

Revisiting the Concept of Love in Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (1590) and Malory's *Le MorteDarthur* (1485)

Baker BaniKhair^a, Abdullah K. Shehabat^{b*}, Raja Khaleel Al-Khalili^c,
Tariq Jameel Alsoud^d, Ali M. Alnawaiseh^e, Mohammad Al-Matarneh^f

^a Department of English, Faculty of Arts, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan.
Email: Baker1983@hu.edu.jo

^b Faculty of Language Studies, Arab Open University, Bahrain.
Email: Abdullah.shehabat@aou.org.bh

^c Department of English, Faculty of Arts, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan.
Email: raja2003@gmail.com

^d Tafila Technical University-Department of English, Jordan.
Email: talsoud@ttu.edu.jo

^e Department of English Language, Mutah University, Faculty of Arts, Jordan.
Email: amanawai@mutah.edu.jo

^f Department of English Language, Tafila Technical University, Faculty of Arts, Jordan.
Email: Matarneh66@yahoo.com

Received: 02 December 2024 | Received in Revised Form: 05 March 2025 | Accepted: 11 March 2025

APA Citation:

BaniKhair, B., Shehabat, A. K., Al-Khalili, R. K., JameelAlsoud, T., Alnawaiseh, A. M., & Al-Matarneh, M. (2025). Revisiting the Concept of Love in Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (1590) and Malory's *Le MorteDarthur* (1485). *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), 181-190.
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.11115>

Abstract

The objective of the current paper is to show that employing "lustful love" in literary works is not intended to be taken at a face value. This paper studies the concept of 'temperance' in Book II of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590), which seems to be idealized in Guyon's personality. In contrast, the paper highlights the opposite image of temperance, which is associated with corruption and lustful desires shown by other knights who were taken by worldly desires, excess and imbalance. To do so, a close reading analysis was employed as a method of current study. *The Faerie Queen* can be seen as an allegory within an allegory. Spenser intends to make this allegory more ethical and didactic by using characters, symbols, monsters, places, caves, and signs. To convey such ethical and moral themes to the reader, he allegorically symbolizes "lustful love" as an evil and sinful monster when it loses temperance and goes beyond one's rationale. More significantly, considering such thematic and allegorical concepts of love and temperance, this study compares Spenser's masterpiece with Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485) in the sense that both have dealt with this issue profoundly, but in a totally different approach. It is found that Spenser has made Book 2 very didactic, providing readers with various teachings and ethical lessons that always urge them to consider temperance as a real, necessary virtue against temptations. Eventually, it is important to point out that the current study is limited only to Spenser's Book II.

© 2025 EJAL & the Authors. Published by Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics (EJAL). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY-NC-ND) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

*Corresponding Author

Email: Abdullah.shehabat@aou.org.bh

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.11115>

Keywords: Edmund Spenser, Context of Love, temptation, Sir Thomas Malory, comparative literature.

Introduction

There has always been a misunderstanding regarding the depiction of lustful love in Spenser's Book II. It has always been reviewed considering lust, eroticism and sin rather than didactic and Book II, the book of Temperance in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590), can be looked at as a rich romance poem, especially for its didactic approaches towards love, sex, and temptation. In fact, temperance is more represented in *The Faerie Queen* as an ideal concept rather than just a virtue. It is axiomatic that so many literary terms have been always taken for granted depending on their face value rather than the intended ones. For example, some critics have read the novel as a portrayal of Spenser's praise of women so as to reflect his admiration of Queen Elizabeth I, despite showing women as rebellious activists searching for truth in addition to describing their own physical beauty (Alashjaai, 2014). However, a major theme the whole book of Temperance in Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* is trying to suggest through its multifarious references is man's weaknesses and original sin. Such a theme is intricately connected with the traditional lore, ethics, morals, and values of the Renaissance and the Mediaeval Era that commonly prevailed and appeared in various epic poems before Edmund Spenser.

The theme of love in Spenser's masterpiece is quite different and similar sometimes to the one presented in Sir Thomas Malory's "*Le Morte Darthur*" (1485), in the sense that both have openly dealt with the theme of lustful love, using various and different stylistic elements. Love in Malory's romance is associated with regret, remorse, loss, and destruction, it appears as an inseparable part of courtly love and the chivalric code of mediaeval heroism and knighthood. According to Moloney (2014), lust and love have an influential impact on those noble knights who seem to struggle hard to keep their chivalric integrity and honor, "The legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table are preeminent in medieval lore, as literary history celebrates these valiant knights on their illustrious quests; these crusades, however, were very often affected, or even entirely motivated, by love, lust, or a damsel in distress." (p.89)

Love in Spenser's romance is also represented as sinful and immoral, especially the kind of love we see in Lancelot's romantic relations and love affairs, which is lustful, sinful and adulterous. After a thoughtful and painful conflict within, Lancelot has to go through a long journey of redemption and chastisement in a desperate and passionate attempt to cleanse and purify his guilty soul from the disastrous sins he committed, adultery. The following excerpt is an example which depicts a knight going on a perilous and painful journey of adventurous risks, agony and predicament:

Now gins this goodly frame of Temperance
Fairely to rise, and her adorned hed
To pricke of highest praise forth to aduance,
Formerly grounded, and fast setteled
On firme foundation of true bountihed;
And this braue knight, that for that vertue fights,
Now comes to point of that same perilous sted,
Where Pleasure dwelles in sensual delights,
Mōgst thousand dangers, & ten thousand magickmightes (Spenser, Book II-147)
(all excerpts from the text *The Faerie Queen* are taken from (Roche, 1981).

There are studies on different interpretations of love, lust, temperance, and/or romance (De Young, 2008; Evans, 2009; Miller, 2016). There are quite a few scholarly writings on Edmund Spenser's Book II and Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485); however, all these writings have reviewed these works in the light of their surface value rather than the deep and embedded structural units of meaning (Kumari, 2015). The study also fills the research gap as there is a dearth of studies on subjectivism portrayed through temperance and love in Renaissance classics. The objective of the current paper is to show that employing lustful love in any work is not intended to be taken at a surface value. In other words, it shows that employing "lustful love", a prominent theme in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590) and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485), but it does not necessarily stand for eroticism and man's weakness i.e., sin. The study also provides "insight[s] into how Renaissance England imagined the Eastern Other-a picture that would eventually solidify into English Orientalism" (Kim, 2017). By and large, this paper studies the concept of temperance in Book II, which seems to be idealized in Guyon's personality (a major character in the epic work). In contrast, the paper highlights the opposite image of temperance, which is associated with corruption and lustful desires shown by other knights who were taken by worldly desires, excess and imbalance.

Literature Review

In fact, literature has always played an important role in teaching moral and human values. Literary works, including all genres, can have a great impact on readers in many possible ways through powerful and lively representations and depictions of real life and characters. Khan (2014) states that "Throughout the

history teaching moral values through stories, poems or literatures has been a very old system of moral education. " (p.6). Renaissance literature has a diverse and rich nature that is characterized with profound morals and wisdom. During that era, there has been a marked interest in classical learning which urged individuals to acquire strict moral conduct in their social and personal life. Historically, the Renaissance represented the rebirth and revival movement of almost all kinds of knowledge and sciences. It witnessed various cultural and literary transformations and changes that embraced a deeper human sense. According to Jing (2024), "The Renaissance was the period from the 14th to the 17th century when great cultural changes and transformations occurred in European cultures and beyond. The period saw the revival of classical knowledge and flourishing arts, literature, and intellectual pursuits. " (p. 325). In an edited book titled, *Rethinking Virtue, Reforming Society: New Directions in Renaissance Ethics, c.1350 - c.1650* (2013), Lines & Ebbesmeyer (2013) stress upon the idea that "Children, youths, and adults in Renaissance Europe were everywhere surrounded by reminders of their obligations toward God and society and of their responsibility to live a good life, not only for themselves, but also for others." (57). Therefore, the general atmosphere that prevailed during that era was essentially concentrating on the importance of values and ethics in the community. Human values based on religion and traditional lore, especially the Greek and Roman cultures were highly regarded by most citizens who prioritize spiritual values over mundane and materialistic world. Yao (2024) points out that "Humanism is the core idea of the Renaissance, which is fundamentally based on the importance of human values and rationality." (p. 314)

Several studies have highlighted the didactic and ethical context of love and temptation in Book II of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (1590) and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485). For instance, in their cross-cultural study entitled "Of Lust and Love: A Cross-Cultural Study of Sex and Relationship Advice Articles in Women's Magazines," Lulu & Alkaff (2018) offer a cross-cultural comparative study of sex and relationship advice columns in contemporary women's magazines. Analyzed considering the society's norms and values, 60 advice articles were taken from women's magazines and analyzed in terms of depicting sex and relationships so as to investigate the prevailing messages and values inherent and whether they match with those prevailing in the society. Lulu & Alkaff (2018) study show that women appear as empowered but within the traditional framework of gender roles and the normal heterosexual relationship. However, Anderson (2018) in studying the figuration of women in *The Faerie Queene* depicted different figuration of women rather than fully focusing on a pure sexual perspective of women. She presented different transformations for women, ranging from "static to mobile, from mono- to multidimensional, from monstrous to idealized, from purely fictive to strongly historicized, with many a variant in between".

Kumari (2015) in "Faerie Queene as a moral and spiritual allegory", discusses the political and spiritual aspects of ethics and values in Spenser's work including temperance and other values like truth. She mentions Sir Thomas Malory in passing when she refers to the common characteristics, similarities and resemblances in Romance literature. However, Singh primarily focuses on the personifications of objects and symbols within a greater allegory of spirituality. Similarly, Bernar (2023) looks at the religious and historical contexts of the work especially that of the reign of Tudor monarch – Queen Elizabeth, highlighting more conflict in between the Catholics and the Protestants (48). Miller (2016) in his study titled, "Temperance, Interpretation, and "the bodie of this death": Pauline Allegory in The Faerie Queene, Book II", investigate the intertwined relation between Holiness and Temperance from a theological perspective highlighting the theme of religious and biblical symbolism and allegory in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book II, emphasizing that, "The theological allegory thus locates the action of Book II, the "moment" of Temperance, partly in the world of the virtuous pagan, who apprehends the Law through the workings of human reason, and partly in the interval between baptismal "death" and the resurrection it waits upon." (2016, p.4). However, Miller (2016) confines his research approach to a generalized context of scriptural allusions and biblical symbols in Spenser's work, referring to the classic virtue of temperance as failure in Book II.

Evans (2009) in "How Temperance Becomes "Blood Guiltie" in *The Faerie Queene*" studies the idea of temperance in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* as a proto-capitalistic conception which foreshadows the ethics and standards of the modern world, or what she calls New world labor, within the newly transatlantic world ethics and values that views temperance as a tool or a commodity imposed by the new social structure of a capitalist society. In this article, the author traces the historical timeline and development of the conception of temperance through referring to some classic literary masterpieces written during the Renaissance era and middle-ages, such as Shakespeare's works. However, Evans in this study does not point out the value of temperance from an ethical or didactic sense, but she rather situates temperance against the mainstream capitalism of the new world.

Within the context of good vs. evil and the position of temperance in such eternal and perpetual conflict of values, in his master's thesis, *The Circle and the Cross: The Self-Destructive Nature of Evil in Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queene*, De Young (2008) explores that idea of evil and its roots which plays a destructive role in demolishing ethics and values from a Spenserian critical perspective, who views evil as " a sicker and quieter substance that reduces vitality and suffocates life." (p.12). He refers to the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, when he points out the idea of temperance in Book II, especially in Sir Guyon's character. Eventually, Lee (1997) investigated the topic of love or lust? The Sentimental Self in Honglu Mong". The objective of her study was to

discredit any sentimental dimension of the novel for the purpose of lust, which would be considered a misinterpretation of the modern distrust of the novel, thus regarding sentimentalism as tasteless and fruitless.

Previous studies have highlighted the idea of temperance in Book II of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queen*. However, have rarely investigated temperance from a didactic or ethical context, nor has any study fully compared Book II of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queen* with Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, which gives this study a special importance. This paper will mainly study the idea of temperance in both works through using a critical and analytical lens that probes the underlying implications and meanings of this allegorical and symbolic analogy highlighting the context of Spenserian ethics and didacticism.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted the close reading methodology which requires a detailed reading of the text, to understand its meaning and the author's intent (Ohrvik, 2024). This method ideally suits classic master pieces and long texts which require the reader to discern deeper nuances and to understand Spenserian fantastical style in using allegories. The close reading approach also helps in discerning the allegorical patterns used in most of the epics and poetic works written during the Renaissance.

Sampling

Passages and quotes were carefully chosen from both texts, Spenser's *Faerie Queen* and Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, to highlight the significant theme of lustful love and temperance. The criteria of sampling the quotes were mythical images and symbols of places and characters which provide reasonable and illuminating insight into the hidden, mysterious and underlying implications of temperance.

Data Analysis

To critically analyze the implicit images of temperance and the ethical structure of didacticism, this study heavily relied on textual analysis and close reading to show the context of temperance in the selected texts. Mythical images and symbols were also analyzed to foster a critical view of the theme of temperance from a different angle which combines Spenser's teachings and Malory's Arthurian mythology.

Results and Discussion

The Faerie Queen as an Allegory Within an Allegory

From an allegorical perspective, *The Faerie Queen* can also be seen as an allegory within an allegory. Spenser wants to make this allegory more ethical and didactic by using characters, symbols, monsters, places, caves, and signs. To convey such ethical and valuable themes to the reader, he allegorically symbolizes lustful love as an evil and sinful monster when it loses temperance and goes beyond one's rationale. Temperance was more represented in *The Faerie Queen* as an ideal concept than just a virtue. Temperance in Book II is likely seen to be idealized on Guyon's part. On the contrary, we see the totally opposite image of temperance, which is corruption and lust, shown by other knights who were taken by their excessive sexual desires and instincts. As seen from this excerpt, temperance paves the way for spiritual strength and moral values. It certainly becomes an obvious way for the protagonist to gain steadfastness and strong will:

*But he the rightfull owner of that steed,
Who well could menage and subdew his pride,
The whiles on foot was forced for to yeed,
With that blacke Palmer, his most trusty guide;
Who suffred not his wandring feet to slide.
But when strong passion, or weakefleshlinesse
Would from the right way seeke to draw him wide,
He would through temperance and stedfastnesse,
Teach him the weake to strengthen, & the stro[n]g suppressse (Book II, 186)*

However, understanding and perceiving temperance from this perspective implies and triggers the notion that actual temperance in *The Faerie Queen* has never existed, simply because it is never fully achieved; rather, it remains a utopian image of idealism proposed in an ideal form of temperance. In such a way, Guyon is seen as the knight of temperance, but also the knight of idealism, piety, and spirituality. Spenser constantly features temperance as a fleeting ideal stance that is not fully developed since he constantly raises skeptical questions about it. Questions like whether we see actual temperance in *The Faerie Queen*, or whether temperance is a fabricated or imaginary concept contrived by Spenser's mind

present a solid argument about the whole issue from a philosophical and religious perspective. Temperance poses complicated ethical points in Book 2, which reverses the common idea about Guyon as the knight of temperance.

Guyon is seen many times in the epic exceeding the temperance limit and steps out of its boundaries approaching idealistic orientations. At a superficial level, temperance could mean balance between the body and the mind, as reason plays a supervising and guiding role when the body's desires go out of control. It is important to notice that Spenser could have meant something more than the actual idea of temperance itself. The poet here highlights the essence of temperance that should accompany good and noble virtues of heroism and chivalric deeds such as bravery, peace, and sacrificial love. Such a chivalric code is quite known in most epic poems of the old and medieval times as customary and traditional of prevalent heroism and knighthood. Edman (2015) states that "the kingdom, established by the almost invincible model, King Arthur, his Camelot, became a continuous reminder of the mediaeval expectation of a perfect city that embodies its inhabitants ruled by the ideals set according to egalitarianism. Beginning with his knights of the Round Table, the Arthurian city state or his Kingdom was accepted as a symbol of a universal utopia. The utopian Arthurian territory ruled by its king's absolute authority and respect for equality seemed to last forever" (p. 93). Temperance is essentially represented as a moral strength that defies worldly pleasures and lustful temptations, especially lustful sexual pleasures, as seen in the following excerpt from Book II:

*His answer likewise was, he could not tell.
Whose senseless peach, and doted ignorance
When as the noble Prince had marked well,
He ghest his nature by his countenance,
And calmd his wrath with goodly temperance.
Then to him stepping, from his arme did reach Thosekeyes,
and made himsef free entrance. Each dore he opened without any breach;
There was no barre to stop, nor for him to empeach.
They're all within full rich arayd he found,
With royall arras and resplendent gold.
And did with store of euery thing abound,
That greatest Princes presence might behold.
But all the floore (too filthy to be told) Withbloud of guiltlesse babes,
and innocents trew, Which there were slaine,
assheepe out of the fold, Defiled was,
thatdreadfull was to vew, And sacred ashes ouer it was strowed new (Book II 94).*

What we obviously see is a new form of intellectual and metaphysical concoction that goes beyond all those mundane and bodily desires. In other words, such a new version of temperance is closer to transcendentalist view in its pure form of metaphysical and ideal structure. Spenser suggests in this book the notion of spirituality and loftiness through Guyon's actions, morals, behaviours, and intellectual temperance. Guyon represents spirituality in the sense that he's always seen as ideal, and also in the sense that he never shows any compromises towards worldly offers and temptations. Guyon was more of an ideal character than only a knight of temperance commonly seen in mediaeval romances. We would rather stress the point here that Guyon's character shows more nobility and spirituality than any other knights we see in this romance or even in Malory's romance as well. Probably, this representation shows us a completely opposite image from the other knights, who were totally driven by the temptations, lust, and worldly purposes offered to them. One of the interesting things here is that Guyon has never actually stopped searching for virtues because his journey did not cease at a certain point. He continues to search for virtues and to learn more wisdom as he recognizes his deep need for them. Probably, his journey to defy the challenges and struggles for the sake of virtue is a sufficient example to prove that he is the knight of virtue rather than the knight of temperance alone.

It should be noted that if Spenser wanted to suggest only temperance, he would not let Guyon keep journeying without stopping at a destination. Such a new form of temperance goes beyond the traditional meaning of such an important virtue. The following stanza represents the virtue of temperance as a golden means that gives the knight the power to resist desires and worldly pleasures that cause sadness and depression:

*But temperance (said he) with golden squire
Betwixt them both can measure out a meane,
Neither to melt in pleasures whot desire,
Nor fry in hartlessegriefe and dolefullteene.
Thrisehappy man, who fares them both atweene:
But sith this wretched woman ouercomeof anguish,
Ratherthen of crime hath beene,
Reserue her cause to her eternalldoome,
And in the meane vouchsafe her honorable toombe (Book II-168)*

Temperance is meant to be an audacious journey for an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Temperance, in

its classical definition, does not mean that one must jeopardize his/her life; rather, it means embracing moderation even in one's quest for virtues. There are just a few examples where temperance appears realistic, and to restore and achieve temperance, one must take risks. For example, when Guyon loses his temper and feels anger, he promises to take revenge. Probably, this is the only example in which we see Guyon behave like a man filled with vengeful emotions. As we see in this example:

*So both agree their bodies to engrave
The great eartheswombe they open to the sky
And with sad cypresses seemly it embrace,
The covering with a cold their closed eye,
They lay therein those corsers tenderly,
And bid them sleepe in everlasting peace.
But ere they did their utmost obsequy,
Sir Guyon more affaection to increase,
Bynempt a sacred vow, which none should aye release.
The dead knight's sword out of his sheath he drew,
With which he cut a lock of all their heare,
Which melding with their blood and earth, he threw
Into the grave, and gan devoutly sweare;
And worse and worse young orphane by thy paine,
If I or though dew vengeance doe obtayne:
So, shedding many teares, they closed the earth again(1, canto 1, 61)*

The above stanzas show us how Guyon was driven by his affection and revenge thoughts. But we think that this is the only example in which we actually see Guyon lose temperance. Probably, Spenser wants to show us that even with the most temperate people like Guyon, the knight of temperance, one can still lose temperance. Spenser wants to indicate that one sometimes has to lose temperance to restore temperance once again. Guyon is seen as a human being by showing these actions rather than that ideal angel that keeps abstaining from the worldly and mundane life. This is different from the other parts of the story when we see Guyon as an ideal figure who never shows weaknesses or even makes any compromises to the many worldly tempting offers.

The Didactic and Ethical Context in The Faerie Queen

The didactic and ethical context in *The Faerie Queen* seems to take place throughout Book II. The didactic context of romance is always prevalent and dominant, both verbally and dramatically. Guyon's words, verbal advice, and insightful guidance keep telling and warning against the excess of desires. This makes romance appear to be more universal in the sense that it tackles a human issue. The universality that romance outlines stems from the fact that a human being's weakness lies in desires and that the excess of bodily desires will certainly lead to Man's downfall and self-destruction.

The study sheds light on the contextual and didactic ways that Spenser tries to show us in *The Faerie Queen. Book-II*. First, Spenser poses the issue of conflict in *The Faerie Queen*, in which we see clear conflicting and opposing images. These images are abundant and salient because each one represents and features different knights, scenes, approaches, and virtues. It is also full of paradoxes and juxtapositions. We see the images of evil and goodness simultaneously as binary opposition. We see virtues and sins: human beings vs. beasts, good people vs. wicked people, temperance vs. excess, idealism vs. real temperance, hope vs. despair, happiness vs. sadness.

Fowler (2021) explains in his book entitled, "*Remembered Words*" that the structure of Spenser's work depends heavily on emblems, imagery, and allegories. Fowler states, "It was Spenser's invariable practice to build into the imagery of *The Faerie Queene*, at strategic points, the traditional emblems of the virtue whose legend he was writing. These emblems must have helped to make at least the main drift of his allegory widely intelligible, but unfortunately, it no longer works like that in Book 2, where emblems are heavily relied on for structure as well as for imagery, either their existence is now not yet even noticed, or else they are treated as mere surface decoration. Yet they are essential to Spenser's method, which is oblique, working indirectly through details" (p. 17). These images and allegories portray the dynamicity of the struggle for goodness and the fight for virtue.

There is also a lively struggle between the two contradictory forces of good and evil, and often the winner is the evil side, but Guyon remains almost exceptional throughout the epic. Davis (2012) points out that "the culminating episode of Book II, then, results from the failure to correctly assert righteousness; in allowing himself to succumb to radical chastity rather than attaining the balance that he is said to represent, the Palmer no longer possesses the ability to properly judge and punish Acrasia's offenses. In consequence, the destruction of Acrasia's Bower results from the rage that Palmer has been slowly fostering himself and Guyon. Although all previous encounters have appeared to be leading to a final triumph of balance over excess, it is now clear that no earlier scenario truly resulted in a victory of reason; that the Bower scene should suffer the same fate does

not surprise" (p. 10). Furthermore, Guyon's struggle for virtues is seen as a representative of the human's predicament with sins and desires, which symbolize the idealistic as well as the spiritual purity of the soul, opposing the mundane and sensual desires represented by other knights, as reflected in the following stanza:

*Thus reconcilement was betweene them knit,
Through goodly temperance, and affection chaste,
And either vowd with all their power and wit,
To let not others honour be defaste, of friend or foe, who euer it embaste,
Ne armes to beare against the others syde:
In which accord the Prince was also plaste,
And with that golden chaine of concord tyde.
So goodly all agreed, they forth yfere did ryde (493)*

Probably, Guyon has become exceptional for his struggle for virtue, where we see sins becoming the norm. There is always conflict in romance, and often this conflict is in the form of combat for achieving a virtue. Furthermore, romance suggests that virtues are to be tested and challenged by their opposite sins, and as we see, virtues overcome sins when they are associated with temperance, which stands as a self-restraining power against temptations. Davis (2012) states that "Guyon's wandering eyes show his inability to internalize his temperate education. Though this situation stems from Guyon's lack of true temperance in the face of sexual temptation, it also represents an argument against Palmer's—or reason's—ability to adequately react to moral situations. Perhaps then, Guyon's character more closely embodies continence than temperance, for Aristotle says that "if continence involves having strong and bad appetites, the temperate man will not be continent nor the continent man temperate" (vii. 2.1146a. 5-6). If Guyon is striving for continence, his behaviour and Palmer's presence are both justifiable because "the continent man, knowing that his appetites are bad, refuses on account of his rational principle to follow them" (vii.1.1145b.7-8). Palmer, as his rational principle and his practical wisdom turn him away from the things that he desires but cannot have. Only those who feel no temptation can experience temperance, and as shown in the above example, Guyon is not immune to the lure of bodily pleasure." (pp. 20-21)

The use of symbolic characters is one of the most allegorical representations of virtues as well as sins. The names of knights and characters are so symbolic in the sense that they reflect something that has to do with either sins or virtues. One of the most intriguing things that supports the didactic dialogue in *The Faerie Queen* is the use of universal themes that we feel influence on us as readers, no matter what cultural backgrounds we come from. Spenser's discourse is almost universal and rich in its multifarious connotations to sins, virtues, ethics, morals, punishments, human existence, and mankind's predicament with sins and desires. Such a didactic discourse awakens the sense of what is wrong and right. Spenser here addresses humanity in his masterpiece, emphasizing the moral aspects of his story. This is, however, different from Malory's romance, in which we become more attracted to the entertainment and suspense it creates towards the end of the romance.

However, Spenser's romance is didactic rather than entertaining, and it directly and explicitly addresses the reader and teaches the audience from the very beginning. The romance begins with the first book entitled "Holiness," which is important because it supports the ethical as well as the religious and didactic aspects of the romance through the prolonged struggle, we see in Book 1 for truth and spiritual purity. Similarly, book two is a continuation of the struggle, but this time for the virtues that holiness entails in book 1. Even though both dealt with different themes, they seem to complement each other since temperance can be looked at as part of holiness if we look at it this way. If we contrast Book 1 and Book 2, we may discover that Spenser's didactic approaches are totally different in each book. There are many similar incidents in book 2 that resemble what is happening in book 1, as Hamilton explains: "The further power of temperance to resist temptation is displayed by Guyon's descent into Mammon's cave. This descent clearly parallels the Red Cross Knight's passage through the house of pride. The house of Richesse corresponds to the house of pride, both being places of glittering wealth to which the knights are led by a broad, beaten highway" (p. 97).

In the first book, we see that Spenser uses mythical creatures more than often as we see in Book II, and that religion is all truth that Christians must search for and struggle hard to win. The use of the mythical context in book one is much more obvious than in book II. Hamilton (1961) suggests that Spenser relied heavily on classical mythology in Book 1. He adds, "We have noticed that Book 1 draws upon scripture, but at this point of his story, Spenser significantly turns aside to draw upon classical mythology. When the knight plucks a bough to weave a garland for Duessa, he hears Fadubio tell the pitiful story of his metamorphosis into a tree. The theme of the bleeding bough derives ultimately from Virgil, while the metamorphosis is Ovidian" (p. 65).

However, in Book II, Spenser puts us in a situation where we see a sharp contrast between the world of reality and the world of imagination or idealism. He intends to create this clash to cause suspense and to draw the attention of the readers to the fact that virtues are more like temperance which might not be easy to get since they always confront harsh realities, and only through temperance can one save himself/herself from the powers of evil. However, there are many similar cases in which we see a lot of parallels, as Hamilton (1961) suggests in his book *The Structure of Allegory in the Faerie Queene*. He says, "The relation of books 1

and 2 to the theme of man's fall becomes more explicit when each knight falls into the power of his enemies. Guyon's fall, which heralds the coming of Arthur, parallels the same midpoint of the narrative in Book 1, where the Red Cross Knight, whose powers are similarly weakened, also falls to the ground and is imprisoned until he is rescued by Arthur. As Una is how Arthur intercedes for the Red Cross Knight, the Palmer is how Arthur pledges to aid Guyon" (p. 98).

Spenser always uses the mythical representations of beasts associated with sin. It is an influential aspect in the sense that it creates this synchronized image with the ugliness that promotes the understanding of the distinction between good and evil. However, Spenser also poses the idea of one's downfall with these inviting temptations of both sex and wealth. This temptation was often made by the disguised ugliness that we see with Duessa. Spenser intends to demonize the female figures in the same way beasts appear to us, which in fact conveys the idea that lust might seemingly appear beautiful, but once committing it, one can see the ugliness behind its foul smell. This parallelism between sin and the ugliness of the beasts is seen throughout the whole romance. Moreover, Spenser creates that parallel with allegorical female figures that seemingly appear beautiful and alluring, but once men sleep with them, they turn into beasts. Spenser is triggering here that lust is probably instinctual behavior, and that is why when knights commit these sinful crimes, they turn into mad beasts.

McClenny (2019) emphasizes the idea that love is something noble in mediaeval romances, while lust is an act of selfish sexual gratification. He adds that "love is a feeling of strong affection for another person coupled with the desire to share life passionately together, while lust is rooted in selfish sexual gratification that has little regard for another person to save physical appearance" (p. 3). Therefore, throughout Book II, desires are always contrasted with descent and noble intentions that fit within the context of temperance. Fox (1961) emphasizes the idea that "the system of the seven deadly sins, while giving Book II great variety in episodes and characters, is subordinate to the dominant theme of temperance. We can best understand the function of this system by considering Book N as a drama in five acts. Act i (Cantos i and ii) describes the background and introduces an episode that presents Guyon with an objective suitable to his role as the knight of temperance. Act N (Cantos ii–vii) depicts the various obstacles to his mission. The first five deadly sins—those designated spiritual by St. Gregory and subsequent authorities—appear in the traditional order of Pride, Envy, Wrath, Sloth, and Avarice. At the same time, the theme of temperance is constantly before our minds: Guyon is described as moderating his anger and as rejecting wealth and worldly honours in the name of 'temperance'. Strictly speaking, however, Guyon is here manifesting the Aristotelian concept of continence, or moderation in a general sense, rather than temperance, which has as its object the control of the appetites for food, drink, and sex" (p. 5).

This is one of the didactic issues that Spenser is suggesting here, indicating that appearance might not look as beautiful as the core reality, such as the house of pride, which appears so attractive from the outside but is full of ugly dead bones inside. Also, Guyon keeps reminding us of the deadly sins, as we see in this stanza:

*Wrath, gealosie, griefe, love do thus expel:
Wrath is a fire, and gealosie a weede,
Griefe is a flood, and love a monster fell;
The fire of sparkes, the weede of little seede,
The flood of drops, the monster filth did breede:
But sparks, seed, drops, and filth, do thus delay;
The sparks soon quench, the springing seeds outweed,
The drops dry up, the filth wipe cleane away:
So shall wrath, gealosie, griefe, love, dye and decay.* (1, canto 1v, 35)

The reader can see these images and start watching how Guyon can overcome this lustful wave of temptation through practicing temperance. Nohrnberg (2014) explains in his book *The Anthology of the Faerie Queene*, that "Spenser conceives temperance as the virtue that secures private integrity against an unruly physical environment. As a consequence, this virtue is the natural model for personal orderliness and the control of internal power; presumably, our allegiance to the institutions of society that maintain law and order is elaborated from the ideal of control established by this early training. This broadening of virtue seems to be the logic behind Spenser's construction of the legend of justice, where a quest like Guyon's is undertaken on behalf of the social body" (p. 352). Fox (1961) also asserts that "the hazardous voyage is in part a recapitulation of what has preceded and in part an anticipation of what is to come. All seven sins are included; they appear in approximately the reverse of the traditional order of enumeration, beginning with the carnal sins of gluttony and lust and progressing through the spiritual sins to culminate in pride. Finally, Act V opens with Guyon's arrival at his destination. His victory over excess and Acrasia is the victory of temperance in the proper sense of the term over the two opposed vices. But these vices are also the carnal sins in the system of the deadly sins" (p. 6).

Conclusion

Edmund Spenser, following the Renaissance trend, made his romance much more didactic, to the extent

that we feel like he is preaching and warning the reader against lust, sin, and temptation. He made Book II of *The Faerie Queen* so didactic that it provides us various teachings and ethical lessons that always urge us to consider temperance as a real, necessary virtue against temptations. The didactic and ethical aspects learned through love and sex remain the central issues throughout the whole book of temperance in *The Faerie Queen*. It is different in this regard from Malory's romance because we always notice this philosophical and moral didacticism and teaching presented in the form of wise words, peaceful advice, and religious preaching. Spenser's romance is much more didactic in the sense that Spenser draws lively pictures and comparisons between those who control their minds and those who exceed the limits of common human decency and courtesy. He commends virtues and praises temperance, and fiercely condemns excessiveness, imbalance, and greed, and more importantly, he calls for chastity, piety, pure love, and redemption.

In Malory's romance, we feel this remorseful and regretful preaching towards the very end of the poem when Lancelot falls in love and commits adultery and then goes through endless agony and predicament as a deserved punishment. At a few specific points, readers begin to feel pity for Lancelot as he deeply and remorsefully tries to redeem himself to eliminate the shame and guilt of his adulterous sins. At this point, in particular, Malory's romance becomes purely didactic and ethically moral, but not overtly as Spenser does in his epic poem since the very outset of his work. The prevalence and dominance of the idea of temperance in Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, Book II, Temperance in Book II appears to be idealized in the sense that it remains unfulfilled, unattainable and unachieved. It attracts the attention of readers to follow the thematic development of the epic as to understand the essence of ethical and moral lessons embodied in the structural allegory. Such implications are complicated to grasp from the first superficial reading of this classic literary masterpiece.

References

- Alashjaai, N. F. (2014). Women's Roles in Edmund Spenser's "The Faerie Queene". *The English Literature Journal*, 1(6), 194-197. Retrieved from <http://english.aizeonpublishers.net/content/2014/6/eng194-197.pdf>
- Anderson, J. H. (2018). *Spenser's Narrative Figuration of Women in The Faerie Queene* (Vol. 19). Medieval Institute Publications. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/mip_rmenc/1
- Bernar, G. B. (2023). Symbolism in Book I of the Faerie Queene by Edmund Spenser. *Scientific Bulletin of the International Humanitarian University*, 62(2), 48-52. doi: <https://doi.org/10.32841/2409-1154.2023.62.2.11>
- Davis, C. (2012). Spenser's Palmer: The Perversion of Right Reason in The Fairies Queene, Book II. *Honors Theses*, 53. doi: <https://doi.org/10.32597/honors/53/>
- De Young, S. (2008). The Circle and the Cross: The Self-Destructive Nature of Evil in Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queene. *Masters Theses*, 675. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/675>
- Edman, T. B. (2015). Power in Jeopardy: A Poststructuralist Reading of the Arthurian Legend from Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur and Tennyson's Idylls of the King to Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 4(2), 88-102. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v4i2.436>
- Evans, K. (2009). How Temperance Becomes "Blood Guiltie" in The Faerie Queene. *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 49(1), 35-66. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sel.0.0049>
- Fowler, A. (2021). *Remembered Words: Essays on Genre, Realism, and Emblems*. Oxford University Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198856979.001.0001>
- Fox, R. C. (1961). Temperance and the Seven Deadly Sins in The Faerie Queene, Book II. *The Review of English Studies*, 12(45), 1-6. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/512341>
- Hamilton, A. C. (1961). *The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene*. Clarendon Press.
- Jing, Y. (2024). The Role of Renaissance History on the Development and Promotion of Culture. *Transactions on Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 12, 325-329. doi: <https://doi.org/10.62051/rp110c90>
- Khan, N. (2014). Role of Literature in Moral Development. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 2(3), 6-9. Retrieved from <https://www.arciournals.org/pdfs/ijisell/v2-i3/2.pdf>
- Kim, S. E. (2017). "Armed To Point": Sansfoy And Imagining The Orient In Book I Of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene. *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 48(1), 117-131. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cjm.2017.0005>
- Kumari, S. (2015). The Faerie Queene" As A Moral and Spiritual Allegory. *International Journal of Research*, 2(6), 811-823. Retrieved from <https://journals.pen2print.org/index.php/ijr/article/view/8404>
- Lee, H. (1997). Love or Lust? The Sentimental Self in Honglou meng. *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, 19, 85-111. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/495090>
- Lines, D. A., & Ebbersmeyer, S. (2013). *Rethinking virtue, reforming society: new directions in Renaissance ethics, c. 1350-c. 1650*. Brepols Publishers. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1484/M.CURS-EB.5.106640>
- Lulu, R. A., & Alkaff, S. N. H. (2018). Of Lust and Love: A Cross-Cultural Study of Sex and Relationship Advice Articles in Women's Magazines. *Sexuality & Culture*, 22(2), 479-496. doi: <https://doi.org/10.>

- [1007/s12119-017-9479-x](#)
- McClenny, H. (2019). The Desire for Chaste Love in Book Three of The Faerie Queene. *English Department Theses*, Paper 22. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10950/1328>
- Miller, D. L. (2016). Temperance, Interpretation, and “the bodie of this death”: Pauline Allegory in The Faerie Queene, Book II. *English Literary Renaissance*, 46(3), 376-400. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6757.12075>
- Moloney, K. (2014). Maidens, Magic, and Manipulation: The Female Presence in Sir Thomas Malory’s Morte Darthur. *Snapshots of Doctoral Research at University College Cork 2014*, 89-93. doi: <https://doi.org/10.33178/boolean.2014.17>
- Nohrnberg, J. (2014). *The Analogy of The Faerie Queene*. Princeton University Press. Retrieved from <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691615998/the-analogy-of-the-faerie-queene>
- Ohrvik, A. (2024). What is close reading? An exploration of a methodology. *Rethinking History*, 28(2), 238-260. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2024.2345001>
- Roche, T. P. (1981). Reviewed Works: The Faerie Queene by Edmund Spenser, A. C. Hamilton; Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': A Critical Commentary on Books I and II Douglas Brooks-Davies. *The Modern Language Review*, 76(3), 660-663. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3727408>
- Yao, Z. (2024). An Inquiry into Renaissance Art and Literature. *Transactions on Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 12, 313-318. doi: <https://doi.org/10.62051/zxb1hg66>