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*The Images of Evil in the First Book
of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene*

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of the thesis entitled *The Images of Evil in the First Book of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene* is to provide an overview and an analysis of the artistic renderings of malevolence, sin and religious fallacy that are abundant in Book One of Edmund Spenser's poem. In order to achieve a detailed examination of the images of evil in the first book of Spenser's work, the proposed paper deals with a variety of artistic renderings of malevolence illustrating the repellent and abominable nature of sin through deformation, disease and decay of a number of evil creatures present in the poem.

In the first chapter, a list of selected images of evil is provided. The categorization of these images is based on the book *Spenser's Images of Life* by C. S. Lewis, paying attention primarily to the complexity of various allegorical characters devised by Spenser and their impact on the reader. The insidious nature of evil is illustrated by the author of the poem to various extents in different cases. Thus, the aim of the chapter is to examine first the images of evil representing less treacherous forms of malevolence, including the enemies of the Knight of Red Crosse in the forms of paynim knights or apparently hideous, deformed creatures, such as the embodiments of deadly sins in the House of Pride, and gradually shift to more complex, intricate and deceptive images of evil possessing greater destructive potential, including the image of temptress in the form of Duessa, the sinister hermit of Canto IX- the embodiment of the sin of despair or even Red Crosse himself as the bearer of inherent corruption and the susceptibility to sin and fallacy. In the process of the examination of more complex forms of malevolence, the aspect of deceiving outward appearance concealing the true nature of evil ones is frequently observed.

The second chapter of the thesis concerns some of the intertextual links pertaining to the poem. These are selected with regards to the crucial formal features present in a number of scenes of highly spiritual nature and with regards to the issue of the corruption of nature and the possibility of salvation in the Protestant theology. Thus, the first part of the second chapter is dedicated to the genre of romance, especially its English version, as the formal source of many an encounter with evil in *The Faerie Queene* and as a model which is altered by Spenser in order to comply with the Protestant concept of Grace and Redemption, while the second part of the second chapter deals with the Apocalyptic implications and images present in Book I, drawn predominantly from the Revelation and its Protestant interpretations.

Finally, the third chapter further explores the issues of Adamic corruption of Red Crosse and the incapability of a fallen man to achieve Holiness and Redemption unless an act supervised directly by God is involved, as they are illustrated in the scenes of Redcrosse's imprisonment by giant Orgoglio, his subsequent liberation by Prince Arthur or in the episode involving the Cave of Despair, all of which contain the aspects of Protestant theology embedded within the framework of English romance.

Cílem bakalářské práce s názvem *The Images of Evil in the First Book of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene* je přehled a rozbor uměleckých ztvárnění zla, hříchu a náboženské hereze, jichž se v první knize Spenserovy básně nachází hojnost. K dosažení této analýzy se práce zabývá širokou škálou vyobrazení zla, která nositelům nepravosti připisují projevy fyzické deformace, nemoci a rozkladu za účelem zdůraznění odpudivé povahy hříchu.

V první kapitole práce je čtenáři předkládán přehled vybraných obrazů zla, jejichž kategorizace je založena na čtvrté kapitole knihy C. S. Lewise *Spenser's Images of Life*. V případě těchto ztvárnění je sledována především rozdílná konstrukční složitost různých alegorických postav a jejich estetický účinek na čtenáře. Jelikož je zákeřnost ďábelských intrik v křesťanském životě demonstrována Spenserem v různých případech do různé míry, snahou autora této práce je postupovat od jednodušších vyobrazení zla, jejichž pravá podstata a funkce je zřejmá, tedy například jednotlivých zlotřilých rytířů plnících funkci řadových protivníků hlavní postavy nebo jednotlivých ztělesnění smrtelných hříchů, a postupně se propracovat k rafinovaným a záludným formám zla, jako je například Duessa, ztělesnění nepravé církve, vyobrazení zoufalství, které se pomocí vytříbených argumentů pokouší svést hlavního hrdinu na scesti nebo i hlavní hrdina sám jako nositel prvotního hříchu a potenciálu hřešit. Při rozboru složitějších obrazů zla je výrazným prvkem, který se objevuje na mnoha místech básně, dvojakost a klamavá povaha nositelů nepravosti, využívajících vnější zástěrku moci nebo pompéznosti ke korumpování hlavní postavy.

Druhá kapitola práce se zabývá některými z inspiračních zdrojů Spenserovy básně. Tyto jsou vybírány s ohledem na důležitost žánru anglické verze středověké romance, která se stala formálním modelem pro zásadní scény hluboce spirituální povahy a zároveň k charakteristicky Protestantskému pojetí zla v lidské přirozenosti a problematické možnosti dosažení vykoupění, které jsou v těchto výjevech demonstrovány. V první části kapitoly je proto předestřena úloha romance jako zdroje formálních prvků, který je ovšem Spenserem upraven tak, aby odpovídal právě Protestantkému pojetí boží milosti a vykoupění člověka, a v druhé části kapitoly je osvětlena úloha Zjevení Sv. Jana a jeho protestantských interpretací jako zdrojů náboženských a apokalyptických obrazů, které jsou v první knize *The Faerie Queene* výrazně zastoupeny.

Třetí kapitola je pak věnována bližšímu rozboru protestantských teologických konceptů nastíněných v kapitole druhé, především opakovaně chybuující hlavní postavě, kterou je díky její podstatě možno chápat jako odraz biblického Adama, a její neschopnosti dosažení spásy bez přímého podílu boží milosti, která je v básni nutným předpokladem vykoupění.

INTRODUCTION:

The Faerie Queene by Edmund Spenser is a work that abounds in political allegory, ethical lessons, tales of courtship and chivalry but also in various memorable images of religious and spiritual nature. Since the poem deals with the conflict between good and evil, between righteousness and wickedness, between the way of protestantism and the religious fallacy of Roman Catholic Church, the imagery devised by Edmund Spenser pertains not only to the bravery, prowess and piety of heroic allegorical figures that populate the poem, but also to the moral corruption, wickedness and treachery of the characters that represent the forces of evil. The images of evil in *The Faerie Queene* are numerous, often powerful in their artistic intensity, imposing due to their display of unholy wrath, spite and conceit, and yet, the sense of contempt is conveyed by them due to the corruption which the servants of Satan insidiously spread and at the same time fall prey to. Especially noteworthy is the way in which the images of evil enable the author to accentuate the revolting nature of sin and the most appalling transgressions against the will and the instructions of the Lord. The images of evil that can be found in *The Faerie Queene* seem to be intentionally formed and constructed in order to achieve the sense of repulsion. They are employed in order to reflect and illustrate the deplorable and fallacious practices of Catholicism, and therefore, they are present in the poem as elements deserving the resentment and disdain of the reader. The Devil's work is omnipresent and on numerous occasions, the missions of righteous knights commissioned by Gloriana, the Queen of Fairyland, are threatened and almost marred by the forces of evil. With regards to the magnitude of this poem, not every venture into the Devil's domain carried out by Edmund Spenser can be addressed in the thesis. For the purposes of addressing the issue of artistic vision of evil in *The Faerie Queene*, the first book of the work provides a sufficient amount of material. The first book certainly contains a wealth of images pertaining to evil, moral corruption, temptation and the bidding of Satan in general. Evil characters as well as evil places are involved in the fierce and unceasing struggle between the good and the wicked, between the way of Protestantism and the way of Roman Catholic Church. Upon the examination of this struggle presented in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, it becomes apparent that one of the prominent features of the images of evil appearing in the poem is the

feature of defect. The signs of disease, deformation or decay can be found throughout the first book of the poem as the symptoms of moral disintegration and are frequently employed in vivid descriptions of the forces adverse to the Lord represented on Earth by such honorable characters as the Knight of Red Crosse. In this respect, the focus of the thesis is mainly on the elements of unpleasantness, defect and disintegration that can be detected in the artistic renderings of various forms of evil illustrating the author's religious views. The aesthetic impact of the images of evil should be discussed and demonstrated through a number of examples from the first book of *The Faerie Queene*. Attention is also paid to the spirituality of the time reflected in Edmund Spenser's images of evil and to the author's own religious background and its influence on the final form of his artistic vision of malevolence and wickedness. Therefore, of the several forms of allegory present in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, the religious and spiritual allegory and its correlations with the author's artistic and poetic approach to the portrayal of evil is emphasized. In the first chapter, by using a number of examples, the examination of the images of evil in Book I focuses on the categories of evil based on the hierarchy suggested by C. S. Lewis in his *Spenser's Images of Life*. This categorization should illustrate the existence of various stages of complexity of these images and at the same time bring the attention of the reader to one of the foremost features of Spenser's artistic renderings of evil in *The Faerie Queene*- the contrast between deceptive display of power or pomp on one side and the aspects of disease, weakness and deformation on the other. The aim of the second chapter is to map the intertextual links pertaining to *The Faerie Queene* and to deal with the sources of Spenser's poem. While the significance of the works of the Classical period or of Renaissance epic is not denied, the main focus of this chapter is on the importance of English form of romance as the source of formal features of many an encounter with evil in *The Faerie Queene*. Also, the influence of the Protestant interpretations of the Revelation that helped form the imagery of various crucial, deeply spiritual passages of the poem, such as the confrontation with the monster named Error of Canto I or the final dragon fight of Canto XI, is emphasized. The examination of the influence of the Protestant views of the Revelation as the source of imagery should prepare ground for the considerations of the reflections of the Protestant spirituality and theology in the images of evil present in Spenser's poem. The contrast between virtue and sin, namely temperance and wrath and holiness and wickedness, detectable in selected passages of Book I is dealt with as well as the issues of the Adamic corruption of the Knight of Red Crosse, the apocalyptic dimension of the struggle between Prince Arthur and giant Orgoglio and, more generally, the

necessity of divine Grace in the process of overcoming the corruption of nature- the greatest obstacle preventing Redcrosse from achieving Holiness, the virtue Book I is dedicated to.

CHAPTER I: MAPPING IMAGES OF EVIL

As it was stated in the introductory part of the thesis, the images of evil in *The Faerie Queene*, regardless of their form, have one thing in common. The symptoms of physical deformation, unpleasant appearance, physical decay, foul odour and various other signs of deterioration and disintegration certainly can be seen as the common features of evil pantheon, evil characters and evil places designed by Edmund Spenser and as the general characteristic qualities of artistic renderings of evil present in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*.

In the examination of the images of evil in *The Faerie Queene*, the compilation of essays by C. S. Lewis entitled *Spenser's Images of Life* can provide a preliminary overview of various forms of evil present in *The Faerie Queene* along with a valuable comparison between Spenser and other distinguished English authors dealing with the issues of evil, malevolence and the sources of continuous human lapses in the field of ethics since it is closely connected with the considerations of Spenser's approach to the portrayal of evil. In one of his essays, C. S. Lewis uses, among others, the examples of *I Tamburlaine* and *Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe and *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, and by comparing their images of evil with those of Edmund Spenser, he arrives at the following conclusion. Evil in the aforementioned works of Marlowe or Milton is portrayed as "involving immense concentrations of will" and it appears as "energy- lawless and rebellious energy, no doubt, but nevertheless energy, abounding and upsurging."¹

The evil portrayed in *Paradise Lost*, *Faustus* or even *Comus* seems to show the signs of immense vital power, whereas in *The Faerie Queene*, energy is replaced by a state of frenzy or uncontrollable rage, vitality is replaced by a constant state of malady and there is a distinct sense of unconditional surrender to the variety of vices and base needs replacing the manifestation of strong will. As an illustration of this deplorable state, which might be incorrectly interpreted as a sign of vital power similar to the one displayed by Satan of *Paradise Lost* or Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, C. S. Lewis provides the example of Pyrochles, the knight attacking Guyon in the fifth stanza of Canto II . According to C. S. Lewis, in this case, the feverish activity and the rage of Pyrochles depicted through the images of brightness, heat, red colour and through the knight's own exclamations concerning the implacable fire consuming his entrails enable the author to emphasize the true nature of the aggression and

¹ Lewis, C.S. *Spenser's Images of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967. 66.

violence on the part of the wicked- as the subordination to a malignant disease, an affliction taking over body and mind, a fever resulting in agonizing frenzy which only death can palliate. The likes of Pyrochles, the wide array of evil knights, the variety of monstrous creatures but also the more important Satan's servants such as Orgoglio, they all seem to be no longer entities in control of their own execrable drives.

In his essay, C. S. Lewis draws the conclusion that the difference between the approaches of Marlowe or Milton and the approach of Spenser can be traced in the vision of an author (and an allegorist) concerned "not with the moment of avaricious choice, but with the whole life-long state of the avaricious man: not with the moment of yielding to a particular sexual temptation, but with the life-long state of the nympholept."² And indeed, the reminders of this authorial approach become apparent during the examination of *The Faerie Queene* on numerous occasions. Such images which evoke the sense of stagnation, decline and dilapidation are present in abundance throughout the poem, be it a council of mortal sins in Canto IV of the first book or the omnipresent houses of evil, that, despite possessing certain degree of sinister pomp or solemnity, show the unmistakable signs of a prolonged decay and decomposition.

Regarding the images of evil in *The Faerie Queene*, in C. S. Lewis's book *Spenser's Images of Life*, five major categories of forms in which the incarnations of wickedness appear are recognized. Although these categories do not represent an ideal division and they appear limited as far as their systematic arrangement is concerned, they also help put emphasis on the aspects related to the images of disease and decay as they were already presented.

The first category includes less significant paynim knights posing as momentary enemies of Red Crosse, such as Sansfoy, Sansjoy and Sansloy of Book I or Pyrochles in the second book-an example provided by C. S Lewis. Although the defective nature of evil might not be immediately detectable in this case, the fits of rage and uncontrollable choleric behaviour of Pyrochles are distinct pieces of evidence illustrating the knight's affliction. The second category pertains to the images of disease and defect which are illustrated by the likes of Corceca or Abessa appearing in Canto III of the first book or Maleger of the second book. These unfortunate characters are, as C. S. Lewis notes, afflicted by blindness, deafness, fever and various other dysfunctions. The third category of evil is characterized as the disgusting, that is, as such imagery conveying the sense of repulsion and loathing. Such are the images of

² Lewis. 66.

Seven Deadly Sins in Canto IV of the first book or Duessa in her true likeness, as C. S. Lewis observes.

The fourth category of evil is recognized as the temptation to relax, the example of which can be found in Canto VII of the first book where Red Crosse unforseeingly drinks from the fountain of sloth and is subsequently captured by the giant Orgoglio and subjected to the destructive effects of religious falsehood.

Finally, the fifth main category of images of evil pertains to the Waste House which is seen as the ultimate representation of Death and which can be recognized in the Houses of Evil throughout the poem, including the House of Orgoglio of Canto VIII of the first book or the House of Pride in Canto IV. All aforementioned forms of images regarding the wicked to some extent involve the signs of disease and defect, are designed in order to achieve a powerful impact on the reader and are prevalent in various memorable scenes capturing the struggle between good and evil. As far as the aspects of physical deformation and disease are concerned, *The Faerie Queene* offers an abundance of relevant examples. The features of deformity and dysfunction, easily recognizable in the case of the giant Orgoglio or the monster named Error, as well as outward splendour serving as a camouflage concealing the true state of things, such as in the case of Duessa or House of Pride, can be detected in a large number of images of evil present in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*.

One of the most significant images of evil of the first book can be seen in the imposing appearance of the giant Orgoglio who defeats and captures the Knight of Red Crosse in Canto VII. Orgoglio, one of the foremost adversaries of pious knights in Edmund Spenser's poem, the personification of carnal pride and the Antichrist himself, is introduced to the reader as a horrible, hideous giant. The physical form of this monstrous being is not concealed in any way, on the contrary, Orgoglio puts on display his hideousness in order to intimidate his enemies. The moral disintegration and depravity of Orgoglio is reflected through the imagery concerning matters and materials evoking the sense of repulsion. In fact, even the descent of this giant is associated with poetic representation of unpleasantness, as the following lines show:

The greatest Earth his uncouth mother was,
And blustering Æolus his boasted syre,
Brought forth this monstrous masse of earthly slime
Puft up with emptie wind, and fild with sinfull crime.³

³ Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene, Book One*. London: The MacMillan Company, 1903. I.vii.9. All subsequent quotations are from this edition.

Since the giant serves as the representation of the basest human vices, conceit and pride in particular, he is described as a creature born of soil whose very essence can be identified as slime, a viscous matter evoking the sense of nausea and repulsion. Orgoglio shows the signs of both deformation and disease, and according to the five categories devised by C. S. Lewis, he could be listed in the category of the disgusting as well as the category of disease, the latter of which may not be obvious in the case of the horrible giant whose height, in the words of the poet, seemed to threaten the sky, whose physical strength enabled him to use an oak torn out of the earth as a battle-mace and even capture the Knight of Red Crosse. Yet, upon a more careful examination of the episode involving Orgoglio's death in Canto VIII, after the decapitation executed by Prince Arthur, the blood of the giant seems to be contaminated and impure. The death of Orgoglio is described in the following lines:

With mortall steele him smot againe so sore,
That headlesse his unweldy bodie lay,
All wallowd in his owne fowle bloody gore,
Which flowed from his wounds in wondrous store (I.viii.24)

However, the merit of Orgoglio as a demonstration of the execrable nature of sin can be seen not only in the aspect of physical hideousness, but also in the aforementioned passage concerning empty wind inflating the mass of earthly slime. This passage in particular can be seen as indicating uninhibited pride of the giant- a sin of rebellious mind which reaches beyond the boundaries of mere physical monstrosity and which will be dealt with later on in this chapter.

The image of contamination of the evil ones as far as their bodily fluids are concerned seems to recur in the poem. In relation to the imagery regarding the connection between evil and various disgusting matters, be it tainted blood or excessive production of slime, it is necessary to mention the fact that similar tendency in the portrayals of maleficent creatures can be traced on other occasions, such as the fight between Prince Arthur and the seven headed beast affiliated with Duessa in Canto VIII. During a fierce struggle, Arthur manages to slice away the scalp of one of the monster's heads. This action results in a massive hemorrhage described in the following lines:

And high advauncing his blood-thirstie blade,
Stroke one of those deformed heads so sore,
That of his puissance proud ensample made;
His monstrous scalpe downe to his teeth it tore,
And that misformed shape mis-shaped more:

A sea of blood gusht from the gaping wound,
That her gay garments staynd with filthy gore
And overflowed all the field around. (I.viii.16)

Again, the elements of deformity, the disgusting and the disease are present, and this particular image of evil becomes stained with impure blood, foul gore, as the poet puts it, after the stroke of Arthur's sword.

Similarly, in Canto I, in the passage referring to the struggle between Red Crosse and the monster named Errour, described as an ugly, vile creature partially resembling a serpent while retaining some features of a woman, the pious knight is engulfed in a disgusting matter, the contents of the beast's stomach in particular, after seizing the adversary by the throat. The incident is depicted in the following manner:

Therewith she spewd out of her filthy maw
A floud of poyson horrible and blacke,
Full of great lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw,
Which stunck so vildly, that it forst him slacke
His grasping hold, and from her turne him backe. (I.i.20)

Not only does the appalling odour of the matter regurgitated by the monster force Red Crosse to recoil, it also defiles the site of the battle. Among the constituents of Errour's vomit, books and treatises preserving the ideas of the false religion can be found.

In the several examples mentioned above and pertaining to the images of evil dissected in order to illustrate the total corruption caused by Roman Catholic Church, the author is not limited only to the outward appearance of evil beings and the signs of evil detectable on the outside. The decay and depravity which run deep and are often referred to as poison or certain form of contamination, a malignant disease, afflict the bearer of the wickedness and serve as the means of the profanation of the environment.

The list of the most significant images of evil present in the first book of *The Faerie Queene* would be distinctly incomplete without several other examples illustrating amply the signs of deformation, decay and disease which stand for malevolence. Among them, one of the most prominent is the detailed portrayal of the inhabitants of House of Pride:

But this was drawne of six unequall beasts,
On which her six sage Counsellours did ryde,
Taught to obay their bestiall beheasts,
With like conditions to their kinds applyde. (I.iv.18)

Idleness, the first of these counsellors, is described as a sickly being finding even the slightest movement too painful. The state of grave sin is emphasized by the mention of continuous fever indicating moral disintegration:

For contemplation sake: yet otherwise,
His life he led in lawlesse riotise;
By which he grew to grievous malady;
For in his lustlesse limbs through evill guise
A shaking fever raignd continually. (I.iv.20)

The second of the counsellors, Gluttony, is depicted as a “deformed creature, on a filthie swyne“, and in his case, the author provides a carefully constructed images of physical changes caused by overindulgence in delicacies and alcoholic beverages. Gluttony appears in the form of a morbidly obese antropomorphic creature, or, more probably, a human being that has already lost the majority of distinctive features of the species, constantly suffering from heat and profuse sweating. The author illustrates the deplorable state of Gluttony by remarking:

And in his hand did beare a bouzing can,
Of which he supt so oft, that on his seat
His dronken corse he scarce upholden can,
In shape and life more like a monster, then a man. (I.iv.22)

Due to the vivid descriptions of the damage perceived as a result of Gluttony’s moral depravity, the elements of physical deformation and disease are ideally combined in this image of evil, as the following lines show:

Full of diseases was his carcas blew,
And a dry dropsie through his flesh did flow:
Which by misdiet daily greater grew:
Such one was Gluttony, the second of that crew. (I.iv.23)

Lechery, the third of the monstrous Counsellors of Lucifera, is fittingly described as a rough and filthy character upon a bearded goat. The characteristic traits of unimpeded carnal lust and salacity manifest themselves in the physical form of the counsellor- his green gown and fine clothes designed in order to conceal true inglorious nature. As well as other members of the ignominious council, Lechery shows the signs of an all-consuming affliction.

Which lewdnesse fild him with reprochfull paine
Of that fowle evill, which all men reprove,
That rots the marrow and consumes the braine:

Such one was Lecherie, the third of all this traine. (I.iv.26)

The fourth representation of sin, Avarice, is not remarkable for his misshapen physical form, but rather for its constant quest for pelf. Even in this less conspicuous image of evil, the element of bodily defect is detectable, as the following lines prove.

Whose wealth was want, whose plenty made him pore,
Who had enough, yet wished ever more;
A vile disease, and eke in foote and hand
A grievous gout tormented him full sore. (I.iv.29)

Similarly to Avarice, Envie, the fifth of the counsellors, does not possess a wide variety of visible deformations, but his leprous mouth producing poisonous backbites represents an essential element of his appearance.

Finally, Wrath, whose name is justified by his blood-stained raiment, is portrayed by the author as a figure showing the signs of several diseases whose eyes hurl fiery red sparkles, thus providing the proof of the state of uncontrollable frenzy referred to in the following lines:

And fretting grieffe the enemy of life;
All these, and many evils moe haunt ire,
The swelling Splene, and Frenzy raging rife,
The shaking Palsey, and Saint Fraunces fire. (I.iv.35)

It should be noted that the way in which the author ascribes the symptoms of various afflictions to the wide range of characters representing deadly sins is not random or coincidental. On the contrary, it is quite precise and exact and the signs Lucifera's counsellors show would be probably observed in the cases of living persons indulging in described sins.

Another example of evil recognizable by the naked eye can be found in Canto XI of the first book, where a winged dragon of immense size appears. This form of evil, resisting the blade of Red Crosse for a considerable portion of time prior to finally succumbing to the devout knight, seems to show various signs of decay and hideousness as well as imposing, yet deceptive pomp, similarly to the giant Orgoglio, who had once possessed the ability to use a large tree torn out of the ground as a mace and evoke the sense of dread and terror in the hearts of men, but who turned into nothing more than an empty bladder once he was finally defeated and slain. There is also certain resemblance between the image of the dragon and numerous houses of evil, where royal arras and gold amaze the visitor in every room and where, at the same time, the filth and putrefaction of evil covers the floors. The dragon of Canto XI, representing Satan himself, may be equipped with enormous talons, sharp teeth designed in order to tear flesh and seemingly impenetrable skin covered with metallic scales,

yet, the same associations as in the case of the giant Orgoglio or Seven Deadly Sins arise during the fierce battle between him and Red Crosse. Three rows of iron teeth which the dragon puts on display, no matter how imposing or intimidating, are described by the author in the following fashion:

Three ranckes of yron teeth enraunged were,
In which yet trickling blood, and gobbets raw
Of late devoured bodies did appeare. (I.xi.13)

The remains of dismembered and mutilated corpses- torn flesh of Satan's victims caught between the dragon's teeth, serve as the reminder of the true hideous nature of sin that cannot be obscured by any vain display of power or physical strength. The level of unpleasantness is further increased by the emissions of noxious fumes produced by the dragon's gorge, as it is depicted in the following lines:

A cloud of smothering smoke and sulphure seare,
Out of his stinking gorge forth steemed still,
That all the ayre about with smoke and stench did fill. (I.xi.13)

Again, as in the case of Orgoglio, the aspects of unpleasantness, repulsiveness and decay are prevalent in this significant image of evil devised by the author. The utter corruption represented by this particular image of evil is also illustrated in the scene of the dragon's slaying, taking two whole days. After the monster is, with great difficulty, wounded by Redcrosse using his spear, the blood of the beast is described as tainted:

Forth flowed fresh
A gushing river of blacke goarie blood,
That drowned all the land, whereon he stood;
The streame thereof would drive a water-mill:
Trebly augmented was his furious mood
With bitter sence of his deepe rooted ill. (I.xi.22)

Beside such images of evil referring to various demonic characters and creatures, malevolence in *The Faerie Queene* is represented by the places of evil as well. The Waste House as the ultimate image of Death is emphasized by C. S. Lewis as the representation of evil of the highest order.

As far as the case of the House of Pride is concerned, the splendour and glory put on display within the walls of this evil place bear resemblance to the pomp frequently associated with other houses of evil or to the deceiving appearance of Duessa. The following lines extracted from the eighth stanza of Canto IV illustrate the events taking place at the House of Pride:

High above all a cloth of State was spread,
And a rich throne, as bright as sunny day,
On which there sate most brave embellished
With royall robes and gorgeous array,
A mayden Queene, that shone as Titans ray. (I.iv.8)

Yet, the images of evil presented in the House of Pride, embellished with exceeding finery visible on the outside, become even more repulsive in the eyes of the readers due to the impact of the contrast achieved by the author revealing the depravity and squalor that can be recognized in the ghastly parade of the inhabitants of the house- Lucifera's counsellors. As it is frequent in *The Faerie Queene*, the imposing and the pompous can be once again found in the vicinity of the wicked and the disgusting.

In this respect, not only the House of Pride, where the summit of Lucifera's despicable counsellors takes place, is noteworthy for its portrayal of evil. The first book of the poem contains several other images of evil pertaining to the places that are rarely entered by devout and god-fearing men.

Similar to the false splendour of The House of Pride, the seemingly peaceful scene with a variety of trees appealing to the eye and harmonious warbling of birds witnessed by Redcrosse and Una upon entering a forest in Canto I serves only as a deceitful guise fashioned to deceive those who proceed without caution and to camouflage the real nature of the wood. Unlike Redcrosse, Una recognizes the true peril of the forest as she warns her champion:

Yea but (quoth she) the perill of this place
I better wot then you, though now too late
To wish you backe returne with foule disgrace,
Yet wisdomes warnes, whilst foot is in the gate,
To stay the steppe, ere forced to retrate.
This is the wandring wood, this Errours den,
A monster vile, whom God and man does hate. (I.i.13)

Una's warning is not unsubstantiated, and Redcrosse is bound to find out how dangerous the monster named Error can be.

Apart from The House of Pride or The Wood of Error, danger lurks in various other lairs scattered throughout the poem. In his essay, C. S. Lewis provides the example of the House of Busyrane present in the third book and refers to this type of image of evil by stating that "with its magnificence in room after room, its silence, its desertion, (it) is undoubtedly a place of Death."⁴ Again, as on various different occasions in *The Faerie Queene*, the pomp, splendour, false glory, but also lifelessness, stagnation and dilapidation can be recognized in the House of Busyrane of the third book, as well as in other similar places appearing in the first book: the House of Archimago or the House of Orgoglio. The palaces of the high ranking servants of Satan may be richly decorated and luxurious, yet, in fact, they represent nothing but the dens of vice and they strike the reader as lodgings as cheerful as the dungeon in which Redcrosse is held prisoner after being incapacitated by the water of an enchanted fountain and captured by the giant Orgoglio. Although C. S. Lewis perceives the houses of evil as an independent category of the images of evil in *The Faerie Queene*, the elements of other, previously mentioned types can be easily detected within the confines of these dens of sin.

While Prince Arthur searches the House of Orgoglio in Canto VIII in order to set free the Knight of Red Crosse, the author of the poem describes Arthur's discovery within the chambers of the castle :

There all within full rich arrayd he found,
With royall arras and resplendent gold.
And did with store of every thing abound,
That greatest Princes presence might behold.
But all the floore (too filthy to be told)
With bloud of guiltlesse babes, and innocents trew. (I.viii.35)

Along with luxury, unspeakable filth and gore- the curdled blood of the innocent and the victims of the false religion, are found behind the doors of Orgoglio's chambers. No wonder, the signs of disease and decay are present in abundance in the places of evil: despite the display of gold, precious stones and excessive finery, eternal bane and destruction awaits those who enter, as it happens to the Knight of Red Crosse who becomes confined within the

⁴ Lewis. 71.

dark dungeon beneath Orgoglio's castle. Regarding the signs of disease and decay, the dungeon itself and also the effects of its environment on imprisoned Red Crosse offer valuable material. In the stanzas concerning the rescue of the unfortunate prisoner courtesy of Prince Arthur, the following description of the passageways leading to Red Crosse's cell can be found:

Where entred in, his foot could find no flore,
But all a deepe descent, as darke as hell,
That breathed ever forth a filthie banefull smell. (I.viii.39)

It is obvious that extremely unpleasant odours rule supreme in the dungeon of sin and its darkness is unfit for living. Upon the discovery of imprisoned Red Crosse, the reader is confronted with the spectacle of death and physical devastation- the dire consequences of the foul and noxious environment of the dungeon. The unfortunate captured knight is depicted as a being completely lacking vital power and showing the signs of malnutrition and malady. Apart from his dull eyes resembling hollow pits, unable to endure sunlight, other disastrous changes that befell Red Crosse in the dungeon of evil are listed:

His rawbone armes, whose mighty brawned bowrs
Were wont to rive steele plates, and helmets hew,
Were cleane consum'd, and all his vitall powres
Decayd, and all his flesh shronk up like withered flowres... (I.viii.41)

In the image of imprisoned knight, once a healthy man of solid physical constitution turned into the shadow of a man, the author of the poem once again utilizes the elements of physical disintegration, disease and decay in order to emphasize the malignant influence of evil.

Similarly terrible effect is achieved by the speech made in the Cave of Despair, where another image of evil of a more deceitful nature makes appearance in the form of an old hermit. As it was already said, The Knight of Red Crosse falters repeatedly during his quest for the reunion with Una, yet he is eventually availed and guided by Prince Arthur and others and he finally accomplishes his mission.

Due to the graveness of Redcrosse's repeated errors and lapses and the dangers the knight's own mistakes give rise to, perhaps another form of evil should be taken into consideration. Redcrosse himself acts on many occasions as the bearer of evil and often falls victim to his own self destructive potential. The nature of man in compliance with the

fundamental principles of Protestantism leads to Redcrosse's constant need of Grace and his incapability to fend off some more powerful adversaries. More than sufficient evidence of this is found in his capture and imprisonment by Orgoglio, his dependence on the intervention of Una in the Cave of Despair and also the inability to immediately see through the guise of Duessa.

Duessa, in contrast with Una- the image of true faith and fidelity, on the most distant point of the scale imaginable, represents one of the most advanced images of evil, playing the role of temptress in the pantheon of falsehood, fallacy and lie presented in Book I. This character, the personification of the false religion, becomes the most deceitful adversary of the Knight of Red Crosse. Duessa, assuming a form appealing to the eye and possessing the capacity to deceive even a religious and virtuous man, almost causes the physical and spiritual death of the Knight of Red Crosse. In the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, Duessa temporarily poses as the object of the virtuous knight's courtship and chivalrous admiration. Thanks to the deceptive image created by imperfect perception of Red Crosse, Duessa gains an advantage that further increases the magnitude of the threat posed by her. In the case of this image of seductress with one purpose- leading the virtuous knight astray- Duessa's affiliation with the Devil is not easily recognizable. Even a false name Fidessa is employed in order to further confuse the defender of true Faith. The deception that the knight falls prey to represents a work of a formidable opponent that the true religion represented by Red Crosse has to face. Duessa, the incarnation of fallacy, skillfully conceals her ulterior motives by using a convincing guise, in this case the camouflage in the form of deceptive feminine charms. This form of evil is almost impossible to ward off in the case of the Knight of Red Crosse, who repeatedly falls victim to the guiles of Satan, becomes deprived of his ability to recognize the Devil's work and is thus rendered defenseless. In several powerful scenes of Canto VII and especially Canto IX, the Knight of Red Crosse succumbs to desperation and hopelessness, is held in captivity and eventually finds himself on the brink of eternal damnation, contemplating suicide. The knight's repeated lapses and his inability to successfully deal with the schemes and wiles of Duessa serve as the proof of the high level of danger represented by this particularly insidious form of evil.

When the Knight of Red Crosse along with Prince Arthur reveal the true likeness of Duessa, that is, when she is deprived of her guise, the author offers an unapologetic image of ugliness that serves as the reminder of utmost corruption embodied in the form of the deceitful woman who plotted against the pious knight in order to bring about his destruction

and eternal damnation. The following lines refer to the reaction of the knights present at the scene of Duessa's exposure in Canto VIII:

Such as she was, their eyes might her behold,
That her misshaped parts did them appall,
A loathly, wrinckled hag, ill favoured, old,
Whose secret filth good manners biddeth not be told. (I.viii.46)

C. S. Lewis in *Spenser's Images of Life* refers to another excerpt from Canto VIII, in which, according to his opinion, an ideal example of the image of evil falling into the category of the disgusting can be located. The following lines certainly do not shy away from naturalistic descriptions of bodily disintegration and utter hideousness:

Her teeth of her rotten gums were feld,
And her sowre breath abominably smeld,
Her dried dugs, like bladders lacking wind,
Hong downe, and filthy matter from them weld.
Her wrizled skin as rough as maple rind,
So scabby was, that would have loathd all womankind. (I.viii.47)

In her book *The Condition of Creatures*, Georgia R. Crampton comments on the exposition of Duessa in the following way: "The baring of Duessa's misshapen self is an instance of a peculiarity frequent in Spenser's description of evil, of inauthenticity- the presentation of nether and hindsides of things and people in obscene contrast to their fronts. These rear views seem not to balance, but to invalidate, the front ones."⁵

The falsehood, the deceit and complete moral depravity of Duessa are effectively reflected in the words describing her exposure. The image of decay and putrefaction camouflaged through vain guise of deceptive splendour illustrates effectively the repulsive nature of sin, is designed in order to evoke the sense of repulsion and is representative of many other artistic renderings of evil appearing in the first book.

The contrast between outward appearance and the true state of evil works in slightly different way, quite surprisingly, in the case of giant Orgoglio the reader is already familiar with. Although this monstrous creature does not appear in a form appealing to the eye of his adversary, on the contrary, his hideousness is clearly visible at first sight, it can be useful to return to this image of evil in order to address the complexity of its nature which may go unnoticed. Orgoglio was quite understandably listed among those evil creatures of the poem

⁵ Crampton, Georgia R. *The Condition of Creatures*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974. 130.

which put their viciousness on display without inhibition and whose ugliness is obvious. Yet, regarding the scene of the death of Orgoglio, the reader may note that the aftermath of once intimidating Son of Aeolus, the embodiment of Pride, appears somewhat peculiar. The intimidating power and appearance of the giant prove to be nothing but a well designed illusion and deception employed in order to conceal the weakness and impotence of this particular servant of Satan. The remains of Orgoglio, once he is definitively defeated and slain, are depicted as a thing resembling an empty bladder, worthy of pity and contempt, lacking any potential of threat or danger. This aspect of the seemingly straightforward approach of the author to the creation of images of evil clearly illustrating the repulsiveness of particular vices can be deemed slightly problematic in the case of Orgoglio since the sin of Pride that the giant represents is usually seen primarily as a sin of intellect. Still, Orgoglio's conceit, shameless boasting and the ability to intimidate stem from his physical strength, the mass of his enormous body, which, however, in the final act of exposition at the hands of Arthur deflates and turns into a pitiful reminder of the weakness and the inevitable deterioration of the flesh. It should be noted that this reminder of vanity and unholy pride appears as a poetic image appropriate mainly in the portrayal of an intellectual sin, the sin of a mind defying the commands of God, and thus renders the features of physical deformation and hideousness somewhat gratuitous as far as the aim of the indictment of sin is concerned.

As the examples above show, the images of weakness, impotence and stagnation concealed under the guise of pomp and power appear at various points in the poem, be it in the House of Pride, a place of evil where luxury and excessive splendour help conceal unspeakable filth, or in the scene of the exposure of evil Duessa. Across the hierarchy of the images of evil found in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, the sense of grave defect, apparent or concealed to various extents in different situations, is successfully conveyed.

Often considered one of the most powerful scenes of Book I, Redcrosse's confrontation with a sinister old man in the Cave of Despair, already mentioned in the list of other places of evil, presents to the reader perhaps the most insidious form of evil and the temptation to commit one of the gravest sins imaginable. The repeated lapse of the knight, taking place not long after his deliverance from the decaying dungeon of Orgoglio's castle, serves as a distinct warning from the dangers of falsehood and religious fallacy and the intentional misinterpretations of the word of God. It is no accident that the author portrays religious error as a monster of the most hideous nature in Canto I and that the cup of lies possessed by Duessa is dreaded and reviled throughout the first book. In Canto IX, through

the precise and well constructed argument of the personified Despair, Redcrosse nearly loses his battle with evil, overwhelmed by the elocution of the sinister hermit. Although Redcrosse previously suffered the effects of heresy, spiritual falsehood and darkness in Orgoglio's dungeon where he underwent a terrible change and was deprived of all vital power, in Canto IX, he is misled by a young knight named Sir Trevisan, and he must face Despair that uses its powerful weapons of deception and twisted reasoning based on distorted truth. By inventive and skillfully delivered argumentation, Despair in the form of a cursed man of hollow eyes and unkempt appearance attempts to convince Redcrosse to rest eternally, in other words, to take his own life. In a dark cave, a place of stagnation and death, Redcrosse is subjected to the following words explaining the futility of a man's journey through life, which are inevitably bound to plant the seeds of doubt and confusion even in the hearts of the most devout christians:

He there does now enjoy eternall rest
And happy ease, which thou dost want and crave,
And further from it daily wanderest:
What if some little paine the passage have,
That makes fraile flesh to feare the bitter wave?
Insidiously, the cursed man hastens to add:
Is not short paine well borne, that brings long ease,
And layes the soule to sleepe in quiet grave? (I.ix.40)

Unfortunately, the lesson learned in the dungeon of Orgoglio does not suffice to prevent the knight from the loss of spiritual strength. Upon listening to the statements of personified despair, in subsequent contemplation, Redcrosse's faith is corroded by the twisted and deformed truth used against the pious knight in the form of an indictment concerning his many grave sins committed prior to entering the cave. The cursed man, seizing the opportunity, further deprives Redcrosse of his spiritual equilibrium by pronouncing a sacrilegious misinterpretation of the creator's intention and the purpose of life:

Did not he all create
To die againe? all ends that was begonne.
Their times in his eternall booke of fate
Are written sure, and have their certaine date. (I.ix.42)

The painful reminiscence of the errors on the part of Redcrosse follows:

The lenger life, I wote the greater sin,
The greater sin, the greater punishment:
All those great battels, which thou boasts to win,
Through strife, and blood-shed, and avengement,
Now praysd, hereafter deare thou shalt repent. (I.ix.43)

Not only the sins committed by sword, but also Redcrosse's previous involvement with Duessa and his infidelity are addressed:

Is not enough, that to this Ladie milde
Thou falsed hast thy faith with perjurie,
And sold thy selfe to serve Duessa vilde,
With whom in all abuse thou hast thy selfe defilde? (I.ix.46)

As in the episode concerning the water of an enchanted fountain which incapacitated Redcrosse in Canto VII, the resistance of the knight proves to be insufficient in Canto IX. The speech of the cursed man has a terrible impact on Redcrosse whose reaction is described by the author in the following fashion:

Well knowing true all that he did reherse,
And to his fresh remembraunce did reverse
The ugly vew of his deformed crimes,
That all his manly powres it did disperse,
As he were charmed with inchaunted rimes,
That oftentimes he quakt, and fainted oftentimes. (I.ix.47)

The pious knight is overwhelmed by weakness. Again, the sense of the loss of manly power is strongly present, as it happened within the dungeon of Orgoglio's castle. At this point, the previously mentioned idea of the temptation to relax stemming from the sin of despair as one of the most insidious forms of evil encountered in the poem, an idea expressed in C. S. Lewis' book *Spenser's Images of Life*, seems fully justified. In the musings of Redcrosse, after being exposed to the influence of despair, the acceptance of suicide is almost reached, and the immortal soul of the knight can be saved only through the intervention of

Una. This episode can be, from the theological point of view, seen as warning the reader from the sin of despair and as demonstrating, through the example and the actions of Redcrosse, the omnipresent concepts of Law and Grace.

Surely, in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, countless other examples of imagery of disease, decay and ugliness could be found. Yet, letting images and examples build up would be unnecessary and redundant. Instead, with regards to the syncretism of the author who utilized a large number of sources in creating the poem and with regards to the highly religious nature of the poem, the examination of the influences as well as the implications concerning the spirituality of the age and place that gave rise to *The Faerie Queene* seems to be more useful.

CHAPTER II: INTERTEXTUAL LINKS AND LITERARY REFLECTIONS:

The fact that Spenser combines a wide array of literary elements obtained by borrowing from the works of other distinguished authors of the past is undeniable. The influences of Vergil, Torquato Tasso or Ludovico Ariosto are often cited by various critics and a number of authors have already concerned themselves with the significance of the works such as *La Gerusalemme liberata* or *Orlando Furioso* as the models for various parts of *The Faerie Queene*. For example, Josephine Waters Bennett addresses the correlations in the fields of form and subject matter between Vergil and the scenes of descent to Hell described in *The Faerie Queene*, the exposition of Duessa by Arthur seen as modelled after the exposition of Alcina in *Orlando Furioso* or the resemblances between the events taking place in The House of Pride and those portrayed by Ariosto and Tasso, particularly in the House of Alcina⁶. Certainly, in comparison with Books III and IV of *The Faerie Queene*, the influence of the works of the aforementioned authors is less prominent in Book I. Considering the first book, one cannot omit the reflections of the Revelation and plentiful biblical citations present in the story of Redcrosse and Una.

Although such works as *Orlando Furioso* are rightfully considered essential in the process of determining the main influences on *The Faerie Queene*, with regards to the significance of the encounters with Error, giant Orgoglio, Despair or the Dragon of Canto XI and with regards to their deeply spiritual, even apocalyptic implications- the subject matter of the following chapter- let us, for the time being, take into consideration another source of imagery of the poem- the genre of romance.

Andrew King deals with this Spenser's source of material stating that in Book I, "Spenser draws heavily upon native romance to give narrative representation to a Protestant paradigm of Holiness"⁷. And indeed, the author of *The Faerie Queene* uses this older narrative representation proven by time to a great extent. The adversaries such as hideous giant Orgoglio or the Dragon of Canto XI owe much to the traditional imagery of medieval romances populated by monstrous, overgrown beasts and creatures, and the setting of the

⁶ Waters Bennett, Josephine. *The Evolution of The Faerie Queene*. University of Chicago Press, 1942. 110.

⁷ King, Andrew. *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance*. Oxford University Press, 2002. 126

whole first book with its dark, damp caverns and the aforementioned Wood of Error bear much resemblance to the fundamental environments of romances.

The significance of romance as a source of material for *The Faerie Queene* is commented upon by Alastair Fowler who remarks: „In general... Spenser’s poem needs the unfeared continuum of romance. This is usually with him a fortuitous Bróceliande-like forest.“⁸ The environments characteristic of romances, such as the labyrinth of the treacherous wood in Canto I but also caves or dungeons in other cantos, are certainly present and employed to a powerful effect in *The Faerie Queene*. Regarding Spenser’s way of incorporating the elements of romance into his allegorical poem, Alastair Fowler admits that Spenser’s approach to the narrative representation of romance is marked by stylishness and suggests the possibility of characterizing *The Faerie Queene* as mannerist neo-gothic⁹, but also arrives at the conclusion there is an element of discovery characterizing romance at the core of the poem’s narrative paradigm.¹⁰

As Andrew King states, not only the environment but also the ethos of Redcrosse during his clash with Error or upon his venture to the Cave of Despair is to certain extent modelled after the brave knights of many a romance. Yet, at this point, Andrew King is able to recognize a source of tension between the model of romance and the approach of Spenser and is able to shed light on certain problematic aspects of Redcrosse’s fate in the face of imminent danger. Regarding the episode taking place in the Cave of Despair, King illustrates the problem and at the same time provides an interesting angle of viewing the material borrowed from romance and incorporated into Spenser’s vision. Several features of the whole scene which can be without a doubt deemed characteristic of romance are listed: the determination of the knight to encounter the enemy, the encounter itself presented according to the traditional patterns of romance, the appearance of the sinister hermit dwelling in the cave or the path leading to the cave decorated with cadavers. All these aspects certainly represent literary elements reminiscent of such works as alliterative *Morte Arthure*.¹¹ Yet, King recognizes a deviation from the usual pattern and formula of romance in Redcrosse’s struggle with Despair and especially in the resolution of the precarious situation- the knight’s zeal and courage prove to be insufficient in the face of evil and they become the reasons for

⁸ Fowler, Alastair. *Edmund Spenser*. Harlow: Longman Group Ltd., 1977. 46.

⁹ Fowler. 28.

¹⁰ Fowler. 43.

¹¹ King. 128.

reprimand, not commendation.¹² Redcrosse nearly succumbs to his formidable enemy and is not able to resist the weapons of Despair unless he unconditionally accepts God's Grace. In the Protestant view of virtue and sin, Redemption and Grace, "only human actions which are specifically directed by God can be effective and admirable."¹³ By the same token, the scene preceding Redcrosse's encounter with the monster named Error in which Una warns Redcrosse from rashness and from unnecessary quest for a heroic feat can be interpreted as "a rejection of the heroic ethos which is central to many romances."¹⁴ Due to certain tension between the expectation of the reader stemming from the familiarity with the model of native romance and the final form of Spenser's poem that in many respects contradicts the rules of the genre, the impact of the Protestant interpretation of man's strive for salvation can be actually increased .

The utilization of the model of romance adapted to the Protestant religious vision does not pertain only to the passages regarding Redcrosse's handling of Error and Despair, but for example also to the final dragon fight in Canto XI. According to King, this battle scene seems to share many features with *Bevis of Hampton*, a Middle English romance, including such details as the knight's fall in a well that proves to possess unexpected healing powers. Yet, in Spenser's version of the story Redcrosse does not represent a completely self-confident and self-sufficient champion anymore, but rather a vulnerable servant of God executing, not without plentiful imperfections, His will through His Grace.¹⁵ The possible ambiguity of the final lines, especially the words "his might", of Canto XI may be taken into consideration in this respect:

Then God she prayd, and thankt her faithfull knight,
That had atchieved so great a conquest by his might. (I.xi.55)

The importance of heavenly Grace, of the involvement of His might, can be recognized in another source of material used in Book One of the poem. This source is the Revelation, offering a wealth of images illustrating the struggle between Redcrosse and the forces of darkness, as well as the knight's more general human condition. Josephine Waters Bennett dedicates the whole ninth chapter of her book *The Evolution of The Faerie Queene* to the apocalyptic imagery in Book One, ascribing great importance to the narrative structure of

¹² King.128.

¹³ King.128.

¹⁴ King.128.

¹⁵ King.137.

the Vision of Saint John. In the story of Red Crosse and Una who are separated, must overcome many hardships and Satan's schemes and finally reunite in holy matrimony the elements of the legend of St. George are combined with the images presented in the Revelation and its protestant interpretations.¹⁶ Certain parallels between the events of Book I of *The Faerie Queene* and those described in the Revelation appear to be fairly obvious. Just as Christ slays the dragon in the vision of Saint John, Prince Arthur kills the seven headed beast taking Duessa's commands and Saint George as the Knight of Red Crosse puts the dragon of Canto XI to death using his sword. The woman riding the beast in the Revelation is reflected in the character of Duessa. The intervention of an avenger riding a white horse is reflected in the actions of Arthur who at one point becomes an agent of heavenly Grace in order to avail Saint George engaged in his struggle with the forces of darkness. The images from the Revelation are in this way incorporated into the framework of altered romance. The importance of the Revelation in this respect is further emphasized by the author of *The Evolution of The Faerie Queene* by the statement that "the significance of this combination cannot be grasped until we understand the significance and importance attached to the Revelation in Spenser's day."¹⁷ Regarding the position of the Revelation in Spenser's day, Bennett offers a wealth of information. The familiarity of Edmund Spenser with the Vision of Saint John and its interpretations by protestant theologians is illustrated through a number of historical facts. Although the authority of the Revelation was doubted by such distinguished protestant minds of the sixteenth century as Martin Luther or Erasmus of Rotterdam, others, for example John Bale, contributed to its defence which is preserved in *The Image of Bothe Churches after the Moste Wonderful and Heauenly Reuelacion of Sainct John the Euangelist*.¹⁸ In this commentary on the Revelation, the vision of Saint John was perceived as a prophecy of Protestant Reformation, and this particular idea was later elaborated by a Swiss theologian named Henry Bullinger.¹⁹ In early 1570's, the increased interest of scholars in Revelation manifested itself in Cambridge, in the activities of William Fulke, George Gyffard and Arthur Golding which resulted in the creation of three studies dealing with the vision of Saint John. Accidentally, all these studies were published at the time of Edmund Spenser's residence in Cambridge. Also, prior to that, in 1569, Edmund Spenser became the author of the translation of Jon van der Noot's *Theatre for Worldlings*, a collection of vision poems by Petrarch and French poet Joachim du Bellay as well as four sonnets by van der Noot himself. In these

¹⁶ Waters Bennett. 110.

¹⁷ Waters Bennett. 110.

¹⁸ Waters Bennett. 111.

¹⁹ Waters Bennett. 111.

sonnets, certain passages of the Revelation regarded as characteristic of Protestant movement were utilized. In van der Noot's interpretations of his own sonnets, the seven headed beast of the Apocalypse and the woman riding it represent Roman Catholic Church and the ways of the old religion while Jesus Christ takes the form of an avenger descending from heaven and finally slaying the beast .²⁰

In this light, the images of evil employed by Edmund Spenser in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* can be more clearly seen as possessing profound allegorical meaning that may prove elusive upon casual reading. Thus, apart from the identification of Duessa with the Whore of Babylon, Josephine Waters Bennett includes among the images pertaining to evil not only the rich garment worn by Duessa, a feature found also in Revelation 17:4, not only her triple crown, obviously a symbol of papacy, but also her golden cup filled with lies and errors that is compared with the cup of Circe, the infamous enchanted chalice of the ancient Greek mythology. This comparison with the dangers of enchanted cup of Circe, illustrating the malignant effects of the Roman Catholic teaching, is drawn from Henry Bullinger's interpretation of Revelation which can be found in his *Sermons upon the Apocalips* from 1561.²¹ (In his book *Infernal Triad*, from a slightly different viewpoint, Patrick Cullen directs the attention of readers towards parallels between Circe of Greek mythology and another character representing the forces of evil in *The Faerie Queene*- Lucifera: "Although Lucifera is not portrayed specifically as Circe, the description of her House of Pride is primarily indebted to Ariosto's description of the palace of Alcina, who is a Circe-figure."²²)

Another correlation between the images of evil in *The Faerie Queene* and those of Revelation can be detected in the scene of struggle between Arthur and Duessa's beast . At one point, Arthur inflicts a severe injury upon of of the monster's heads, slicing away a large portion of its scalp. In Revelation 13:3, one of the seven heads of the beast of the Apocalypse bears a similar wound which was interpreted by John Bale as the symbol of the loss of authority on the part of Roman Catholic Church, thus providing a clue in the search for more profound levels of theological as well as historical significance.²³

In addition to that, in certain sense, the preliminary dragon fight in Canto I of the first book can be seen as derivative of Revelation 12:1 in which one of the famous passages

²⁰ Waters Bennett. 111.

²¹ Waters Bennett. 115.

²² Cullen, Patrick. *Infernal Triad*. Princeton University Press, 1974. 40.

²³ Waters Bennett. 115.

concerns a lady clothed in sun threatened by a seven headed horned dragon.²⁴ Again in Canto I, yet another instance of correlation with the Revelation can be recognized. The powerful image of the monster named Error that produces, after being seized by the throat by Red Crosse, a large amount of disgusting matter that floods the site of the fight, has been already discussed. This particular scene bears resemblance to Revelation 12:15, where Satan in the form of Serpent regurgitates a flood, sending it after a beautiful woman. Later in the vision of Saint John, the flood is described as containing demonic frog-like spirits. Upon a careful examination of Canto I of *The Faerie Queene*, it becomes apparent that the vomit of the monster named Error contains not only books and treatises designed to spread the false religion but also frogs and toads, amphibians traditionally associated with the Devil.²⁵

In accordance with the examination of Book I carried out in the ninth chapter of *The Evolution of The Faerie Queene*, all the above mentioned instances of images of evil linked theologically with the Apocalypse and the Revelation serve as the evidence of the precise way in which the protestant vision of good and evil is prepared and constructed by the author of *The Faerie Queene*, and they also help illustrate the depth of religious allegory of the poem.

In relation to the influence of the Revelation and apocalyptic sensitivity on Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, the observations of Frank Kermode can be also taken into consideration, as in his essay *The Faerie Queene, I and V*, he states: “The English settlement- to which, as Revelation proved, all history tended- is a type of that final pacification at the end of time. Spenser makes it clear that it is only typical: but the boldness with which he conflates history and the archetype in Revelation proves how fully he accepted Foxe’s bold formula, ‘the whole church of Christ, namely... the church of England’.”²⁶ Appropriately, a citation from *Acts and Monuments* by John Foxe, the author of largely popular *Book of Martyrs* and an important figure influential in the field of the sixteenth century historical views of puritans, is cited in order to illustrate the process described by Edmund Spenser in Book I and explained by Frank Kermode in the following way: “The subjection of Red Cross to Orgoglio is the popish captivity of England from Gregory VII to Wyclif. ... The *miles Christi*, disarmed, drinks of the enervating fountain of corrupt gospel and submits to Rome. He is rescued by Arthur, doing his duty for Elizabeth as Emperor of the Last Days.... In ix.17 Red

²⁴ Waters Bennett. 116.

²⁵ Waters Bennett. 117.

²⁶ Kermode, Frank. *The Faerie Queene, I and V*. Ed. Kermode, Frank. *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne- Renaissance Essays*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971. Pages 48-49.

Cross places Una under the charge of Gloriana, head of the Church. In this warp of allegory the capitulation to Despair must mean the Marian lapse: after that, Red Cross is assured of his Englishness, and shown the New Jerusalem...²⁷

As it can be seen in the views presented above, the links between the Revelation and apocalyptic nature of Book I are plentiful, and the allegory presented by Edmund Spenser is in various, often not apparent, aspects aimed at the religious fallacy brought by Rome.

However, not only in the wealth of allusions to evil portrayed in the Revelation and its protestant interpretations, but also in various more general aspects of the construction of the struggle for Holiness and other virtues, frequently marred by the servants of Satan, the spiritual and religious views of the Protestantism in *The Faerie Queene* can be recognized.

²⁷ Kermode.48.

CHAPTER III: REFLECTIONS OF PROTESTANT ETHICS AND THEOLOGY BEYOND

IMMEDIATE LITERARY LINKS:

The images of evil that have been discussed so far often showed, apart from the signs of disease, decay or hideousness, also certain characteristic traits which may be defined as conceit, fury and lack of temperance or restraint. In the Protestant views of ethics and morality, the ability to control one's baser drives and to refrain from excess in every field of human undertaking plays an important role, especially in contrast with the highly objectionable ways and practices of the old church. Upon the reading of several parts of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, it becomes clear that some of the images of evil the reader is already familiar with provide fine examples of the deficiency of the false religion in the department of temperance and humility. In Canto VII, the giant Orgoglio represents such an example, not only due to his exceeding height that surpasses the tallest of the mortal seed, not only because of his dreadful appearance, but mainly on account of his conduct and attitude. At the point when the Giant attacks the Knight of Red Crosse, temporarily indisposed and deprived of his strength by the the water of an enchanted fountain, Orgoglio puts on display the conceit and wrath of Satan in its full extent. The author of the poem addresses the Giant's manners and personal traits in the following way:

So grown great through arrogant delight
Of th' high descent, whereof he was yborne,
And through presumption of his matchlesse might,
All other powres and knighthood he did scorne. (I.viii.10)

Orgoglio, assured of his superior power, disdains all the mortal seed and proves that his pride has no bounds and limits. In order to demonstrate his power, Orgoglio, continuously enraged and in the state of fury, does not hesitate to tear a fully grown oak out of its roots and employ it as a battle-mace in a vain, yet impressive, gesture of power. Since the giant represents Carnal Pride on the moral level, the Antichrist on Religious level and the Pope on the political level, such characterization is more than appropriate, keeping in mind the pope's tendencies to seize the control over both the church and the state and achieve the state of ultimate, unlimited power at the time. Orgoglio's lack of temperance and excessive conceit are further illustrated in Canto VIII, during the clash with Arthur. Already the Giant's preparation for the fight is marked by rage and scorn, as it is written in Stanza VII:

Therewith the Gyant buckled him to fight,
Inflam'd with scornfull wrath and high disdain,
And lifting up his dreadfull club on hight,
All arm'd with ragged snubbes and knottie graine (I.viii.7)

During the struggle, an important difference between the approaches and strategies of both opponents can be recognized. While the giant, in his frenzy, does not possess the ability to control his wrath and in his limitless pride attempts to achieve an imposing effect that would intimidate the enemy, Prince Arthur remains focused and retains his temperance even in the face of imminent danger in the form of Orgoglio's enormous strength and his dreadful club. In his display of excessive force and rage, the giant misses his opponent and thrust his wooden battle mace so deep into the ground he himself fails to further use his own weapon. Sheer excess of Orgoglio's conduct and the lack of restraint pave the way to his own doom, as it is written in Canto VII:

The idle stroke, enforcing furious way,
Missing the marke of his misaymed sight
Did fall to ground, and with his heavie sway
So deeply dinted in the driven clay,
That three yardes deepe a furrow up did throw: (I.viii.8)

Arthur manages, due to the lightness of his movements, to avoid the giant's blow and by skillful manoeuvring, while the giant strives to retrieve his deadly weapon, finally accomplishes his mission. The beginning of Orgoglio's final decline is described in the following fashion:

And whiles he strove his combred clubbe to quight
Out of the earth, with blade all burning bright
He smote off his left arme, which like a blocke
Did fall to ground, depriv'd of native might. (I.viii.10)

Orgoglio pays the highest price for his display of unimpeded rage and for his boundless self-assurance and scorn- one of his arms is severed by Prince Arthur. After the unsuccessful intervention of Duessa's beast, the giant once again attempts to deal with the pious knight through the brutal force of his wrath, yet he proves to be no match for Arthur,

lacking the grace which his opponent possesses, both in the physical and in the spiritual sense. The shield of the noble knight, reflecting bright light at one point and thus signaling the involvement of heavenly grace, becomes the symbol of Arthur's victory. The brightness of heaven's light is unbearable for the giant and instantly forces him to recoil:

The light whereof, that heavens light did pas,
Such blazing brightnesse through the aier threw,
That eye mote not the same endure to vew. (I.viii.19)

Since this moment, several Arthur's effective moves follow in a quick succession and lead to Orgoglio's final destruction.

And threatning high his dreadfull stroke did see,
His sparkling blade about his head he blest,
And smote off quite his right leg by the knee,
That downe he tumbled; as an aged tree. (I.viii.22)

As it can be easily seen, the actions of Prince Arthur are carried out swiftly, without vain gestures or unnecessary display of power, and with great efficacy. The decapitation of the giant represents the last move on the part of Arthur, sealing the fate of his monstrous enemy. The remains of the giant, suddenly turning into a thing resembling an empty bladder, serve as the proof of the vanity and abominable conceit of Satan's servants and help reveal evil in its true likeness.

The nature of evil portrayed in Book I, the lack of restraint and the abundance of infinite wrath, spite and rage, can be recognized not only during Arthur's struggle with Orgoglio. This aspect of malevolence is also distinctly present in the image of hideous dragon of Canto XI, a furious beast that Redcrosse has to fight for two long days. Again, the contrast between the rage of the beast and the temperance of the knight, between the excessive force and intimidation on the part of the evil creature and the skill, lightness of movement and grace displayed by the pious man, plays an important role in the scene of the final battle. During the preparations for the clash, the dragon of Canto XI is described as a being not only hideous and extremely large, but also showing the signs of unholy wrath:

His body monstrous, horrible, and vaste,
Which to increase his wondrous greatnesse more,

Was swoln with wrath, and poyson, and with bloody gore. (I.xi.8)

In contrast, the Knight of Red Crosse puts much effort into the restraint of battle fury and employs the agitation of the critical moment in order to retain his prowess and bravery and to successfully accomplish his mission. In the anticipation of the imminent fight, the following words are spoken:

O gently come into my feeble brest
Come gently, but not with that mighty rage,
Wherewith the martiall troupes thou doest infest,
And harts of great Heroës doest enrage. (I.xi.6)

In spite of the enormous size of the the dragon and seemingly impenetrable armour of metallic scales covering his whole body, Redcrosse is still able to inflict pain previously unknown to the beast. The reaction of the the dragon is, quite understandably, further aggravation of its rage:

Exceeding rage enflam'd the furious beast,
To be avenged of so great despight;
For never felt his imperceable brest
So wondrous force, from hand of living wight. (I.xi.17)

In the ensuing battle, the contrast between the fury of the beast and the temperance of the righteous knight is repeatedly accentuated. The vital importance of the virtue called temperance is illustrated in various stages of the fierce struggle conveying increasing sense of urgency. The dragon, employing the imposing display of his size as well as seemingly matchless strength, manages to smite Redcrosse several times. However, the knight is never deterred by the superior power of his enemy, and shows much persistence in withstanding the blows of the monster, experiencing tremendous torment and retaining the ability to charge repeatedly. Unlike the metallic armour of scales and the enormous wings of the the dragon, the knight's most effective weapon, apart from his spear, is his persistence, self-discipline and temperance that allows him to remain focused and to employ his skill to defeat his monstrous enemy. Even if the knight strikes with the strength of several men, as the author puts it, he never acts out of sheer wrath and never becomes commanded by bling rage, unlike his opponent. After wounding the beast under its left wing, Redcrosse's spear is damaged, yet the

knight continues to fight using his sword, provoking unprecedented rage of the the dragon. In return for the wounds inflicted by his keen blade, the pious knight is engulfed in flames produced by the beast, and subsequently seared and scorched. Still, the campaign of Redcrosse leads to a victorious end, illustrating the importance of the spirit of temperance in combination with the indispensable grace of God.

At the same time, it must be said that Temperance and also Holiness, the virtue that Redcrosse is a patron of, are not achieved easily and the knight undergoes numerous falls and lapses. A long and difficult journey must be undertaken before Red Crosse, purged of the temptation of the flesh, pride, anger and other vices, can face the dragon and eventually prevail. Even after this victory, Redcrosse is still not fully capable of achieving Holiness, which further illustrates the graveness of the predicament of a sinful, fallen man. Georgia R. Crampton remarks that the patron of Holiness is not only courageous but also “a trifle vainglorious” after being advised by Una not to proceed in a rash manner in front of the entrance to Error’s den.²⁸ As a reaction to Una’s admonition and advice, the knight puts on display his pride and thus demonstrates his own susceptibility to sin:

Ah Ladie, (said he) shame were to revoke

The forward footing for an hidden shade:

Vertue gives her selfe light, through darkenesse for to wade. (I.i.12)

It is exactly the susceptibility to sin, Redcrosse’s state of a fallen man, that represents an adverse force comparable in its destructive potential to the power of a hideous giant or a fire-breathing dragon. The evil of Redcrosse as it was briefly outlined in the first chapter, the weakness of flesh, the vaingloriousness of the knight or the lack of resistance in the face of religious fallacy combine in order to create an image of a man that fits within the scope of a deeply religious allegorical work illustrating the spiritual ideals of Protestantism. In order to characterize the Knight of Red Crosse in terms of Protestant theology, a view of Patrick Cullen who proposes the perception of Redcrosse as “Adam pretending to be Christ”²⁹ can be taken into consideration. A parallel can be seen between the fall of Adam and the fall of Redcrosse, especially with regards to the importance of the initial fall of man in the Protestant understanding of sin and virtue, Grace and Redemption. The aforementioned episode near the den of Error illustrating the knight’s own corruption and his disregard for the

²⁸ Crampton. 120.

²⁹ Cullen. 43.

warning provided by Una can be interpreted as a mask of pride in fact concealing the champion's Adamic corruption.³⁰ Redcrosse as a character of highly fallible nature can be characterized not only as a parallel to Adam, but also as a "volatile patient"³¹, as Georgia Crampton suggests. Viewed as a whole, a strenuous and difficult journey, Redcrosse during his campaign in Book I since the imprisonment in Orgoglio's dungeons up to the final dragon fight in Canto XI seems to be reduced to the role of a sufferer whose predicament is caused by his rashness and lack of virtue that can be observed since the events taking place in The Wood of Error. With regards to the fact that Redcrosse represents the patron of Holiness, his quest for this particular virtue seems to be futile from the perspective of a sinful, repeatedly faltering man and quite understandably results in the sense of despair, as it is effectively demonstrated during the encounter in the cave of Canto IX. Redcrosse, a parallel of Adam, is condemned, unless a divine intervention occurs. In Canto IX such intervention on the part of Una saves her champion from the clutches of the infamous sinister hermit. Prior to that, the intervention on the part of Arthur, seen as a parallel of the avenger of the Apocalypse and of Christ, saves Redcrosse from certain death that would await him in the dungeon of Orgoglio. Judith Anderson goes as far as to proposing the identification of Orgoglio's carnality, the humanity of the son of Aeolus, with the humanity of Redcrosse and the body of his sin.³² In contrast, the intervention of Arthur and the defeat of Orgoglio can be interpreted as "the reenactment of Christ's victory over the proud flesh and more generally the corruption of nature."³³ Such as Redcrosse's lapses contain a profound theological meaning, Arthur's main feats presented in the poem can be interpreted as symbolic actions of Apocalyptic and eschatological proportions. The proud flesh symbolized by the giant is defeated and at the same time, in compliance with the Calvinist concept of Redemption, a considerable distance between the humanity and the virtue of Arthur can be recognized due to his shield—a divine weapon necessary for his victory, a weapon whose lack of identification with Arthur symbolizes the situation of Christ the Redeemer bringing Redemption to the humanity, Redemption viewed as an "unrealized possibility in present time finally dependent on faith",³⁴ since Redcrosse does not become completely aware of his election until he is disciplined in the House of Holiness, although the corruption of nature is overcome at the point of Arthur's victory over the giant.

³⁰ Cullen. 43.

³¹ Crampton. 118.

³² Anderson, Judith H. *The Growth of a Personal Voice*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976.161.

³³ Anderson.161.

³⁴ Anderson.161.

The eschatological dimension of the episode describing the death of Orgoglio and the freeing of his captive can be also traced in the references pertaining to the Revelation, such as the blood defiling Orgoglio's castle which is compared to the blood of martyrs of Revelation 17:6-7 or in the image of Orgoglio's wound compared with the flow of "fresh water...from riuen rocke"³⁵ referring back to Exodus 17:5-6, the life of Moses and the events and signs serving as harbingers of the coming of the Redeemer.

In the weakness of Redcrosse, his rescue executed by Arthur, the death of Orgoglio, the episode in the Cave of Despair and various other parts of the poem, the necessity of Grace and the concept of fallen man and the corruption of nature are persistently and repeatedly commemorated and used as the illustrations of the Protestant view of the only appropriate path leading safely to Redemption.

³⁵ Anderson.160.

CONCLUSION:

To summarize and to conclude the examination of the images of evil present in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*, it can be stated that the array of the artistic renderings pertaining to sin, vice and the corruption of human soul is great, as great as the number of possible temptations and fallacies which await a devout Christian during his quest for redemption. As the hard and often painful journey of the Knight of Red Crosse proves, even the holiness, temperance and various other virtues of the best of men are constantly subjected to trials. In this respect, the dangers of religious falsehood and the insidious way in which temptation corrupts the soul are amply illustrated through the plentiful images of evil devised by Edmund Spenser. The artistic elaboration of the author's creations includes, apart from other elements, the aspects of utter hideousness, defect, disease and dysfunction employed in order to shed the light on the true, odious nature of malevolence that is often skillfully veiled in the shroud of luxury, vanity and splendour. It is true that as in the cases of the depictions of virtuous characters, the images of evil are created by using a wide variety of elements borrowed or drawn from other sources, biblical, classical or medieval. By looking into several, certainly not all, aspects of the poetic images concerning evil in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, and by examining some of the spiritual implications contained within them, a complete understanding or a judgement regarding the merits or possible imperfections of the work are not attempted, but, hopefully, with regards to the magnitude of *The Faerie Queene*, a brief look at the poem as an important milestone in the history of English written epic poetry with strong religious and allegorical features can be provided.

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