There is a remarkable lack of consensus—even for Spenser criticism—in interpretation of Book II of *The Faerie Queene*. Is Book II to be read in a Christian or purely secular context? And just how sufficient is Guyon's virtue in that context? While debate flourishes over such questions, basic aesthetic problems of Book II are largely ignored. For example, although the House of Alma manifests a rich classical background, the allegory of the body-castle, with its A=B equivalences, can seem clumsy and mechanical. While Guyon has sworn to defeat Acrasia, the enemy of Temperance, the intertemporal violence with which he destroys the Bower of Bliss and fulfills his quest seems aesthetically disturbing because it appears excessive for the triumph of Temperance it purports to express.

Once, however, one admits aesthetic objections to parts of Book II and considers directly the apparent clumsiness or confusion with which seemingly straightforward moral doctrine is allegorized, what might have been dismissed as occasional lapses in Spenser's poetic judgment appear as a coherent poetic strategy of discrediting Classical Temperance as a moral standard in order to put in question the actual relationship between ethical principle and moral action and to examine allegory itself as a methodology. That the allegory of the House of Alma, while consistent in principle, can seem awkward and problematic in execution calls attention to the relationship between *theoria* and *praxis* as Spenser shapes his allegory to address the concerns of Book II. Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss—a signal that the moral concerns of Book II are not to have satisfactory solution within the limited terms of Temperance—seems, indeed, excessively violent. For full moral resolution, the reader can consider the larger pattern of the 1590 *Faerie Queene*, in which Book II forms the antithesis of a dialectical movement that explores the problem of making sense of sensual experience. Although Book II does not appear in this context as a self-contained whole, reading the book as part of a larger pattern reveals the true unity of Book II: the coherent—and ironic—exploration of the limitations of Temperance. Rather than unconditionally approving Temperance, Book II furnishes a critique which, in the episodes concerning the House of Medina and Occasion and Furor, descends to out-and-out burlesque. The object of this critique, I should like to argue, is not so much Temperance itself, but the misappropriation of the classical virtue as a ready-made theoretical framework for acting in the fallen world. The use of Temperance as a design for ethical living becomes a series of exegetical defenses against experience masquerading as a classical, self-sufficient virtue. To treat moral and aesthetic questions separately is therefore to fall prey to the self-deceived methodological narrowness Spenser wishes to criticize.
Book I initiates the dialectic and addresses the uncertainty of sense experience by treating the fallen world as a sign that points toward eternal sureties. The typological pattern of sin and redemption subsumes the physical and spiritual wanderings that make up the quest of the Redcrosse Knight. He is led through errors both moral and epistemological to fulfill his quest by slaying the dragon and liberating Eden. The linguistic pun error—errare that underlies the Redcrosse Knight's adventure hints at the inseparability of moral, epistemological, and formal aesthetic problems in The Faerie Queene. Nonetheless, Book I gives assurance that there is ultimate truth at the far end of earthly signs by deferring the practical problem of mediating experience. Redcrosse errs by seeking truth through his senses and must learn to prize truth—faith and loyalty—over the evidence of physical sense. Spenser's witty comment on the climactic dragon battle, "The joyous day gan early to appeare" (1.11.51.1)—it is indeed early for judgment day—by suggesting an ambiguity of historical time, calls attention to how problematic the literal level is in the textbook typology of the episode.\(^6\) The actual, fallen world, which provides a ground for the redemptive dragon fight, teasingly resists redemption. Eden menaced by the dragon is necessarily a fallen Eden. When the dragon falls to the ground in defeat, he becomes one with the unredeemed physical world and "like an heaped mountaine lay" (1.11.54.9). Although the dragon fight points typologically toward ultimate redemption, the world remains fallen. Typological allegory saves the world of appearances from being merely transitory and phenomenal, but it offers little help in contending with the phenomena of the physical world.

The problem of actually coping with fallenness, or mediating, rather than transcending, earthly experience is deferred beyond the conclusion of Book I. In Book II, the Elfin knight and his Palmer attempt to make sense of experience by elevating classical Temperance to the status of revealed truth and adapting Christian modes of allegory to secular uses. The mishaps they have using their methodology to cope with the fallen world signals Spenser’s need to shift the basis of his own allegory. The Book of Temperance therefore provides a transition from the Christian typology of Book I, which has full authority but limited application, to the poet’s own, human model of reading, which is developed in book III.

For this reason, the spiritual context of Book II must seem ambiguous. Guyon is a pagan hero, but he acts in a world not simply of the Order of Nature. His pagan ignorance is a sign of the secular difficulties of acting in the fallen world. The problem of making sense of the fallen world is epitomized by two contrasting attempts to read signs of Original Sin. The first of these attempts occurs at the end of Canto i, when Guyon and the Palmer encounter the dying Amavia beside her dead husband Mortdant. Guyon interprets the scene to the Palmer as "the image of mortalitie" (2.1.57.2) showing how passion conquers reason and overcomes the susceptible flesh. Guyon’s response to the tableau is to urge burial of the pair, in disregard of the religious and teleological questions raised by Amavia’s suicide.\(^7\) Common morality does not, in Christian terms, at least, justify giving religious burial to a suicide. Nor does Guyon’s judgment that
“best shall be to them, that liued best” (2.1.59.4) adequately describe the fate of the human soul.

The Palmer’s attitude towards the bloody-handed offspring of Mortdant and Amavia reveals more radical avoidance of religious significance. When the babe’s hands cannot be washed of his mother’s blood, the Palmer refuses to recognize this as a sign of Original Sin. He rejects the Christian interpretation and instead provides a doubtful epyllion about a nymph who is turned into a fountain to avoid rape. The Palmer’s story of the nymph whose waters refuse the blood with which the babe’s hands are stained reflects his own unwillingness to cope with the bloodiness of human nature. He couples a misreading of the bloody hands as a symbol of the babe’s innocence with an injunction to Ruddymane to avenge his mother, to bloody his hands in earnest.

The difficulties Guyon, the Palmer, and Arthur have in reading signs of the Fall represent a special case of the hermeneutical problems encountered throughout Book II. Temperance, the virtue with which Guyon attempts to cope with the fallen world, represents a system inadequate to the complexities it purports to engage: the knight’s reliance on a pre-determined system to understand and respond to the world around him gets him into trouble. Guyon’s naive dependence on methodology leads him to strike a mechanical mean between arbitrary extremes where more thoughtful attempts at mediation are needed. The ostensible archetype of Temperance as the golden mean, the House of Medina, is, in fact, a lampoon of the theme it purports to express. The three sisters, Elissa, Perissa, and Medina, who seemingly embody the theme of Temperance as a mean between extremes, present a formula for perpetual family strife. Guyon’s attempted mediation of the battle between Huddibras and Sans loy yields a picture of farcical violence that makes Guyon’s efforts seem foolish. Well-intentioned Guyon runs “vnto that stead, their strife to vnderstond” (2.2.21.7). The literal appropriateness to the situation of the word “vnderstond” mocks any other understanding Guyon might have of his role as the knight of Temperance. Guyon’s role as mediator becomes similarly, and comically, literal when all he can do is rush between the knights to stand under their combined blows and be driven away. Medina’s efforts at making peace between the two are more successful than those of Guyon, but, nonetheless, her own version of mediation is highly questionable. She steps between the knights and tells them, “And were there rightfull cause of difference, / Yet were not better faire it to accord” (2.2.30.1-2). Medina makes accord itself a value, at the expense of any substantive meaning the dispute may have. The difference between the two knights is granted no significance except insofar as that difference allows a mean to be struck. The knights are persuaded to go into dinner, where they glower at each other in a parody of discordia concors.

Spurious mediation appears in a much more serious light when Arthur encounters Maleger’s hags, Impotence and Impatience. When Arthur falls between them, he occupies a mean position that is far from golden. Moreover, the defeat of the hags does not illustrate a happy medium between Impotence and Impatience. Rather, they are defeated
by the low squire acting as the agent of heavenly Providence. Mere positional significance gives place to the meaningful paradox that a lowly mortal can bring aid from highest divinity. Similarly, the paradox of divine grace saves Guyon when, after walking the straight and narrow through the Cave of Mammon, he faints dead away and is succored by an angel. Guyon is unconscious of the rescue, but the Palmer (and the reader) see the angel, who is likened to Cupid, “hauling laid his cruel bow away” (2.8.6.2). The angelic Cupid seems, curiously, to bridge a gap between the Book of Holiness and the Book of Chastity. Guyon is largely unaware of the divine order that justifies the world of appearances and is unwilling to open himself to the erotic and uncertain world of the senses. He seeks a kind of structural authority in Temperance which is blind to both Eros and Agape.

The hermeneutical errors characteristic of Guyon and of his mentor the Palmer result partly from an indiscriminate adherence to methodology but, more fundamentally, from prudishness that induces the drawing of rigid boundaries around the individual, boundaries that purport to exclude sense experience. In Book II, Temperance represents the breaking asunder of the complex mediating capacity of the human body: as a formal structure, the human body defines the boundaries between self and non-self, but it is also the physical medium of sense experience. Instead of accommodating this complexity, Temperance offers the defensive ordering of inner space, the regulation of the passions purely as a means of excluding the sensual world. In its very insufficiency, Temperance attests to the interdependence of moral sensibility and exegetical performance.

The climactic trial of Guyon’s Temperance in the Cave of Mammon reveals the fatal inability of that virtue to accommodate both the physical and psychological components of the passions. In the Cave of Mammon, Guyon faces a test of the senses on two levels simultaneously: those of desire and of basic physical appetite. He passes the first test and fails the second. Guyon can easily refrain from looking with desire upon anything in Mammon’s realm, but his very repression leads him to neglect his genuine physical needs. After three days without food or sleep, he faints dead away. Critics, searching for some fault that would explain why the seemingly virtuous Guyon succumbs after successfully avoiding all of Mammon’s snares, sometimes charge Guyon with excessive curiosity. (Tonkin; Berger 3-38). To the extent that Guyon’s curiosity is the desire for pure intellectual experience, to the neglect of his grosser sensual needs, it is indeed the fault that brings about his downfall and reveals a serious division between his modes of perception and of self-perception.

In Book II, exegesis becomes a method of avoiding sympathetic connection with the complexities of the sensual world. The Palmer is the model of the simple-minded exegete who directs Guyon away from the stuff of human experience. The Palmer begins his exegetical career by misreading the blood-stained hands of Ruddymane, in a fastidious evasion of human falleness. His final act of interpretation, as he explains “what meant”11 Acrasia’s beasts to Guyon, reveals no deepening of critical method:
Said he, These seeming beasts are men indeed, Whom this Enchauntresse hath transformed thus, Whylome her louers, which her lusts did feed, Now turned into figures hideous, According to their mindes like monstruous. (2.12.85.1-5)

In assigning a privileged status to the mind, the Palmer completely disparages the body. For the Palmer, physical form serves only to reveal the mind, which becomes monstrous through its involvement with the sensual. The Palmer’s final comment, “Let Grill be Grill, and haue his hoggish mind, / But let vs hence depart, whilst wether serues and wind” (2.12.87.8-9) gives a perfect synopsis of his characteristic exegetical method. Faced with the wonderfully intractable Grill, the Palmer can only name him, express disgust, and turn away.

The limitations of Temperance in mediating between the individual and experience are reflected in the critical examination of allegory that begins in earnest with the appearance of the allegorical figures Furor and Occasion (2.4). The false division made by Temperance between inner state and outward condition is reflected poetically in the episode by the discrepancy between narrative victory over allegorical figures and a satisfactory solution to the moral problems those figures represent. Although Guyon easily subdues Occasion and Furor, the violent complexity of Phedon’s plight, which, as we subsequently learn, called forth the figures, belies the value of Guyon’s achievement. At the heart of Phedon’s predicament lie poetic discontinuity and the failure of human connection: the discordant relationship of Furor to Occasion, Phedon’s furor to its occasion, and the apparently crude allegory of personification to the full significance of Spenser’s text all combine to present a field of conflicts that far surpasses Guyon’s powers as a mediator.

The occasion of Phedon’s murderous furor is his failure to establish the appropriate connections, either to the object of his passions, Claribell, or to his doppelgänger, Philemon. Phedon distances himself as “The sad spectatour of my Tragedie” (2.4.27.6) and blames his own violent actions entirely upon the friend who shared his love and private confidences. He fails to see his own faithlessness in Philemon’s guilt or to recognize the dark side of his love for Claribell in the violence provoked by intimations of her sexuality. Phedon uses language both to justify and to sustain his furor. He recounts his murderous rampage with elaborate parallels and antitheses in order to impose a pattern of poetic justice upon the expression of his fury:

Which when I heard, with horrible affright  
And hellish fury all enragd, I sought  
Vpon my selfe that vengeable despight  
To punish: yet it better first I thought,  
To wreake my wrath on him, that first it wrought.  
To Philemon, false faytour Philemon  
I cast to pay, that I so dearely bought;
Of deadly drugs I gaue him drinke anon,
And washt away his guilt with guiltie potion.

Thus heaping crime on crime, and griefe on griefe,
To losse of lounde adioyning losse of frend,
I meant to purge both with a third mischiefe,
And in my woes beginner it to end:
That was Pryene; she did first offend,
She last should smart: with which cruell intent,
When I at her my murdrous blade did bend,
She fled away with ghastly derriment,
And I pursewing my fell purpose, after went.

(2.4.30-31)

The repetition of “first” (“better first I thought . . . first it wrought”) initiates a movement away from Phedon himself, his own guilt, and the punishment of the guilt with suicide. Moreover, Phedon makes the priority implied by the term “first” carry an unjustified connotation of responsibility. He implies a spurious causality with the metaphors “pay” and “bought.” The facile antitheses “in my woes beginner it to end” and “first offend, last should smart” divert attention from Phedon’s own role in the expression of emotions in violent action. True poetic justice, however, is introduced with the appearance of the allegorical figure Furor: Phedon justifies himself with poetic fakery and is attacked by a trope.12

The figure Occasion reveals complementary discontinuities between her status as the mother of Furor and the way she performs her role, how she mothers. Ostensibly, the genealogy of Occasion and Furor is a metaphor of origins, expressible by the idiomatic statement, “occasion is the mother of furor.” Nonetheless, this sober, ontological statement contrasts with the rather foolish cheerleading she uses to provoke Furor, which represents the dynamics of her influence on her son.

Guyon does not see that Furor and Occasion may refer both to inner states and to outward manifestations. Guyon starts out faced with the nice paradox of having to fight Furor without becoming furious while at the same time needing irascible passion as a source of strength. The paradox is betrayed by the Palmer’s simple, purely narrative decision to bind the figure of Occasion. Similarly, Occasion represents the etymological falling together of circumstances and purpose, but the potential ambiguity of the figure is not faced directly.

The limitations of Guyon’s attitude towards the allegory of Occasion and Furor appear more clearly when Occasion becomes the occasion of conflict between Guyon and Pyrochles (2.5). The episode comically plays a wholly psychological interpretation of Occasion against a wholly naturalistic construction of the figure. Pyrochles’ squire Atin appears seeking out Occasion in order to “stirre [his master] vp to strife and cruell fight” (2.4.42.7). He uses the figure as a kind of ad hoc psychological allegory with which to encourage his master’s violent tendencies, and, at the same time, upbraids Guyon for opposing a “silly weake old woman” (2.4.45.4). The Palmer, with uncharacteristic lucidity, exposes Atin’s
equivocation by using Occasion as a proper name and common noun, in
an idiomatic English construction, “Madman . . . that does seeke / Occa-
sion to wrath, and cause of strife” (2.4.44.1-2), but the lesson is lost on
Guyon.

The inadequacies of Guyon’s approach to the interplay of psycho-
logical and external phenomena are revealed in the battle between Py-
rochles and Guyon and the subsequent freeing of Occasion. That Guyon
finally concedes the point of the conflict to Pyrochles indicates the basic
senselessness of the entire battle. More specifically, Guyon’s action, or
quiescence rather, in allowing Pyrochles to free Occasion belies the
admonitions about Temperance with which he interprets the battle for
Pyrochles. Guyon’s victory over the enraged Pyrochles illustrates quite
clearly the disadvantages of losing one’s self-possession. Having defeated
Pyrochles, Guyon attempts to effect a reconciliation by moralizing his
defeat for the knight: the loss of a battle is less shameful than the loss of
psychological mastery. In emphasizing the psychological aspect of the
encounter, Guyon tacitly acquiesces to Pyrochles’ use of Occasion as an
ersatz psychological allegory. In contrast, when Pyrochles attempts to
discuss the stated occasion of the conflict, Guyon’s supposed oppression
of the poor old woman, Guyon neglects to explain that Occasion is more
than the weak old woman she appears to be. Rather, he smiles and allows
Pyrochles to bring discord upon himself. An ounce of practical criticism,
in this case, would have been worth a pound of theory.

What appears to be a simple excess of irascible passion in Phedon
and Pyrochles is, upon careful examination, a disastrous penchant for
projecting the passions onto external form and an inability to connect
passions to their occasion. Similarly, what initially seems to be a com-
plementary excess of concupiscible passion in Cymochles can, with a differ-
ent focus, be seen as a surfeit of mediation: he enjoys his pleasures
indirectly. At the conclusion of the Pyrochles episode, the scene shifts
abruptly to the Bower of Bliss, where Cymochles indulges inclinations
that contrast with those of his brother:

There Atin found Cymochles sojourning,
To serue his Lemans loue: for he, by kind,
Was given all to lust and loose liuing,
When euer his fiers hands he free mote find:
And now he has pourd out his idle mind
In daintie delices, and lauish ioyes,
Hauing his warlike weapons cast behind,
And flowes in pleasures, and vaine pleasing toyes,
Mingled amongst loose Ladies and lasciuious boyes.

(2.5.28)

The imagery of “pourd out his idle mind / In daintie delices” combines
suggestions of a post-coital softness with soft-headedness. Cymochles
substitutes a genuine passivity for activity. His role in the entertainments
of the Bower of Bliss is expressed in language more concrete and active
than the facts of the matter deserve:
He, like an Adder, lurking in the weeds,
His wandring thought in deepe desire does steepe,
And his fraile eye with spoyle of beautie feedes;
Sometimes he falsely faines himselfe to sleepe,
Whiles through their lids his wanton eies do peepe,
To steale a snatch of amorous conceipt,
Whereby close fire into his heart does creepe:
So, them deceuies, deceiu’d in his deceit,
Made drunke with drugs of deare voluptuous receipt.

(2.5.34)

The complex and bawdy pun “snatch of amorous conceipt” slyly reproaches Cymochles’ passive voyeuristic sensuality: what he enjoys is all conceit and no snatch.

The Bower of Bliss merits moral condemnation not so much because it represents sexual license, but because not enough healthful sexual activity really occurs there. Although the Bower of Bliss is the locus of demonic sensuality, we virtually never see any of its inhabitants actually making love—in clear contrast to the Gardens of Adonis where, “Franckly each paramour his leman knowes” (3.6.41.7) and Venus takes her fill of Adonis’ sweetness (3.6.46.9). It seems that the essence of sexual abuse in the Bower of Bliss is a prurient sensibility rather than unchecked copulation. Spenser’s morality eludes the facile application of conventional orthodoxy.13 Moral significance is not something readily separable from its poetic medium. Not only is careful reading necessary to elicit the genuine moral content of Spenser’s poetry, but Spenser insists that narrowly conventional moral vision is, in fact, a poetic problem.

In the great allegorical set piece of Book II, the House of Alma, prudish inhibition about the human body is linked directly to poetic limitation. Far from being the celebration of the well-regulated body as the fortress of Temperance, the House of Alma is the example of bad allegory that exposes the inadequate strategy of defense Temperance offers in place of true understanding of the human body and its capacity to mediate experience.14 Although the architectural framework expresses detailed, physiological allegory, the idea that actually controls the allegory, Vitruvian man, the measure of all things, is suppressed and subverted.15 The emphasis placed upon individual details of the physiological allegory fragments the broad vision of the Vitruvian Castle of Health. The formal principle, tacitly given by the etymological connection of health and hāl, wholeness, is thereby undermined. In addition, the depreciation of the flesh, as “earthly slime” obscures differences between individual existence and larger cycles of nature, making it impossible to consider the relationship of human life, either to natural mutability or to ultimate sureties; it all becomes matter for compost.

Critics have pointed out the imbalance in the physiological allegory of the House of Alma which pays careful attention to the digestive system but fails to mention human sexual organs (Gohlke 129-30; Evans 141). In fact, the peculiar focus is purposeful and is partially foreshadowed by Guyon’s dual trial of desire and of physical appetite in the Cave of Mammon. The allegory of the House of Alma offers a
schematic and reductive anatomy of appetite in place of a consideration of the complexities of human passions. Relegating the natural appetite to the kitchen (or stomach) and the sensitive appetite to the Parlour (or liver) destroys the metaphoric richness of the term appetite and denies the interplay of the physical and the emotional in human passions.

The cognitive faculties are located in a turret, disconcertingly far from the passions. The three brothers who inhabit the turret, each in a separate room, figure forth major discontinuities in the processes of thought. That Guyon and Arthur are quickly ushered out of the middle chamber, inhabited by the figure responsible for reasoning about things present, hints suspiciously at the inability of the physiological allegory to treat actual experience. While Phantastes draws upon Renaissance notions of the imagination and Eumnestes’ “infinite remembrance” recalls the powers of the soul described in the *Meno*, it is not entirely clear how the figures function together in the allegory. Is the negative view of artifice represented by buzzing flies, idle fancies, and “all that fained is, as leases, tales, and lies” (2.9.51.9) definitive? Or might Phantastes benefit from more contact with his brothers? And why is Eumnestes’ “infinite remembrance” differentiated from knowledge—“all that in the world was aye thought wittily” (2.9.53.9) is explicitly the province of the second brother—when, in the *Meno* (82b-85e), Socrates demonstrates that knowledge is recovered by recollection?

The two texts encapsulated within the description of Eumnestes’ chamber cast doubt upon the entire allegorical scheme represented by the three brothers. *Briton Monuments* and the *Elfin Chronicles* present a complex coexistence of past and present, history and faerie, historical truth and literary imagination that discredits the too-simple divisions represented by the three chambers and their inhabitants. When Spenser says of the *Briton Monuments*:

> After him Vther, which Pendragon hight,  
> Succeeding There abruptly it did end,  
> Without full point, or other Cesure right,  
> (2.10.68.1-3)

he uses his own powers of literary artifice to make a witty pun that relates British history, the encapsulated history text, and the typography of Spenser’s own text to the local present of his fiction, and thereby gives the lie to those who would take the plodding, Brobdingnagian allegory of the House of Alma as Spenser’s characteristic mode.

Maleger’s attack reveals crucial limitations of Temperance as a theory of conduct when the theoretical construct that is the House of Alma must be put to practical use in repulsing the assault. In introducing the episode, the narrator calls attention to the gap between theory and practice since his assertion that, in a body ruled by reason, all is peaceful and secure is belied by the narrative action that follows: a violent and desperate battle against the forces of Maleger (2.11.1-2). The moral and exegetical defenses provided by Temperance to cope with sensual experience fail in their designated task because the very notion of defense is revealed
to be a spurious ideal. Maleger's assault of the theoretically inviolable House of Alma demonstrates that adhering to defensive strategies results only in an intolerable division between the ideal of security and the reality of perpetual siege. Temperance takes cover against the ultimate externalization of sense experience, with neither perception nor desire playing a role in the confrontation. The human body is reduced to Temperance's stockade, with the five senses, paradoxically, the bulwarks of defense and the points of greatest vulnerability. The allegory of the House of Alma situates the human body on the perimeter separating sense from sensuality, in order to show that division inherently untenable.

The conclusion of Book II, divided as it is over two cantos and ending in the contradiction of two final battles, confirms the limitations of Temperance as a scheme for making coherent sense of sensual experience. The attack upon the House of Alma by Maleger and his troops and the Bower of Bliss episode represent two contradictory ways of portraying sensuality: as war and as love. The siege of the House of Alma shows the body endangered by hostile and repulsive affections; the Bower of Bliss reveals the very different danger afforded by that which is attractive and desirable. The first canto of the inconclusive conclusion to Book II confirms the impossibility of moral and exegetical defensive strategies. The final canto reveals the human causes and consequences of those defenses against bodily mediation of sense experience.

In introducing the fulfillment of Guyon's quest to the Bower of Bliss, Spenser simultaneously establishes and subverts the distinction between abstract virtue and the hero in order to point up the unsuitability of Temperance as the model for Guyon's conduct:

NOW gins this goodly frame of Temperance
Fairely to rise, and her adorned hed
To pricke of highest praise forth to aduanse,
Formerly grounded, and fast settele;
On firme foundation of true bountied;
And this braue knight, that for that vertue fights,
Now comes to point of that same perilous sted,
Where Pleasure dwelles in sensuall delights,
Mongst thousand dangers, and ten thousand magick mights.
(2.12.1)

The stanza sets forth a parallel between "this goodly frame of Temperance" and "this brave knight." However, the potentially sexual image of "pricke of highest praise" tempers, perhaps, the ideal of mental sufficiency and control ostensibly to be illustrated by Guyon's battle with Acrasia. The covert punning is appropriate, since Guyon's first genuine experience of sensuality occurs in the Bower of Bliss. The knight who fights for virtue will not merely be doing battle on behalf of Temperance against external enemies, since the place "Where Pleasure dwells" is as much within Guyon as it is within an enchantress' garden.

Guyon's belated sexual initiation takes place at the fountain where the two naked damsels "shewd him many sights, that courage cold could
reare” (2.12.68.9). The knights discomfiture proceeds from his penchant for cultivating inner harmony and externalizing disruptive forces. One of the damsels teases Guyon by loosing her hair:

With that, the other likewise vp arose,
And her faire lockes, which formerly were bownd
Vp in one knot, she low adowne did lose:
Which flowing long and thick, her cloth’d arownd,
And th’yuorie in golden mantle gownd:
So that faire spectacle from his was refit,
Yet that, which refit it, no lesse faire was fownd:
So hid in lockes and waues from lookers theft,
Nought but her lovely face she for his looking left.

(2.12.67)

As Gertrude Stein said of Oakland, California, there’s no there there. The spectacle is not a woman, but a stimulus. The knight’s reaction is a clandestine version of internalization. Instead of Guyon’s embracing one of the damsels, “His stubborne brest gan secret pleasauce to embrace” (2.12.65.9).

With the revelation of Acrasia and Verdant in the center of the Bower of Bliss, Spenser strips the veil from the sexual fear that motivates the elaborate sensual defenses of Book II:

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

(2.12.73)

The description echoes Tasso (Gerusalemme Liberata, 16.17-22) and more distantly, Lucretius (de Rerum Natura, 1.29-40), but the double Narcissism of Armida and Rinaldo has become Acrasia’s violation of the helpless Verdant. The lovers’ eyes are not, however, organs of sense, as in Tasso, but the woman’s weapon and the man’s most vulnerable place. The witch Acrasia uses intercourse to exhaust her victim in order to exercise power over him. Her sympathetic magic depends upon a physiological pun; the man loses to her his spright (spirit) with his spright (semen). The reference to Verdant’s “humid eyes” links Acrasia’s sucking to Cymochles’ voyeurism: both Acrasia and Verdant abuse the senses by making them serve the perverse, self-indulgent, and uncreative sensuality that characterizes the Bower of Bliss. Acrasia, practicing fellatio by way of paronomasia, betrays both the nature of the threat against which the moral and exegetical defenses of Temperance are designed to guard and the crucial limitations of the defensive strategy. The succubus Acrasia represents a threat to integrity of self where that integrity is conceived as impregnabil-
ity. Acrasia violates Verdant’s physical integrity, but, more seriously, her erotic punning threatens the boundary of the moral and the physical and makes bodily integrity vulnerable to the play of language. Guyon and the Palmer can bind Acrasia and ravage the Bower of Bliss, but they cannot truly defeat the witch, since they have ceded her the creative powers of language, which she misuses. Temperance offers no alternative to Acrasia’s perverse sexuality, no creative engagement with the sensual, merely defense.

Although Guyon’s quest comes to an end with the binding of Acrasia and destruction of the Bower, *The Faerie Queene* does not conclude at the end of Book II. Just as Britomart overthrows Guyon at the opening of Book III, so the model of reading developed in Book III supersedes the hermeneutic strategies deployed in Book II. Book II has demonstrated the need for a new model of reading by revealing the danger of applying an inappropriate methodology to the enterprise of making sense of the sensual world. In Book II, Spenser undermines, not Aristotelian Temperance, but the strategy of borrowing a theoretical construct without paying critical attention to its application in practice.

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NOTES

1. For useful surveys of the critical disagreement, see Gohlke; and Cullen; also see the head note to Book II in Hamilton, ed., *The Faerie Queene* 163-68; and Berger 3-4. An earlier and much shorter version of my own argument about Book II was presented at the Medieval Institute in Kalamazoo and appears in *Spenser at Kalamazoo, 1984*.

2. Appeal to some theory of critical pluralism, such as that articulated by R. S. Crane in *The Language of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry* (3-38), is not sufficient to explain the disagreement in interpretation of Book II. To take this particular example, the choice to read Book II in either a Christian or a secular framework is not a facultative choice of critical language, as Crane would have it. The very possibility of free choice between Christian and secular world views is itself a position that can be right or wrong. To put it crudely: if the reader is free to choose whether Guyon is a pagan or a Christian—that matter a lot.

   For wholly secular readings of Book II, see Miller 299-312; Sirluck; and Woodhouse. For interpretations that place Book II in a Christian context, see Stambler; Hamilton, “Theological Reading”; and Hoopes.

3. To my knowledge, only Gohlke and Greenblatt have addressed this issue directly. I am indebted to Gohlke’s article on Book II, but I disagree with her inclination to see Guyon’s limitation as hero and the discord between the Book’s action and the apparent moral allegory of Temperance as symptomatic of a permanent dimming of Spenser’s moral vision and an enervation of Spenserian allegory that begin with Book II. Rather, I would argue that in Book II, Spenser presents a calculated, and entertaining, critique of Temperance as part of the larger dialectical pattern of the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*.
4. For a discussion of this point, and an overview of critics who share aesthetic misgivings about the Bower’s destruction, see Hamilton’s edition of *The Faerie Queene* 168.

5. For a reading of Book II as a substantiation of Temperance, see Carscallen.

6. All quotations from Spenser are taken from the J. C. Smith edition.

7. For a discussion of some of the theological implications of this scene, see Bieman.

8. See Hamilton, “Theological Reading” on this point; for a full discussion of classical and Christian sources of the episode, see Kaske.


10. This point was brought to my attention by my colleague, Elizabeth Bieman.

11. This is a clear echo of Archimago’s question to Una about “what the Lyon ment” (1.3.32.8). Una, a less reductive exegete than the Palmer, retells the entire story for Archimago.

12. For a detailed psychological interpretation of the episode, see Alpers 59-69.

13. Pollock interprets the Bower of Bliss as the source of intemperate lust.

14. For discussions of the House of Alma as a straightforward allegory of the temperate body, see Nohrnberg 290, 343-51; and Williams 64-71.

15. Barkan (162-74) has a good discussion of the tradition of the body-castle.

16. For a discussion of Renaissance mistrust of the imagination, see Rossky.

17. I am grateful to Elizabeth Bieman for calling my attention to this and for pointing out the source for Anamnestes in the slave boy Socrates induces to “intuit” the Pythagorean theorem.

18. Spenser plays on meanings of “full point”—the full stop or punctuation mark missing from the page of Spenser’s text, the full conclusion, or the full significance—and on homonyms of Cesure (caesura)—seizure, and possibly ceaser (one who puts an end to), seizor, and Caesar. Note that “There,” which succeeds the word “Succeeding” directly, without a full stop, is a locative that can point to the “there” of historical England, the “there” of English history, or the “there” of the text.

For another view of this passage, see Fried.

19. C. S. Lewis (331-32) criticized the unnatural, peep-show aspect of sexuality in the Bower of Bliss. Among subsequent readers to make essentially the same observation are Durling; and Quiones (257). For a view of this episode from a different perspective, see Okerlund.

WORKS CITED


