane Seagar. The testimony of Mabel Swinnerton, a neighbor, recounts vividly the story of the rape: after Jane arrived, Lambe sent his servant away, locked

³ "A Briefe Description of The Notorious Life of John Lambe, otherwise called Doctor John Lambe, Together with His Ignominious Death." *Short Title Catalog of Early English Books 1475-1640*. Pollard and Redgrave, Eds. Amsterdam 1628, Catalog # 15177, STC Reel # 803. A copy of Maber Swinnerton's testimony alone is available in *English Women's Voices 1540-1700*. Charlotte F. Otten, Ed. Miami: Florida International University Press, 1992.

the door, forced her to sit on a stool, kissed her by putting his tongue in her mouth, and would "not let her alone" (17-18). Though he willingly includes the details that lead up to the rape, the pamphleteer interrupts the reprinted document to insert in very large letters that take up nearly a quarter of the page, "There are certaine passages which are upon the records which for modesties sake are here omitted" (18). Perhaps, the author cannot describe the rape since whatever happened caused her to "smoke like a pot" (18); more likely, the omission of the details, "for modesties sake," suggests a reticence about graphically describing rape during the period.

In a different way, the testimony of the wife of Lord Audley, Earle of Castlehaven, in the most notorious of cases during the period, suggests a need for silence in the description of rape.⁴ The trial revolves around accusations against Audley for aiding in the rape of his wife and twelve year-old daughter-in-law and for committing "buggery". When the trial begins, Lady Audley expresses apprehension at having to tell of her experiences and asks if she may deliver her testimony in writing rather than by "word of mouth" (35). Though her silence about rape takes the form of a willingness to write and not speak, a concern with modesty and propriety, similar to that of the Lambe trial, motivates her request.

If these two instances were symptomatic, if rape were really something unrepresentable in the period, one could argue that the poem does not describe Lucrece's rape because a graphic description would have been out of the question. The problem with this explanation is that as we move further into the Audley trial, the rape victims tell their stories in great detail. In contradiction to the notions of modesty in the Lambe trial and the statement by Lady Audley, ultimately, Lady Audley herself and the other victims in the case graphically speak about certain aspects of their rapes. Take the example

⁴ An incomplete transcript of the testimony from the 1631 trial is available in *English Women's Voices*, Ibid. An official second hand account of the whole trial, probably from a court clerk, is available in the STC: "The Trial of Lord Audley, Earle of Castlehaven, for Inhumanely Causing his Own Wife to be Ravished and for Buggery." *Short Title Catalog of Early English Books 1640-1700*. Wing Edition. (1679) Catlog # T2227. STC Reel # 677:15. For another discussion of this trial in relation to literature, see Barbara Breasted. "Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal." *Milton Studies*, 3 (1971), 201-24.

of the daughter-in-law's description of a series of encounters with Skipwith, a servant:

[Lord Audley] saw Skipwith and I lie together several times, and so did many of the servants of the house besides. [Audley] tempted me to lie with others also, telling me my husband did not love me, and if I would not, he would tell my husband I did lie with them. He used oil to enter my body first, for I was then but twelve years of age. (36)

Or, the wife's description of what happens to her:

He made Skipwith come naked into our chamber and bed; and took delight in calling up his servants to show me their nudities, and forced me to look upon them, and to commend those that were the longest. (36)

Clearly, neither the wife nor the daughter-in-law are afraid of offending modesty here. The concern with modesty cannot be universal enough to explain Lucrece's silence at the moment of the rape.

Though Audley's trial does not explain such a silence, what emerges from the case is a tacit definition of rape as penetration. This definition comes from Audley's defense of himself as recorded by the court clerk. The second-hand version of the trial records that Audley defended himself by arguing that his affair with the servant was not buggery since "there was not penetration" and that the occurrences with his wife were not rape since he "did not penetrate at all" (7).

If we turn to *The Rape of Lucrece*, we see that it is precisely penetration that the poem is silent about:

The wolf hath seiz'd his prey, the poor lamb cries,
Till with her own fleece her voice controlled
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold.

For with the nightly linen that she wears
He pens the piteous clamors in her head,
Cooling his hot face in the chastest tears
That ever modest eyes with sorrow shed. (677-683)

The passage consistently avoids any allusions to penetration. Tarquin, "the wolf," seizes and "entombs," but even these words connote capture, confinement, and a sense of being sealed off, rather than invasion or

penetration. In addition, the metaphors displace the act onto Lucrece's head and voice rather than describing penetration itself. By entombing Lucrece's voice, Shakespeare makes a consistent effort to distance the rape from its representation in language. This description of rape then raises the more specific question: why is the poem silent about the moment of penetration?

III: Rape, Abduction, and the Status of Woman

Perhaps if the rape trials -- the views of individualized and localized writers -- fail to provide a definitive answer for why the poem is silent on the subject of penetration, then rape law -- a more authorized, collective, and consensual body of material on rape -- will provide another answer. What is striking about Renaissance rape law is the shift that occurs from the previously understood definition of rape as abduction of a piece of property to a definition of rape as forced violation of a woman against her will. An examination of a short history of rape law in England will reveal the reasons for this change and may indicate why the issue of penetration was a particularly charged one.

From the first statute on rape in England (1275), a conception of woman as property had been implicit in legal discussions of rape. What is notable about this early part of the legal history of rape is that this implicit conception of woman as property intensifies, or strengthens, over time and in several ways.⁵

⁵ Other historians who have discussed rape law are J.B. Post. "Sir Thomas West and the Statute of Rapes, 1382." *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53, 1982. 24-30. He notes that a 1382 change in rape law took the emphasis away from a wrong done to a woman and puts the emphasis on her family; Barbara Toner. *The Facts of Rape*. New York: Arrow Books, 1982. Chapter five on the history of rape discusses the classifications of rape as first a social crime against the family and then a sexual crime against the woman; Nazife Bashar. "Rape in England Between 1550 and 1700." *The Sexual Dynamics of History: Men's Power, Women's Resistance*. London: Pluto Press, 1983, 28-42. She studies the contradictions between the severity of rape law and the few number of arrests and convictions for rape. For an historical analysis of literature using rape history, see the analysis of rape as depicted on the Jacobean stage: Susan Gossett. "'Best Men are Moulded out of Faults': Marrying the Rapist in Jacobean Drama." *English Literary Renaissance* (Autumn 1984), 305-327.

The first statute concerning rape is the 1275 statute of Edward I.⁶ Called Westminster I, this law said that it was unlawful to "ravish" or "take away by force" any girl under the age of twelve, any wife, maiden, or other woman "against her will." The specified punishment for a convicted rapist was two years in prison and a fine set by the King, unless the woman chose to marry her rapist to save him from punishment. To the degree that the statute uses the language of "take away", it implies that women are goods that men snatch away. To the degree that it specifies "against her will", it implies a person, granting her autonomy to consent. In addition, the marriage clause works strangely in favor of women by giving them the agency to choose husbands that were otherwise unacceptable to their families.

There is some evidence that women used the marriage clause frequently to force their parents into accepting otherwise unapproved of suitors and this situation, along with the fact that the original statute did not deter rapists at all, led to a considerable change in the law just ten years later.⁷ The new law, 1285, increased the punishment for rape to death. More importantly, it omitted the marriage clause and introduced the concept that a man could rape a woman with or without her consent. By introducing the idea that rape occurs even if the woman agrees to sexual relations, the law takes away the notion that her will is important and implies that she is the property of her husband or father who then consents for her. Through the elimination of the marriage clause, the law indicates the concern that women used it to force their parents to accept otherwise unacceptable marriages. The elimination stresses that women were the property of their families who could now decide on acceptable suitors without worrying about releasing their property to a

⁶ Statute of Westminster 1, Cap. XIII. *Statutes at Large*. (London: Charles Eyre and Andrew Strahan, Printers to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1786).

⁷ Both Toner, *Op.Cit.* and Post, *Op.Cit.* point out the prevalence of this way of forcing parents agree to a woman's marriage with an unapproved of man. One Renaissance historian notes that the marriage clause was dangerous because it allowed women to marry out of their class. See Sir Edward Coke. *The Second Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England*. (1642), Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979, 181. The apparent increase in rapes has been noted by many historians from the Renaissance through the present day. See, in particular, Sir William Blackstone. *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. (1890), Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978. IV 212.

financially or socially disadvantageous marriage arrangement.⁸ Without the notions of consent and the option for marriage, the law figures women as part of the financial status of their family; By 1285, the law almost completely treats women as property, not as persons who have the ability to consent, to refuse, and to decide on a marriage.

By 1382, the law removes any remaining notion of women as persons.⁹ The new law reiterates that rape may take place with or without the consent of the woman, and more importantly, provides a procedure through which the family, heretofore excluded from the appeal process, could bring charges against the alleged rapist.¹⁰ In addition, the law requires that the land or money belonging to the abducted woman should revert back to her family. The effect of the new law is to take even the control of being able to charge a man with rape away from the woman. The law illustrates the number of ways since 1275 that the law eradicated any notion of women as persons by showing how it makes women solely into the controlled property of their families.

In 1486, a major change took place which reintroduced the concept of women as persons back into the law.¹¹ This law, along with others in 1557, 1576, and 1597, takes the trouble to distinguish between rape and the "taking away of women against their wills unlawfully" (statute 1597).¹² (Though, even here, the two concepts seem intertwined: "taking away", acting as if women are property, and "against their wills", acting as if they were persons.) The 1576 statute, for example, lists rape and burglary as two separate crimes. Since abduction implicitly treats women as property, the thing stolen away, the very attempt to discriminate between these two things implies an incipient

⁸ As Barbara Toner points out, the change had the effect of almost completely changing the definition of rape from being a sexual offense, though some sexual element remained. Op.Cit. 118.

⁹ For a thorough discussion of the effects of the 1382 statute, see J.B. Post, Op.Cit.

¹⁰ Susan Brownmiller argument about the addition of more and more people to the appeals process implies that this addition was good for women. She says that it meant that rape was no longer a family misfortune or a threat to land and property, but an issue of public safety and state concern. Susan Brownmiller. *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975. p.29.

¹¹ Henry VII, Cap. II. (1486). *The Statutes at Large*. Op.Cit.

¹² Edward IV, Cap. VII (1557); Elizabeth, Cap. VII (1576); Elizabeth, Cap. IX (1597). All available in the *Statutes at Large*, Op.Cit.

concept of woman as person. Though the statutes never specifically redefine rape in terms of the woman, the interpretation of the law begins to shift; thus, one lawyer from the period interprets rape as "when a man hath carnal knowledge of a woman against her will" (Coke 180). The change in rape law lessens the emphasis on women only being perceived as property and indicates a change to the notion that women are people.

The narrative I have just offered above is one agreed upon by historians Nazife Bashar and Barbara Toner; however, what these historians do not acknowledge when they conclude, as Bashar does, that "Rape came to be seen as a crime against the person, not as a crime against property" (41) is that the shift was by no means uniform or complete. Differences in the way that legal historians define rape during the period show that the definition of rape is in fact ambiguous. The difference is that some lawyers define rape as "raptus" meaning "carnall knowledge of a woman against her will", while others use the meaning "to snatch" and emphasize the definition of rape as theft of property. An example of the first form is Sir Anthony Fitzherbert's definition of rape as, "to ravish a woman against her will unlawfully." Sir Edward Coke's definition, quoted earlier, clarifies that "to ravish" is "when a man hath carnall knowledge of a woman against her will" (180). In contrast, Nicholas Brady says that Fitzherbert's and Coke's definition is wrong, explaining that "when a woman is enforced violently to sustain the fury of brutish conrupfcense: but she is left where she is found, as in her own bed as Lucrece was" (377) is the wrong use of the word "raptus". He prefers the definition of "rapere" to mean abduction "as Helen by Paris, or as the Sabine women were by the Romans" (378). In other words, abduction is the correct definition, or as he puts it, abduction is "both the by nature of the word, and definition of the matter... the right ravishment" (378).

More legal experts during the period define rape as Coke does; however, even if Brady's definition is anomalous for the time, it still suggests that

¹³ Sir Anthony Fitzherbert, *The Newe Boke of Justices of the Peace*. (1538). Abingdon, England: Professional Books, Ltd., 1982, folio 19, number 7.

the definition of rape during the period was somewhat ambiguous.¹⁴ More importantly, the presence of two conflicting notions of rape suggests that the definition of rape always assumes something about the status of women, and thus that two radically different conceptions of woman existed during the period.

The issue of the status of women as persons or property helps to explain why the issue of penetration was a particularly charged one: the ill-defined status of rape and woman in the Renaissance meant that every representation potentially defined rape and therefore implicitly took a position on the status of women. I would argue that *Lucrece* passes over rape because of this problem: for anyone writing at the time, the presence of these two notions meant that defining rape as forcible penetration meant discarding the notion of women as property and supporting the concept of them as persons. This does not mean that not describing penetration automatically relegates women to the status of property. Not describing penetration could either imply a view of women as property or a refusal to make a choice. But which is the case in *Lucrece*? To decide this question it is necessary first to see if the conflict between woman as person and woman as property is evident in the poem.

IV: Invading the Sweet City: Two Views of Lucrece

If statute law embodies the conflict between the opposing views as woman as person or property, then perhaps *The Rape of Lucrece* embodies this conflict as well. I would argue that *Lucrece* reflects both attitudes and does not make a choice between them.

The poem imagines Lucrece as property in two major ways. First, the scenes in which the narrator demonstrates that Lucrece is an object of exchange between men and cast her as property; second, the images the narrator uses to describe Lucrece as treasure, land, or ediface which therefore imply

¹⁴ One legal authority still puts rape into his section of the law on burglary and theft. See Michael Dalton. *The Countrey Justice*. (1619). Reprinted by London: Professional Books, Ltd., 1973, 233.

casts her as Collatine's property. Before the poem begins, "The Argument" presents Lucrece, and all of the wives, as objects that men bet over." After her suicide, the poem maintains her status as property that men fight over and own when Collatine and Lucrece's father quarrel over who loves her more: The father says, "She's mine," and Collatine replies, "O mine she is" (1795-6). Each relation claims ownership of Lucrece crying, "my daughter," and "my wife!" (1806). That both men so adamantly exercise their rights of ownership implies that Lucrece is property that the men steal, bet over, and own. The concept of Lucrece as property is evident also in the images that the narrator uses to describe her. For example, in the stanza in which Collatine brags about Lucrece, the narrator uses the image of treasure to imply that Lucrece is Collatine's property:

For he the night before, in Tarquin's tent,
Unlock'd the treasure of his happy state;
What priceless wealth the heavens had him lent
In the possession of his beauteous mate. (15-18)

The metaphors in the passage employ the image of Lucrece as part of Collatine's estate. She is his "treasure", and his "priceless wealth." Lucrece's value in the poem as a possession is emphasized when the narrator clearly states that Collatine's "priceless wealth" comes from "the possession of his beauteous mate". Later in the poem, the images of Lucrece as a valuable property continue when the narrator describes Lucrece as a "rich jewel" (32) and as something that Collatine should not describe around "thievish ears" so as to protect himself from robbers who might want to steal his property away. Other images suggest that Lucrece is literally property, that she is land or a physical object owned by Collatine. A moment when the poem employs these images occurs when Tarquin looks on the sleeping Lucrece.

The narrator says,

These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred,
Who like a foul usurper went about
From this fair throne to heave to owner out. (411-13)

¹⁵ For an extended discussion of the way in which the poem figures Lucrece as the thing men fight over, see Nancy Vickers. "'The Blazon of Sweet Beauty's Best'": *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. Parker, Patricia and Geoffrey Hartman, Eds. New York: Methuen, 1985.

The passage describes Lucrece's breasts as "maiden worlds" (410) that Tarquin wants to own for himself. He wants to conquer these worlds in the same way that a "foul usurper" wants to invade and capture the property of the King. In this case, Tarquin wants to usurp Lucrece -- the throne -- which the Collatine -- the King -- possesses. Other images in the poem show that Collatine is the owner of Lucrece; moreover, they show that, like this first image, Collatine is the King and she is his property, either his castle or his city. For example, later when asked for what reason (under what color) Tarquin wants to rape Lucrece, Tarquin answers, "Under that color I am come to scale / Thy never-conquered fort" (481-2). Here Tarquin describes her as Collatine's "fort", later, she is a sweet city (470), a house (1170), a mansion (1171), and a temple (1172). These examples demonstrate that the poem consistently portrays Lucrece as the property that Collatine defends and Tarquin conquers. The evidence of the bet and the images together suggest that the poem supports the notion that Lucrece is property.

What is striking, however, about the images of Lucrece as property is that they quickly shift to become evidence for the opposite claim because they are also at the same time metaphors for penetration. For example, Tarquin pledges himself to the "invasion" (287) of the land of Lucrece. Later, the image of Lucrece as a "sweet city" turns into a metaphor for Tarquin's desire to rape: he wants "To make the breach and enter this sweet city" (469-70). The word "breach" obviously implies penetration and echoes other metaphors for forced entry in the poem. Lucrece compares herself to an invaded city when she says of the rape, "my Troy did perish" (1546-1547). And the metaphor for penetration is blatant when the narrator comments that Tarquin is a "Rude ram, to batter such an ivory wall" (463-4). After the rape, the metaphors of penetration continue as Lucrece describes herself as "ransack'd", "sack'd", and "battered" (838, 170, 1171). These metaphors assume that rape is penetration and therefore support the notion that Lucrece is a person that Tarquin violates, that he "carnally knows against her will". What is significant about these images is that they are both images of property and

because in the language of rape law, penetration implicitly casts rape victims as persons, images of personhood. The poem seems to commit simultaneously to two radically different notions of Lucrece, and thus refuses to make a choice as to what her status really is.

A second piece of evidence that the poem does not make a choice about the status of Lucrece springs from its treatment of voice. At first, her ability to use her voice in ways that are similar to the men in the poem suggest that she is a person; however, as Coppélia Kahn has pointed out, her voice ultimately demonstrates the extent to which her speech is inscribed within a Roman system of values that define her as property.¹⁶ Again, the fact that the poem seems to commit to two views simultaneously suggests that it does not make a choice.

The Rape of Lucrece highlights the voice and the ability to speak. That Lucrece is able to speak, do things with her voice, and have her voice fail in a way similar to that of the men points to the fact that Lucrece has the same status as them. Shakespeare suggests the importance of voice by having one of the first events of the poem be a linguistic act: the description quoted earlier of Collatine's boasting about Lucrece's beauty. This importance intensifies as the poem proceeds since most of the poem gives itself over to Tarquin's and Lucrece's first-person accounts of their thoughts and of the events. The presence of Lucrece's voice in equal or greater amounts than the men indicates that the poem assigns her a similar status as a person.

One of the most important acts that the voice accomplishes in the poem is the making of the verbal contracts which serve to move the plot forward. For example, before the poem begins, the men bet over whose wife is at home. The bet then holds the men to the contract that they must yield Collatine the victory when Lucrece is the only wife at home, but also moves the plot forward in that making the bet and carrying it through ultimately leads to Tarquin's midnight ride to Rome to rape Lucrece. The male characters in the poem make

¹⁶ Coppélia Kahn. "Lucrece, The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity." *Rape and Representation*. Higgins, Lynn A. and Brenda R. Silver, Eds. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 141-159.

another contract when they vow to avenge Lucrece's rape (1835-1841). The vow requires that they carry through on their claim. When they do, their actions move the plot forward, and indeed end the poem, when they drive Tarquin from the city and change the government from Kings to Consuls. Lucrece has a similar ability to make contracts using her voice. She uses her voice to ask that the men avenge her rape. The answer that the men agree to consequently sparks their own vow and the actions which ultimately drive the poem to its conclusion when Collatine and his men banish Tarquin from Rome. Lucrece's ability to make this contract and have it acted upon shows that she participates in the movement of the plot in the same way that the men do and that she therefore has the same status of personhood.

By the same token, Lucrece's failure of words is presented in similar terms to the failures experienced by Tarquin and Collatine. That is, as I've suggested, her complaints about the inadequacy of language are complaints that the narrator makes as well when he describes the failure of the words of men.

But like its metaphors of property, the poem's treatment of voice works against itself for men own and construct everything about Lucrece, including her voice. In a recent essay on *The Rape of Lucrece*, Coppélia Kahn argues that in spite of the "tongue", the voice that Shakespeare gives Lucrece and the understanding with which he presents her, ultimately he inscribes her within the same patriarchal values of the Roman society that authorize rape and blame women as victims. It is possible, in other words, to see that when Lucrece speaks, she does it not with an equal voice, but within and out of the language and rhetoric of men. Implicitly then we might argue that Lucrece is not a person with her own autonomy, but the property of men. Lucrece's voice, at first a sign of her personhood, quickly becomes the thing that reveals the extent to which men have control over, and define her. Like the evidence of the metaphors, Lucrece's voice reveals how easily Shakespeare turns away from committing himself to either notion of Lucrece, how he undermines one vision with another, at the very moment he describes it.

Rather than endorsing one view of woman or another, the poem embodies

precisely the conflict over the status of woman evident in the rape statutes and the legal authorities who comment on them. How does this fact bear on the original question: why is the rape, in particular the moment of penetration, passed over in silence? The poem passes over it in silence because the rape is the inevitable site of conflict between these notions. It is the moment when the poem, by graphically describing rape, would have to take a stand on the status of woman. The poem passes over the rape since to describe rape as "carnal knowledge of a woman against her will" would commit to something which was undetermined and undeterminable at the time. Graphically representing rape in the Renaissance would mean assigning Lucrece, and all women, the status of person in a world where that particular status was neither denied nor assured.

Chapter Two

The Glozing Words of Milton's *Comus*

The attempted rape scene in *Comus* is one of several moments in which Milton's masque praises the power of chastity. The Lady warns the magician Comus who is besieging her that if she were to describe chastity's power that "...the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake, / Till all thy magic structures, reared so high, / Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head" (797-799).¹ The Lady's threat ascribes what are virtually supernatural powers to chastity, but the action of the masque challenges this claim in several ways. First, it takes the Lady's brother and an attendant spirit to drive away the villain. Second, even then the Lady is still stuck in her chair: the powers of chastity (whatever they are) are not enough to get her out of it. Finally, it is specifically language that is required to combat the magician: the brother must say "backward mutters of [Comus'] dissevering power." The moment suggests not only that chastity lacks the power the Lady claims it has, but perhaps more disturbingly, that language in particular -- the force we associate with the magician himself -- has the power that chastity should. As such, these discrepancies raise a series of questions. One, why does chastity lack the power that the masque (which ostensibly endorses the chastity of the Lady) claims it has? Two, why are a series of auxiliary figures (the brothers, the Attendant Spirit, Sabrina) required to do what chastity should? Three, why is it that language in particular assumes chastity's alleged power in the course of the poem?²

¹ All quotes come from *Comus*. Milton, John. *The Complete English Poems*. Campbell, Gordon, Ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992. 59-91.

² Stanley Fish reads the problems raised by *Comus* as a literary device. The masque raises, develops, and solves these problems and in doing so mirrors the process that the reader goes through while reading. "Problem Solving in *Comus*." *Illustrious Evidence: Approaches to English Literature of the Early Seventeenth Century*. Miner, Earl, Ed. Berkeley: University of California, 1975. 115-132.

I: The Competition between Chastity and Language

The competition that the masque stages between chastity and language may function to illustrate chastity's power. The masque provides plenty of evidence to suggest that the masque really does believe that chastity has more force than language. For example, there are a number of moments in the work in which characters vaunt the power of chastity and one in particular in which chastity does what it is supposed to do. The Elder brother wins the debate by convincing the younger that if the Lady is chaste, if she has "true virginity", then "No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer / Will dare to soil her virgin purity" (426-7). Chastity should have the force to allow the Lady to walk through danger unscathed, or as the brother implies six lines earlier, unpenetrated. He says, "T'is Chastity, my brother, chastity, she that has that is clad in complete steel" (420-1). Chastity is a supernatural force that should keep the Lady from harm. If a chaste lady is in danger, then "the Supreme Good... / Would send a glistening guardian, if need were, / To keep [her] life and honour unassailed" (217-20). We see that chastity does indeed have the power "to keep life and honour unassailed" in the rescue scene. In this scene, Sabrina is the "glistening guardian" and helper of "ensnared chastity" (909). She comes in to rescue the Lady, "a virgin... / In hard besetting need" (856-7). In one sense the moment validates the claim about chastity because the Lady does get her "glistening guardian," but in another, the very fact that it requires outsiders to rescue the Lady suggests that there is something less than supernatural about chastity itself. More to the point, the moments where chastity works are offset by ones in which it usually fails while in the presence of another power.

In the scenes which juxtapose chastity and language to each other, pose one force against the other, it is language that comes out ahead. For example, in the first scene in which the Lady meets Comus, the magician tells the audience that he will tempt the Lady with "well-placed words of glozing courtesy" (161). When he does this, the Lady does not walk through danger

unscathed, but follows the villain. One reading, of course, is that the Lady is deficient in chastity, but another is that chastity itself simply cannot compete with language. In the scene of attempted rape, chastity seems limited: the Lady is incapable of saving herself and is even immobilized during the rescue scene. Chastity also seems less powerful than language in particular. This is true both in the sense that Comus' spell immobilizes the Lady, but it is also true when the Lady says, "I had not thought to have unlocked my lips / In this unhallowed air" (756-7). The act of speaking itself is figured as a kind of sexual consent. In this moment, the suggestion is that language (here, the Lady's language and not the magician's) undoes, or makes inroads into, chastity.

It is possible that though these moments expose chastity as having less than supernatural power, that the masque challenges the virtue so as to ultimately redeem its power. Perhaps the temporary doubt about chastity is part of masque structure. According to this form, the figures of the anti-masque are characters of unruly behavior that threaten the order of the world of the masque characters. Usually, the figures of the masque triumph over the figures of the anti-masque.³ If we apply this definition to *Comus*, we should see that chastity (the Lady) triumphs over language (the rape, Comus' lust). As we have seen, the problem with this is that it is not just Comus' language, but the lady's as well, that challenges chastity's power. Also, it is not really the case that chastity suddenly triumphs at the end. In one sense it does -- Sabrina saves the Lady, but even if there is a certain masque-like element to the poem's treatment of chastity, this will not explain the redundancy, or doubling, of chaste figures.⁴

³ M.H. Abrams. "Masque." *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993, 6th edition. p.109-110.

⁴ D.C. Allen notes Comus' dominance in the masque. Rather than see the masque as identified with the villain, he suggests that Comus' power only illustrates Milton's "ill-success" (104). See Allen, "Milton's *Comus* As A Failure in Artistic Compromise." *English Literary History*, 16:2 (June 1949), 104-119.

II: The Nature of Chastity

Perhaps if masque structure and form will not explain the contradiction in the poem's treatment of chastity, then the answer is built into the period's conception of chastity itself. It may be possible to see this by looking at a series of documents about chastity from the period: *A Rule of Good Life* (1633 ed.), *The Court of Good Counsell* (1607), *An Apology for Women, or Women's Defence* (1620), *A Discourse on Marriage and Wiving* (1615), *The Schoole of Honest and Virtuous Lyfe* (1579), and *The Mother's Counsell* (1636). These documents show that the authors do not believe that chastity has anything like the supernatural power that the Lady and the Elder Brother attribute to it. While some of the manuals treat chastity as virginity and others treat it as a psychological state, for the most part, the marriage manuals and guides for women in the period discuss chastity as a virtue that enables them to find good husbands, to find favor in the sight of God, or to insure a legitimate line of children. In other words, they describe chastity as a pragmatic virtue that enables women to navigate social relations, including their relationship to God.

In general, the manuals urge women to be chaste as a way to seek or stay in the favor of those around them. One marriage manual, *The Court of Good Counsell*, for example, urges fathers to keep their daughters chaste, to bring them up carefully, always considering, "what calling his son-in-law is like to bee, and so to frame his daughter accordingly" (xxii).⁵ Other writers encourage chastity in girls and women since the virtue will frame them accordingly for God. A 1633 edition of Saint Bernard de Clairvaux's, *A Rule of Good Lyfe*, tells us that "such as remain chaste and virgins, shall in heaven be equal to the holy angels" (163).⁶ From M.R., the author of *The Mother's Counsell*, we find out that chastity "in earthly creatures makes

⁵ *The Court of Good Counsell*. (London: Ralph Blower, 1607), STC 5876, Reel # 1375.

⁶ Bernard de Clairvaux, Saint. *A Rule of Good Life*. (Doway: Laurence Kellam, 1633), STC 1923, Reel # 1057.

heavenly saints" (5).⁷ Finally, chastity is a way to guarantee legitimate children. The marriage manual, *The Schoole of Honest and Virtuouse Lyfe*, warns in a section titled, "The Commendacion of Chastitie," that "ungodly children are unprofitable" (83).⁸ He argues that a "chaste life" brings "righteous children" (83). In other words, chastity is commendable because it insures a line of legitimate, godly children.

While these examples show that chastity is considered to have some power, it is the power to bring a woman into or keep her in the favor of her father, husband, or God. It is a virtue that has to do with social behavior and not a supernatural power like the Lady and the Elder Brother in the masque describe. Nor do they (like *Comus*) first ascribe to chastity a supernatural power and then seem to draw it back. They really will not explain, but in fact highlight, Milton's vacillation. These pamphlets, as a class, do not even shed much light on the contest between chastity and language. There is only one moment in all of the pamphlets which indicates anything about the relationship between chastity and language. This is the moment in which M.R. notes that anytime untrue or "unchaste" words are said to a chaste woman that the words turn back on the speaker and cover him "with red shame" (5). In fact, just the opposite happens in *Comus*. Rather than making the magician's words bounce back, the Lady receives his language, "unlocks her lips," to imply a kind of sexual consent.

The evidence from the pamphlets only seems to complicate the question about the limited power of chastity in the masque. They reveal that what Milton describes is very different from what the contemporary documents suggest. He describes chastity as having more power than was attributed to it in the period. He then limits chastity so that it does not even have the power that the pamphlets imply that it should. The masque is even more curious since M.R. implies that chastity has power over language and what

⁷ M.R. *The Mother's Counsell: Or, Live Within Compass*. (London: Wright, 1636), STC 20583, Reel # 1033.

⁸ Prichard, Thomas. *The Schoole of Honest and Virtuouse Lyfe*. (1579), STC 20397, Reel # 349.

Milton shows is exactly the opposite. The documents suggest that the relationship between language and chastity that the masque posits may be peculiar to Milton himself.

III: The Omnific Power of Language

If contradictions built into the period's conceptions of chastity are not immediately apparent and pamphlets that expressly address the subject of chastity suggest that the contest between chastity and language is expressly Milton's, then it seems logical to turn to *Paradise Lost*, a work in which the power of language is a major preoccupation. At first, it seems that language is so powerful, so beneficent, so all consuming as a category that it makes sense that Milton would believe that this power is greater than that of chastity.

Several moments in *Paradise Lost* articulate this. For example, God tells Abdiel that the "better fight" (VI.29) is "Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms" (VI.32).⁹ He tells him that simply the word "truth" is more powerful than Satan's army. In book VII, the poem shows us exactly how powerful a word can be. In this book, each command that God speaks initiates the creation of some new part of the universe. One of the most recognizable examples occurs when God begins the act of creation. He speaks his "omnific" words (VII.217), "Let there be light" (VII.243) and the result is that, "light ethereal, first of things...began" (VII.243-6). Each time God speaks, something new comes into the world. The poem further indicates the all-consuming, all-creative power of language by using the word "author" to describe the creator. For example, God is the "author of all being" (III.374), the "world's great author" (V.188), and the "author and end of all things" (VII.590). By linking the use of language and the act of creation, the poem shows its absolute belief in the power of language. If we take this

⁹ All quotes come from *Paradise Lost*. Milton, John. *The Complete English Poems*. Campbell, Gordon, Ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992. 149-443.

evidence in the poem to be an indication of Milton's own sentiments, then it would make sense for language to be powerful in *Comus*. Language would have to be more powerful than chastity simply because there is nothing more powerful.

Of course, Satan is also a capable creator and user of language. In the scene in which he tricks Eve, it is "...[H]is words, replete with guile, / [that] Into her heart too easy entrance" win (IX.733-734). Satan, too is an author, the "author of all ill" (II.381), the "author of evil" (VI.262), and "Satan our great author" (X.236). What these examples indicate is that language itself, though powerful, is not necessarily good in Milton's work. In other words, language as power does not rescue the masque from its seeming identification with its villain.

Perhaps if the solution to the poem's apparent concessions of the power of chastity to the power of language lies neither in masque form, nor in the period's conception of chastity, nor in Milton's own attitudes toward language as epitomized in *Paradise Lost*, then the answer must be specific to the conditions of the masque itself. The answers must lie in the historical circumstances in which for which the masque was produced and performed.

IV: Bridgewater's Masque

Current critics see the masque as a work that is inseparably tied to the political circumstances in which it was produced. In the past 25 years, many critics have seen it as Milton's method of publicly exonerating and sanitizing the Earl of Bridgewater's association with a series of political and sexual scandals that surrounded his appointment as President of the Council in the Marches of Wales in 1631.

One of the political scandals has been described and discussed by Barbara Breasted: In the winter of the year that the Earl was appointed (1631), his cousin, the Earl of Castlehaven, was indicted and imprisoned for orchestrating the rape of his wife by his servants and for sodomizing his

servants himself.¹⁰ In May, the Earl was found guilty and beheaded. Because of the familial connection between the two Earls, Breasted sees the masque as a "cleansing family ritual" (201) that "affirmed Bridgewater's possession of the aristocratic virtues which their relatives so notoriously lacked" (201). Breasted argues that the masque is a "perfect compliment to the Bridgewater Family" (219). What is problematic about this account is that, as we have seen, there are moments in which chastity is exposed as not very powerful. Whether these moments are planned or an expression of underlying ambivalence, none of them seem like good techniques for sanitization.¹¹

More recently, Leah Marcus has detailed the Earl's involvement in another sexual scandal.¹² This scandal involved the case of a servant girl named Margery Evans who was raped by two men near the town of Ludlow. When local officials refused to hear her case, Evans appealed to Charles I and the King asked Bridgewater to look into the case. During his involvement with the case, the Earl discovered the judicial corruption amongst local officials in Wales. Marcus argues that this well publicized case forms the background for the interpretation of the masque. Milton's masque "both praises the Earl for his work in pursuit of justice and acknowledges the limits upon what he can accomplish" (296). The masque then lauds the Earl's treatment of the case, his attempts to right judicial wrongs, and to pursue the truth. At the same time, it offers "a stringent challenge to all those officials who served under

¹⁰ Barbara Breasted. "Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal." *Milton Studies*, 3 (1971), 201-224. I discussed this trial in chapter one in an effort to illustrate contemporary attitudes about rape. Several critics have used the trial to discuss *Comus*. See in particular Dean A. Reilein who argues that the Sabrina figure represents the Egerton family rising above their family history. Reilein. "Milton's *Comus* and Sabrina's Compliment." *Milton Quarterly*, 5 (1971). Rosemary Karmelich Mundhenk expand on Breasted's argument in, Mundhenk. "Dark Scandal and The Sun-Clad Power of Chastity: The Historical Milieu of Milton's *Comus*." *SEL*, 15 (1975), 141-152.

¹¹ John Creaser has also criticized Breasted's reading of *Comus* as a sanitization of the events of the Audley trial. Specifically, he criticizes the hypothesis that the Audley trial delayed the Earl's taking of office, that certain cuts were made from the original manuscript because the material was too sexual, and that trial influenced the Sabrina episode. See Creaser, John. "Milton's *Comus*: The Irrelevance of the Castlehaven Scandal." *Milton Quarterly*, 21:4 (December 1987), 24-34.

¹² Leah Sinanoglou Marcus. "The Milieu of Milton's *Comus*: Judicial Reform at Ludlow and the Problem of Sexual Assault." *Criticism*, 25:4 (Fall 1983), 293-328. See also Marcus' article, "The Earl of Bridgewater's Legal Life: Notes toward a Political Reading of *Comus*." *Milton Quarterly*, 21:3 (December 1987), 13-23.

the Earl of Bridgewater's authority" (323) and a view of the ideal of judicial impartiality. Marcus' reading explains several of the contradictions in the masque. According to her reading, chastity is limited to show the powerlessness of those people, like Margery Evans, who must submit themselves to the judgment of the courts. The reason for the extra rescuers is that they, especially Sabrina, are allegories of the members of various judicial courts who must try to save the people who need them. Sabrina is in the masque because she is a "supernatural being [with] historical connections with judgment and the law" (319). She exists as a rescuer in order to be an ideal: "She embodies an ideal of rectitude which no fallible human judge could ever hope to reach" (321). Marcus' reading explains two reasons why the masque behaves like it does, but her reading does not explain the masque's implicit endorsement of language over chastity.

In a later, and very different reading of the masque, Marcus discusses the masque's, Milton's, and the Earl of Bridgewater's relationship to the Archbishop Laud.¹³ Marcus argues that *Comus* does not fit traditional expectations of masking structure; instead, the work subverts this structure in order to affirm the Earl of Bridgewater's independence from the court of Charles I and, more specifically, from the Archbishop Laud. "Milton designed *Comus*," Marcus writes, "to encourage the Earl in his resistance to Laud and the central ecclesiastical authority" (177). Milton praises the Earl's quiet resistance to Charles I's and Laud's support of plays, maygames, and other holiday celebrations as a way of "patching over dissent, questioning, and spiritual ferment" among the people (196). On a more general level, the antagonism can be understood as a fight for power between Laud (the ecclesiastical authority) and Bridgewater (the judicial authority). What was at stake was not only power, but revenue from, among other things, the fines collected for the punishment of sexual offenses. When the masque is read in

¹³ Leah S. Marcus, "Milton's Anti-Laudian Masque." *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. Chapt. 6, 169-212. Cedric Brown also discusses Puritan sentiment toward Archbishop Laud, but in the context of Milton's *Lycidas*. See, Brown. *John Milton's Aristocratic Entertainments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, esp. p. 166.

these terms, then it asserts that the Laudian party, in its support of holiday past-times, was shaping the church into something like Comus and his crew. This reading of Marcus' helps to explain many things: the reason for the extraneous rescuers is that they represent Bridgewater's notion of how the church and state could work together. The state (the brothers) has the main authority to rescue and then the church is allowed to come in at the state's invocation. The reading also explains why language is powerful by suggesting that it is the very dangerous force wielded by Comus, the literary representation of the very powerful Archbishop Laud. This reading, however, does not explain why chastity is limited, nor does it take into account the extreme and overarching power that language seems to have. Indeed, the hardest thing to account for in the masque seems to be Milton's pull toward language, a pull that has to be accounted for, if only because otherwise it identifies him with the villain.

V: These Glozing Words: The Court in Milton's *Comus*

To argue with critics like Breasted, who see the masque as an attempt to exonerate the Bridgewater family, is to produce to opposite expectation, that I will show how Milton criticizes Bridgewater instead of praising him. I would like to suggest something different. Rather than praising or criticizing Bridgewater, the masque offers a critique of courts in general and an environment where rhetoric is the most important thing of all.

The only explicit critique of the courts in the masque occurs when the Lady agrees to follow Comus. She says to Comus, who is disguised as a shepherd,

Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was named,
And yet is most pretended. (321-327)

In this passage, the Lady tells us that courtesy does not exist in the courts,

but among very different people, those from "lowly sheds". The Lady's criticism of the courts, more specifically, is not simply that they are not courteous, but that the courts are places where things are "pretended".

Another example of the masque's criticism of the court environment is that the villain is a member of the courtly class. Comus lives in a "stately palace" that is very similar to the court of Ludlow Castle where the masque concludes. Since Comus is also of the aristocratic class, then his characteristics of deception, dissembling, and specifically his use of "glozing words", are also part of what it means to be courtly.

If these things -- the Lady's criticism and Comus' identification with the aristocracy -- indicate anything about the masque's attitude, then Milton seems to be saying that being courtly means being Comus-like, deceiving, and becoming too involved with language, with rhetoric.

If we look at other representatives of the court in the masque besides Comus, this critique of the court holds true. The two representatives are the two brothers who display in their debate over their sister's safety, an overly absorbed concern with their abilities as rhetoricians. While the Elder Brother argues that chastity will save his sister, the younger one argues that chastity does not exist and that Danger will take its opportunity to hurt her (385-407). The conclusion of their debate, however, is not a mutual decision to believe in the power of chastity, but the Second Brother's exclamation that his brother's rhetoric is convincing. The Second Brother says to the Elder, "How charming is divine Philosophy! / Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose, / But musical as is Apollo's lute..." (476-478). The end of the argument is not a recognition of the power of chastity, but a distraction, a preoccupation with the power of language. More than the safety of their sister, these two members of the court are interested in their rhetoric.

How does this information help to answer the questions: why is chastity limited? Why is language so powerful? The masque suggests not that rhetoric should be more important than anything else, but in a world which is a world of the court, it is more powerful. The masque does not glorify or advocate

this state of affairs, but depicts it. Similarly, the power of chastity is limited because within the court environment, this virtue really has no power. Finally, why are there extraneous rescuers? I would argue that the rescuers are a last minute gesture to save the Lady (and overcome Comus' language) and thus conceal the masque's critique of the court. The masque is ultimately at odds with the world for which it was commissioned. It provides not simply or particularly a critique of the Earl of Bridgewater, but a critique of the world he inhabits. In such a world, speaking, "loosing one's lips," is not a form of resistance, but at least partially a sign of consent, of contamination and corruption.

Chapter Three

Advancing Goodly Chastity in Book III of *The Faerie Queen*

In book III of *The Faerie Queen*, three attempts are made to rape the "goodly Ladie" Florimell. What is striking about her attempted rapes is that every time she escapes from one predator, she ends up in the clutches of another: just as she escapes from the forester, she is set upon by the fisherman and just as she escapes the fisherman, she is set upon by Proteus. What is equally striking is that the rest of the book repeats this pattern -- the repetition of the rapes -- on a larger scale: just as Florimell's predicament is suspended, we are shown a kind of repetition of the same event with the False Florimell. Just as the False Florimell is snatched away by Sir Ferragough, Hellenore is whisked away by Paridell. In a sense, book III culminates with the most problematic rape of all. We are shown Amoret's heart literally being "cleft in twaine" by Busirane.³² The questions I am going to examine in this chapter are: what does the repetition of the rapes mean? Why does one successive attempt to rape follow another? What I am going to suggest first is that, taken cumulatively, these rapes add up to a larger story of rape and second that, more importantly, each attempt takes more and more from the woman who is the intended victim. The function of such repetition is to isolate, by contrast, the figure of Britomart. Spenser contrasts her not only to those objects of attempted rape within the book, but to his specified reader, Queen Elizabeth, as well. Ultimately, the book highlights the differences between Britomart's chastity and that of Elizabeth as part of a larger attempt to critique the Queen's chastity itself. Just as my inquiry into the relationship between chastity and language in *Comus* led "outside" the text to Milton's conception of the court, so here, my question will lead "outside" to a tentative reading of Spenser's attitude toward Elizabeth's chastity. I will suggest that Spenser's critique figures Queen

³² Edmund Spenser. *The Faerie Queen*. New York: Penguin Books. Roche, Thomas P., Jr., Ed. 1978. Book III: p. 383-562.

Elizabeth as a potential object of attempted rape. Spenser fashions himself and the general (male) reader as characters who futilely attempt to "pen" chastity in a frustrated attempt to threaten the Queen with their control.

I: Advancing Goodly Chastity

The character who is most repeatedly the object of attempted rape in book III is Florimell. If we look at the pattern of the attempted rapes here, we can see a pattern in which each attempt takes more and more away from its victim. What she loses is power, the ability to resist her attackers. As the scenes of attempted rape progress from the woods where the forester chases her, to the boat where the fisherman attacks her, to the underwater bower where Proteus threatens her, she gradually becomes increasingly isolated from those things that make her able to resist. She must abandon her horse who "from perill free...her away did beare" (VII.24.8). When she is forced to escape into the sea, she becomes more isolated from the knights, Arthur and Guyon, who are trying to help her. Not only does Florimell lose the things that make her able to resist, but the force used against her gets stronger and stronger so that, in comparison, she has less power. In the first attempted rape, the forester chases her and threatens her with his spear. In the second, the fisherman uses physical force against her when he throws her into a pile of fish scales. In the final attempted rape scene, Proteus uses against her threats of violence, magic (he transforms himself from one threatening beast to another), and physical force (he throws her in his dungeon). By the end of the series of attempted rapes, she is in a dungeon with no way to escape; she is completely powerless.

Logically, if each attempted rape strips its victim of more and more power, then the false Florimell should have even more stripped from her, but in fact, just the opposite is the case. The next two objects of rape, or attempted rape -- the False Florimell and Hellenore -- have less stripped from them, but their function is to help to call attention to the chastity of

Florimell and Amoret. They help to illustrate that the thing that is "more and more" taken away is chastity. The scenes involving Hellenore illustrate this point most clearly because the text explicitly says that the purpose of writing about unchaste characters is to call attention to the chaste ones:

But never let th'ensample of the bad
Offend the good: for good by paragone
Of evill, may more notably be rad,
As white seemes fairer, macht with blacke attone. (IX.2.1-4)

The passage argues that writing about "evill" helps to illustrate "good" and seeing "blacke" makes white seem even whiter. In other words, the purpose of the scene is to make chastity "more notable", more noticeable, by showing it in contrast to something else.

The attempted rapes of the False Florimell function similarly (though less obviously) to call attention to Florimell's chastity. What becomes evident during her scenes is that she has no chastity and no power to take away. For example, when Braggadocio steals her away from the Witch's son, the False Florimell reacts this way:

But she thereto would lend but light regard,
As seeming sory, that she ever came
Into his powre, that used her so hard
To reave her honor, which she more then life prefard.
(VIII.14.6-9)

In this passage, the False Florimell does not have any chastity to lose. She only seems to be chaste as when she is "seeming sory, that she ever came / Into his powre," or when she expresses dissatisfaction with her situation when she lends Braggadocio her "light regard." The scene suggests that the False Florimell's chastity is only seems like, is only a copy of the original. By suggesting a kind of imitation chastity in the False Florimell, the book calls attention to the chastity in the real thing. Both scenes provide some measure of what it would mean to say that each woman has "more and more taken away" by calling attention to exactly what that thing is.

If we look back on the scenes with Florimell and then forward to the ones with Amoret, we see that chastity is indeed the thing that is

progressively stripped away. By the end of the series of attempted rapes of Florimell, her chastity is all that remains. She is, in fact, the exemplar of what chastity should be. The narrator writes that he wants "t'advance [her] goodly chastitee" (VIII.43.3) so that "every honourable Dame...[her] vertuous deedes imitate" (VIII.43.5-6); but it is this chastity that is taken away from Amoret. In other words, if each attempted rape takes more away from the heroine, then while the attempted rapes of Florimell take her power and leave her chastity, the attempted rapes of Amoret take both.

If we look closely at the descriptions of Busirane's seven month long attack on Amoret, we can see a similar pattern to what occurred in the Florimell scenes: the heroine becomes more isolated and less powerful in relation to the amount of force used against her. But what these scenes ultimately develop is the pattern in which Amoret's chastity is taken away, too.

Similar to the series of attempts on Florimell, the attempted rapes of Amoret isolate her from people who could help her to resist rape, or rescue her from situations of danger. She is isolated from Scudamour when he, "Ne canst her ayde, ne canst her foe dismay" (XI.11.7); moreover, we discover that nothing that could possibly save her is capable of doing so: "sith powre of hand, nor skill of learned brest, / Ne worldly price cannot redeeme" her (XI.16.3-4). Also, as the attempted rapes continue, the force used against Amoret increases. She becomes less and less powerful in comparison to her attacker. Busirane holds her in a dungeon by "strong enchauntments and black Magicke leare" (XI.16.7) and has "many dreadfull feends...pointed to her gard" (XI.16.9). More importantly, the fact that this force is ever increasing is made evident in the Maske of Cupid scene. We see that "Cruelty" and "Despight" carry her "forward still with torture... and evermore encreased her consuming paine" (XII.21.8-9). The force used against her increases the more that she resists.

The attempted rape scenes take away more, strip off more, than Amoret's power. They seek to eradicate her chastity itself, to get Amoret to deny her

steadfast faith to Scudamour. We find out that "deadly torments do her chaste brest rend...All for she Scudamour will not deny" (XI.11.5). Busirane uses "a thousand charmes" (XII.31.8) "all perforce to make her him love" (XII.31.6). The attempts seek to get her to deny Scudamour and to pledge her love to Busirane, but this pledge would require Amoret to reject, to give up her chastity itself.

The function of the attempted rape scenes is to take "more and more" away from each heroine. In doing so, they suggest something else: rape is inextricably intertwined with the book's notion of power and chastity; rape is a vehicle through which the book calls attention to these characteristics in its heroines. But if the function of the attempted rapes is to help illustrate chastity, then it is curious that it rarely ever challenges the power or the chastity of the main character, the chaste knight Britomart. Why is she never attacked? What is the relationship between her and the subsidiary heroines? Like the contrast by Hellenore and the False Florimell to Florimell, the relationship here is one of opposition. While Florimell and Amoret get weaker, Britomart gets stronger. While the other characters are repeatedly attacked, Britomart attacks. While other characters need to be saved, Britomart saves herself. And while their chastity becomes more threatened, Britomart's becomes more inviolable. If one function of the repetition of rape is to show chastity under siege, another more indirect function is to show, by contrast, the inviolability of Britomart's chastity.

In contrast to the other heroines in book III, Britomart becomes more powerful as the book progresses. She must defend her power, her ability as a knight, several times. But unlike the other heroines, Britomart maintains her power. It is the people she fights, in fact, who get weaker in comparison to her force. Britomart first has to prove her strength, her ability as a knight, in canto I when she fights Sir Guyon. She knocks him off of his horse and "[makes] him stagger, as he were not well" (I.6.5). Later in the book, her force appears to have increased so much that she not only knocks Marinell off of his horse, but almost fatally wounds him. She fights with "fierce

furie and great puissaunce" (IV.16.2) and after the fight, the book tells us that "all was in her powre" (IV.18.9). In her final fight with a knight, Britomart appears to be less powerful because she and Sir Paridell knock each other off of their horses and end up in "senceless corse" (IX.16.5); but by the end of the book, Britomart seems to have regained her power. She uses her "utmost might" (XI.25.1) to rescue Amoret from the castle of Busirane.

The next difference between the chaste characters is that while Florimell and Amoret get caught and need to be rescued, Britomart rescues. Florimell, for example, needs "soveraine favour towards chastity" (VIII.29.3) to "succour send [in] her distressed cace" (VIII.29.4). Britomart, on the other hand, is one who helps those in their "distressed cace." She is the "noble knight" (XII.39.2) with "huge heroicke magnanimity" (XI.19.2) who saves Amoret. Not only is Britomart capable of saving others, however, but she can also save herself when she is being attacked. For example, when Malecasta tries to rape her, Britomart leaps out of her "filed bed... [to] gride the loathed leachour" (I.62.2-4). Later, in the same scene, when Gardante wounds her, Britomart leaves the company "all dismayd" (I.66.4) and drives them from the room "quite terrifide" (I.66.9). In canto XII when Busirane attacks her, Britomart is also able to defend herself. We are told that after he strikes her with his daggers: "So mightily she smote hime, that to ground / He fell halfe dead" (XII.34.1-2). Unlike the other characters, Britomart defends and rescues herself.

We have already seen that the book uses opposition to make something more noticeable by contrasting them to others. The purpose of the opposition between Britomart and the other characters appears to be to isolate Britomart's chastity, to highlight its difference from that of the other characters in the book. What is the difference? Why emphasize it? What the book is calling attention to, I will suggest, is Britomart's chastity -- in particular, her steadfast search for Arthegall, for a husband. This becomes clear especially upon examination of the differences between Britomart's chastity and that of the other characters.

If we examine several of the other characters' chastity, we see that Britomart is the only one whose chastity is marked by her search for a husband. Quite differently, Florimell's chastity is an ornament to her beauty and something that determines her relationship to others. Her "steadfast chastity and vertue rare" (V.8.5) are "[t]he goodly ornaments of beautie bright" (V.8.6). The fact that Florimell's chastity is an ornament to beauty, something that adds to her appearance, becomes even more clear when we see that the descriptions of her chastity are usually part of a description of her physical appearance or of physical actions. When Florimell enters in canto I, the book implies that Florimell's chastity is pure by describing her appearance: she has a "face of christall stone" (I.15.4), she rides a "milke-white" horse (I.15.2), and has garments "wrought of beaten gold" (I.15.6). Later, her chastity is evident in her physical actions when she "struggle[s] strongly both with foot and hand, / To save her honor from that villain vild [the fisherman]" (VIII.27.3-4).

Unlike Florimell, whose chastity is an "ornament," Amoret is the representative of chastity and love itself.³³ She is "of grace and beautie noble paragone" (VI.52.2). She is the "ensample of true love alone" (VI.52.4). Her core, her heart is chastity itself, thus she has a "chaste brest" (XI.11.3).

Though Florimell's and Amoret's chastity differ greatly, they are

³³ It is difficult to make a clear distinction between the chastity of each of the chaste characters in the book. The difference between the chastity of each of the characters, especially Amoret and Florimell, has been the subject of much debate. Some critics see Florimell as representing beauty and Amoret as representing love. See Anon. "Introductory Observations on *The Faerie Queen*." Ed. of 1842. *Variorum Spenser*, 381. Some debate centers on the difficulty of distinguishing between Britomart's and Amoret's chastity. Dowden says that Amoret is Love's martyr and Britomart is Love's champion. See, Dowden, Edward. "Heroines of Spenser." *Transcripts and Studies*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubmen, and Co., Ltd., 1910. 305-337; C.S. Lewis. says that it is impossible to decide. See, Lewis. *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1938. If there is any agreement among the critics, it is that each of the chaste characters has only part of what Britomart has in chastity. See also, A.S.P. Woodhouse. "Nature and Grace in *The Faerie Queen*." *English Literary History*, 16:3 (September 1949), 194-228; and Frederick M. Padelford. "The Allegory of Chastity in *The Faerie Queen*." *Studies in Philology*, 21 (1924), 364-381. Recently, Susan Frye has argued that Britomart, Amoret, and Florimell are all versions of the same character who have been wounded by a love that is necessarily violent to all females. Susan Frye. *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. p. 131.

similar in that both are passive, both are attacked, and both are powerless. They are both involved in actively protecting their chastity and attempting to stave off a predator who wants to defile it.

Britomart's chastity differs because she is both chaste and powerful. She has both "great valiaunce" (IV.3.3) and "pure chastitie and vertue rare" (IV.3.4). For example, in canto XI, Britomart, "the flowre of chastity" (XI.6.2) has the power to drive off the giant Ollyphant, "[f]or he the power of chast hand might not beare" (XI.6.3). She consistently proves her chastity through her "goodly deeds" (IV.3.5), such as her rescue of Amoret. More importantly, what is notable about Britomart is that her chastity is characterized by her search for Arthegall, "her seeke [for] an unknowne Paramoure" (III.3.4), for the "matrimoniall bowre" (III.3.7). In other words, what distinguishes Britomart's chastity is her active, unswerving search for a husband, for married chastity.

Spenser uses Florimell and Amoret to call attention to a chastity that leads towards marriage, the consummation of love. If book III validates this kind of chastity, then there is another, related, question that the book raises. Since book III is at least partially about the Queen and since *The Faerie Queen* is about fashioning a gentleman, then there are two readers this definition of chastity might bear on: the specified reader of book III, Queen Elizabeth, and the general reader of the work itself.

II: Queen Elizabeth's Chastity

I have suggested that Britomart embodies Spenser's ideal of chastity. Is Britomart the representative of the Queen's chastity? While there are surprisingly few passages in book III which explicitly discuss Elizabeth, and only one that explicitly refers to her chastity, these passages reveal that the chastity of Queen Elizabeth and Britomart differ greatly. Spenser ultimately validates Britomart's chastity and uses the opposition between the characters to draw attention to his critique of the Queen.

The only overt discussion of Elizabeth's chastity occurs in the dedicatory proem to book III when Spenser asks Elizabeth,

Ne let his fairest Cynthia refuse
In mirrours more then one her selfe to see,
But either Gloriana let her chuse,
Or in Belphoebe fashioned to bee:
In the one her rule, in the other her rare chastitee.
(Pr.5.5-9)

In this passage, Spenser requests that Elizabeth either see herself as powerful, like Gloriana, or as chaste, like Belphoebe. He implies that power (her rule) and chastity can not exist in the same body, that they are incompatible. Spenser believes Queen Elizabeth's chastity should be compartmentalized, separated from her power. By asking her to choose between chastity and power in the dedicatory stanzas and then creating a heroine who exemplifies the co-existence of both attributes, Spenser contrasts Elizabeth and Britomart and by juxtaposing their chastities, Spenser critiques Elizabeth's.

Why does Spenser critique the Queen's chastity? If Britomart is the representative of chastity and her chastity is characterized by her search for a husband, then it is possible that Spenser criticizes Elizabeth for remaining a virgin, for not seeking a husband. There is some evidence to suggest that Spenser is anxious about the fact that Elizabeth remains "a royall virgin" (III.49.6). This criticism occurs in canto III when Merlin tells the lineage of Queen Elizabeth. When he arrives at the point in the story when he must describe the Queen, he stops speaking, "As overcomen of the spirites powre, / Or other ghastly spectacle dismayd, / That secretly he saw..." (III.50.2-4). The context in which this scene occurs implies that Merlin is dismayed by something about Elizabeth. Since Merlin has been describing lineage, marriage, children, it possible that the "ghastly spectacle" he sees is Elizabeth's failure to produce these things.

Spenser might be critiquing the chastity of his specified reader, the Queen, ut there is another reader of the book that Spenser's criticisms bear

on: the general reader that Spenser proposes his project fashions. What is the effect of criticizing the Queen's chastity on this reader?

III: The Queen's Chastity and The Gentleman Reader

In a letter of the author's to Sir Walter Raleigh, Spenser proclaims that, "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (15). How does Spenser imagine his critique of the Queen as part of the larger project to fashion the male reader? Perhaps the way he fashions himself as the male subject reflects how he wants the general, male subject to be fashioned.³⁴ His own project fashions him as one of the people who can "pen". Spenser does this in a frustrated attempt to deal with the Queen's power, with a kind of chastity that combines chastity and power, but does not seek marriage. The Queen's chastity is something that is beyond his "pen", something that he cannot control.³⁵

There is evidence to suggest that Spenser figures himself as something like Busirane and the act of representation is something like the act of rape.

³⁴ Montrose discusses the relationship between Spenser as the subject of the Queen and the Queen as subject of a literary work. Montrose, Louis Adrian. "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text." *Literary Theory/ Renaissance Practice*. Parker, Patrica and David Quint, Eds. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1986. 303-340.

³⁵ In the past decade, several critics have dealt with the subject of Spenser's reactions to the Queen's chastity. With a few exceptions, most conclude that Spenser was frustrated by the Queen's presentation of her chastity. For a discussion of how Spenser's frustrations register themselves in the text, see Pamela Joseph Benson. "Rule Virginia: Protestant Theories of Female Regiment in *The Faerie Queen*." *English Literary Renaissance*, 15:3 (Autumn 1985), 277-292 and Maureen Quilligan. "The Comedy of Female Authority in *The Faerie Queen*." *English Literary Renaissance*, 17:2 (Spring 1987), 156-171. For a discussion of Spenser's representation of her chastity, see Bruce Thomas Boehrer. "'Careless Modestee': Chastity as Politics in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queen*." *English Literary History*, 55:3 (Fall 1988), 555-575 and John King. "Queen Elizabeth: Representations of the Virgin Queen." *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43:1 (Spring 1990), 30-74. Susan Frye has a similar argument about what Spenser does in book III. While I agree with her reading, I disagree with some of her basic assumptions. First, while she argues that the text conflates Britomart, Florimell, and Amoret, I argue that they are different principally because they are differently victims of rape. Second, she argues that Spenser is trying to enforce a dominant definition of chastity as virginity, and (as I will argue below) I think he supports a notion of chastity as the pragmatic virtue discussed in chapter two. Third, while she only deals with the subject of rape in the last two cantos of book III, I discuss the pattern of repetition throughout the book. Finally, I expand the argument to include Spenser's construction of the male reader. See Frye, Op.Cit.

The book makes the analogy between rape and representation when Scudamour describes Amoret's predicament. Scudamour asks why Busirane is allowed to "[his] lady and [his] love so cruelly to pen" (XI.10.9)? The use of the word "pen" to describe Busirane's actions draws an analogy between "penning" (holding someone forcibly in one place) and, "penning" (writing). The description of what happens to Amoret also draws an analogy between Busirane and Spenser who are both involved in the act of "penning" a chaste figure. In a disturbing way, the analogy aligns Spenser with Busirane and implies that Spenser's act of representation of Elizabeth is analogous to attempted rape.

Though there are no other moments in the poem that describe representation as like rape, there are many that suggest something close to it: that representations have the power to hurt, to marre the reader. When Spenser writes about Malecasta, he addresses "Faire Ladies" and asks that they "Let not [Malecasta's] fault [their] sweet affections marre" (I.49.3). The implication is that the representation of Malecasta's unchaste behavior has the power to mar "Faire Ladies". Here, the book implies that representations have the power to damage the female reader, earlier in the book, he implies that they can hurt the Queen herself. For example, when Spenser writes to Elizabeth that he fears that he will "her perfections with his errour taint" (Pr.2.5), he implies that his representations have the power to hurt or damage the original. When Spenser writes about Hellenore, he says that representing the "wanton Lady" (IX.1.6) will "with her loose incontinence...blend / The shyning glory of your soveraigne light" (IX.1.3). The implication, here, is that the act of writing about "loose incontinence" is enough to cause it to "blend" with (and thus damage and make impure) the "soveraigne light" of the Queen.

If Spenser fashions himself, the Queen's subject, as capable of "penning" Elizabeth's chastity, then perhaps he imagines for the general reader similar capabilities. Ultimately, I think he imagines another person, a "gentleman reader", who is also frustrated by female authority, by a kind of chastity that is beyond his control.

IV: *The Faerie Queen* and The Aging Elizabeth

The suggestion that Spenser is frustrated by the Queen's chastity may seem strange considering that book was first published in 1590 when the Queen was fifty-seven and beyond the age when chastity, marriage, and child-bearing were an issue. Why would he attack Elizabeth's chastity at such a late date? Some critics -- Montrose, Quilligan, Benson -- argue that *The Faerie Queen* is in part responding to a general frustration that had always surrounded the female ruler, but there is another explanation. In the 1590's the issue of the succession was still particularly charged.³⁶ Though by 1590, the question of marriage and children had disappeared, the issue of the succession remained. It makes sense for Spenser to criticize the Queen for choosing a kind of chastity that prevented the question of succession from being solved.

Exactly what kind of chastity does he want her to have? Ultimately, he validates a chastity like Britomart's, one which resembles that of the pamphlets discussed in chapter two. His work aggressively figures an attack on all kinds of chastity that do not pragmatically help the owner to maneuver her way through social relations. Of course, Elizabeth was a master at using her marriagability to manipulate her political position, but this is not the kind of chastity that Spenser writes about. He imagines a chastity like Britomart's, one that would navigate the Queen to a husband. The problem registered in *The Faerie Queen* is this: not only does the Queen's chastity not lead her to a husband, but more problematically for Spenser, it resists "penning", definition, and control.

³⁶ John King specifically makes the connection between the succession and chastity in his discussion of the concern about the "chaste perpetuation of the Tudor dynasty" (Op.Cit. p. 44). For a detailed discussion of the questions of marriage and succession in Elizabeth's reign see, J.E. Neale. *Queen Elizabeth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1934. p. 119. An example of the connection between the issues of marriage, succession, and chastity is the 1563 House of Commons petition to Elizabeth which warned her of the "miseries unspeakable" that would befall England if the Queen did not name a successor. The petition also carried in it an exhortation to her to marry. Typically the Queen responded to these requests as she did in 1559 by defending her peculiar kind of chastity: "...[I]n the end, this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time lived and died a virgin" (Neale 73).

Ioynnt-stoole, and put his tongue in her molith to kisse her, but shee was wonderous fearefull of him, and strived with him as much as she could, but hee would not let her alone, but stroue with her.

There are certaine passages which are vpon the Records which for Modestie sake are here omitted.

I Asked her why shee told it not at the first, shee said shee was afraid her Mother would haue beaten her: but then at her mothers intreatie, I tooke her home and drest her, but when I opened her to dresse her: the place did smooke like a pot that had seething liquor in it that were newly vncovered, and I found her to bee very sore, and could not abide to bee touched: but I perceiued that some body had drest her, and I asked her if any body had medled to dresse her, shee told me *Lambs* maid *Becke* had brought her a thing in a dish, and had drest her, but there was a little specke of the venimous substance of it, that stucke vpon the inside of her thigh, and when I puld it away, it had festerd the place where it stucke, as if one had touched it with an end of Iron, so vilde and venimous was that base substance. So by the intreaty of goodwife
Seager,

"A Briefe Description of The Notorious Life of John Lambe, otherwise called Doctor John Lambe, Together with His Ignominious Death." Amsterdam, 1628. STC 1475-1640. Catalog # 15177, Reel # 803.

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