



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature

**ABJECTION OF WOMEN AND WOMANHOOD IN EDMUND
SPENSER'S *THE FAERIE QUEENE***

Tuğrul Can SÜMEN

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2024

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KABUL VE ONAY

Tuğrul Can Sümen tarafından hazırlanan "Abjection of Women and Womanhood in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*" başlıklı bu çalışma, 24 Ocak 2024 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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20/03/2024

Tuğrul Can SÜMEN

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ABSTRACT

SÜMEN, Tuğrul Can. *Abjection of Women and Womanhood in Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene*, MA Thesis, Ankara, 2024.

The aim of this thesis is examining the adverse representations of women and womanhood in “Book I: The Legend of the Knight of the Redcrosse, or Holinesse,” “Book II: The Legend of Sir Guyon, or of Temperaunce,” and “Book III: The Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity” in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96) from the perspective of Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection, established in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). In an unorthodox amalgamation of epic poetry, moral allegory, and medieval romance, Spenser creates a plethora of women characters and personifications in a binary opposition of morality, most of whom are represented by the virtues and vices. The narrative is constructed as a progression of physical and spiritual battles between morality and immorality, and by the victory of moral characters and personifications, Spenser conveys his didactic messages. In the light of Spenser’s nationalism, this thesis argues that in “Book I,” “Book II,” and “Book III” of *The Faerie Queene*, women, who threaten the representations of Elizabeth I, The Kingdom of England, and Protestantism are labelled as evil, and these women can be classified as mothers and “whores.” Both productive and non-productive sexual actions of evil women are represented as odious, unnatural, and villainous, unravelling the moral fabric of England. This thesis refers to theory of abjection to analyse the representations of such women, by concentrating on the form of these women. The argument connecting Spenser and Kristeva is, Spenser’s portrayals of evilness of women are created in accordance with Neoplatonism. In Neoplatonism, a person’s physical appearance is an expression of inward spiritual condition. Spenser follows the Neoplatonism in *The Faerie Queene*, and the debasing physical and non-physical descriptions of evil women focus on the body, which is represented as disgusting. This thesis analyses Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* from the perspective of abjection and argues that Spenser represents evil women as abject, and through their destruction, the author purges evil qualities from any association with Elizabeth I, the Kingdom of England, and Protestantism.

Keywords: Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Julia Kristeva, Abjection, Neoplatonism, Womanhood.

ÖZET

SÜMEN, Tuğrul Can. *Edmund Spenser'in The Faerie Queene'inde Kadınların ve Kadınlığın İğrençliği*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2024.

Bu tezin amacı Edmund Spenser'in *The Faerie Queene* (Peri Kraliçe) adlı eserinin "Book I: The Legend of the Knight of the Redcrosse, or Holinesse" (I. Kitap: Kızıl Haçlı Şövalyenin Destanı, ya da Kutsallık), "Book II: The Legend of Sir Guyon, or of Temperaunce" (II. Kitap: Sör Guyon'un Destanı, ya da Ölçülülük), ve "Book III: The Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity" (III. Kitap: Britomartis'in Destanı, ya da İffet) bölümlerinde bulunan olumsuz kadın ve kadınlık temsillerini Julia Kristeva'nın, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (Korkunun Güçleri: İğrençlik Üzerine Deneme)* (1982) eserinde kurduğu iğrençlik teorisinin ışığı altında incelemektir. Epik şiirin, ahlaki alegorinin ve Orta çağ romansının sıra dışı bir birleşimi olan eserde Spenser, iyilik ve kötülük temsili olan çok sayıda kadın karakteri ve kişileştirmelerini, ahlaki bir ikilem içerisinde yaratır. Anlatı, ahlak ve ahlaksızlık arasında süregelen fiziksel ve ruhani savaşlar ile ilerler ve ahlak sahibi karakterlerin ve kişileştirmelerin zaferleri aracılığıyla Spenser öğretici mesajlarını aktarır. Spenser'in ulusçuluğu göz önüne alınarak, bu tez *The Faerie Queene*'in birinci, ikinci ve üçüncü bölümlerinde, I. Elizabeth'i, İngiliz Krallığını ve Protestanlığı tehdit eden kadınların kötü veya ahlaksız olarak nitelendirildiğini ve bu kötü kadınların anneler ve "fahişeler" olarak gruplandırılabilceğini iddia eder. Kötü kadınların hem üreme-merkezli, hem de üreme-merkezli olmayan tüm cinsel faaliyetleri mide bulandırıcı, doğaya aykırı ve düşmanca temsil edilerek, bu kadınlar İngiltere'nin ahlaki yapısını bozmakla suçlanırlar. Bu tez bu tür kadın temsillerini incelerken Julia Kristeva'nın *Korkunun Güçleri: İğrençlik Üzerine Deneme* adlı eserinden yararlanır ve bu kadınların bedenine odaklanır. Spenser ve Kristeva'yı bağlayan nokta ise Spenser'in kadınlardaki kötülüğü betimlerken kullandığı temsillerin Neoplatonizm ışığında yaratılmış olmasıdır. Neoplatonizm'e göre, bir bireyin fiziksel görünüşü içindeki ahlaki durumun bir ifadesidir. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*'de Neoplatonizm'e uyar ve iğrenç olarak temsil edilen kötü kadın tasvirlerinde kullandığı alçaltıcı fiziksel ve fiziksel olmayan betimlemelerinde bedene odaklanır. Bu tez *The Faerie Queene*'i iğrençlik teorisi ışığında inceler ve Spenser'in kötü kadınları iğrenç olarak betimlediğini ve yazarın bu

kadınları ortadan kaldırarak beğenmediği kötü özelliklerin I. Elizabeth, İngiliz Krallığı ve Protestanlık ile çağrışımlarının engellendiğini iddia eder.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Julia Kristeva, İğrençlik, Neoplatonizm, Kadınlık.

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INTRODUCTION

Presenting the height of the English Renaissance, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is an allegory, with many meticulously interwoven layers. The elaborate layers of *The Faerie Queene* open the allegory to be examined from diverse and multiple perspectives. Accordingly, representations of women and womanhood in the allegory can be examined from contemporary approaches, which would unveil new arguments and information on how and why the women and womanhood are represented as such in *The Faerie Queene*. This thesis is an examination of disparaging portrayals of women and womanhood in "Book I: The Legend of the Knight of the Redcrosse, or Holinesse," "Book II: The Legend of Sir Guyon, or of Temperaunce," and "Book III: The Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity" in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96), by theory of abjection, established by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). The main argument of this thesis is based on a pair of pre-arguments. First, Platonism in the Renaissance features Neoplatonism as a sub-category. In Neoplatonism physical composition and morality are aligned, meaning a woman's beauty is an echo of her morality. Similarly, a woman's hideousness is an echo of her wickedness. Spenser's representations of women and womanhood in *The Faerie Queene* mirror the tenets of Neoplatonism. Second, in "Book I," "Book II," and "Book III" of *The Faerie Queene*, all "evil" women, with the exception of Lucifera and Philotime, are represented in a bipartite classification or taxonomy, either as evil mothers, or as "whores."¹ The main argument of this thesis is all evil women in *The Faerie Queene* are abject, either as mothers or as whores. Abjection is discernible either in physical or cultural composition of a woman. By physical composition, all elements of a woman's physical constitution are meant, such as appearance, bearing, clothes, cosmetics, genitals, and health. By cultural composition, a woman's cultural identity is meant, such as her ethnicity, morality, religion, and sociality.

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96) is, most basically, a eulogy, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I. *The Faerie Queene* is a hybrid creation, and defining the allegory in simple terms is challenging. Spenser defies the monochromacy of literary genres, in favour of a polychromatic amalgam of allegory, comedy, epic, pastoral, satire, and many

¹ The author of this thesis acknowledges the fact that the word "whore" is derogative to women; however, Spenser uses this word to describe some of the women characters and personifications.

more. The allegory consists of six complete chapters, or books, and a single incomplete one. “Book I: The Legend of the Knight of the Redcrosse, or Holinesse,” “Book II: The Legend of Sir Guyon, or of Temperaunce,” and “Book III: The Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity,” were published in 1590, and “Book IV: The Legend of Cambel and Telamond, or of Friendship,” “Book V: The Legend of Artegall, or of Iustice,” and “Book VI: The Legend of S. Calidore, or of Courtesie” were published in 1596. The remaining “Book VII: Two Cantos of Mutabilitie” was published in 1609, a decade after Spenser’s demise (Heale 170).

In the context of *The Faerie Queene*, the disparaging portrayals of women and womanhood are expressions of transgressions against Elizabeth I, the Kingdom of England, and Protestantism. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser creates a plethora of women characters and personifications in a binary moral opposition, oscillating between the author’s desire of representing Elizabeth I, England, and Protestantism in a perfect and protean fashion, and expelling elements inappropriate for the well-being of the monarch, the kingdom, and the religion, shaped by the author’s anxieties, apprehensions, and concerns. Morality is paramount for Spenser’s characters, most of whom are represented by the virtues and vices. The narrative is constructed as a progression of corporeal and non-corporeal engagements between morality and immorality, and through the victory of moral characters and personifications, Spenser conveys his didactic and political messages.

The primary concern of “Book I: The Legend of the Knight of the Redcrosse, or Holinesse” is adhering to the code of conduct of Protestantism, which is represented by Una and The Redcrosse Knight. The Redcrosse Knight is on a perilous quest, which is slaying a terrifying dragon. He is accompanied by a helpful Dwarf. The quest is complicated by the interference of Archimago and Duessa. Archimago is a wizard, who employs magical sprites to separate The Redcrosse Knight and Una. Duessa is a representation of Whore of Babylon, who misguides and seduces The Redcrosse Knight. Duessa is only one of the disparagingly portrayed women in “Book I.” Typically, in “Book I,” the evil women are representations of both native and foreign anti-Protestant threats. Corceca and Abessa, a mother and her daughter, reluctantly shelter Una and

following her departure, send Archimago after Una. Error is a horrifying half-serpent and half-woman monster, who The Redcrosse Knight slays to prove her mettle to Una. Night is an ancestor of Duessa, and she helps Duessa with the recovery of one of The Redcrosse Knight's enemies. The Redcrosse Knight's physical and spiritual condition is enervated with each mistake. Eventually, Una guides The Redcrosse Knight to House of Holiness for spiritual atonement and rejuvenation. Finally, The Redcrosse Knight slays the dragon and marries Una. Archimago mysteriously disappears and Duessa is banished.

The principle of "Book II: The Legend of Sir Guyon, or of Temperance" is forming a balance between deficiency and excess in daily human existence. The disparaging portrayals of women and womanhood in "Book II" are representations of either deficiency or excess. Acrasia is a representation of excessiveness in passions. Acrasia's vividly described beauty is a call for the abandonment of chastity. Even the name of Acrasia's residence, the Bower of Bliss, is an expression of ravenous lust. Acrasia is the ultimate representation of imbalance, or intemperance, in "Book II," but the penultimate threats are reverberations intemperance as well. Impatience and Impotence are representations of deficiency in patience and self-control. Occasion is representation of excessive anger and obstinance, and she is completely out-of-control. The protagonist of "Book II" is Sir Guyon, and he is accompanied by Palmer. "Book II" begins with Sir Guyon witnessing the aftermath of Acrasia's schemes and vowing to bring Acrasia to justice. Sir Guyon's role in "Book II" is the role of an enforcer, who forces people to obey the moral norms of society. In the end, Sir Guyon captures Acrasia, and destroys the Bower of Bliss.

Chastity is at the heart of "Book III: The Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity." The significance of chastity, purity, and virginity is emphasised both in "Book I" and "Book II;" however, in the context of "Book III," chastity is both a praise of love and marriage, and a eulogy to Elizabeth I. The protagonist of "Book III," Britomart, is a representation of Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen. In contrast, the anti-theses of Britomart in "Book III" are women, who delight in sexual experiences. In a general sense, in "Book III," the evil women are representations of dangers against chastity. The first threat to Britomart occurs in Castle Joyous. The lady of the castle, Malecasta is unaware of Britomart's gender, due

to the full-clad armour hiding the knight's body. In the dark hours of the night, Malecasta attempts to seduce Britomart, but faints following the revelation of her being a woman. Britomart, in "Book III," is accompanied by Glauce, and seeks Artegall. Merlin, a renowned wizard, prophesied the marriage of Artegall and Britomart. The story of Britomart's journey is accompanied by the story of Florimell, who is in love with Marinell and desperately searches for him, and by the story of Amoretta, who is in love with Scudamore and held captive by Busirane. Amoretta, Britomart and Florimell are representations of chastity, and the women, who are represented in contrast in "Book III," constitute a threat to chastity. Argante is a giantess, who abducts a young squire with intentions of sexual assault. The Witch, by employing magic, creates a doppelganger Florimell to pacify the carnal urges of her son. The threats against chastity are serious in portrayals, but only Hellenore's story is intended to be humorous. Hellenore abandons her miserly husband, Malbecco, to be with Paridell. In the end, Malbecco finds Hellenore lying with a satyr.

This thesis restricts its scope to "Book I," "Book II," and "Book III" for the reason being the consensus of Spenserians is as *The Faerie Queene* progresses the narrative begins to unravel. Frederick M. Padelford explains one of the reasons as such:

It is almost a commonplace among students of Spenser that with the third book of [*The*] *Faerie Queene* the poet renounced the severe architectonics which had governed the composition of the first two books, and yielded to a looser structural method, weaving a wide-meshed romance of many strands and introducing so many characters and so many unresolved situations that the fourth and fifth books were mortgaged in advance. (367)

Spenser's feelings of disappointment for the atmosphere surrounding the court of Elizabeth I, and the political decisions of the monarch could be another reason for the decline of the narrative. Perhaps for this reason, in "Book IV" to "Book VI," Spenser represents political excellence necessary for a moral ruler, and political faults, exhibited by wicked rulers. The decline is seen in the number of women characters and personifications as well. The number of evil women in "Book I," "Book II," and "Book

III” are nineteen². These are, in alphabetical order, Abessa, Acrasia, Argante, Corceca, Duessa, Earth, Elissa, Error, Hellenore, Impatience, Impotence, Lucifera, Malecasta, Night, Occasion, Perissa, Phaedria, Philotime, and the Witch³. In “Book IV” to “Book VI,” this number is reduced to nine. These are, in alphabetical order, Adicia, Ate, Blandina, Briana, Clarinda, Munera, Philtra, Poeana, and Radigund. Therefore, to focus on the part of the narrative, in which the representations of evil women are more commonly found, this thesis restricts its scope to “Book I,” “Book II,” and “Book III.”

Moreover, the arguments of this thesis are only concerned with the evil women, except when a woman character or personification’s narrative is interwoven with the narrative of a man’s, such as in the case of Abessa and Kirkrapine, or the witch and the unnamed son. One reason for this decision is women have a much firmer grip on the narrative, compared to men. In a paradoxical manner, although the protagonists of each book, except “Book III,” is a man, evil men usually engage in physical combat and are destroyed in turn. Through seducing, scheming, and manipulating, evil women survive longer than evil men, and by proxy, exert more control over the narrative. In addition, *The Faerie Queene* is dedicated to Elizabeth I, and arrayed with moral and political messages for the queen, exemplified by both good and evil women. The pillars of the narrative of *The Faerie Queene* are made of women characters and personifications. Male characters support the main narrative, the narrative of women. Padelford affirms this point of view by comparing the second and third books:

The book is devoted to the exposition and celebration of virtue in woman. It is a companion study to the allegory of temperance, for as the second book is an exposition of continence in man’s life, so this book is an exposition of continence in the life of a woman. Though many male characters are introduced, they are merely supporting characters to the women, and every episode is designed to assist in interpreting the theme of the virtuous woman (381).

² To be counted, a woman must be a character or personification. For example, Lady Estrilde, who had an affair with Brutus may be accused of adultery or seduction; however, she exists only as a name in the narrative. Therefore, she is not included in this list.

³ This thesis examines only women characters and personifications, who are either mothers or sexually promiscuous. To learn more about them check “Appendix I: Women Characters and Personifications.”

Lastly, abjection is primarily reserved for the women. There are only a few abject men, making the theory less than ideal for the survey of evil men.

In “Letter to Raleigh,” also known as “A Letter of the Authors,” Spenser discloses the purpose of *The Faerie Queene*: “The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline” (*The Faerie Queene* 714). Elizabeth I is at the centre of *The Faerie Queene*, as the author reveals, “[i]n that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in particular I conceiue the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery land” (*The Faerie Queene* 716). Elizabeth I is praised in a kaleidoscopic fashion, as numerous women characters glorify the diverse aspects of the monarch. The mentioned disparaging portrayals of women and womanhood contrast and complement Elizabeth I, by becoming foils. Elizabeth I is praised in an intensive manner, by conceits. The exaggeration is the same for the anti-theses of Elizabeth I, only, such women are debased in a distinctive style. They are the epitome of disgust, of horror, of repugnancy, of wickedness. This makes such women ideal for an examination of theory of abjection.

To understand the theory of abjection, a rudimentary understanding of Julia Kristeva as an intellectual, and a basic insight to her concepts are required. Kristeva is one of the high-profile intellectuals of the late-twentieth century, and the early twenty-first century. One of the fundamental figures in psychoanalysis and post-structuralism, Kristeva is a prolific author, who wrote on literary criticism, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. She is regarded as an original and protean thinker, commenting and writing on fictional and non-fictional literature, linguistics, politics on both micro and macro levels, motherhood, sexuality, womanhood, and many more. Noëlle McAfee remarks, “[w]here other thinkers might see these fields as separate domains, Kristeva shows that the speaking being is a ‘strange fold’ between them all – a place where inner drives are discharged into language, where sexuality interplays with thought, where the body and the culture meet” (1). Paradoxically, Kristeva, as a post-structuralist, is against the systems of dualisms. Simultaneously, she advocates for a concordant and umbilical relationship between the concepts. According to McAfee, this discrepancy is “in actuality, manifestations of her attempt to help us all find a balance between the ‘excesses’ of nature and the constraints

of culture, even as she tries to unravel the polarity ... between these two domains” (3). Kristeva’s arguments for a balanced and nuanced relationship between the nature and culture is unsuitable for an examination of *The Faerie Queene*. However, for Kristeva the foundations of identity are born from the balance, or the nuance. For example, Kristeva “documents how people are both fascinated and repelled by the foreigners in their midst, but she sees this attitude toward ‘foreignness’ as a necessary and constitutive feature of our self-identity” (McAfee 3). The hostility against the other, as a defence mechanism, is a part of the definition of abjection, and such hostility is found again and again in *The Faerie Queene*.

There is one distinct dualism in *The Faerie Queene*, and as with all dualisms, one is superior to the other. The “us” and “them” mentality, regarding one’s identity, is conspicuous in *The Faerie Queene*. The “us” is represented by being Anglo-Saxon, English, and Protestant. In the same manner, masculinity is preferable to femininity for “us.” The divide between the culture and nature is another dualism and is related to the construction of gender roles. The culture against nature is demonstrated as culture’s supremacy and the nature’s powerlessness in *The Faerie Queene*. The culture is represented by men, and the nature is represented by women. Men and masculinity are superior to women and femininity, but the representations of Elizabeth I, such as Belpheobe and Britomart, are exceptional. The dominancy belongs to men, who subjugates women, the submissive sex, in an assortment of contexts. The contexts can be examined in accordance with the morality; although, the morality of the context does not change the outcome. The fate of women is bondage by captivity, death, or marriage. Acrasia’s captivity by Sir Guyon, and Una’s marriage to The Redcrosse Knight are contradistinctive in representation, however, in the end, both Acrasia and Una are coerced by men into submission. Nature and the negative representations of women and womanhood in *The Faerie Queene* are affiliated. Women, who desire autonomy, and refuse the coercion and submission by men are disfavoured by the author. Such women are punished and are excluded from the civil society. Earth is the embodiment of the nature, and her representation is a bleak portrait of women’s reproduction. Earth’s existence is shown by her abominable children, who are all threats to the English civilisation. Similarly, the Witch is an outcast, exiled by the culture, and forced to live on

the borders of the land. Interestingly, a few characters and personifications, such as Duessa, have the ability to blend into the culture, hiding like a chameleon. Duessa successfully obfuscates her ambitions and her appearance. Therefore, she is able to effortlessly glide through the social strata, seen in her position in the House of Pride.

Duessa may conceal her nature and blend with the culture. Nevertheless, she remains an evil and wicked woman in *The Faerie Queene*. In the poem, all representations of corruption, evilness, and wickedness in women and womanhood focus on the body. The body of evil women are dark, deformed, diseased, disabled, filthy, hideous, and lascivious. The evil women foment a sense of disgust and horror, revealing the wickedness within the characters and personifications. This disgust and horror are expressed either in the physical sense, as abhorrence spreading from the body of evil women, or in the moral sense, as violations of social standards of morality. This constitutes an abjection, which is necessary for maintaining the identity, the “us,” Spenser favours. Spenser’s opinion on villainous women is transparent, as the author’s schadenfreude for the cruel fate of such women are often expressed following their punishment.

In *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, the origin of the word abjection is shown to be “*abjectus*,” which is the “past participle of *abicere* ‘reject’, from *ab-* ‘away’ + *jacere* ‘to throw’” (3). The meaning of abjection is constructed by the context. If the word is used as an adjective to define a person, abjection means “completely without pride or dignity; self-abasing” (3). Prior to being conceptualised by Kristeva, abjection, as an adjective, existed in the English, and the authors of the English Renaissance referred to the word. Kelly Lehtonen, in her research, argues that “the concept of abjection, in its modern sense, was perhaps surprisingly alive and well in Spenser’s time” (181). The examples Lehtonen presents are from the contemporaries of Spenser, namely Gabriel Harvey, George Gascoigne, Thomas Nashe, and James Dalrymple (181). In *Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey*, the word in various forms is found. Harvey, in a letter to John Young, speaks of M. Nevil and is afraid that Nevil thought too little of him: “I praid him most hartely, and that with mi cap in mi hand, that he wuld not suffer me to go in as great suspens as I cam: and, unles he thout too vilely and abiectly of me, that he culd not altogether set me and mi

wurds at nauht, but wuld at the last put me in sum better hope” (15). In a letter to Spenser, written in 1579, Harvey describes philosophers in a few unflattering words:

None so injurious to themselves, so tyranous to there servants, so niggardlye to ther kinsfolkes, soe rigorrous to ther acquayntance, soe unprofitable to all, so untowarde for the common welthe, and so unfitt for the worlde, meere bookeworms and verye idolles, the most intolerable creatures to cum in any good sociable cumpanye that ever God creatid. (87)

The adjective Harvey prefers to describe the philosophers in the following sentence is a variation of the word abjection: “[T]hey are the dryest, leanist, ill-favoriddist, abiectist, base-minddist carrions and wretcheckes that ever you sett your eie on” (87). George Gascoigne, in *Weedes: The pleasant Fable of Ferdinando Jeromini and Leonora de Valasco*, describes how the lover was “disdaynefullye abjected by a dame of high calling” (457). Thomas Nashe, in *Pierce Pennilesse His Syplication to the Divell*, comments on the fate as “drawne vp to the heauen of honor from the dunghill of abiect fortune” (174). Positively, abjection, as a word, was known to the Renaissance authors in England.

In *The Faerie Queene*, abjection, as a word, is found more than once. In “Canto XI” of “Book III,” Scudamore’s grief is expressed with abjection:

With great indignaunce he that sight forsooke,
And downe againe himselfe disdainefully,
Abiecting, th’earth with his faire forehead stroke:
Which the bold Virgin seeing, gan apply,
Fit medicine to his grieffe, and spake thus courtesly. (III.xi.13.5-9)

In “Canto IX” of “Book V, Arthur and Artegall concoct a plan to lure Malengin out of the cave. Samient, a maiden in the service of Queen Mercilla, heads to the entrance of the cave, and cries and wails to draw the attention of Malengin. Samient’s actions is described as abject:

The Damzell straight went, as she was directed,
Vnto the rocke, and there vpon the soyle
Hauing her selfe in wretched wize abiected,

Gan weepe and wayle, as if great grieffe had her affected. (V.ix.9.6-9)

Lastly, in “Canto VII” of “Book VI,” Arthur defeats Sir Turpine, who prostrates himself in fright of Arthur’s strength. Arthur confiscates the possessions of Sir Turpine, and hangs him upside down from a tree, so that all the passersby can witness his humiliation:

Then letting gim arise like abiect thrall,
 He gan to him obiect his haynous crime
 And to reuile, and rate, and recreant call,
 And lastly to despoyle of knightly bannerall. (VI.vii.26.6-9)

Abjection appears in the described meanings in *The Faerie Queene*; however, Lehtonen argues Spenser “takes this usage a step further, anticipating Kristeva’s concept of subjectivity and *self*-abjection,” referring to the abjection of Malbecco in “Book III” (181). The basis for Lehtonen’s argument is Spenser’s employment of the word “selfe” in *Amoretti* is credited in *Oxford English Dictionary* as the first to denote a new meaning (181). Indeed, in *Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. IX*, “self” is defined as “[a]n assemblage of characteristics and dispositions which may be conceived as constituting one of various conflicting personalities within a human being,” and *Amoretti* is the earliest example (“Self” 411). In “Sonnet XLV” of *Amoretti*, the word “selfe” appears as an expression of subjective experience:

Leaue lady in your glasse of christall clene,
 Your goodly selfe for euermore to vew:
 an in my selfe, my inward selfe I meane,
 most liuely lyke behold your semblant trew. (*The Poetical Works* 570)

Elizabeth Fowler, in *Approaches to Teaching Shorter Elizabethan Poetry*, remarks that the three modes of the lyric in the Elizabethan Age are the amorous, the devotional, and the petitionary, and “[a]ll these kinds of poetry seek to define the meaning of internal experience – the experience of spirituality, of the passions, of cognition, of subordination, of need” (250). This is parallel with Spenser’s employment of self in *Amoretti*, but such a subjective experience is also found in *The Faerie Queene*. In “Canto XII” of “Book II,” Spenser presents an insight to the human psyche, surprising to find in the English Renaissance:

Who wondrous things concerning our welfare,
 And straunge phantoms doth lett vs ofte forsee,
 And ofte of secret ill bids vs beware:
 That is our Selfe, whom though we doe not see,
 Yet each doth in him selfe it well perceiue to bee. (II.xii.47.5-9)

Fowler comments, “[t]he consequential difference between the roles of the reflexive pronoun and the substantive proper noun is well demonstrated in the change suffered by the word *self*, which expands over centuries from a merely reflexive, emphatic feature of sentences to an independent entity with a philosophical tradition behind it” (252). The self as a subject, as employed by Kristeva, is the basis for the main argument of this thesis, as abjection is a defence mechanism against the threats against the self-identity, which in the context of this thesis is being English, and Protestant.

Prior to any engagement with the theory of abjection, an elementary knowledge of certain terms from psychoanalytical terminology is needed. The terms foundational for the theory of abjection are, subjectivity, object, signification, the symbolic, the semiotic, oedipal stage, mirror stage, and thetic break. Kristeva prefers the term subjectivity to the term of self. There are three reasons for the distinction between the self and subjectivity. First, culture, context, history, language, and relationships shape much of a person’s identity, and a person is subject to all kinds of phenomena; second, a person is unaware of much of the phenomena he or she is subjected to, as there is an unreachable dimension in a human’s psyche, namely the unconscious, a space that forms the identity unbeknownst to the person; and finally the self is an unsatisfactory concept to understand a person’s relationship with the language, for language generates the subjects (McAfee 2). Kristeva is not the founder of the term subjectivity, or subject, as there is a colossal philosophical tradition examining the relationship between the subject and the object. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* could be the beginning point of the linguist arguments in philosophy (Oliver xii). Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida followed Hegel’s footsteps. Regarding psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan examined Sigmund Freud’s arguments from the perspective of linguistics. Kristeva’s concept of semiotic is constructed on the arguments of Lacan.

Kristeva's *La révolution du langage poétique* (1974), translated as *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), is the author's masterpiece, furthering her arguments in *Séméiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (1969), translated as *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980). The general argument of *Revolution in Poetic Language* is "the works of literary avant-garde writers produce a 'revolution in poetic language.' That is, they contain elements that 'shatter' the way we think that texts are meaningful. Meaning is not made just denotatively, with words denoting thoughts or things. Meaning is made in large part by the poetic and affective aspects of texts as well" (McAfee 13). Kristeva's opening statement for *Revolution in Poetic Language* is "Our philosophies of language, embodiments of the Idea, are nothing more than the thoughts of archivists, archaeologists, and necrophiliacs" (13). Kristeva is critical of past approaches to the language. She claims prior to the post-structuralist approaches, the language was analysed and categorised as dead or dormant signs. The accused manage such an approach by completely excluding the dynamic and heterogeneous processes of language, which means the subject's emotions, energy, and experiences are neglected. Kristeva, as a counterargument, presents the semiotic and the symbolic as modalities of signifying process. According to Kristeva:

These two modalities are inseparable within the *signifying process* that constitutes language, and the dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved; in other words, so-called "natural" language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic. On the other hand, there are nonverbal signifying systems that are constructed exclusively on the basis of the semiotic (music, for example). (*Revolution* 24)

The word "symbolic" is borrowed from Lacan's terminology. The symbolic is the world of the father, entered by the acquisition of language. In the context of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the symbolic is the logical, rational, and orderly way of communicating and expressing meaning. This is related to significance, as in "Introduction" of *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Leon S. Roudiez defines the term as a reference to "the work performed in language (through the heterogeneous articulation of semiotic and symbolic dispositions) that enables a text to signify what representative and communicative speech does not say" (18). The word "semiotic" is a reference to the semiology, founded by Ferdinand de Saussure. In the context of *Revolution in Poetic*

Language, semiotic is active, emotive, and personal. It is the energy and expression of the body, “a discharge of the subject’s energy and drives. In other words, we may find ourselves using certain words because they get something across clearly or because they express some feeling, desire, or unconscious drive” (McAfee 15-16). To clarify, an example from “Canto IV” of “Book II” in *The Faerie Queene* presents both the symbolic and the semiotic in the same lines:

The noble *Guyon* mou’d with great remorse,
 Approching, first the Hag did thrust away,
 And after adding more impetuous forse,
 His mighty hands did on the madman lay,
 And pluckt him backe; who all on fire straight way,
 Against him turning all his fell intent,
 With beastly brutish rage gan him assay,
 And smott, and bitt, and kickt, and scratch, and rent,
 And did he wist not what in his auegement. (II.iv.6.1-9)

Here, Sir Guyon pushes Occasion, the Hag, away and engages in combat with Occasion’s son, Furor. In the symbolic mode of language, a linear chronology of the ongoing action and events are narrated. The reader understands that Furor is angry. However, the true portrayal of Furor’s emotional condition is understood by the semiotic mode of language. Furor’s smiting, biting, kicking, stretching, and rending is a discharge of uncontrollable fury, and the repetition of the synonymous words of assault conveys just how uncontrollable this fury really is. *The Faerie Queene* is, of course, not a nineteenth or twentieth century, post-symbolist, avant-garde literary work. Regardless, a semiotic mode of language is found in it, because the semiotic is inborn. It cannot be completely suppressed. In the exact way the unconscious, on occasion, bursts through the conscious, the semiotic too, on occasion, burst through the symbolic. The semiotic can be suppressed to some degree, but never completely.

The semiotic, as a concept, is interwoven with the body, and Kristeva is specifically interested in the maternal body. Kristeva borrows “chora” (or khôra) from Plato’s *Timaeus*, and in the context of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the term means “an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases” (25). The term is an explanation for “how an infant’s psychic

environment is oriented to its mother's body" (McAfee 19). In *Timaeus*, "khôra" is translated as space:

Then, third, there is space [meaning khôra], which exists for ever and is indestructible, and which acts as the arena for everything that is subject to creation. It is grasped by a kind of bastard reasoning, without the support of sensation, and is hardly credible. In fact, when we take space into consideration we come to suffer from dreamlike illusions, and to claim that every existing thing must surely exist in some particular place and must occupy some space, and that nothing exists except what exists on earth or in the heavens. (Plato 45)

In *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Kristeva comments that "Plato's *Timeus* speaks of a *chora*, ... receptacle, ... unnamable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the One, to the father, and consequently, maternally connoted to such an extent that it merits 'not even the rank of syllable'" (133). Kelly Oliver, in *The Portable Kristeva*, discerns that in the Ancient Greek, the word meant "space, area, or land. Kristeva uses it to mean the space in which drives enter the language" (24). According to McAfee, the semiotic chora is a crucial component of constructing one's own identity:

Kristeva seems to have something in mind that belongs to each person in particular before he or she develops clear borders of his or her own personal identity. In this early psychic space, the infant experience a wealth of drives (feelings, instincts, etc.) that could be extremely disorienting and destructive were it not for the infant's relation with his or her mother's body. An infant's tactile relation with its mother's body provides an orientation for the infant's drives. (19)

Therefore, mother plays a crucial role in the development of the baby. However, by employing language, the baby eventually is able to refer to things outside of his or her own body, meaning the other, or the object, can now be referred by language, meaning a break from the mother. Kristeva borrows from the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and calls the separation a *thetic break*. A complete understanding of the language is not necessary for the *thetic break*, a child's attempt to communicate by people other than mother shows that the *symbolic* is already taking place. For example, a child may see an animal and attempt to mimic the sounds the animal makes, meaning the child successfully identified the other. The beginning of the *signification process* and the emergence of a child *subjectivity* is related to the *thetic break*.

In psychoanalysis, abjection is “our reaction (horror, vomit) to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between **subject** and **object** or between self and **other**” (Felluga 3). Abjection is born out of ambiguity, liminality, or transgressions against the subject. There is a physical and a cultural sense of abjection. In physical sense, abjection is in relation to the body and the “filth” expelled from the body, such as blood, excrements, mucus, nail trimmings, and so forth. For Kristeva, the “most elementary and most archaic form of abjection” is “food loathing” (*Powers of Horror* 3). For example, dairy products, such as butter, cheese, milk, and yoghurt, may be appetising. However, for a person with lactose intolerance, or a vegan person, dairy products may arouse a sense of disgust and revulsion. This is the result of the disruption of the meaning of the dairy products. According to Lechte, abjection “is a dimension of human experience that is based in affect, rather than reason. It is a negative *feeling*, not a rational law. An individual’s dislikes in food will have an abject basis” (10). Abject is not a symbol of death, but the blur between the borders of subject and object, a breach of the border, or a mediator of liminality. For example, a corpse is a site of abjection as well:

A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death – a flat encephalograph, for instance – I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 3)

The corpse is abject because the body persists in-between states of existence. The completion of process of decomposition would render a corpse a mere skeleton, however, the corpse still bears a resemblance of a degree of life. The corpse exists between life and death, and the ambiguity of the meaning of life and death is presented by the corpse. Therefore, “[i]t is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules” (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 4). According to Smith, abjection “forces us to choose our identity. I reject the corpse. I am NOT the corpse” (00:02:44 - 00:02:47). The source of abjection in Kristeva’s example of food loathing is in-betweenness as well. Kristeva is repulsed by the skin on the surface of milk, because the milk is no longer fresh, but still not spoiled. The

desire to purge the object from the presence of our mind reveals our desire to cement our existence in the realm of the living, and the constructed meanings are connected to our identity. Therefore, a desecration of beauty, health, and hygiene by filth is a subject of abjection. In *The Faerie Queene*, abject women arouse a sense of disgust. Duessa's scab-ridden body is deformed by syphilis, and bathing in oregano and thyme is a common treatment of syphilis in the sixteenth century, but the treatment doesn't help her. Error cannot be anything but abject, as she is only described by the filth surrounding her body and her nest.

In cultural sense, abjection refers to the in-betweenness of the cultural identity, or transgressions against the Englishness. The identity in question includes, but not restricted to, ethnicity, language, and religion. However, the common feature of all non-physical elements of identity, in the context of abjection, is immorality and offensiveness. Kristeva claims all crime is abject, "because it draws attention to the fragility of the law," but, "premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility" (*Powers of Horror* 4). This functions as the primary representation of abjection in cultural sense in *The Faerie Queene*. There are no grey zones in morality for Spenser, if a character or personification is deemed moral or immoral, this label is not open to discussion, and is carried by this particular character or personification for the rest of the narrative. Archimago represents the height among male characters, and Duessa represents the height of female characters, in the sense of premeditated crime. The reason is the main antagonists, such as Acrasia and the Dragon, are defeated and punished and exit the narrative in the conclusion "Book II," and "Book I," respectively. However, Archimago and Duessa evade both judgement and punishment in "Book I," "Book II," and "Book III." The crime in question is too, an element of in-betweenness, as Kristeva's explains crime is, "a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you" (*Powers of Horror* 4). There is a distinction in Kristeva's examples, a breaking of the bonds of trust, a betrayal, which is necessary for abjection. Public renouncement of morality, or amorality, is not abject. Lechte clarifies the distinction with an example of a judge:

To the extent that corruption is abject, it is a betrayal of trust. When a judge in the legal system secretly engages in criminal behaviour, this is abject in a way in which a known criminal's criminal behaviour is not. For the judge has betrayed the trust that makes him or her 'above suspicion'. All secret, corrupt behaviour is abject, whereas open defiance is not. Hypocrisy, therefore, is a manifestation of abjection. (*Powers of Horror* 11)

Therefore, "a friend who stabs you in the back, science (which is supposed to save life) producing weapons of mass destruction, a politician on the take," (Lechte 11) are common examples of abjection. In the light of this perspective, evil women in *The Faerie Queene* particularly abject, as betraying, deceiving, scheming, and manipulating are the forte of evil women. All of the women, employ such tactics, and made abject in the process. They remain in-between in social relationships. For example, for the Redcrosse Knight, Duessa is more than a stranger, but less than a friend, for she betrayed him on multiple occasions. Abessa and Corceca hide Kirkrapine's nightly visits and occasion from Una, who trusts them enough to rest in their home. Malecasta resorts to subterfuge to earn Britomart's trust, only to betray that trust by attempting to seduce her. Guyon and the Palmer trust Phaedria and travel with her, however, Phaedria betrays the trust of her guests, and attempts to lull Guyon to a feeble state.

In *The Faerie Queene*, the function of abjection is to be a mean for purgation. Jon A. Quitslund explains the function of abjection in relation to the women in a narrative as such:

One attitude toward the feminine involves a kind of exorcism, a strategy that has come to be called 'abjection.' Whatever is undesirable in human nature as a whole, specifically attributed to women as the source of the undesirable, gets stigmatized, even demonized, as inimical to mankind's health. Like repression, abjection never achieves its declared objective of purification: the undesirable remains desirable to the extent that it still exists, and abjection may render it more powerful as an exotic beauty, alluring and secretly nasty. (27)

The general deduction from the arguments so far, is in *The Faerie Queene*, abjection functions as an exorcism, as Spenser dismisses any evil character or personification, once the assigned moral lesson is learned. This is an apt description for the women in *The Faerie Queene*, who employ sexual liberty against the knights. Duessa's body is repeatedly described as hideous; nevertheless, the sexual magnetism of Duessa is enough

to control not only Sans Loy and Orgoglio, but for a brief time, the Redcrosse Knight. Similarly, Acrasia is a felicitous example, who is condemned by Sir Guyon for her transgressions against chastity of the knights; nevertheless, she is repeatedly described as inhumanly beautiful, and unlike Duessa, she is spared of an execution, and is sent to the court of the Faerie Queene instead. Spenser is obsessive in his demand for morality, however, at times the author dwells on the details unfitting for the purpose of *The Faerie Queene*. Quitslund notes Spenser's "use of strategy of abjection is distinctive: where another poet would more anxiously hide what he hates, he includes everything that has been marked for exclusion (28). Duessa's scabs caused by syphilis, the fluids Error excretes to the Redcrosse Knight, Acrasia's thinly veiled body, Argante's incestuous actions in the womb of her mother, Hellenore's scandalous elopement are described all too openly. What is expected to be a taboo is transgressed by the evil women, and the expulsion of the evil women from the narrative serves as an exorcism. Such an exorcism prevents the violations of the concept of taboo in *The Faerie Queene*. According to Lechte:

On a socio-cultural level, feelings of horror can be evoked in purification rituals, rituals which are enacted so as to avoid defilement, and which are intricately tied to the sacred. In other words, abjection is at play when a Jew feels revulsion for pork, or a Hindu for killing a sacred cow. Prohibition and transgression – pollution and purification – are, then, tied to abjection. The one who commits an act of defilement feels wretched and worthless; that is, he or she will feel they are nothing. And they may be seen to be so by others. (10)

Kristeva states that the "various means of purifying the abject ... make up the history of religions" (*Powers of Horror* 17). Such is the case in *The Faerie Queene*, for all abjection is eradicated, only for new sources for abjection to appear as the narrative progresses. *The Faerie Queene*'s devotional layer makes the work a fictional religious history; therefore, Kristeva's comment of the religions attempting to purge all source of abjections still apply here.

In *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (2007), Barbara Creed expresses the general misogyny towards the female biology from the antiquity to the Renaissance by describing how "the uterus was frequently drawn with horns to demonstrate its supposed association with the devil" (43). Abjection of the female

genitalia is all too well known, and is acknowledged by Kristeva, who claims “[t]he fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power. It is this power, a dreaded one, that patrilineal filiation has the burden of subduing” (*Powers of Horror* 77). Helen Hackett affirms this view in an examination of *The Faerie Queene*, and coincidentally associates the representations of female sexuality and abjection: “All of these examples, and the others like them in the poem, bespeak a fundamental definition of women in terms of the deviation of their sexual organs from the male ‘norm’, and an anxiety about those sexual organs as potentially monstrous and nightmarish, a source of horror” (136). The abjection of evil women transcends the flesh and bone, and spreads to the natural environments and domestic spaces, as evil permeates like a miasma of malfeasance, in the form of crime or offence, which reveals the subjects are abject in non-physical aspects as well.

This thesis is not the first to examine *The Faerie Queene* from the lenses of abjection, or the first to concern with the physical composition and cultural composition of women. David Sean Kinahan, in “*His Body Well be Red*”: *The Politics of Representing Body in The Faerie Queene* (1993) examines bodily politics in *The Faerie Queene*; however, abjection, as a theory, is not referred. Arpine Mızıkıyan’s *The Monstrous and Grotesque Images of The Feminine in Book I of The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost* (2006) offers a comparative examination of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* (1667) from a feminist perspective. Both Melissa Joy Rack, in *Abject Horror and the Renaissance Imagination: Plotting the Intersection of Human and Monster in Book I of Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene* (2008), and Michele Joy Bromley, in *Monsters in the Mirror: Literary Reflections of Mentally and Physically Deformed Humanity in Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene* (2013) refer to abjection in their analyses of monsters in the work. The contribution of this thesis to Spenserian corpus is its comprehension, as the scope of research in Mızıkıyan and Rack is restricted to “Book I,” and Bromley bypasses “Book II.” This thesis is comprehensive in scope, as all evil women in “Book I,” “Book II,” and “Book III” are classified and analysed. Contrary to Bromley and Rack, this thesis refrains from any approaches to the monster theory.

This thesis is composed of three chapters. In the first chapter, a historical and theoretical background for the thesis is presented, and the aforementioned taxonomy is explained. Specifically, how Spenser associates the physical composition of evil women with abjection, by confining them from the material world and assigning them with physical deformities and debilitations, signifying their moral failings is clarified. Moreover, how the abjection of evil women transcends the physical compositions and spreads to the entire narrative is emphasised. Evil women are represented as unnatural and villainous, unravelling the moral fabric of England, by subverting the basic tenets and units of a society. The second chapter is reserved for abject mothers and children. Comparisons of good mothers and evil mothers are presented, and how each evil mother is abjected is explained in detail. In this chapter, Abessa/Corceca/Kirrapine, Earth, Errour, Night, and the Witch will be examined. The third chapter is reserved for “whores,” and how the female genitalia and women’s sexuality are made abject in *The Faerie Queene* are enucleated. In the third chapter Acrasia, Argante, Duessa, Hellenore, Impatience, Impotence, and Malecasta are examined.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT

“Without an adversary, prowess shrivels.”

–Seneca, *Moral Essays*

The rivalry between the good and evil has been a stable subject for artistic representations since the Classical Age. The antagonism of antipodean concepts of morality remained a popular motif in literature, existing as the virtues and vices in the Ancient Greek. The brief parable of Prodicus, known as “Hercules at the Crossroads⁴,” is mentioned for the first time in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (2.1.21-34). In the parable, Heracles finds himself in a moral conundrum:

For he says that when Heracles⁵ was starting to enter adolescence from childhood – when youths, since they are already becoming their own rulers, make clear whether in life they will take the road through virtue or that through vice – going out to a quiet spot, he sat down perplexed as to which of the roads he should take. (Xenophon 38-39)

In “Hercules at the Crossroads,” an irresolute Heracles stands at a crossroads, and a pair of tall women approach him. The women are personifications, named Virtue and Vice. Virtue’s physical appearance is associated with purity, “her eyes [with] modesty, her bearing [with] moderation, and she [wore] white clothing” (39). Vice, on the other hand, “had been fed to the point of being fleshy and soft,” (39) and her description paints an unflattering portrait of the personification:

⁴ The name of the parable is not specified by Socrates in *Memorabilia*. There is a tradition of re-representing “Hercules at the Crossroads” in the Western Art. Albrecht Dürer’s *Heracles at the Crossroads* (1498), Domenico Beccafumi’s *Choice of Hercules* (1520), Lucas Cranach the Elder’s *The Choice of Hercules* (1537), Paolo Veronese’s *The Choice Between Virtue and Vice* (1565), Annibale Carracci’s *The Choice of Hercules* (1596), Jonas Hünnerbein’s *Hercules at the Crossroads* (1595), Nicolas Poussin’s *Choice of Hercules* (1636-37), Jan van den Hoecke’s *Hercules Between Vice and Virtue* (1650), Gerard de Lairese’s *Hercules between Virtue and Vice* (1685), Paolo de Matteis’ *The Choice of Hercules* (1712), and Pompeo Batoni’s *Hercules at the Crossroads* (1748), are some of the well-known examples. Therefore, the parable is polyonymous. This thesis adheres to the name preferred by Erica Tietze-Conrat and Malcolm Davies and refers to the parable as “Hercules at the Crossroads.”

⁵ Amy L. Bonnette, in her translation of *Memorabilia*, prefers Heracles instead of Hercules.

She was prettied up so that her complexion seemed to appear whiter and rosier than its reality, and so that her bearing seemed straighter than its nature. Her eyes were wide open, and she was wearing the clothes in which her bloom would be most conspicuous. She looked down at herself frequently, looked around to see anyone else was looking at her, if and frequently looked at her own shadow. (Xenophon 39)

Vice, nicknamed Happiness by her friends, attempts to befriend and tempt Heracles, so he can settle down for an easy and pleasant life. Virtue objects Vice and appeals to Heracles' morality. Virtue explains how such a life is absent of glory and honour, and how only by abiding to discipline and enduring hardships, Heracles' life can be worthy. In the end, Heracles' answer to the arguments or his decision is left unknown. However, according to Socrates, the education of Heracles was left to Virtue; therefore, the reader assumes Heracles heeded the words of Virtue (Xenophon 42).

There is an analogy between "Hercules at the Crossroads" and *The Faerie Queene*. In *A Greek-English Lexicon*, basic meaning of parable is "a comparing, comparison," (Liddell and Scott 1177) and "Hercules at the Crossroads" is a representation of the juxtaposition between the morality and immorality. Virtue and Vice, as a pair, are discordant and each vie for the control of Heracles' future. Furthermore, the parable is an example of the relationship between physical composition and morality in Greece. Physical composition of Virtue and Vice is a commentary, highlighting morality of Virtue and immorality of Vice. All elements of physical composition of Virtue and Vice, such as bearing, cosmetics, clothing, and weight, are part of the moral dichotomy as well. Virtue's physical composition is simple, and she arouses a sense of nobility. On the other hand, Vice's physical composition is complex, and she arouses a sense of indecency and disgust. The precept is simple. Virtue is beautiful and Vice is ugly.

There is a remarkable possibility Spenser had read *Memorabilia* and was inspired by "Hercules at the Crossroads." Cambridge University, at the time of Spenser's studentship, was a centre for the study of Plato, where Spenser became a scholar on Greeks, as is apparent from his vocabulary and translations (Green 1). Furthermore, it is known that Spenser read authors such as Cicero. In the Middle Ages, "Hercules at the Crossroads"

remained in writing thanks to Cicero's *De Officiis*, translated as *On Duties*⁶ (1913) by Walter Miller. In fact, representing morality and immorality as a binary opposition gained popularity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, in Continental Europe. Aparajita Nanda names a few morality plays as examples, such as *All for Money*, *Mankind*, *Mundus et Infans*, *The Assembly of Gods*, *The Castle of Perseverance*, *The Example of Virtue*, *The Interlude of Youth*, *The Pasttime of Pleasure*, and *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* (53). "Hercules at the Crossroads" is a popular example, as Theodor M. Mommsen argues, Erwin Panofsky's *Hercules am Scheidewege* (1997) has established "how the ancient tale of the choice of Hercules became during the Renaissance a favourite theme of humanist writers and playwrights, and of artists, especially in Italy and Germany" (178). For instance, Francesco Petrarca, in *La Vita Solitaria*, translated as *The Life of Solitude* (1924) by Jacob Zeitlin, refers to "Hercules at the Crossroads," and by proxy, Prodicus and Xenophon (1.2.4, 2.4.9)⁷. Lastly, in "Letter to Raleigh," Spenser mentions Virgil's *Aeneid* and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as inspirations for *The Faerie Queene*. Therefore, Spenser, for certain, had read Xenophon. In *The Aeneid*, "Hercules at the Crossroads" is not mentioned. However, in the end of "Book Six," Anchises guides Aeneas and the Sibyl to a crossroads in the underworld. At the crossroads, there are a pair of gates. One is made of horns, and the other is made out of "dentils of elephant tusk in fantastic perfection" (Virgil 157). The gate made of horns grants an easy escape, but only to ghosts. Aeneas and the Sibyl enter the gate made of ivory.

"Hercules at the Crossroads" is a perfect model of the portrayals of women in *The Faerie Queene*, because physical compositions of women are allegorical or symbolic expressions of morality or immorality. Spenser is "always a moralist," (Bayley 25) and the author's

⁶ "For we cannot all have the experience of Hercules, as we find it in the words of Prodicus in Xenophon: When Hercules was just coming into youth's estate (the time which Nature has appointed unto every man for choosing the path of life on which he would enter), he went out into a desert place. And as he saw two paths, the path of Pleasure and the path of Virtue, he sat down and debated long and earnestly which one it were better for him to take" (Cicero 121).

⁷ "Hercules did so on entering manhood, as is testified by Xenophon, the pupil of Socrates, and by Cicero" (Petrarca 133). "Hercules too attained in solitude that wholesome plan of life which I have mentioned in the preceding book, when, hesitating long and much as though at a parting of the ways, he ultimately spurned the way of pleasure and took possession of the path of virtue, and marching indefatigably along its course he was raised not only to the apex of human glory but to a reputation of divinity" (Petrarca 286-87).

women characters and personifications are either on the side of morality or immorality, with only a few exceptions. Spenser's system of aestheticism is designed to praise morality and vilify immorality, hence physical composition of a woman is a product of this aestheticism.

Because Spenser's aestheticism for women functions in accordance with morality and immorality, prior to any engagements with the topic, Spenser's moral code must be examined. For Spenser, morality or immorality of a woman is decided by how well a woman conforms to the moral norms of England. The norms are an amalgam of representations of culture, tradition, and the scripture. In the sixteenth century, England reserved domestic roles to women, and the female sex was considered inferior to the male sex in almost all areas of life. A woman's identity was defined either by prospect of a future husband or by her husband after the marriage. A woman's identity could be comprised of three titles: maiden, wife, and mother; all of which were destined to be subjected to the male.

In *The Faerie Queene*, all three phases of womanhood are represented. In "Book I," "Book II," And "Book III," Alma, Amoretta, Belpheobe, Britomart, Chrysogonee, Florimell, Medina, Palladine, and Una are maidens. Psyche is the wife of Cupid and Hellenore is the wife of Malbecco. Corceca is the mother of Abessa, Chrysogonee is the mother of Amoretta and Belpheobe, Cymoent is the mother of Marinell, Dame Caelia is the mother of Charissa, Fidelia, and Speranza, Earth is the mother of Orgoglio, Error is the mother of larvae, Night is the ancestor of Duessa, Occasion is the mother of Furor, and the Witch is the mother of a nameless son. Clearly, for women, a classification, or a taxonomy, exist; although, there are also women who defy any classification. Padelford, for example, proposes that there are four kinds of women in "Book III" of *The Faerie Queene*:

Then there are four intermediate characters, all serving as types: the woman who is pure in thought and deed but not self-reliant, and therefore constantly in need of man's protection; the vain and self-centered woman who would establish her own matrimonial triumphs upon the discomfiture and debasement of other women; the woman who might normally observe conventional chastity but who yields to

adultery because married to miserly old age; and finally the bride who finds bodily communion a hindrance to the communion of spirit. (381)

Moreover, women are often created as pairs, with women complementing each other by contrasting, and acting as each other's foils. For example, in "Canto I" of "Book I," Spenser presents Duessa and Una as a pair, and Duessa complements Una by becoming her moral contrast. However, in a pair, moral contrast is not a precondition. Chrysogonee's children, Amoret and Belphoebe are foils; however, both women are moral in character. Occasionally, Spenser presents a trio, instead of a pair. In "Canto II" of "Book II," Medina stands in moral contrast to Elissa and Perissa, while the oldest and the youngest complement the middle sister. Moral comparisons diffuse a sense of *discordia concors*⁸ in *The Faerie Queene*.

Generally, women on the side of immorality, or "evil" women, with the exception of a few, are condemned as antitheses of maidens, wives, and mothers. Acrasia, Abessa, Argante, Elissa, Malecasta, Perissa, and Phaedria are antitheses of maidenhood, as they are not chaste, pure, and/or virgins. Hellenore is an antithesis of wifehood, as she commits adultery and is not faithful. Curiously, Corceca, Earth, Error, Night, Occasion, and the Witch are not antitheses of motherhood, as all mothers exhibit common characteristics of motherhood, such as concern for their children. Nevertheless, Corceca, Earth, Error, Night, Occasion, and the Witch are evil women, as they are malevolent in nature. Furthermore, by breeding, they produce abject children, increasing the number of the enemies of England. Spenser condemns antitheses of maidens and wives as "whores," for they transgress the moral boundary arranged for women by the society, through sexual intercourse. Duessa, for example, is a representation of the Whore of Babylon. In fact, Spenser openly labels Duessa as "Scarlot Whore" (I.viii.29.2). The Whore of Babylon is

⁸ Samuel Johnson, in *The Lives of the Poets* (1779), reverses *concordia discors*, and defines *discordia concors*, as "a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike" (14).

found in the Bible⁹, Revelation¹⁰ 17. The Whore of Babylon's physical composition reminisces that of Vice in "Hercules at the Crossroads;" however, the Whore of Babylon is wholly abject. She is described as both a mother and a whore. Once again, Spenser labels Kirkrapine's relationship with Abessa as "whoredome;" although, A. C. Hamilton et al. remark that the word in the context "has the biblical sense of idolatry and unfaithfulness to God" (57).

In *The Faerie Queene*, evil mothers are condemned as well; and the sexuality of evil mothers is abject in representation, similar to whores, as will be discussed in further paragraphs. The basic difference between mothers and whores is that the crimes of mothers are unrelated to sexual intercourse, but rather related to the birth and reproduction. Spenser's belief is that aberrancy of maidenhood, wifehood, and motherhood plays a major role in the moral decay of the society. The ultimate purpose of the evil women is destroying the moral fabric of England by degrading the basic tenets of a society.

To understand how Spenser, as an author of the sixteenth century, approaches the concepts of motherhood and womanhood, an understanding of motherhood and womanhood of the age is required. B. Scott Crawford, in *Encyclopedia of Motherhood* (2010), argues that between the sixteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, motherhood become "a reflection of larger political structures and dynamics" and "[t]hrough the family and motherhood, the family and state became connected and intricately linked" (495-96). According to Crawford, "the relationship between the family and the larger body politic is possibly best reflected and articulated in the writings of Robert Filmer" (497). Sir Robert Filmer¹¹ is a seventeenth-century political philosopher, and the first

⁹ Grace Warren Landrum examines Spenser's choice from the three versions of the Bible, and these are Cranmer's Bible, or the Great Bible, The Genevan Bible, and The Bishop's Bible (518). His in-depth analysis suggests Spenser was most familiar with Cranmer's Bible. Therefore, this thesis refers to Cranmer's Bible in any Biblical references.

¹⁰ Revelation is the second most borrowed book from the Bible by Spenser, losing the first place to Matthew by a margin (Landrum 518).

¹¹ Although *Patriarcha* was written in the seventeenth-century, Filmer was born in the sixteenth century, in or around 1588, and by the achievements, the acquaintances, and the wealth of his family, he was close to the court. His grandfather, Robert Filmer, was a "registrar or prothonotary of Queen Elizabeth's Court of the Common Pleas and a typical sixteenth-century lawyer on the

absolutist in England, who is best known as the author of *Patriarcha; or, The Natural Power of Kings* (1680). Peter Lastett comments that *Patriarcha* is “not the anatomy of a political system, but an essay on political obligation and the historical origin of political power” (11). Indeed, Filmer’s concern in *Patriarcha* is “not to question or quarrel at the rights or liberties of this or any other nation,” but “to inquire from whom these [rights] came, not to dispute what or how many they are, but whether they are derived from the laws of natural liberty or from the grace and bounty of Princes” (Filmer 55). In *Patriarcha*, Filmer refuses that people are born equal and free, as “[i]t contradicts the doctrine and history of the Holy Scriptures, the constant practice of all ancient monarchies, and the very principles of the law of nature” (Filmer 53). The core *Patriarcha* is concerned with a natural hierarchy, found in the Bible:

Sir Robert Filmer’s prime assumption was that the Bible was the true, the unique and complete revelation of God’s will on all things. It contained the whole truth about the nature of the world and the nature of society. The details of recorded history from the beginning to the death of the Apostles were to be found in it, and also the laws which would govern history from that time to the end of the world. This first assumption was shared by Puritan and High Churchman alike, in fact by nearly every member of Christendom: it needed no defence. (Lastett 11)

Based on the Bible, Filmer’s assertion is that the father, or the patriarch, is the absolute authority in his family, and the “subordination of children is the fountain of all regal authority, by the ordination of God himself” (Filmer 57). For Filmer, such an authority naturally dominates women, exemplified in “Judah, the Father, pronounced sentence of death against Tamar, his daughter-in-law, for playing the harlot” in the Bible (Filmer 58). Interestingly, Filmer refers to Sir Walter Raleigh, in an anecdote about Nimrod, “who no doubt (as Sir Walter Raleigh affirms) was by right lord or King over his family. Yet against right did he enlarge his empire by seizing violently on the rights of other lords of families, and in this sense, he may be said to be the author and first founder of monarchy”

make” (Lastett 1). His uncle, Captain Sir Samuel Argall, was “first discoverer of the direct sea route to Virginia, first surveyor of the coast of New England, reputed conqueror of the site of modern city of New York” (Lastett 1). Filmer himself was born in or around the year the Spanish Armada was defeated at Gravelines. Thus, Filmer’s views were shaped by the political events of both the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, and his views on the family and the women’s role reflect the sixteenth century thought.

(Filmer 59). Filmer defends the view that a father's role in a family, and a monarch's role in a kingdom, is homologous:

It may seem absurd to maintain that Kings now are the fathers of their people, since experience shows the contrary. It is true, all Kings be not the natural parents of their subjects, yet they all either are, or are to be reputed, as the next heirs of those progenitors who were at first the natural parents of the whole people, and in their right succeed to the exercise of supreme jurisdiction. And such heirs are not only lords of their own children, but also of their brethren, and all others that were subject to their Fathers. (Filmer 60-61)

Basically, Filmer's distinct and rigid hierarchy favoured men and disfavoured women:

According to Filmer, the family in essence was a microcosm of the state. Through this gendered construct of power, men ruled their households similar to a magistrate, with their wives and all dependents, including both servants and children, serving as loyal subjects within the home. Based on this worldview, women—and particularly mothers—essentially existed as second-class citizens, as they were relegated to the home and found little direct interaction with the public political sphere. Once married, women were legally defined as *femme covert*, meaning that in all matters both legal and social their husbands subsumed them. (Crawford 497)

Considering Filmer was born in, or around, 1588 and *The Faerie Queene* was printed for the first time in 1590, it would be an anachronism to claim Filmer's views were influencing Spenser. Although, Filmer's views, as a reflection of the consensus of the society, were certainly known by the sixteenth and seventeenth century literary circles, as "Filmer himself refers to his intimacy with George Herbert, while his brother at Court was an associate of Ben Jonson. The circle included Henry King, George Sandys, Isaac Walton, Richard Lovelace, even John Donne himself" (Lastett 3). Spenser, in *The Faerie Queene*, affirms the sanctity of marriage, as all representations of Elizabeth I in "Book I," "Book II," and "Book III" are destined for marriage and motherhood. The marriage of the Redcrosse Knight and Una, Arthur and Gloriana, Arthegall and Britomart are a certainty. This certainty is a subtle and transparent encouragement for Elizabeth I to marry, and bear an heir for the throne of England. By becoming a mother, Elizabeth I can secure the future of England; therefore, in *The Faerie Queene*, an offence committed against the representations of Elizabeth I is an offence committed against the present and the future of England.

The inequality between the sexes felt much more among the lower and middle classes, however, in the political arena, not even the royalty was immune to the vicious misogyny of the public. In 1541, before the demise of Henry VIII, *Schole House of Women*¹² was written by Edward Gosynhyll. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), *Schole House of Women* is described as “the period’s most notorious misogynist satire, which draws on a wide variety of sources to catalogue female capriciousness, in crudely vigorous rhyme royal” (Somogyi 22). Nadine Saghir presents a brief summary of *Schole House of Women*:

In his satirical poem, the author begins with a prolix critique on the character of women, concluding that most women are fastidious, disputatious, and sharp-tongued, and when married they become quarrelsome and more inclined to gossip. Then, he continues to expound on the subtlety, the loquacity, and the versatility of the feminine spirit, supporting his misogyny with quotations from Solomon and Cicero. (par. 6)

Later, Gosynhyll made amends in *The Prayse of All Women called Mulierum Pean* (1542). In this dream-vision, similar to Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Legend of Good Women*, Venus defends the womankind. There is a praise of motherly love, which is considered as the “most realistic, tender, and extensive” example in the period (Utley 293).

Gosynhyll’s aggression on the female sex ceased, however, a few followed his footsteps. England mourned the loss of monarchs in a succession, as Henry VIII passed away in 1547 and the only male heir to the throne, Edward VI, passed away in 1553. The throne, after a nine-day long reign of Lady Jane Grey, was left for Mary I. Mary I remained a divisive figure for the English, and the main reason of opposition to Mary I’s reign was because of her Catholicism. In 1554, *An Humble Supplication unto God for the Restoring*

¹² There is a debate on the authorship on *Schole House of Women*. John P. Collier argues “it is very clear, from the style and character of the production, that it was not a translation. Edward Gosynhyll ... was the writer of at least two humorous productions from the press of John Kygne, although bibliographers have hitherto only mentioned one of them as his, viz., ‘The prayse of all women, called Mulierum Pean,’ ... but nobody seems to have been aware that he was also the author of ‘The Schole House of Women’” (iii). On the other hand, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, it is stated that “critical opinion is divided as to whether Gosynhyll indeed wrote both works as an exercise in rhetorical ingenuity” (Somogyi 22).

of His Holy Word Unto the Church of God, written by Thomas Becon, was released for the public. Becon finds the rule of women an affront to Christianity: “And verily, though we find that women sometime bare rule among thy people, yet do we read that such as ruled and were queens were for the most part wicked, ungodly, superstitious, and given to idolatry and to all filthy abominations; as we may see in the histories of queen Jesebel, queen Athalia, queen Herodias, and such like (227-28). For Becon, the demise of a male ruler and ascension of a female ruler is a divine punishment: “Ah, Lord! to take away the empire from a man, and to give it unto a woman, seemeth to be an evident token of thine anger toward us Englishmen” (227). Elizabeth I, after the demise of Mary I, became the monarch and found herself at the subject of accusations as well. In 1558, John Knox wrote *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, a tract denouncing the rule of women. In the tract, Knox finds a rule of women is against the nature and destructive to the existing social order:

I conclude (as before) that to promote a woman heade ouer men, is repugnant to nature, and a thinge moste contrarious to that ordre, whiche God hat approued in that common welth, whiche he did institute and rule by his worde. But nowe to the last point, to wit, that the empire of a woman is a thing repugnant to iustice, and the destruction of euerie common welth, where it is receiued. (35)

Melanie Hansen discerns how Knox’s views are not only against the gynocracy, but against women holding authority and power in general, and Knox’s targets are Mary I of England, Queen of France Catherine de Medici, Queen Regent of Scotland Marie de Lorraine, and Mary I of Scotland (15). Still, as Judith M. Richards remarks that “[a] principled, reformist hostility to female rule, as distinct from the rule of the Catholic Mary Tudor, was peculiarly short-lived” (117). James E. Philips Jr. states that “for the most part, the Renaissance Englishman was fulsome in his praise and defense of the opposite sex” (6). The mentioned attacks on women were met with apologies and defences from authors across Europe. In 1523, Juan Luis Vives “acknowledged that women possess certain intellectual capacities, and, in his *De institutione foeminae Christianae*, he outlined a humanistic course for their education” (Philips Jr. 5). Cornelius Agrippa’s *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* is a defence of women’s superiority. Philips Jr. explains “Richard Hyrde’s translation of Vives in 1540, and David Clapham’s translation of Agrippa in 1542, brought support to a similar enlightenment, in England, regarding

women” (5). Thomas Elyot’s *The Defence of Good Women* (1540) is a eulogy for Anne of Cleves, and a defence of women’s education. Robert Vaughan’s *A Dyalogue Defensyve for Women agaynst Malycyous Detractoures*¹³ (1542) is written as an argument between a falcon and a magpie, concerning women’s rights¹⁴. “The generall end” of *The Faerie Queene* may be “fashion[ing] a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline;” (Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* 714) however, the entirety of the allegory is a eulogy to Elizabeth I. Therefore, as Elizabeth I is the height of morality in representation, how Elizabeth I is portrayed must be examined, to understand how immorality is represented.

First and foremost, all representations of Elizabeth I embody an inseparable three for Spenser; the unity of the monarch, the kingdom, and the religion. For Spenser, Elizabeth I is an English, a Protestant, and a Queen. The three are sacrosanct, and so is Elizabeth I as the embodiment of the three. Personifications and characters, who defy or offend any of the three essential components of Elizabeth I’s unity are condemned as immoral. The Redcrosse Knight, who “sprong out from English race,” is an Englishman, and suitable to become Una’s husband (I.x.60.1). On the racial profiling of the non-English women, Mira Assaf Kafantaris comments how Elizabeth I’s representations defend the future of England, but “a foreign queen emblemizes the threat of infection, which can permeate the commonwealth religiously, culturally, or physiologically” (par. 1). Duessa and Sans Foy, who engage in a liaison, are both non-English; and represent the dangerous foreign powers. Duessa is “the sole daughter of an Emperor,” meaning she is from a foreign nation (I.ii.22.7). Sans Foy is a Saracen. Adicia and Soudan, a foreign wife and husband, threaten the rule of Mercilla in “Book V.” In *The Faerie Queene*, a non-English personification or a character, man or woman, is always hazardous for the well-being of England.

¹³ In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the authorship of *A Dyalogue Defensyve for Women agaynst Malycyous Detractoures* is debated, and the defence is thought to be written by Robert Burdet (Somogyi 22).

¹⁴ There are many more cases, such as Elyot’s and Vaughan’s. For more information, see “The Background of Spenser’s Attitude Toward Women Rulers” by James E. Philips, Jr.

The same is true for the non-Protestant personifications and characters. In *The Faerie Queene*, to be moral is to be a Christian, and a Protestant. Spenser disfavours any other religion or a movement, particularly Catholicism and Islam. The majority of Spenser's opinions against Catholicism is found in "Book I." Duessa is a representation of Catholicism. She is a representation of the Whore of Babylon, "figure that Protestants read as a symbol of the Catholic Church" (Kaske xviii). Corceca is a Catholic, representing the "defects of Catholic laity, ignorant and too legalistically ritualistic and quantitative in their approach to their devotions" (Kaske 42). Together with Abessa, her blind daughter, and a thief named Kirkrapine, the three steal from the Church. Kirkrapine's punishment is a demonstration of how Catholicism offends Protestantism. Immunity from such a punishment is not granted to Muslims either. Soudan, a Muslim, is slain by Arthegall, and all three Saracen brothers are defeated by the Redcrosse Knight. Therefore, any character or personification, who represents any element of Catholicism, is condemned to immorality.

Lastly, all representations of Elizabeth I, namely Belpheobe, Britomart, Gloriana, and Una, are destined to be perfect rulers. Representations of Elizabeth I are noble in bloodline, and all are portrayed with all synonyms of chastity, such as innocence, physical and spiritual beauty, purity, maidenhood and virginity (Seber 138). The latter are moral merits, expected from a woman in the sixteenth century England. Moreover, all representations of Elizabeth I are bearers of moral merits expected from perfect rulers, such as bravery, courtesy, faith, justice, and mercy (Seber 138). Lastly, all representations of Elizabeth I are "associated with light as their virtues provide them with a heavenly brightness, distinguishing them from the dark ones" (Seber 138).

Contrasting and complementing representations of Elizabeth I are Acrasia, Duessa, Lucifera, Philotime, and Radigund, each representing an antithesis of the perfect ruler. Acrasia, Duessa, Lucifera, Philotime, and Radigund abide in spheres of natural or unnatural darkness. Acrasia's domain is the Bower of Bliss, basically a hole-in-the-ground. Philotime's domain is the underworld and the "contrast between the dim light of the throne room and Philotime's brightness" is a commentary on the deficiency in

Philotime's virtue (Seber 145). The House of Pride is awe-inspiring; however, Lucifera, as an autocrat, darkens the grandeur of her realm:

A mayden Queene, that shone as Titans ray,
 In glistening gold, and perelesse pretious stone;
 Yet her bright blazing beautie did assay
 To dim the brightnesse of her glorious throne,
 As enuying her selfe, that too exceeding shone. (I.iv.8.5-9)

As for Radigund is the ruler of Radegone, and her name derives from "Greek *radios* 'reckless' and *gunē* 'woman,' or from Latin *radere* 'to offend'" (Rupprecht 580). Radigund is an Amazon, representing hyper-masculinity in a female body. This hyper-masculinity means aggressiveness, defying domestic responsibility, and dominancy. Radigund's transgression of the borders of gender performances is a fault for Spenser, who describes Radigund as follows: "Like as the Moone in foggie winters night / Doth seeme to be her selfe, though darkened be her light" (V.v.12.8-9). Duessa, the daughter of Deceit and Shame, casts a figurative darkness, in the form of concealment and deception. Masterfully, Duessa manipulates Orgoglio, the Redcrosse Knight, and Sans Foy, for the sake of her schemes. Simultaneously, she conceals her disease-ridden body from the society. An association with light is reserved for the representations of Elizabeth I. The light is a symbol for chastity, honesty, and righteousness. Antitheses of Elizabeth I are associated with darkness, as the darkness is a symbol of deception, seduction, and trickery; although, it should be noted that there are a few exceptions.

The Faerie Queene is an allegory, and each layer of the allegory is conglutinated, meaning examining Elizabeth I, England, and Protestantism singularly is impossible. However, such is not the case for the antitheses of Elizabeth I, England, and Protestantism. There are characters and personifications, overlaid with each other; however, such is a commentary on the far-reaching effects of immorality. Individuality is a must for the evil, and conformity is a must for the good, meaning the good characters and personifications represent a collective identity, whereas the bad or the evil characters and personifications represent individuality. Therefore, the expectancy is that the evil characters and personification should defy any classification, or categorisation. However, in *The Faerie Queene*, the evil women are subjects of a classification, as seen by the table below.

| Classification/Taxonomy of Evil Women in <i>The Faerie Queene</i> | | | |
|---|-------|--------|---------|
| Name | Book | Mother | "Whore" |
| Abessa | I | | ✓ |
| Acrasia | II | | ✓ |
| Argante | III | | ✓ |
| Corceca | I | ✓ | |
| Duessa | I, II | | ✓ |
| Earth | I | ✓ | |
| Elissa | II | | |
| Error | I | ✓ | |
| Hellenore | III | | ✓ |
| Impatience | II | | ✓ |
| Impotence | II | | ✓ |
| Lucifera | I | | |
| Malecasta | III | | ✓ |
| Night | I | ✓ | |
| Occassion | II | | ✓ |
| Perissa | II | | |
| Phaedria | II | | |
| Philotime | II | | |
| The Witch | III | ✓ | |

There are three deductions that can be made from this table. First, even though the evil characters and personifications are variegated, the evil women were created with a certain archetype in Spenser's mind. The traditional archetype in female representations as a pair, known as the virgin and the whore, can be found in both secular and religious sources. However, Spenser introduces motherhood as a juxtaposition as well. The details regarding this juxtaposition are presented in Chapter II. Second, physical composition of a woman plays a role in her classification, as a mother character or personification is always deformed. In contrast, a woman, who is labelled as a whore can be beautiful; however, such a beauty is created by artifice, either by cosmetics or by concealment. Third, exceptions to the rule are found all too common, in *The Faerie Queene*. For instance, Lucifera cannot be classified by either labels, and remains an exception to the classification.

Last of the moral elements of Spenser's system of aestheticism is the concepts of virtue and vice. In "Letter to Raleigh," Spenser refers to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: "I

labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall vertues, as Aristotle hath deuised...” (*The Faerie Queene* 715). In Greece, Socrates engaged in a range of debates on morality, and argued for an ethics system based on the concept of virtue. The system of ethics was developed further by Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics; although, only Plato and Aristotle are mentioned in “Letter to Raleigh.” In *Oxford Dictionary of English*, virtue is defined as “behaviour showing high moral standards,” or “a quality considered morally good or desirable in a person” deriving from the Latin word *virtus* (Pearsall and Hanks 2065), meaning “manly qualities, valour” (de Vaan 681). On the other hand, vice is defined as “immoral or wicked behaviour,” deriving from Latin word *vitium*, (Pearsall and Hanks 2058) meaning “defect, fault” (de Vaan 684). There is a distinct polarity in the meaning of the concepts, simplified as good and bad, or evil. In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates discusses oughtness of a city-state with Adeimantus, in which the society is stratified by three classes: the guardians, the auxiliaries, and the producers. In “Book IV,” Socrates argues a guardian should possess four cardinal virtues, namely wisdom, courage, moderation¹⁵, and justice. Opposing the four cardinal virtues are vices, namely ignorance, cowardice, indulgence, and injustice, and a man who adheres to the vices is an unhappy man. In contrast, a man who adheres to the virtues is a happy man. Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, affirms the arguments of Socrates, and explains that “since happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with complete excellence¹⁶, we must consider the nature of excellence; for perhaps we shall thus see better the nature of happiness” (20). Aristotle’s main argument is that the temperance is necessary for the proper exercise of virtues, for both deficiency and excess of an action leads to negative outcomes. For example, courage in deficiency is cowardice, however, in excess it leads to impulsive and rash decisions. Spenser’s consulting to Aristotle in a work that is dedicated to the virtues is not surprising, as David S. Sytsma states that “Protestants produced an astonishingly rich corpus of ethical texts based on *Nicomachean Ethics*” (1). Aristotle’s understanding of virtue can be described as practical and materialistic, eschewing any theological or spiritual connotations. Roger Crisp summarises the conclusion of Aristotle’s *ergon* argument as “human happiness consists

¹⁵ John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson explain the original term is *sôphrosunê*, meaning “self-control, good sense, reasonableness, temperance, and (in some contexts) chastity” (1062).

¹⁶ Jonathan Barnes, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Revised Oxford Translation: Volume Two* (1984) translates “virtue” as “excellence.”

in the exercise of the virtues” (xiv). However, Elizabeth Heale warns the reader by stating that “[t]he ‘Letter’ is notoriously misleading both in its citation of Aristotle as the source for its virtues ... and in its account of Books 1-3 which conflict with the poem as we have it on a number of points, suggesting that it was still in a process of evolution when the ‘Letter’ was written” (Heale 11-12). It is safe to assume that Spenser approached the concept of virtue and vice either experimentally or subjectively.

The concepts remained dynamic subjects of discussions, resulting in changes in meaning and interpretation from the Post-Socrates Greece to Renaissance Europe. There were secular and religious interpretations of the concepts¹⁷. Spenser alludes both religious and secular interpretations; however, religious interpretations are more conspicuous in representation. “Book I” of *The Faerie Queene* is dedicated to “Holinesse,” and the hostility of Catholicism and Islam against Protestantism recurs as a theme. Spenser’s choice of religious interpretations for the concepts could be the result of the influence of *Psychomachia*. Aurelius Prudentius Clemens is the Latin poet, who wrote the narrative poem *Psychomachia*, translated as *The Fight for Mansoul* by H. J. Thomson, which is the first pure medieval allegory dealing with the struggle between good and evil within the soul of man. Aparajita Nanda explains the conceptualisation of a Christian’s life as “a pilgrimage towards God, a war against the forces of evil, has been reiterated right through the literature of late antiquity and the Middle Ages well into the Renaissance,” and the war, for the first time, represented in poetic form by Prudentius’ *Psychomachia* (52). Tucker argues, in the form of allegory, beside “Hercules at the Crossroads,” *The Faerie Queene* is the best representation of the concept of psychomachia (181). Furthermore, *The Faerie Queene* is “an epic treatment of the struggle between virtue and vice, with countless characters symbolically enacting the many battles within the soul, all of which update Prudentius’ work for Spenser’s contemporary context” (Tucker 181). Nanda remarks how concrete evidence, supporting the argument that Spenser had read

¹⁷ This thesis skips constructing a genealogy for the concepts, as such a genealogy would be impossible to describe in a few pages. Shawn R. Tucker’s *The Virtues and Vices in Arts: A Sourcebook* (2015) presents a comprehensive examination of the genealogy, from Plato’s *The Republic* to Paul Cadmus’ *The Seven Deadly Sins*.

Psychomachia, does not exist; however, “one has to acknowledge that Prudentius’ work was notable for its powerful influence upon medieval and Renaissance culture” (53).

Psychomachia, as a term, is translated as “The Fight for Mansoul” by H. J. Thomson. In *Psychomachia*, Chastity, Faith, Good Works, Hope, Long-Suffering, Lowliness, and Soberness are representations of virtue, and personified as women. Contrasting the seven are Discord, Greed, Indulgence, Lust, Pride, Worship-of-the-Old-Gods, and Wrath, who represent the personification of vices. There is antagonism between the virtues and vices. For example, Faith is the enemy of Worship-of-the-Old-Gods. The narrative is supported by other virtues and vices, who remain within the conflict, but play a more passive role, such as Anguish, Care, Hunger, Falsehood, Fear, Sleeplessness, etc. There are resemblances between *Psychomachia* and *The Faerie Queene*. Women, who are personifications of moral concepts, are at the centre of the narrative. Moreover, physical composition of women is created as an expression of morality. Pride, for example, is seated on a chariot. She is aristocratic, fierce, and haughty in character. Pride’s representation reminds the reader of Lucifera, who dwells in the House of Pride. Indulgence is described as Vice in “Hercules at the Crossroads,” as “her locks perfumed, her eyes shifting, her voice listless, abandoned in voluptuousness” and “she lived only for pleasure” (Prudentius 301). Indulgence conquers all “without shedding of blood” (Prudentius 303). There is an analogy between Acrasia and Indulgence, as both are comparable in representation. Faith, on the other hand, is represented in dignity, as

her rough dress disordered, her shoulders bare, her hair untrimmed, her arms exposed for the sudden glow of ambition, burning to enter fresh contests, takes no thought to gird on arms or armour, but trusting in a stout heart and unprotected limbs challenges the hazards of furious warfare, meaning to break them down. (Prudentius 281)

In the same manner of *Psychomachia*, women on the side of morality in *The Faerie Queene*, such as Britomart, Florimell, and Una, are simple in physical composition. Simple physical compositions arouse a sense of chastity, dignity and nobility, as with Virtue’s in “Hercules at the Crossroads” or Faith’s in *Psychomachia*. On the other hand, women on the side of immorality, such as Acrasia, Duessa, and Errour, are complex in physical composition. They arouse a sense of artificiality, indecency, disgust, and

sensuality. The conception is simple. Women on the side of morality are beautiful, and the women on the side of immorality are ugly. The only way for the women on the side of immorality to be beautiful is to create beauty by artifice. Moreover, beauty of the evil women is an instrument for deception, seduction, and trickery. Hackett argues that Spenser, as a Protestant, “is suspicious of artifice as distraction and deception” (136).

To understand how and why Spenser adheres to such a conception, Spenser’s sources should be examined. In “Letter to Raleigh,” Spenser mentions seven names as models of inspiration. The names of the authors are Aristotle, Homer, Virgil, Ludovico Ariosto, Plato, Torquato Tasso, and Xenophon; although, Lewis argues that Spenser’s “chief models” are Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, Boiardo’s *Orlando Innamorato*, and Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* (131). Three of the seven authors are philosophers; Aristotle, Plato, and Xenophon. Philosophies of the three authors, especially Platonism, is fundamental for the text, as Lewis remarks, “Spenser wrote primarily as a (Protestant) Christian and secondarily as a Platonist” (144).

Therefore, in order to analyse negative portrayals of women, both Christianity and Platonism should be examined with a focus on beauty and ugliness, and the association of the pair of concepts with morality. Furthermore, Spenser represents the relationship between physical composition and morality in *The Faerie Queene* in accordance with Renaissance Platonism, specifically Neoplatonism. Padelford argues that “Canto V” of “Book III” is concluded with Belphoebe praised “as an embodiment of the neo-platonic ideal of womanhood” (375). In a similar vein, Lewis interprets Arthur’s chasing of Florimell as a “picture of the soul, as in Platonism, endlessly seeking that perfect beauty” (144). In Neoplatonism, an individual’s beauty is a symptom of morality or immorality. In literature, descriptions and discussions of a woman’s beauty are not restricted to physical appearance, but all elements of a woman’s physical composition, including morality. Thus, in a discussion about the pair of concepts, constituents, such as bearing, clothing, hygiene, cosmetics, youth, weight, etc. will also be discussed.

To understand how physical composition and morality are associated with Neoplatonism, Plato’s arguments on the nature of beauty should be examined. In Greece, prior to the

arguments of Socrates, found in the works of Plato and Xenophon, a source on the nature of beauty is not found (Grube 269). Nevertheless, admiration for beauty and disdain for ugliness, particularly for the male physique, is found in Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. In *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, Homer's sense of aesthetics is an expression of appreciation for human physique, aptly related to physical appearance; however, unrelated to morality. Eco exemplifies Homer's sense of beauty by reminding the reunion of Helen and Menelaus. In *The Iliad*, Helen's elopement with Paris is the trigger of the Trojan War; however, in the end Helen is excused from any kind of punishment. Eco notes how "the irresistible [b]eauty of Helen absolves her of the suffering she caused. Troy having been taken by storm, Menelaos swoops on his unfaithful spouse to kill her but his sword arm is left paralysed when his glance falls upon her beautiful naked breasts" (*On Beauty* 37). On the other hand, Thersites is mocked for his deformed physique and is hated by Achilles and Odysseus. Homer describes his physical deformity and vulgarity as inseparable: "His head was full of vulgar abuse ... He was the ugliest man that went to Ilios" (106). Nevertheless, in a general sense, Homer's descriptions of physical composition focus on the virility of heroes. Homer acknowledges the beauty of the natural environments as well; however, even in the natural environments, perspective of the narrative is human centred, as for the Greeks, "[n]ature ... is but the frame, with man as the picture" (Grube 269). On occasion, Homer employs aestheticism in the violation in reprehensible action. If he finds "an action that is 'not beautiful', he means that a breach of this rule is ugly, ... as it causes pain to the spectator" (Grube 270). For Homer, "works of art or songs are called beautiful, it is especially their spectacular value that the author has in mind; not their moral value or their technique" (Grube 270). *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Faerie Queene* were written with the same purpose, as for the Greeks *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are "not only ... artistic heritage[s], but ... moral and spiritual guide[s]" (Grube 270). Identically, Spenser, in "Letter to Raleigh," expounds on the purpose of *The Faerie Queene*: "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline" (*The Faerie Queene* 714).

For the first time in Greece, "moral aspect of beauty" is praised by the lyric poets, followed by tragedians and philosophers, as the word of *kalos* "comes to be used more loosely and the distinction between the good and the beautiful is obscured" (Grube 270).

Eco remarks that “being *kalos* and *agathos* generically defines what the English world would later describe as a gentleman, a person with a dignified air possessed of courage, style, ability, and proven sporting, military, and moral virtues¹⁸” (*On Ugliness*, 23).

In this sense, Eco claims that “Plato’s position was a more complex one, and it led to the two most important concepts of Beauty elaborated over the centuries: Beauty as harmony and proportion between the parts (derived from Pythagoras), and Beauty as splendour, as expounded in *Phaedrus*, which was to influence Neoplatonic thinking” (*On Beauty*, 49-50). Grube divides Plato’s arguments on beauty in a pair of periods, as the first period consists of *Gorgias* and *Hippias Major*, and conveys Socrates’ thoughts, and the second period, consisting of *Phaedrus*, *Philebus*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Timaeus*, in which Plato conveys his own thoughts (271). Socrates, in *Gorgias*, argues with Polus, and refers to the physical beauty: “Take physical beauty first. When you call a body fine are you not referring either to its usefulness for some particular purpose or to some feeling of pleasure which makes glad the eyes of its beholders? Is there any reason other than these for calling a body fine?” (49). Socrates defines the aesthetic of physical composition in relation to utility. Similarly, in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, Socrates argues beauty and goodness is one and the same, both requiring a certain function. In a dialogue with Socrates, Aristippus asks whether “a dung-carrying basket [is] noble¹⁹,” to which Socrates replies the basket is beautiful, whereas a gold shield is ugly, for the former is fittingly crafted and the latter is not. In *Hippias Major*, Socrates presents three distinct definitions of beauty, countering the arguments of Hippias of Elis. The arguments in *Hippias Major* recurs in *Memorabilia* and Plato’s *Protagoras*.

Accordingly, Plato’s system of aestheticism demands morality for beauty. In *Republic*, Socrates, in an argument with Glaucon, states “[f]or it is, and always will be, the finest saying that what is beneficial is beautiful; what is harmful ugly” (146). In *Symposium*, Socrates answers Agathon with a question: ““Just one more small thing – doesn’t what is good also seem to you beautiful?”” (36). In *Timaeus*, Timaeus claims, “anything good is

¹⁸ *Kalokagathia* is a term representing the perfection, with *kalos* meaning “beautiful” and *agathos* meaning “good, but covers a whole series of positive values” (Eco, *On Ugliness* 23).

¹⁹ Amy L. Bonnette translates beautiful as noble. Clearly, there is an interloping interpretation in both concepts.

beautiful, and nothing beautiful lacks proportion, so we are bound to expect a healthy creature to be a well-proportioned creature” (92). In Greece, physical beauty held non-physical associations, as Eco exemplifies with a reply of the Oracle of Delphi: “[t]he most beautiful is most just” (*On Beauty* 37). The case against Phryne in Ancient Greece, taking place between 350 B.C. and 340 B.C. is a prime example of how the beautiful is the moral. Esther Eidinow explains the two accounts of Phryne’s acquittal from a dangerous accusation. Plutarch, in *Lives of the Ten Orators*, argues Phryne was acquitted from her charges by exposing her bare breasts to the judges, who were enthralled by her beauty and cleared her of all charges (Eidinow 24). However, Athenaeus presents a more spiritual narrative:

Hyperides spoke in support of Phryne, and when his speech accomplished nothing, and the jurors seemed likely to convict her, he brought her out in public, ripped her dress to shreds, exposed her chest, and at the conclusion of his speech produced cries of lament as he gazed at her, causing the jurors to feel a superstitious fear of this priestess and temple-attendant of Aphrodite, and to give in to pity rather than put her to death. (qtd. in Eidinow 25)

Eidinow explains how “the display of Phryne’s body prompted in the jurors a profound sense of religious awe (*deisidaimonesai*),” and she continues by explaining that “Athenaeus does not condemn Phryne’s behaviour; rather the implication is that this woman, in her body and behaviour, and above all in her beauty, teetered on the divine” (25). Similarly, Theognis, in *Elegies*, explains how Muses and Graces attending the marriage of Cadmus and Harmony sang the following verses: “The beautiful is good, and if a thing’s / Not beautiful, it isn’t good” (Hesiod and Theognis 97). Eco remarks that the verse is “to a certain extent an expression of a commonly held opinion regarding the sense of beauty in ancient Greece” (*On Beauty* 37).

Plato’s arguments on the nature of beauty are contrasted and complemented by his definition and arguments on ugliness. In *Symposium*, Aristophanes, Eryximachus, Pausanias, and Phaedrus, debate on the nature of love, and the conclusion of the argument is, love for the sake of a union is a divine experience, whereas love for the sake of physical gratification is degrading. Love plays a critical role in *The Faerie Queene*, as Spenser openly discusses in “Canto IX” in “Book IV” how there are “three kinds of loue,” which

are “deare affection,” “raging fire of loue to woman kind,” and “zeale of friends” (IV.ix.1.2-7). Love, as in Platonism or Neoplatonism, is reserved for the chaste, pure, and virgin women in *The Faerie Queene*. The remaining women, such as Duessa and Acrasia, inspire a baser form of infatuation. Proportion plays a critical role in a Platonic or Neoplatonic representation of beauty, as well. Argante, Error, Oliphant, and Orgoglio, are monstrous in appearance. Non-human creatures, with the exception of Satyrane, is represented disproportionate in form, and thereby, ugly. Lastly, in *Parmenides*, Socrates and Parmenides engage in a debate concerning the Forms, and a conclusion of the argument is there is no Form for “hair and mud and dirt, or anything else totally undignified and worthless” (Plato, *Complete Works* 364). In *The Faerie Queene*, all sources of physical abjection, such as blood, dirt, pus, and ooze, belong to the ugly.

Neoplatonism is a branch of Platonism, founded by Plotinus in the mid-third century. Monist and mystical in nature, Neoplatonists “absorbed, appropriated, and creatively harmonized almost the entire Hellenic tradition of philosophy, religion, and even literature—with the exceptions of Epicureanism, which they roundly rejected, and the thoroughgoing corporealism of the Stoics” (Wildberg par.1). Neoplatonism is regarded as concluded in 529 C.E. with the closing of the Academy by Emperor Justinian; however, by then the philosophy “had spread to Syria, Asia Minor and Alexandria, as well as to Athens, the birthplace of philosophy and Platonism” (Remes 1). Neoplatonism survived all the way to the Renaissance, and echoed in the textual treatises of Baldassare Castiglione, Giovanni Boccaccio, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino, and numerous others. Influenced by Plato’s *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, in “On Beauty,” Plotinus “focuses on the nature of physical beauty and its relation to moral and intellectual beauty” (Gerson 91). Plotinus’ cosmology is encapsulated by three main concepts, which are the One, the Intellect, and the Soul. The One represents the Good, and the Good is “the source and principle of beauty” (Plotinus 103). Plotinus argues symmetry and proportion, key components of beauty in the Renaissance, are indeed beautiful; however, beauty is fundamentally pertained to the Good:

The soul, then, when it is purified, becomes form, and an expressed principle, and entirely incorporeal and intellectual and wholly divine, which is the source of beauty and of all things that have a kinship with it. Soul, then, being borne up to Intellect,

becomes even more beautiful. And Intellect and the things that come from Intellect are soul's beauty, since they belong to it, that is they are not alien to it, because it is then really soul alone. For this reason, it is correctly said that goodness and being beautiful for the soul consist in 'being assimilated to god', because it is in the intelligible world that Beauty is found as well as the fate of the rest of the Beings. Or rather, Beings are what Beauty is and ugliness is the other nature, primary evil itself, so that for god 'good' and 'beautiful' are identical, or rather the Good and Beauty are identical. (Plotinus 99)

Plotinus' main argument here is the beauty is an external expression of morality. Man's actions have effects on the Soul. Therefore, if a woman is beautiful, she is, unmistakably, a good person. For all beauty emanates from the One, meaning a beautiful woman is hither to the One than an ugly woman. Expectedly, if a woman is ugly, she is a bad person. Ugliness, in the context of Plotinus' views, is associated with moral failings, licentious actions and thoughts that taint the Soul and draw a man closer to the baser, material realm. Similarly, in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), Castiglione accounts a series of dialogues on the requisites of an ideal courtier and an ideal courtly lady, and the treatise includes multiple sections on the nature and role of the beauty. Considering the immense popularity of *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione's assertions on beauty can be considered as fashionable expressions of the common thought in the sixteenth century. In "The Fourth Book of the Courtier," Messer Pietro's views on beauty echoes that of Plotinus, indicating the popularity of the notion in the Renaissance:

My Lords, I would not have any of us, like profane and sacrilegious men, incur God's wrath by speaking ill of beauty, which is a sacred thing. ... I say that beauty spring from God, and is like a circle of which goodness is the centre. And hence, as there can be no circle without a centre, there can be no beauty without goodness. Thus a wicked soul rarely inhabits a beautiful body, and for that reason outward beauty is a sign of inward goodness. (Castiglione 293-94)

Pietro continues by contrasting the beautiful with the ugly: "The ugly therefore for the most part wicked too, and the beautiful are good: we may say that beauty is the pleasant, gay, acceptable and desirable face of good, and that ugliness is the dark, disagreeable, unpleasant and sad face of evil" (294). During the Renaissance, a person's external physical appearance was considered as a reflection of her or his morality. Indeed, Eco states "[b]etween the Middle Ages and the Baroque Period, vituperation with regard to women – whose ugliness reveals their inner malice and pernicious powers of seduction –

was a theme that enjoyed great success” (*On Ugliness* 159). Eco exemplifies Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Il Corbaccio* (1355), as a misogynist attack on women, and a representation of the connection between women’s physical composition and morality. A dream-vision, *Il Corbaccio* conveys the narrative of an unnamed protagonist, who falls in love with a widow and the unrequitedness of his love causes him frustrations. He falls asleep and as his dream turns into a nightmare, a dignified shade from the underworld approaches him and reveals him the truth about the widow, as the protagonist learns in horror the shade is the widow’s ex-husband. The ex-husband tells in grotesque detail how the widow is hideously ugly, but covers her body with cosmetics. Following the revelation, the ex-husband begins an invective about the inferiority and the faults of the women and advises the dreamer to pursue his studies instead of chasing superficial love. The dream is concluded and the dreamer finds he is troubled no more. *Il Corbaccio* remains one of the most prominent examples in fourteenth century of how a woman’s beguiles have stupefying effect on men and how artificial beauty is considered worthless by misogynist men. Although misogynist literature was well-established prior to *Il Corbaccio*, the work makes a good notice of the treatment of the cosmetics and beauty created through artifice. Even in *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione’s occasional misogynist streak is seen, as beauty created by artifice is looked down upon:

Women are always very eager to be—and when they cannot be, at least to seem—beautiful. So where nature is somewhat at fault in this regard, they try to piece it out by artifice; whence arise that painting of the face with so much care and sometimes pains, that plucking of the eyebrows and forehead, and the use of all those devices and the endurance of that trouble, which you ladies think to keep very secret from men, but which are all well known. (54)

Beauty endorsed in the Renaissance was a natural beauty, for the artifice that was created by make-up and cosmetics was considered false and lust-invoking. The criticism of the cosmetics continued and passed even Spenser’s time, as seen in Ben Jonson’s poem “Still to be neat, still to be dressed.”

The hygiene is a vital sign, dividing the good women and the evil women in *The Faerie Queene*. In the Renaissance Europe, the upkeep of personal care is an unspoken requirement of a lady. According to Belsey, even in the Middle English allegory,

Romaunt of the Rose, there are instructions for the lover to “wash his hands, make sure his teeth are white, keep his fingers clean, and comb his hair, while also learning to sing, dance, and play the guitar” (Belsey 200). Filth is an indication of failings in body and a symptom of a diseased soul.

Lastly, the traditional representation of a woman in the Renaissance emphasised youth. In *The Faerie Queene*, all good women are young, either maidens or at least at child-bearing age. The evil women are old, even decrepit. The idea of oldness as an expression of evil goes back to Greece, as Eco explains, “Agathon represented Eros as eternally young and handsome (thus returning to a recurrent theme in the Greek world, from Pindar onwards, whereby beauty is accompanied by youth and ugliness by old age)” (*On Ugliness* 27).

The physical representations, in accordance with Neoplatonism, forms the basis of the abjection in *The Faerie Queene*. Abjection is a process, and the source of the process can be physical, or non-physical²⁰. In physical aspects, the elements associated with ugliness are represented as odiousness by Spenser. For example, the female figure in *Il Corbaccio* is an example of physical abjection, because of the employment of cosmetics. In non-physical aspects, the elements associated with moral failings are represented as horrifying. Vice, in “Hercules at the Crossroads,” is abject in both physical and a non-physical sense. The reason for this is the combination of the employment of cosmetics, which forms a disingenuous façade.

²⁰ The physical and non-physical abjection are not concepts mentioned by Kristeva. The concepts are called as such by the author of this thesis, to examine the disparity of the abjection of women in *The Faerie Queene*, in a clear and coherent manner.

CHAPTER 2: ABJECTION OF MOTHERHOOD, MOTHERS, AND CHILDREN

“Whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother’s love is not. Your mother brings you into the world, carries you first in her body. What do we know about what she feels?”

–James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Motherhood in *The Faerie Queene* is, first and foremost, associated with the earthly side of procreation²¹, inferior to the spiritual side of procreation. The women favoured by Spenser, who are all moral without exception, are allowed to transcend from the negative representations of maternity. They are represented by the positive characteristics, specifically the virtues, of motherhood. The narratives of Dame Caelia and Charissa in “Book I,” Chrysogonee in “Book III,” and Belge in “Book V,” are moral and virtuous representations of motherhood. Dame Caelia and Charissa guide the Redcrosse Knight in atonement and spiritual cleansing. Chrysogonee is the mother of Amoretta and Belpheobe, both of whom are representations of Elizabeth I. Furthermore, as a chaste woman, Chrysogonee’s impregnation occurs by a divine source, and by the grace of the divine source, she is spared of birth pangs. Belge is a political representative of “Low Countries as a whole,” (Hamilton et al. 579) and the loss of twelve of her seventeen children at the hands of a tyrant represents Belge as a tragic, but noble, figure.

On the other hand, all remaining mothers in *The Faerie Queene* are represented as abject, and enemies of England. Hence, Abessa, Corceca, Earth, Error, and Night in “Book I,” Occasion in “Book II,” and the Witch in “Book III” are represented as evil women. The symptoms of wickedness are discernible on the body of the evil women as abnormalities or deformations. Abessa’s deafness, feebleness, and muteness²², Corceca’s blindness,

²¹ Elizabeth A. Spiller argues Spenser’s “evocation of language of biological reproduction responds not so much to a breakdown in Aristotelian reproductive theory itself, but to a breakdown in the poetics implied by that theory” (64).

²² According to National Association of the Deaf, the terms “deaf and dumb,” “deaf-mute,” and “hearing impaired” are considered derogatory (*Community and Culture* par.4). This thesis refers to such terms only in the literary context of *The Faerie Queene*.

Error's nauseating anatomy, and the Witch's decrepit and frightful appearance are all deformations, in comparison to a healthy and temporarily able-bodied human. Earth, Night, and Occasion are abstract concepts. The personifications lack physicality in representation, contrast to the evil women. Instead, representations of the three are concerned with the production of abject children or grandchildren, forming a lineage. Earth is the mother of three giants, who are Argante, Ollyphant, and Orgoglio. These giants are anthropomorphic in form, resembling humans. Still, the proportions of the body of the giants are off, and they disregard any rule of civility and morality, going so far as to commit sexual offences. Earth, as a mother, is represented as able to produce only monstrous children. The reason for the deformation of Earth's children is evilness, as Argante, Ollyphant, and Orgoglio are represented as lewd or lustful creatures. Lastly, Night is the mother of Sansfoy, Sansjoy, Sansloy, Cymochles, and Pyrochles. There is a chance she is an ancestor of Duessa, as well. The children of Night are unrepentantly evil, and each of them is abject. Sansfoy, Sansjoy, and Sansloy are known as the Saracen Brothers, and all of them are Muslims. Per Spenser's attitude towards the foreigners, representations of the Saracen Brothers are completely negative, subjecting the brothers to social abjection. Cymocheles and Pyrocheles are brothers, and the pair are bound to the bidding of Acrasia. The brothers commit a moral crime, by assaulting Sir Guyon and Arthur, with no provocation, which is an example of abjection, by the premediated crime. Lastly, Occasion's role in the narrative is brief, as she only aggravates her son, Furor, to assault Sir Guyon, who binds Occasion by deforming her tongue. Sir Guyon is the embodiment of Temperance. For Spenser, Temperance is second only to Holiness in significance. Sir Guyon is such a moral character that an angel guards him when he is unconscious. This means, any offence committed against Sir Guyon, or the concept of Temperance, is a heinous crime. The same holds true for Una and the Redcrosse Knight, the embodiments of Holiness, and Florimell²³, the embodiment of Chastity.

²³ The thematic virtue of each book, namely Holiness, Temperance, and Chastity, are embodied by more than one character. For example, Amoret, Belpheobe, Britomart, Florimell, and Una are exemplifications of chastity. The only distinction is Belpheobe and Britomart, who defend their chastity by fighting, whereas Amoret, Florimell, and Una defend their chastity by escaping, or running.

In *The Faerie Queene*, all evil mothers are subjected to abjection, and abjection is easily discernible. Moral women are distinguished by an association with light, beauty, courtly behaviour, chastity, health, hygiene, modesty, non-physical love, and a temporarily able-body. In contrast, evil, or immoral, women are distinguished by an association with darkness, cosmetics, disability, diseases, filthiness, impropriety, promiscuity, and physical love. This is true for all women in *The Faerie Queene*. Still, mothers have a few unique features, separating them from women, who are not mothers. The unique features of mothers can be recognised by analysing the abjection of motherhood and mothers. One method of easily recognising abjection of mothers and motherhood is by checking the morality of a mother, which can be ascertained by the morality of her children. This means moral mothers have moral children, and evil, or immoral, mothers have immoral children. There is no exception to this rule. Moreover, the abject children of abject mothers are prone to committing sexual offences, as Argante, Maleger, Orgoglio, Ollyphant, and the Witch's son are described as libidinous creatures.

The second method of recognising the abjection of mothers and motherhood is that evil mothers are associated with the physical side of procreation, and their act of procreating is represented as loathsome. This is especially seen in descriptions of Earth's and Error's reproduction. Interestingly, all evil mothers in *The Faerie Queene* attempt to protect their children from the heavy violence that surrounds the narrative, explained further down for each character and personification. Paradoxically, Spenser represents the biological production or the female genitalia of evil mothers in an abhorrent manner, especially seen in Earth and Error's representations. Interestingly, he does not negate the traditional representations of motherly love. The reason for this could be that since *The Faerie Queene* is an epic, a certain type of kinship exists between the mother and the offspring. Nevertheless, the main concern of the author is conveying a love that is between a moral man and a moral woman, in a Neoplatonic context. In *The Faerie Queene*, marriage is the ultimate goal designated for the representations of Elizabeth I. Nevertheless, motherhood of the representations of the queen is never shown. The reason could be Elizabeth I's refusal to marry, and Spenser's desire to not transgress Elizabeth I's private life.

The third method of recognising the abjection of motherhood, bearing *Psychomachia*'s influence on *The Faerie Queene*, is idleness. Idleness, in the sixteenth century England, was considered a vice, and is mentioned in *Psychomachia* as well: "No member of Soul lurks in idleness, shut off in a pocket of the body and lying close in some retreat in ignoble sloth" (Prudentius 331). Sloth, a synonymy of Idleness, is represented as one of the Seven Deadly Sins in *The Canterbury Tales*, which is one of the inspirations for *The Faerie Queene*. The brief respites of the knights, carefully woven within the narrative, usually only continue for a few lines. The majority of the polyphonic narrative is made of action, brawl, commotion, and conflict. Hiatus and peace of any kind, only function as a foreshadowing of the arrival of new enemies and threats. The knights in *The Faerie Queene* must be ever vigilant, for whenever a woman suggests a knight to relax or rest, a disaster occurs. Acrasia's invitation to relaxation is a seduction, aiming to spoil the chastity of the knights. Duessa's invitation to a "rest" for the Redcrosse Knight ends in the seduction of the knight and his defeat at the hands of Orgoglio. Phaedria lulls unwary travellers to drowsiness and passivity. Malecasta's invitation for Britomart to spend a night in her castle, ends in a violent encounter between her and six knights. Arthur's chase of Florimell is interrupted by the approaching night, signalling the end of the chase with the necessity to rest. Spenser's disfavour of idleness is overtly expressed by Arthur:

Night thou foule Mother of annoyauce sad,
 Sister of heauie death, and nourse of woe,
 Which was begot in heauen, but for thy bad
 And brutish shape thrust downe to hell below (III. iv. 55. 1-4)

Night's relation to idleness is presented in the next few lines: "So from the wearie spirit thou doest driue / Desired rest, and men of happinesse deprive" (III.iv.57. 8-9). This means, an evil woman's invitation to stoppage is an attempt to disarm the knights. There is a connection between the representations of evil mothers and Idleness, which is an evil mother's invitation to relaxation is a dangerous prospect. Corceca, Night, and the Witch offer safety to Una, Duessa, and Florimell, but the safety is a façade, and is represented as unreliable. Sudden breaks of peace and rise in action would no doubt keep the interest of the reader. The rise and fall of the action in the narrative are, concurrently, an invitation to relaxation, and a warning of the dangers to come. Therefore, any suggestion of pause offered by an evil woman in *The Faerie Queene* is extremely dangerous. The only

exception to the case is the rest in House of Holinesse by the Redcrosse Knight, however, the rest, in this context, means convalescence of the soul, rather than body²⁴.

Lastly, mothers, if necessary, can be agents delivering political messages. Belge's narrative of motherhood is functional for a nationalist poet like Spenser, because Belge is a symbol of the sufferings of the Low Countries, and her children are mouthpieces for Spenser's own political views. Belge appears in "Book V," which is concerned with Justice. Errour's role in the narrative is warning of dangerous ideologies, and false religious doctrines, threatening England. Corceca's role in the narrative is a criticism of the corruption of the clergy.

To understand how mothers and motherhood is represented in *The Faerie Queene*, both the good and the evil mothers should be examined for juxtaposition. This thesis examines Chrysogonee first, who is the only good mother character, with any depth in descriptions of motherhood, to contrast the representations of the good and the evil mothers. In that order, characters and personifications are briefly introduced, and then the relationship of the mother, to the concept of abjection is analysed. Dame Caelia, Charissa, and Belge's narratives only mention motherhood, and no practice of motherhood, or mothering is seen. Thus, Dame Caelia, Charissa, and Belge will not be examined in this thesis.

2.1 Chrysogonee

To understand Chrysogonee's representation of motherhood, a certain familiarity with the character is needed. Chrysogonee is a virgin fairy, appearing in "Book III."²⁵ Her role is to construct the genealogy of Elizabeth I, by giving birth to Amoret and Belphoebe, who are adopted by Aphrodite and Diana, respectively. Chrysogonee's pregnancy is a miraculous affair, as she is impregnated by the rays of the sun, without any physical

²⁴ In the House of Holiness, Dame Caelia invites the Redcrosse Knight for a rest; however, the rest in this context is meditative and spiritual. The rest offered by evil women are paralysing, seductive, or threatening.

²⁵ Chrysogonee's appearance in "Book III," which is concerned with the virtue of chastity should not be surprising, because for Spenser chastity is not a simple reference to virginity, but a promise of marriage and monogamy.

intimacy. Her impregnation by the rays of the sun is an allusion to the myth of Danae and Zeus, in which Danae is impregnated by a shower of gold. The gold and the sun rays combined with a painless birth associate Chrysogonee with beauty and morality, which is a direct contrast to the pregnancy of Earth, an evil mother. Chrysogonee's pregnancy, as a process, is completed in the matter of hours, and she suffers no birth pangs. Once her role is fulfilled, Chrysogonee absconds the narrative, and the focus is shifted to another character, once again.

Chrysogonee is Amphisa's²⁶ daughter, and her name means "golden-born" in Ancient Greek (Draper 100), hinting at her divine origins, and her impregnation by Titan's sunbeams associates Chrysogonee with figures such as Danaë, who beget children from a divine source, by rains of gold dust. Chrysogonee is an example of abstract and non-biological motherhood, similar to Dame Caelia and Charissa. Dame Caelia, Charissa, Chrysogonee, and Belge represent the moral side of procreation. The moral side of procreation is not debased by nauseating biological details, and a child made from such a procreation is always moral. Chrysogonee's pregnancy is unique, as the entire process of pregnancy was completed in the matter of hours and her daughters did not drink mother's milk:

In this wilde forrest wandring all alone,
 After she had nine months fulfilled and gone:
 For not as other womens commune brood,
 They were enwombed in the sacred throne
 Of her chaste bodie, nor with commune food,
 As other womens babes, they sucked vitall blood. (III.vi.5.4-9)

Dorothy Stephens argues that in the Renaissance, "fetuses were believed to be nurtured by their mothers' blood in the womb ... Mothers' milk was thought to be concocted from mothers' blood, which thus differs from 'vital' blood" (110). Moreover, Stephens rejects the idea of new-born Amoret and Belphoebe drinking blood from Chrysogonee (110). From the perspective of abjection, transmutation of milk to blood would be strange as

²⁶ On Chrysogonee's parentage, Himmet Umunç comments that "Chrysogonee is herself the child of Amphisa, whose name (Gr 'double nature'), and absence of any specified consort, suggest an androgynous or self-creative nature" (402).

best and abject at worst. Spenser assigns non-physical descriptions of motherhood for the moral women, and associates the motherhood of moral women with the idea of divine or spiritual procreation. This is not the case for evil, or immoral, women, who are described by earthly, or biological, characteristics of their genitalia, productive system, and motherhood.

Spenser's representation of the conception in *The Faerie Queene* is influenced by Humourism, and Stephens explains that "[i]n general, women were primarily cold and moist, which made them both fruitful and less able than men to think or act vigorously. Even their fruitfulness was of a phlegmatic sort, being that of a receptive earth in which men planted their active seed. Women's wombs were usually thought of as containers, not creators of life..." (111). Humourism is a medical theory, founded in Ancient Greece and favoured by the Romans. The theory had a massive influence on the early modern period. According to Humourism, human body consisted of four fluids, blood, yellow bile, phlegm, and black bile. These humours controlled the health of an individual, and, from a modern perspective, were responsible for homeostasis. The deficiency or excess of the fluids would cause one of the four imbalances: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, and melancholic. To be healthy was the balance of the four humours. To be unhealthy is the imbalance of the four humours. Moral women, and mothers, are not represented with biological characteristics. However, the evil women, and mothers, are represented with biological characteristics. Consequently, the character of the children of evil mothers is represented in accordance with Humourism, meaning they are prone to have issues, caused by the imbalance of four humors, all of which can be described as emotional instability.

Chrysogonee's supernatural pregnancy is a representation of divine and spiritual creation, and a contrast to the creation of other children in *The Faerie Queene*. Elizabeth A. Spiller argues that "Chrysogonee's birth is the most flamboyant creation narrative in *The Faerie Queene*" (73). On the other hand, creation narratives of abject children, such as Argante and Ollyphant, are designed to conjure a strong sense of disgust. Interestingly, in an ideal scenario, *The Faerie Queene* would be concluded with the union of the representations of Elizabeth I and the male figures destined to be with them, such as Britomart and

Arthegall, and Una and the Redcrosse Knight. The mentioned unions would continue the bloodline of the English monarchy, meaning motherhood is the ultimate goal of the text.

2.2. Errour

Errour is a half-woman and half-serpent hybrid creature and the first mother introduced in *The Faerie Queene*. She is the first enemy of the Redcrosse Knight. The Redcrosse Knight, “full of fire and greedy hardiment,” (I.i.14.1) rushes to engage with Errour in her “darksome hole,” (I.i.14.3) without any provocation. Initially, Errour’s repulsive, strange, and strong body physically overwhelms the Redcrosse Knight, however, with the support of Una, he beheads the half-woman, half-serpent.

Errour has a special relationship with the concept of abjection. Abjection, as a concept, is concerned with sources of horror in both physical and non-physical dimensions, and the physical elements of abjection are easier to identify, comparing to the non-physical elements of abjection. Errour represents the height of physical abjection in *The Faerie Queene*, because the deformation of the body of the half-woman is so pervasive, any borders of natural human body are completely transgressed.

Errour is represented as half-human and half-serpent, absolutely horrifying in sight. Hamilton et al. argues that “Errour may traditionally appear as a serpent with a woman’s face as Satan in Langland[’s] *Piers Plowman*” (35). Errour is “most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdain” (I.I.14.9) Her body is nauseating, and in her brief time in the narrative, Errour is not permitted to do anything, but engage in a defensive combat with the Redcrosse Knight.

Errour’s den is the first element of abjection, as both the forest surrounding the den, and inside of the den are deceptive. The forest offers shelter from the rain, easing the concerns of both The Redcrosse Knight and Una. However, a monstrous figure resides in the bowels of the forest. Therefore, the forest becomes an abject space, as the safety suggested by the forest is suddenly and unexpectedly broken, and the den is transformed into an arena, in which the Redcrosse Knight must fight to survive. The labyrinthian passages of

the den are a representation of liminality, in which the Redcrosse Knight struggles. John M. Steadman argues that the dark cave is a Platonic symbol, as for Spenser, Error's den is

an image of the world, and of earthly ignorance and false knowledge. His use of the conventional tree list as an epic catalogue serves to emphasize the concepts of multiplicity and variety, in addition to suggesting the varied pleasures of the senses. The variety and multiplicity of the delights that the forest offers reinforce the poet's emphasis on the multiplicity and variety of ways and paths, and on their contrast with the single Truth and the one true way. (252-53)

The breaking down of the meaning of the space repeats throughout the narrative. By breaking down the meaning of an area, from safety to unsafety, abjection of evil women, who dwell in the area, escalate to the space around them as well.

Error's "filthy" body is the second element of abjection, condemning her as something that should be cleansed or purged. The deformation of her unnatural body is an expression of Error's immorality, and Spenser describes how Error's "vomit [is] full of bookes and papers" (I.i.20.6). In a general sense, Error is a representation of dangerous ideologies, written on paper. Caroline McManus argues Error "serves as a 'frontpiece' ... as a specifically gendered illustration of the dangerous results of (corrupt) women reading and dispensing (corrupt) spiritual doctrine" (395). McManus examines the role of Error regarding to the sociopolitical situation of women, but the general understanding of the Spenserians is Error is an anti-thesis of Protestant doctrine. Douglas Brooks-Davies argues that Error's vomit "is specifically, false Catholic doctrine, and anti-Protestant propaganda" (22). Furthermore, Error's vomit spews out "loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lacke" (I.i.20.7). Brooks-Davies further explains how "[t]he toad was generally believed to be poisonous ... symbolised vices in general ... and was identified with the devil" (22). However, perhaps the most prominent description of the frogs and toads is their blindness, serving as another example of bodily deformation as an expression of immorality. Spenser's repetition of Error's filthiness emphasises the height of Error's immorality. "Her huge long taile," (I.i.15.2) "her poisonous dugs," (I.i.15.6) "her hideous taile," (I.i.16.2) "her cursed head," (I.i.16.3) "her speckled taile," (I.i.17.6) "her angrie sting," (I.i.17.7) "her beastly bodie," (I.i.18.3) "her

huge traine,” (I.i.18.6) “her wicked bands,” (I.i.19.9) “her filthie maw,” (I.i.20.1) “[h]er filthie parbreake,” (I.i.20.9) “[h]er fruitful cursed spawnne of serpents small,” (I.i.22.6) “her body full of filthie sin,” (I.i.24.7) “her hateful heade,” (I.i.24.8) “[h]er scattered brood,” (I.i.25.1) and “her bleeding wound,” (I.i.25.7) are all negative adjectives, representing her body in an odious spectacle.

Errorr’s anatomy is the third element of abjection, as her body is anchored in a liminal space, between that of a human’s and serpent’s. There is an ambivalence in how Errorr’s body is split between a serpent and a human²⁷. Maik Goth remarks how Errorr’s “spawn’s indeterminate shape and uncountable number mark them as monstrous offspring, which Errorr seems to breed herself without the need of a male” (88). This observation reveals a social transgression, as Errorr’s brood is absent of a father. Husbands and fathers are responsible from the family in the patriarchal society of the sixteenth century, and Errorr defies the male authority and the social norms assigned to a wife and a mother. However, such a transgression would occur only if Errorr is a human, and her humanity is questionable. Goth remarks Errorr’s carrying of her young in her mouth renders such an action suitable for an animal, but in the light of her half-human nature, he remarks “such behaviour perverts the mouth’s function as a human orifice designed for the reception of food and drink” (88). Spenser’s construction of an ambivalent form for Errorr may imprison her in a stasis in liminality. Nevertheless, in order to channel a sense of evilness, or immorality, Spenser arbitrarily accentuates on her human and serpent aspects at will. This is, once again, constructed in accordance with Neoplatonism.

McManus remarks how the encounter of the Redcrosse Knight and Errorr “suggests some ambivalence about acknowledging women as powerful agents of socialization who transmit to their children not only life but also fundamental elements of language, culture, and religion” (393). Errorr’s representation, as an abject mother, destroys any positive connotations motherhood conjures, and degrades motherhood to basic biology, making Errorr primarily a caretaker. Perversion of motherhood is the fourth element of abjection

²⁷ John M. Steadman remarks that analogues of the forest and the dark cave in *The Faerie Queene* are found in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, in the labyrinth designed by Daedalus for King Minos, and in Dante’s *Inferno*, in the shadowy woods where Dante is lost (252).

of Errour as she betrays the social responsibilities and roles expected from a mother. McManus argues “Errour illustrates the abuse of the mother’s power to shape children morally. She nurses them daily (as the mother was to catechize her children daily), but with poison and blood, thus instilling tainted religion in their souls, and she dies in a grotesque imitation of the good mother’s self-sacrifice” (394). Nevertheless, Errour’s preemptive attack on the Redcrosse Knight, and Errour’s brood entering Errour’s mouth and attacking the Redcrosse Knight without success, reveals that a bond between the mother and the children still exists, as the same bond moved Errour to protect her children.

The general rule of abject mothers producing abject children in *The Faerie Queene* applies to Errour as well. The “[d]eformed monsters, fowle, and blacke as inke,” (I.i.22.6) slither towards the Redcrosse Knight and attack his legs, but he could not hurt the Redcrosse Knight. Brooks-Davies speculates that the brood could be a representation of the “lusts of the flesh” (22). Errour’s brood witnesses her decapitation at the hands of the Redcrosse Knight, and all of the brood flocks to the corpse, draining her blood, and “[m]aking her death their life, and eke her hurt their good” (I.i.25.9). There are examples of such a consumption in nature. Specifically, Spenser’s representation is a parody of Geoffrey Whitney’s²⁸ story of the pelican in *Choice of Emblems*. Whitney describes how, “to reuiue her younge,” the pelican, would pierce her breast and feed her young her own blood (87). Hamilton et al. remarks, “[t]he popular legend of the pelican ... was applied to Christ [,] who is our pelican (e.g. Dante, *Parad.* 25. 113)” (37). Ingratitude, or a parody of self-sacrifice, is affirmed by Brooks-Davies, who explains how the “young vipers were believed to kill their mother by bursting open her womb” (23). Errour’s brood are abject, as what should be expelled, in this case blood, is consumed. The transgression here is inbreeding of a cultural taboo, as what should be discharged is ingested in an infertile cycle of nourishment.

²⁸ Geoffrey Whitney is a sixteenth-century poet, known for his *Choice of Emblems*, “the first emblem book to appear in English” (Bell par. 1).

Error is a threat to civilisation, as the mere existence of her threatens the requirements of civilization. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1989), Freud describes the non-pragmatic requirements of civilization:

Beauty, cleanliness and order obviously occupy a special position among the requirements of civilization. ... That civilization is not exclusively taken up with what is useful is already shown by the example of beauty, which we decline to omit from among the interests of civilization. The usefulness of order is quite evident. With regards to cleanliness, we must bear in mind that it is demanded of us by hygiene as well, and we may suspect that even before the days of scientific prophylaxis the connection between the two was not altogether strange to man. (47)

Her physical form, her children, and her residence are filthy, and are threats to hygiene. Error's transformation of the forest and the cave from a shelter from the environments, to her own dangerous domain is a threat to order. Finally, Error's grotesque body is a threat to the concept of beauty, which in the Renaissance, pertinent to proportions. Spenser, who is concerned with a model representation of England, necessitates the expulsion of Error and her brood from any contact from the civilised society. Error and her brood's abject representation in body and morality, and death by the sword of The Redcrosse Knight, the steel that is man-made, not only purge such an evil from the soil of England, but also purges dangerous doctrines, ideologies, error from the minds of the society. On the death of Error, Arpine Mızıkıyan comments that "[t]he destruction of Error ... can ... be read as the destruction of a threatening, disruptive element which, if left to endure, would lead to ultimate chaos" (115).

2.3. Abessa, Corceca, Kirkrapine

The brief narratives of Abessa, Corceca, and Kirkrapine are intertwined, and as a result, the three are always examined side-by-side. The three complement each other, further revealing the wickedness of one another. Moreover, the complementation of Abessa, Corceca, and Kirkrapine with each other creates a single allegory of corruption, the whole being stronger than each separate parts. The three are condemned as corrupt, and as a result, all of them are deformed in physical form. Abessa's deafness, feebleness, and muteness, Corceca's blindness, and Kirkrapine's torn-asunder corpse are symbolic in meaning, whereas in comparison, Error's entire existence is odious, designed to arouse

a strong sense of disgust. The common reason of the disabled bodies of Abessa, Corceca, and Kirkrapine, and the disgust-arousing body of Errour is any abnormal body in *The Faerie Queene* is an expression of moral failings. Through the mentioned deformations and disabilities, Abessa, Corceca, and Kirkrapine are made abject.

The role of the three in the narrative begins with Una finding Abessa. Abessa is carrying a pot of water on her shoulders, and “the rude wench” (I.iii.11.3) does not respond to Una’s call. Abessa does not notice Una, as she “could not heare, nor speake, nor vnderstand” (I.iii.11.4). The theme of “Book I” is “Holinesse,” and by Abessa, Corceca, and Kirkrapine, Spenser presents a critique of “common ecclesiastical abuses” (Brooks-Davies 37). To announce the spiritual corruption of Abessa and Corceca, Spenser portrays an imagery of darkness, by the symbolic residence of the mother and daughter. Abessa and Corceca’s dwelling is a “cotage small” (I.iii.14.9). Corceca, as a blind woman, “[s]ate in eternal night,” and after the lion forces open the doors of the cottage, Una finds Abessa and Corceca in a “darksome corner” (I.iii.13.5). Darryl J. Gless explains the religious reference of Abessa as such: “The road she follows and her dwelling in the wilderness identify Abessa as a literary descendant of those Israelites who, having proved faithless, failed to reach the Promised Land (Num 14.20-35)” (3).

Abessa’s blindness, deafness, and feebleness are symbols of an abbess’ rejection of the spiritual truth, that is Protestantism, as Abessa’s name is a reference to an abbess, and she is a representation of “the abbeys and monasteries, products of blind and ignorant superstition that robs the true Church” (Hamilton et al. 57). According to Gless, Abessa’s name derives from *abesse* in Latin, which means “absence of deficiency of being” (3). Abessa’s mother, Corceca’s name means “blindness of the heart (from Lat. *cor*, heart + *caecum*, blind)” (Hamilton et al. 57). Corceca is the embodiment of the superstitions of Catholicism. Subsequently, both Abessa and Corceca’s names are evocative of their individual disabilities in a derogatory manner.

In addition to bearing a disabled body, Abessa engages in a liaison with Kirkrapine, and Kirkrapine’s relationship with Abessa is described as “[w]ith whom [Abessa] he

[Kirkrapine] whoredome vsd, that few did know” (I.iii.18.5). Corceca is aware of the relationship, and both Abessa and Corceca rely on Kirkrapine’s burglary, as Kirkrapine:

And fed her [Abessa] fatt with feast of offerings,
 And plenty, which in all the land did grow;
 Ne spared he to giue her gold and rings:
 And now he to her brought part of his stolen things. (I.iii.18.6-9)

Kirkrapine is a thief, and on an interesting note, Spenser announces the evil intentions of Kirkrapine by describing the stars of the night sky. Kirkrapine enters the cottage during the night, and Aldeboran is shining in the sky. According to Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, Aldeboran is part of Taurus, and “it causeth the destruction and hindrances of buildings, fountains, wells, of gold mines, the flight of creeping things, and begetteth discord” (368). By describing the position of Aldeboran, Spenser announces the destructive purposes of Kirkrapine. Kirkrapine’s association with the darkness and representation as a housebreaking burglar symbolises his evil nature. He enters the churches at night and steals alms-boxes, and brings his loot to Abessa as gifts. He is described as “stout and sturdy,” (I.iii.17.1) and on the grand scheme of the narrative, “Kirkrapine’s violence makes him a symbol of the political force that often supports false religion and benefits from the superficial legitimacy it confers” (Gless 3). Considering Gless’ comment, Abessa, Corceca, and Kirkrapine’s functions are revealed. The three are political representations of the false religious doctrines. Spenser, in order to criticise, assigns disabled or deformed bodies to the three, emphasising that under the disguising cloak of religion, the three are rotten to the core.

Una’s arrival signals the end of Abessa, Corceca, and Kirkrapine, for as Kirkrapine enters the cottage, the lion “straight him rent in thousand peeces small” (I.iii.20.4). In the morning, Abessa and Corceca discover the remains of Kirkrapine in horror, and after beating their chests, crying and wailing, they chase after Una, but they fail to catch her. Abessa and Corceca’s immorality is lightened by the wretched state of their daily life. Abessa and Corceca rely on Kirkrapine for subsistence, and Una’s arrival only engender fear, horror, and loss for the mother and daughter. Through the grotesque death of Kirkrapine, the abjection of Abessa, Corceca, and Kirkrapine is complete.

Disability is disfavoured in terms of representation in the Renaissance, and the source of Abessa and Corceca's abjection is disability. Disability presents a liminality in body, that is neither healthy, nor diseased, or neither complete, nor depleted, but simply existing in-between. Disability, as a negative representation in *The Faerie Queene* and from the perspective of abjection, forces the spectator to disassociate with the disabled body, in an effort to purge the effects of the disability from the identity of the self. This is one explanation of the source of the stigmatisation, or at least the prejudice, against disabled people. According to Hile, in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser exploits the stigmatisation of the disabled in order to construct a moral dichotomy:

Spenser "imports" the full weight of social stigmatization of bodily differences in early modern England into the text in order to convey moral meanings that have nothing to do with physical impairment. Spenser takes for granted that his readers share stigmatizing ideas about and rejecting emotional attitudes toward physical impairment; transferring these ideas and attitudes allegorically from representations of impaired bodies to abstract ideas serves as an efficient means of conveying meaning, because preexisting cultural biases perform some of the work. (89)

The reason for disability, from the perspective of Neoplatonism, is lust. In *Symposium*, different definitions on the concept of love are made. The celestial, or heavenly love, is the love of the Good, expressed by the medium of a person. There is a love between a man and a woman, with the intention of procreation. Lastly, the lust is the worst representation of love. Lust is an engagement in sexual relations without the purpose of conception. Lust drags a person's Soul to deformity and ugliness. In accordance with Neoplatonism, all disabled people are regarded as abject.

In addition to disability, Corceca is abject as an old woman. In *The Faerie Queene*, physical descriptions of senescence are signs of vice. In the case of Corceca, her skin is wrinkly, and she is old. In *The Faerie Queene*, all moral women are represented, or associated with, fertility, spring, and youth. Oldness, in contrast, is a symbol of the decay and the approaching death. Furthermore, hideousness and senescence are the idiosyncratic characteristics of a witch, as in sixteenth century England, the existence of the witches was a legitimate belief. Corceca is not a witch, nor she is represented as such; nevertheless, she is subject to the same disdain as a witch.

Lastly, Kirkrapine's body is abject in the eyes of Abessa and Corceca, who react in horror and shock to see the mutilated corpse. Abessa and Corceca do not bury Kirkrapine, but in an anger, rush after Una, who does not even react when she sees the dead body. Abessa and Corceca's reaction is a representation of the reaction to abjection, as in Abessa's mind, Kirkrapine would enter the cottage in the night, and would be alive and well. Likewise, Corceca, who is aware of the relationship, would expect Kirkrapine to be alive as well. Consequently, finding Kirkrapine dead is shocking to both of them, as Abessa suffers a double loss, for both his lover and the only means of survival, is gone. Kirkrapine's body is an all-too-real reminiscent of the incoming doom for Abessa and Corceca, and as a result, in a reaction, Abessa and Corceca refuse any interactions with Kirkrapine's corpse, distancing themselves from the symbolic meaning of the body.

2.4. The Witch

There are four hags in *The Faerie Queene*, and the Witch is one of them. The part of the Witch and her son, who remains without a name, begins in "Book III," and the narrative of the mother and son is strikingly similar to Abessa and Corceca's narrative in "Book I." In both narratives, the mother and the child reside in a cottage, surrounded by a pastoral space, which is mendaciously peaceful. This space is a forest and a cave for Error, a mountainside road and a forest for Abessa and Corceca, and a valley for the Witch and her son. Similar to Abessa and Corceca, the Witch resides in a cottage too, and the description of the domestic space is associated with darkness and filth once again. The Witch's cottage is made of "stickes and reedes," surrounded by "loathly weedes" (III.vii.6.2-4), and the floor is "dusty ground" (III.vii.10.8). There is a resemblance between the residences of the evil mothers, for each residence is dark and dirty, and darkness and unhygienic living conditions are part of the abjection of evil mothers.

Just as Una spends time in Abessa and Corceca's cottage in "Book I," Florimell spends time in the Witch's cottage in "Book III." Florimell is a representative of Chastity, appearing for the first time in "Book III." Florimell is ceaselessly chased by lewd men,

and her only means of defending herself is running away. In “Canto VII,” Florimell seeks shelter in the cottage of the Witch.

The key difference between Una and Florimell’s visitations is that Una’s entrance to the cottage is denied, because Abessa and Corceca are afraid of her. In anger, Una’s lion forces the gate open. In contrast, Florimell’s entrance to the Witch’s cottage is not forced. The general discussion around Florimell’s entrance focuses on her beauty, “golden wreath and gorgeous ornament,” (III.vii.11.3) which is admired by the Witch, however, this argument ignores the role motherhood plays. The reason is that Spenser favours Florimell as she is a chaste and virtuous woman. Prior to examining her beauty and garments, the Witch accuses Florimell of “vnwelcomed, vnsought” (III.vii.8.3), but Florimell appeals to the Witch’s motherly side, calling her “[b]eldame,” (III.vii.8.6) which means “good mother” (Hamilton et al. 353). Traditionally, motherhood is associated with altruism, compassion, and self-sacrifice, and Florimell calms the Witch by appealing to her motherly side.

Florimell’s fear of the Witch is not unwarranted. According to D’Orsay W. Pearson, “[i]n the sixteenth century, witchcraft was viewed as idolatry in which false gods were worshipped to achieve aims not granted by God or brought about by the working of natural laws. It involved the aid of demons and, by extension, vain ceremonies” (729). K. M. Briggs claims that “[t]he most complete witch in the regular English tradition is to be found in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*” (75). Pearson, affirmatively, remarks how the witch “and her loutish, lustful son have been viewed as prototypes of similar pairs in English Renaissance literature, such as Sycorax and Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*” (729).

The similarity between the narratives of Abessa and Corceca, and the Witch and her son continue with the appearance of a threatening male figure. The lion manages the dispatch Kirkrapine before he harms Una, however, Florimell is defenceless and the only tactic she employs throughout the whole narrative is running away. The Witch’s son is instantly smitten with Florimell, and he brings her gifts to woo her, and Florimell, out of fear and courtly code, politely accepts them. The Witch’s son is described similarly to Kirkrapine,

strong in body and corrupt in morality. The very first line that introduces the Witch's son to the narrative condemns both the mother and son: "This wicked woman had a wicked sonne" (III.vii.12.1). Thus, the rule of abject mothers producing abject children apply to the Witch and her son, as well.

The son is described without any moral merits. He is described as a good-for-nothing, lazy, and wicked man. However, the second he sees Florimell sitting next to her mother, the son begins to feel carnal desires, specifically, "[n]o loue, but beastly lust, that was so beastly tind" (III.vii.15.9). The son and Florimell, side by side, represent the opposing aspects of love, one that is physical, and one that transcends the flesh. The son's love is destructive, so much so that after Florimell leaves, the son's "loue to frenzy turnd" (III.vii.20.9). Camille Paglia argues, "[t]he rape cycle of *The Faerie Queene* is one of the most advanced rhetorical structures in Renaissance poetry. The masculine hurls itself at the feminine in an eternal circle of pursuit and flight, a maelstrom of voracity" (639). Una, Florimell, Britomart, are all threatened with sexual violence at some point in the narrative. In case of Florimell, she is ever-escaping from the clutches of countless dangers, for "Spenser insists that humanity can and must escape the vicious circle of sexual strife through individual effort, a personal heroism" (Paglia 639).

The son is described as an unrepentant villain, however, his attempts to woo Florimell exposes a layer of humanity underneath. In order to gain her affections, the son brings Florimell "oft young birds, which he had taught to sing," "[g]irlonds of flowres," and "the squirrel wild" (III.vii.17.3-6). In the absence of any wealth, the son's presents from nature could represent a sense of innocence, however, Spenser, to disparage any suggestion of goodness in the son, associates such an imagery with the baser and beastly connotations, unsuitable to be a match for Florimell. The squirrel, for example, is a representation of promiscuity, as seen in (VI.ix.40.3), in which Coridon presents Pastorella²⁹, in an attempt to woo her (Hamilton et al. 354).

²⁹ Coridon is a shepherd, and the romantic rival of Calidore, who is in love with Pastorella in "Book VI." Eventually, Coridon helps Calidore rescue Pastorella.

The departure of Florimell awakens a frenzy inside the son, and to punish Florimell, who violated her trust, the Witch sends a hyena-like beast to attack Florimell. The Witch finds Florimell's departure as abject, for she betrays her trust, by causing emotional instability in her son. The Witch, similar to Corceca, acts to get revenge, and sends the beast after Florimell. The failure of the beast drives the son to a rage, and he tries to kill her mother, blaming her for the escape of Florimell. To appease his son, the Witch conjures a woman in the image of Florimell. The woman is the splitting image of Florimell, with only a single change. False Florimell's personality is complimentary to the Witch's son, as she is the anti-thesis of Chastity. The most horrifying aspect of the Witch, as a character, is her power of creating a life by bypassing all biological requirements. This is a subversion of an ordinary mother's ability of creating life. Kristeva remarks that the "[f]ear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power" (*Powers of Horror* 77). The witch's true abjection is creation of False Florimell. To cheer her son after the departure of Florimell, the Witch, by employing magic, creates False Florimell, who is her physical copy, but complete opposite of her in personality. In a mockery of the natural process of motherhood and pregnancy, the Witch is able to bypass the biological and social circumstances of creation and turn the inanimate to animate. The generative and creative power of the Witch is abject, because she, in a Platonic sense, creates an imitation of an imitation. There is a contrast between the Witch and Chrysogonee, as both the Witch's creation of False Florimell and Chrysogonee's entire process of pregnancy and childbirth is supernatural in nature, however, while Chrysogonee's creation of Amoret and Belphoebe is moral, the Witch's creation of False Florimell is immoral.

2.5. Earth, Night, Occasion

Earth, Night, and Occasion, unlike Error, Corceca, and the Witch, are personifications; nevertheless, the representations of the three are abject, concerning motherhood. Earth is the first of the three to be introduced in *The Faerie Queene*. Earth, through intercourse with Aeolus, conceives Orgoglio, and the physical union is described in detail. Comparing the pregnancy of Chrysogonee and Earth presents a draconian contrast in terms of the representation of impregnation, birth, and the aftermath of the process. Chrysogonee's impregnation is from a divine source, and the process is a mimicry of

Virgin Mary's impregnation. The renouncement of physical details regarding the impregnation and emphasis on the source of impregnation presents Chrysogonee as a positive model. Earth's impregnation is described from the viewpoint of Aeolus, who "fild [Earth's] hidden caues with stormy yre," (I.vii.9.5) and Earth "[b]rought forth this monstrous masse of earthly slyme" (I.vii.9.8). Both Aeolus and Earth are condemned with destructiveness and uncivility, as John Watkins remarks Aeolus' name is derivative of "*eonolus*," meaning "destruction of the spirit" (100). Furthermore, Watkins comments the inspiration behind Aeolus in *The Faerie Queene* is found in Virgil's *Aeneid* (100), and states that Virgil describes Aeolia as "a vast womb 'pregnant with the raging south winds'" (100). Watkins further argues that Spenser portrays "the chaos of a terrestrial womb filled with stormy winds as something that Aeolus causes rather than governs" and "associates Aeolus with passion itself rather than with the reason and prudence that overcome it" (100). The physicality, or non-physicality, of love is one of the features separating the good and the evil women in *The Faerie Queene*, and the passionate consummation of Aeolus and Earth signifies the evilness of Earth.

Earth, too, is an evil mother, and her motherhood is abject. The children of Earth are Argante (III.vii.47.8), Grantorto (V.xii.23.7), Maleger (II.xi.45.2), Mutabilitie (VII.vi.26.4-6), and Sansfoy (I.ii.19.6). Robert M. Schuler argues "*The Faerie Queene* is full of stories of transformation, but when Spenser compares physical, moral, or psychological changes to changes in matter, he turns not to alchemical transmutation for his imagery but simply to the four elements (earth, water, air, fire)" (13). There is a hierarchy of elements in *The Faerie Queene*, and the Redcrosse Knight's adventure is a passage from the fire, to air, to water, and finally, to earth (Hamilton, *The Structure* 76). Earth remains in the lowest position in the elemental hierarchy, and the details of the physicality of a sexual union only degrades Aeolus, Earth, and all of Earth's children, specifically, Earth's womb, the centre of her generativity is forced to be abject. The rule of abject mothers producing abject children is in effect in Earth's case. Orgoglio's conception is resembled to an earthquake³⁰, a natural disaster, and the unity of Aeolus

³⁰ According to S. K. Heninger, Jr., "Spenser expressly states that Orgoglio has been generated by a boisterous wind blowing through caves in the earth. By the principles of Renaissance meteorology this origin identifies him as an earthquake" (172).

and Earth is an obvious reference to the unity of Gaia and Ouranos, or Earth and Sky, and the birth of the Titans. Similar to Errour's brood, Abessa, and the Witch's son, Titans in *The Faerie Queene*, namely Argante, Ollyphant, and Orgoglio are threats to the civilization, and abject in form. The representations of Titans in *The Faerie Queene* affiliate the children with depravity, specifically lust. Orgoglio is easily seduced by Duessa, Argante attempts to sexually assault the Squire of Dames in a "filthy lust exceede all woman kinde," (III.xi.4.2), Ollyphant chases a "fearefull boy," for "beastly vse" (III.xi.4.4-6). Perhaps most heinous crime of all is Argante's and Ollyphant's incestuous unity in Earth's womb. The incestuous relationship is a transgression against a taboo, and defiles the womb of Earth, transforming the space from a haven for a baby to a space of sexual depravity.

Night is one of the most dominant personifications in *The Faerie Queene*, as her presence is repeatedly felt, as the primordial representation of darkness. Night is a unique personification, as she is a goddess, creating an expectation to surpass most women in authority and power. Spenser portrays Night as a powerful being, but an evil woman. Nevertheless, Night is revered to some degree, as she is described as "most auncient Grandmother of all" (I.v.22.2). In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Night is the "offspring of primal Chaos" (Brooks-Davies 55), and she is the mother of Doom, Fate, Death, Sleep, Blame, Distress, and many more.

Night's role, regarding motherhood, is being the progenitor of many children and representing an evil and terrifying bloodline. Geoffrey G. Hiller remarks that Night is "[b]oth the source and nourisher of evil," and she "works persistently to return the world to its original chaos" (511). Night is mentioned again in "Book III," and her motherhood is condemned once again:

Night thou foule Mother of annoyauce sad,
 Sister of heauie death, and nourse of woe,
 Which wast begot in heauen, but for thy bad
 And brutish shape thrust downe to the hell below,... (III.iv.55.1-4)

Arthur curses Night, as his chase of Florimell must be paused. Night is abject, as she is the embodiment of a transitional space in time. Life pauses during the Night, but only to

resume with sunrise. The pulse of life is slowed, but not killed. Night is the sister of death, but she is not death, only a transition. The quests of all knights in *The Faerie Queene* are achieved during the day. The darkness of Night is only an obstacle, and “[i]n such instances, ‘joyous’ Day is welcomed for its beauty and vitality, while ‘noyous’ Night is a time of gloom and sadness. The crimson robe of sunrise contrasts with Night’s sable mantle” (Hiller 511).

Last of all, Occasion is one of the hags in *The Faerie Queene*, and she plays a monotonous role in her brief narrative, along with Furor. Furor is Occasion’s son, and his strength is overpowering. Occasion, in an obsessive manner, aggravates Furor to attack random passers-by. Sir Guyon acts to defeat Furor, however, similar to the Witch’s son, Furor is described as a beast, and has a tremendous strength. Sir Guyon, with the help of Palmer, realises the necessity of separating Occasion and Furor. To defeat Furor, Sir Guyon first throws Occasion to the ground, then binds her tongue with an iron lock, and finally bounds her to a stake.

Occasion, along with Furor, offers nothing out of ordinary for an examination of motherhood from the perspective of abjection, nevertheless, the aforementioned arguments on motherhood in *The Faerie Queene* still apply to her. She is the mother of Furor, “[a] mad man, or that feigned mad to bee” (II.iv.3.5). Occasion is described as “the roote of all wrath and despight,” (II.iv.10.9) and Maurice Evans remarks Occasion and Furor teach a lesson to Sir Guyon, who must understand that “in view of the weakness of human nature, the only hope of escaping intemperance is to avoid the occasion of it” (343). Occasion is called a hag, and once again, her body is an exhibition of filthiness (II.iv.4.2). Disability is another detail in Occasion’s body, for one of her legs is crippled. Her feebleness and senility are represented by her sluggish steps, staff, and wrinkles. Occasion’s motherhood is not represented in detail, or any at all, however, she exemplifies how an evil mother in the poem is represented as abject by Spenser. Occasion’s abject body, as a disabled person, is subjected to mutilation, anchoring the reader’s perception of Occasion’s body further down in abjection.

All in all, concerning motherhood, Spenser represents Dame Caelia, Chrysogonee, and Belge in a positive fashion. The four are favoured by Spenser, and the author describes them without reducing their motherhood to an exclusively biological basis. They are moral women and represent the idea of divine procreation. Nevertheless, compared to men, even moral women are confined to be the material countenance of production, as in increasing the number of individuals. Procreation for men, on the other hand, refers to creative and intellectual pursuits. This is seen in a comparison of Arthur and Chrysogonee. The motherhood of evil, or immoral, women is degrading. They are described solely by a biological abnormality or deformity of their genitalia, and productive system. Furthermore, morality is presented as a genetic trait, as all children echo the morality of their mothers. The representation of the female sexuality as an abnormality or deformity is seen in all evil women. These women transform the sexual taboos to weapons against the knights, and freely pursue sexual pleasures. The subject of abjection of female sexuality is explored in the next chapter, following the same methodology.

CHAPTER 3: ABJECTION OF WOMANHOOD AND WOMEN'S SEXUALITY

Camille Paglia, in *The Spenser Encyclopaedia*, presents a canvas of sexual relationships in *The Faerie Queene*. According to Paglia,

The Faerie Queen is the most extended and extensive meditation on sex in the history of European poetry. It charts the full range of human erotic experience, constructing a moral great chain of being from matter to spirit, from the coarsest outbreaks of gross lust to the most elevated refinements of chastity and romantic idealism. Its sexual theme is analogous to its political allegory: the psyche, like society, must be disciplined by good government, or 'justice.' (638)

The Faerie Queene is, indeed, a poem rich in representations of female sexuality. The beginning of the allegory, "Canto I" of "Book I," is concluded with a sprite's seduction attempt of the Redcrosse Knight. The penultimate chapter, "Canto XI" of "Book VI," begins with Pastorella³¹ beguiling the Captain, by pretending to be interested in him sexually. In the unfinished "Book VII," also known as "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie³²," Mutabilitie is spared of an execution when Jupiter is charmed by her "faire beames of beauty" (VII.vi.31.2). Therefore, a safe argument would be that the representations of sexuality maintain a significant role in *The Faerie Queene*. Although the meanings of the representations of sexuality vary depending on the context, these allow Spenser to convey didactic messages.

The context of the representations of sexuality are often black-and-white in *The Faerie Queene*. The most common representation is crime, or offence. Only the evil, or immoral, women fornicate, because of lust. For example, in "Book II," Acrasia is the main

³¹ Pastorella is the name of a character in "Book VI." She is the adopted daughter of Melibee. Pastorella's beauty creates a romantic rivalry between Calidore and Coridon, who are both shepherds. Nevertheless, she is not romantically interested in either. Melibee tells Pastorella about the folly of the court, and praises a simple and pure life in the country.

³² The beginning of *The Faerie Queene*, "Book I," is concerned with Holiness, and the conclusion, "Book VI," is concerned with Courtesy. The unfinished "Book VII," briefly examines the role of Mutability. The progression of *The Faerie Queene* is a symbolic representation of human life, and the virtues are catalogued in accordance with their importance and significance in a virtuous human's life.

antagonist, and she represents the excess in expressions of love, lacking temperament. Acrasia resides in a place called the Bower of Bliss, and the geographical description of the location resembles female genitalia. Acrasia seduces the knights in the Bower of Bliss, by help of wine. This is one of the examples of non-consenting sexual intercourse in *The Faerie Queene*. Acrasia beguiles her victims by enfeebling them, either with magic or wine. Beneath the surface of Acrasia's alluring façade is horrifying cruelty, as she curses Amavia and Sir Mordant, causing the death of the wife and husband.

The allegory proffers generous representations of non-consensual sexual relationships, or sexual violence. "Book III" is dedicated to the virtue of chastity. Consequently, examples of anti-thetical of Chastity, which is lust, concentrate in "Book III." Regardless, representations of non-consensual sexual relationships are found in all chapters of *The Faerie Queene*, and seduction is an omnipresent threat for the knights.

However, the concept of non-physical procreation is not portrayed as crime or offence. In "Book V," Britomart falls asleep in Temple of Isis, and in her dream, she engages a sexual play with a crocodile, and is impregnated with a mighty lion. Generally, in *The Faerie Queene*, context and morality decide whether the example is a positive or a negative representation. In this example, sexual union is consensual and symbolic, and an expression of the unity between Arthegall and Britomart. The example is a contrast of Duessa's representation as a crocodile in "Book I." In "Book I," Duessa is called "a cruell craftie Crocodile" (I.v.18.6), and the reason for this metaphor is in medieval bestiaries, crocodiles are "said to weep while (or after) [they] devours [their] victims," and the animal "was a symbol of hypocrisy" (Hamilton et al. 75). The meaning of the crocodile is constructed in accordance with the context. In "Canto VII" of "Book V," crocodile is a metaphor for Arthegall, and the union of Arthegall and Britomart is not condemned, for from this union, a mighty lion, representing England, is born. Therefore, the act of procreation in a non-sexual manner, is praised by Spenser. Chrysogonee's impregnation, mentioned priorly, is a proof of this argument. The birth of a lion is one example of the procreative, or generative, aspect of love in *The Faerie Queene*. In other contexts, sexual liaison of any kind is condemned, and followed by a form of punishment. This refers to the bestial aspect of love, or lust in *The Faerie Queene*. Technically, both bestial and

procreative aspects of love are abject in the moral allegory. Britomart's sensual dream about Arthegall in a crocodile form is abject, for Britomart's dream is about bestiality. However, depending on the context, such actions can be represented as moral. Spenser portrays his characters and personifications arbitrarily, in accordance with his own notion of morality. However, bestial lust is not found in any positive contexts in the narrative³³, rather depending on the offending character or personification, an abject presentation is found.

In *The Faerie Queene*, all non-heavenly, meaning non-Platonic, and non-procreative actions of sexuality are labelled as bestial lust, and Spenser portrays a diverse composition of lust-driven actions in the poem. There are examples of autoeroticism, bestiality, homosexuality, incest, sadomasochism, and transvestitism (Paglia 638), and the following characters and personifications engage in all listed modes of fornication. In *The Faerie Queene*, both the good and the evil, as a whole, is greater than sum of its parts. Spenser is aware of the possibility that any congregation of evil women would bring a moral annihilation to the Fairy Land. To prevent this, Spenser describes evil women as abject, so they may be easily recognised, and destroys the evil women by the actions of the knight, to prevent the escalation of their corrupting influence. To comprehend each representation of female sexuality, each character, or personification, an analysis is presented under the dedicated sub-chapter. The role each woman plays in *The Faerie*

³³ The only exception could be the liaison of Duessa and the Redcrosse Knight in "Canto VII" of "Book I." D. Douglas Waters argues "[j]ust as the fountain, in the moral allegory, symbolizes sloth and literal lust, it can in the theological allegory, if Duessa is a personification of the Roman Mass, symbolize spiritual fornication, associated by Protestants with the Church of Rome generally and hence for the layman with the Mass specifically" (64). John W. Shroeder examines the symptoms of the Redcrosse Knight, and deduces that the Redcrosse Knight, indeed, engaged in coitus with Duessa: "Red Crosse's enfeeblement, ... adheres exactly to impeccable physiological doctrine. The knight is enfeebled as the result of his first act of venery with Duessa, the drink he takes of the fountain is the metaphor for that act, his enfeeblement displays both the classic symptoms" (145). Lauren Silberman remarks that the drinking from the fountain is a reference to Ovid's myth of the Hermaphrodite: "No reference to the erotic aspect of the myth occurs until Redcrosse actually drinks from the stream; his reaction recalls, in part, the other mythological tradition, which holds that the fountain of Salmacis is aphrodisiac and promotes impotence through sexual overindulgence" (55). The coitus is unexpressed by Spenser, and state of the Redcrosse Knight after his release from the dungeon is a lesson in indulging in lust. The context here is not positive; however, the Redcrosse Knight is cleansed from the sin of lust after his recuperation in House of Holiness. In other contexts, a male, who engages in sexual relationships is punished.

Queene, and how actions of women result in abjection is examined by presenting examples found in the text.

3.1. Acrasia

Acrasia is the main antagonist of “Book II,” and one of the most dangerous women in *The Faerie Queene*. Acrasia’s dangerousness stems from her engaging in seduction in the most alluring, beguiling, and subtle ways. She effortlessly persuades the knights, disarming them. This is described by a metaphor, as the removal of the armour of the knights in the Bower of Bliss. The armour’s symbolic significance is found in “Book I” of “Canto I.” The metal is a testimony of the Redcrosse Knight’s devotion to God. Britomart, too, wears armour. In her case, the armour is a symbol of her chastity and modesty. Acrasia’s removal of the armour of the knights in the Bower of Bliss is a symbolic expression, of her removing of layers of protection against immorality, exposing the base flesh underneath. Acrasia transgresses the norms of the society, by destroying civility and spoiling chastity.

Acrasia dwells in a place called the Bower of Bliss. The name of the Bower is a transparent reference to the female genitalia. The Bower is represented as majestic, set amid beautiful gardens, dazzling golden gates, and fountains. There are charming women, other than Acrasia, in the Bower, and the women are so alluring, even Sir Guyon, the protagonist of “Book II,” is briefly distracted. The seduction of the knights is achieved at the Bower, but the roads leading to the Bower are filled with sensual threats as well. Sir Guyon must be guided by Phaedria, who lulls the passengers in her boat by making them drowsy and lethargic. Acrasia is a queen, meaning all the dangers Sir Guyon faces prior to entering the Bower of Bliss are subservient to her. This is a testament of how dangerous Acrasia is.

Acrasia’s cruelty and dangerousness is exemplified in the beginning of “Book II.” In “Canto I” of “Book II,” Sir Guyon finds a woman named Amavia, who is on the brink of death. Sir Mordant, who is Amavia’s husband, was seduced by a sorceress named Acrasia, in a place called the Bower of Bliss. Amavia, in a disguise of a pilgrim, enters the Bower

of Bliss and she finds Sir Mordant in “chaines of lust and lewde desyres ybownd” (II.I.54.3). Acrasia, before Amavia and Sir Mordant departs, casts a curse:

*Sad verse, giue death to him that death does giue,
And losse of loue, to her that loues to lieu,
So soone as Bacchus with the Nymphe does linke: (II.I.55.4-6)*

Amavia and Sir Mordant drink from a nearby river, and as soon as Sir Mordant swallows the water, he deceases. The baby of Amavia and Sir Mordant, who is named Ruddymane, is made abject, as the baby is smeared with the blood of her mother. The blood is abject, because no matter how much Sir Guyon cleans the baby, the blood would not wash off. Acrasia abjects an innocent baby, by making the baby’s parents decease. Moreover, the blood’s resistance to the water of the river is speculated by Sir Guyon to either an imprint of God’s wrath in “lieu of [Ruddymane’s] innocence,” (II.II.4.3-4) or symptoms of a poison drunk by Amavia and Sir Mordant in the Bower of Bliss, causing a “great contagion” (II.II.4.9). Palmer, a guide of Sir Guyon, explains that the reason Ruddymane’s hands remains bloody, is that the blood of her mother is an “endlesse monument” (II.II.10.9) of Amavia’s innocence. Thus, Ruddymane’s hands cannot be cleaned, and an innocent baby bears a trigger of abjection on his hands.

Acrasia is one of the exceptions in *The Faerie Queene*, for although she is wicked, she is beautiful and bewitching, unaffected by representations of women, in accordance with Neoplatonism. This is same for Lucifera, Philotime and Radigund. Interestingly, the only exception, with regards to a monarch represented in abject physicality is Duessa. Acrasia’s abjection; however, is unaffiliated to her body or physicality³⁴. Instead, Acrasia’s powers of intoxicating and seducing, and her transforming the Bower of Bliss to a space of transgressions is abject.

³⁴ The reason of Sir Mordant’s death could be a venereal disease, as Hamilton et al. suggests “the charme and veneme, which they dronck” (II.II.4.6) is a reference to a sexually transmitted disease (172). If that is the case, then Acrasia’s body is abject, in sense that her body is an instrument of abjection, spreading disease. However, Spenser refrains from extensive medical representation and terminology, and there is no open reference to such an argument in *The Faerie Queene*.

The name of Acrasia derives from an Ancient Greek *acrāsīā*, meaning “badly mixed quality” (qtd. in Hankins 6). Acrasia is the ultimate expression of intemperance, and her fault is the excessive in earthly pleasures. “Book II” is dedicated to Temperance, while Acrasia stands against the balance of passions, symbolising indulging in temptations. Acrasia is described by dying Amavia as a dangerous person, as Acrasia’s “blis is all in pleasure and delight,” (II.I.52.1) and in the Bower of Bliss Acrasia “makes her louers drunken mad” (II.I.52.2). The excessive consumption of narcotics is the method of Acrasia, allowing her to muddle the minds of her victims, so that she can seduce them.

Sir Guyon and Palmer approach the Bower of Bliss in “Canto XII” of “Book II.” The grandeur of the Bower of Bliss is majestic, as like Castle Joyous and the House of Pride, the Bower is decorated with incredible luxury. Luxury is a sign of danger in *The Faerie Queene*, as excessive wealth is both a sign of greed and a symbol of lack of Temperance. Sir Guyon and Palmer pass through an immense Ivory Gate, and the story of Jason and Medea is accounted:

Yt framed was of precious yuory,
 That seemd a worke of admirable wit;
 And therein all the famous history
 Of Iason and *Medæa* was ywritt;
 Her mighty charmes, her furious louing fit,
 His goodly conquest of the golden fleece,
 His falsed fayth, and loue too lightly fit,
 The wondered *Argo*, which in venturous peece,
 First through the *Euxine* seas bore all the flowr of Greece. (II.XII.44.1-9)

The story of Jason and Medea is contextual for the argument of this thesis, as Jason breaks his oath of marriage to Medea, and decides to marry King Creon’s daughter, Creusa. Medea, in a horrible and gory revenge, murders Creusa and her children from Jason. The death of innocent children is an example of physical abjection. The story of Jason and Medea include other examples of physical abjection, such as Medea’s shredding of the corpse of her brother, Absyrtus, and throwing the pieces of the corpse to her father. Hamilton et al. remarks, “Medæa inherits her magic and sensuality from her aunt Circe, as does Acrasia” (277). Acrasia, analogous to Medea, causes the destruction of families.

Family is the smallest unit of a society. Thereby, Acrasia, in a small scale, unravels the fabric of the society.

Sir Guyon and Palmer enter the Bower of Bliss and find Acrasia, with a man named Verdant. The intimacy of Acrasia and Verdant is abject, as Acrasia with “greedily depasturing delight,” (II.XII.73.4) approaches to Verdant’s eyes and “sucke his spright” (II.XII.73.7). The intimacy resembles a parasitic consumption. According to A. Bartlett Giamatti,

[Verdant] seems dead and there is a vampirish quality about Acrasia. Venus, who usually is the animating spirit of this kind of tableau, seems to have given way to some ghastly, demonic female. There seems to be a violation of the male’s essence here which is much more profound than that suffered by the knights in Italian poems; for at the center of this garden we have come not to the source of simple illusion or immortality, but rather to the image of death—a love which is almost necrophilia, a woman whose kiss brings death. (279)

The aftermath is devastating, as the Bower of Bliss is completely destroyed by Sir Guyon and Palmer, who rescue all the remaining victims, except a man named Grylle. Grylle is a lesson for all, as he releases all inhibitions for the passions of the body. Acrasia’s corrupting effect is so potent that for some, the effect is addicting. There is no redemption for Grylle, because he is far too gone, living the rest of his life as more of a beast than man.

Acrasia is capable of inflicting physical abjection, by either transforming sexual intimacy to vampirism or by transmitting sexually transmittable diseases. However, her body is not deformed in any way, and she is not disabled. Acrasia transforms the Bower of Bliss from a space of leisure to a space of debilitation and danger, by spoiling the chastity of the victims, and imbibing the men with wine.

3.2. Argante and Ollyphant

Argante and Ollyphant are twin siblings, and both siblings are giants. Giants, as seen in the case of Orgoglio³⁵, are children of Earth. All children of Earth commit a sexual offence. Argante and Ollyphant are introduced to the narrative in “Canto VII” of “Book III,” when both siblings are about to commit sexual assault. The abjection of Argante and Ollyphant occurs at the moment of the introduction of the siblings, as in the womb of Earth, Argante and Ollyphant engage in an incestuous relationship:

These twines, men say, (a thing far passing thought)
Whiles in their mothers wombe enclosed they were,
Ere they into the lightsome world were brought,
In fleshly lust were mingled both yfere,
And in that monstrous wise did to the world appere. (III.VII.48.5-9)

The relationship pollutes Earth’s creative or generative power, as her womb, which is a non-sexualised space for non-sexual beings, is transformed to a space of sexual depravity. The depravity is shocking and horrifying, as the non-sexualised meaning of a mother’s womb is destroyed. Hamilton et al. remarks the incestuous relationship and the birth of Argante and Ollyphant is a “demonic version of the birth of Belphoebe and Amoret” (359).

Argante and Ollyphant’s relationship begins in Earth’s womb, and the genealogy of the siblings is described as

That Geauntesse *Argante* is behight,
A daughter of the *Titans* which did make
Warre against heuen, and heaped hils on hight,
To scale the skyes, and put Iove from his right:
Her syre *Typhoeus* was, who mad through merth,
And dronke with blood of men, slaine by his might,
Through incest, her of his owne mother Earth
Whylome begot, being but halfe twin of that berth. (III.VII.47.2-9)

³⁵ Orgoglio is a son of Aeolus and Earth, and as a Giant, he is consumed by lust. Orgoglio assaults the Redcrosse Knight, at a weak moment of the knight. Moreover, Duessa manipulates Orgoglio to be the guard of her residence in “Book I.” Orgoglio’s sudden appearance, and his commitment to Duessa, portrays Orgoglio as a threat to the civilization, and a warning for the knights to be ever-vigilant.

According to David O. Frantz, Typhoeus “is identified ... as ‘a great puissant wynde: a whirlwynde’” (55). This is a parallel with the union of Aeolus and Earth in “Book I,” as the union of both produces Orgoglio. Typhoeus is a son of Earth, and in a drunken rage, he fornicates with his own mother. From the incestuous union of Typhoeus and Earth, Argante and Ollyphant are born. Earth’s abjection is seen once again, as incest is one of the taboos of a society. Typhoeus and Earth, and then Argante and Ollyphant, break the taboo, forbidding physical relations between members of the same family. This is a peak example of non-physical abjection, as the horrid transgression of a well-known rule arouses a strong sense of horror and disgust. Moreover, the conception of Argante and Ollyphant is portrayed in accordance with Neoplatonism, as by engaging lust, Typhoeus and Earth produce deformed children.

In the following lines, Argante, the sister, is seen carrying the Squire of Dames, and Ollyphant, the brother, is chasing an unnamed, young man, with the intention of sexual assault. Ollyphant is described as

Great wreake to many errant knights of yore,
Till him Chylde *Thopas* to confusion brought. (III.VI.48.4)

The inspiration behind Ollyphant is *Tale of Sir Thopas* by Chaucer, as the physical abjection of Ollyphant is found in *Tale of Sir Thopas*. Ollyphant’s name is an alternate spelling of the word, elephant. Hamilton et al. suggest that Ollyphant’s name is an innuendo of “creature’s size; and as the name of Roland’s ivory horn, it suggests his phallic dimension” (359). The exaggeration of the male genitalia is not associated with the idea of procreation, rather concerned with depicting Ollyphant as a creature of horror. Ollyphant’s abnormal genitalia, along with his lecherous and rapacious purposes, is another example of abjection in *The Faerie Queene*.

Argante engages in combat with Sir Satyrane, a half-Satyr and half-human, noble warrior introduced in “Book I.” However, Sir Satyrane is unable to defeat Argante. Instead, a pair of chaste women defeat Argante and Ollyphant, named Palladine and Britomart. This symbolises chastity’s strength over lust. Argante and Sir Satyrane complement each other

by a contrast, as both of them were conceived by the actions of sexual assault. The difference is Sir Satyrane is half-human, and by the instructions of his mother, he becomes a moral person. Argante is a giant, and from her very birth, nobody instructs her to be moral. Instead, she is born lecherous, and continues her life as such, without any moral guidance. Frantz believes “virtuous female knights, directing their sexual energies properly, prove the most effective deterrent against [Argante and Ollyphant]; knights who love frivolously, like the Squire of Dames, or who possess merely natural heroism, like Satyrane, are no match for them” (55). With the defeat of the siblings, the abjection is prevented from spreading to the social sphere, as their abjection remain in physicality.

3.3 Duessa

Duessa is one of the, if not the, most dangerous women in *The Faerie Queene*. Introduced in “Canto II” of “Book I,” Duessa’s role in the narrative extend to “Canto IX” of “Book V,” after which she is executed before the beginning of “Canto X.” Duessa, by the means of deceiving, scheming, manipulating, and seducing, creates dangers and threats for other characters, specifically the knights.

Duessa is one of the evil queens, along with Acrasia, Lucifera, Philotime, and Radigund, however, she deviates from the four. First, among all of the foreign queens, Duessa is the only evil queen, who is abject in physicality. Duessa’s entire body is covered with lesions, and her body is deformed. In “Canto II” of “Book I,” The Redcrosse Knight finds a man Fradubio, who is transformed to a tree. Fradubio was once smitten by the beauty of Duessa, however, one day he saw her true form, and the horrific condition of her body is described as such:

Her neather partes misshapen, monstrous,
Were hidd in water, that I could not see,
But they did seeme more foule and hideous,
Then womans shape man would beleeeue to bee. (I.II.41.1-4)

Duessa and Errour are a misshapen pair in representation, as only Duessa and Error are described in such excessive vulgarity. Hamilton et al. comment on the forms of Duessa

and Error by remarking that only Duessa, Error, and the House of Pride is biformed in *The Faerie Queene* (52). Duessa's genitalia are deformed, which suggests that Duessa is suffering from a sexually transmitted disease. To alleviate the symptoms, Duessa bathes in a mixture of "origane and thyme" (I.II.40.7). Duessa's abjection is infectious, as she transforms Fradubio and Fraelissa to a pair of trees. The Redcrosse Knight pulls a branch from Fradubio, and in horror, he realises that from the breaking point of the bough blood flows. Blood is one of the fluids, triggering a reaction to abjection on the beholder.

Secondly, Duessa engages in deception, schemes, manipulation, and seduction in an endless, infertile cycle. Acrasia, Lucifera, Philotime, and Radigund do not survive in the narrative for more than a book. Duessa, survives from "Book I" to "Book V." Moreover, the four queens do not engage all four patterns of representations. Only Duessa engages in all four techniques of controlling someone. Acrasia employs manipulation and seduction. Radigund employs deception, in order to conceal her appearance. Duessa is a true master, as she obfuscates her deformed body, deceives the Redcrosse Knight, schemes to gain control of Orgoglio, manipulates Sir Guyon in "Canto I" of "Book II" and seduces the Redcrosse Knight, Orgoglio, and Sansloy. Duessa's mastery in gaining the trust of her targets and betraying them in worst moments for self-gain is an example of abjection in social sphere.

Thirdly, Duessa is a descendant of Night, who is one of the personifications in "Book I" of *The Faerie Queene*. Acrasia, Lucifera, Philotime, and Radigund's ancestry are not found within the the borders of the narrative. Moreover, Duessa engages with other characters and personifications, much more so than Acrasia, Lucifera, Philotime, and Radigund. In "Book I," Duessa requests the help of Night, in order to heal Sansfoy. Duessa holds a certain degree of prestige in the court of Lucifera, as well. She seduces Orgoglio and manipulates him to become her bodyguard. Then, in "Book II," she deceives Sir Guyon by pretending to be sexually assaulted. In "Book IV," Duessa is accompanied by Ate, who is the representation of discord, Blandamour and Paridell. Duessa's transgression of borders of personal space and trust is demonstrated by her actions within her social circle, which is a testament to the abjection in social spheres.

Fourthly, Duessa's evilness, or immorality, is reflected by the colour of her skin. The descriptions of Duessa's foreignness reveal the layers of exclusivity in *The Faerie Queene*. Duessa, in all analyses, is an expression of everything Spenser desires to purge from England. She is non-English, non-Protestant, and non-White. The excessiveness in Duessa's abjection challenged the readings of *The Faerie Queene* from the perspective of pure allegory. According to Mira Assaf Kafantaris, "[i]n responding to the persistent claim that Spenser's epic should be read as a religious allegory only," as Dennis Austin Britton "have argued that allegory is not only a device through which ideology is transmitted, but is also composed of the same false stability that punctuates race" (par. 4). Dennis Austin Britton observes the lack of the conversion of the non-Christians in *The Faerie Queene* is a conception of "Christianity as a racial identity, a hereditary or blood trait passed from parents to children" (59). According to Kafantaris:

By making Christianity into an inheritance passed genetically from parents to children, the performance of conversion via baptism becomes a moot point, since the children of Reformed parents are recipients of God's election in the womb. Following this logic, damnation is also considered a racial characteristic passed from non-Christian parents to their children. Therefore, in the poem's allegorized landscape, the godly commonwealth belongs to white, Christian-born bodies only. (par. 2).

Duessa's abjection is all-compassing, represented in both physical and non-physical aspects. Furthermore, each of Duessa's layers is an anti-thesis of Una, who is a white woman and the ultimate representative of Englishness and Protestantism. Una is white, English, and Protestant, all of which are qualities favoured by Spenser. Thus, Una is not subject to the same abjection as Duessa. Moreover, each feature of Duessa's identity is abject, which, arguably, assigns her as the most abject woman in *The Faerie Queene*.

Lastly, Duessa has a specific connection to the mother characters and personifications, catalogued previously. Duessa is not a mother, nor does she desire children of any kind. However, Duessa is a rare example of an evil woman appealing to the mother characters and personifications. Duessa appeals to Night in "Book I," with tears in her eyes, which moves Night. In "Book V," Ate is the "mother of debate" (IV.I.19.1), and she supports the false accusations of Duessa, and both women are described as friends. However, Ate, during the trial of Duessa, Ate gleefully speaks against Duessa:

He brought forth that old hag of hellish hew,
 The cursed Ate, brought her face to face,
 Who priuie was, and partie in the case:
 She, glad of spoyle and ruinous decay,
 Did her appeach, and to her more disgrace,
 The plot of all her practice did display,
 And all her traynes, and all her treasons forth did lay. (V.IX.47.3-9)

The verdict of Queen Mercilla³⁶ is a death sentence against Duessa, who is executed between “Canto IX” and “Canto X” of “Book V.” The first woman, who aids Duessa, is a mother, and the last woman, who demands the end of Duessa, is a mother. Duessa’s manipulation of Ate and Night’s motherly instincts is an example of non-physical abjection. However, for her crimes, Duessa receives the ultimate punishment.

3.4. Hellenore

Hellenore’s role in the narrative is unique, as unlike the rest of the women’s roles in *The Faerie Queene*, her role is created purely for entertainment. Hellenore is a young and beautiful woman, married to a miserly old man, Malbecco. In pursuit of ridiculing old men, who inappropriately marry much younger women, Spenser presents an entertaining story, in a non-serious fashion³⁷. Hellenore, out of her volition, joins a band of satyrs, and in a crude parody, engages sexual liaisons with multiple partners. This results in an abjection, not found anywhere else in *The Faerie Queene*. Ironically, Hellenore is not abjected, however, after witnessing her actions, Malbecco is abjected instead. Malbecco witnesses Hellenore’s adultery, and the intensity of horror transforms him to a beast.

Hellenore and Malbecco’s parts in the narrative begin in “Canto IX” of “Book III.” Sir Satyrane and Paridell, who is a wanton knight, demand to enter a castle to recuperate, and the owner of the castle, Malbecco, begrudgingly accepts. Malbecco is depicted as an impotent man, with exceeding amount of wealth. Consequently, he is paranoid about the

³⁶ Mercilla is a representation of Elizabeth I, and the anti-thesis of Adicia, who agitates her husband, Soudan, against her.

³⁷ Lesley Brill argues that “[a]lthough the story of Hellenore has a comic tone, her classical prototype recalls the potentially monumental destructiveness of adultery” (352).

safety of both his wealth and his wife. Malbecco orders a dinner to be prepared, and towards the end of the dinner, Peridell and Hellenore exchange furtive glances with each other:

Vpon his lips hong faire Dame *Hellenore*,
 With vigilant regard, and dew attent,
 Fashioning worldes of fancies euermore
 In her fraile witt, that now her quite forlore:
 The whiles vnwares away her wondering eye,
 And greedy eares her weake hart from her bore:
 Which he perceiuing, euer priuily
 In speaking, many false belgardes at her let fly. (III.IX.52.2-9)

Peridell, requiring more time for convalescence, stays as a guest of Malbecco, and grows infatuated with Hellenore. Deciding to escape with Peridell, Hellenore burns Malbecco's money. However, before she leaves, she screams. Malbecco realising he is about to lose both his wife, and his wealth, chooses to save the burning money instead. Malbecco's greed is a justification for the bizarre transformation he will go through. His obsession with the normalcy of the situation in his domain is an indication that Malbecco is afraid of abjection, trying to keep the world outside of his dwelling, to keep all associations with horror out. Moreover, although Malbecco regards Hellenore as a piece of property, Kelly Lehtonen remarks how Malbecco's "identity being absolutely dependent on his exclusive possession of both. ... Thus Malbecco's negation is, strictly speaking, distinct from Kristevan negation, which is defined by a repulsion of objects to maintain one's identity" (184).

Malbecco eventually finds Hellenore, surrounded by a crowded group of satyrs, who made Hellenore a collective housewife. Malbecco witnesses

Whereas his louely wife emongst them lay,
 Embraced of a Satyre rough and rude,
 Who all the night did minde his ioyous play:
 Nine times he heard him come alof ere day,
 That all his hart with gealosity did swell;
 But yet that nights ensample did bewray,
 That not for nought his wife them loued so well,
 When one so oft a night did ring his matins bell. (III.X.48.2-9)

Malbecco's witnessing of the sexual intercourse horrifies him, and he becomes Gelosy, with horns symbolising of his cuckoldry. Malbecco is horrified, as his idea of self, meaning his identity, is so damaged by the intensity of the experience, he attempts to commit suicide. However, because "all his substance was consum'd," (III.X.87.3) any notion of the self is shattered, meaning nothing is left for death. Malbecco becomes light as a feather and he is unaffected by the suicide attempt. The transformation is hideous, and stands as a testimony of the abjection process. Malbecco becomes so abject, the transformed creature forgets "he was a man" (III.X.60.9).

Nevertheless, although Hellenore is subjected to abjection, she is still a victim, bound by her circumstances. Brill explains how

Malbecco hoards her. Paridell steals her and then throws her away. The satyrs take her home and discover, to everyone's pleasure, a feminine lechery as insatiable as their own. Hellenore's happiness with her semibestial lovers comes as poetic justice of a sort, but it also testifies to the inevitable degradation of people who allow themselves to be overrun by their desires. (352).

3.5. Impatience and Impotence

Impatience & Impotence are the names of a pair of hags accompanying Maleger in "Canto XI" of "Book II." In "Canto XI" of "Book II," Arthur and Sir Guyon reside in the castle of Alma and learn about the history of Britain. The castle of Alma consists of five bulwarks, which are named Sight, Hearing, Smell, Taste, and Touch³⁸. During their stay, the castle is suddenly attacked by Maleger, who is accompanied by Impatience and Impotence. The crowd of enemies attack each bulwark of the castle, and Arthur challenges the leader of the crowd. Impatience and Impotence technically only accompany Maleger, but both hags act as an extension of Maleger's body. They strengthen Maleger in combat by recollecting Maleger's arrows, after he fires them, and distracting Arthur. Following the moment of Maleger's death, the hags commit suicide. Moreover, Maleger is a son of Earth, meaning he is part of the discussion of the rule that

³⁸ The sense of touch is not named directly, and Hamilton et al. speculates the reason could be that the "touch is the temptation of the Bower of Bliss," (263) meaning the sense of touch is more vulnerable to sensual experiences.

abject mothers produce abject children. Therefore, to understand how Impatience and Impotence are subjected to abjection, Maleger, Impatience, and Impotence should be examined side-by-side.

The siege by the army is a symbolic announcement of the sensual experiences overwhelming the senses, or “[t]he siege of the temperate body” (Hamilton et al. 261). The army is described as “passions bace” (II.ix.i.6) and consisting of “strong affections” (II.xi.i.2). The leader of the army, Maleger, and his lieutenants, Impatience and Impotence, are represented by elements of sensuality. Maleger is a robust figure, with tall limbs. Spenser describes the evilness, or immorality, of Maleger by making him wear a bow and many arrows. Moreover, Maleger rides a tiger, and according to T. H. White, the tiger “gets his name from his speedy pace; for the Persians, Greeks and Medes used to call an arrow ‘tygris’” (12). In the Bible³⁹, arrows are references to the sins, “which [assault] the body” (Hamilton et al. 264). In addition to sensual adjectives, Maleger is described as “*Indians* in their quiuers hide” (II.xi.21.5). Maleger’s non-Englishness is accentuated by John Buxton, who argues the depiction of Maleger as a Native American “may recall a drawing of John White of an American Indian⁴⁰, or perhaps Raleigh’s recollection of such a drawing, or a decoration in a map of the New World” (724). Maleger, so far, is abject in a non-physical dimension. He is a representation of an assault by sins, and he is portrayed as an American Indian. The combination of his representations and his daunting appearance shows how Maleger is subjected to social abjection. Maleger is an example of the argument of a non-English being a threat to the English.

Following his social abjection, Spenser provides further details about Maleger, which reveal how he is subjected to physical abjection as well. Maleger’s body is described as “leane and meagre as a rake,” (II.xi.22.2) and his skin is “withered like a dried rooke⁴¹” (II.xi.22.3). The details about Maleger’s body are another evidence of the existence of Humourism in *The Faerie Queene*. According to Hamilton et al., melancholy is “the worst

³⁹ See Psalms 11.2 and Ephesians 6.16.

⁴⁰ The name of the painting is “Indian in Body Paint.”

⁴¹ “[A] stack of hay or a stook” (Hamilton et al. 264).

of all humours,” as it is the humour that is associated with mental illness (264). This is an indication that Maleger could be suffering from a mental disability. If this is the case, then Maleger’s body is further abjected by disability. Moreover, Maleger wears a helmet made from a human’s skull, which is described as a terrifying sight to behold. These details reveal the abjection of Maleger’s appearance. Maleger’s body is portrayed like the grim reaper, meaning that he is described as a walking skeleton. He is malnourished to the extreme and his skin is parched and shrivelled. The helmet is a member of a dead man’s body, but it is described as an accessory. Consequently, each detail specified about Maleger’s body makes him more and more terrifying.

The horrifying image of Maleger is already abject in physical sense, but the details continue to make him more terrifying. During the battle with Arthur, Maleger’s body is pierced by a sword, but no blood comes out of the wound. Moreover, Maleger rises from the ground, shocking both Arthur and his squire, Timias. Arthur’s reaction is described as “[h]alfe in amaze with horror hideous” (II.xi.38.4). Maleger’s body, after being pierced by Arthur, becomes see-through, as the landscape behind Maleger can be seen, however, no blood comes out of the wound and Maleger continues to fight. This is another example of physical abjection, as Maleger transgresses the natural borders between life and death. In the fight, Maleger is able to exist in both life and death, and this disregard for the borders of life and death conjures a sense of horror in Arthur and his squire, Timias. Arthur, realising that slashing attacks will not harm Maleger, crushes his breast with his bare fists instead. However, Maleger still stands up and continues to fight. This terrifies Arthur, and Maleger is described as a “lifeless shadow” (II.xi.44.3). Maleger’s existence is repeatedly described as oscillating between life and death, defying the borders of both.

Lastly, Maleger is the first-born son of Earth, and Arthur realises that as Maleger’s life decays by receiving blows, Earth restores him back to life. The relationship between the mother and the child is a traditional representation of altruism of motherhood, with the mother nourishing her child. However, as both Earth, in accordance with her previous descriptions, and Maleger are established as evil, or immoral, characters and personifications, Spenser portrays both Earth and Maleger as abject, and the sanctity of motherhood and the bond between the mother and the child is destroyed. Arthur kills

Maleger “without remorse” (II.xi.46.7). Arthur breaks the connection between the mother and the child, by throwing Maleger to a nearby lake and drowning him.

Maleger’s drowning in a lake is determined to be a representation of a baptism, meaning Maleger, as a non-Protestant and non-English person, is destroyed by Christianity. The representations of baptism recur in *The Faerie Queene*. For example, in “Canto XI” of “Book I,” the Redcrosse Knight falls in the Well of Life, and the well has the powers of resurrection. The Redcrosse Knight is unharmed by the fall, instead, he is revitalised. In “Canto XI” of “Book I,” the imagery of baptism is represented in a positive context, as the powers of Christianity restores a Christian. In “Canto II” of “Book II,” however, Sir Guyon attempts to clean the blood from the hands of the baby Ruddymane, but the blood cannot be washed away. This is another example of baptism, although, in this context, it is insufficient to clean baby Ruddymane. In “Canto XI” of “Book II,” Maleger’s physical and social abjection is destroyed by Arthur, who drowns Maleger in a lake, in a portrayal of the destructive, or punishing, powers of Christianity⁴².

Impatience and Impotence are described in an analogous fashion to the other evil, or immoral, women in *The Faerie Queene*. The pair are filthy, as the visage of the women is “grim” and covered with “hoary lockes all loose” (II.xi.23.3). They are swift, moving “as chased Stags,” (II.xi.23.5) yet at the same time, crippled in a single leg. The pair are sisters, signifying the close bond of the pair. During the combat, Arthur manages to grab one of the sisters, but the other rushes to her sister’s aid, and the pair, with “their rude handes and gryesly graplemenet,” (II.xi.293) overwhelm Arthur.

Filthiness of the body, and the physical disability, immediately determine the morality of Impatience and Impotence. The elements constituting evilness, or immorality, of the sisters, are also representations of physical abjections. In a social and spiritual sense, Impatience is “commonly identified by the scholastics as a daughter of anger, [who] cannot control the irascible passions (hope/despair, fear/audacity, and anger)” (Rollinson

⁴² For more information about the representations of baptism in *The Faerie Queene*, see A. C. Hamilton’s “A Theological Reading of *The Faerie Queene*, Book II,” and *Soteriology in Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene* by Stuart Anthony Hart.

449). On the other hand, Impotence is an anti-thesis of Potentia, which is “the power or ability to control oneself,” and “is intimately related to the power of restraint” (Rollinson 449). Together, the pair represent the unleashing of the emotions, or passions, breaking the expectancy of temperance in physical, social and spiritual circles. In a physical sense, the disability and filthiness of the pair are representations of physical abjection. Interestingly, in a social and a spiritual sense, the hags are evil, or immoral, but the representations of the personifications do not conjure a sense of horror. Therefore, the sisters are not abject, neither in social not spiritual sense.

The end of the sisters conjures a final abjection, as Impatience, in a frenzy, breaks off the chains and bands that bind her, which was put on her body by Arthur. The hag, with a “dreadfull yelling crye,” (II.xi.47.3) jumps to the same lake, in which Maleger was drowned. In a similar fashion, Impotence grabs one of the arrows of Maleger, and stabs herself in her heart, presenting a “wicked end” (II.xi.47.9). The suicidal ends of the hags arouse a final sense of abjection, as after terrifying the reader Spenser purges both Impatience and Impotence in a violent spectacle.

3.6. Malecasta

Malecasta is a character introduced in “Canto I” of “Book III,” which is dedicated to the virtue of Chastity. Malecasta is the first enemy of Chastity in “Book III,” and in the brief role she plays within the narrative, Malecasta remains as the only woman, who attempted to seduce another woman, albeit by accident. Britomart, the protagonist of “Book III,” is a chaste woman and a knight, concealing her body in a suit of armour. Consequently, she is often mistaken for a man. In fact, “Book III” begins with the exile of Acrasia, and Britomart and Sir Guyon exchanging blows, mistaking one another for a foe.

Britomart, the protagonist of “Book III,” finds the Redcrosse Knight engaging six other nameless knights in combat, under a castle. The group ignore the shouts of Britomart and demand her to pledge her allegiance to Malecasta. Malecasta’s name is concealed, and she is described as a “[l]ady fayre,” whose “soueraine beautie hath no liuing pere” (III.I.26.2-3). This is one of the examples of the deception of evil women. Although

Malecasta is beautiful on outside, she is licentious inside. Physical beauty, for good, or moral, women, is an indication of virtuousness. On the other hand, for evil, or immoral, women, physical beauty is a tool of deception, the alluring body obfuscating the depravity of the soul. Acrasia, Malecasta, and Radigund are among the examples of the women, who employ a combination of beauty and deception. The remaining evil, or immoral, women, cannot employ deception by means of beauty because Spenser portrays such women in odious forms. These women include, but not restricted to, Abessa, Argante and Error.

Britomart defeats the group, and the group yields. The six knights allow Britomart to enter the castle, where Malecasta dwells. The name of the structure is Castle Joyous. The frame of “Book III” is constructed by beauty, pleasure and restraint, categorised under physical and non-physical expressions of love. In physical expressions of love, non-procreative acts of sexuality are meant, which are conceptualised as Lust. In non-physical expressions, creative acts of sexuality are meant, conceptualised as Chastity. Chastity and Lust are on the opposing ends in a moral spectrum, and the evil women, per their immorality, are associated with Lust. The castle’s grandeur is splendid. There are “long and spacious” chambers (III.I.31.6), “roiall riches” of “exceeding cost,” (III.I.32.4) the pillars framed with “purest bullions,” (III.I.32.5-6) “great perles and pretious stones,” (III.I.32.7) and generally, Castle Joyous sparkles with “great light,” and appears “glorious” (III.I.32.9). However, despite its glamorous appearance, Castle Joyous is a deceptive space, for behind the aristocratic and courtly atmosphere, sexual actions are committed. The music of “looser notes with *Lydian* harmony,” (III.I.40.2) is a disarming agent, as in *The Faerie Queene*, music generally echoes in spaces of wickedness, such as the House of Pride in “Book I,” and the Bower of Bliss in “Book III.” John Hollander believes “hearing the music contributes to the moral undoing of the listener. It is interesting that there is no music in the Garden of Adonis (III vi), the Temple of Venus (IV x), or Isis Church (v vii)” (484). Moreover, the tapestry⁴³ in Castle Joyous is a hint of the sins perpetrated by the dwellers. Supriya Chaudhuri remarks the tapestry of Venus

⁴³ The tapestry describes the story Adonis and Venus. Venus aggressively pursues Adonis, who, initially, does not reciprocate her love. The importance of the tapestry is the descriptions denote female dominance in sexual pursuits. The same dominance, and the motif of a female chasing an uninterested lover parallel with Malecasta’s role.

and Adonis in Castle Joyous is a criticism of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, as Ovid expresses "the reductive, predatory, and debasing qualities of sexual love" (471). The tapestry is a foreshadowing of the approaching night, in which a sexual offence is about to be committed. The transformation of a safe space and the deceptiveness of the inhabitants denote Castle Joyous as abject. In spaces such as Castle Joyous, a feeling of safety affects the guests. In a short time, the defences of the guests are lowered, and their trust is betrayed. Additionally, spaces of deception are safe havens for wicked doings. Spenser, to horrify the reader, presents evil, or immoral, actions taking place in such spaces, and purges the good, or moral, characters and personifications from such spaces, to complete the abjection process.

In the night, "whenas all the world in silence deepe," (III.I.59.1) Malecasta, "vnder the blacke vele of guilty Night⁴⁴" (III.I.59.7) approaches the room of Britomart, who is about to spend a night in Castle Joyous. Prior to the night, Malecasta is smitten by "warlike limbs" of Britomart (III.i.52.5), because she assumes Britomart is a man. In an exact description of Duessa, Malecasta wears a scarlet gown, symbolising her sexual intentions. Malecasta is abjected, as Britomart suddenly leaps out of bed, and she is revealed to be a woman. The horror is too much for Malecasta, who faints by the sight of Britomart. There is a double abjection in "Canto I" of "Book I." The beguilement and enchantment by Castle Joyous begin the process of abjection in non-physical sense, as the safety accommodated by the space is instantly destroyed during Malecasta's visit of Britomart. The second abjection process happens during the nighttime, as Malecasta suddenly apprehends the gender of Britomart. Malecasta is disgusted and horrified, and faints as a result. Britomart is also disgusted and horrified, because the illusion of safety, provided by Castle Joyous, is instantly shattered.

In conclusion, Spenser presents colourful and diverse portrayals of sexual activity in *The Faerie Queene*. Evil, or immoral, women engage in both consensual and non-consensual sexual relationships. In both cases, regardless of consent, all evil women are punished for

⁴⁴ Malecasta's intention of seducing Britomart occurs during the nighttime, and Night is one of the abjected personifications in *The Faerie Queene*, examined priorly. By associating Malecasta and Night, Spenser once again hints at the immorality of Malecasta.

their transgressions against the moral norms of the society. If a consensual relationship occurs, the abjection usually occurs within the social strata. This is seen as a betrayal of trust, or an attempt at seduction. However, if a non-consensual relationship occurs, the abjection is seen on the physical level in addition to the social level, either with the abnormality or deformation of the genitalia, or body. In rare cases, both the female genitalia and body are abject together. Spenser, dedicated to represent Elizabeth I, England, and Protestantism in perfect moral fashion, gathers all negative associations and concepts, in the form of Vice. The evil, or immoral, women in *The Faerie Queene*, are conceptualised as the embodiments of Vice. Lust is one of the deadly Vices, and evil women, who are not mothers, act and behave in order to convey the dangers of Lust. Spenser, following a didactic message, punishes all evil women, who engage in Lust. The evil women, who are described as a prostitute or a whore, are abject, and by purging such women from the narrative, Spenser purges the negative associations and concepts from the representations of Elizabeth I, England, and Protestantism.

CONCLUSION

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is a testimony for the moralistic imagination of the author, as the text is black-and-white in the representations of women and womanhood. Spenser disfavours any grey areas in morality, and the poem is constructed as a binary opposition between the good and the evil. Women characters and personifications are subjects of this opposition, as all women characters and personifications are represented as either good or evil.

“Book I” is dedicated to Holiness, and the women characters and personifications play a role either in the praise of Protestantism or being a threat to the religion. Abessa, Corceca, Earth, Errour, Duessa, Lucifera, and Night are evil, or immoral, representations of threats against Protestantism. Abessa and Corceca are representations of the corruption of the Catholicism, and both the mother and the daughter are punished alike by the lion. Earth is the primordial progenitor of the giants, and giants represent uncivility and usurpation of a regimen. Earth's child in “Book I,” Orgoglio is defeated by the Redcrosse Knight. Errour is a portrayal of the dangerous ideologies and false religious doctrines, and she too, is defeated by the Redcrosse Knight. Duessa is the anti-thesis of Una, and she is a representation of all foreign threats to the rule of Queen Elizabeth I. Consequently, she is executed by the order of Queen Mercilla in “Book V,” who is another representation of Elizabeth I. Lucifera is another anti-thesis of Elizabeth I, as she is a portrait of a tyrant. Night, same as Earth, is a reference to the concept of primordial darkness and the daughter of Chaos. Night is a progenitor of a detestable bloodline, however, as a goddess, she is exempt from punishment.

“Book II” is dedicated to Temperance, and the negative representations of women and womanhood are constructed by the concept of Intemperance. Occasion is the mother of Furor, she is excessive in her anger and obtuseness. Impatience and Impotence are sisters, and both sisters are expressions of deficiency in Patience and Potency, respectively. Phaedria is a guide of Acrasia, and she is a representation of Slothfulness, deficiency of Busyness and Vigor. Lastly, Acrasia is the ultimate representation of excessiveness of Passion, spreading a metaphorical miasma of licentiousness from the Bower of Bliss.

“Book III” is dedicated to Chastity, and is the conclusion of “Book III” is the limit of the range of this study. The negative portrayals of women and womanhood in “Book III” are concerned with fornication, as an extension of lust. Argante, a giantess, abducts the Squire of Dames, intending to engage in a non-consensual intercourse. Malecasta, duly named as “the Lady of Delight,” is smitten with Britomart, mistaking her for a man, and attempts to seduce her. The Witch is an old hag, and her son is infatuated with Florimell, in a sensual sense. Lastly, Hellenore presents a comical relief in *The Faerie Queene*, by engaging in a feast of fornication with a group of satyrs, much to the dismay of her miserly, old husband, Malbecco.

Morality, for Spenser, is anchored to the author’s desire of representing Elizabeth I, the Kingdom of England, and Protestantism in a perfect fashion, and all women characters and personifications, who stand against the representation of the three is abject. The reason for this abjection is any woman, who is a threat for the well-being of the monarch, the monarchy, and the religion, is construed as immoral by the author. To represent all of the elements constituting Elizabeth I, the Kingdom of England, and Protestantism, Spenser creates a plethora of women, and in a contrast, a plethora of anti-theses. The anti-theses of women characters and personifications in “Book I,” “Book II,” and “Book III,” can be catalogued as mothers and non-mothers, who engage in sexual liaisons generously, and consequently, Spenser describes such women as prostitutes. Evil, or immoral, mothers in “Book I,” “Book II,” and “Book III” of *The Faerie Queene* are Corceca, Earth, Error, Night, Occasion, and the Witch. Motherhood is an important role for the well-being of England. The primary reason being the evil mothers increase the potential concerns and threats for England, by breeding. By doing so, evil mothers threaten to unravel the moral fabric of the society, and thereby, of England.

Disregarding any possibility of an exception, all mother characters and personifications in *The Faerie Queene* produce a brood or children, in accordance with the morality of the mother. This means all evil mothers produce an evil brood or evil children. This fact parallels with Spenser’s disapprobation of any ambiguous areas in morality. On an interesting note, the author maintains the traditional expressions of motherly love, such

as nourishment and self-sacrifice, for all characters and personifications. The reason for this phenomenon could be the author's desire of warning the reader that not all positive expressions or portrayals are moral. The remaining evil, or immoral, women in "Book I," "Book II," and "Book III" of *The Faerie Queene* are non-mothers. Distinguishing a mother and a non-mother, without referring to her brood or children is made easy with a simple observation. Only non-mother characters and personifications are allowed to fornicate for pleasure, in a non-creative or non-productive sense. Spenser describes such women as prostitutes, or whores. These characters are Acrasia, Argante, Duessa, Hellenore, Impatience, Impotence, and Malecasta.

Spenser's nauseating and unsavoury descriptions of evilness, or immorality, allow *The Faerie Queene* to be examined from the perspective of abjection. Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* is concerned with how disgust and horror are reactions to the breakdown in meaning, and how such a breakdown is pertained to the self-identity. The feelings of disgust, aroused by blood, excrement, open-wound, pus, and sewage, are rational expressions in accordance with the human evolution. Kristeva approaches to the feelings of disgust from a psychoanalytical perspective and presents abjection in both physical and non-physical aspects.

To define the physical aspect of abjection, Kristeva exemplifies the concept with the skin on the milk, and the corpse. Kristeva is revolted by the taste of skin on the milk, and when her parents force her to consume the skin, she is repulsed by the feeling. By doing so, Kristeva disengages from her parents, by her identity. Kristeva's parents identify the skin on the milk with life-affirming associations, such as deliciousness and nourishment. For Kristeva, the skin is identified with life-denying associations, such as disgust, loathing, and nausea. This creates a breakdown in meaning, as the borders between the life and death are blurred by the skin on the milk. This is called the process of abjection. The Neoplatonism is a substitution for the physical abjection in *The Faerie Queene*, as the outwardly expressions of abnormality, deformity, and disability are expressions of inward moral corruption.

The non-physical aspect of abjection is more rigorous in expression, as the concept can be applied to a number of diverse situations in daily-life. The non-physical aspect of abjection refers to abjection in the social sphere. Expressions of criminality, betrayal by a close friend, the failings of judicial systems, are examples of non-physical aspect of abjection. Crime, for example, heightens the display of the vulnerability of the public safety. This, in turn, fills the eyewitnesses with horror.

To analyse the abjection of women and womanhood in *The Faerie Queene*, both physical and non-physical aspects has been analysed for each character or personification. Abjection is term of late-twentieth century, however, for Spenser, descriptions and portrayals of abjection are common expressions of evilness, or immorality, in *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser represents women and womanhood, as characters and personifications, in accordance with Renaissance Platonism, or Neoplatonism. In Neoplatonism, all physical expressions of beauty emanate from the beauty of the Soul. In opposition, all physical expressions of ugliness emanate from the ugliness of the Soul. Consequently, all moral women in *The Faerie Queene* are beautiful, without any exceptions. The beauty in artworks, in the Renaissance, is pertained to order, precision, and proportions. In England, the pinnacle of the Renaissance artistry is reached not by painting or sculpture, but by literature. Consequently, the feminine beauty for the English, and for Spenser, is constructed as an amalgam of both foreign and native influences. Spenser expresses the beauty of the moral characters and personifications by association them with light, and by being light-skinned, modest in behaviour, chaste, healthy, hygienic, and by temporarily-abled. In contrast, evil, or immoral women, are distinguishable by their tendency to reside in places of darkness, using cosmetics, being disabled, diseased, filthy, promiscuous, and engaging in sexual liaisons. The evil women are, with only a few exceptions, are disgusting and ugly.

In terms of physical aspects of abjection, evil, or immoral, mothers are represented as abject, because each evil mother is deformed or disabled in body, productive systems, and the genitalia. Corceca is a blind woman, meaning she is disabled. Earth's womb is transformed to a hyper-sexual space of incest by the actions of Argante and Ollyphant.

Errorr's half-human and half-serpent body arouses a sense of horror, and her mouth and genitalia are conjoined. Night, as a goddess, is a figure of authority. Consequently, the appearance of her sexual organs or systems are not represented. Nevertheless, because of her deformed and terrifying appearance, she is cast down from the heavens, and her children are all abject in body. The Witch is a terrifying old hag, and she is decrepit in description. Occasion is crippled in a leg, and Sir Guyon tears her tongue out of her mouth, further disfiguring her. The children of the mothers are abject as well. Abessa is deaf and feeble, meaning as with her mother, Corceca, she too, is disabled. All of Earth's children are giants, and each is deformed in proportions. Errorr's children are a brood of horrible monsters. Upon the death of Errorr, her brood drink her blood, transgressing the borders between life and death, and transforming death-affirming spilled blood to life-affirming nourishment. The Witch's son is not named, and he is beast-like in appearance. Occasion's son, Furor, is demented, attacking anyone her mother commands her to. All children commit crimes, which generally entails sexual offences. Earth, Night, and the Witch's children are lewd creatures, unafraid to commit a sexual assault for their self-satisfaction.

In terms of non-physical aspect of abjection, all mothers are outcasts, exiled from the civil society in one way or the other. Corceca is a criticism of the blind superstition of the nuns, residing in a dark cottage out of the sight of civilization. Earth represents the baser and material realm, despoiling the noble act of creation, by debasing the concept in physical expressions. Night only appears in the absence of the daylight and delays the noble quests of the knights. The Witch is an old hag, living in a dark and filthy cottage, on the fringes of civilisation. Each of the mothers commit a moral crime, or represented as a concept of immorality, which makes them eligible for social abjection.

The prostitutes, or whores, are subjects of social abjection, and the body of such women are subjects of physical abjection, except Acrasia. Abessa, Corceca's daughter, is in a sexual liaison with a thief named Kirkrapine, and due to the horrifying appearance of Kirkrapine, and the disability of Abessa, sexual relationship is imagined to be horrible in sight. Acrasia is the main antagonist of "Book II," and her terrifyingly beautiful and

sensual body easily seduces the knights. Argante's disproportionate body is abject, and the incestuous relationship with her twin brother, Ollyphant, in Earth's womb subjects the siblings to abjection. Duessa is the most cunning antagonist in *The Faerie Queene*. Her deceitful nature is an example of the non-physical aspect of abjection, her diseased and disfigured body is an example of physical abjection. Moreover, Duessa is a non-white, foreigner woman, and her abjection, as a foreign threat to England, is an example of social abjection. Hellenore's sexual engagement with a group of non-humans, or half-humans, arouses an intense sense of disgust for Malbecco. Consequently, Hellenore's meaning for Malbecco is destroyed and an abjection occurs. Impatience and Impotence are a pair of sisters and both women are hags. Decrepit and filthy in appearance, the pair commit suicide after the defeat of Maleger, in a manner that abjects the bodies of both sisters. Lastly, Malecasta is beautiful and healthy in body, however, she betrays the trusts of her guest, namely Britomart, by attempting to seduce her during the night. By doing so, Malecasta's attempt becomes an example of non-physical abjection.

The word abjection, as an example of degradation, appears thrice in *The Faerie Queene*, in "Canto XI" of "Book III," "Canto IX" of "Book V," and "Canto VII" of "Book VI." However, examples of extreme abasement, debasement, and odiousness, as sources of horror, are found from the beginning to the end of the allegory. Spenser demonstrates an unusual understanding of human psychology, as the representations of the evil women in *The Faerie Queene* are prime models for an examination from the perspective of abjection. The concept is employed by authors of different time periods. Nevertheless, in the context of the works of both authors, the term is associated with intense feelings of abhorrence, loathing, and revulsion. The conclusion of the arguments in this thesis is Spenser's abject representations of women and womanhood can be considered as a means for purgation. Basically, Spenser constructs evil women by assigning them unfavourable physical and social characteristic, so, by their destruction, he can expulse such characteristics from any association with Elizabeth I, England, and Protestantism.

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APPENDIX 1. WOMEN CHARACTERS AND PERSONIFICATIONS

Abessa: Corceca's deaf and mute daughter, who is in an adulterous relationship with Kirkrapine in "Book I."

Acrasia: The main antagonist of "Book II" and the ultimate enemy of Sir Guyon. She is an incredibly beautiful and lecherous woman, who resides in the Bower of Bliss, and the name of the location is a reference to female genitalia. Sir Guyon captures Acrasia and destroys the Bower of Bliss.

Argante: The giantess, who is the twin of Ollyphant. She is the daughter of Earth and Typhoeus. Argante is stopped by Sir Satyrane while she was chasing a young man for sexual gratification.

Corceca: Abessa's blind and superstitious mother, who is aware of her daughter's relationship with Kirkrapine.

Duessa: The main female antagonist in "Book I," Duessa is a cunning witch, who seduces Fraddubio, the Redcrosse Knight, Orgoglio, and Sansfoy. She is an honoured guest in Lucifera's court. She rides a seven-headed beast, symbolising the Seven Deadly Sins and puts Orgoglio as a guard to her castle. Tries to spoil the union of Una and the Redcrosse Knight, but her ruse fails. Revealed to be hideous in form. Executed by the order of Mercilla in "Book V."

Earth: The personification of element of earth, land-based natural environments, and Gaia from the Greek mythology. Earth begets many children from various partners, all of whom are wicked, and a few of them deformed in body.

Error: The first enemy encountered by the Redcrosse Knight. She is half-serpent and half-woman. Decapitated by the Redcrosse Knight. After her death, her brood rush to her corpse to drink her blood.

Hellenore: Malbecco's young wife with a roving eye. Hellenore escapes with Paridell and abandoned by him in a forest. She's picked up by a group of satyrs, with whom she prefers to stay.

Impatience/Impotence: Sisters, who aid Maleger with his siege on Alma's castle.

Malecasta: The Lady of Delights, who resides in Castle Joyous. Unsuccessfully tries to seduce Britomart during the night, and faints upon realising Britomart is a woman.

Night: The goddess of darkness and night. She is an ancestor of Duessa, and helps her with the recovery of Sansjoy, by persuading Aesculapius.

Occasion: The mother of Furor. Occasion relentlessly provokes Furor to attack bystanders.

The Witch: The hag in "Book III," who allows Florimell by letting her stay in her cabin. Has an unnamed son, who falls in love with Florimell. Creates hyena-like beasts and False Florimell with magic.

APPENDIX 2. ORIGINALITY REPORT

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| | Department | English Language and Literature |
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Date: 26/03/2024

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My thesis work with the title given above:

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- Is not a research conducted with qualitative or quantitative approaches that require data collection from the participants by using techniques such as survey, scale (test), interview, focus group work, observation, experiment, interview.
- Requires the use of data (books, documents, etc.) obtained from other people and institutions. However, this use will be carried out in accordance with the Personal Information Protection Law to the extent permitted by other persons and institutions.

I hereby declare that I reviewed the Directives of Ethics Boards of Hacettepe University and in regard to these directives it is not necessary to obtain permission from any Ethics Board in order to carry out my thesis study; I accept all legal responsibilities that may arise in any infringement of the directives and that the information I have given above is correct.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

Tuğrul Can Sümen

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SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL

APPROVED

Prof. Dr. Hande Seber