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Spenser's sporting muse : The playful use of imagery in relation to the metamorphsis of the lover in Spenser's Amoretti.

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CHAPTER 3: CAPTIVITY

Introduction

The notion of captivity is central to the *Amoretti*. It is implicit in the title, which deviates from the norm of using the lady's name. The Italian word for hooks is 'amo', and the poet/lover's *Amoretti*, his "little love offerings" (Spiller 113), are indeed hooks for capturing the lady within a web of metaphor. In the opening sonnet, the poet/lover states that his "Leaves, lines, and rymes, seeke her to please alone". Since their purpose is restricted, there is a captivity of form as well. According to Spiller, the sonnet "exists, as far as one can determine from those who practised it, to enable the utterance of a passionate self in eloquent—that is, rationally controlled—form" (145). In his discussion of the *Amoretti*, Spiller comments on Spenser's "massive control and steadiness" (143) throughout the sequence. Referring to Am. 1, Spiller praises the poet for "an unusual degree of control" which he establishes,

> not merely by the metapoetic metaphor he uses (that the pages of the text stand like souls in front of a Recording Angel) but by a kind of formal density and discipline….The way in which the content of the three quatrains is marshalled (and the word is chosen advisedly, given the metaphor of captivity) in the final couplet under its headwords, "leaves, lines and rymes", the first two linked by alliteration and the second two by off-rhymes, gives an assurance of mental control, which is important in a sonnet using the rhetoric of passion, as this does. (143)

The *Amoretti* deals not only with the politics of wooing, but also with the politics of writing. In his article entitled "Spenser's 'Greener' Hymnes", Johnson cites Mary Oates's observation that the fictive hero of the sequence is a poet-lover

> eager to write a song of praise worthy of the object of his love; each poem is, then, like a book of *The Faerie Queene*, with this hero in simultaneous quest of his love object and his poem.…Thus [the sonnets] offer themselves as

> enactments of the experience of writing a poem as well as of falling in love. (433)

At times, the narrator is the concerned lover who is trying to find peace and reconciliation in his relationship with the lady; at others, he is the concerned poet who seeks to break free of the captivity of form and to find a way of writing that does not restrict the lady in any way, but which also does her justice.

In this chapter, I intend to highlight some of the many images of bondage and captivity which are used by the poet/lover to describe his relationship with the lady, and to show how Spenser playfully manipulates and transforms these images as the sequence progresses.

Initially the images of captivity are negative and conflictual as the poet/lover expresses his frustration at his lack of success in wooing and winning the affection of the lady. Don M. Ricks, who describes "the tone of the first sixty or so sonnets [as] negative", sums up the situation as follows: "The lover-poet is rejected; his lady seems proud and cruel, and love for him is a cause of pain and suffering." However, as the drama of the relationship unfolds and the poet/lover evolves out of the egotistical love which is so typical of the Petrarchan lover, he "finds both [the lady] and love have become sources of pleasure and enlightenment" (9). The change in the poet/lover's perception is reflected in the captivity imagery, which assumes a more positive quality. The imagery thus functions as an index of the development of the poet/lover's suit, which is "not primarily presented as a narrative event, but as a process of metaphoric comprehension. Where his progress is seen, it takes place through the extension or transfer of metaphoric understanding". (Wood 19–20)

The earlier sonnets, in particular, are characterized by complaint about the devious nature and lack of mercy shown by the lady as she allegedly seeks to allure and ensnare the poet/lover in a variety of ways. The pain that he experiences is attributed to the lady's rebuttals and adamant refusal to accept his stilted love:

> Over and over he demands to know when the lady will relent and when his suffering will end. Unable to understand what he sees as a discrepancy between her beauty and supposed cruelty, he indulges in repeated outbursts

> of puzzled frustration (Ricks 10)

—using images of predatory creatures to establish her treachery.

The poet/lover's portrayal of the lady as various predatory beasts and himself as her helpless prey is ironic. During the course of the sequence it emerges that the poet/lover is engaged in a "captive-making' process of his own. In his role as lover, he wishes to capture the lady as his bride and his "weep[ing], wail[ing], sigh[ing] and plead[ing]" (Am. 18) are all deliberate ploys to accomplish this aim. As the poet, he strives to give expression to each situation, occasion and feeling that he experiences by capturing it in a metaphor. In Am. 27, he expresses his hope that his "verse, that never shall expyre, / shal [her] make immortall".

Entrapped by his own image of the proud, cruel Petrarchan mistress, the poet/lover fails both to see the real lady and to recognize the true reasons for his misery. He perceives the lady as a Mirabella, who

> is endowed with "wondrous giftes of natures grace" (*FQ* VI vii. 28), but she misuses them to cause suffering and fuel her own pride (29). She is merciless, inviting the grim logic of which Calidore warned Crudor: "Who will not mercie unto others shew / How can he mercy ever hope to have?" (i,42) (Heale 163)

The lady "challenges the stereotype" and as Johnson puts it

> refuses to remain either a literary projection of the lover's desires or a rhetorical display of the poet's art; by such refusal she is liberated from the fixed patriarchal order which would confine her to the role of a hardly-present, passive observer. At the same time her liberation allows her to be liberator, using the same device (pen, pencil) to write/right the poet into a poetics of life and a discourse of mutually meaningful communication. ("Gender Fashioning" 508)

Since the poet/lover has defined the lady's role, however, he incorrectly assumes that "she rejects him willfully for convention's sake" (Ricks 10). His hope that she will fit the image he has conceived for her is idealistic and the images of bondage he uses reflect his own captivity to this false and fruitless view of love.

The poet/lover's depiction of the relationship as an ongoing battle and his notion that the lady can be conquered is also inaccurate. Alexander Dunlop points out that

> he cannot conquer the lady. Conceivably he could conquer the lady's body, but he could not 'conquer' the lady into any relationship of true love, for conquest implies unwilling submission, and true love, Spenser tells us, is a matter of mutuall good will. (85)

At first, the poet/lover "pursues the lady with the aim of achieving a Petrarchan conquest", but this later gives way to a relationship in which "mutuall good will" becomes the focus (Kennedy 222).

In the early part of the sequence, the poet/lover is blind to the nature of true love, which, we are told, "is not a matter of wooing and winning, of courtship and conquest; [but] is ultimately a gift of grace, as Sonnet 67 suggests" (Dunlop 92). William J. Kennedy likens the poet/lover to Busirane, "the amatory artist whose poetic conceits distort the image of love in an abusive perversion of truth" (240). It is this distorted image of love to which the lady objects: "Being unenlightened [the poet/lover] cannot understand that she rejects him because he is unenlightened; that she rejects him, in other words, because he loves her for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way." (Ricks 10)

Right from the start of the sequence, the lady is presented as being constant, and therefore attainable, "even eager for the lover; nonetheless she will only be his on her terms" (Johnson, "Gender Fashioning" 506–7). It is the steadfast lady who, in Am. 11, "ne wilbe mooved with reason or with rewth" and who "force[s] [the poet/lover] to live" so that a real relationship may develop and he may become worthy of her love: "The poet of the *Amoretti* needs to prove that he is not a Busirane. He must convince the beloved that he is an honest lover, not a frenetic rhetorician beset with false conceits or poisonous ideas." (Kennedy 240) As the courtship progresses, and the poet/lover moves "from an I-centric to a thou-centric perspective" (Johnson, "Spenser's 'Greener' Hymns" 432), he comes to

realize that love liberates as well as binds. Those same qualities which, in the earlier sonnets, inspired the most ardent complaint, are now recognized as positive attributes. The changes in the poet/lover's perception are registered in the imagery, which is playfully transformed. The predators of the poet/lover's earlier experiences give way to the "gentle deare". The images of war and defeat are replaced by those suggesting victory and peace, and captivity, paradoxically, becomes freedom.

The protests and complaints of the poet/lover cannot, however, be taken too seriously, as there are hints throughout the sequence which suggest that captivity (in marriage) is not only inevitable, but is also highly desirable. As early as Am. 6 the poet/lover encourages himself with the words:

> Then thinke not long in taking little paine,
> to knit the knot, that ever shall remaine.

These lines anticipate the turning point in Am. 67, where the poet/lover gives up the chase and unexpectedly, the "beast so wyld" yields and is "fyrmely tyde" of her own freewill. The turning point—the knot to be knit—refers both to marriage and to the crafted poem. What the poet/lover has wanted to capture about the lady is the image of himself capturing her. In this sonnet, the lady allows herself to stand still long enough to enable the poet/lover to do so. This moment is significant, since it is in crafting the poem and exploiting the resources of language that the knot is transformed.

The poet/lover's self-deception regarding captivity by the lady is demonstrated in the couplet of Am. 37 in which he reproves the folly of desiring the very thing that signifies the loss of one's liberty. His comment,

> Fondnesse it were for any being free,
> to covet fetters, though they golden bee

is of course applicable to his own situation and can be interpreted as a witty self-observation of the direction he is taking.

Hints of a happy outcome are often connected with the idea of willing submission. On several occasions, the poet/lover declares that he would willingly yield his "poore life"

to the lady. It is also significant that both the poet/lover and the lady appear to be willingly involved in the action, and the conflicts could, at any time, be ended by either. Yet, the poet/lover continues to "Dayly…seeke and sew for peace" (Am. 11) and the lady refuses to allow the battle (wooing) to cease and consents to hearing his "terms" and reading his "leaves, lines, and rymes". Their voluntary participation in a pattern of bondage and captivity suggests a playful game of 'captive making'.

For purposes of this chapter I have divided the imagery of captivity into three groups: The section on Martial imagery explores the poet/lover's uses of the stock Petrarchan love-as-war theme; this is followed by a discussion of the poet/lover's use of predatory beast imagery to reconcile the seemingly disparate traits of ideal beauty and obdurate cruelty which he discerns in the lady; the third group, entitled Hands and Bands, focuses on the idea of willing submission and the paradox of freedom in captivity.

Martial Imagery

In the opening sonnet, the stock Petrarchan image of love-as-war is introduced by the comparison of the "leaves, lines, and rymes" that the poet/lover sends to the lady, to "captives trembling at the victors sight". The poet/lover's purpose in sending the poems is clear:

> Leaves, lines, and rymes, seeke her to please alone,
> whom if ye please, I care for other none.

His poems aim only to please the lady, who is not only the object, but also the inspiration of the sonnets. The importance of winning her favour, with regard to both his wooing and his writing, is noted by Ilona Bell:

> When Petrarch writes about "loving her to whom I said: 'you alone please me'" ("col dolce oner che d'amar quella ài preso/a cui io dissi: 'Tu sola mi piaci'" RS 205: 7–8), the lines emphasize his words and his love. When Spenser's "Leaves, lines, and rymes, seeke her to please alone" (1:13) the emphasis shifts to her response to his love and his poems. (153–4)

The lady, who is portrayed as the victor, is clearly in control: her "lamping eyes will deigne sometimes to looke / and reade the sorrowes of [the poet/lover's] dying spright" and she may or may not grant him grace.

While the repetition of the adjective "happy" ("Happy ye leaves," "happy lines" and "happy rymes") suggests that a favourable response to his "little love offerings" (Spiller 113) is anticipated, the word "trembling" hints at an underlying uncertainty, and serves as a reminder that the poet/lover is entirely at the mercy of the "soverayne" lady [Am. 3]: "A Petrarchan poet can praise or curse to his heart's content or misery…but an Elizabethan poet/lover must perforce recognize his mistress's power to accept or refuse his suit." (Bell 153) By Am. 10 it is evident that the poet's "Leaves, lines, and rymes" have failed to impress or sway the lady and the lover has made very little progress in his suit. Frustrated by the inefficacy of his poetry, and his powerlessness in the face of the lady's "unmoved mind" (Am. 6), the poet/lover protests in Am. 10 against what he, at this early stage of the courtship, perceives to be her "rebellious pride" (Am. 6).

Am. 10 is the first of a trio of sonnets in which the captivity imagery, initiated in the opening sonnet, is extended. These three sonnets of complaint (Am. 10, 11 and 12) employ legal and martial imagery and form a strong contrast with the previous three sonnets of praise, in which the lady was lauded for her angelic and godlike qualities. The source of Am. 10 is Petrarch's 'Or vedi, Amor' (*Rime* 121):

Or vedi, Amor, che giovenetta donna
tuo regno sprezza, e del mio mal non cura;
et tra duo ta' nemici è sì secura.
Tu se' armato, et ella in treccie e 'n gonna
si siede e scalza, in mezzo i fiori et l'erba,
ver'me spietates e 'ncontra a te superba.
I' son pregion; ma se pietà ancor serba
l'arco tuo saldo, e qualcuna saetta,
fa di te, et di me, signor, vendetta.

(Lord Love, you see this lady full of scorn
for your great rule, and laughing at my harm:
two enemies cause her no great alarm.

You're up in arms, she in loose hair and gown,
barefoot, sitting where flowers and grasses grow,
cruel to me, and arrogant to you.

I am in prison; if clemency is due,
take up your bow and let some arrows loose
in rapid vengeance, for both of us.)

Petrarch's poem plays upon the paradox that the "heavily armed and normally omnipotent" (Fox 79) god of love is unable to overpower a beautiful, young woman who scorns both Love and the lover. The poet suggests that Love avenge the lady's "proud" and "pitiless" demeanour by "making her fall in love (presumably with the poet) and thus accept Love's reign" (Dasenbrock, "Petrarchan Context" 42).

Spenser's adaptation of Petrarch's poem introduces many differences. In place of the beautiful, young woman sitting barefoot amid the flowers and the grass, the lady in Am. 10 is depicted as a "powerful guerriera" (Fox 79) whose eyes make "huge massacres". While it appears that "the lady is the problem" in Petrarch's version, in Am. 10 the poet/lover "suggests rather that love itself is the problem" (Dasenbrock, "Petrarchan Context" 43). The sonnet is addressed to the "Lord of love" who seems to have lost control of the situation. Disdainful of both Love and the poet/lover, the *Amoretti* lady follows her own freewill.

Unrighteous Lord of love what law is this,
That me thou makest thus tormented be:
the whiles she lordeth in licentious blisse
of her freewill, scorning both thee and me.

The legal imagery ("Unrighteous", "law", "licentious", "freewill") found in the first quatrain merges with the martial imagery in the second quatrain in the description of the lady as a "Tyrannesse" who "doth joy to see" the conquests she is able to make. The image not only highlights the lady's cruelty, but also reinforces the idea of her apparent "lawlessness":

> See how the Tyrannesse doth joy to see
> the huge massacres which her eyes do make:
> and humbled harts brings captive unto thee
> that thou of them mayst mightie vengeance take.

The metaphor of captivity, introduced in Am. 1, reappears in this quatrain when the lady brings "humbled harts…captive" to the Lord of love. Play on the words "hearts" and "harts" anticipates Am. 67, in which the deer image is so prominent. The lady's act of returning the captives to the Lord of love suggests that Love is still in control, contradicting the poet/lover's earlier assertion that it was the lady, who, uncurbed by Cupid's laws, had taken charge.

In the third quatrain, the poet/lover urges the Lord of love to take some action against the lady. His playful use of the word "little" is slightly ironic and the suggested punishment, given the harsh nature of the imagery used in the second quatrain, is surprisingly mild, but also firm:

> But her proud heart doe thou a little shake
> and that high look, with which she doth comptroll
> all this worlds pride bow to a baser make,
> and al her faults in thy black booke enrol….

In his analysis of Petrarch's 'Or vedi, Amor', Am. 10 and "Behold, love, how thy power she despiseth' (Wyatt's rendition of Petrarch's *Rime* 121), Reed Way Dasenbrock considers Spenser's poet/lover's plea to the Lord of love to be "far less severe than Petrarch's 'take vengeance' in the sense of 'make her fall in love with me', to say nothing

of Wyatt's dark sounding plan of revenge—to break the lady's heart" ("Petrarchan Context" 42–3).

The couplet provides some insight into what has really been happening and, simultaneously, draws attention to the ludic dimension of the sequence.

> That I may laugh at her in equall sort,
> as she doth laugh at me and makes my pain her sport.

The sonnet lady, it appears, has been making fun of the poet/lover's efforts to woo and win her. His poems are the lady's sport, and he is one of the "humbled harts" of which she makes sport. The final line of the poem has two extra syllables, "her sport", suggesting that it is the lady who gets the last (or the longest) laugh, but that the poet/lover turns it into a joke. The playfulness in the sonnet, alluded to in the word "sport", is recognized by Rosemond Tuve who refers to the poet/lover's depiction of the situation as "delicate mockery" (64) and by Louis L. Martz, who finds the tone of the sonnet hard to describe but detects elements of "humor, parody or comedy" (158) in it. Nonetheless, the poet/lover's suffering is real, and the description of his condition as "tormented" is apt. The lady's "freewill" also applies to the 'game of love' in which she and the poet/lover are engaged, and which she plays according to her own set of rules. Consequently, the poet/lover's "hart" is being "humbled" in a way that he finds most discouraging, and the "little paine" he envisaged in Am. 6, is proving to be for greater than he anticipated.

The martial and legal imagery in Am. 10 continues in the sonnet which follows as the poet/lover "dayly…seeke[s] and sew[s] for peace". In Am. 10 it was the lady who "humbled harts [brought] captive" to the Lord of love. In Am. 11, it is the poet/lover who offers "hostages" to the lady, as he did with his poems in Am. 1. The lady's response seems both hostile and heartless. Ignoring the poet/lover's petition for peace,

> she cruell warriour doth her selfe addresse
> to battell, and the weary war renew'th.

The poet/lover's despair is reflected in the alliteration in "weary war", but the lady, now depicted as a "cruell warriour" appears to be insensible to his suffering and stands firm:

Ne wilbe moov'd with reason or with rewth, 5
to graunt small respit to my restlesse toile:
but greedily her fell intent poursewth,
Of my poore life to make unpitteid spoile.

In contrast to the poet/lover, who is presented as the helpless victim—the "unpitteid spoile"—is the Merciless lady, whose hard-heartedness is conveyed by the words "greedily" and "fell intent". Douglas Brooks-Davies regards the transformation of the "beloved into a Venus armata [in this sonnet as] signifying the cruelty of the warfare of love" (225) and indeed, the lady's next action seems to support this view. Disregarding the poet/lover's desperate appeal,

Yet my poor life, all sorrowes to assoyle,
I would her yield, her wrath to pacify:

the lady is unrelenting:

but then she seekes with torment and turmoyle,
to force me live and will not let me dy.

The poet/lover's pain has gained in intensity in this sonnet: the "little paine" in Am. 6, which became "my paine" in Am. 10, is now referred to as "my restlesse toile" and "torment and tormoyle". His despair is further emphasized by the repetition of "my poore life" in lines 8 and 9 of Am. 11.

In the couplet, the poet/lover attempts to reassure himself that "All paine hath end, and every war hath peace". However, the certainty with which he had reminded himself in Am. 6

…to thinke not long in taking little paine,
to knit the knot, that ever shall remaine

is absent, as in the final line, he admits the inefficacy of his poetry to woo and win the lady:

> but mine no price nor prayer may surcease.

Despite the numerous references to the poet/lover's suffering and the slightly negative note on which the sonnet ends, there is an underlying hint of playfulness in the poem. The notion of game-playing is suggested by the alternating actions of "I seeke" in line 1 and "…then she seekes" in line 11. While the lady does not respond as the poet/lover would like her to, she clearly is not a "sencelesse stone" (Am. 54) as he contends much later in the sequence: she permits his daily suits and there is never any indication that either the poet/lover or the lady wishes to terminate the courtship. This idea of voluntary participation adds to the playfulness: captivity implies loss of will power, whereas willing submission and deliberate conquest suggest a playful game of captive making. In the early stages of the relationship, the lady's constancy is perceived as stubbornness, and is, therefore, a cause for despair. Although the poet/lover is not aware of it as such, the fact that it is constancy, and not stubbornness, helps him, as it is firmness with a virtuous purpose. By refusing to encourage or to accept the poet/lover's stilted Petrarchan poses and by forcing him to live, the lady is actually sustaining him, with the result that a more natural and equal relationship develops. As the courtship progresses and the poet/lover's perception grows, so he comes to recognize her stubbornness as constancy. In a similar way, captivity is later transformed into freedom. However, at this point, the poet/lover still believes that he best expresses himself in the conventions of Petrarchan poetry, and so Am. 12 continues in a similar vein.

In Am. 12 the "dayly…see[ing] and sew[ing]" of Am. 11 is reduced to a single day. In this instance, it is the poet/lover who initiates the action.

> One day I sought with her hart-thrilling eies
> to make a truce and termes to entertaine:
> all fearlesse then of so false enimies,
> which sought me to entrap in treasons traine.

Having failed in his attempt to have the lady's "proud heart" shaken and her "high look" lowered in Am. 10, the poet/lover now seeks "termes to entertaine". Seen in the context of the legal and martial imagery so prevalent in this group of sonnets, the word "entertaine" can be read as "to negotiate a treaty" (Maclean and Prescott 591). However, it also recalls Am. 4, in which the lady was called upon to "prepare [her]self new love to entertaine" and serves as a reminder that since Am. 1, the purpose of the sonnets, with their "terms", that is, "leaves, lines, and rymes" has been to please (or entertain) the lady. This allusion to the ludic aspect of the sequence is further supported by the alternating pattern—as in the previous sonnet—of his and her seeking, as well as the ambiguous reference to the "hart-thrilling eies" as "false enimies", suggesting that they are either deceiving eyes or, alternatively, that they are not actually enemies at all.

The lady "resists the [poet/lover's] designs by assuming an active and aggressive role against them" (Kennedy 206):

> So as I then disarmed did remaine,
> a wicked ambush which lay hidden long
> in the close covert of her guilefull eyen,
> thence breaking forth did thick about me throng.

The poet/lover, who in the previous sonnet declared his willingness to yield his "poore life" to the lady, now claims that he was "forst to yeeld" himself and has been held captive ever since:

> Too feeble I t'abide the brunt so strong,
> was forst to yeeld my selfe into their hands:
> who me captiving streight with rigorous wrong,
> have ever since me kept in cruell bands.

In spite of the poet/lover's protests against the "rigorous wrong", the verbs ("disarmed did remaine", "kept", "t'abide") used in this sonnet indicate that he makes no effort to protect himself against her onslaught or to escape from her "cruell bands", suggesting that captivity is actually desired.

He concludes the sonnet by "brand[ing] her action ('rigorous wrong') a violation of justice that needs repair" (Kennedy 206):

> So ladie now to you I doo complaine,
> against your eies that justice I may gaine.
>
> [Am. 12]

The reference to justice in the final line of Am. 12 recalls the reference to the "Unrighteous Lord of love" with which the first of the three love-as-war sonnets opened. In the last of this trio of sonnets, a significant development has taken place: for the first time in the sequence, the poet/lover addresses his complaint directly to the lady as he appeals to her for justice against her eyes. It is the real lady that he claims to want to get to know; the constructed poeticized eyes are to be escaped.

In Am. 14, a sonnet of self-encouragement, the poet/lover returns to the love as-war-metaphors:

> Retourne agayne, my forces late dismayd,
> Unto the siege by you abandon'd quite;
> great shame it is to leave like one afraid,
> So fayre a peece for one repulse so light.

The opening words of the sonnet reinforce the idea that this is an ongoing battle. Clearly, the lady has remained unyielding, and the vanquished poet/lover finds that he is having to yield to her. Nevertheless, he chooses to "retourne agayne" rather than to abandon the struggle. His use of the word "siege" to describe the ongoing battle is significant, as it places him in the role of captor; in the early sonnets, the role of the aggressor is usually assigned to the lady while the poet/lover is depicted as the helpless victim.

Dunlop considers Am. 14 to mark "the end of the lover's first 'siege' to win the lady", as well as "the beginning of a second 'siege'" (35). The intensification of the 'battle' is reflected in the martial imagery used to describe this 'second siege':

> Gaynst such strong castles needeth greater might 5

then those small forts which ye were wont belay;
such haughty minds enur'd to hardy fight,
disdayne to yield unto the first assay.

In these lines the poet/lover admits that "greater might" will be required to conquer the castle/lady. His intention to capture the lady is confirmed by the word "belay" which can be defined as "to besiege" as well as "to make fast, which is the lover's aim" (Maclean 592). Although the image of the castle "for the siege of love [is] commonplace" (Brooks-Davies 227), it emphasizes two of the lady's characteristics: in the same way as a castle is an impenetrable stronghold, so the lady has shown herself to be unwavering in her response to the poet/lover's efforts to woo her. Yet, the fact that she remains standing firm, and has not withdrawn from the situation, is comforting, since it indicates that she is attainable.

The third quatrain lists the tactics the poet/lover proposes to use in this 'second siege':

Bring therefore all the forces that ye may,
and lay incessant battery to her heart;
playnts, prayers, vowes, ruth, sorrow, and dismay,
those engins can the proudest love convert.

Having unsuccessfully tried "playnts" against the lady's eyes in Am. 12, "prayers" to the "Unrighteous Lord of love" in Am. 10, "vowes" to continue taking "little paine / to knit the knot" in Am. 6, "ruth" in Am. 11, "sorrow" implied throughout and "dismay" in Am. 6 and 14, the poet/lover plans to combine them as a form of "incessant battery" against the lady's heart. The confidence with which he asserts "Those engins can the proudest love convert" is belied by the revelation of a back-up strategy in the sonnet's final couplet:

And if those fayle fall downe and dy before her,
so dying live, and living do adore her.
[Am. 14]

Like the proposed “incessant battery” however, this oxymoronic alternative plan is a mere reiteration of the poet/lover’s earlier ineffective approaches, and by Am. 18 he acknowledges that his new strategy is getting him nowhere:

> Yet cannot I with many a dropping teare,
> and long intreaty soften her hard hart:

The failure of his various displays of emotions as tactics in his battle to win the lady are confirmed in the couplet of the same sonnet.

> So doe I weepe, and wayle, and pleade in vaine,
> whiles she as steel and flint doth still remayne.
> [Am. 18]

Although the poet/lover focuses on the lady’s wilfulness and his resulting misery, the last three words, “doth still remayne” also refer to the fact that the lady is stationary, thus confirming her attainability and her willing participation in the courtship. The poet/lover’s failure to elicit a positive response from the lady is directly linked to his reliance upon the sterile Petrarchan metaphors which dominate the early poems and which the lady finds unacceptable. At this stage, however, the poet/lover seems unable to write himself out of these constricting metaphors on which he has came to depend, and so the ‘battle’ continues in the next sonnet.

Am. 19, with its trumpet, crown, honour and rebellion, shares the martial quality of the sonnets around it” (Dunlop 64). As in Am. 10, in which the poet/lover complained of the lady’s “lording in licentious blisse / of her freewill” and appealed to the “Lord of the love” for help, so he claims in this sonnet that the lady “[Love’s] precept proudly disobayes, / and doth his ydle message set at nought”, and urges,

> Therefore O love, unlesse she turne to thee
> ere Cuckow end, let her a rebell be.

This is the second reference to the lady's rebellious nature. First mentioned in Am. 6, the lady's "rebellious pride" was treated seriously; in this sonnet, the tone is a little more light-hearted as the poet/lover is caught in a trap of his own making. The word "let" permits two readings of the final line: either the poet/lover is saying "allow her to be a rebel", or alternatively, "let us call her a rebel". By calling her a rebel, he is categorizing her. Paradoxically, if she is designated a rebel, then her rebellion is already being brought under censure and control. The fact that these last two lines are conditional is significant, as it suggests that the poet/lover has not given up hope that the lady will eventually relent.

For the moment, however, the lady remains unyielding, and by the end of the first section of the sequence, the poet/lover acknowledges the futility of his efforts when he admits that it is "in vaine I seeke and sew to her for grace" (Am. 20). This image recalls his earlier seeking and suing for peace in Am. 10.

In the middle section of the sequence, the poet/lover's suffering increases and he seems less certain about his poetic abilities. The poet/lover's escalating misery and his diminishing confidence in the power of his poetry to woo and win the lady are evinced in Am. 25. In this sonnet, time seems to be arrested as the poet/lover suffers, suspended between hope that the lady will yield and despair at his lack of success:

> How long shall this lyke dying lyfe endure,
> And know no end of her own mysery:
> but wast and weare away in termes unsure,
> twixt feare and hope depending doubtfully.
> Yet better were attonce to let me die,
> and shew the last ensample of your pride:
> then to torment me thus with cruelty,
> to prove your powre, which I too wel have tride.
> But yet if in your hardned brest ye hide,
> a close intent at last to shew me grace:
> then all the woes and wrecks which I abide,
> as meanes of blisse I gladly wil embrace.
> And wish that more and greater they might be,
> that greater meede at last may turne to mee. [Am. 25]

While the first quatrain focuses on the poet/lover's hope and fear, the second on his fear and despair, the form comes unusually to his rescue in the sestet, where a change occurs as he considers that the lady may have a hidden intention locked up in her breast. Despite the extent of his suffering, as conveyed by the phrase "this lyke dying lyfe", and his weariness, first noted in the "weary war" and "restlesse toile" of Am. 11, and emphasized by the alliteration in "wast and weare away" and "woes and wrecks" (line 11), the poet/lover repeats his willingness to suffer at the hands of the lady, but in this instance, the "woes and wrecks" which he would readily endure, are seen "as meanes of blisse"—the final reward.

The "woes and wrecks" and the weariness noted in Am. 25 are brought together in the "wearie woes" of the courtship in Am. 36. The poet/lover is presented as a most disheartened supplicant for peace to a rather cruel and hostile mistress. The hope which he felt in Am. 25 gives way to his growing despair, now expressed as "ruthlesse torment", as the poet/lover seems unable to envisage an end to his suffering:

> Tell me when shall these wearie woes have end,
> Or shall their ruthlesse torment never cease:
> but all my dayes in pining langour spend,
> Without hope of aswagement or release?

In the second quatrain, the poet/lover confirms that the "Dayly…seek[ing] and sew[ing] for peace" of Am. 11, his endeavour "with her hart-thrilling eies / To make a truce" in Am. 12 and the combination of these different tactics in the "incessant battery" of Am. 14, have come to nothing. The lady remains obdurate and the poet/lover's woes are proliferating.

> Is there no meanes for me to purchace peace,
> or make agreement with her thrilling eyes:
> but that their cruelty doth still increace,
> and dayly more augment my miseryes?

The more accepting, compliant manner implied in the earlier love-as-war sonnets is replaced by a mocking, taunting tone as the poet/lover turns to the lady in the third quatrain and couplet:

But when ye have shewed all extremityes,
then thinke how little glory ye have gayned,
by slaying him, whose lyfe though ye despyse,
mote have your life in honour long maintayned.
But by his death which some perhaps will mone,
ye shall condemned be of many a one.

[Am. 36]

The poet/lover's use of the words "mote" and "perhaps" signal latent (though now suppressed) terms of agreement, peace and liberation. Earlier, the poet/lover had declared his willingness to yield his "poore lyfe, all sorrowe to assoyle" (Am. 11) to the lady. In these lines, there is a reversal of the idea that there is value in the "slaying" of the poet/lover by the lady.

The "threatening" (Dunlop 45) note on which Am. 36 ends proves to be as ineffective as all the other ploys tried by the poet/lover, and so Am. 41 marks a return to the martial imagery as the 'battle' resumes. The focal point of this sonnet is the cruelty and injustice of the lady, who "take[s] delight t'encrease" the poet/lover's misery. Her hard-heartedness is emphasized by the depiction of himself as a "humbled foe"—someone deserving of pity. This notion, first introduced in the repeated reference to the poet/lover's "poore lyfe" in Am. 11, is reiterated in the description of his distress in line 7 as "a wretches woe", and of himself in line 10 as the lady's "piteous spoyle". The wordplay on fayre/fair in the couplet reintroduces the concept of injustice, previously encountered in Am. 10 and 12, appealing to the idea that fair should be fair (and hinting that perhaps there is fairness to come):

O fayrest fayre let never it be named,
that so fayre beauty was so fowly shamed.

[Am. 41]

The sonnet concludes on the same "harsh warning tone" (Dunlop 47) as Am. 36.

In Am. 42 the poet/lover adopts a more submissive attitude. His pain has become a cruel torment, indicating that the lady has not acceded to his plea for grace. Nevertheless, the poet/lover embraces his suffering:

> The love which me so cruelly tormenteth,
> So pleasing is in my extreamest paine:
> that all the more my sorrow it augmenteth,
> the more I love and doe embrace my bane.

The idea of willing captivity, which has been alluded to on a number of occasions, reappears in the second quatrain as the poet/lover asserts

> Ne doe I wish (for wishing were but vaine) 5
> to be acquit fro my continuall smart:
> but joy her thrall for ever to remayne,
> and yield for pledge my poore captyved hart….

In Am. 10 it was the lady who "humbled harts [brought] captive" to the "Lord of love". In this poem, it is the poet/lover, the "humbled foe" of Am. 41, who proclaims his willingness to yield his "captyved hart" to the lady. The poet/lover's surrender of his heart is an intensification of his earlier efforts: in Am. 1 he sent his "leaves, lines, and rymes…her to please alone" and in Am. 11, he offered "hostages…for [his] truth". The poet/lover now takes the matter one step further as he makes explicit his desire to be bound to the lady: "Let her, yf please her, bynd with adamant chayn". He lets her bind him because he is already bound willingly, anticipating her position in Am. 67.

After attesting to his "joy her thrall for ever to remayne" and accepting his "extreamest payne" the poet/lover refutes his earlier claim that he would gladly "yield [his] poore life" to the lady by pleading:

> Onely let her abstaine from cruelty,
> and doe me not before my time to dy.
>
> [Am. 42]

As he hopes to escape death, which probably represents the greatest possible suffering, the "extreamest paine", his request in the couplet is rather ironic and serves as a reminder that his complaints should not be taken too seriously.

The images of thralldom and death are extended in Am. 43 as the poet/lover is witnessed in the midst of a dilemma:

> Shall I then silent be or shall I speake?
> And if I speake, her wrath renew I shall:
> And if I silent be, my hart will breake,
> Or choked be with overflowing gall.

The poet/lover's "speaking" (writing) is of the utmost importance since it is not only the medium of the poet's art, but also the means by which the lover hopes to gain the lady's favour. Yet here he feels inhibited from speaking, suggesting that the captivity is reaching a climax.

In the second quatrain, the lady is again assigned the role of the powerful victor, who renders the enthralled poet/lover helpless:

> What tyranny is this both my hart to thrall,
> and eke my toung with proud restraint to tie?
> that nether I may speake nor thinke at all,
> but like a stupid stock in silence die.

Although the poet/lover refers to the lady's acts of enthralling his heart and restraining his tongue as "tyranny", his use of the term is less of a rebuke than his earlier description of the lady as a "Tyrannesse" (Am. 10). In the earlier sonnets, the poet/lover attributed his suffering to the hard-heartedness and cruelty of the lady. In this sonnet he begins to recognize that he, too, bears part of the blame. His tongue is tied, both because he does not know whether or not to speak and because the lady refuses to encourage a set of amatory practices of which she disapproves. Similarly, his "poor captyved hart" of Am. 42 is enthralled, precisely because he has spoken of it as such.

The poet/lover's growing perception is further demonstrated in the sestet, in which he outlines his witty solution to the dilemma; he will both speak and not speak by turning

inward, where he will teach his “hart with silence secretly” to speak. His eyes will then read “love learned letters” to the lady’s eyes. Thus, through a process of interior dialogue, his heart and his eyes will communicate to the lady that which he has been unable to express in words and will plead his “just cause”. The repeated reference to justice in line 10 suggests that the poet/lover has not yet entirely abandoned the idea established in some of the earlier love-as-war sonnets, that the lady is unfairly severe towards him. The transformation of the poet/lover’s words into a ‘secret silence’

> Which her deep wit, that true harts thought can spel,
> wil soone conceive, and learne to construe well,
> [Am. 43]

conveys the idea of a secret language or game, that only the poet/lover and the lady can understand or play. The lady is thus not quite the enemy as before.

A number of important developments have taken place in this sonnet. In the past, the poet/lover assumed that the cause of his problems lay with the lady. In Am. 43 he begins to accept responsibility for the ineffectiveness of his poetry. Instead of turning to the lady for the solution, he provides his own solution. Significantly, it lies with him, and not with the lady. By resolving to speak a new language of the heart, rather than in the conventions of Petrarcharism and courtly love, the poet/lover takes a decisive step towards a more authentic expression of his feelings. This turning inwards is not conceived as romantic sincerity as much as subordination of convention to truth and feeling.

The optimism of Am. 43 is, however, short lived as the poet/lover resumes the martial imagery in the sonnet which follows. Using the classical legend of Orpheus, the poet/lover compares his “cruell civill warre” with Argonaut’s strife that “Orpheus with his harp…did bar”:

> When those renoumed noble Peres of Greece,
> thrugh stubborn pride amongst themselves did jar
> forgetfull of the famous golden fleece,
> then Orpheus with his harp theyr strife did bar.

In the second quatrain, the poet/lover applies the tale to his particular situation. Whereas the Argonauts fought among themselves, the conflict for the poet/lover is between the inner and outer self:

> But this continuall cruell civill warre,
> the which my selfe against my selfe doe make;
> whilest my weak powres of passions warreid arre,
> no skill can stint nor reason can aslake.

Unlike Orpheus, who succeeded in calming the Argonaut's strife, the poet/lover's efforts are fruitlesse. His "toung with proud restraint" (Am. 43) is tied and his music (poetry) is "tunelesse", evoking only negative responses:

> But when in hand my tunelesse harp I take,
> then doe I more augment my foes despight:
> and griefe renew, and passions doe awake,
> to battaile fresh against my selfe to fight.
> Mongst whome the more I seeke to settle peace,
> the more I fynd their malice to increase.
>
> [Am. 44]

Although the poet/lover's art does not procure the desired effect, he no longer holds the lady responsible. The battle continues because of his own poetic shortcomings and the war he wages in this sonnet is not against the lady, but himself. In Am. 17 the poet/lover recognized that "a greater craftesmans hand" was needed for "devizing colors" to express his love. In Am. 44, the poet/lover accepts responsibility for his poetic inadequacies, bringing him closer to achieving the peace for which he has been striving since Am. 11.

The poet/lover's modified use in Am. 52 of some of the earlier martial imagery is indicative of the progression he is making in his suit. From the opening line, "So oft as homeward I from her depart", it is clear that the poet/lover is a frequent visitor to the lady's home. As in Am. 10 to 12, this sonnet "is based mainly on the idea of the lady as

triumphator" (Brooks-Davies 254). The poet/lover, on the other hand, is depicted as a defeated soldier, who

> …having lost the field:
> is prisoner led away with heavy hart,
> despoyld of warlike armes and knowen shield.

The visit to her home is an echo of the situation described in Am. 46, when the lady, who determined the duration of his visit, sent him on his way:

> When my abodes prefixed time is spent,
> My cruell fayre streight bids me wend my way.

In Am. 52, he is not being sent away, he is being led.

In the second quatrain it emerges that the poet/lover is going to be alone, contradicting the idea established in the opening lines:

> So doe I now my selfe a prisoner yeeld,
> to sorrow and to solitary paine:
> from presence of my dearest deare exylde,
> longwhile alone in langour to remaine.

Like Am. 42, this poem concerns the pain that the poet/lover feels and to which he yields. In Am. 42 his "sorrow" and "extreamest paine" were caused by confrontation. Here it is her absence, rather than her scorn, which torments him. Whereas in Am. 42 the image of captivity was linked to the poet/lover's submission to the lady and his desire to be bound with "adamant chayne", in this sonnet it is associated with her absence and the resulting anguish to which he succumbs. While the parting is a form of pain, there is not just pain and rejection, but also longing and appreciation.

In the final couplet, the image of captivity is reworked as part of the poet/lover's penance:

So I her absens will my penaunce make,
that I of her presens I my meed may take.

[Am. 52]

These lines, in which the "solitary paine" caused by her absence is connected to the reward and the lady's "presens", point to the poet/lover's underlying belief that his suffering is neither permanent nor in vain. They also reinforce the notion expressed in several sonnets (Am. 6, 26 and 51), that the poet/lover's pain and suffering are directly proportional to the joy he anticipates will be his, when the lady finally accepts him:

Onely my paines wil be the more to get her,
but having her, my joy wil be the greater.

[Am. 51]

The poet/lover's repeated use of the word "wil", rather than 'might', suggests that he is confident of success. Play on the sound of "get her" and "greater" conveys the idea that the poet/lover's "paines" are directly proportional to the joy he anticipates will be his when she finally accepts him. Significantly, there is an extra syllable in each line as his verse strains to include her. At this stage, her absence is replaced by a rather marginal arrival.

Thus, whilst the battle is not yet over, the tone of helplessness and despair, which dominated so many of the earlier love-as-war sonnets, has been supplanted by one of hope and expectation. The lady, addressed in Am. 52 as "my dearest deare", is obviously not quite the enemy as before. The poet/lover's use of the appellation also indicates a movement towards affection and valuing her.

This conciliatory tone manifests itself in the first line of Am. 57 when the poet/lover asks: "Sweet warriour when shall I have peace with you?" Although his use of the word "when" constitutes a protest, the poet/lover, it would appear, is contemplating the end of the conflict, and for him it is now simply a matter of time.

He continues his petition by suggesting that the time is now appropriate for peace so that the courtship can advance. His suffering, which he has endured for a prolonged period of time, has become intolerable:

High time it is, this war now ended were:
which I no lenger can endure to sue,
ne your incessant battry more to beare:

In Am. 14 the poet/lover declared his intention to "lay incessant battry to her heart". It is because of her obduracy that his "battery" has been so incessant. In this sonnet, however, it transpires that the lady has outwitted him, as the "incessant battery" is attributed to her.

The second quatrain constitutes a rather playful exaggeration and amusing elaboration of his suffering:

So weake my powres, so sore my wounds appeare,
that wonder is how I should live a jot,
seeing my hart through launched every where
with thousand arrowes, which your eies have shot….

While the images are, by this stage, quite familiar, they are used more playfully than in the past and there is a sense that the poet/lover is not quite the helpless victim he would have the reader believe. He emphasizes his innocence and vulnerability and magnifies the lady's guilt by placing his accusation immediately after the description of his wounds.

The condemnatory tone of the complaint is softened by the opening phrase, "Sweet warriour", which is dismissed by Maclean and Prescott as a "famous Petrarchan oxymoron" (588) and by Brooks-Davies, who sees it as "recall[ing] love's bitter-sweetness" (258). Its significance in this sonnet goes beyond both of these observations; it reflects the changing nature of their relationship. In Am. 11 the lady was depicted as a "cruell warriour", supporting the poet/lover's claims that she treated him with hostility and unfairness. In Am. 57 the tone of her warrior-like character alters and a teasing tone creeps in with the substitution of the epithet "Sweet warrior".

In the third quatrain the poet/lover seems to regress as the old themes of the lady's cruelty and mercilessness reappear:

Yet shoot ye sharpely still, and spare me not,
but glory thinke to make these cruel stoures;

ye cruell one, what glory can be got,
in slaying him that would live gladly yours?

The lady is once again addressed as “ye cruell one” which is markedly different from “my dearest deare” (Am. 52) and “Sweet warrior”. Yet, progression is evident as the notion of willing captivity comes to the fore. In Am. 25 the poet/lover linked his suffering to “greater meede” and in Am. 26 to “endlesse pleasure”. In Am. 57 he extends the idea when he unequivocally expresses his desire to “live gladly” as hers. There is also significant play on “glory” as he coaxes the lady into (or at least towards) renouncing this kind of glory.

The couplet reiterates the idea introduced in the first two lines of the sonnet:

Make peace therefore, and graunt me timely grace,
that al my wounds wil heale in little space.
[Am. 57]

The timely grace the poet/lover seeks refers to receiving grace soon. It also restates his contention in the second line that it is now the time for the lady to show him mercy. The poet/lover’s use of the imperatives (“Make peace” and “graunt”) in the couplet conveys a sense of authority and reveals his increasing confidence. He no longer views the relationship as a battle that will never be won, but is optimistic that the conflict will be resolved “in little space”.

With Am. 57 “the war is ended” (Dunlop 56) and “the Petrarchan love-as-war metaphors end” (Johnson, “Gender Fashioning” 513). Although martial imagery is employed in Am. 60 and again in Am. 69, the images are used in an entirely new and positive context.

The reference to time in Am. 57 is picked up in Am. 60. In the first quatrain, astronomical time is the focus. While the reference to Mars in line 4 pertains to the planet, there is also the suggestion of Mars, the Roman god of war. The correlation between the planet and the god of war is found in the number sixty. Just as Mars completes its orbit in sixty years (according to line 4), so the god of war terminates his course in the sixtieth sonnet. The significance of the number sixty is highlighted by Maclean and Prescott who point out that the poet/lover “gives Mars an orbit of sixty years, not the correct seventy-

nine, possibly because he spent sixty sonnets warring for the lady" (611). Brooks-Davies, who also recognizes that "the number is the problem", cites R.E. Neil Dodge's suggestion, which, in his opinion, "no one has bettered" that "Spenser misremembered Ptolemy's figure of 79+ (solar) years for the time it would take Mars to depart from and return to a given position in relation to the sun" and points out that "three is thus an error for four. But note the self-referring element: this is sonnet 60" (261).

The poet/lover then moves to chronological and psychological time as he applies the topic to his own situation:

> So since the winged God his planet cleare
> began in me to move, one yeare is spent:
> the which doth longer unto me appeare,
> then al those fourty which my life outwent.
> Then by that count, which lovers books invent,
> the spheare of Cupid fourty yeares containes:
> which I have wasted in long languishment,
> that seemd the longer for my greater paines.

The "long languishment" and "greater paines" have made the year of courtship deceptively slow. In the early sonnets, the subject of the poet/lover's pain and suffering was treated seriously. In this sonnet, his altered perception is registered by the light-hearted manner in which he appeals to the lady, as his "loves fayre Planet" to

> … short her wayes
> this year ensuing, or else short my dayes.
> [Am. 60]

Am. 69 marks the beginning of the last section of the sequence and is the first of a group of three sonnets "celebrating the new stage of their relationship" (Dunlop 53). Opinion is divided when it comes to pinpointing the exact moment when the transformation begins, but critics seem to agree that it occurs somewhere between Am. 62 and Am. 69. For Martz, the celebration of the New Year in Am. 62 signifies the turning

point in the relationship. J. W. Lever discerns a change after Am. 64, the kiss sonnet. According to John N. King, Am. 68 "initiates a frank anticipation of the joys of wedlock in the post-betrothal sequence (Am. 69–89)" (170). Peter Bayley identifies Am. 69 as the moment when "the lady at last accepts his love" (87). The editors of the *Variorum* edition, it seems, choose a slightly later point as they include Am. 69 in the group of love-as-war poems. Given its position in the sequence and its context in the course of events, there is little to substantiate such a reading. Despite the prominent presence of martial imagery in this sonnet, its focus is on the victory of conquest and poetic immortalization, rather than on the conquest itself.

Am. 69 resumes the victory theme of Am. 29 where reference was made to the lady's "great triumph" and of Am. 68, which celebrated Christ's "triumph over death and sin". In Am. 69, the poet/lover "now the triumphator" (Brooks-Davies 269), seeks to "record the memory / of [his] loves conquest". The first quatrain concerns the past:

> The famous warriors of the anticke world,
> Used Trophees to erect in stately wize:
> in which they would the records have enrold,
> of theyr great deeds and valarous emprize.

The reference to the ancient warriors recalls the poet/lover's depiction of the lady, first as a "cruell warriour" and later as a "Sweet warriour".

The poet/lover then moves into the present as he integrates the martial imagery into his own experiences:

> What trophee then shall I most fit devize,
> in which I may record the memory
> of my loves conquest, peerelesse beauties prise,
> adorn'd with honour, love and chastity?

The analogy is straightforward. In the same way as the warriors enrolled the records of their victorious battles by erecting trophies "in stately wize", so the poet/lover will find a "fit devize" in which he may record the memory of his own conquest.

The first line of the quatrain is ambiguous: “most fit” can be seen as the qualifier of both “I”, in which case it suggests that the poet/lover is the most worthy ‘warrior’ for the task, and “devize”, which places emphasis on the aptness of the ‘devize’ he chooses. Similarly, “my loves conquest” in line 7 is open to two different interpretations: it can be read as the poet/lover’s conquest over the lady, as well as the conquest of the lady over the poet/lover:

> The ambiguity of “loves” as either a positive or a possessive makes it unclear whether the trophy will celebrate the conquest of his aggressive rhetoric over the beloved or the conquest of her graceful beauty over him, and it signals that the speaker is actively thinking about the result. (Kennedy 263)

As the poet/lover moves into the future in the third quatrain, he centres his attention on his poetry:

> Even this verse vowd to eternity,
> shall be thereof immortall monument: 10
> and tell her prayse to all posterity,
> that may admire such worlds rare wonderment.

The “trophees” of the ancient warriors, which became the “trophy” of the victorious poet/lover, are now transformed into “this verse” (both this particular sonnet and the entire sequence) which the poet/lover envisions as an “immortall moniment” to the lady’s beauty.

In the couplet the poet/lover plays with the ideas of captivity and victory:

> The happy purchase of my glorious spoile,
> gotten at last with labour and long toyle.
> [Am. 69]

Although he praises the lady’s “honour, love and chastity”, he celebrates his “conquest” and, picking up on the idea of glory noted earlier, refers to the lady as his “glorious spoile”. The poet/lover “seems to ignore 67 which made it clear that the lady yielded of her own

free will; he stresses instead his own 'labour and long toyle'" (Dunlop 63). The words "toyle" and "spoile" have been linked on previous occasions: in Am. 11 the poet/lover, depicted as "unpittied spoile", chided the lady for her refusal "to graunt smal respit to [his] restlesse toile"; in Am. 15 the poet/lover prefaced his blazon characterizing the lady's beauties with a reference to the "tradefull merchants that with weary toyle…both the Indias of their treasures spoile"; the poet/lover's inability to complete his epic work, the "taedious toyle" of Am. 33, was attributed to the lady who "doth my spirite spoyle". In Am. 69, the poet/lover's "long toyle" culminates in the victory of having finally captured his "glorious spoile", the lady. Maclean and Prescott point out that though "he did not, strictly, win the lady, Paul calls Christ's resurrection our 'victory' (1 Corinthians 15) and the lover may not be wholly deluded" (65).

In the final word of the last sonnet in which martial imagery appears, the poet/lover draws together a number of the captivity and weaving images used throughout the sequence. "Toyle" refers not only to "work" but also implies "slow, painful progress", one of the poet/lover's most strident complaints. It has military connections by way of Middle English "toile" referring to dispute. (*OED* toil, *sb.*[1]) Links with the captivity motif are established through the French "toil" meaning a snare or a net and the Latin *tela* (web). (*OED* toil, *sb.*[2]) The rhyming of "toyle" and "spoil" in Am. 69 seems to assume that the "toyle" of writing will bring its rewards ("spoil"); as if the hidden promise of the rhyme has now been fulfilled.

Imagery of Predatory Beasts

The poet/lover of the *Amoretti* "is afflicted by the puzzling juxtaposition in his lady of ideal beauty and obdurate cruelty" (Hamilton, *Spenser Encyclopedia* 32) and in the first two sections of the sequence, he frequently uses imagery of predatory beasts and hunting to portray her dual nature. Initially, the emphasis is more on the lady as a predatory beast than on him as the hunter, Through his playful use of the imagery, he transforms the Petrarchan tradition and when, in Am. 67, he ceases to be the relentless pursuer and she surrenders of "her owne goodwill", the situation is reconciled. The fact that he is reworking a Petrarchan motif adds significance to this crucial moment when she becomes the "gentle deare".

In Am. 55 he tries to ascertain of what substance the lady is formed that would make her simultaneously cruel and fair:

> So oft as I her beauty doe behold,
> And therewith doe her cruelty compare:
> I marvaile of what substance was the mould
> the which her made attonce so cruell faire.

On a number of occasions the poet/lover alludes to this double aspect of the lady, when he addresses her as his "fayre cruell". In some sonnets he focuses on the "fayre" as he pays tribute to her "wondrous virtue" (Am. 7) and to "her mind adornd with vertues manifold" (Am. 15). Yet in other sonnets, he condemns her cruel behaviour in the strongest of terms; the lady is accused of being "more cruell and more salvage wyld / Then either Lyon or the Lyonesse" (Am. 20), more dangerous than "beastes of bloody race" (Am. 31), as deadly as the cockatrice (Am. 49), as cunning as the panther (Am. 53) and as ruthless as the greedy tiger (Am. 56).

In most of the sonnets in which the poet/lover utilizes images of predatory beasts, the tension between the Petrarchan and the Neoplatonic views of beauty comes to the fore. From the Petrarchan point of view, the "disdainful mistress [is] as cold and cruel as she is beautiful" (Abrams 31). This contrasts with the Neoplatonic perception of beauty according to which physical beauty was regarded as an outward expression of the inner grace and spiritual beauty of the soul, and this spiritual radiance was an extension of the effulgent beauty of God Himself. In his *Hymne in honour of Beautie*, in which Spenser deals at length with the nature of "true beautie" (Am. 79), the lover, learns "to identify beauty with the 'faire lampe' (HB 99) of the immortall soul…and ends by creating in his mind an image of the beloved, a 'more refined forme' (HB 214) which mirrors the beauty of her soul, not the imperfect beauty of her body" (Yale 688):

> But they which love indeede, looke otherwise,
> With pure regard and spotlesse true intent,
> Drawing out of the object of their eyes,
> A more refined forme, which they present

Unto the mind, voide of all blemishment:
Which it reducing to her first perfection,
Beholdeth free from fleshes frayle infection.

And then conforming it unto the light,
Which in it selfe it hath remaining still
Of that first Sunne, yet sparckling in his sight,
Thereof he fashions in his higher skill,
As heavenly beautie to his fancies will,
And it embracing in his mind entire,
The mirrour of his owne thought admire.

Which seeing now so inly faire to be,
As outward it appeareth to the eye,
And with his spirits proportion to agree,
He theron fixeth all his fantasie,
And fully setteth his felicitie,
Counting it fairer, then it is indeede,
And yet indeede her fairness doth exceede.

['In Honour of Beautie' stanzas 31–33]

The poet/lover's use of predatory imagery to illustrate the dichotomous nature of the lady is most apt. The predatory beasts that he has chosen are distinguished by their beauty and/or power. Simultaneously, they conjure up the world of ruthlessness with which the predator, in pursuit of its prey, is associated.

In Am. 20, the poet/lover censures the lady's cruelty and her heartless behaviour. By means of a hyperbolic image, he asserts that her conduct is comparable to that of the lion, king of the animal world, but also a predatory beast. His choice of image in this sonnet is significant: the comparison of the lady to the majestic lion recalls the poet/lover's earlier reference to her "soverayne beauty" in Am. 2 and her "awful majesty" in Am. 13; the association with the lion as predator evokes the idea of the lady as hunter, and the poet/lover, who is identified as "the silly lambe", as her prey. The poet/lover's comparison

of the lady to a creature as conventional as the lion and his humbling of himself as the lamb contribute to the lightness of tone which is evident throughout the sonnet.

Images of the hunter and his prey are frequently employed in the sequence. Although it is usually the lady who is portrayed as the hunter, and the poet/lover as the prey, the roles are, at times, playfully interchanged and interwoven.

In the first quatrain, the poet/lover establishes the lady's role as that of the powerful and merciless victor, while he is presented as the humble pleader for mercy.

> In vaine I seeke and sew to her for grace,
> and doe myne humbled hart before her poure:
> the whiles her foot she in my necke doth place,
> and tread my life downe in the lowly floure.

The exaggerated picture he presents of himself lying prostrate on the ground and the lady with her foot on his neck, assuming "the traditional position of the (monarchial) triumphator" (Brooks-Davies 232), is intended to highlight the lady's cruelty However, it also has an amusing side for the reader as he turns something that is conventional (her cruelty), into something resembling a burlesque.

The opening line of the sonnet reintroduces the image of seeking and suing which was first encountered in Am. 11. Two changes have occurred: in Am. 11, the seeking and suing was for peace. In Am. 20, the poet/lover "seek[s] and sue[s] to her for grace". The words "In vaine" (Am. 20), which replace "Dayly" (Am. 11), indicate the lady's refusal to "bow to a baser make" (Am. 10) and the inefficacy of the poet/lover's proposed "incessant battery" (Am. 14). Frustrated by his lack of success, the poet/lover proceeds to discredit the lady and to expose what he perceives to be her callous and unfeeling nature.

An authoritative description of the behaviour of the lion and the lioness, which are used as comparisons with the lady's attitude, follows in the second and third quatrains:

> And yet the Lyon that is Lord of power,
> and reigneth over every beast in field,
> in his most pride disdeigneth to devoure
> the silly lambe that to his might doth yield.

But she more cruell and more salvage wylde,
then either Lyon or the Lyonesse:
shames not to be with guiltlesse bloud defylde,
but taketh glory in her cruelnesse.

The poet/lover contends that the lady's cruelty knows no bounds. Her cruelty is emphasized by his observation that the behaviour of even the most savage of beasts is governed by certain rules, while the lady, "lord[ing] in licentious blisse" (Am. 10), appears to have no rules to temper her hard-heartedness. This makes her more tyrannical than either the lion or the lioness.

During the Elizabethan period, "lions were thought magnanimous" (Maclean and Prescott 595) and "the power and clemency of the lion were traditional" (Brooks-Davies 232). The lady, however, seems less inclined to spare the submissive and weak. The innocence of the poet/lover is suggested by the image of the "silly lambe" and the reference to his "guiltlesse bloud". The heartless nature of the lady is emphasized by her refusal to show mercy to the poet/lover, who, by his own admission, freely surrendered ("before her poure") his "humbled hart" and "to [her] might doth yield".

The notion of the courtship as a hunt is extended in the couplet as the poet/lover, addressing the lady directly and appealing to her sense of honour, implies that "only bad sportsmen kill prey that gives up" (Maclean and Prescott 595):

Fayrer then fayrest let none ever say,
that ye were blooded in a yeelded pray.
[Am. 20]

In this sonnet, the poet/lover is seen as the yielded prey. Later, the roles are reversed when the lady becomes the yielded prey in Am. 67.

Despite the poet/lover's claims that the lady is heartless and unnaturally cruel, there are hints in the sonnet that caution the reader against regarding his accusations too seriously. According to convention, it is the lady who is the figure of perfection, and the lover who is in need of moral guidance. In this sonnet, however, the traditional roles are

wittily reversed, warning the reader to regard the poet/lover's harsh condemnation of the lady with caution.

Complaints against the lady's "too portly pride" (Am. 5) are a recurring theme in the first section of the sequence, and in the poem the poet/lover displays his wit by the way in which he cleverly links the idea of her as the lion with yet another reference to her pride: "And yet the lion…in his most pride disdeigneth to devoure / The silly lambe". The Biblical allusion to the lion and the lamb lying down together suggests that the conflicts will be reconciled and draws attention to the more hopeful dimension of the poem. The lion is a complex creature that accommodates a range of responses to the lady. On the one hand, her cruelty goes beyond that of the lion or lioness, but like them, she is the extreme of her kind—the lion has sovereignty in power; she has sovereignty of beauty. It is this beauty which makes her most powerful and cruel. Yet the poet/lover appeals to that beauty as if there is something in beauty that should not be associated with cruelty. Thus, her beauty is both a source of cruelty, and in some way, a guarantee of the grace for which he "seeke[s] and sue[s]".

The incompatibility of beauty and cruelty (as the poet/lover hopes) is developed in Am. 31. In the first quatrain, the poet/lover suggests that the lady's hard hart, cruelty and pride are depraved and unnatural:

> Ah why hath nature to so hard a hart,
> given so goodly giftes of beauties grace?
> whose pryde depraves each other better part,
> and all those pretious ornaments deface.

The question with which the sonnet begins creates the impression that the poet/lover is either seeking a rational explanation for Nature's purpose in creating a lady who is simultaneously cruel and fair, or perhaps challenging or questioning the fact.

Evidence in support of the poet/lover's assertion that beauty and cruelty are incongruous, is presented in the second quatrain:

> Sith to all other beastes of bloody race, 5
> a dreadfull countenaunce she given hath:

that with theyr terrour al the rest may chace,
and warne to shun the daunger of theyr wrath.

Although "he counts her among the 'beastes of bloody race'" (Dunlop 43), there is the insinuation that the lady, in some way, is quite different from "all other beastes".

The trait which distinguishes her from "other beastes of bloody race", and which demonstrates, once again, that she is the exception to all rules, is revealed in the third quatrain:

But my proud one doth worke the greater scath,
through sweet allurement of her lovely hew:
that she the better may in bloody bath
of such poore thralls her cruell hands embrew.

Nature has given other predatory beasts such frightening appearances, that they scare their prey away. The lady, on the other hand, has been endowed with a "lovely hew", causing her to attract, rather than repel, those she seeks to make her thralls. This renders her far more dangerous than "other beastes", a point which is emphasized by the reference to her "cruell hands" and the resulting "bloody bath".

Notwithstanding the ruthlessness and brutality suggested by these images, there is an underlying hint of playfulness in the poem. The paradoxical play on attractive entrapment in "sweet allurement" serves as a reminder that the poet/lover not only desires to be her "thrall", but has on various occasions declared his willingness to yield to her. He calls the lady "my proud one", suggesting that real affection is present.

The poet/lover's portrayal of the lady as a predatory, bestial figure who derives great pleasure from her bloody massacres is absurdly extreme. Quite obviously, the lady is neither "a beaste of bloody race", nor is there any foundation for his accusation that she deliberately lures her admirers so that she can destroy them in a "bloody bath" as such beasts do. Nevertheless, the comparison serves the poet/lover's purpose well, and it adds impact to the mock-serious indictment with which he concludes his argument:

But did she know how ill these two accord,

such cruelty she would have soone abhord.

When the poet/lover indulges in these excessive criticisms of his lady, “he is revealing his own emotional state, not her personality and character” (Ricks 9); he is registering the inner conflict of his two reactions. Notwithstanding the element of playfulness, there is suffering in the courtship, and the predatory beast imagery used in this sonnet is intended to communicate the extent of the poet/lover’s misery and frustration.

The fact that the poet/lover persists in his efforts to persuade the lady to abandon what he sees as her cruel ways, is in itself a sign of hope, since it suggests that beneath that terrible beauty, he discerns a generosity. This notion is confirmed in Am. 38 in which the lady is compared to a dolphin, an animal reputed to be particularly good-natured.

The sonnet opens with a reference to the classical legend of Arion, the poet and musician, who was rescued by a dolphin after being cast into the sea:

> Arion, when through tempest cruel wracke,
> He forth was thrown into the greedy seas:
> through the sweet musick which his harp did make
> allur’d a Dolphin him from death to ease.

The poet/lover then selects aspects of the tale to apply to his own situation:

> But my rude musick, which was wont to please
> some dainty eares, cannot with any skill
> the dreadfull tempest of her wrath appease,
> nor move the Dolphin from her stubborn will.

While the lady is compared to the dolphin, the poet/lover’s “rude musick” is contrasted with the alluring “sweet musick” produced by Arion. The tempest’s “cruel wracke” is likened to the lady’s wrath which the poet/lover has had to endure and which his “musick” has failed to appease. The comparison of the lady to the dolphin implies that there is a similarity between her qualities or behaviour and that of the dolphin. Since the lady’s reactions to the poet/lover do not in any way resemble the behaviour of the dolphin in

Arion's story, it can be assumed that the poet/lover's choice of a dolphin, rather than some crueller animal, has been made in recognition of their shared quality of benevolence. This observation is supported by the poet/lover's appeal in the couplet. Reverting to the cruel/fair image, he reiterates his plea that the lady desist from her cruel behaviour:

> Chose rather to be praysd for dooing good,
> then to be blam'd for spilling guiltelesse blood.
> [Am. 38]

In Am. 41 "an admonition is offered to the lady in the form of a choric comment by the lover in which he warns her of the danger of 'fowly shaming' the gift of beauty that nature has given her" (Fox 80). The poet/lover creates the illusion that he is carrying out an objective analysis that will provide an explanation for the lady's cruelty. He begins by posing a question:

> Is it her nature or is it her will,
> to be so cruell to an humbled foe?

Three options are then offered for consideration:

> if nature, then she may it mend with skill:
> if will, then she at will may will forgoe.
> But if her nature and her wil be so,
> that she will plague the man that loves her most:
> and take delight t'encrease a wretches woe,
> then all her natures goodly gifts are lost.

The patterning of the poet/lover's thought processes (Is it…or is it, If…then, But if…then) lends credence to his alleged objectivity. Rosemond Tuve describes the poet/lover's method as follows:

> Amoretti 41 retreats after the octave into easy conventionalities of imagery.

> He begins with saucy, metrically irregular question and sly, rhetorically patterned suggestion for improvement: "Is it her *nature* or is it her *will*?" He breaks the meter harshly to play on "that she will plague the man that loves her most" and pulls into a concluding sudden flattery based on her *nature*. But then he abruptly leaves this little psychological puzzle and embarks on a new set of meanings, a discussion of the misuse of nature's gifts. (63)

The paradox is one of appearance and reality:

> And that same glorious beauties ydle boast,
> is but a bayt such wretches to bequile
> As, being long in her loves tempest tost,
> she meanes at last to make her piteous spoyle.

In accordance with the Neo-Platonic belief concerning outer beauty and inner goodness, the lady's great beauty seems to bear witness to her good nature. Yet the possibility exists, as the poet/lover has previously suggested, that the lady may be outside the norms of nature.

Although there is no direct reference to predatory beasts in this sonnet, there are allusions to the theme. In line 2, the poet/lover depicts himself as "an humbled foe" which can be linked to the "yeelded prey" in Am. 20 (Brooks-Davies 247). Corroboration for this conjecture is found in the third quatrain in which the poet/lover suggests that the lady cunningly uses her beauty as "bayt" to entice or allure her "spoile" (prey). Thus, the attractive power of Neo-Platonic beauty becomes a snare and the lady is endangering her status as a divine beauty:

> The lady, Spenser is saying, needs to realize that Nature's gifts are to be used well, and that this entails an obligation for her to consider seriously the suit of "the man that loves her most" rather than abusing her beauty by converting its effects on others into a source of self-love. (Fox 80)

The poet/ lover's conclusion is an echo of his earlier appeals to the lady.

O fayrest fayre let never it be named,
that so fayre beauty was so fowly shamed.

[Am. 41]

The lady does not, however, respond to his plea and so the predatory beast imagery reappears in Am. 53.

In this sonnet the poet/lover compares the actions of the lady to those of the panther in order to show how merciless she is in her treatment of him. The first quatrain concerns the panther, whose cunning enables him to outwit his prey, and the second draws the parallels with the lady:

The Panther knowing that his spotted hyde
Doth please all beasts, but that his looks them fray:
within a bush his dreadfull head doth hide,
to let them gaze whylest he on them may pray.
Right so my cruell fayre with me doth play,
for with the goodly semblant of her hew.
she doth allure me to mine own decay,
and then no mercy will unto me shew.

The similarities between the panther and the lady, as the poet/lover perceives her at this stage of the courtship, are obvious. In the early sonnets, there have been recurring complaints about her "sly skill" and "subtile craft". Like the panther, the lady has also been accused of using her beauty in deceptive ways to allure her admirers, and her cruel treatment of her victims as "spoyle" or "prey" has been the subject of many of the sonnets.

The reference to the panther's "looks" and his victims "gaze" recalls the interactive looking and gazing that characterizes the relationship between the poet/lover and the lady. Just as the panther's "looks them fray", so the lady's "lofty lookes…thret[en] rash eies which gaze her so wide" (Am. 5). In Am. 37 the poet/lover describes how the lady cunningly entangles "mens frayle eyes, which gaze too bold" and in Am. 47 he warns

against trusting “the treason of those smyling lookes” which, like “golden hooks…theyr bayts doe hyde” and “tempte [their victims] to theyr decay”. However, the panther’s “looks” also refer to his appearance and in this sonnet, the poet/lover is allure[d] to [his] owne decay” by the lady’s beauty.

At the beginning of the second quatrain, the poet/lover confidently asserts “Right so my cruell fayre with me doth play”, implying that there is a perfect correspondence between the behaviour of the panther and that of the lady. Yet there are a number of significant differences that he neglects to mention. While the “goodly semblant of her hew” may attract admirers to the lady, there is no evidence to support his claim that she deliberately sets out to do so. The panther’s deception also works in quite an opposite way: he hides his head while the lady shows herself, but conceals her predatory nature. Whilst both the panther and the lady treat their victims in cruel ways, the nature of their mercilessness is quite different. After having intentionally and successfully enticed his prey, the panther responds by actively pursuing his victim, which is then treated as “prey”. The lady, on the other hand, seems to be quite uninterested in her victim and remains aloof.

In the sestet, the poet/lover moralizes on mercy and “the lady is urged to emulate the mercifulness of God” (Dunlop 53):

> Great shame it is, thing so divine in view,
> made for to be the worlds most ornament,
> to make the bayte her gazers to embrew,
> good shames to be to ill an instrument.
> But mercy doth with beautie best agree,
> as in theyr maker ye them best may see.

The lady’s treasonable luring and killing, and her craftiness in baiting her lovers, were commented on in Am. 47. In this sonnet the “bayte” image refers not only to the way in which the lady torments the poet/lover by rejecting his efforts to woo and win her, but also to her alleged misuse of her beauty as an allurement. The final couplet draws on the image in Am. 9 in which the lady’s “powrefull eies” were said to be like “the Maker selfe”. The association of the lady and God in this sonnet reinforces the notion, first introduced in Am.

20 and reiterated in Am. 55, that the lady's beauty is both a source of cruelty and, in some way, a guarantee of grace:

> Then sith to heaven ye lykened are the best,
> be lyke in mercy as in all the rest.
>
> [Am. 55]

Dunlop describes the tone of Am. 53 as "almost bitter" and the imagery as "some of the most negative imagery…of the beasts of prey" (53). I disagree with his view as I detect an element of playfulness in this sonnet. The poet/lover's use of the word "play" in "Right so my cruell fayre with me doth play" calls to mind Am. 10 when the poet/lover accused the lady of making his "pain her sport". The notion of the courtship as a game extends into the very next sonnet as the poet/lover admits that he has deliberately been playing various parts in order to woo and win the lady. His exaggerated account of the lady's behaviour in Am. 53 can be seen as one of the many "pageants play[ed]". Ricks is of the opinion that the "irrational excesses…are symptomatic of the distorted viewpoint of the unenlightened lover-poet, and his emotionalism and frustration build up to a kind of crescendo in the last few negative sonnets" (11).

In this regard, Am. 56 can perhaps be regarded as the final outburst. The poem does not depict any new developments in the courtship. Instead, it seems to provide a summary of all the poet/lover's major complaints up to this point. Each quatrain plays on a different image and there is a distinctive rhetorical pattern: "Fayre ye be sure" in line 1 is reorganized as "Fayre be ye sure" in lines 5 and 9. Each "fayre" is qualified by a simile ("fayre…but cruell and unkind, / As is a Tygre"; "fayre…but proud and pitilesse, / As is a storm"; "fayre…but hard and obstinate, / As is a rock"). The images are then repeated in reverse order in the couplet and paired with strong verbs describing the lady's alleged actions:

> That ship, that tree, and that same beast am I,
> whom ye doe wreck, doe ruine, and destroy.

By this stage of the sequence, however, the poet/lover realizes that the lady did not deliberately set out to "wreck…ruin…[or] destroy" him. As he indicates in Am. 59 and 64,

> Her ship was simply proceeding on its own self-assured, straight course, while his "silly" (meaning foolish, feeble, ignorant) "barke" blundered into storms and tempests, led astray by his own foolish, misguided sense of direction. (Bell 174)

Having reached this conclusion, there is no further reference to beasts of prey after Am. 56, and the "recapitulation of conspicuously negative imagery of the preceding sonnets [in this poem] suggests that we are approaching the end of a section of *Amoretti*" (Dunlop 55).

Hands and Bands

The poet/lover's perception of the lady as his "fayre cruell" extends to the lady's hands, where, in Am. 1, her "lilly hands" are said to have dead doing might, and, paradoxically to be "loves soft bands":

> Happy ye leaves when as those lilly hands,
> which hold my life in their dead doing might
> shall handle you and hold in loves soft bands,
> lyke captives trembling at the victors sight.

"Hands" and "bands" are linked by rhyme and develop into an important motif in the sequence, which, in turn, has connections with the notion of captivity. The pairing of "hands" and "bands" in this introductory sonnet anticipates both the action in Am. 67 whereby the poet/lover takes the trembling "deare" by the hand and ties her "with her owne goodwill", as well as the ultimate binding in marriage which is celebrated in the *Epithalamion.*

A number of allusions to marriage are identified by Brooks-Davies: "hands…hold …hold" in lines 1 to 3 seems to echo the "Marriage Service's 'to have and to hold'; the lily used by the poet/lover to describe the lady's hands is "the flower of purity and marriage";

and finally, “bands” can also be seen as a reference to “the rings exchanged at the marriage service” (216). Bell attaches significance to the fact that these lines are written in the future tense. In her opinion, “the future tense, combined with references to her “lilly hands” and “loves soft bands”, implies that [the lady] has promised, but not yet actually given, her hand in marriage” (152–53). In support of this view, she points out that

> early modern English marriage contracts are customarily sealed by the offering and accepting of lover’s tokens. Thus, the very title [of the poet/lover’s “leaves, lines, and rymes”], *Amoretti,* meaning “intimate little tokens of love”, characterizes the sequence as a pledge of Spenser’s love and a token of his engagement. (152)

The implication of Bell’s assertion that the poet/lover and the lady are bound by a promise right from the outset of the sequence/courtship, is that the poet/lover’s ‘capture’, has in a sense, already been achieved. This is contrary to the impression created by the poet/lover during the courtship, that he has the freedom to make a choice. It also raises the question of how serious he is when he accuses the lady of deviously trying to entrap him. What can be ascertained however, is that “the poet/lover’s love is virtuous, it seeks ‘to knit the knot, that ever shall remaine’ (Am. 6)” (Hamilton, *Spenser Encyclopedia* 32). The many allusions to marriage in the first few lines of the introductory sonnet provide a clear indication of the direction in which the poet/lover, knowingly and willingly, is heading: “Spenser is using the genre of sonnet sequence for a practical purpose, for the wooing of his bride. *Amoretti* is a gesture of courtship, a wedding gift from the groom.” (Heninger, “Sequences, Systems, Models” 84)

In Am. 12, in which the pairing of “hands” and “bands” recurs, the poet and the lover are distinct. Whilst the poet, creating the sequence, knows the true meaning of “bands”, the lover simply feels trapped. The lady’s “lilly hands” of Am. 1 are now linked to the “wicked ambush” and the “close covert of her guilefull eyen” which lead to the poet/lover’s capture and the “cruell bands” in which he is “kept”. The figurative bands of Am. 1, “loves soft bands”, which were associated with reciprocal binding in marriage, become a literal constraint in Am. 12. The adjectives used to describe the bands in the two sonnets are in direct contrast to each other. While “soft” conveys the positive qualities of

gentleness and acquiescence, the negative adjective "cruell" points to the lady's alleged hard-hearted and unrelenting attitude. Despite his protests against the "rigourous wrong" of the lady's actions, the verbs ("disarmed did remaine", "kept" and "yeeld") used to describe the poet/lover' response to the lady, indicate that he does little to avoid entrapment in the "cruell bands", reinforcing the idea that this is a binding which he actually desires.

The notion of cruelty is applied to the lady's hands in Am. 31. Previously viewed as "lilly hands", connoting purity and innocence, the lady's hands are now perceived as "cruell hands" with connections to bloody rapacity, shame and tainting:

> But my proud one doth worke the greater scath,
> though sweet allurement of her lovely hew:
> that she the better may in bloody bath
> of such poore thralls her cruell hands embrew.

The hyperbolic imagery used in this sonnet is more an expression of the poet/lover's emotional response to the lady's rejection of his efforts, than a description of her character. By presenting a ridiculously exaggerated account of his unhappiness and frustration, the poet/lover hopes to persuade the lady to change her behaviour. No matter how condemnatory the poet/lover's comments about the lady appear, they are usually complemented by references to her "sweet allurement".

Am. 37 and Am. 47 focus on two different aspects of the lady's "sweet allurement". In the former, the poet/lover seems to be issuing a warning regarding the trap of the "golden tresses", and in the latter, he cautions against trusting "the treason of those smyling lookes". The emphasis in both sonnets is on the insidious cunning of the lady, who is accused of utilizing her beauty to entrap her powerless victims. The image of the hair as a net or trap, which captures the beholder, is not unfamiliar in literature. Brooks-Davies notes that "the hair-as-trap motif originates with Song of Solomon 7:5 and is frequent in Petrarch (eg. *Rime*. 59, 196, 253)" (244). In the *Amoretti* it is the poet/lover's insinuation that the lady deliberately devises such a trap for her admirers that renders Spenser's use of the convention unusual. Samuel Daniel employs the conceit of the hair as a trap in his sonnet 14:

Those amber locks, are those same nets my deere,
Wherewith my libertie thou didst surprize:
Loue was the flame, that fired me so neere….

While the ensnaring of his lady, Delia, is seen to be the means by which Love is able to influence the lover, there is no suggestion in this poem that the lady intentionally sets out to entrap him. In his application of this conceit, Daniel is adhering to the pattern followed by Petrarch in *The Canzoniere* as well as by most of the Renaissance sonneteers.

Henry Constable deviates from this idea of having the lover lay blame for his entrapment on something other than the lady, by portraying his lady's hair as a trap by means of which she wilfully captures her victims:

My Lady so the while she doth assay
In curled knotts fast to entangle me,
Puts on her vayle to th'end I should not flee
The golden net wherein I am a pray.

The sonnet is not one of condemnation as he points out that the net is actually superfluous:

Alas (most sweete) what need is of a nette
To catch a byrd which is allreadie tame
Sith with youre hand alone you may it gette,
For it desires to fly into the same
What needs such arte my thoughts then to intrap
When of them selves they flye into youre lap
('Of his Ladies vayle wherewith she covered her. Sonet: 3'
Poems of Henry Constable 132; cf. *Elizabethan Sonnets* 160)

Like the lover in Henry Constable's sonnet, the poet/lover in Am. 37 alleges that the lady displays "sly skill" in her attempt to capture her admirer. However, the idea of willing submission is clearly stated in Constable's sonnet, while in Am. 37 the poet/lover only hints that captivity is indeed desirable.

In the opening lines of the sonnet, the lady's cunning ("guyle") as well as her beauty ("golden tresses") is established:

> What guyle is this, that those her golden tresses
> She doth attyre under a net of gold:
> and with sly skill so cunningly them dresses
> that which is gold or heare may scarse be told?

"Guyle" and "golden" are key words in this poem. Their significance is conveyed by their symmetrical positioning in the first line of the sonnet—"guyle" appears near the beginning of the line and "golden" towards the end. Furthermore, the two words are linked by alliteration (g and l sounds).

As the sonnet develops, so the idea of the lady's deceitfulness is extended. In the first quatrain, "guyle" is tied by assonance to "attyre", emphasising the lady's active role in the deceit and alleged entrapment, and to "sly" which refers to the skilful manner with which she dresses her hair so that the poet/lover is unable to distinguish the "golden tresses" from the "net of gold". The lady is clearly in control and the poet/lover is rendered helpless by her beauty. There appears to be very little, if any, sympathy for "mens frayle eyes, which gaze too bold" or "theyr weaker harts, which are not wel aware".

The "net of gold" in the first quatrain is an actual net. In the second quatrain, the real net merges with a metaphorical net, "the golden snare", and the poet/lover continues his protestations against the lady's cruelty, as she "craftily" attempts to allure and entrap him. The association of the words "gold" and "golden" with the net in the first quatrain, and the snare in the second, reiterates the paradoxical play on attractive entrapment in the "sweet allurement" of Am. 31. It also reinforces the idea that captivity by the lady is less disagreeable than the poet/lover would have the reader believe.

In the third quatrain the poet/lover centres on his own position in relation to the "golden snare". Seeming to believe that he is still "a 'free man' with hopes of escaping love's entanglements" (Lever 99), the poet/lover issues a stern self-warning against becoming "entrapped" in her "bands":

> Take heed therefore, myne eyes, how ye doe stare
> henceforth too rashly on that guilefull net, 10

in which if ever ye entrapped are,
out of her bands ye by no meanes shall get.

The imperative used in this quatrain forms a contrast with the rhetorical questions of the first two quatrains. The words “guilefull” and “net” appear in a negative connotation in the third quatrain. Unlike the “net of gold” in line 2 that evokes the idea of attractive entrapment, the “guilefull net” presented in line 10 suggests an object which should be avoided. Of course the warning comes too late, as the poet/lover is already ensnared in the lady’s “bands”. This sonnet can, perhaps, be seen as a fanciful exercise whereby the poet/lover attempts to put himself back into a position of choice and tries to imagine what it would be like to be free.

In the couplet, the poet/lover comments on the folly of desiring something that signifies the loss of one’s liberty:

Fondnesse it were for any being free,
to covet fetters, though they golden bee.
[Am. 37]

Considering that at this point in the sequence, the poet/lover is more than halfway to the betrothal, the couplet can be regarded as an observation about his own position and his desire to be fettered with the golden bands/marriage. Although the poet/lover would have the reader believe that he is aware of the lady’s “sly skill” and has escaped her “guilefull net”, there are several clues in the sonnet that suggest that he is deceiving himself. Ambiguity of language is a site of deception, and so, captivity and playfulness work together through wordplay—ambiguity both traps and releases.

In the final line of Am. 37, the fetters are not seen as negative and restrictive, but rather as golden and therefore attractive. The poet/lover’s intimate knowledge of and preoccupation with the allure of the lady’s golden hair—he mentions its “gold” or “golden” colour five times—and the “fondnesse” (foolishness) of coveting it, betrays his captivity and his bondage can be ascribed to his own helplessness in the face of the lady’s beauty. Ironically, it is the poet/lover who is deceptive, and not the lady, as he claims. His self-deception is seen as a constant hindrance to the relationship.

The “golden tresses” of Am. 37 reappear in the “golden hookes” of Am. 47. In this sonnet, the lady’s “sweet smile” (Am. 39), which “cheared” the poet/lover’s “storme-

beaten hart" in Am. 40, is compared to "golden hookes, / That from the foolish fish theyr bayts doe hyde". As in Am. 37, the adjective "golden" points to the "sweet allurement" of the lady's smyles. The emphasis, however, is more the lady's manipulation (a hidden reference to her hands) of "those smyling lookes", than on their allure. Her method is described in the second quatrain:

> So she with flattring smyles weake harts doth guyde
> unto her love, and tempte to theyr decay,
> whome being caught she kills with cruell pryde,
> and feeds at pleasure on the wretched pray….

The lady seems intent on destroying those who are "foolish" enough to be ensnared by the "golden hooks", and her actions are presented as being deliberately cruel and destructive. This contrasts strongly with Am. 37 where her admirers were lured with "guyle" and "sly skill", and, "being caught…theyr weaker harts" merely "craftily enfold[ed]".

The third quatrain highlights the dichotomous nature of the poet/lover's "fayre cruell" and extends the imagery of the hands.

> Yet even whylst her bloody hands them slay,
> her eyes looke lovely and upon them smyle:
> that they take pleasure in her cruell play,
> and dying doe them selves of payne beguyle.

The "lilly hands" of Am. 1, with their paradoxical "dead doing might", which became the "cruell hands" with links to bloody rapacity, shame and tainting in Am. 31, are now transformed into "bloody hands" which "slay" their "wretched pray". As her hands are more directly involved in causing pain than her eyes, they hint at a more intimate connection too.

Two reversals of earlier situations occur in the closing lines of this sonnet. The first concerns the apparent delight experienced by the lady as she "feeds at pleasure on the wretched pray" which she has "caught" and "kill[ed]" with cruell pryde". In the third

quatrain, the delight is extended to the “wretched pray” who “take pleasure in her cruell play”. There is thus a suggestion of mutual enjoyment.

The second reversal has to do with the notion of deceit, which, until this point in the sequence, has been largely attributed to the lady. Although not acknowledged by the poet/lover, his own self-deception was revealed in Am. 37. In Am. 47, he openly admits that it is “the wretched pray” who “doe them selves of payne beguyle”. The poet/lover deceives himself into thinking that pain is pleasure, just as she has deceived him (by her beauty) into thinking that he will find pleasure. In this world of false appearances, wordplay draws the sting as pleasure becomes pain and pain becomes pleasure. While the lady’s “mighty charm” may allure her admirers to the “golden fetters” of Am. 37, it is not she who deceives them. This is the first time that such an admission has been made, and clearly indicates the poet/lover’s progress.

His progress is reflected in Am. 51, where, in terms of the Pygmalion myth, he begins to question whether his view of the lady is accurate. This self-examination leads to a change in his perception of her “stubborne hart” and “the hardness that he condemned before he now admires…. The obduracy that he berated as ‘cruell’ he now recognizes as ‘stedfast’” (Dunlop 52):

> Doe I not see that fairest ymages
> Of hardest Marble are of purpose made?
> for that they should endure through many ages,
> ne let theyr famous moniments to fade.
> Why then doe I, untrained in lovers trade,
> her hardness blame which I should more commend?
> Sith never ought was excellent assayed,
> which was not hard t’achive and bring to end.
> Ne ought so hard, but he that would attend,
> mote soften it and to his will allure:
> so doe I hope her stubborne hart to bend,
> and that it then more stedfast will endure.
> Onely my paines wil be the more to get her,
> but having her, my joy wil be the greater.

[Am. 51]

The first line hints at the possibility that the poet/lover plans to try a new strategy. This is suggested by Maclean and Prescott who explain that in addition to meaning to "pay attention or apply himself, the word ['attend', used in line 9], also means 'wait', anticipating Am. 67's paradox that the pursuit of love succeeds better if the lover stops trying so hard" (601).

The poet/lover's use of the word "allure" (line 10) is significant. Although the word has appeared many times in the sequence, this is the first time that it is used to refer to the poet/lover's actions; on all the previous occasions, it was the lady who was said to "allure". and usually with negative connotations. The editors of *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser* describe his use of the word as "curious" and are of the opinion that it refers "to his attracting the lady rather than to a softening of a hard substance"(631). However, he still draws her to him, so that she softens her stance.

The word "bend" (line 11), which is open to two different interpretations, further reveals the poet/lover's plan to "allure" and 'capture' the lady. Brooks-Davies points out that "in the normal sense", the word bend means to "cause someone to incline to one's will" (254). However, it also has associations with the Old English *bend* meaning "band" or "bond" and can therefore be seen as a play on "bind" or "fetter". If this is the case, then line 12 ("And that it then more stedfast will endure") alludes to the poet/lover's desire for a permanent binding in the bands of marriage.

The verbs in the third quatrain ("soften", "allure", "bend" and "endure") summarize the poet/ lover's strategy and lead up to his confident declaration in the couplet:

> Onely my paines wil be the more to get her,
> but *having her*, my joy wil be the greater.
>
> [Am. 51, italics mine]

The reversal of roles witnessed in Am. 51 where the poet/lover is seen as the potential 'captor' and the lady as his intended 'captive', continues in Am. 65. The lady, who will be described as "most assured" in Am. 68, appears to have expressed some doubts about

committing herself to bands and Am. 65 represents the poet/lover's response to her disquiet.

This sonnet represents a significant development in their relationship, as the poet/lover tries to reassure the lady "that the bands of love entail no loss of real liberty, for love is an act of 'mutuall good will'" (Dunlop 62). Earlier the poet/lover had complained that the lady used "her power to torment and entrap him" (Bell 174) and had contemplated the possible loss of his freedom in the bands of marriage:

> Sonnet 10 asked the "Unrighteous Lord of Love what law is this / That me thou makest thus tormented be? / the whiles she lordeth in licentious blisse / of her freewill, scorning both thee and me" (10:1–4). Sonnet 12 complained that her eyes, "me captiving streight with rigorous wrong, / have ever since me kept in cruell bands" (11–12). Sonnet 37, the gorgeous "What guyle is this, that those her golden tresses," described his enormous attraction to her, only to recoil in fear of "that guilefull net" 37:10. (Bell 174–75)

In Am. 65, the poet/lover not only demonstrates a willingness to yield up his liberty without complaint, but also argues that "the liberty [the lady] will lose when entering into the bond of marriage is more than counterbalanced by the advantages she will gain from it" (Fox 82). Ironically, the very same argument that made the poet/lover despondent is now seen to contain the seeds of hope.

> The doubt which ye misdeeme, fayre love, is vaine,
> That fondly fear to loose your liberty;
> when loosing one, two liberties ye gayne,
> and make him bond that bondage earst dyd fly.

As the poet/lover reassures the lady of the freedom within bonds, the images of bondage, captivity and entrapment employed in the earlier sonnets, become both positive and productive. The poet/lover enhances his argument by using the paradox in which "loosing" becomes "gayne":

Sweet be the bands, the which true love doth tye,
without constraynt or dread of any ill:
the gentle bird feeles no captivity
within her cage, but singes and feedes her fill.
There pride dare not approch, nor discord spill
the league twixt them, that loyal love hath bound:
but simple truth and mutuall good will
seekes with sweet peace to salve each others wound.

The bands out of which the poet/lover, in Am. 37, feared that he "by no meanes [should] get", are transformed in this sonnet into "sweet bands". No longer viewed as negative constraints, they "now produce a true love knot, a symbol of union" (Brooks-Davies 265). The bird, which is generally associated with freedom, "feeles no captivity" even when caged, and continues to sing and eat its fill. Similarly, the lady "is invited to discover in the bondage of love the caged bird's freedom in song" (Bernard 426).

According to the poet/lover, "mutuall good will" will not only sustain their love, but will also cause it to prosper. Furthermore, it "has the virtue of banishing all danger from the private enclosure of their love" (Bernard 426). The lady's pride, which previously hindered the relationship, is said to have no effect as the "bands" are transformed into a "league" which is "bound" with "loyal love". Within these bands, the lady will also enjoy "simple truth", which is what she has wanted from the poet/lover all along, and the "salv[ing of] each others wound".

In the couplet, the poet/lover "emphasizes the purity and sacredness of the bond" (Dunlop 62) as he looks forward to their marriage:

There fayth doth fearlesse dwell in brasen towre,
and spotlesse pleasure builds her sacred bowre.
[Am. 65]

Am. 65 marks the beginning of the betrothal, and the transition initiated in this sonnet continues through Am. 67, which can be regarded as the turning point in the sequence. The sonnet abounds with images of captivity which have been used in previous

sonnets, but in Am. 67, these images are transformed as the dear/deer herself returns to the reformed poet/lover and allows him to take her by the hand and bind her.

Most critics seem to agree that the sources for Spenser's Am. 67 are Petrarch's *Una candida cerva* (*Rime* 190), Wyatt's "Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind" (Sonnet XI), and (not so widely noted) Tasso's sonnet *Questa fera gentil* (Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians* 43–4; cf. Fox 81). Alistair Fox, who asserts that Spenser's purpose in Am. 67 "is to show how loss may be converted into gain through the giving over of self", claims that "he uses the echoes of Wyatt's poem to highlight the transformative difference that such a surrender of ego can make" (81). In Tasso's version, the deer voluntarily submits to capture, and Lever is of the opinion that it is this detail that held appeal for Spenser (125). While acknowledging that Spenser owes much to imitation and tradition, King observes that Am. 67 "differs from these poems in almost every respect, except the celebration of the loved one's virtuous chastity" (167).

Am. 67 opens with the familiar image of the hunt, which is now referred to as a "weary chace":

> Lyke as a huntsman after weary chace,
> Seeing the game from him escapt away,
> sits downe to rest him in some shady place
> with panting hounds beguiled of their pray,
> So after long pursuit and vaine assay,
> when I all weary had the chace forsooke,
> the gentle deare returnd the selfe-same way,
> thinking to quench her thirst at the next brooke.

In the earlier sonnets, the poet/lover presented the lady as the merciless hunter and himself as her helpless prey. In this poem, the poet/lover assumes the role of hunter and the lady is now seen as the hunted. The "gentle birde" of Am. 65 becomes the "gentle deare". This image, which ambiguously alludes both to the forest animal and to the lady, forms a striking contrast with the lion, tiger and panther to which the lady was previously compared. The "game" in line 2 can be viewed as either the object of the poet/lover's quest, or as the process of play of which there have been hints throughout the sequence.

The futility of the poet/lover's game is emphasized by the description of it as a "weary chace", a "long pursuit" and a "vaine assay".

The poet/lover has no sooner resigned himself to the fact that his game "escapt away", than the deer/lady returns and "converts her capture to a self-transcending act of surrender" (Bernard 427). This action signifies a turning point in their relationship:

> There she beholding me with mylder looke,
> sought not to fly, bur fearlesse still did bide:
> till I in hand her yet half trembling tooke,
> and with her owne goodwill hir fyrmely tyde.

When the deer/lady turns back and surrenders "with her owne goodwill", she does so because the poet/lover has ceased to be the hunter—her relentless pursuer. "This acquiescence departs from the unapproachable remoteness of the deer of Petrarch and Wyatt" and forms an "implicit contrast to the prey whom hunters can neither catch nor tame" (King 168). Although it is not clear whether the "mylder looke" refers to the poet/lover who now looks less threatening, or to the lady, possibly as an indication of her assent, both work well. That the lady seeks "not to fly" but stands "fearlesse" is of particular significance:

> Just as at the end of sonnet 65 "fearlessness" betokens fidelity ("fear"= "doubt"; "fearlessness"= the condition of being free from doubt about the actions of another, hence the condition that results from trust in and fidelity to the other), so now the beloved's fearlessness betokens her release from negative constraints. (Kennedy 257)

The lady "beholding" the poet/lover at the beginning of the quatrain punningly anticipates the moment when he "*in hand* her yet half trembling" takes (italics mine). This line recalls Am. 1 in which the poet/lover's "Leaves, lines, and rymes" are compared to "captives trembling at the victors sight". In both instances, it is uncertain whether the trembling is caused by fear or anticipation. Just as the poems are held in "loves soft bands" in Am. 1, so

the poet/lover now ties her “fyrmely”. Since the tying is done “with her owne goodwill”, there is a suggestion of mutuality and reciprocity in the binding.

The poet/lover’s amazement at the turn of events is accentuated in the couplet

> Strange thing me seemd to see a beast so wyld,
> So goodly wonne with her owne will beguyld.
> [Am. 67]

The strangeness derives from the sudden and unexpected transformation of the “beast so wyld” into a willing captive. Dasenbrock notes that the deer/lady

> is tamed less by the poet than by her own will. This shows the change in her since Amoretti 10, when she was (or seemed to be) completely hard-hearted and self-willed. In short, to be conquered, she must will her own conquest, while the lover must have no will to conquer. Thus it cannot be a conquest at all but can only be (as sonnet 65 says) a league “that loyal love hath bound.” (“Petrarchan Context” 44)

The notion of “losing” becoming “gayne” (Am. 65) is restated in Am. 67 as the defeated lady is also the successful lady and the conquered poet/lover is the conqueror. In the same way as the lady is “fyrmely tyde” by her “owne goodwill” in a band that is not really bondage, so the idea of captivity is transformed into liberty in the sonnets that follow.

In Am. 72 the poet/lover presents a delightful captivity. According to the poet/lover, the only “servile bands” that could tie him were the “fayre tresses” referred to in Am. 37. But his heart, analogous to his “selfe”, broke out of its prison to fly to the lady. The image of the caged bird, which felt “no captivity” and was used to explain “loves sweet bands” in Am. 65, describes his own heart, as voluntarily flying back to the lady to “feed its fill”:

> Being my selfe captyved here in care,
> My hart, whom none with servile bands can tye
> but the fayre tresses of your golden hayre,

breaking his prison forth to you doth fly.
Lyke as a byrd that in ones hand doth spy
desired food, to it doth make its flight:
even so my hart, that wont on your fayre eye
to feed his fill, flyes backe unto your sight.

In the third quatrain, the poet/lover petitions the lady to take him/the bird into her bosom and "gently encage" it so it might be her thrall. At this point, both his art and his heart have been 'captured':

Doe you him take, and in your bosome bright
gently encage, that he may be your thrall:
perhaps he there may learne with rare delight,
to sing your name and praises over all….

The final couplet of this sonnet highlights the mutual benefits of their alliance:

That it hereafter may you not repent,
him lodging in your bosome to have lent.
[Am. 72]

It is here that he will learn to sing her praises, which is what he has wanted to do, and what he has done, since the beginning of the sequence. Both his heart and his art have been 'captured' (by "the fayre tresses of [the lady's] golden hayre"), but as a result of Easter (Am. 68), and because of its position in the sequence, 'captivity' has a transformed meaning and the captivity imagery in this sonnet cannot be taken too seriously. The nets, webs, bands and predatory imagery, used negatively, and upon which the poet/lover was so dependent in the early days of the courtship, are transformed into images of free consent and play, reflecting their mutual love.