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"Use Me But as Your Spaniel": Feminism, Queer Theory, and Early Modern Sexualities

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THIS ESSAY EXPLORES TWO INTERRELATED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE way that we read representations of early modern female sexuality. Are depictions of female rivalry, masochism, promiscuity, and zoophilia ever feminist? And are those of female heteroeroticism ever either feminist or queer? In general, scholars of early modern literature have implicitly answered no to both questions, an answer that I will argue registers a persistent tension in the articulation of queer and feminist thought. One reason that scholars turn to the early modern period is that its representations of sexual desire and practice can upset narratives that assume a transhistorical heteronormativity.[1] What Valerie Traub has described as the "simultaneously feminist and queer goal" to "render adequately the complexity and alterity of early modern sexuality" has produced groundbreaking and sophisticated studies of early modern women who resist the imperative to marry and reproduce: nuns, virgins, Amazons, lesbians, and female friends ("Sonnets" 285).[2] However, in focusing almost exclusively on nurturing and egalitarian same-sex relations, this work has overlooked a range of alternative sexual fantasies and practices.[3] In the pages below, I argue that the prevalent, limited definition of queerness derives from an unspoken adherence to a particular strain of feminism, one that sees not only heterosexuality but also any eroticization of power as incompatible with feminist aims—and one that some early formulations of queer theory sought to contest in the debates within feminism known as the sex wars. By tracing the legacy of the sex wars in early modern studies, I propose to make available a mode of reading that reintegrates some of the foundational work of queer theory—much of which was done before such theory was called queer—into understandings of female sexuality.[4] The theoretical frameworks offered by

what we might call queer feminism, I argue, allow us to reassess past and present views of what counts as good sex for women.

Since its emergence in the 1980s, the work that has come to be called queer theory has stressed the limitations inherent in privileging the gender of object choice as the only marker of sexual normativity.[5] A focus on same-sex object choice, as this work has shown, obscures the many forms that sexual fantasy and practice can take and thereby produces a tacit sense that cross-sex desires and practices are coherent, predictable, and normal. So while homoeroticism offers one important challenge to normativity—and perhaps the most visible and important challenge, given the greater cultural and legal privilege accorded to heteroerotic relations—it does not offer the only challenge.[6] In studies of the early modern period, in particular, a focus on same-sex object choice has tended to sustain the modern distinction between homo- and heterosexual identities that queer historiography has sought to complicate.[7] And in studies of early modern female sexuality, a focus on women who resist relations with men has prevented us from exploring the full complexity and diversity of past desires. In this essay, I seek to make visible early modern images of pleasures and intimacies that challenge heteronormative ideals of companionate marriage and "homonormative" ideals of egalitarian friendship—both of which tend to define sex that is tender and monogamous as the optimal sex for women.[8] I examine early modern representations of female rivalry, polygamy, group sex, zoophilia, and masochism to foreground the attractions of excess and abjection.[9] In resisting what Leo Bersani has called "the *redemptive reinvention of sex*," I argue, these representations contest ideals of socially healthy and personally affirmative sex that have shaped past literature and present criticism ("Is the Rectum" 215).

My analysis focuses on two sixteenth-century texts that have been widely seen as shoring up patriarchal and heterosexual norms even as they expose the fissures and contradictions of those norms: Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although these texts overtly endorse cultural ideals of chastity, friendship, marriage, and procreation, the bulk of their content stresses the appeal of affects and practices that run counter to these redemptive models of sexuality. As Bruce Smith has argued, the imaginative worlds of literature give us access to some of the early modern cultural fantasies that cannot be documented by the period's moral, legal, or medical discourses (16–22). Expanding our awareness of the variety of past desires, I argue, is central to a queer project of contesting the privileging of sex that takes place between monogamous and loving couples.[10] The prevalence of perverse and undignified sex in *The Faerie Queene* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* cannot be dismissed as a mere expression of misogyny or male anxiety, and not just because both works sought to appeal to female as well as male audiences.[11] By depicting erotic fantasies or practices that fit neither conservative nor feminist ideals of normality, Spenser's and Shakespeare's texts help us to recognize the alterity and diversity of early modern sexualities. I have little doubt that Spenser and Shakespeare were, to borrow Kathleen McLuskie's phrase, "patriarchal Bard[s]," and my intention is not to cast them as feminist or queer theorists *avant la lettre* (44). Yet I insist that however much patriarchy may influence sexual desire and limit sexual agency, it does not tell the whole story. When we treat patriarchy as a monolithic system that structurally preempts and co-opts any seeming deviations from its norms, we miss the power of perversity to expose the insufficiency, indeed the dishonesty, of past and present ideals of good and healthy sex. I propose that, rather than pity or pathologize representations of female desires that appear undignified or disempowering, we recognize these representations' poten-

tial to generate new understandings of sexual variation. To situate my own understanding of queer feminism within the larger theoretical debates that have influenced early modern studies, I begin with a brief overview of the conflicted feminist legacy from which many tenets of queer theory emerged.[12] I then reassess some often discussed representations of gender and power in *The Faerie Queene* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to demonstrate how diverse a range of past sexualities comes into view when we disentangle queer theory from a certain definition of feminist sexuality.

Because the intersection between queer and feminist theories has been contentious and complex, it is often forgotten that one of the foundational texts of what has come to be called queer theory was initially presented as part of the debates within feminism known as the sex wars: Gayle Rubin's 1984 essay "Thinking Sex," which insisted on the need for "a concept of benign sexual variation" (283).[13] In its original polemical context, Rubin's work constituted not a clean break from feminism but a challenge to "sexual-subordination" or "antiporn" feminists who condemned pornography and sadomasochism as violent tools of patriarchy. By tracing the positions that Rubin and other "sex-radical" or "prosex" feminists were reacting to, we can better understand how current studies of early modern female sexuality came to privilege particular affects, desires, and relations for women in spite of the fact that nothing in these studies' explicit theoretical commitments mandates such a focus.

One strain of sexual-subordination feminism is "subordination" or "power" feminism. In its most iconic and uncompromising form, represented by the work of Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, subordination feminism asserts that sex as we know it requires women's subjugation. Because the patriarchal structure of society makes it virtually impossible "to separate the act of intercourse from the social reality of male power," sex with men inevitably disempowers women (Dworkin 127). For a second group of sexual-subordination theorists, those who would come to be identified as "cultural" feminists, the solution was to reject men and their values altogether in favor of same-sex female relations. In Adrienne Rich's influential formulation, for instance, "[s]ex is equated with attention from the male, who is charismatic though brutal, infantile, or unreliable. Yet it is the women who make life endurable for each other, give physical affection without causing pain, share, advise, and stick by each other" (62).[14] If aggression and rivalry are "guy things," then women's love for one another happily eludes the troublesome ambivalence and hostility that can attend Eros.

While they differ in important ways, cultural and subordination feminism each question whether heteroeroticism can be a true choice under patriarchy, and they agree that women who desire men must be victims, traitors, or both.[15] As Rita Mae Brown bluntly writes, "Straight women are confused by men, don't put women first. . . . You can't build a strong movement if your sisters are out there fucking with the oppressor" (114). Moreover, for the feminists that Teresa de Lauretis calls "mainstream or cultural-feminist lesbians" in an article generally credited with introducing the term *queer theory*, power and lust are themselves fundamentally masculine and harmful (viii).[16] Accordingly, any relationship that involves such elements endangers women, regardless of the genders of the partners involved.

Although it is rarely stated so baldly, within early modern studies the view that both hierarchy and heteroeroticism are irreconcilable with feminism continues to guide many queer analyses of female sexuality. This understanding of feminism, however, is at odds with the arguments of many of the founding texts of queer theory. The side of the sex wars that has been described as "sex-radical" or "prosex" feminism argued that the

laudable aspiration to protect women from violence and injustice could promote conservative ends by limiting what count as proper and healthy female desires.[17] Disturbed by the convergence of sexual-subordination feminism and right-wing moral crusades, sex-radical feminists sought to construct what Rubin called "a radical theory of sex" ("Thinking" 275). Central to sex-radical feminism was the view that attacks on pornography and sadomasochism, on the one hand, and celebrations of a "lesbian continuum" (Rich 51), on the other, could be as intolerant of sexual variation as the patriarchal ideology that feminists wanted to displace. In opposition to cultural and subordination feminism, sex-radical feminists sought to destigmatize sexual fantasies and practices that tested the experiential bounds of pleasure and pain, domination and submission, and that involved fetishes, role-playing, and partners who might be male or female, gay or straight.[18] Instead of understanding sexuality according to binaries of male or female, homo- or heterosexual, healthy or destructive, sex-radical feminists defended the pluralistic and perverse desires and subjectivities that would come to define queer theory (Rubin, "Sexual Traffic" and "Blood").

By the late 1980s, the sexual-subordination side of the sex wars had become identified with feminism as such in much academic discourse, while the sex-radical side had become identified with queer theory, particularly with studies of male homoeroticism.[19] Indeed, some of the most powerful insights of sex-radical feminism have been developed by the "antisocial" or "antirelational" strain of queer theory. A signal instance is Leo Bersani's polemical concession that sex is infused by abjection and domination. In a perverse take on subordination feminism, Bersani argues that MacKinnon and Dworkin have provided reasons

> for defending, for cherishing the very sex they find so hateful. Their indictment of sex—their refusal to prettify it, to romanticize it, to maintain that fucking has anything to do with community or love—has had the immensely desirable effect of publicizing, of lucidly laying out for us, the inestimable value of sex as—at least in certain of its ineradicable aspects—anticommunal, antiegalitarian, antinurturing, antiloving. ("Is the Rectum" 215)

Rather than disavow the appeal of the erotic humiliation and loss of boundaries associated with women and gay men, Bersani argued, we might provisionally accept that sexuality may itself be "a tautology for masochism" in order to conceive of intimacies that do not aspire to self-affirmation or mutual recognition (217). Writing in this vein, queer theorists like Michael Warner, Lauren Berlant, and Lee Edelman have stressed the ambivalent, undignified, and disruptive nature of sexuality. These and other proponents of the "antisocial" thesis in queer theory have shown that pride, optimism, and respectability exercise a coercive and normalizing force of their own. They propose that we recognize forms of intimacy and community in which perverse, shameful, and irrational feelings and desires have a place.[20]

In early modern literary criticism, the influence of antisocial queer theory has tended to be limited to studies of male sexuality (e.g., Goldberg, "Anus" and *Sodometries*; Rambuss, *Closet Devotions*). Meanwhile, although studies of early modern female sexuality have brilliantly illuminated how women resisted the submissive and heteronormative roles prescribed for them, what has gone unexplored is the way in which women's desires for sodomy, group sex, bestiality, and sadomasochism can equally challenge gender hierarchies and sexual norms.[21] We need a conceptual framework that acknowledges the legitimacy not only of female desire for sex outside monogamous and loving relations but also of a female version of what Bersani calls "love of the cock" (*Homos* 8). In the pages that follow, I explore representations of seemingly un-

feminist sexual fantasies, along with equally unfeminist displays of competition, overinvestment, selfishness, and anger—not because I think that such impulses are unquestionably positive or liberatory but because I believe that unless we grapple with their persistent appeal, feminist work can end up policing or pathologizing desires that do not readily conform to ideals of mutuality, cooperation, and egalitarianism.[22] In making visible models of past female sexuality that go beyond lesbian separatism, on the one hand, and patriarchal false consciousness, on the other, sex-radical feminism and queer theory can compel us to reassess the relation between sexuality and power in the present as well as the past.

Situated in a world teeming with queer desires, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* demonstrates the appeal of sexuality that deviates from both heteronormative marriage and homonormative amity—an appeal that persists despite cultural idealizations of the temperance, chastity, and friendship that should contain and direct erotic drives. Whereas a venerable critical tradition took it for granted that Spenser embraced patriarchal values and condoned only married, reproductive sex, more recently critics have stressed the protofeminist and queer dimensions of *The Faerie Queene*.[23] In particular, feminist and queer readings of the poem have proposed that Spenser offers female homoeroticism as an alternative to the violence and moralism of patriarchy, and many have focused on Britomart, Spenser's female Knight of Chastity, as an emblem of female strength and autonomy.[24] While these readings have challenged the heteronormativity of more conservative critics, they nonetheless tend to agree with these critics that good and healthy sex is devoid of lust and power. I want to focus instead on two episodes in *The Faerie Queene* that illustrate the pleasures of rough, anonymous, and promiscuous sex: the story of Sir Guyon's encounter with two naked women wrestlers and that of Hellenore's rejection of her impotent husband in favor of a band of "iolly *Satyrs*" (3.10.51.9). The fantasies depicted in these episodes are not unusual in *The Faerie Queene*, and the prominence of nonnormative sexualities in the poem should be read in the context of an early modern literary tradition that was well aware of the voyeuristic pleasure it offered a readership that included both women and men.[25] By imagining a vicarious realm of excess, humiliation, and promiscuity, *The Faerie Queene* accentuates the appeal of practices and desires that defy ideals of healthy and normal sex for women.

In the preface to his translation of *Orlando Furioso*, Spenser's contemporary John Harington offers an instructive meditation on the voyeuristic pleasures of Ludovico Ariosto's text, and we might use this passage as a rubric for interpreting the sexual fantasies of *The Faerie Queene*. Having asserted the philosophical and political value of Ariosto's romance, Harington addresses the charge that "although he write Christianly in some places, yet in other some, he is too lascivious, as in that of the baudy Frier, in Alcina and Rogeros copulation, in Anselmus his Giptian, in Richardetto his metamorphosis, in mine hosts tale of Astolfo and some few places besides." Yet Harington satirically interprets these charges of immorality as hypocritical veneers for readers who would make pornographic use of *Orlando Furioso*. Even as they condemn Ariosto's representations of sodomy, zoophilia, transvestism, and promiscuity, Harington notes, readers are so eager to get to these episodes that they are "half offended that I have not made some directions that you might find out and read them immediately." And although Harington insists that such scenes are meant "to breed detestation and not delectation," he anticipates that his readers will be all "too exorable" when he asks that they "pardon" Ariosto's fault in including such episodes—"if this be a fault" in the first place (vii).

Harington's suspicion that the "lascivious" parts of *Orlando Furioso* are its main

draw allows us to reevaluate the general critical sense that Spenser likewise includes such scenes in *The Faerie Queene* to breed detestation and not delectation. I want to begin with a memorable conflict between moralism and sex in *The Faerie Queene*, one in which pleasure and aggression, homoeroticism and heteroeroticism, intersect. As Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, nears the end of his quest to destroy the dangerously seductive Bower of Bliss at the conclusion of book 2, he is distracted by "[t]wo naked Damzelles" in a fountain who "seemed to contend, / And wrestle wantonly, ne car'd to hyde, / Their dainty partes from vew of any, which them eyd" (2.12.63.6–9). For many conservative readers, the women's wrestling is a tawdry show meant to thwart Guyon's defeat of the bower's ruler, the Circean figure Acrasia (literally, "incontinence"). In C. S. Lewis's notorious account, for instance, the women, whose "names are obviously Cissie and Flossie," are "ducking and giggling in a bathing-pool for the benefit of a passer-by: a man does not need to go to fairie land to meet them" (331).[26] Meanwhile, the scholars who have defended the women have insisted either that the women's wrestling is innocent, nonsexual play (Hendrix) or that it represents a homoerotic alternative to the violence of male chivalry.[27] I propose instead that this episode illustrates the appeals of sexual danger, recklessness, and vulnerability for women as well as men. Instead of excluding power or aggression, the women's wrestling eroticizes their exchange:

> Sometimes the one would lift the other quight
> Aboue the waters, and then downe againe
> Her plong, as ouer maystered by might,
> Where both awhile would couered remaine,
> And each the other from to rise restraine.
> (64.1–5)

The initial simile here—the woman is submerged "*as* ouer maystered by might"—makes it clear that the women are not actually trying to drown each other. But such parenthetical reassurance is telling: as anyone who has been dunked knows, what makes such games gratifying is their flirtation with domination and disempowerment. We might compare the excitement of the dunking game to that of what Adam Phillips calls the "tickling scene." For Phillips, tickling is "a paradigm of the perverse contract" insofar as it seeks that "blurred point" between pleasurable helplessness and painful humiliation (11, 10).[28] Spenser's dunking scene requires a similarly precarious balance between mastery and trust. Such a contractual hierarchy, however, dissolves below the water's surface, where the women "each the other from to rise restraine." The difficulty of discerning between feigned and genuine aggression is manifested by the first few lines' enjambment. And this uncertainty is what gives the women's wrestling its perverse and exciting edge.

Power is interchanged not just between the women but also between the women and Guyon. However much Guyon may enjoy the women's wrestling, it is not initially performed for his benefit, nor does it receive sexual meaning from his voyeurism. Guyon may have initially "espyde" the women (63.6), but three stanzas later "The wanton Maidens him espying, stood / Gazing a while at his vnwonted guise" (66.1–2). By all conventional standards, Guyon should be in a position of mastery here. He is a strong man—not only clothed but also in full armor—gazing on the "dainty partes" of two naked and defenseless women. As it turns out, however, Guyon is more threatened by the women than they are by him. One woman tauntingly displays "all, that might his melting hart entyse / To her delights" (66.7–8). And although the other woman initially ducks underwater, "[a]basht, that her a straunger did auise" (66.4), she soon literally lets her hair down, teasing Guyon by covering the "faire spectacle" of her body with "lockes and waues" that are "no lesse faire" (67.6, 8, 7). Once she has nothing but the "golden mantle" of her tresses between Guyon's eager gaze and her wet flesh,

"Withall she laughed, and she blusht withall, / That blushing to her laughter gave more grace, / And laughter to her blushing, as did fall" (68.1–3). As A. C. Hamilton notes, laughter is almost invariably a sign of sexual excitement in *The Faerie Queene* (Spenser 282n67). I would add that even as the woman's blush registers shame and exposure, her laughter expresses joy at her own boldness and amusement at Guyon's awkward reaction. Her mirth thus poses a threat to the same values and hierarchies her modesty appears to sustain.

What we have here is not a controlling, voyeuristic male gaze but a mobile set of identifications in which the reader is implicated. For even as we see the women through Guyon's eyes, we watch Guyon from the perspective of the women, who "spyde the knight to slacke his pace, / Them to behold, and in his sparkling face / The secrete signes of kindled lust appeare" (68.4–6). Like the woman's blush, Guyon's "sparkling face" reveals "secrete signes of kindled lust" that he would rather conceal. Once the women perceive Guyon's helpless arousal, "Their wanton meriments they did encreace, / And to him beckned, to approch more neare, / And shewd him many sights, that corage cold could reare" (68.7–9). This interaction tests the boundaries between modesty and aggression, femininity and masculinity, shame and pleasure. For even as Guyon gazes on the women's "dainty partes" and "wanton merriments," he occupies the position of the "cold"—chaste and fearful—mistress described by Petrarchan poetry. Meanwhile, the women are as interested in his parts as he is in theirs as they endeavor to "reare" his "corage." With its etymological connection to *cœur* ("heart"), "corage" here stresses the interplay among desire, its physical signs, and the spirit to act on it. The phallus becomes not only a sign of masculine domination but also an object of female desire—and amusement.

Guyon, in the end, has the "corage" neither to join nor to resist the women—he withstands temptation only because the Palmer, who has served as his guide, "much rebukt those wandring eyes of his" and "him forward thence did draw" (69.2–3). But the Palmer's rebuke only delays the release of aggressive erotic energy aroused by the women. As Stephen Greenblatt observes, Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss a few stanzas later replaces the self-dissolution of sexual consummation with a destruction of "the not self, of all that lies outside, or resists, or threatens identity" (177). Whereas Greenblatt assumes that Spenser endorses such destructive egoism, more recently Joseph Campana has argued that Spenser makes a negative example of Guyon and that the wrestlers represent a feminine principle of selfhood based on vulnerability, openness, and common corporality (467–68, 492–96). While Campana's essay challenges traditional readings of Spenser as a strict moralist, I would depart from his analysis to argue that the alternative the women offer to what Bersani has called "the sacrosanct value of selfhood" is not necessarily interpersonal connection or self-affirmation ("Is the Rectum" 222). Rather, the women's sadomasochistic play makes shame, aggression, and disempowerment central to the pleasure of the intimate encounter in which we, like Guyon, have just participated.

The episode of the wrestling women, then, illustrates that neither modern categories of sexuality based on the gender of object choice nor redemptive models of sex can fully account for the complexity of erotic fantasy in the past or the present. As Lewis's dismissal of "Cissie and Flossie" indicates, however, modern readers have been able to subsume the bathing women into contemporary lesbian erotica, especially that aimed at men.[29] Spenser's story of Hellenore cannot be so easily contained by modern categories of sexuality, for it introduces the zoophiliac fantasies and practices that, though now virtually unmentionable, were not uncommon in early modern England. In this episode, Hellenore

abandons her possessive old husband, Malbecco, for the seductive knight Paridell, who quickly deserts her. Once "loose at randon lefte" (3.10.36.1), Hellenore joins a band of satyrs who take her home "With them as housewife euer to abide, / To milk their gotes, and make them cheese and bredd, / And euery one as commone good her handeled" (36.7–9). Spenser prefaces the tale of Hellenore's "loose incontinence" with an apology to the "[r]edoubted knights" and "honorable Dames" who read it (3.9.1.1), and he insists that he only includes it so that "good by paragone / Of euill, may more notably be rad" (3.9.2.2–3). Yet he quickly abandons this moralistic frame to describe Hellenore's sexual activities in graphic—and sympathetic—detail. And the narrative repeatedly suggests that Hellenore has good reason to prefer the "iolly *Satyres*" over the impotent Malbecco (3.10.51.9), whose jealousy and moralism, we are told, emerge from his "privie guilt" that he is "[v]nfit faire Ladies seruice to supply" (3.9.5.3, 2). Indeed, as scholars have observed, the "euill" against which this story warns readers ends up being not Hellenore's "loose incontinence" but Malbecco's "[f]owle Gealosy," which makes him even less human than the satyrs, "so deform'd that he has quight / Forgot he was a man, and *Gelosy* is hight" (3.11.1.5, 3.10.60.8–9).[30] However, even as critics have defended Hellenore by stressing Malbecco's inhumanity, they have shied away from the most extraordinary aspect of the episode, which is the fact that Hellenore not only chooses communal over monogamous sex but also prefers partners who are half goat.

Zoophilia occupied a strikingly central place in the premodern sexual imagination. Bestiality offers perhaps the most prominent example of the potential for early modern studies to challenge modern sexual categories and norms. Its representations remind us, in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's formulation, of how little we know—how little we might want to know—about the manifold forms that sexuality can take (*Epistemology* 4–8, 22–26, 45). The first English statutes against bestiality were passed in 1533 and 1548, and what court records we have indicate that it occurred with some regularity.[31] Moreover, the prominence of bestiality as a motif in literature and art from at least Ovid on suggests that it was a persistent part of a fairly mainstream sexual fantasy in premodern Europe. One attraction of bestiality may be that it affords forms of intimacy and pleasure that do not—that perhaps cannot—include mutual commitment or recognition. It thus constitutes a paradigmatic instance, as Bruce Boehrer has argued, of the confrontation with alterity that haunts all sexual relations (111–15). Moreover, unlike marriage or friendship, cross-species eroticism pursues a pleasure that exists only in relation to the self, not as an instrumental part of generation or spiritual communion.

In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's story of Hellenore, like the many heteroerotic and homoerotic scenes in the Bower of Bliss, envisions a sexuality that does not justify itself through claims of love, commitment, or procreation. As in the episode of the wrestling women, our view of Hellenore's relations with the satyrs is mediated through the gaze of a disapproving voyeur. In this case, however, that voyeur is Malbecco, and his jealousy over the pleasure he is denied attenuates any simple moralistic response:

> At night, when all they went to sleepe, he vewd,
> Whereas his louely wife emongst them lay,
> Embraced of a *Satyre* rough and rude,
> Who all the night did minde his ioyous play:
> Nine times he heard him come aloft ere day,
> That all his hart with gealosy did swell;
> But yet that nights ensample did bewray,
> That not for nought his wife them loued so well,
> When one so oft a night did ring his matins
> bell. (3.10.48)

Satyrs were understood to be extraordinarily potent and well-endowed, and Hellenore's hirsute partner here lives up to that reputation,

mounting her and achieving orgasm nine times in a single night. Whereas Hellenore's "louely"-ness should contrast with the "rough and rude" satyr who embraces her, it is clear that what Hellenore "loue[s]" about her new companion may be not only the indelicate, violent nature of his embraces but also the sensation of the satyr's hairy hide against her soft skin. The "ensample" of the satyr's inexhaustible appetite "bewray[s]" to Malbecco that his "louely wife" has good reason to "loue" the satyrs "so well." In contrast to the impotent Malbecco, who is unable to offer Hellenore "timely seruice to her pleasures meet," the satyrs are equal to Hellenore's appetite (3.9.7.8). Malbecco's admission that Hellenore's love for the satyrs is "not for nought" allows that sexual pleasure may be self-justifying, even as the double negative registers the reluctance of this recognition. The description of the satyr as one who "so oft a night did ring his matins bell," moreover, casts sex as another form of piety: like the bell rung to call believers to morning prayers, the satyr's ability to "come aloft" nine times "ere day" summons Hellenore to an act of ritual devotion. At the same time, the sounding of a matins bell throughout the night rejects social norms and selfless submission in favor of an untimely, anticommunal pursuit of gratification.

Hellenore's exit from the poem, like her entrance into it, is accompanied with words of moral censure. At the episode's close, however, the disapproval comes not from the narrator but from Malbecco, who urges Hellenore "to leaue that lewd / And loathsom life, of God and man abhord" (3.10.51.1–2). Given Malbecco's resentment and self-pity, his demand that Hellenore submit to the cultural and religious standards that would mandate her return to his "bed and bord" is hardly compelling (51.5). Unsurprisingly, Hellenore "it all refused at one word, / And by no meanes would to his will be wonne, / But chose emongste the iolly *Satyres* stil to wonne" (51.7–9). As Hellenore recognizes, Malbecco's appeal to conventional morality uses shame as a weapon to achieve his own "will," which is, perversely, the desire that she share his sexual privation. The lines' punning identical rhyme underscores Hellenore's victory. Instead of being "wonne" to Malbecco's will, Hellenore exercises her own will, choosing to "wonne," or live, her life with the satyrs. Like the wrestling women's engagements with each other and with Guyon, Hellenore's relations with the satyrs makes no pretense to spiritual transcendence or social productivity. Rather than imagine sexual liberty as producing a utopian future, both episodes stress the appeals of rough and selfish sex that cannot be assimilated to hetero- or homonormative ideals. Indeed, the desire to reject the burdens of redemption may be at the heart of both Spenserian fantasies.

A redemptive view of sexuality—particularly female sexuality—has been as central to studies of Shakespeare as to those of Spenser. It has long been a critical commonplace that Shakespearean comedy works to restrain libidinal impulses by directing them into stable and productive—"normal"—marital unions. Numerous scholars have agreed that what Northrop Frye described as comedy's adaptation of Eros to "the moral facts of society" is a good thing (Frye 181)—and that "well-ordered marriage" is the place where this happens (Olson 99).[32] For these critics, patriarchal power and heterosexual marriage protect what Frye called the "normal world" from women and the irrational desires they inspire and embody (182). With its formally neat conclusion, which promised to subordinate unruly passions to productive marriages, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seemed to offer a perfect example.

It is a testament to the effectiveness of feminist and queer studies that such normative readings of Shakespeare now appear quaint, if not cruel. But while feminist and queer scholars have challenged the patriarchal and heteronormative values that Frye

designated the "moral facts of society," many have substituted an equally restrictive definition of healthy desire. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* again offers a case in point. Taking Helena at her word when she accuses Hermia of betraying a closeness that made them "Like to a double cherry, seeming parted / But yet an union in partition," critics have almost invariably contrasted the serene equality and gentle reciprocity of female bonds with the violence and domination of heteroerotic unions (3.2.210–11).[33] Hermia and Helena have been instrumental to arguments that equate heteroeroticism with female subjugation and homoeroticism with female empowerment.[34] Telling in this regard is Traub's argument that "the most provocative figure of female erotic autonomy and resistance to patriarchal affiliation" (*Renaissance* 69) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the "imperial vot'ress" who avoids "Cupid's fiery shaft," walking on "in maiden meditation, fancy free" (2.1.163, 161, 164). While Traub offers an important reminder of the early modern alternatives to heteronormative marriage, her inadvertent conflation of libidinous desire with patriarchal domination runs the risk of censuring women's "fancy"—the sometimes painful fantasies and longings instilled by "Cupid's fiery shaft," whether these are directed at men or women. I begin from the premise that if we treat this virginal "vot'ress" as a model of autonomy and resistance, if we idealize women's same-sex relations as a "fancy free" zone, we might find ourselves condemning as unfeminine—or unfeminist—such feelings as hostility, ambivalence, and overinvestment. And if we assume that affective or erotic excess inevitably disempowers women, we overlook the possibility that a pleasure in domination or abjection may challenge hetero- and homonormative ideas of proper and healthy female sexuality.

The cultural-feminist view that same-sex relations are uniquely peaceful and satisfying finds its early modern analogue in the homonormative theory of friendship described by Montaigne, who echoes Aristotle and Cicero in explicitly excluding both heteroerotic love and "Greek license" from his definition of friendship because they include difference of gender, age, or rank and therefore lust and hierarchy (92). Montaigne acknowledges that purely sexual passion is "more active, more fervent, and more sharpe" than friendship. But he goes on to make this intensity the source of its weakness, casting passion as "a rash and wavering fire, waving and diverse: the fire of an ague subject to fits and stints, and that hath but slender hold-fast of us." By contrast, "[i]n true friendship, it is a generall & universall heat, and equally tempered, a constant and setled heat, all pleasure and smoothnes, that hath no pricking or stinging in it, which the more it is in lustfull love, the more is but a ranging and mad desire in following that which flies us" (91). Much as cultural feminists oppose certain forms of sex to true sisterhood, then, classical-friendship theorists contrast "lustfull love" with "true friendship."

Helena's description of her past relationship with Hermia appears to provide the strongest evidence of a union that was "all pleasure and smoothnes"—the precise sort of same-sex relationship celebrated by many feminists as a refuge from heteroerotic lust and domination. Here Helena rehearses a classical picture of friendship that is at once nostalgic and reproachful:

> We, Hermia, like two artificial gods
> Have with our needles created both one flower,
> Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
> Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
> As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds
> Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
> Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
> But yet an union in partition,
> Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;
> So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
> Two of the first—like coats in heraldry,
> Due but to one and crowned with one crest.
> And will you rent our ancient love asunder,

To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury. (3.2.203–19)

Helena's emphasis on identity (she uses the word "one" seven times) evokes a fantasy of perfect harmony. And this is not merely spiritual friendship. Along with their hands, voices, and minds, the women's "sides" have merged into one, a description whose sexual connotations would have been evident to contemporaries: in the sixteenth century, "sides" was synonymous with "loins" ("Side"). If we take this description literally, it is hard to see how Helena or Hermia could ever have become interested in anyone but the other—or why any woman would willingly abandon such "sisters' vows" and "childhood innocence" (3.2.199, 202). Such a fantasy of innocent sexuality is, in fact, at the heart of both "friendly" bonds and "maidenly" identity, for both true amity and proper femininity are free of the "lustfull love" that theorists like Montaigne, along with many modern feminist scholars, associate with heteroeroticism.

As Helena's repeated use of similes in the double-cherry speech acknowledges, however, union with Hermia can only be figurative. In reality, because they do not actually share "hands, . . . sides, voices, and minds," each woman's subjective experience is inaccessible to the other—understanding the "truth" of the other's thoughts and feelings must remain, in Martha Nussbaum's words, "a fallible exercise of the imagination" (990). And as Shakespeare's sonnets amply demonstrate, the realization of a beloved's inaccessibility may be felt as a betrayal that provokes suspicion and anger. So while someone like Montaigne might treat friendship and passion as contraries, we can understand them as different versions of the same fantasy of ecstatic and eternal fulfillment, a fantasy that requires the destruction of otherness. As Shakespeare's sonnets indicate, an aspiration to classical friendship is not the opposite of Montaigne's "ranging and mad desire in following that which flies us." In truth, the inevitably thwarted dream of a perfect and constant harmony may itself be the source of pain and violence. Adam Phillips puts it nicely: "No amount of redescription will alter the fact that if people can satisfy each other they can frustrate each other" (Bersani and Phillips 109). In their exhaustive catalog of the vicissitudes of love, Shakespeare's poems to the young man attest that a homonormative dream of oneness may invite the same aggression and neediness that friendship should exclude.[35] Likewise, as his sonnets on the rival poet indicate, competition and infidelity are not limited to heteroerotic triangles—nor, for that matter, to men.

Read in the light of the intersection of the traditions of classical friendship and Petrarchan love, the full range of Helena and Hermia's interactions in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* becomes coherent. Helena's memories of oneness with Hermia are not so much displaced as complicated by her repeated accounts of her friend's violent temper:

I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me. I was never curst.
I have no gift at all in shrewishness.
I am a right maid for my cowardice.
Let her not strike me.
. . . . . .
O, when she is angry she is keen and shrewd.
She was a vixen when she went to school,
And though she be but little, she is fierce.
(3.2.299–303, 323–25)

How do we reconcile this picture of past rivalry with the one of past concord? Thus far, the answer has been to treat the latter speech as evidence of the more general principle that, as Kathryn Schwarz puts it, "heterosociality violates the expectations both of female bonding and of femininity" (220).[36] I argue instead that since both memories recount a time before the play's action, the text gives us little evidence that one is a more accurate description

of the past than the other. Together Helena's memories of harmony and hostility indicate the ambivalence and complexity that inflect almost all intimate relations. The shifts in Helena's verb tenses suggest that the fear that Hermia will "strike" her is not a new phenomenon. Helena charges that Hermia "*is* keen and shrewd" and that she "*is* fierce"—and these appear to be not momentary aberrations but enduring characteristics, since Hermia also "*was* a vixen when she *went* to school." Hermia's violent temperament does not, however, foreclose the possibility of homoeroticism. If we expand Sedgwick's theory of male homosocial rivalry into the realm of same-sex women's relations, it is possible to see the competition between Helena and Hermia as evidence of the intensity of their bonds to each other, not a sign that those bonds are coming undone (*Between Men*). Moreover, read in the context of the queer work that has been done since Sedgwick's original formulation of this theory—including Sedgwick's own rethinking of the relation between feminist and "antihomophobic" inquiry in *Epistemology of the Closet* (27–44)—representations of the triangulation of desire that feature women as the desiring agents have the potential to challenge the assumption of male agency and female passivity on which so many analyses of past sexuality have been based. Helena's charge that Hermia is "keen" and "fierce" connotes not only a piercing temper but also vehement desire. Particularly in contrast to Helena's claims that she is a "right maid," this charge suggests that Hermia's past and present "shrewishness" is coterminous with an equally "unmaidenly" sexual appetite. Read together, Helena's two accounts of the past remind us that tenderness and aggression are not mutually exclusive. To be sure, not all rivalry is a sign of attraction and identification, and competition can strain or destroy interpersonal bonds. But to assume that relations between women naturally exclude tension and hierarchy is to impose a norm that may limit female affect and eroticism as much as the patriarchal prescriptions that queer feminist work seeks to challenge.

I have discussed Hermia and Helena's relationship at length to demonstrate the limitations of queer readings that rely on cultural and subordination feminism. I want now to consider Helena's attachment to Demetrius, which, I argue, equally resists injunctions of proper maidenly behavior. Helena's fantasies of herself as helpless subordinate to both Hermia and Demetrius register the same perverse, masochistic drives that theorists like Edelman and Bersani see at the heart of normative anxieties about sex. For scholars like MacKinnon, female masochism is a convenient fiction of patriarchy: "Love of violation, variously termed female masochism and consent, comes to define female sexuality, legitimizing this political system by concealing the force on which it is based" ("Sexuality" 329–30). As sex-radical feminists have argued, however, the quest to protect women may end up stigmatizing those whose desires do not fit feminist ideals. Rather than dwell on what Judith Butler has lampooned as "the eternally victimized position of women," we might take seriously the possibility that fantasies of pain, domination, and the rupture of boundaries appeal to women as well as men ("Against Proper Objects" 15).[37] Female masochism does not automatically perpetuate patriarchy or heteronormativity. Indeed, it may reveal what Edelman has called the "antisocial bent of sexuality as such," which "regimes of normativity" disavow (143). Insofar as masochism gratifies the insistent, irrational aspects of the libido, attending to early modern representations of it can help to dislodge the association between heteroerotic desire and the tyranny of the normal. The insights of queer theory focused primarily on men, that is, can expand our view of feminist sexuality.

Much as Helena's descriptions of Hermia as a "vixen" challenge her earlier story of their "sisters' vows" and "childhood innocence,"

her inexorable pursuit of Demetrius complicates her claim that she is "a right maid for my cowardice." Instead of upholding patriarchal power, Helena's relentless devotion demonstrates how, taken to a masochistic extreme, fantasies of female submission and obedience can pervert and threaten men's privileged access to sexual initiative and agency. Demetrius may try to "define sex as a weapon," as Schwarz has argued (224), but in calling his bluff Helena upsets clear distinctions between domination and submission. Denying Demetrius the prerogative of rejecting her, Helena insists that

> I am your spaniel, and, Demetrius,
> The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
> Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,
> Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
> Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
> What worser place can I beg in your love—
> And yet a place of high respect with me—
> Than to be used as you use your dog?
> (2.1.203–10)

Now, it is possible to understand Helena's submission as the logical extreme of patriarchal ideology, as Shirley Garner (138) and Madelon Gohlke (171) have done. But in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Shakespeare used the figure of the spaniel to depict the masochistic element of *male* desire. In this earlier play, Proteus portrays his love for Silvia in terms strikingly similar to Helena's: "spaniel-like, the more she spurns my love, / The more it grows, and fawneth on her still" (4.2.14–15). When Proteus describes Silvia as spurning him, he uses a term that in the sixteenth century conflated injury with seduction. For although *spurn* could mean to kick or trample, it could also mean to urge or incite ("Spurn"). Helena's echo of Proteus reminds us that abject devotion may be the flip side of aggression—a dynamic that we see in Proteus's eventual attempt to rape the woman who spurns him. There are, of course, significant differences between male and female positions here. Not only do men enjoy legal and cultural privileges denied women, but differences in physical strength mean that there is little chance that Helena can violate Demetrius physically, however much she stalks him. Nonetheless, Helena's obsessive pursuit of an unresponsive object co-opts the male role of lover and the male prerogative of refusing to take no for an answer—gendered positions widely represented in sixteenth-century English versions of the Petrarchan sonnet—and thereby blurs the boundaries between masculinity and femininity, abjection and aggression. Such unreciprocated devotion is not what we would usually associate with a feminist view of healthy, fulfilling love. But to dismiss Helena's desire reflexively as mere false consciousness is to endorse the same hierarchy of good and bad sex that queer theorists have long critiqued and therefore to miss the challenge that female sexual agency, however perverse, may pose to patriarchal norms.[38]

Like Hellenore's polygamous relations with the satyrs in *The Faerie Queene*, Helena's fantasy of canine humility tests the limits of "normal" human desire as well as "natural" female love. Given that *to use* could mean to have intercourse with, Helena's wish "to be used as you use your dog" is of a piece with the larger theme of bestiality that scholars have noted in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Boehrer; Rambuss, "Shakespeare's Ass Play"). This theme is most prominent, of course, in Titania's infatuation with the asinine Bottom. But, as Jan Kott demonstrates, in the forest the young lovers also explore their own terrifying creaturely passions (220–36). I would add that early modern writers as diverse as Robert Burton and Edward Coke saw bestiality as a form of sodomy.[39] So Helena's words may also evoke the anal eroticism that, as Gail Kern Paster has argued, was connected to the pleasures of evacuation in the period (113–62). Moreover, as Jonathan Goldberg has noted, by describing the pleasure of defecation as a substitute for that of vaginal intercourse,

Paster limits the appeal of anal eroticism to excremental functions and to men, instead of exploring the pleasures that women as well as men might find in anal penetration ("Anus" 264–69). Read in the light of Goldberg's observation, Helena's conflation of masochism, sodomy, and bestiality exposes the tenuousness of distinctions between human love and animal lust, male and female nature, and vaginal and anal intercourse. And insofar as any sexual activity that "wasted" seed meant for procreation could be classified as sodomy in the early modern period, Helena's attention to anal and animal fantasies also challenges the injunction to procreate with which the play ends.[40] Helena's proposition to Demetrius thereby compels us to reevaluate the assumption that the only women who defy patriarchal sexual norms are those who desire homoerotic objects and gentle, nonpenetrative sex.

Helena's exchanges with Demetrius and Hermia reveal that women's unapologetically perverse desires—whether for women or for men—can threaten ideals of proper, "normal" sexuality. And Helena is certainly not the only character in the play to challenge sexual norms. When we read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* through the lenses of sex-radical feminism and queer theory, we see a consistent depiction of love itself as, in Berlant's words, a "queer feeling" that resists the fantasies of normativity it is so often invoked to serve (443–44). The Amazonian Hippolyta and the ambiguously sexualized Puck conspicuously fuse masculinity and femininity.[41] Similarly, as Carol Neely has observed, Titania "desires everything in sight, including a woman, a boy, and an ass" (114). I would note that Titania also desires Oberon, the play's sadistic arch-patriarch, suggesting that she is no more immune to the pleasures of submission and heteroeroticism than Helena or Hermia.

Throughout this essay, I have traced past representations of queer female sexuality in order to bring to view sexual possibilities that get lost when we base definitions of queerness solely on the gender of object choice. While none of the representations of women I have examined in *The Faerie Queene* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be classified as feminist in unproblematic terms, they do manifest an attraction to sexual fantasies and practices that disrupt the redemptive sexualities of both heteronormative marriage and homonormative friendship. I have explicitly avoided the positions taken by cultural and subordination feminists, even though I recognize the important intellectual and political work they have done. For the same reason, I have been just as explicit about limiting my own interpretive frameworks to the insights of the opposing side in the sex wars—sex-radical feminism and the strands of queer theory that followed. Ironically, an analysis like mine is possible only because sexual-subordination feminism has been successful in revealing the injustice and violence of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. I want to conclude by proposing that it is in the space of feminist analysis that awareness of the "anticommunal, antiegalitarian, antinurturing, antiloving" aspects of sexuality might produce the most fruit. Such attention can expand not only the scope of queer studies but also the potential for feminist studies to incorporate affects and desires that historically have been seen as a source of female shame and disempowerment. And by adopting a queerer and more pluralistic view of feminist sexuality, we can come closer to dispelling fictions that locate happy endings only in "the normal world."

Notes

1. Scholars who have stressed that heterosexuality, like homosexuality, only became a category of sexual identity in the nineteenth century include Goldberg, *Sodometries*; Katz; Lochrie; and Bach.

2. See, e.g., Stephens; Jankowski; Schwarz; Shannon; Traub, *Renaissance*; Drouin; and Crawford.

3. Sinfield directly equates heterosexuality with patriarchy in his definition of a "radical" play as one "promoting a critique of patriarchy," which in his analysis takes the singular form of envisioning same-sex unions and communities (*Shakespeare* 72). And while the studies of early modern female relations mentioned above do not explicitly equate patriarchy, heteroerotic object choice, and normativity, their exclusive focus on same-sex relations suggests that the gender of object choice is the privileged marker of queerness. Similarly, Nardizzi, Guy-Bray, and Stockton's *Queer Renaissance Historiography*, a collection of essays on the current state of early modern queer studies, focuses, with the exception of Stockton's essay on *Paradise Lost*, entirely on representations of same-sex desire.

4. See Rubin, "Thinking" and "Leather Menace"; Califia, Introd. and *Public Sex*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Sedgwick, *Epistemology*; and Bersani, "Is the Rectum," all of which were produced before de Lauretis coined the term *queer theory* in 1991.

5. Sedgwick, *Epistemology* 8, 31, 35, 45; Warner, Introd. xxvi and *Trouble* 10, 37–38, 70; Berlant and Warner, "What" 345–46; Marcus; and Halley 112–14.

6. For the unique privacy accorded heterosexuality, see Goldberg, *Sodometries* 9–19; Berlant and Warner, "Sex" 554–55; and Warner, *Trouble* 23.

7. For a critique of the reduction of early-modern-sexuality studies to a search for recognizable gay and lesbian identities, see Chedgzoy; Goldberg and Menon 1611–13; and Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare* 22, 119, 133.

8. Influential discussions of the ascendancy of companionate marriage include Lewis; Stone; and Belsey. I borrow the term *homonormative* from Shannon, who uses it to describe the classical theory that since true friendship is defined by equality, friends must be alike in everything, including gender. According to Shannon, homonormative relations of likeness and equality were valued by early modern ethical and political theorists over heterosexual relations of difference and hierarchy (19–26, 55–56). For early modern thinkers, Shannon argues, homonormative friendship signified the dignity, reason, and equality that challenged the tyranny of heterosexual marriage. See also Bray, *Homosexuality* and *Friend*; Smith; and Masten.

9. Medievalists have provided excellent models of the sexualities that come into view when we focus on acts rather than object choice; see, e.g., Cohen; Schultz.

10. As numerous scholars of the medieval and early modern periods have argued, a fear of anachronism and a privileging of historical difference can encourage both a silencing of past sexualities and a false sense of the coherence of modern ones. I therefore risk incorporating anachronistic terms and concepts into my analysis not to recover the truth of early modern sexual practice but better to assess how the past is used and constructed in the present. For debates on queer historiography, see Sedgwick, *Epistemology*; Goldberg, *Sodometries*; Halperin; Dinshaw; Gajowski; Goldberg and Menon; Freccero; and Menon, "Period Cramps."

11. As Traub argues, works by men were a constitutive part of women's lived experience, since these works provided the idioms and images through which desire was categorized and understood (*Renaissance* 21). On Spenser's female readers, see Quilligan; Stephens; and Montrose, "Elizabethan Subject." On the importance of women to the success of early modern theater, see Rackin 58–59.

12. While in this essay I am concerned specifically with the debates of the sex wars, critiques of a universal category of "women" also appeared in work on the intersections between race, class, colonialism, and gender and in postmodernist critiques of the concept of identity. Tellingly, the first critics to challenge the view of egalitarian female solidarity in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were Hendricks 52–59 and Loomba 166–69, both of whom study the impact of early modern ideas of race and colonialism on the play.

13. Rubin, "Blood," provides an account of the original context of "Thinking Sex."

14. Gilligan; Smith-Rosenberg; and Faderman also offer exemplary instances of work in the cultural-feminist vein.

15. See MacKinnon, "Feminism" (1982) 532 and "Feminism" (1983) 646–55; Dworkin 982; and Rich 36–40, 67. Halley analyzes the relation between cultural and subordination feminism (76–77).

16. For additional theory in this vein, see Morgan; Atkinson; and Russell.

17. For critiques of the cultural-feminist tendency to desexualize lesbianism, see Califia, Introd. and *Public Sex*; Echols; Sedgwick, *Epistemology* 36–37; Butler, "Against Proper Objects" 11; and Marcus 193–95.

18. See esp. Rubin, "Leather Menace"; Califia, Introd. and *Public Sex* xii–xxxi, 158–67, 168–78; Creet; Echols; and English, Hollibaugh, and Rubin 41–44.

19. For a critique of these categories, see Butler, "Against Proper Objects," and Martin.

20. See Bersani, *Homos*, and Edelman; see also Warner, *Trouble*; Love; Halperin and Traub; and Ziv.

21. Particularly compelling studies include Schwarz's work on Amazon challenges to ideals of femininity and heteronormativity; Shannon's insight that homonormative female friendship competed with heteronormative marriage as both an affective and a political model; and Traub's important study of the myriad early modern discourses describing same-sex female desire (*Renaissance*).

22. Love; Edelman; and Halperin and Traub also discuss the stigmatizing potential of pride, optimism, cooperation, and self-control.

23. Scholars who interpret Spenser as a defender of patriarchal and conservative values include Lewis 297–360; Berger, *Allegorical Temper* 65–88, 211–24; Greenblatt 169–92; and Montrose, "Elizabethan Subject."

24. See Quilligan; Silberman; Suzuki; Cavanagh; Stephens; Schwarz 137–74; and Campana.

25. The most famous intended reader of *The Faerie Queene* was, of course, Elizabeth I, but two of the poem's seventeen dedicatory sonnets address specific female patrons, and one addresses "all the gratious and beautifull Ladies in the Court" (735).

26. Critics who discuss the moral hazard posed by the women include Durling; Okerlund; and Lees-Jeffries 181–85.

27. See Stephens 37; Traub, *Renaissance* 148–49; and Campana 488–89.

28. See also Kipnis's discussion of tickling scenes in pornography (122–23).

29. Hendrix, in fact, likens them to female mud or oil wrestlers (74).

30. See Berger, *Revisionary Play* 154–71, esp. 163; Gilde; Nohrnberg 31; and Bruhn. For readings that assume Hellenore's degradation, see Suzuki 152 and Watkins 49.

31. See Salisbury 77–102; Maxwell-Stuart; Fudge 133–42; and Cressy 9–27.

32. See also Barber; Brooks.

33. See, e.g., Montrose, "Shaping" and *Purpose*; Smith 200; Garner; Green; Schwarz 203–35; Traub, *Renaissance* 36–76; Sinfield, "Cultural Materialism" 71, 75; and Little.

34. See Montrose, "Shaping" 65–69, and Schwarz 220.

35. See Chedgzoy's and Fineman's readings of the relation between the sonnets to the young man and those to the dark lady, particularly Fineman's reading of sonnet 62 (49–85).

36. See also Dusinberre 259–60 and Traub, *Renaissance* 174–75.

37. Vance analyzes the complex relation between women's sexual endangerment and sexual experiment and fantasy.

38. Recounting the feminist vilification of, e.g., sadomasochism, promiscuity, and fetishism, Rubin recalls that "[s]omehow, these poor sexual deviations were suddenly the ultimate expression of patriarchal domination" ("Sexual Traffic" 76–77).

39. See Coke 58–59 and Burton 2: 653.

40. On this definition of sodomy, see Halpern 20–22.

41. See Schwarz 203–35 and Wall 101–08.

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