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THE VENUS OF REGENERATION:
THE TRADITION AND THE FAERIE QUEENE

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CHAPTER I  INTRODUCTION

This thesis is primarily concerned with the significance of the figure of Venus in the *Faerie Queene*, and with the tradition of Venus as a regenerative goddess or Great Mother. Though some work on the character and interpretation of Venus has been done before, no analysis of this aspect of her has been carried through, save in isolated passages. This thesis will attempt to show that Spenser was using a definite tradition in his treatment of Venus as a regenerative goddess, and that the courtly love elements in the *Faerie Queene* were part of a newer tradition.

The *Faerie Queene* is unfinished. Each of the six completed books deals with a single virtue. Of the six, Books III and IV deal with Chastity and Friendship, respectively, and some of the principal characters whose stories remain unfinished in Book III reappear in Book IV (and even in Book V). But these two books do not deal with Chastity and Friendship alone, in the same sense that Book II deals with Temperance and Book V with Justice. Chastity and Friendship are rather two distinct parts of Love, and many other parts of Love are represented in these two books. It is no coincidence, therefore, that
Venus appears thrice in extended episodes in these books, and but accidentally in all the other books.

Books I and II exist as well-unified, complete narratives. The first is the story of St. George (Holiness) and his triumph over the dragon who has imprisoned the parents of Una (Truth), and of his love for Una. The second tells the story of Sir Guyon, representing Temperance, who triumphs over the Bower of Bliss and its mistress, Acrasia, who represents intemperance.

Josephine Waters Bennett calls Book III "The Emulation of Ariosto": by this she means that, as in the Orlando Furioso, the narrative is more important than the allegory, and that the allegory is used only occasionally and as ornament. Yet the allegory is important, and certain allegorical interpretations are necessary to the understanding of the narrative. The narrative, moreover, is highly complex. Instead of one hero and heroine, as in the preceding books, there are four important pairs of lovers in the two books of Chastity and Friendship: Amoret and Scudamour, Belphoebe and Timias, Florimel and Marinel (with a false Florimel to confuse things), and Britomart and Arthegall. As in the diffuse Italian epics, the plots concerning the various pairs are involvedly mixed and intricate, and complicated by digressions containing the
stories of yet other characters. So if the allegory is subordinate to the narrative, often it strengthens it by helping the reader through the narrative and by aiding the reader in seeing Spenser's purpose.

Venus serves one of Spenser's most important allegorical purposes in the Books III-IV section; and because she is portrayed in two distinctly different ways in this section, some explication helps, indeed, is almost necessary for complete understanding. An understanding of the narrative, however, is essential to understanding the role of Venus in it. A plot summary would be too complex and lengthy, but a presentation of the important female characters can be given here.

Amoret's story extends through the two books, and involves most of the other characters. In a series of flashbacks we see her born, reared by Venus in the Garden of Adonis, installed in the Temple of Venus when she is grown, and won as a prize of love there by Scudamour. On her wedding night, she is abducted by Busy-rane and imprisoned in his castle, from which Scudamour cannot rescue her. Britomart, however, the lady-knight who represents Chastity, does rescue Amoret, but only later is she united with Scudamour.

The story of Florimel is the second narrative thread
of this section. She falls in love with Marinel, who, because of a prophecy that a woman will cause his downfall, avoids all women. Britomart wounds him (thus fulfilling the prophecy) and Florimel, hearing of the accident, decides to seek him out and offer her love. Her search and the perils she undergoes extend from canto i of Book III to canto iii of Book V, when she and Marinel are finally wed. Most of the male characters as well as Britomart at one time or another join the search for her.

Belphoebe is Amoret's twin sister, but this twin is reared by Diana in the woods, not by Venus in the Garden of Adonis. Spenser's first description of her occupies ten stanzas; she is a beautiful huntress, and inspires awe in all who see her. Though she is associated with Timias, Arthur's squire, in most of her appearances in this section, she is not concerned with marriage at all, and has been compared to the Cupid of the Cupid and Psyche story: austere and chillingly chaste.

The most important character in the section comprising Books III and IV is the lady-knight Britomart, who represents the virtue of Book III, Chastity. This Chastity is not "the arid chastity of the self-appointed
celibate, but the chastity of one who assigns to the body its legitimate claims. Britomart rather is destined to marry and produce an illustrious line of kings. Her search for the lover she sees in a magic looking-glass made by Merlin, and the adventures she experiences on the search, constitute the third plot of this section of the \textit{Faerie Queene}. She meets most of the other characters before seeing her lover, Arthegall, the hero of Book V. She visits Malecasta's Castle Joyous, encounters and wounds Marinel, and rescues Amoret from Busyrane. The power she enjoys as the embodiment of Chastity enables her to help those less-fortunate lovers she meets.

These are the women who occupy most of this section of the book. The men are much less important in these stories; the women are emphasized: whenever a man's job has to be done, Britomart is present and able. But this is not to say that the women are not looking for their lovers; that is the occupation of three of the four major feminine characters. Only Belphoebe is not; and her role is that of a Diana-like aloofness: one reason is perhaps that, since Spenser had stated that she represented Elizabeth, he had to be very cautious in his portrayal; another is the Pla-
tonic hierarchy of Love which he was following to a large extent: there must be, for Spenser to show a complete range of Love, a highest type; the Idea of Love, which Belphoebe represents.

So Love is the dominant theme of the section, and women, the dominant characters. So also is Venus the dominant non-mortal figure. The choice of Venus was well-made: she is not only a female deity, but the goddess of Love. And in Spenser's presentation of her, she becomes more than a goddess of light, trivial love. As the various characters represent varying levels of love, so does Venus, in her various appearances, represent varying levels of love. Venus appears thrice in long episodes in this section of the poem, but she is not the same person or goddess in all these appearances. Rather there are two ideals of Venus which are presented.

The first, and the one most readers think of when Venus is mentioned, is that of sensuality. Venus inspires lust in men and women, and the mortal can do little to protect himself from the goddess' often arbitrary and perverse choices. The specific images sometimes called to mind are Venus and Mars caught in Vulcan's net, and Venus' attempts to seduce Adonis.
as portrayed in Shakespeare's poem. More often than not Venus elicits no dramatic image, but only the idea of sensual lust. Cupid is often associated with Venus, either as her agent or as a free, naughty agent of his own will.

The second ideal of Venus presented in the *Faerie Queen* is less known to the modern reader, and, if known, is often not associated with Venus. This is the idea of Venus as a goddess of regeneration and rebirth, who guides and protects all forms of generation and rebirth. Her favored period is the spring, when life begins again after the death of winter. Adonis, her lover, is associated with her: he has spent six months in Hades but has returned to his love, Venus, in the spring. This ideal is most often associated with Demeter and her daughter Proserpine, now, but both goddesses were originally known by it.5

The three passages in which Venus is described at length are all in Books III and IV. In the first, Venus and Adonis are the subjects of a tapestry which hangs at Castle Joyous, the house of Malecasta, and the story of their love is shown in several pictures. The second passage describes the Garden of Adonis, of which Venus is the mistress, and where she lives with her lover, Adonis. The third passage describes the
Temple of Venus, where Venus again is the mistress, and where Scudamour wins Amoret by earning the Shield of Love. These passages will be described in detail in a later chapter, but a brief statement concerning each is essential at this point. In the Castle Joyous passage, Venus, associated with the courtly love of the castle and with Cupid as well, represents the goddess of courtly love. In the Garden of Adonis passage, Venus represents the mother of regeneration and rebirth, almost assuming the position of a nature goddess. The third passage, describing the Temple of Venus, combines the treatment of the former two, treating Venus partly as a nature goddess and Great Mother, and partly as a goddess of courtly love.

Courtly love had begun at the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine in the twelfth century, and this became the basis for viewing Venus as a goddess of sensual love after that time. Courtly love was, as its title suggests, the courtly ideal of love. Eventually it came to be very formalized and conventionalized, and a rigid system was gradually formed. The specific rules—no woman could possibly be in love with her husband, adultery was the form love must take, one must keep one's loves secret—made this system sensual, in spite of attempts to give it respect by employing cer-
tain religious forms. These forms, instead of lifting courtly love, became lowered themselves through the association. Venus, and especially Cupid, were regarded as sponsors of this love, and they figure prominently in its literature.

Spenser's treatment of Cupid as an essential figure in the courtly love tradition emphasizes the distinction Spenser makes between the elements of courtly love and the more natural regenerative love. Cupid is generally excluded from representations of the second love. The figures of Genius, who appear twice in different places, are distinguished in a different but no less important way. The figure of Nature in the Mutability Cantos likewise furnishes a distinct figure of natural domination of earthly forces.

The remaining chapters of this thesis will be concerned with illustrating the tradition of Venus as the Great Mother in earlier poetic and mythological writing. Elements associated with Venus in the Faerie Queene which are treated in the earlier tradition will be discussed as well, while the tradition of Venus as a goddess of courtly love will be shown. The traditions can be divided into Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance phases.
CHAPTER II  THE CLASSICAL VENUS

The Western tradition begins in Greece. Many of the literary, moral, and religious observances still employed have their beginning there. In the case of the pantheon of gods and goddesses, as in other aspects of Greek life and thought, what is Greek is not necessarily Greek in origin. The origins of several of the gods were not Greek, but the gods subsequently developed in the Greek culture and illustrate it. Such is the origin and development of Venus.*

One of the several mystery religions which found their way into Greece from Asia Minor was the cult of the Great Mother. The center of the cult was "the Maima MATER DEUM who was conceived as the source of all the powers of nature."¹Because independence of the male element was a characteristic of the goddess, the Great Mother was represented as hermaphroditic. Her various titles included "Mistress of All," "All-Nourisher," "All-Begetter," "mighty Mother," and "Mother of "Zeus Himself," and one of her popular names was Cybele.

* In the Greek section of this chapter I have used the name "Aphrodite" rather than the name "Venus," which is what Spenser used.
This Cybele was associated with Attis, who personified the life of the vegetable world. A connected cult was that from which came Adonis to Greece and Osiris to Egypt. Adon, or Tammuz, was the consort of Ishtar, and his death in the fall caused the journey of the goddess to the underworld. Her position among the gods likewise concerned the vegetation of the world, which she controlled, and she also was often portrayed as hermaphroditic.

Because the names of these inclusive goddesses are several and their functions many, it is difficult to know with certainty what aspects in their religion were first brought into Greece for worship there. The central sanctuary, however, seems to have been in Askalon, in present-day Israel, and from there to have shifted into Cyprus and Cytherea, a small island off southern Greece. However the goddess was derived, her significance in Greek literature and other Greek writing springs as much from her Greek development as from her Near Eastern origins.

Certain similarities between the worship of Aphrodite and those of Ishtar and Cybele show a definite connection between them, and Aphrodite seems to have been the Greek goddess corresponding to those of the
Near East. Macrobius tells of seeing in Cyprus a statue of Venus "bearded, but with feminine dress, with the phallus and the signs of the male nature, and they think her to be both male and female. Aristophanes calls her Aphrodite." The significance of the hermaphroditic quality, which Ishtar and Cybele also possessed, helps us to see the function of Venus. She was the goddess of regeneration; holy prostitution had been carried on in her temples in Asia Minor which served to keep the sexual function of the goddess always in mind. The hermaphroditic quality can perhaps be explained also by the fact that, when hermaphroditic, she has no consort; when only feminine, she does have a consort. In Greece Venus often had a consort in the figure of Adonis.

The origins of Adonis are likewise Near Eastern, and illustrate more closely the conception of Venus, with whom he came to be associated. Adonis, being a god of vegetation (the tree or corn spirit), died and was mourned in the fall. Ishtar, his eastern consort, travelled to the underworld to retrieve him, and brought him back to earth and life in the spring. In Greece the trip to the underworld was occasioned by Persephone's love for Adonis. Both Persephone and Aphrodite desired him, and Calliope, who judged the dispute, decided that
Adonis would spend one part of the year with Persephone in the underworld, one part with Venus on earth, and one part by himself. Venus then set to work to persuade Adonis to spend his own part with her, and Persephone was irritated. She appealed to Vulcan, Venus’ erstwhile husband, who took the form of a boar and killed Adonis while he was hunting. This occasioned Venus’ trip to the underworld, and Adonis was regularly retrieved every spring to live again until winter.

The Adonis embroideries, however, came later; the versions just summarized come from Appolodorus, Hyginus, and Fulgentius. The earliest mentions of Aphrodite in Greek writings occur in Homer, Hesiod, and the Homeric Hymns. In Homer’s implied story of the judgment of Paris in the Iliad, Aphrodite is a goddess of sensual pleasure; the two rivals of Aphrodite are simplified in function as well. The simplification and personalization of the goddesses, and especially Aphrodite, can easily be seen as the results of Homer’s attempts to dramatize the situations he describes. Aphrodite’s influence with Zeus and the other gods is by this time great.

Hesiod gives an account of the birth of Aphrodite. The son of Heaven and Earth, angered at his father, cut
off his father's members and threw them into the sea. The genitals made a foam, and from this foam Aphrodite was born. Hesiod mentions both Cytherea and Cyprus in connection with Aphrodite, and at the latter island she came to shore. "Grass grew up about her beneath her shapely feet." Ashore there, "with her went Eros, and comely Desire followed at her birth at the first and as she went into the assembly of the gods." The vegetable powers are amply illustrated by the flower growth, while the more sensual implications are expressed by the presence of Eros and Desire. Even here, then, in Hesiod, the significance of Aphrodite has been expanded to include a personal aspect of love and growth, while before in Asia Minor the emphasis, still emphasized in the Greek forms, was on a less personal, more inclusive Great Mother.

The third of the early versions is the collection of Homeric Hymns. Two of the hymns are in honor of Aphrodite. The shorter praises the beauty of the goddess from Cytherea and Cyprus. The longer hymn tells of Venus' power, even among the gods and goddesses. Only the great female deities are immune from the persuasions of her: Athene, Artemis, and Hestia. Even Zeus, the greatest of all, she can beguile. Zeus did
cause Aphrodite to love a mortal, so that she could not claim to be herself immune from such love. The mortal was Anchises. "So she came to woo Anchises to many-fountained Ida, the mother of wild creatures and went straight to the homestead across the mountains. After her came grey wolves, fawning on her, and grim-eyed lions, and bears, and fleet leopards, ravenous for deer; and she was glad in heart to see them, and put desire in their breasts, so that they all mated, two together, about the shadowy coomes."

Her power over animals, with the power over plants one of the requisites for the Great Mother, is illustrated in this passage. "Whereas the background of the figure of Aphrodite always discloses the figure of the Great Mother as Lady of Plants and Animals, in the foreground she always remains the young and seductive goddess. But even as such she represents not so much the transformative anima character of the Feminine as the world-governing unindividual love principle and sexual principle of life." Both the personal attraction and the impersonal animal love she encourages are explicit in the hymn.

The "Hymn to Aphrodite" probably dates from the seventh century B.C. From at least that date, and
probably from Homer's time, Aphrodite had more than one significance, though they still tended to merge. Homer, using Aphrodite in a dramatic narrative, would tend naturally to oversimplify in an effort to extend the dramatization, but there was evidently basis for his usage. That basis, of course, is drawn from the implications of the goddess as a goddess of plant and animal growth and from the various prostitutions which went on in her temples in Asia Minor. Homer's residence is not known precisely, and he may have come in contact with aspects of worship of Aphrodite which had those characteristics he describes.

Whatever the beginnings of the slowly separating distinctions of the significances of Aphrodite, by the time of Plato they were sufficiently apart to warrant his statement of the fact. Homer only implied the distinction by treating only the subsidiary role—a goddess of desire and lust; the writer of the Homeric Hymns (at a later date than Homer) viewed the single goddess as embodying both personal and impersonal aspects; Plato explicitly made the distinction between two different Aphrodites, and the distinction he made was readily accepted by those who came after him.

Plato's distinction is made in the Symposium.
He seems to have borrowed the idea from the Symposium ascribed to Xenophon, who, however, states in that work that the two roles were probably but different aspects of the same goddess. Plato, in his more famous work, continued the distinction made by Xenophon and distinguished between two goddesses, one called Aphrodite Urania, the other Aphrodite Dione. Aphrodite Urania was the child of Uranus, who threw the genitals of his father, Cronos, into the sea; Aphrodite Dione was the child of Zeus and Dione, a minor Greek water-goddess. Aphrodite Urania's love is pure and worthy; Aphrodite Dione's love is sensual and raw. Though no explicit parallels between a regenerative love and the pure love he describes is made, the reader who has read Homer inclines to associate Homer's Aphrodite with the more sensual Aphrodite of Plato. The distinctions made by Plato persisted and were accepted.

More important to Plato and to us is Plato's discussion of Love, the son of Aphrodite, with Diotima, in the Symposium. Plato subjects this old woman to a series of questions:

"What then is Love?" I asked; "Is he mortal?"
"No."
"What then?"

"As in the former instance, he is neither mortal nor immortal, but in a mean between the two."

"What is he, Diotima?"

"He is a great spirit, and like all spirits he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal."

"And what," I said, "is his power?"

"He interprets," she replied, "between gods and men, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them. For God mingles not with men; but through Love all the intercourse of God with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried out. The wisdom which understands this is spiritual." (14)

"...for conception and generation are an immortal principle in the mortal creature, and in the inharmonious they can never be." (15)

"Marvel not, if you believe that love is of the immortal...for...the mortal nature is seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal: and this is only to be attained by generation, because generation always leaves behind a new existence in the place of the old." (16)

Besides explaining the importance of love in a non-personal expression, Diotima's remarks help explain the Greeks' addiction to those mystery religions which offered immortality at the same time as pleasure. Though the ideal immortality through generation would not be at all sensual, the popular success of orgiastic pleasures evidently spread. One can easily
see the religious appeal in a function which became licentious.

Plutarch's essay, "Of Isis and Osiris," shows the similar Egyptian cult of regeneration. Just as the Ishtar religion spread to Greece with Aphrodite at its head, so did that same religion spread to Egypt with Isis at its head. And just as Aphrodite caused the rebirth of her lover, Adonis, by journeying to the underworld, so did Isis give rebirth to her lover, Osiris, by gathering and putting together his severed members. Plutarch, explaining the allegorization made by wise old men of his time of the myth in the cult, says that the Egyptians allegorized so that "Osiris is the Nile; copulating with Isis the Earth; Typhon, the Sea, into which the Nile flowing vanishes and is dispersed, except as such part as the earth has taken from him and received, and becomes productive thereby." Further he says,

But when Isis has recovered Osiris, and is making Horus (her son by Osiris) grow, strengthened by means of exhalation clouds and mists, Typhon has been conquered indeed, but not destroyed, because the goddess of the Earth hath not suffered the Principle opposed to moisture to be entirely exterminated, but she lowered and slackened the same, wishing that the mixture might continue: inasmuch as it was
not possible for the world to be complete if the fiery principle failed and were exterminated. (18)

Plutarch goes on in his description of the religion, emphasizing what the wise men allegorize: "The more learned among the priests do not only call the Nile 'Osiris,' and the sea, 'Typhon,' but give the name of Osiris generally to every Principle and Power productive of moisture; regarding this as the cause of generation and the essence of seed. 'Typhon' they call everything dry, fiery, dessicative, and antagonistic to moisture." Plutarch mentions as well some equivalents between Egyptian and Greek gods, among them Apollo and "the elder Horus," and Aphrodite and Nephthys. Later he mentions that "Nephthys, being married to Typhon, was at first barren, and if they tell this not of a woman, but of a goddess, they express enigmatically that the entire extent of the country was unproductive, and bore no crops from barrenness." Her barrenness results from her relations with Typhon, however, for when she copulates with Osiris (when the Nile overflows that part of the land which is called Nephthys) they are "betrayed by the springing up of plants...." The correspondence of this growth with the growth in the spring caused by the return of Adonis
to Aphrodite is striking, and this is evidently the reason Plutarch makes the equation of Aphrodite and Nephthys. This relationship is complicated, however, by the fact that Isis and Osiris are the more usual symbols of the Nile and Earth. Isis is called the "Female Principle of Nature, and that which is capable of receiving all generation," in virtue of which she is styled by Plato, "Nurse," and "All-receiving." 23

That Aphrodite was but the Greek goddess of regeneration and rebirth who in the larger framework was represented by goddesses like Isis and Astarte as well as Aphrodite can but show the importance of her origin. The Greek writings, illustrated by Hesiod and Homer, show the Greek attitude and belief. More specific characteristics of Aphrodite in Greek literature and writings can be found. Empedocles, a pre-Socratic philosopher, writes thus: For all these things—beaming Sun and Earth and Heaven and Sea—are connected in harmony with their own parts: all those parts which have been sundered from them and exist in mortal limbs. Similarly all those things which are more suitable for mixture are made like one another and united in affection by Aphrodite." 24

Aphrodite as a linking agent, of course, is part of
the tradition of Aphrodite as goddess of regeneration.

The most obvious illustration of the ancient personification of natural forces is to be found in the mutual love of Heaven and Earth, of Father Zeus or Jupiter, the sky-god, and Gaia or Terra, the Mother Earth.... The love that thus unites the Sky-Father and the Earth-Mother is, according to Aeschylus, no other than Aphrodite, whose universal power is seen in the marriage of heaven and earth, in the fertilizing rains, and in the birth of flocks of sheep and the grain of the fields, as well as in the growth of trees.29

Here the power of Aphrodite merges into her position as the goddess of spring, when she greeted Adonis coming up from the underworld and was joyous and made things grow through her power.

Plato conceives of a cosmos divided into three parts: Aphrodite is the middle, the agent between the great Love Idea and mankind, the two extremes. This is Aphrodite Urania; the other Aphrodite of Plato did not enter into the cosmic scheme. The three-level concept grew into five- and seven-level concepts in the Neo-Platonist schemes. This division of the cosmos into several tiered parts, deriving from Plato, is seen by E.C. Knowlton to be a traditional division. He argues for a fourfold breakup: God, agents, primal matter, and man. "Nature," he says, "stands for the principle which, presiding over matter, is desirous of bringing order out of chaos, of substituting har-
mony for strife."

He cites Bernard Silvestris, in whose De Mundi Universitate sive Megacosmus et Microcosmus Natura and Nous, "the providence of God," act as agents inside the fourfold division. The heritage of this tradition with Aphrodite as the intermediate agent leads to Alain de Lille and Le Roman de la Rose. The relation of Aphrodite to the figure Nature, who is often the agent, will be discussed in the next chapter.

The association of Aphrodite with Adonis was almost a classical commonplace. Theocritus writes of the death of Adonis thus: "Here are built for him shadowy bowers of green, all laden with tender anise, and children flit overhead—the little loves— as the young nightingales perched on the trees fly forth and try their wings from bough to bough." In this passage the little flitting loves emphasize the relation of Eros with Aphrodite, as well as Adonis' relation to her, while the image of the nightingales hints at a return of youth to Adonis after death.

In The Golden Ass (second century A.D.) the roles of Aphrodite are combined into one person. In a ballet given in that work there is a representation of Aphrodite as the goddess of spring; boys and girls dance, while
one girl represents Aphrodite before marriage. The judgment of Paris in enacted, emphasizing Aphrodite's role as the goddess of pleasure and wanton love. But a later prayer to the moon goddess in the same work deserves being quoted: "Blessed Queen of Heaven, whether you are pleased to be known as Ceres...; or whether as Celestial Venus now adored at sea-girt Paphos, who at the time of the first creation coupled the sexes in mutual love and so contrived that man should continue to propagate his kind for ever...; or whether as Artemis...or Proserpine..." Isis appears, saying that she is known by all these names but that her real name is Isis. She says that she is "Nature, the universal Mother, mistress of all the elements, primordial child of time, sovereign of all things spiritual, queen of the dead, queen also of the immortals, the single manifestation of all gods and goddesses that are." This joining under one name several goddesses resembles Macrobius' statement that Adonis, Osiris, and Horus (as well as several others) are nothing else than the sun. While the name of the deity, therefore, is important to some writers, e.g., Plato, this illustrates that the function of the deity was sometimes more important than the mere name. Apuleius
thus lumps together similar characteristics of several Greek goddesses into one deity of this characteristic—here as Isis. Probably Apuleius uses Isis because of his limited knowledge about her: whereas he would know other functions and qualities of the Greek goddesses, he might have known only the creative and regenerative functions of Isis, and therefore felt that she was more suitable to be given the importance of the distinction.

The view of Aphrodite implied by Apuleius' version is one of a goddess with more than one distinction. If the aspect of Aphrodite presented by him can be found in several other goddesses as well, what characteristics distinguish her from the others? Though no answer was given, Cicero's list of the gods and goddesses does contain an interesting section on Venus. Rather than believe the different versions of her birth and other qualities to be only symbolic stories illustrating her character, Cicero implies there are several Venuses:

"The first Venus is the daughter of the Sky and the Day... The second was engendered from the dea-foam.... The third is the daughter of Jupiter and Dione, who wedded Vulcan.... The fourth we obtained from Syria and Cyprus and is called Astarte; it is recorded that she married Adonis." A Platonic influence as well can
discerned.

Roman literature after Cicero generally continues the view of Aphrodite adopted by the Greek writers. In Claudian's panegyric, On Stilicho's Consulship, for example, the origin of Love is told. This Love is an agent between higher and lower, as in Plato. "In the beginning Love [Clementia] was the guardian of this vast universe, she who dwelt in the sphere of Jove, who attempers the sky 'twixt cold and heat, who is the eldest of the immortals. For Love, pitying the elemental confusion, first disentangled Chaos; with a smile she scattered the darkness and bathed the world in light." Whereas in Plato Love is masculine, the son of Penury and Plenty, here Love is feminine. Love as an agent between the several cosmic levels is continued in the middle ages, notably in Alain de Lille.

Venus is presented in Roman literature often as a goddess of marriage. The Roman Sidonius, in the Epistalamium of Ruricius and Hiberia, employs Venus in a different way than does Claudian, who has higher things than mortals in mind. The writer is honoring the wedding of his patron, and produces a Temple of Venus which has been artfully decorated by Mulciber with precious stones and gold. Venus, when told of the coming
nuptials, says to Cupid, "So let them be straightway united, for they are alike both in wealth and beauty and lineage; there is naught that is ill-matched in these victims of thy shaft." Cupid's association with Venus, begun in Hesiod where Eros was present at her birth, was common though not inevitable by this time. In the middle ages the two were often contrasted rather than viewed together as in Sidonius. Venus, then is presented here as a goddess of marriage. In Claudian's De Nuptiis Honorii et Mariæ, Venus is responsible for the marriage which the poem honors. In this latter poem the goddess is introduced to give a hint of marriage's true meaning which is reproduction and carrying on the species, and in the former poem one sees this idea in Venus' mentioning their being well-matched, implying a look to the future.

A more important Venus is found often in Roman literature, often also in the works now regarded as most important. Lucretius' poem De Rerum Natura opens with an invocation to Venus. Spenser translated this passage and inserted it in the Faerie Queene in the Temple of Venus passage:

Great Venus, Queene of beautie and of grace,
The ioy of Gods and men, that vnder skie
Doeest fayrest shine, and most adorne thy place,
That with thy smyling looke doest pacific
The raging seas, and makst the stormes to
flie;
Thee goddesse, thee the winds, the clouds doe
fear,
And when thou spredst thy mantle forth on hie,
The waters play and pleasant lands appeare,
And heauens laugh, and al the world shews
joyous cheare.

Then doth the dædal earth throw forth to thee
Out or her fruitfull lap abundant flowres,
And then all living wights, soon as they see
The spring break forth out of his lustry
bowres,
They all doe learne to play the Paramours;
First doe the merry birds, thy pretty pages
Privily pricked with thy lustfull powres,
Chirpe loud to thee out of their leauy cages,
And thee their mother call to coole their
kindly rages.

Then doe the salvage beasts begin to play
Their pleasant friskes, and loath their wonted
food;
The Lyons rare, the Tygres loudly bray,
The raging Bulls rebellow through the wood,
And breaking forth, dare tempt the deepest
flood,
To come where thou doest draw them with de-
sire:
So all things else, that nourish vitall blood,
Soone as with fury thou doest them inspire,
In generation seeke to quench their inward
fire.

So all the world by thee at first was made,
And dayly yet thou doest the same repayre:
Ne ought on earth that merry is and glad,
Ne ought on earth that lovely is and fayre,
But thou the same for pleasure didst pre-
payre.

Thou art the root of all that joyous is,
Great god of men and women, queene of th'ayre,
Mother of laughter, and wealspring of blisse,
O grant that of my loue at last I may not
misse.
Venus is here almost the equivalent of Nature, and she encourages the spring sport and reproduction. Yet things grow of their own matter: "All things grow step by step, and increase in size and are fed out of their own matter..."38 "May it surely be known that each is nourished and waxeth from substance wholly its own."39 A later passage shows Nature to be the only creator: "All things of herself she accomplished aye,"40 while the first line of the fourth stanza quoted above shows Venus to have been the creator. Rather than a contradiction, there is an equating of the two.

Time's importance is emphasized:

Over his worn-out shrivelled vine, the vine-dresser sorroweth,
He blames time's onward march, and he wearies
with praying breath
High heaven, nor comprehends how everything decays
Slowly, and creeps into the grave, outworn by
length of days.41

Again:

Thenceforward the full-grown vigor and strength age fritters away,
And life like a fleeting stream slips downward into decay.42

The stream slips onward, but it keeps coming, however, and the idea of rebirth in the spring is hinted here, if not stated explicitly.

Virgil's *Georgics* contains a passage more typical
than extraordinary, similar to Lucretius' "Hymn to Venus":

Oh, spring is good for leaves in the spinney, good to forests,
In spring the swelling earth aches for the seed of new life.
Then the omnipotent Father of air in fruitful showers
Comes down to his happy consort
And greatly breeds upon her great body alive with the trilling of birds,
And the beasts look for love, their hour come round again;
Lovely the earth in labor, under a tremendous wind
The fields blossom, a mild moisture is everywhere.

The joy and meaning of spring come alive with the union of Heaven and Earth in this symbolic picture.

A section of Book VI of the Aeneid, however, perhaps the most striking section in the poem, illustrates the Platonism and pagan mixture of Virgil's ideas of the next world. Aeneas asks his father about a group of humming people he sees in the underworld; Anchises answers that

These are spirits, ready
Once more for life; they drink of Lethe's water
The soothing portion of forgetfulness.

Aeneas wonders why any would be willing to go again into life, exchanging it for Paradise. Anchises replies:
First, my son, a spirit  
Sustains all matter, a heaven and earth and  
ocean,  
The moon, the stars; mind quickens mass,  
and moves it.  
Hence comes the race of man, of beast, of  
winged  
Creatures of air, of the strange shapes  
which ocean  
Bears down below his mottled marble surface.  
All these are blessed with energy from hea¬ 
ven;  
The seed of life is a spark of fire, but  
the body  
A clod of earth, a clog, a mortal burden.  
Hence human fears, desire, grieve, and are  
joyful,  
And even when life is over, all the evil  
Ingrained so long, the adulterated mixture,  
The plagues and pestilences of the body  
Remain, persist. So there must be a clean¬ 
sing,  
By penalty, by punishment, by fire;  
By sweep of wind, by water's absolution,  
Before the guilt is gone. Each of us suf¬ 
fers  
His own particular ghost. But the day comes  
When we are sent through wide Elysium,  
The Fields of the Blessed, a few of us, to  
linger  
Until the turn of time, the wheel of ages,  
Wears off the taint, and leaves the core of  
spirit  
Pure sense, pure flame. A thousand years  
pass over  
And the god calls the countless host to Lethe  
Where memory is annulled, and souls are will¬ 
ing  
Once more to pass into mortal bodies.

The idea of continual rebirth is modified so that only  
after cleansing and absolution can the particular person  
be born again, with memory annulled. The Greeks puri¬ 
fi ed themselves in their mystery rites before death, but
otherwise there are similarities. The Platonism is deeply imbrued in this passage.

Ovid says in Book XV of *The Metamorphoses* how

All things are always changing,  
But nothing dies. The spirit comes and goes,  
Is housed wherever it wills, shifts residence  
From beasts to men, from men to beasts, but always  
It keeps on living. As the pliant wax  
Is stamped with new designs, and is no longer  
What once it was, but changes form, and still  
Is pliant wax, so do I teach that spirit  
Is evermore the same, though passing always  
To ever-changing bodies.  

Nothing remains the same: the great renewer,  
Nature, makes form from form, and, oh, believe me  
That nothing ever dies.  

Reminiscenses from everywhere immediately strike one on reading these passages: from Virgil, from Plutarch, from Plato, from Greek myth. Nature, not exemplified by any particular god or goddess here, was later to become more specifically a name for Venus.

The anonymous *Pervigilium Veneris (The Eve of St. Venus)* is one of the last poems celebrating Venus written while Rome was still pagan. Written in the fourth century A.D., it celebrates the coming of spring with a joyous freshness and prophecy of success for lovers; praises of Venus who is the cause of all this are many. Cupid has put up his arrows for the festival. (This indicates that no one will fall in love,)
To quicken the whole year from the clouds of spring, the bridegroom-shower has flowed into the lap of his fair bride, that so mingling with the vast frame he might pass through sea and through sky and through all the lands to nourish their offspring.... Herself the Creatress in hidden might sways flesh and spirit from within with her enkindling life.... Herself along the passage of the seed drew the flooding tide of herself through sky and through the lands and the sea beneath, herself poured the quickening life through their veins, and bade the universe know the ways of birth....

The joy and life in the poem can perhaps be detected from the brief quotations given; the entire poem revolves around the core in these quotations, but it mainly involves the effect of Venus' power on nymphs and animals,

Cupid, as we have seen, was usually associated with his mother, Venus, when she was presented as a goddess of marriage. Another figure often associated with Venus in Roman literature (and into the middle ages) is Genius. One of the first appearances of him occurs in The Table of Cebes the Philosopher, translated "out of Plutarch." The hero of the piece wanders into a strange town, and, while there, is shown a picture with many strange representations. A crowd of people stand waiting before a door which opens onto a large circuit. The hero asks the meaning of the picture, and a native answers him thus: the circuit "is called life: And the great companie, that standeth before the doore, be those
The old man, that standeth above, having in his hand a paper... is called Genius. He commandeth the enturers, what they must dooe, if they will be kepte safe in lyfe. ⁴⁹ Seated in the circuit Desire offers a drink of error and ignorance to all who pass; opinion, desires, and lusts await them also, while Fortune stands to aid and hinder them.

C. S. Lewis points out ⁵⁰ that the Romans thought the "genius" of the paterfamilias was closely connected with the reproductive power. This being true would leave the way open for two developments of the word: one would retain the sense of the higher self in general, and the other would become associated with the reproductive power to a greater extent. The second development is more important in the middle ages, and can be found in Martianus Capella, Bernard Silvestris, and especially in the De Planctu Naturae of Alain de Lille, where Genius is specifically associated with Venus.

From Alain and in the same line of development are the figures of Genius in the Roman de la Rose and the Confessio Amantis; its final development occurs in the Faerie Queene, where both developments are shown.

The Genius of The Table of Cabes the Philosopher is not entirely one or the other, and the blending of
the two seems natural, here and in general: where any idea of reincarnation or regeneration is present, the higher self would be an aspect of a later (or earlier) life, and reproduction would be the specific method of symbolizing a reincarnation of one's own self, in the Platonic fashion.

Another Genius appears in a work called The Fountain of Ancient Fiction by Vincenzo Cartari. An aged Cave (evidently a person) dwells in a dale; this Cave sends forth Times and calls them back again. In her lap sits a serpent eating its tail, an obvious eternity symbol.

And at the gate of this so strange-fram'd demne,
    In Matrons habit, and in grave attire,
Stands gracious Nature noting with her pen,
    Whom she lets forth and whom again retire:
And round about the cave the souls of men
    Flie here and there, as seeming to aspire,
And longing to recover heaven, but these
With Nature must remaine till death shall please.

In furthest nooke and corner of the cell,
    Sits an old man, whose colour'd haire
Is far more white than any toung can tell,
    And whose cheere lovely face exceeds all faire,
Writing down lawes for those that here do dwell,
That ignorance may never cause despaire,
And as he sits, each star he doth divide,
And every planet in his course doth guide.
This is actually a slightly expanded version of the description of the Cave of Nature in Claudian's *On Stilicho's Consulship*, and Boccaccio later explained the allegorical figures. Later in the medieval literature Genius is associated with Venus as well as Nature, and in the Greek versions of regeneration it is Venus who controls rebirth, while here the association is with Nature. Venus and Nature seem to have been employed almost indiscriminately in the period from late Rome (as well as in works like *De Rerum Natura*) to the renaissance, while often in that period their identification with each other is explicit.

Venus in Greek and Roman literature is often seen inside a garden, luxuriant and extravagantly described. Often she was associated with the Garden of the Hesperides. Venus gave Hippomenes the golden apples with which to lure Atalanta; they came from one of her sacred gardens but not necessarily the Garden of the Hesperides. Venus carried Adonis to her garden when he returned from the underworld each year, and the spot was naturally very luxuriant and blooming. Pliny mentions several beautiful, ever-blooming gardens, chief among them the Garden of the Hesperides, and the Gardens of Alcinous.
and Adonis. Homer describes the Garden of Alcinous thus:

Wherein all manner of tall trees blossom'd and bore;
Pears and pomegranates, apple-trees gleaming with fruit,
Fig-trees also and blooming olives were there,
Such that the fruit of those trees never withered or fail'd
Winter or summer, but West-winds, breathing thereon,
Brought some to the birth, unceasing, and ripen'd the rest...
Last, at the edge of the plot, there were flowers and herbs
Of every kind, trim-bedded and always in bloom.... (56)

The idea of such a garden was common in classical times and the similarity between the name Adon (the Assyrian name for Adonis) and Eden (the Hebrew earthly Paradise) is interesting if inconclusive. Some of the classical gardens were associated with Venus, and this is especially the case in Roman literature.

The famous passage in Claudian's De Nuptiis Honori et Mariae deserves being quoted in full in this respect. The Venus here is responsible for the happiness caused by the marriage of the two lovers:

Where Cyprus looks out over the Ionian main
a craggy mountain overshadows it; unapproachable by human foot it faces the isle of Pharos, the home of Proteus and the seven mouths of the Nile. It is consecrate to pleasure and to Venus. The year's less clement seasons are strangers to it, wherever brood the
blessings of eternal spring. The mountain's height slopes down into a plain; that a golden hedge encircles, guarding its meadows with golden metal.... Fair is the enclosed country, ever bright with flowers though touched with no laboring hand, for Zephyr is husbandman enough therefore. Into its shady groves no bird may enter save such as has first won the goddess' approval for its song. Those which please her may flit among the branches; they must quit who cannot pass the test. The very leaves live for love and in his season every happy tree experiences love's power: palm bends down to mate with palm, poplar sighs its passion for poplar, plane whispers to plane, alder to alder. Here spring two fountains, the one of sweet water, the other of bitter, honey is mingled with the first, poison the second, and in these streams 'tis said that Cupid dips his arrows. A thousand brother Loves with quivers play all around upon the banks, a tender company like to Cupid himself in face and of equal age. The nymphs are their mothers; Cupid is the only child of golden Venus. He with his bow subdues the stars and the gods and heaven, and disdains not to wound mighty kings; of the others the common people is the prey. Other deities, too, are here: License bound by no fetters, easily moved Anger, Wakes dripping with wine, inexperienced Fears, Pal lor that lovers ever prize, Boldness trembling at his first thefts, happy Fears, unstable pleasure, and lovers' Oaths, the sport of every lightest breeze. Amid them all wanton Youth with haughty neck shuts out Age from the grove.

Afar shines and glitters the goddess' many-coloured palace, green gleaming by reason of the encircling grove. Vulcan built this too of precious stones and gold, welding their costliness to art. Columns cut from rock of hyacinth support emerald beams; the walls are of jaspar, the floor of agate trodden as dirt beneath the foot. In the midst is a courtyard rich with fragrant turf that yields a harvest of perfume; there grows sweet spikenards and ripe cassia, Panchean cinnamon-flowers and
sprays of cory balm, while balsam creeps forth slowly in an exuding stream....
Venus was seated on her glittering throne, tiring her hair...
surrounded by the Graces; one helped her comb her hair, "yet carefully leaving a part untended; such negligence becomes her more." The most striking point, here as in Homer's Garden of Alcineus, is the eternal spring and absence of any season when plants fail to bear and bloom at the same time. As in Lucretius, "no labouring hand" need touch the plants, for they grow of their own substance if they have only the steady West wind.

The multiple aspect of Venus is clearly shown in this poem. The work is specifically a marriage song, honoring the poet's patron and his marriage, and so Venus' functions as love and marriage goddess are emphasized. Yet Claudian also makes Venus' role as springtime and nature goddess only scarcely secondary. Though marriage and reproduction, of course, are extremely close, either can be treated alone; but Claudian chose to write of both. Hints of what was to become part of the courtly love tradition can be detected in this passage, notably in the presence of the thousand brother Loves and the allegorical figures; and Venus' artful toilet also seems more courtly than
either natural or conjugal.

By the end of the classical period (somewhat arbitrarily defined for this thesis as, generally, before the Christian poets), then, certain various, but rarely conflicting, characteristics of and conventions concerning Venus are apparent. Her multiplicity is, I think, the most important. No duality has yet been explicitly stated by any of the mythographers or poets (save possibly Plato), and that will come in the middle ages as a result of the multiplicity. Within the various elements which comprise Venus at this time, moreover, there are shades and differences: Venus as a goddess of marriage, for instance, is different in Sidonius and Claudian; Venus as a goddess of reproduction and rebirth is different in Claudian and Plato; again, Venus as a goddess of lewd love and lust is different in Claudian and Ovid. Claudian, as noted in the last sentence, seems to include all the elements of Venus in his poems. He is a fitting place, for that reason, to end a treatment of the classical ideas of Venus.
Claudian was the last major poet of pagan Rome. During the last decades of the fourth century A.D., Christianity was established in Rome as the authorized religion. Claudian faded into obscurity in the first decade of the fifth century, and the tone of poetry and other literature is different in writers after him.

This change in tone was no more abrupt, however, than was the acceptance of Christianity. Both changes were gradual: for neither had Christian writers waited for the legalization of Christianity, nor was the Christian religion suddenly popular. Concurrently with the establishment of Christianity, the attitude toward the pagan gods underwent change, but here again the change was not complete. The new attitude was not completely different from the old: only the emphasis was changed.

Prudentius, a contemporary of Claudian's, illustrates in several ways the new attitude. The focus of what he writes is on God, but the basis for the treatment of nature which he gives is obviously pagan: "I can bring back the ashes into their old shapes.... I who was able to create the new shall restore the dead. There are touches of my power in the very seeds: nature
teaches them all to come to life again after death. For they are dried up by the loss of the strength whereby they lived before."¹ Here in a superficially Christian form we have the ideas expressed by pagans long before: the continued rebirth and regeneration of plant and animal life through the work of a superior being. Here Nature is the agent of God, whereas often in pagan writing Venus is the agent of a vague, higher power.

More specific relationships between pagan and later Christian elements are interestingly seen in the Marian worship in Cyprus. The temples of Mary, the name—Panaghia Aphroditessa—, and the location of the particular worship show that an equation of Aphrodite and Mary had been made.² Mary's more universal and important position in Catholicism as it develops endows her with a force in some ways similar to certain of Aphrodite's powers: the elements of grace delivered through the person of Mary, and of rebirth delivered through the person of Aphrodite make the comparison a not unworthy one.

The Church's attitude did not extend to burying the pagan gods. Actually, "the gods lived on in the middle ages in concepts which had already taken shape at
the end of the pagan epoch—interpretations proposed by
the ancients themselves to explain the origin and nature
of their divinities.»

Even within the Church (as hinted
above) the gods remained. The Church's attitude toward
the pagan gods was one of outward tolerance, but this
tolerance was based on an effectively debilitating argu-
ment. The churchmen claimed that the gods were the pro-
ducts of euhemerism, and therefore not to be feared as
rivals to their God; in other words, the Church showed
(or tried to show) that the gods who had been seriously
worshipped for hundreds of years were but deified humans
anyway, and therefore only mistakenly revered. St. Isi-
dore of Seville, for example, said that, "Those whom the
pagans claim to be gods were once mere men." These pa-
gans were treated with respect, however, for having pro-
duced great things and founded cities, and their bene-
\[those of\]
factions were often paralleled with the Biblical heroes;
pagan wisdom likewise was paralleled with Biblical exam-
\[\text{ples. This subtle method of debunking had its effects,}\]
\[and eventually only churchmen knew much about the old}\n\[gods. The Marian worship in Cyprus, which had but sub-}\n\[stituted Mary for Aphrodite, seems to be one exception;}\n\[and sometimes the gods and goddesses appeared as figures}\n\[in stained-glass windows in the cathedrals.}
tendency, however, is also illustrated by the transformation of Venus into St. Venere, while other pagan gods and rituals were accepted into the Church without much change. Generally, however, the pagan deities were strictly kept out of the Christian circle.

Venus and Cupid suffered more than others. A goddess of sensual love could less readily be converted to Christianity than could, for example, a goddess of the hearth; and a goddess of sensual love was less acceptable also than a goddess of regeneration. Now since Venus occupied both the roles of sensual love and of regeneration, we can imagine her to be more easily accepted (or less readily reviled) as the second than as the first. And this is essentially the case. The Venus which was sometimes represented by the planet Venus, more natural and impersonal, was more acceptable to the Church than the Venus which was associated with Cupid. The latter represented the worst kind of adulterous lust, and was regarded with a frown by all Christian writers until at least the thirteenth century. The former Venus, however, was often connected with God and portrayed as his agent, as the following hymn addressed to God illustrates: "Under your guidance, Jupiter shines in the sky; you restore her brilliance to Venus, and by
you is Fortune obliged to diversify earthly destinies through superior influence. The planets controlled many things, and were represented usually, as here, as guided and dominated by God, and expressly made by God for this purpose.

A twelfth-century commentary on Virgil's Aeneid by Bernard Silvestris contains a description of Venus which can be taken as typical of the attitude toward her in that period. "In truth there are held to be two Venuses, a legitimate and a wanton goddess." The legitimate Venus concerns herself with the natural order, the stars, the elements, and all animals. "The shameless second Venus is said to be the wanton goddess of concupiscence of the body, so that she is the mother of all fornication." The good Venus is later called "Mother of Concord" as well. The first Venus here is a cosmic force, while the second is the love which comes from man's disharmony with the love of the creator. So long as man is in harmony with "the love which governs creation," then he is living under the auspices of the good Venus. This good Venus is a function of "nature," and so is the other Venus when we recall that through original sin is the second Venus created. Bernard attempted to relate Venus petulantiae to all sin by calling
her "mater omnium fornicationum," where "fornicationum" means any deliberate departure from the laws of God.\textsuperscript{12} The sexual implications of such fornication will be seen in the \textit{De Planctu Naturae} of Alain de Lille.

The book of Andreas Capellanus, \textit{De Amore} (twelfth century A.D.), is concerned with the "petulantiae deam," and is a treatise on courtly love. The relations of the two seem clear: because "courtly" love was not that love which had reproduction as its end, participating in that love would be a sin against the goddess of such love, the legitimate Venus (and indirectly against Venus' master, God).\textsuperscript{13}

In Lucretius Venus was the agent of Nature, and there are hints there that Venus herself is responsible for the regeneration of animal life. There is almost an equation drawn between the two. In the literature of the middle ages there are often no clear distinctions drawn between Nature and Venus. They are almost interchangeable, save that when both are present in the same poem Nature is usually the more important, and never less important. "Nature" may have been the beginning of an all-potent overall goddess—a tendency to monotheism interrupted by Christianity, and continued later within the Christian
Boethius has a goddess Nature, who

keeps, with a foreseeing care,
The spacious world in order by her laws,
And to sure knots, which nothing can untie;
By her strong hand all earthly motions draw....

This is a typical expression of Nature's power, which expresses itself through those "natural" laws to which everything and everyone are subject, and which are put forth in writing often during the middle ages.

Martianus Capella, either Christian or pagan (or neither: "such men do not have beliefs") was a fifth century North African. He can justifiably be assigned to the middle ages (despite his dates), for his major work, De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii, became almost a handbook in the middle ages. The work is primarily a catalogue of the seven liberal arts based on a thin plot of the proposed marriage of Mercury to the learned Philology. Venus is presented as "generationum omnium mater." Hymen, however, is the conciliator of the sexes and the elements, and is the agent of Natura, as well as being the matchmaker among the gods. Here, then, Venus as one of the honored goddesses in the marriage party is assigned a more important sphere of power than just marriage, and is in charge of all birth.
Nature as a goddess, like Venus, was not viewed tolerantly. Her influence among the early Christians is proved by the polemics against her. Perhaps Nature, like the Venuses, had two elements, one of which had become wanton and illegitimate after the original sin. Lactantius, in the fourth century, began the polemics, and Prudentius continued the process; the method the latter used was to make Nature a defeated pagan deity, subordinate to God: she was not, then, the begetter of man, but his sustainer.¹⁹

The same twelfth century Bernard Silvestris who wrote the commentary on the Aeneid wrote also De Mundi Universitate sive Megacosmus et Microcosmus. Bernard was associated with the Platonic School at Chartres. Matter, in his original work, is presented as a formless chaos, "longing for harmonious order." Matter desires form; the viewpoint of creation as an impulse of the deity is not present. Natura complains of this situation to Noys, a feminine emanation of the Godhead, the "Intellect of the highest God," and Noys gives a history of the world-to-be. Natura creates the world, but to make man she needs help. After a celestial journey to visit the Tugaton, the Platonic Idea of the Good, and with the aid of Noys, Urania, and Physis, Natura creates
The last lines describe him, and his organs of generation are particularly praised: they "war with death, restore Nature, and continue the species. They prevent the return of Chaos."21

This work is the result of pagan humanism, "which eliminates everything Christian except for a few ultimate essentials." The technical science and history is Roman, and Bernard's Natura is pagan Claudian's.

"She is the ruler of generation through the whole cycle of life, she is the ever-fruitful womb: 'mater generationis.'" This work is neither Platonistic nor Christian, but a "syncretistic picture of the universe, in which there are higher and lower gods, emanations, astral spirits and nature spirits. The whole is bathed in the atmosphere of a fertility cult, in which religion and sexuality mingle."22

The culmination of the Martianus Capella-Bernard Silvestris tradition is Alain de Lille. His two works are De Planctu Naturae (The Complaint of Nature) and Anticlaudianus, both written in the last part of the twelfth century. In the first, the Planctu, Nature appears to the young narrator in a dream, and explains her position in the order of the universe: "God by command creates man; the angel by work procreates him; man by obedience recreates himself...; God commands with
the mastery of authority; the angel administers with
the service of action; man obeys with the mystery of
regeneration." Nature stresses her subordinance
to God immediately afterwards, making her evidently
equivalent in rank to the angels, for she says, "the
power of God may be called the superlative, that of
Nature the comparative, that of man the positive." Yet Nature speaks, after this system has been shown, of
"my command," "my law," "my majesty," and "my ordering." Whatever Nature's, and Alain's, actual beliefs about
Nature's power and rank, these words indicate that if
any power is above her, it is very basic and almost
impersonalized. Nature, to all practical purposes,
is the chief.

This Nature is a virgin while being "mother of
all things... beauty, form, pattern of the world." This seeming contradiction resembles the Greek and Near
Eastern myths of Cybele and Magna Mater who were virgin
goddesses, hermaphroditic, and mothers of all things.
Nature, in the passage where she is called "mother of
all things," is apostrophized in a page-long series of
epithets resembling the Isis passage in Apuleius' Golden
Ass and the Physic passage in the De Mundi Universitate.

Nature's power is also illustrated in a more signi-
ficant action. Nature, in her work, "stamp[57], so to speak, the various coins of things in the image of the original." Venus, "who is skilled in the knowledge of making," with her husband Hymen and her son Cupid, is appointed by Nature to be her deputy. The reason for this appointment is that Venus, "by laboring at the various formation of the living things of earth, and regularly applying their productive hammers to their anvils, might weave together the line of the human race in unwearied continuation." Digressing a little, Nature answers a question from the narrator about Cupid. Cupid is identified less with generation and continuation of the race than with the passions of love itself—delight, sorrow, joy, evil, all at the same time. The relationship of Venus to Cupid is illustrated by what Nature says to the narrator at this point: "Now let the style, which had slightly wandered toward the boyish and light verses of thy youth, return to the ordered theme of the narration previously planned." The "ordered theme" is that of Venus, and the "light and boyish" verses are those concerning Cupid; Cupid is not very significant compared to Venus in this poem. This dissociation of the two is expressed again in Le Roman de la Rose and the Faerie Queene, as shall be shown later.
Venus' role, as stated above, is again told and emphasized. The remainder of the Planctu brings in the characters of Hymen, Chastity, Temperance, Humility, Truth, and finally Genius. Genius is called by Nature "her other self" and "myself again," and Genius "assists Nature in the priestly office." The plot, almost completely confined to Nature's complaint against those who practice sodomy and cannot thereby reproduce, leads up now to Genius' advice to Nature as to dealing with such vices. With this advice the poem ends.

The figures of Venus and Nature, it can be seen, are not readily distinguishable in most of these medieval works. What is Nature in one work can be Venus in another, or what is Nature's function can be Venus'. Venus is always associated with love or sex in some form. Nature's superiority in those works where both appear arises from the fact that Nature was often viewed as an impersonal quality or power, while Venus was always identified with a particular goddess and was never impersonalized to the extent that Nature was.

Alain's other work, Anticlaudianus, again deals with Nature. Nature's garden is described, and it resembles the gardens of Alcinous and Adonis described in classical literature: the north and south winds neither
rage nor threaten; flowers bloom in an eternal spring.
Winter does not steal away the blossoms, and every tree
willingly allows its seed to be paid as tribute, and
can not withstand the consequences of nature.

Nature, discerning each event with a profound
intuition, holds her rights in these seats and,
provident, designs laws which she puts into ef-
fect through the entire globe. She examines
thoroughly the causes of things and the origins
of the world. She redeemed ancient chaos by
a better form and grace of feature, and the
forest bewailed its primeval tumult. But she,
curbing civil wars by the bond of faith and
checking the quarrels of brothers, imposed
the kisses of peace upon the elements, and
tied them in a better knot of category. The
motion of the earth, the bellowing of thunder,
the rages of the ocean, and battles of the winds
she watches over with faithful mind, and dex-
terously shuts off by a specified enclosing
the runnings-out of time. Wherefore hoary
winter, clouded by snows, makes lamentation,
spring laughs, summer glows, and autumn flows
forth in a vast torrent of things. And so the
earth abides, the river rolls on, the air flows
along, the flame leaps up, and all the rest,
not hostile, keep faith, not daring to violate
that trust. The transient tide binds fast the
limits of the land, restrained by an ordered
course.

This time Nature wants to create a new man, a perfect
man, to be both God and man. A visit to God for permi-
sion occupied much of the poem, and the levels of power
are many: God, Nature, agents and messengers between
the two (Sophia or Phronesis) and Nous, all seem on
different levels. Nous, similar to Noys of De Mundi
Universitate, is given God's seal of approval for her idea for the plan of the new man, and Nature, using Nous' blueprint, sets to work to make him, and finally Juvenis (Youth) is born. At his birth, "love reigns, nowhere is Discord .... The tree does not seek cultivation, nor the vineyard the pruning hook, but each gives of its own accord new fruits, and pursues closely the wishes of the farmer by its fertility." The rose blooms without thorns. With this birth the poem ends.

Venus' role in this poem is slight. She is mentioned only seldom, and then only concerning wanton love. Her function here is clearly all usurped by Nature. And Nature is more dependent on God in this poem than in the De Planctu Naturae: rather God's power and importance are stressed in the plot mechanism (the journey) and not only in one digression as in the former poem.

Neither, however, of Alain's poems would be given the Catholic imprimatur today, though the Church in the middle ages probably regarded both works as eminently orthodox. The proposal for a non-celibate priesthood was made in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and one English cleric defended marriage "because it was in harmony with the order of Nature decreed by God." This idea, by no means singular, could have been fur-
nished by Alain's De Planctu Naturae or any number of similar works.

Le Roman de la Rose is in many respects the culmination of the Venus-Nature-Genius trio. Jean de Meun, who continued Guillaume de Lorris' incompletely allegory, concerns himself almost entirely with these figures, and his part of the work is more than 18,000 lines long. He spends little actual space on the plot, but devotes his attention to long digressions explaining the function of Nature and Genius, and their relationship to each other and to God. Earlier literature which portrayed Nature as an agent of God had appeared in France, including Le Mystere de la Passion, La Vie de Saint Rimi, and Chretien de Troyes' Eric et Enid.35

Venus and Nature have similar roles in the poem, and their exact relationship is never made explicit. Venus, however, seems to be the physical manifestation of the sexual principle, while Nature is the one who works to produce what Venus represents. While Venus is urging the barons on in their siege of the castle, Nature, complacently approving, works in her smithy to produce such pieces as may be

Used for the continuity
Of life....36
Neither seems superior to the other in power, and certainly Venus is a powerful being. Venus, however, has contact with her son Amour (Cupid) and others, while Nature is more remote from mortal functions.

Venus and Cupid occupy leading positions in the book as well. There is no common identification of the two, however, but each is individualized, and they represent different qualities. Venus' Olympian stature, while not basic to her origins, endows her with a gravity and power Cupid cannot have: rather, Cupid's power comes from another source, his association with courtly love. "In the Romance of the Rose Venus is the sexual appetite—the mere natural fact, in contrast to the god of Love who is the refined sentiment." Venus is distinctly superior to Cupid in strength, and she is his mother as well. He calls for her aid, therefore, when he sees that the castle erected by enemies of courtly love cannot be easily won. Venus, found with her lover, Adonis, aids Cupid, but not specifically for the principles of courtly love. Rather, her reason for aiding in the fight is that such opposition to procreation and multiplication which the heroine puts forth is wrong and should be beaten down.
Nature's role in the poem is the most important.

She works

To forge such pieces as may be
Used for the continuity
Of life; for she doth mold things so
That never shall any species know
The power of death, but as one dies
Forthwith another may arise
To fill his place.\textsuperscript{38}

The phoenix story is used as an illustration of Nature's power: everything that dies rises again through Nature.\textsuperscript{39}

For Nature, pitiful and good,
Abhors and hates Death's envious mood,
Who ruthlessly would mar and break
The fairest thing her skill doth make,
And seeing nought more fair can be,
Her own form ever stampeth she
On all her works...\textsuperscript{40}

Genius is Nature's priest, and to him Nature laments man's seeming propensity to remain chaste and celibate. Genius, like Venus, seems on the same level as Nature, though the relationship of priest and confidant implies some modest difference in rank. Genius' power, however, is strong. God's overall power and rank is stated by Nature, as in the preceding allegorical works of this kind, in her confession to Genius:

\begin{quote}
Wherewith his love appointed me
His faithful chamberlain to be.
His chamberlain! nay, over all
He made me vicar general,
And constable--his own right hand.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}
God's command was that Nature watch the fate of those created by God, "And all their forms perpetuate." All created things must obey Nature's laws.42

Nature's complaint, occasioned by Cupid's urging Venus to aid him in his fight against the lady's unreasonable actions, is against precisely those things that the unwon lady represents: shrinking from sexual love, hesitancy to reproduce.

Kind Nature's self do they destroy,  
Who of their labors prove so coy  
As let their fertile fallows lie  
Untilled, while they stand idly by,  
That she hath made so fair and good,  
With will, if they but understood  
Her ways, to give her works new birth,  
Lest death triumphant ride o'er earth.43

Ennodius, a Bishop of Pavia in the early sixth century, had voiced a similar complaint in an Epithalamium for Maximus where Cupid laments to Venus that men have become cold and will not marry. Venus here becomes more than a mere goddess of marriage, and approaches a goddess of regeneration.44 The complaint in Ennodius' poem and that in the Roman de la Rose are similar to Nature's complaint in Alain's poem; except that Nature in De Planctu Naturae is complaining against sodomy and unnatural sexual actions, while the other complaints
are against a lack of sexual activity of any kind. Genius in the *Roman de la Rose* expresses a disgust for homosexuality, but refusal to reproduce is the foulest sin of all, and it is that which is reviled.\(^5\)

Genius, when he hears the story Nature tells him, begins a long, forthright exhortation to men to procreate. This harangue occupies about 1200 lines.\(^6\) The phallicism which permeates the speech is put into an unsubtle symbolism and, though there are several digressions, the basic idea is that men should reproduce in emulation of their fathers before them or the world will lose all the human race. Genius promises a heaven on earth when men begin to obey all the laws of Nature: an eternal spring day, with healthy plant and animal life, for unchanging spring Reigns there, and knows no worsening.\(^7\)

The earth will be as lovely as when Saturn ruled before Jupiter replaced him. Those who won't follow Genius' advice are cursed and excommunicated. The poem finally ends in an atmosphere of phallicism when the lover, his Venus-directed army having beaten down the defenses of the lady, approaches the rose of the lady's love, his intent obvious.\(^8\)

So a principal theme of Jean de Meun's part of the
Roman de la Rose can be seen as an exhortation to continue the species by sexual reproduction. Only that love which has reproduction for its end is tolerated in this second part. The frank and easy references to the generative organs emphasize this focus. Whereas Bernard Silvestris was more interested in the original generation of man and the universe, Jean de Meun (and Alain de Lille) are "describing rather their continuous renewal or regeneration," and Venus and Nature are the persons who represent the fact of that regeneration.

The medieval period is sometimes characterized by its propensity to produce and read handbooks and encyclopedias. In this sense Le Roman de la Rose is typically medieval because of the digressions on all sorts of scientific and philosophical subjects. All the books mentioned in this chapter, moreover, contain elements of compilation in their very core. In this handbook-characteristic of the middle ages, then, certain mythological dictionaries and encyclopedias, though written after the generally accepted date for the end of the middle ages, can be termed medieval. Natali Conti's Mythologiae was one of the most important, as was Boccaccio's Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri (though this latter was written before the end of the middle...
ages). These two compilations, and others like them, were used in place of the expensive classical books on mythology. By using one of these handbooks, one could acquire an entire library. Excerpts from Ovid, Macrobius, Pausanias, Apollodorus, Homer, and Virgil made these writers familiar and their works common. These handbooks were so voluminously packed with classical allusions and quotations, indeed, that, to take a pointed example, one critic will grant only four books a definite influence on Spenser: Lucretius (whom Spenser translated), Alain de Lille (and this has been challenged), and the two handbooks mentioned above.

Another reason these mythological handbooks were so popular was that in them the myths were often allegorized and explained. Another feature was their casual mixture of myth and quoted poetry—which made the point of emphasizing myth as an essential substance of poetry, important in the renaissance.

Boccaccio's book, very long, contains, for example, chapters, "De Cupidino primo, secundi Mercurii filio," "De Cupidine Veneris filio," and "De Amore XII Jovis filio." There are three chapters as well on Venus, and the Venuses are not the same: "De Venere magna VI Celi filia," "De secunda Venere Celi VII filia et matre
Cupidinis," and "De Venere Jovis XI filia, que peperit Amorem." The story of Adonis and Venus is told in some detail, and casual interpretations of the various parts of the story are noted. Boccaccio does not, however, treat Nature as a goddess, probably because she was rarely treated in classical times: most of the stories and myths of Nature came in the middle ages.

Natali Conti's *Mythologiae* contains more quotations from classical authors than Boccaccio's book. Conti's book is even longer than Boccaccio's, containing over 1100 pages and a fifty-page index. The introduction of the first chapter on Venus is notable:

This Venus, whom sensual men ordinarily call the goddess of delights, of pleasures, of delicacies, of gentleness, of elegance, of generation, causing all the world to be coupled, joining together creatures of the air, the land and the sea; a very pretty lady, agreeable, powerful enough to cause miracles, a Princess multiplying through love, who by a voluptuous germ assembles both sexes and continues their species even to the end of the world...

It is remarkable, it seems, that the very first mention of Venus in this book, which employs all the classical material available, should concern her importance as a goddess of regeneration and rebirth. Venus causes all species to propagate according to the teachings of Nature: so the connection between the two goddesses is made.
Spontaneous growth occurs in Conti's version of the Garden of Venus. The various origins of Venus, the several versions of her birth, and accounts of two Cupids, are all given by Conti; in most instances a source for each principal fact is quoted (and any Greek is translated into Latin). The Adonis story is told in detail.

The importance of these handbooks (and their popularity seems to indicate one kind of importance which can be given them) lies in the fact that Venus and Cupid (and the other gods and goddesses for that matter) were not viewed as simple personifications of one characteristic or quality, but came to represent almost vital persons, sometimes with human failings of inconsistency and contradiction. This is particularly the case with Venus.

Venus' duality is shown not only in the mythological dictionaries and handbooks, but in much of the other literature of the middle ages. For every reference to Venus as Nature's helper or as a goddess of procreation, one can find at least one reference to Venus as a goddess of wanton lust, as for example the queen of a court of love. What seems to be more important, however, is that the second Venus, the goddess of wanton love and lust, did not predominate to the degree one
would expect. The first Venus, that of regeneration and of the natural process, dating from the first beginnings of the personage herself, continued almost uninterrupted up into the renaissance. The continuation is what I have tried to show in this chapter.
CHAPTER IV THE RENAISSANCE VENUS

If one characteristic can be termed either explicit or implicit in almost all sixteenth-century Italian poetry, that characteristic is Neo-Platonism. The Platonic academy in Athens remained intact for several centuries. The most important Platonic philosophizing after Plato, however, occurred in Alexandria, where Plotinus (third century A.D.) interpreted Plato's writings. Plotinus categorized the angels and included them in Plato's multi-leveled universe, and his disciples, Porphyry and Iamblicus, further extended the hierarchy until finally demons were included. Generally after Plotinus Plato's hierarchy was degraded. The Christian element which Plotinus first inserted prompted Saint Augustine to study the tradition.

Neo-Platonism owed its popularity in Italy (and much of Europe) to Marsilio Ficino and his disciple, Pico della Mirandola. The famous Platonic Academy (so-called) founded by Ficino near Florence under Lorenzo de Medici's patronage was responsible for much of the popularity of the Neo-Platonic doctrine which, from Ficino's pen, flooded Western Europe. Ficino's accomplishments were immense: he made the first com-
plete translation of Plato's dialogues into Latin, wrote lengthy Latin commentaries on them as well, and translated Plotinus and Hermes Trismegistus. Because he had learned Greek by reading Dionysius the Areopagite and Proclus, two Neo-Platonists, and because he read Plotinus' Enneads along with Plato's dialogues, his version of Platonism was decidedly Neo-Platonic.¹

Since Ficino's Platonism was the basis for most expressions of Neo-Platonism in Italian (and other) literature of the succeeding century, his basic doctrine, generally as it relates to Venus, will be given here.

"Love is the key to Ficino's entire system: it links his theology with his epistemology, and both with his ethics. It is for this reason that the 'Commentary on the Symposium' was the work selected to epitomize his whole philosophy."² Plato's Symposium consists of a series of definitions and explanations of love expounded by several Athenians at a banquet. All the ideas expressed are not reconcilable, and one mistake made by many readers is trying to fit all these ideas into one consistent system. Ficino's commentary attempts to explain everything in the Symposium in
terms of love: whether he believed he was explaining Plato or making his own system is not easy to decide from the work, but he explains all the incongruous parts rather well.

Phaedrus has the first speech defining love, whose origin he thus explains: "Love is the oldest and wisest of the gods, and perfect in himself." Ficino explicates Phaedrus' speech as follows: the First Essence was created, formless, but because created from God it turned toward God, was illumined by His glory which kindled its passion which caused it to draw closer to God. By cleaving to God in this way it assumed Form or Idea. This Form contained in some way the original of its material existence, in the same way that the Idea or Form of fire contained the form of the god Vulcan, who became mythologized from it. "It was that still formless substance which we mean by Chaos; that first turning toward God we call the birth of Love.... This composite of all the Forms and Ideas we call in Latin a mundus, and in Greek a cosmos, that is Orderliness. The attractiveness of this Orderliness is Beauty.... And so we may say that the nature of Love is this, that it attracts to beauty, and links the unbeautiful with the beautiful."
The second speech is Pausanias'. Love is Venus, or vice-versa. The relation of Venus to the Love defined by Phaedrus is explained in some detail by Pausanias:

To sum it up, Venus is two-fold: one is clearly that intelligence which we said was in the Angelic Mind; the other is the power of generation with which the World-Soul is endowed. Each has as consort a similar Love. The first, by innate love is stimulated to know the beauty of God; the second, by its love, to procreate the same beauty in bodies. The former Venus first embraces the Glory of God in herself, and then translates sparks of that divine glory into earthly matter. It is because of the presence of sparks of this kind that an individual body seems beautiful to us, in proportion to its merits. The human soul perceives the beauty of these bodies through the eyes.

The soul also has two powers. It certainly has the power of comprehension, and it has the power of generation. These two powers in us are the two Venuses which are accompanied by their twin Loves. When the beauty of a human body first meets our eyes, the mind, which is the first Venus in us, worships and adores the human beauty as an image of the divine beauty, and through the first, it is frequently aroused to the second. But the power of generation in us, which is the second Venus, desires to create another form like this. Therefore, there is a Love in each case: in the former, it is the desire of contemplating Beauty; and in the latter, the desire of propagating it; both loves are honorable and praiseworthy, for each is concerned with the divine image.

Of what, therefore, does Pausanias disapprove in love? I shall tell you. If a man is too eager for procreation and gives up contemplation, or is immoderately desi-
rous of copulation with women, or consorts unnaturally with men, or prefers the beauty of the body to that of the soul, insofar he abuses the dignity of love. It is this abuse of love which Pausanias censures. Therefore, a man who properly respects love praises, of course, the beauty of the body; but through it he contemplates the more excellent beauty of the soul, the mind, and God, and admires and loves this more fervently than the other. Moreover, he performs the functions of generation and coition within the bounds prescribed by natural law and civil laws drawn up by men of wisdom.

The Venus of wanton love and sensual delights controls that love which is not for the purpose of generation and procreation.

Eryximachus' speech is interpreted, in a sophisticated way, to refer to the love defined previously. His speech is used to reinforce the central part of Ficino's philosophy: "that the world is organized and run on the principle of love, that love is its unity as well as the motivation of each of its parts."

The famous myth of Aristophanes is given in the fourth speech. Man originally consisted of one body which contained both what is now man and what is now woman. Because he considered the vulgar love of the body for itself more important than the love of the body as the way to God, he was divided into two parts.

Socrates' own speech again concerns the two Venuses:
"one clearly the ability of the soul to know divinity; the other, the ability of the soul to propagate lower forms." Though called good and bad, "in reality, both are good, since the creation of offspring is considered just as necessary and honorable as the quest after truth. But the second Venus has been called bad since it often disturbs us on account of our abuse of it; and turns the soul aside from its own good, which consists in the contemplation of the truth, and directs it toward baser pursuits." Dictima describes Love thus: "So that gods may somehow endure for us forever, we desire to recreate those which pass away. That re-creation is effected by generation. Hence has been born in everyone the instinct for generation. But since generation, by continuation, renders mortal things like divine, it is certainly a divine gift."

The Venuses of Pausanias are explained in terms of their origin as well. Of the two Venuses, one is celestial and terrestrial: the celestial is the daughter of Celios or heaven and has no mother, while the terrestrial is the child of Zeus and Dione. The celestial Venus is said to have no mother because she is in no way associated with matter, which is often called by physicists the mother of all. The terrestrial Venus is the
offspring of Zeus, the generative virtue of the World Soul; and since she is infused into the material universe and is therefore in continual contact with matter she is reputed to have a mother..."\textsuperscript{12} This distinction is strikingly similar to Plotinus' version: "To us Aphrodite is twofold; there is the heavenly Aphrodite, daughter of Ouranos or Heaven; and there is the other the daughter of Zeus and Dione, that is the Aphrodite who presides over earthly unions; the higher was not born of a mother and has no part in marriage for in heaven there is no marrying."\textsuperscript{13} Ficino distinguishes further between the two Venuses thus: "The one is drawn by innate love to contemplate the Supreme Beauty; the other, by a kindred impulse, is moved to create a likeness of that beauty in material form. The first embraces the divine splendour and infuses it into the terrestrial Venus, who imparts it to the world of matter."\textsuperscript{14}

These Platonic Venuses can be seen to be distinct from the medieval Venuses of the previous chapter; yet at the same time certain similarities, more basic than particular, are discernible. The most important and most readily noticeable probably stems from the categorization begun by Plato originally: the world as a
tri-leveled place, with a powerful being, an agent, and man or matter occupying the three levels. Venus throughout the middle ages is the agent of God or Nature or both, and her primary function is to insure the continuation of the race of man through generation. The celestial Venus, who directs man to heavenly Beauty or Love, was one of the more complicated Platonic doctrines, and this Venus is rarely found in the literature of the middle ages because the more complicated doctrines were not readily available until Ficino's translations of the dialogues.

The expressions of Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas in literature did not begin with Ficino. Dante, writing a century and a half before, was regarded by the Academicians as an illustrious forerunner. Dante's ideas of love as a means of moral perfection, "an ascent through successive stages of contemplation toward a celestial vision," probably came from Dionysius, Augustine, and the early translation of the *Timeaus* made by Chalcidius.

Petrarch also deserves mention as one who expressed Platonic ideas in his poetry, but he and those who came after him and before Ficino have but occasional Platonic thoughts, and even those not deep or thorough. After Ficino, however, relative completeness and thorough-
ness were often the case. One work deserves attention as a poetic expression of Neo-Platonic Love: Benivieni's *Canzone dell'Amor Divino* (late fifteenth century), to which Pico della Mirandola added notes. It became almost as famous in its own day as Cino's "Commentary on the Symposium."¹⁸ The soul, entering the body, forgets the intellectual Beauty it formerly knew, but, because it sees traces of Beauty in physical forms, it is led back to Celestial Venus, "who in fullness of her Beauty, not being comprehensible by any particular intellect, she, as much as in her lies, endeavors to be united to the first mind, the chiefest of creatures and general habitation of Ideal Beauty."¹⁹

This Love, for that he on the amorous breast
Of the fair Cyprian at the first has lain,
To follow still is fain
The starry splendour of her fairest face,
Hence our first stirrings of desire attain
Through him an object newly manifest;
And sharing his high quest,
The way to highest good we too retrace....

As from first good the eternal intelligence
Is, lives, conceives, so conceives, moves, creates
The soul; where germinates
Each living ray shed from the breast divine....

And from that soul, as the heavenly from God's shrine,
Is earthly Venus born, whose beauty lights
The skies, inhabits earth, is nature's veil.²⁰

Benivieni, however, was Christian-focused, while
Poliziano was one of the poets, with Lorenzo de Medici, associated with the Academy. His long poem, Stanze per la Giostra (late fifteenth century), incomplete, tells of the first meeting of the lovers to whom it was addressed, of the man's infatuation, and of Cupid's triumphant return to the Kingdom of Venus, described in a long series of stanzas. Because of the incomplete state of the poem, the Neo-Platonic doctrine must be almost entirely assumed, but it is evident that the Venus who figures so largely in the poem is that terrestrial Venus who delights in reproduction, and not the Venus of vain, wanton pleasures. Poliziano perhaps drew from other sources than Neo-Platonism in creating his "picture of a world governed and linked up by love and permeated by secret sympathies and affections,..." In Venus' garden, there are "secret sympathies even between inanimate things. The wind plays lovingly through the grasses...and the waters of the fountain feed the trees whose branches shade them from the heat, so that trees and fountain alike increase by mutual liberality.... The trees themselves twine together in a loving embrace... while the beasts and birds and even the fishes in the stream are moved by the same force.... Moreover it is by the power of Love that the whole of this enchanted
world is preserved and made eternal": 23

There comes nor hoar frost light nor chilling snow
To dim the eternal garden's locks to white.
Therein the frozen Winter dare not go,
That grass, those trees, no blasts unfriendly blight.
There the revolving years no changes show
Since joyous Spring takes never hence her flight,
But loosens her bright hair upon the winds
And myriad blossoms into garlands binds. 24

Classical influences besides Plato seem present in
Poliziano's garden of Venus, and this version easily
can occupy a choice position in the earthly paradise
tradition.

A slightly later poet who was a close follower of
Ficino and his doctrine was Giovanni Nesi. His Poema
Visione, a dream poem, shows the poet looking onto the
earth from a distance. The Temple of Venus Urania is
set in the Garden of Ideas, which was the birthplace
of Love, and Venus is hailed as "the power through which
all things are brought into being and preserved:

Hail to thee therefore, goddess blest and true
Through whom all is that is; who quickened all
The lives that dost in thy Idea renew. 25

The garden is described: therein all forms known on
earth exist in their primal beauty and perfection:

Whatever heaven from its sacred breast
Of living light flung to the womb of earth
In this or that Idea is manifest.
As in a golden cloud are bodied forth
Infinite gems, each one of which doth hide
Immortal forms, within awaiting birth.
Hardly on earth are they to be described
And in a mortal vesture they enfold
Forms that in heaven are bare, to heaven allied.
I think there are not stars so manifold
As these ideas; and all are joined in one
Fairer than heaven, which heaven's height doth hold.
What here is nourished by moon or sun
After the forms celestial is designed
They from the fount where all has unison
There dwelleth all that is, for every mind
And every soul and life and truth is there
Harboured, and nothing out of it we find.
And if a free and lofty flight thou dare
Well shalt thou see that thou without him art
And wast a dream, a shade, a cipher bare,
Save in so far as his designs impart
A form to thee, for He the pattern traced
Which, though the heavens revolve, shall ne'er depart....
Upon its ample vesture is enwrought
The image of the form divine, whereby
To rude and barren matter form is brought.26

This is perhaps the least material garden of Venus yet described in literature, and in this respect it looks forward to Spenser's Garden of Adonis, which has, however, a physical description to balance the philosophical.

Michelangelo Buonarroti's lyrics (sixteenth century) are perhaps the purest, most comprehensible expression of the Neo-Platonism of the Italian renaissance. Their being based on popularized ideas was probably responsible for their purity and simplicity:27
I know not if it be the fancied light
which every man or more or less doth feel;
or if the wind and memory reveal
some other beauty for the heart's delight;
or if within the soul the vision bright
of her celestial home once more doth steal,
drawing our better thoughts with pure appeal
to the true Good above all mortal [sic]
sight:
this light I long for and ungladd seek.28

One other sixteenth century Italian writer should
be mentioned. Palingenius Stellatus' Platonism is basic
enough for it to have been gotten from medieval sources
and he cannot, therefore, be termed a Ficinean Neo-Pla-
tonist.29 Many of the ideas expressed in Palingenius'
book, Zodiacus Vitae (early sixteenth century), are
familiar ones, but one especially concerns us here.
Book IV contains a discussion of love: Arete sends a
young man to explain to the narrator that without Venus
"the use of the earth would cease" and that "through
love there is permanence and order."

Hir God hath ordeynd, that she myght the losse
which nature brought
Full recompence, which God appoynts that hurt-
ful cannot be.
What then of them shall I reporte content with
chastitie,
That fayre encrease do not esteeme: but voyd
of issue die,
And leave no signes of them behinde, they sinne
assuredly.
And if the truth may here be sayd, unworthy
birc his gives
Nature, of whom not one is borne, unworthy
she he lives
By whome another hath no life....30
While not strictly Neo-Platonic, the idea of Love as a universal force is implicit in Neo-Platonism, and the exhortation to multiply and fill the earth is medieval as well.

In England Neo-Platonism was not a factor in poetry until Spenser himself made much use of it. Rather the medieval view of Venus is still present in Chaucer's poetry and, through Chaucer, this view is also the view of the imitators of Chaucer. As in the middle ages, Venus is often subordinated to Nature, and, still, Nature and Venus are usually subordinate to God and act, though sometimes independently, on his general command.

Chaucer treats Nature in The Parliament of Fowls. The setting is the Temple and Garden of Venus. This garden, again in the medieval garden tradition, is described:

Th'air of that place so attempre was
That nevere was ther grevance of hot ne cold;
There wax ek every holisom spice and gras;
No man may there waxe sek ne old;
Yet it was there joye more a thousandfold
Than man can talle; ne nevere wolde it nyghte,
But ay cler day to any manes syghte.31

Venus' courtly love background, in the form of a court
and various allegorical figures, is next described, but then the narrator (who is dreaming) notices one fairer than all the others: it is Nature:

And in a launde, upon an hil of flovres, Was set this noble goddesse Nature. Of brounches were here halles and here bours Iwrought after here cast and here mesure; Ne there nas foul that cometh of engendrure That they ne were prest in here presence; To take hire and yere hire audience....

And right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kynde, Devyseth Nature of aray and face, In swich aray men myghte hire there fynde.

Nature, the vicaire of the almyghty Lord, That hot, cold, heavy, lyght, moyst, and dryye Hath knyt by even© noumbres of accord....

The occasion for Nature's presence in Venus' Garden is St. Valentine's Day, when all the birds are congregated there to choose their mates, Robinson notes that the birds resemble the birds pictured on Nature's dress in Alain's *De Planctu Naturae*, and the birds are there compared to an "animalium concilium." This, plus Chaucer's reference to Alain and his "Pleynt of Kynde," make clear Chaucer's having known the work, and the figures of Nature in the two works are very similar. Nature's position, however, as a judge at a court of love seems peculiar and a job more suited to Venus. This emphasizes, then, the similarity between Venus and Nature.
The group often referred to as the imitators of Chaucer could as easily be called imitators of Alain. "They all deal with the personification of nature and in their treatment of her as the servant of God and guide of mankind reflect something of Plato's cosmological theory." The poets who can be put into this group are Lydgate, Dunbar, Hawes, Gavin Douglas, Rolland, and the anonymous author of *The Court of Venus*. Gower also should be mentioned.

Lydgate is the most important, and his work, *Reson and Sensuallyte*, the most typical for our purposes. The poem is a translation of part of *Les Echecs Amoureux*, and, as can be guessed from the title, concerns the contrast often, and here, represented by Diana and Venus. Nature, greater than Venus, is described first:

```
This emperesse, y yow ensure,
I-called was Dame Nature,...
For this is she that is stallyd
And the queene of kynde called,
And under God the chefe goddesse,
The whiche of erthe, this no dout,
Hath governance rounds about,
To whom al thing must enclyne....
And this lady, Dame nature,
Through hir myghte, this verray trewe,
Alle erthely thing repaireth newe
By natural revolution
And new generation....
For which this lady in hir forge
Newe and newe ay doth forge
Thynges....```

34
Those who disobey Nature's laws often are led before her priest, Genius. You shall find

That his power is Auctorised
And through the world eke solemnysed,
To a-coursen alle tho
That ageyn my lawes do.36

Venus is then described: she was born from Saturn's genitals. Her power is immense, though she admits being less powerful than Nature:

I take recorde of thise clerkys,
That the forge of al hir werky,  
Without me, in certeyn;
Was nat maked but in veyn,
For but I put to my care
Hir forgyng myghte nat endure,
To hyr I am so knyt by bonde
Necessarie to hir kinde,
I make redy alle thing
Pertynent to hir forgyng,
And pleynly, lyke to hir desire,
In hir forge I make the fire,
Ordeyn for hammer and for stith,
Without me, that forgeth ought.37

But whereas Nature is superior to Venus, so also is Venus superior to Cupid, who acts as Venus' subordinate. Venus, speaking to the narrator, adds that he need feel no guilt at wondering at the commands of both Nature and herself: their commands cannot be contradictory, because both goddesses are essentially the same.38 The basic medieval world structure is seen again, but the emphasis has shifted a little. The focus is on courtly love. Venus is shown, even in this
poem, as a goddess of courtly love, and the poet seems to be trying to retain for her both a courtly love and a natural function.39 The result of this double role is a little confusing. In Lydgate's "Complaint of the Black Knight" the goddess Nature likewise is subordinate to God, but has the governance of all earthly things.40.

Stephen Hawes' The Pastime of Pleasure deals with the same theme as the Roman de la Rose. La Belle Amoure (male) tells Venus how his love, La Bell Pucell (female), was created by Dame Nature; his complaint is that she repulses him and will not accept his love. Venus is upset, and has Cupid bear a letter to the lady:

What was the cause of your creacyon  
But man to love the world to multeply  
As to sowe the sede of generacyon  
With fervent love so well convenyently  
The cause of love engendreth perfytely  
Upon an entente of dame Nature  
Whiche you have made so fayre a creature

That of dame Nature what is the entent  
But to accomplyshe her fayre sede to sowe  
In such a place as is convenyent  
To goddes pleasure for to encrease and growe.41

This is the advice of Nature in De Planctu Naturae and of Genius in the later part of Le Roman de la Rose. Venus is here again seemingly subordinate to, or at least on a less aloof level than, Nature, but Venus does give the advice in this poem. Another of Hawes'
works, The Example of Virtue, gives a similar picture of Nature's power.

John Holland's Ane Treatise Callit The Court of Venus is a conventional treatment of Venus as a goddess of courtly love. The two figures, Esperance and Desperance, argue about love. Desperance speaks against courtly love (so rudely that Esperance faints from shock) and must be tried at Venus' court.42 "The Parliament of Love," a minor, anonymous poem, also presents a typical court of love, presided over by Venus.43 The hero of Gavin Douglas' The Palice of Honour sings of love's inconstancy before Venus and is tried at her court.44

The number of poems which present Venus in this atmosphere of the court of love, with no hint either of Venus' regenerative function or of Nature's power, is quite large. Dunbar's The Thistle and the Rose contains these lines:

Birds were singing in the garden,
"Haill May, haill Flora, haill Aurora schene
Haill Princes Nature, haill Venus luvis quene."45

Here Venus is at least taken out of the courtly love tradition enough to be associated with Nature and the spring.
In the anonymous *The Court of Venus* Genius is the "clarke" of Venus, whereas up to this time Genius has been Nature's assistant:

Venus knew I had a woeful hart
And wher we thus content she knoweth her relefe
To me therefore she send her owne clarke
To slacke my sorrowes, and helpe me of my gryefe.46

Genius asks the complaining lover to write up his complaint and he presents it at Venus' court. Not only is this a good example of the courtly love Venus, but it also incorporates Genius into the courtly love system.

John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* more closely resembles *Le Roman de la Rose* than any other English work of the period. But whereas the basic structure is similar—Nature confessing to her priest, Genius, of man's failings in the *Roman*; and the lover confessing to Venus' priest, Genius, in this poem—the tone is different. The courtly love attitude, quite submerged and subordinated in the second part of the *Roman*, predominates throughout the *Confessio Amantis*. The digressions in Gower's poem, moreover, are more unified and well-organised than in the French poem.47

Two traditions can be seen in the sixteenth
century making their way toward Spenser: one combines the Venus of the Neo-Platonism revived in Italy by Ficino with the medieval and classical tradition of Venus as a goddess of regeneration and rebirth; the other is the courtly love tradition of Venus. Spenser recognizes each of these traditions, and uses them in his poetry, but usage does not mean adoption, and Spenser does not adopt them all. Most especially does Spenser seem to refuse to adopt the attitude his countrymen have taken toward Venus in the centuries preceding him, the courtly love attitude.
CHAPTER V  SPENSER’S VENUS

Edmund Spenser lived in the latter half of the sixteenth century, one or two generations after Hawes and Douglas. His works illustrate the traditions of Venus both as a courtly love goddess and as a goddess of rebirth; this latter tradition including much of Spenser’s Neo-Platonism. Likewise, the tradition of Nature as a goddess of comparable, and usually higher, power is shown in the Mutability Cantos (Book VII) of the Faerie Queen. Genius and Cupid as figures associated with Venus can be seen in Spenser’s poetry as well, and Spenser’s work can be discussed as the culmination of both traditions of Venus.

Venus appears in three extended episodes in Books III and IV of the Faerie Queen, and the distinctions clearly indicated by Spenser warrant their being discussed separately. In the first episode she is the subject of a panel of tapestries in Castle Joyous, the house of Malecasta; in the second she is the mistress of the Garden of Adonis; in the third she is the goddess of the Temple of Venus. By a careful reading of each of these three sections of the poem, the differences in the function of Venus in each context are made
clear, and Spenser's purposes seen. These purposes are seen, moreover, to follow in the traditions which have been outlined in the preceding chapters.

1. The Venus of Castle Joyous

The first episode occurs in the first canto of Book III. Britomart, the chief representative of Chastity, riding alone, sees a knight defending himself against six other knights. Disliking the odds, Britomart interrupts and asks the cause of the fight: the six answer that they are fighting the one because he will not renounce his lady and serve theirs, Malecasta. The single knight is none other than St. George, the Red-Cross Knight, the hero of Book I, loyal to his lady, Una. Britomart aids the Red Cross Knight, and they defeat the other six; together all eight enter Malecasta's palace, Castle Joyous. Inside, the atmosphere is rich and sumptuous, and many ladies and knights entertain the newcomers.

The most notable of the furnishings is a tapestry which tells

The love of Venus and her Paramoure
The faire Adonis, turned to a flowre...
First the "fervent fits" Venus undergoes when first smitten with love for Adonis are portrayed, then with what sleights and sweet allurements she
Entyst the Boy, as well that art she knew,
And wooed him her Paramoure to be...2

She is shown pampering him and wooing him, and leading him into a secret glade where she watches over him while he sleeps;

And whilst he bath'd, with her two crafty spyes,
She secretly would search each daintie limb,
And throw into the well sweet Rosemaryes,
And fragrant violets, and Pances trim,
And ever with sweet Nectar she did sprinkle him.3

She wins his heart, and "joy'd his loue in secret wmespyde."4 But the warning she gives him against fighting the boar is ignored and he is shown dead in one panel, and turned into a flower in the last.

C.S. Lewis argues that, here and in the picture of the Castle of Bussyranne (in canto xii of the same book), Spenser is portraying a courtly love element to contrast with the conjugal chastity of the heroines, Amoret and Britomart. The ornateness of the setting; the threat to all newcomers either to fight for their lady or yield to Malecasta; the couples reveling, dancing, and using the beds in the large chamber; the lady acting as the head of the castle; and the pairing off the ladies with
the knights—all these things are elements of courtly love, and the overall effect is of a courtly love system. Moreover

every gentle Squire
Can choose his dame with Basciornari gay
With whom he meant to make his sport and courtly play.

An elaborate comparison of the six knights who challenge the Red Cross Knight with a corresponding group in Le Roman de la Rose has been made by Fowler, which strengthens the argument that Spenser is describing courtly love.

Cupid is a powerful person inside the Castle of Malecasta:

And Cupid still amongst them kindled lustful fires.

Cupid here, as in Le Roman de la Rose, must be dissociated from Venus and regarded alone: Cupid need not always be with his mother. This Cupid, rather, is the refined sentiment and representative of the sophistication of courtly love.

The element of courtly love begun in the house of Malecasta is developed and emphasized in the house of Busyrane in canto xii. The Mask of Cupid in that later canto pictures the same "deep human suffering" which underlies the love presented by Guillaume de Lorris in the first part of Le Roman de la Rose, what C.S. Lewis
calls "its heartbreaking glitter, its sterility, its suffocating monotony." Cupid, and not Venus, is the symbol of this love: the Venus who adorns the tapestry of the Castle of Malecasta does not appear in the house of Busyrane. Cupid's power is not, because he acts without his mother, slight: the danger of courtly love is difficult to overcome: Amoret is almost impossible to rescue from Busyrane's castle (only Britomart can do it), and even Britomart (Chastity) is wounded in Castle Joyous after she has refused Malecasta's invitation to love: the element of courtly love influences Britomart enough to cause her to be "wounded" here.10

Perhaps the most obvious and most important aspect of the story of Venus and Adonis in the Castle of Malecasta is its being presented on a tapestry. This Venus and Adonis are not real. Venus, it should be noted, is described as craftily peering at the naked Adonis, her slyness being emphasized.

The Castle of Malecasta, then, represents the life of courtly love, and the tapestry of Venus and Adonis in the castle shows the mythological analogue to courtly love. Cupid, here and in the house of Busyrane, is the god of this love; Venus is generally ignored in the con-
text of courtly love in Spenser (except for an important passage discussed later). The attitude of Spenser to Cupid in other parts of his poetry generally corresponds to the attitude adopted here: Cupid is the blind god, wanton and unheeding, the god who complicates life for the lover.

2. The Venus of the Garden of Adonis

The second episode of the Faerie Queene which contains a long passage on Venus is the Garden of Adonis episode. This occurs in the sixth canto of Book III, and its central position emphasizes its importance for the entire book. Indeed, most of the central characters must be interpreted with the Garden of Adonis and its significance in mind. While the significance of this passage is important, however, the episode adds little to the plot: the allegory, rather than the plot, must be emphasized when speaking of the Garden of Adonis.

Canto vi tells of the birth of Amoret and her beautiful sister, Belphoebe, who is the subject of much of the preceding canto. The readers must wonder who this beautiful Belphoebe is, and why she lives in the woods, away from court. Her mother, Chrysogonee, one summer
day lay naked after bathing and slept; in this position she was impregnated by the rays of Titan,

Great father he of generation.

When birth was imminent, Chrysogonee stole into the woods, fell asleep again, and was delivered "unwares" of twin daughters.

Venus, meanwhile, had lost her son, Cupid, and had come to earth to seek him. She sought first in the court, then in the cities, then in the country. Finally she tried the savage forests and accidentally came upon Diana, naked after bathing. Diana was ashamed at being thus surprised, especially by her old rival, and shortly asked Venus her reason for being in the woods. Venus told her, and Diana, after uttering some insults, agreed to help her search. They found Chrysogonee instead of Cupid, but she was asleep and not aware that she had given birth. Each of the goddesses took one of the babes to rear: Diana named hers Belphoebe and took her to the forest to be reared; Venus named hers Amoret and reared her in the Garden of Adonis.

The description of the Garden of Adonis occupies stanzas 29 to 50 of canto vi. Stanzas 7 to 9 of that canto form a sort of prelude to the Garden of Adonis passage: in that prelude the sun is called the "father
...of generation" and the "author of life and light."
Adonis, called by several of the ancient mythographers
the sun, is heralded, perhaps, by this allusion, and
Spenser's concept of the form-matter relationship is
begun here, to be expanded in the longer passage to
follow. The relation of the sun to the birth of the
twins of Chrysogonee is the reason for its being de-
scribed.

The first section of the longer passage (stanzas
29-35) describes the profusion of plants:

> there is the first serainarie
> Of all things, that are borne to line and die
> According to their kindes.13

Genius is the porter of the two gates of the Garden of
Adonis, and he lets those naked babes out who wish to
go into the world, after clothing them with "sinfull
mire" and "fleshly weedes." He also lets those in
by the back gate who return after death. Those who
are returned "planted be again," remain a thousand
years, and

> are clad with other hew,
> Or sent into the chaungefull world again.16

They run the entire circle from new to old to new again.
No gardener is needed,

> for of their owne accord
> All things, as they created were, doe grow,17

remembering the Almighty's "word" to increase and mul-

tily. Nor do they need water,

    For in themselves eternall moisture they imply. 18

All sorts of "formes" are "bred" there, all according to their kind: some are fit for human souls, some for beasts, birds, or fishes.

The second section (stanzas 36-38) tells of the everlasting store of substance supplied by "an huge eternall Chaos." 19 This substance is the first cause of life: from it form and feature become a body and enter the state of life. When form fades and life decays, the substance remains: it changes but remains the same substance, while forms are variable and decay.

The third section (stanzas 39-42) describes the enemy of the Garden and all its occupants: Time. He mows the herbs and other things with his scythe, and never shows pity. Even the gods have shown pity but Time will not. Venus laments the ravages of Time, but she can not find redress for such wrongs:

    For all that liues, is subject to that law: All things decay in time, and to their end so draw. 20

Were it not for Time all would be happy in the Garden, for plenty and pleasure and bliss are all there.
Continual spring and harvest occur at the same time.
Blossoms and fruit at once deck and burden the trees.

The last section (stanzas 43-50) gives the allegory
of Venus and Adonis. In the liddle of the Garden stands
a stately mount surrounded by a grove of myrtle trees.
In the thickest part of the grove is a natural arbor,
fashioned by the entwinings of the trees and vines:
neither sun nor wind can penetrate there. Every sort
of flower grows there, and there does Venus enjoy her
dear Adonis,

And reape sweet pleasure of the wanton boy. \(^{22}\)
She possesses him, "and of his sweetnesse takes her fill." \(^{23}\)
The frank and open love of Venus and Adonis in the Garden
contrasts with the peeping and almost perverted love of
Venus for Adonis in the tapestry in Castle Joyous.

Some say that she hidds Adonis from the Stygian gods
who would have him: but he can never die:

All be he subject to mortalitie,
Yet is eterne in mutabilitie,
And by succession made perpetuall,
Transformed oft, and chaunged diuerslie. \(^{24}\)

He is the father of all forms, and lives in the Garden
where he gives life to all others. He lives there safely,
for Venus has imprisoned the boar which is his natural enemy in a strong cave underneath the mount. Sometimes Cupid comes to visit, but he must leave his darts behind; he plays with Adonis, and also with his wife, Psyche, and their daughter, Pleasure. This Cupid is hardly compatible with the earlier portrayal of him in Castle Joyous, where he is not associated with Venus. The arrows signify his courtly love function, and that is why he must leave them outside the Garden: the courtly love element is not wanted in the procreative paradise.

To this Garden Venus brought Amoret and reared her as an example of true love and chaste affection. Afterwards many loved her, but she returned only the love of Scudamour.

Various elements of this passage have been much debated by commentators. Because of the many philosophical implications involved, many philosophers have been cited as the source for Spenser's doctrine of form and matter or his cosmology. Stirling's conclusion in Os-good's Variorum edition of Spenser's works can be quoted in this context: "Spenser's intention is popular, not subtle or esoteric, and his general meaning is clear and consistent if the passage is taken at face value."25 Certain ideas, however, should be cited to illustrate
the importance given them by all critics; and certain other basic usages, seen in earlier authors in other parts of this thesis, will be noted.

Certain large background ideas describing the Garden itself are worthy of note. The first, one which has caused this passage to be described as extremely poetic and pictorial, concerns the prolificness of plants and animals which live in the Garden. The beauty which is hinted and suggested more than actually described relates to this prolificness. The happy tone and the merriment and felicity of the lovers suggest the paradise which is explicitly stated in stanza 43.

No change of seasons spoils the continuity of the Garden's beauty:

There is continuall spring, and harvest there Continuall, both meeting at one time....

The splendid perpetuity and continuity of the Garden look back to other gardens noted earlier: the gardens of Alcinous and Adonis, and of Venus (in Claudian's De Nuptiis Honorii and the Italian Neo-Platonists).

Genius acts as a gate-keeper while supervising the departure of babes clothed with human flesh ("sinfull mire") into the world and the return of the dead to the Garden through the back gate. Reincarnation
of souls figures in the *Aeneid* and in Plato, and was not a new idea with Spenser.

Spenser's conception of the form-matter relationship has been the subject of much learned and erudite debate. The first mention of form and matter in the entire passage occurs in the prelude of the sun. Men find infinite shapes of creatures

Informed in the mud, on which the Sunne hath shyned. 27

The sun is

th'author of life and light;
And his faire sister for creation
Ministreth matter fit.... 28

So here the sun is form and his sister, Earth, matter.

In stanza 35

Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
And uncouth forms, which none yet ever knew.... 29

These forms are not the life-giving form which Adonis represents, but rather the bodies which, composed of matter and substance, await form and life. The substance is made into bodies which, when they assume form and feature, "inuado/ The state of life." 30 These substances can don sundry forms, 31 which are variable and decay, but the substance remains.

In Spenser's version of the allegory of the Gar-
den's processes, Adonis remains a paradox in more than one way. He can never die, but he is subject to mortality; he is "etern in mutabilitie" and the reason he can remain alive is that he is Transformed oft, and chaunged diuerslie, evidently by the substance of which he is composed being "hewed" with various forms. He is the "Father of all formes," yet he is one of the chief recipients of the benefits of the form principle: one, in this case, would expect him to represent that element which is changeless in him—the substance element—and Venus to represent either form or substance or both, since both are changeless in her. Such is not the case, and Adonis remains the "Father of all formes." An eighteenth century scholar, John Upton, in notes to the edition he published, called Venus form and Adonis matter, as did Greenlaw. Davis says the following: "Alone he symbolizes matter, from which all creation is derived and to which it ultimately returns; but by union with Venus, the divine and life-giving principle of form, he becomes the 'Father of all forms,' begetting an infinite progeny of living creatures." Woodhouse calls the two elements "material forms, represented by Adonis...", and material substance, represented
by Venus.\textsuperscript{36} Stirling's position is that Venus represents matter (as the earth) and Adonis, form (as the sun: the Adonis-sun equation was generally accepted\textsuperscript{37}).

Granted this relationship, one critic believes Spenser is following "the Aristotelian tradition blended with the Platonic as in medieval Christian philosophy. Aristotle...believed the male parent provided the form and the female, the matter. The 'formes,' then, referred to in stanza 12\textsuperscript{*} are transcendent, but the 'naked babes' of stanza 32, while also forms, are inseparable from matter, that is, immanent, and already present on the earth...."\textsuperscript{39}

The heavenly house and Venus' earthly home,

\begin{quote}
Where most she wonnes, when she on earth does dwell,\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}
cannot be equated, however, for the two houses are distinguished by Spenser.

Stirling, again, emphasizes Spenser's using a popular, eclectic (though mainly Platonic) tradition more than any detailed, erudite Platonism. The Garden is not Spenser's entire cosmos, but only that part which provides the substance-form union,\textsuperscript{41} while several usages of Spenser's show that he was not retaining the terminology of

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{*} Venus "left her heauenly hous/ The house of goodly formes and faire aspects...."\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}
refined Platonism.\textsuperscript{42}

The passage, then, can be viewed as a popular version of the concept of the form-matter relationship. Spenser's treatment of it is, while complicated, easily understood when taken at face value. The form of expression reveals a procedure worthy of the poet: first, the babes illustrate concretely the form-matter relationship; next, an abstract version of the relationship clears up any vague points; finally in the Venus and Adonis story, Spenser presents an allegory of the same relationship. Concrete illustration, abstract principle, allegorization follow in perfect order.

The Bower of Bliss (Book II, canto xii) is the companion to the Garden of Adonis. Both are beautiful, luxuriant paradises, both have an inner bower where the mistress of the place dwells, and in both passages natural descriptions are much and effectively used. Genius is the gate-keeper of both gardens.

But the gate-keeper of the Bower of Bliss is

\begin{quote}
not that celestiall powre, to whom the care
Of life, and generation of all
That liueth, pertaines in charge particular,\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

which might describe the Genius of the Garden of Adonis, but rather he is "oure Selfe" who shows us strange phantoms and secret ills.\textsuperscript{44} The Genius in the Garden, who
lets the naked babes out and allows the dead back in, can more easily be related to the Geniuses of Alain and Le Roman de la Rose than can this Genius. This one has been reduced almost to a demon.

The lovers in the Garden of Adonis are more straightforward than in the Bower:

Frankly each paramour his leman knowes in the Garden, and there there is no coy display by the woman whom Lewis calls Cissie and Flossie as there is in the Bower of Bliss. All is natural in the Garden of Adonis, while in the Bower of Bliss Flora's mother, Art,

as half in scorn
Of niggard Nature,
ornaments and decks and lavishly adorns her.

Lewis' distinction is a valid one: the Bower of Bliss is the place of intemperate pleasure and lasciviousness, whereas the Garden of Adonis is the first seminarie Of all things, that are borne to liue and die.

Acrasia's evil in turning her lovers into wild beasts when she is finished with them cannot be disregarded. The Bower of Bliss does not fit into the pattern of Books III and IV, where Chastity's chief enemy is courtly
love; the Bower is not an example of courtly love, as
the castles of Malecasta and Busyrane are: Cupid is
not mentioned at all in the passage.

The Garden of Adonis contains no goddess Nature.
But in the Mutability Cantos (Book VII), however, Spenser presents a Nature similar to the goddess used by
the medieval writers. Her role in the book is an impor-
tant one: she is called on to judge a dispute between
Jove and Mutability, and her decision is accepted at
once. Spenser does not describe Nature in detail, but
cites a precedent for his action in Chaucer, who rather
referred the reader to Alain,

who he thought
Had in his Plaint of Kindes describ'd her
well.49

The similarities between Venus and Nature in the Faerie
Queene indicate that some sort of relationship was meant
by Spenser; and Greenlaw has equated the Venus of the
Garden of Adonis with the Natura of Lucretius' De Rerum
Natura.50 Josephine Waters Bennett suggests that Na-
ture can be identified with the Venus principle of the
Neo-Platonic celestial world, as opposed to the Venus
of the earthly principle, represented by the Venus of
the Garden of Adonis. Spenser's knowledge of Neo-Pla-
tonism, seen as well in the Fowre Hymnes, was broad
3. The Venus of the Temple

The third extended passage concerning Venus occurs in the tenth canto of Book IV. Scudamour is telling of the way he won Amoret in the Temple of "great mother Venus." He hears that Amoret will be awarded to the first knight to win the Shield of Love. So he goes to the Temple. Outside the gates, guarded by twenty knights, he sees the Shield; he defeats the knights and, by displaying the Shield he has won, gets past the gates into the garden containing the Temple. Like the Garden of Adonis and the Bower of Bliss, it is a beautiful paradise, full of luxuriant growth,

and all that nature did omit,
Art, playing second natures part, supplied it. 52

Several pairs of lovers occupy the garden, while also some famous pairs of friends emphasize the fact that Friendship is the virtue of Book IV.

The actual Temple is guarded by Concord, flanked by her two sons, Love and Hate. Scudamour enters by virtue of the Shield between Love and Concord into the Temple where a hundred altars, tended by a hundred linen-dressed priestesses, burn with incense. Venus, motion-
less, stands upon a costly altar; she is hermaphroditic and wears a veil. A flock of little loves fly about her head while lovers prostrate before the altar complain of love's delay. Lucretius' "Hymn to Venus" occupies stanzas 44 to 47: Venus is hailed as the mistress of all nature and the "Joy of Gods and men"; springtime is her season, and all beasts then

In generation seek to quench their inward fire....

So all the world by thee at first was made. 53 Various women lie around her: Womanhood, Shamefastness, Cheerfulness, Modesty, Curtesie, Silence, Obedience; and in the lap of Womanhood sits Amoret. Scudamour holds up the Shield of Love, on which the image of Cupid with his bow and arrows is engraved, and Venus yields to his suit and gives him Amoret.

This passage contains an interesting mixture of elements: the two most obvious and basic are the ideas of Venus as the Great Mother as well as the mistress of all courtly love. The "Hymn to Venus," the female priestesses, and her veil and double sex imply the former, while the frequent use of abstract gate-keepers and attendants, the Cupids flying around her head, and the complaining lovers are reminiscent of the courtly love tradition. Besides the courtly fixtures, as Miss Tuve
remarks, "Spenser here shows a conception of Love which is neither the Reason-and-Sensuality motif of Book II [the Bower of Bliss] nor the service des dames of the medieval courtly romances. Spenser's conception of Love in the Garden of Venus [that is, in Book IV], especially as seen in the figure of Concord and in the hymn to Venus, is more like the idea of Love as a cosmic principle or creating force...." An interesting point in Spenser's description of Venus is that she is almost perfectly motionless: only when she gives Amoret to Scudamour does she move. She stands on an altar and could almost be a statue. In the Castle of Malecasta, Venus is presented in a tapestry seducing Adonis, while in the Garden of Adonis she is very much alive: here she is neither quite one nor the other, but a living statue or an inanimate person. The paradox of her appearance illustrates as well the dual function of courtly love goddess and Great Mother goddess which is presented in the Temple of Venus passage.

So Spenser lies in the tradition of treating Venus as a goddess of rebirth. Both in the Garden of Adonis and the Temple of Venus her function as re-creative is emphasized. Almost all the conventions which had converged to form the tradition are found in Spenser's
versions: some have been mentioned, some not. The more basic elements of the tradition—the garden, luxuriant plant and animal life, a consort, eternal spring—are, of course, present; smaller points—for instance, the linen clothing of both Venus' priestesses in the Temple and the priestesses of Isis—can easily be found. Spenser evidently was familiar with the tradition, and was aware he wrote in it.

The use of Nature as a substitute for or as a higher aspect of Venus in the tradition is seen in the Mutability Cantos. Neither Venus nor Cupid is associated with her explicitly, but the comparisons made between the Cantos and the Garden of Adonis and Temple of Venus passages indicate the similarity between Nature and Venus.

Spenser's use of the two figures of Cupid and Genius is remarkably consistent. Cupid's function remains much more constant throughout the poem than Venus'. He is always, with one major exception, a courtly love figure: the love he inspires is courtly and the aim of it is never regenerative. The exception is in the Garden of Adonis where he, having left his darts outside, could enter and play with his wife and child. Spenser, however, so identifies Cupid with courtly love that he creates a Mask of Cupid to represent the evils and sterility of it.
That Mask occupies almost an entire canto (canto xii of Book III). Winged Cupids also appear in the Temple of Venus as a fitting accompaniment to the prostrate lovers who complain before the great goddess. The idea of a "court" of love, popular in middle ages literature after the twelfth century, is what Spenser is using, and these Cupids are almost essential here.
CHAPTER VI, CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to show two points: that there was a continual tradition of Venus as a goddess of regeneration and rebirth in literature from the Greek period until the English renaissance; and that Spenser is inside, and perhaps culminates, that tradition. That this tradition is not the only one concerning Venus: that Venus can be other things than a goddess of rebirth has been indicated in the thesis as well.

The *Faerie Queene* illustrates Spenser's knowledge and exploitation of the Venus tradition. In Spenser's epic there are two Venuses, one of courtly love, one regenerative, described in three long sections.

The traditions of which the *Faerie Queene* is the culmination begin in classical times. In the first Greek writings Aphrodite has either of two aspects: she may be either a figure resembling Mother Nature, or she may be the personification of wanton sexual desire. The Aphrodite of natural growth comes from the Near Eastern religions, from which Greece derived Adonis as well. Homer treats only the wanton and lustful Aphrodite, while Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns stress the natural functions of Aphrodite. Plato is the first to state explicitly the dual
function of Aphrodite; he does this in the *Symposium*, which was widely read, and his distinctions tend to become fixed beliefs. The three-leveled universe which Plato explains includes Aphrodite as an agent between gods and man. Plutarch mentions Plato's distinctions when discussing the Isis religion in Egypt, which resembles the Aphrodite worship in Greece.

Latin literature continues the traditions begun by Greek writers. Venus is seen as a goddess of marriage in Sidonius and Claudian, while her wanton qualities are also implied. She is portrayed as a goddess of creation and universal love in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, and the *Pervigilium Veneris* shows her as a goddess of springtime and rebirth. Apuleius' *Golden Ass* shows the Platonic influence by having a dual Venus—goddess both of lust and rebirth. The *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* illustrate the Platonic doctrine of reincarnation of souls, a mystery which is controlled by Venus in the *Faerie Queene* and by Genius and Nature in several medieval works. The garden associated with Venus had become conventionalized by the time of Claudian, and his Garden of Venus, described in the *De Nuptiis Honorii*, shows Venus' power and function.

With the dominance of Christianity the pagan gods were discredited by the clergy. Venus' dual role becomes
more marked—one Venus is good and one is bad—and Na-
ture becomes an important goddess. The "Nature" poets—
Martianus Capella, Bernard Silvestris, Alain de Lille—
write of the triumph of the good Venus—she in control
of creation and re-creation—over the bad Venus—she who
leads men to lust. The figure of Genius emphasizes Venus'
and Nature's power. The Roman de la Rose continues the
treatment begun by the nature poets of Venus and Nature
as complementary goddesses, while the Italian mythographers
illustrate, prosaically, the dual character of Venus in
their handbooks.

The Neo-Platonism developed in renaissance Italy by
Marsilio Ficino contains a place for Venus: the Platonist
multi-leveled universe contains god, agent, and man, and
Venus is the agent. There are two Venuses in this hier-
archy and they occupy different levels. This Ficinean
doctrine is further illustrated by several poets, including
Benivieni, Poliziano, and Michelangelo.

The English poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth cen-
turies continue the medieval tradition, and have been
grouped into a "school of Alanus." These treat Venus
and Nature as goddesses of nature, sometimes working to-
gether, sometimes separately. The complicated code of
courtly love, borrowed especially from Le Roman de la
Rose, finds its way into this literature.

The Italian Platonism comes to England first with Spenser, who makes much use of it. The various types of love he presents in Books III and IV of the *Faerie Queene* illustrate certain levels of the Platonic hierarchy, and his other works illustrate his interest in the Platonic doctrine as well. Most striking in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is not the Neo-Platonism, however, but Spenser's treatment of Venus. Whereas before only one tradition of Venus has been used by any one writer, so that one gets either a goddess of wanton love or a goddess of natural rebirth, but not both, Spenser presents a Venus of courtly love (the most wanton in Spenser's viewpoint, because her aim was not procreation) in the Castle of Malecasta, and a Venus of natural regeneration in the Garden of Adonis. In a later passage, the Temple of Venus, she is fused and contains elements of both traditions. His figure of Nature in the Mutability Cantos shows his knowledge of the tradition.

The *Faerie Queene* continues the traditions begun in Greece, and can be said to terminate them. Spenser's successors, lacking either the personal temperament or the suitable literary milieu, did not continue to write poems about similar subjects (Milton being one excep-
tion). Spenser is the culmination, and his work is not an unworthy culmination. For one thing he realized the traditions and exploited them by using all the elements he possibly could. Again, the subject of Venus was easily adaptable to the literary genre which he chose as his medium. Finally, the taste of the age in which he wrote made both genre and subject popular.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I


5. In Rome of the third century A.D. there was a close association of Venus and Cares, and often one priestess served both goddesses. See: Roy Merle Peterson, The Cults of Campania (Rome, 1919), pp. 251-52.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II


2. Ibid., pp.114-16.


7. Ibid., p.71.


9. Ibid., p.411.


12. The distinction Plato makes concerns the names of the goddesses; how much was original with him, linguistically, is not clear.

13. The implication Pausanias draws can easily be seen not, indeed, to fit into any system of regeneration. See: De Planctu Naturae.

15. Ibid., p. 577.
16. Ibid., p. 578.


18. Ibid., p. 34.
19. Ibid., p. 28.
20. Ibid., p. 10.
21. Ibid., p. 33.
22. Ibid., p. 32.
23. Ibid., p. 46.


27. Ibid., p. 237.


30. Ibid., p. 236.

31. Ibid., p. 238. "An interesting Hymn to Dionysius contains references to several of the goddesses mentioned in the speech of Isis. Dionysius himself was one of the group which included Adonis, Attis, and Osiris. See: F. Legge, Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity (New York, 1950), I, p. 143.


36. See: *Le Roman de la Rose*.


52. Eternity exercises an "absolute control over all times." The souls of men fly over the bosom of Eternity, and this means "that whosoever attains unto that excellency of perfection, must first enter his aspiring steps by means of "nature...." Ibid., p. 23.

53. The Christian aspects of this identification will be considered in the next chapter.

54. Ovid, op. cit., p. 255.


FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III


5. Ibid., p.127.


7. William Allen Nicolson, The Origins and Sources of the "Court of Love," (Boston, 1899), p.22. The date (the thirteenth century) was the beginning of the Court of Love, when Venus became respectable in one sense by being associated with this convention.

8. Quoted, Seznec, op. cit., p.82.

9. Ibid.,


11. Ibid., p.149.

12. Ibid., p.150.

13. Ibid., p.148.


16. Lewis, op. cit., p.79.


18. Ibid., p.38.


20. Urania's presence is justified by the Platonic doctrine.


22. Ibid., p.112.


24. Ibid., p.31.

25. Ibid., p.35. Italics mine.

26. Ibid., p.34.

27. Ibid., p.32.

28. Ibid., pp.44-45.

29. Ibid., pp.46-49.

30. Ibid., pp.84, 85.


32. Ibid., pp.53-54.

33. Curtius, op. cit., p.121.

34. Ibid., p.124.


38. Lorris and Clopinel, op. cit., III, pp.43-44.
39. Ibid., p.47.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p.75.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., pp.164-65.
44. J.F.E. Raby, A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages (London, 1934), I, p.120.
47. Ibid., p.180.
48. Ibid., p.187 note.
49. Gunn, op. cit., p.203.
50. Ibid., p.244.
56. Ibid., I, pp.102-3.
57. An Orphic Hymn to Nature, however, is extant: "Nature, the parent of all, ... 'daedale'mother, ... first born, ... without end, ... father and mother of all things, ... nurse, ... eternal and ever moving." Quoted, Lotspeich, op. cit., p. 37.

58. Natalis Comitis, Mythologiae...., (Geneva, 1636); Noel le Comte, Mythologie...., tr. I.D.M. (Rouen, 1611).


60. Comte, op. cit., p. 308.


62. See: Nielson, op. cit.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV


2. Ibid., p. 24; Jayne's Introduction.

3. Ibid., p. 125.

4. Ibid., p. 128; italics his.

5. Ibid., pp. 142-43.

6. Ibid., p. 153; Jayne's note.

7. Ibid., p. 162. This seems inconsistent with Plato's version, where the two type loves result from the body's being divided. See: Plato, I, p. 562.


9. Ibid., p. 192

10. Ibid., p. 203

11. This Venus is evidently the one born from the foam of Uranus' genitals. See: Chapter II, above.


14. Robb, op. cit., pp. 79-80

15. See: Chapter II, above.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., pp.92-93.

24. Ibid., p.125.

25. Ibid., p.158.


27. Ibid., p.241.


33. Ibid., p.904.


37. Ibid., p.61.
38. Ibid., p. 61.

39. Both traditions seem to be working on the poet, whether he realizes it or not.


44. Gavin Douglas, Poetical Works, ed. John Small (Edinburgh, 1874), I.


FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER V


2. Ibid., 35.

3. Ibid., 36.

4. Ibid., 37.


6. FQ, III,i,56.

7. Variorum, p.211.

8. FQ, III,i,39.


10. Ibid., p.65.

11. FQ, III,vi,9.

12. See: Chapter II, above.

13. FQ, III,vi,30/.


15. Ibid., 33.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 34.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 36.

20. Ibid., 40.

21. Ibid., 41.
22. Ibid., 46.
23. Ibid., 36.
24. Ibid., 47.
26. FQ, III, vi, 42.
27. Ibid., 8-9.
28. Ibid., 9.
29. Ibid., 35.
30. Ibid., 37.
31. Ibid., 38.
32. Ibid., 47.
37. See: Chapter II, above.
38. FQ, III, vi, 12.
40. FQ, III, vi, 29.
42. For example, his use of "Substances" is a plural
form impossible for an incorporeal entity; rather he uses it to mean a "corporeal mass"; "form," likewise, is not consistently used in the higher Platonic sense, but sometimes as "phenomenal shapes." See: Variorum, p.349.

43. FQ, II,xii,47.

44. For the distinction between the "two-edged" use of the Roman "genius," see: C.S. Lewis, "Genius and Genius," RES, XII (1936), p.189.

45. FQ, III,vi,41.

46. Lewis, op. cit., p.331; FQ, II,xii,63-68.

47. FQ, II,xii,50.

48. FQ, III,vi,30.

49. FQ, VII,vii,9.


51. Josephine Waters Bennett, "Spenser's Venus and the Goddess Nature of the Cantos of Mutability," SP, XXX (1933), pp.163-64. The first two hymns concern mainly Venus and Cupid; the range of these hymns is from modified courtly love to a modified Platonism. In the later two hymns the Platonism is more specific and pure, and the tone more chaste.

52. FQ, IV,x,21.

53. Ibid., 46-47.

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