

“The Faerie Queene” as a Romantic Epic

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“The Faerie Queene, Book 1” is blended with epic and romantic qualities. Discuss. [NU. 2020, 2017]

Or, Write a note on “The Faerie Queene” as a romantic epic.

Edmund Spenser's (1552/53-1599) *“The Faerie Queene, Book I”* (1590) tells the story of the heroic adventure of the Red Cross Knight and Lady Una, who are going to save Una's kingdom from a terrible dragon. This Book is special because it mixes two styles: epic and romantic. Here, Spenser uses the heroic adventure and serious tone of an epic. He also uses the knightly love and chivalry of a medieval romance. This blend makes it a wonderful romantic epic.

Invocation: First of all, Spenser begins *“The Faerie Queene”* with an invocation to the muses, like many great epics. He requests help from the muse Clio to write about the great deeds of knights and ladies. He writes:

“O helpe thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong.”

Spenser also pays tribute to Venus, the goddess of love, and her son Cupid, as his poem also deals with love and chivalry. Lastly, he praises Queen Elizabeth for her role in national life.

Heroic Adventure: *“The Faerie Queene, Book I”* has many epic qualities, including a heroic figure and grand adventure. The Red Cross Knight is the brave hero of Book I. He is full of courage and strength. He wears a red cross on his chest, which is a reminder of his dear lord, Jesus Christ.

“But on his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore”

The knight is traveling with the heroine, Lady Una. His mission is to defeat a terrible dragon that has been ravaging the kingdom of Una's parents. This is the knight's heroic adventure, to fight against evil and save people. This heroic quest is an important feature of the epic.

Knightly Love and Lady: Spenser blends the knight's heroic adventure with medieval romance. In this type of romance, we find knightly love: a knight fights for honour and courts his lady. The bond between the Red Cross Knight and Lady Una is central to this book. Spenser writes:

"A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside"

Lady Una is very beautiful, pure, and innocent. Her love for the knight is true and pure. Even when he leaves her because of a trick, Una still loves and forgives him. Their relationship is sweet and emotional, like a romantic tale. Ultimately, the knight defeats the dragon and marries Lady Una. Thus, Spenser's blend of epic and romantic qualities makes it a romantic epic.

Supernatural Forces: The presence of supernatural forces is both epic and romantic. In an epic, the hero fights against supernatural forces and shows his courage and strength. Book I is full of supernatural forces like Monster Error, Archimago, Duessa, Orgoglio, and the fire-breathing dragon. Monster Error is a vile creature that looks like half-woman and half-serpent.

"A monster vile, whom God and man does hate:"

The supernatural monsters make this poem an amazing romantic epic.

Nature and Imaginary Places: In romantic stories, the setting is often imaginary and beautiful. This poem is full of imaginary places, like dark forests, shining castles, talking trees, and peaceful valleys. Moreover, Spenser portrays nature beautifully throughout the journey of the knight and the lady. These romantic elements are blended perfectly with the knight's epic quest.

Allegorical Significance and Grand Style: Both epic and romantic poems bear deeper significance. *"The Faerie Queene"* is an allegorical poem with deeper meanings. In Book 1, Red Cross Knight stands for a Christian hero. He is the symbol of holiness. Una stands for truth and true religion. The dragon is a symbol of sin or Satan. The poem suggests a Christian hero (Knight) must be guided by truth or true religion (Una) to achieve holiness. Moreover, Spenser writes this poem in a grand and serious style, and in Spenserian Stanza. His words are formal and poetic, perfect for a romantic epic.

In conclusion, *"The Faerie Queene, Book 1"* is a perfect blend of epic and romantic qualities. Spenser mixes the heroic adventure and grand style of an epic with knightly love and feelings.

This blend makes the poem a romantic epic that shows us courage, strength, battles, evils, and love.

LxNotes