

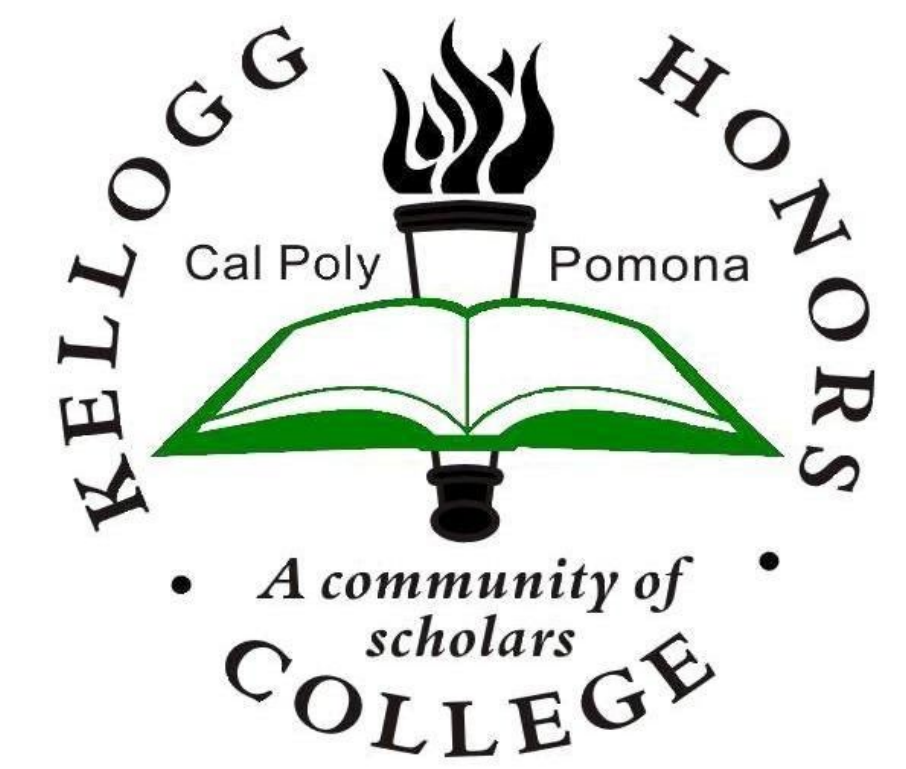
Spenserian Poetics: Analysis and Application in Research-Based Creative Writing



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Abstract

Edmund Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*, is a widely recognized allegorical piece of literature that has been studied and referenced throughout modern English literature. At his death, the long, collective poem was left half-finished. Though many have studied his poetry, none have attempted to complete his work. In my research, I attempted to understand Spenserian poetics to the degree of replication. The methods for this included the explication of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*. In this, I analyzed and researched Spenser's poetic structure, devices, style, history, allusions, and the purpose of each in creating his unique story. This analytical research addressed outlining and developing a Book of the Faerie Queene in Spenser's style. After an analysis of Spenser's approach, these findings were then synthesized into a story of my own invention. Continuing the artistic work of Spenser, I outlined Book VIII in the style of Spenser to continue his legacy. After outlining, I wrote the climax canto (chapter) of my story, *Book VIII: The Legende of Princesse Aida, or of Kyndnesse*, to give flesh to that which has passed just as my protagonist Aida does in reviving kindness in the kingdom of Bona by confronting the murderous Invidious with "No armes, no sword, not one thing...".

Approach

Poetic Structure

Rhyme Scheme: ABABCBCC

Slight deviations occur in lines where a break in the structure is needed for impact.

Iambic pentameter for the first 8 lines with the 9th line being *iambic hexameter*

Allegory

Character names in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* represent bigger ideas from which the audience is supposed to learn.

*Timias eventually takes on the name Invidious to become the absolute embodiment of envy.

*Aida's name is Latin for "help". When Aida takes on her male disguise she calls herself Ezra which is "help" in Hebrew.

Kindness is the "knightly virtue" presented in this book as each book is meant to show the virtues of Queen Elizabeth's knights.

The virtues of her knights evidently reflect onto her own virtues. In both the names, Aida shows different kinds of kindness. When Aida acts as Ezra, she shows active modes of kindness. When she acts as Aida, she shows passive help and kindness—the help and kindness which comes from listening.

Allusion

In many Early Modern English pieces of literature, authors would draw ideas from each other. I attempted to duplicate this idea by incorporating many different ideas and references—in literary terms, allusions—from Spenser's own works and other popular books from his time such as *The Bible*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Mallory's *Le Morte Darthur*, and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Allusions to these literary pieces were found in Spenser's first and third books of *The Faerie Queene* and incorporated into my continuation of *The Faerie Queene* to maintain a true Spenserian poetic tradition of allusion.

Example of Research: Story Outline of the First Canto

Timias, Sir Arthur's former squire, is all alone in the woods. Having been present in Book IV, Timias is mulling over the events that had happened. Belpheobe believes that he had lusted after a woman (i.e. when he accidentally "prickt" and hurt Amoretta trying to save her—a symbolic rape), and Timias denied that accusation before¹. Though Belpheobe reunited with him and supposedly forgave him, she found that she still believed that he had some lust for someone—even if it wasn't Amoretta—and could not hold back her feelings of jealousy and upset; thus, he is abandoned by Belpheobe. Arthur, seeing Timias' sulking as unmanly, denounced him as a squire. Timias' emotions, too much for him to bare, make him question the goodness within him. Had he really lusted after a woman? Had he really been unmanly? Had he been doing everything wrong despite wanting to do everything right? Before, he felt that everyone was seeing everything all wrong; however, now he wonders if they were right about the baseness of his actions. A catalogue of all the people who have been misperceived is depicted². Wandering alone and having a woman-like lament (mirroring how Aida will be acting like a boy)³, he finds himself trying to find shelter from the rain. He comes across a jugged, craggy cave along a mountain's edge and takes shelter in it for the night. While he sleeps, he is "prickt"⁴ on the ankle and poisoned by the green-eyed, serpentine monster named Covetess⁵. Waking up from the prick, he believes a nightmare has woken him up and attempts to go back to sleep. This begins his transition into Invidious.

Allusions:

1. Book 4 of FQ (Background Information)
2. Spenserian Catalogue of People presented to make a particular point: misperception
3. Ovid's woman's lament trope
4. "Prickt" (Nicholas in Chaucer/The Friar of the Priest's tale)
5. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book 2: Depiction of Envy/Invidia and her poison.



"The Patron of true Kyndnesse"
drawing by Katelyn Skye Porter

BOOK VIII THE LEGENDE OF PRINCESSE AIDA OR OF KYNDNESSE

An Excerpt from Canto 11:

- 24 The man unsure of how he could resolve
This ailment of the poison still inside,
He asked of Aida how he could absolve
Himself from the sin of which he was tied.
Fair Aida said to him, "You must involve
Yourself in full forgiveness to so solve
All that which continues to ail you, goodly squire."
With that last title given he gan 'volve¹
Into the squire that she said he now is.²
He turned toward the woman to say, "Forgive me,
please."
- 25 A silence rang throughout the littered hall,
And then a sign that showed the sin was gone:
Burned was a path on the floor and the wall
Of some serpentine creature—some foul con.
Finally, the man no longer was pawn
To Satan's deadly sin, Invidious.
The man fell to his knees to act upon
The guilt he felt for his acts hideous.
"Lord I thank you!" he cried, voice clear and serious.
- 26 Fair Aida helped the poor man to his feet
To ask him happily "What is your name?"
"Timias" quoth the man in a tir'd bleat.
"Nice to meet you Timias." quoth the dame.
"My name is Aida," she said without shame
Of being known as truly a woman.
The man asked "Would the king seek me to blame
Or to condemn me for my hellish sin?"
"I know not, but I will ask you be forgiven.
- 27 "For now, please rest. You've not yet recovered
From battle or from sin as you are meek."
Quoth Aida. She guided him take cover
In a room or salon of this antique
Palace of Bona or to leave and seek
A grove of trees he could hide in tonight.
She told the same to poor Arthur still weak
That he should rest in a room for the night.
For Aida knew that rest would make clar'ty and light.³

¹ 'volve evolve shortened to fit the meter

² Breaking of the rhyme scheme is metaphorically breaking the spell-like grip that holds him captive

³ Aida believes this will all blow over in the morning.