

Power, Religion and Morality: An Interpretation of the Dress Culture in Spenser's FQ Book I

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Abstract

Edmund Spenser's allegorical poetry "*The Faerie Queene*" mirrors the author's observations and perspectives of the British life under the religious conflicts in 16th century. In Book I, Spenser intentionally endows the clothes and adornments of different characters with implied connotations, via which the political culture and religious background of the Elizabethan Age are presented to the readers. And the symbolic metaphors of the dresses make public the author's stand as Queen Elizabeth I's political supporter, declare his religious position as a protestant poet, and express the viewpoint of the British upper-class towards personal moral cultivation under the Renaissance humanistic trend.

Key words: Edmund; Spenser; *Faerie Queene*; Dress culture

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Edmund Spenser, one of the most famous British poets in the 16th century, narrated the Red Cross Knight's adventures in Book I of his masterpiece *Faerie Queene*, highlighting the religious motif of self-fashioning in Renaissance Age via the power of faith. In Book I, except for the well-knitted plot, various vivid characters, and meaningful special surroundings, readers might well notice the interesting description of clothes and

adornments of different characters and their underlying meanings. For example, the black stole and the veil Una wore (FQ, I. i. 4), the scarlet red clothes and the crown like a Persian mitre of Duessa (FQ, I.ii.13), and the mighty arms and silver shield the Red Cross was clad in (FQ, I. i. 1), are all impressive externalized symbols of those characters.

Stephen Greenblatt, the expert of the British literature and culture in 16th century, phrased Spenser as "one of the first English writers to have what we may call a field theory of culture, that is, the conception of a nation not simply as an institutional structure or a common race, but as a complex network of beliefs, folk customs, forms of dress, kinship relations, religious mythology, aesthetic norms, and specialized modes of production" (Greenblatt, 1980, p.187). In his comment, forms of dress, equivalent to religious belief and modes of production, are basic element of how we define a people's characteristics. Ways of how people dress themselves, as part of the living style, not only reflect political life and class identities, but also mirror the social morality of a certain society. Spenser's depiction of dress in *The Faerie Queene*, Book I, works closely with the characterization, and promote plot development. Hamilton ever listed clothing-related words such as "Veil" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, the authoritative research handbook of Spenser's poetry, speaking of the significance of dresses and personal adornments to characterization and theme enhancement. Based on the previous studies, this paper discusses the political and religious connotations and the underlying moral meanings of the dresses and adornments mentioned in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.

THE POWER OF DRESS: THE CLASS DIVISION

In the late Middle Ages, early capitalists accumulated a great amount of wealth along with the expansion of

overseas trade. Some luxurious foreign textiles such as silk and velvet became available to the rich families. To show off their wealth and exalt their social status, rich merchants imitated the dressing styles of the royal families and the nobles, resulting in a competition atmosphere in clothing at that time. The French queen of Philip IV was ever surprised to see many rich people dress themselves like the way she did (Dewald, 2004, p.545)! Subsequently, Sumptuary Laws were implemented in many European countries in order to suppress luxurious consumption (Steele, 2005, P.197), which on one hand restricted imports and protected national industries, and on the other hand consolidated class differences and standardized social hierarchy.

According to the British Sumptuary Law, strict regulations were imposed on dresses of people of different classes, ranging from clothing styles, length of robes, colors, materials of adornments, to even layers of lining. Literally, the purpose of the Sumptuary Law was to suppress luxurious consumption, but actually, aristocrats especially royal members were extravagant in their clothes and adornments to show off their distinctive social status. For example, in Tudor England, only nobles above earldom were entitled to silk clothes or those embroidered with gold and silver, while knights were only allowed to wear cloaks embellished with a little golden or silver thread (Dewald, 2004, p.545). After Elizabeth's succession, more specific rules were added to the original regulations on clothes, for example, only royalty could wear the color purple and only the highest nobility could wear the color red (Benson, 2007, p.187), and the act regarding women's clothing marked the feature of a female ruler.

As a royal poet, Edmund Spenser wrote for political purpose to speak highly of Queen Elizabeth I, from her political achievements to even her appearance and clothing. As a monarch, Elizabeth I showed her great political talents, and as a female, she paid much attention to her outer appearance such as the colors or the styles of her clothes. Unlike other ordinary women, the queen's clothes functioned as political symbols, the distinctiveness and luxury of the clothes being exactly the way she established authority as a monarch. Janet Arnold ever described in astonishment all kinds of Elizabeth's extravagant clothes in *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*. She claimed that the queen's robes and adornments, including the expensive embroidery lace and luxurious jewelries, exerted "diplomatic functions" (Arnold, 1988, p.73). Robes, in feudal society, were endowed with political meaning, representing class identity and social status. In Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, robes or garments of Una, Duessa and other characters were depicted: Una's black stole (i.4 & i.45), royal robes of a maiden Queen (iv.8), the witch's robe (viii.46 & viii.49), and the antique robes of that ancient Lord and

aged Queen (xii.5), etc. Robe, etymologically, derives from "rob" according to the Oxford English Dictionary, originally referring to the act of robbing people's wealth or land via starting a war (Steele, 2005, p.110). Before the slave society, because of the material scarcity, people were equal without wealth or class differences. The increase in social wealth resulted in great changes in people's interrelationship: people who possessed more land and more wealth consolidated their positions by looting, robbing and enslaving others, thereby they gained greater power. From this perspective, the word "power" is closely related to robbing or robbery, thus the robe, the special type of clothes worn by ruling class or powerful noblemen, gains the underlying meaning of power, class position and high social status.

According to *the Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*, robe is the equivalent word to gown or garment, referring to the long and loose clothes of classical style like the ancient Roman Toga (Steele, p.110) that only the upper class of noble blood or clergies were qualified to wear. Therefore, robes, gowns and garments had political implications in feudal society, and the clothes of the important characters Spenser depicted in his long poem suggested their class identities. Among those characters who wore robes, Una was God's daughter, Queen Elizabeth I's religious incarnation; the ancient Lord and Queen were Una's parents, incarnations of Adam and Eve; Witch Duessa alluded to the Scottish Queen Mary, etc. In addition, Spenser employed the political metaphor of robe when he narrated that Duessa was spoilt of her scarlet robe and robbed of royal robes and purple pall when the knights exposed her true ugly features (FQ I, viii. 45 & 46). Purple was the royal color, and robes were exclusive to the upper class, thus the features of Duessa's clothes suggested her identity of a royal member. When she was robbed of her robes in the story, this detail implied that Mary, the Queen of Scotland, was deprived of power as a ruler, corresponding to the real historical event that Queen Mary was imprisoned by Elizabeth I out of political purpose.

Another interesting word Spenser employed was "disrobe" when he narrated that a thief went to rob churches of their ornaments, and holy Saints of their rich vestments, moreover, he also *disrobed* the Priests of their habiliments (FQ I, iii. 17)! In 16th century, devout Catholics dressed the religious statues in fine clothes. The behaviors of the thief to rob church priests of their fine robes and habiliments cast light upon the conflicts between Radical Protestants and Catholics at that time. Literally, the word "disrobe" means removing clothes from priests, while metaphorically, it means depriving their power. The wording in the poetry suggested a underlying close relationship between robes and power.

In Chapter 4, the poet described Queen Lucifera's Lords wearing ruffs. Ruff was a popular design in the

Renaissance period, originating from the French court and suitable for both genders. Wheel folded collar as it appeared, it was stiffened and shaped to give prominence to the dresser, creating visual effects of being unattainable and untouchable. It was said that Queen Elizabeth I especially favored this design as it highlighted her majestic image as a powerful queen, an authoritative ruler, and a supreme monarch. No wonder we can see in many of her portraits that she wore all kinds of extravagant robes and dresses decorated with ruffs of various styles, which represented her identity as a powerful ruler.

Though there was only a small portion of Book I referring to nobles' clothes, these dressing details provided information on how the upper class dressed themselves in the 16th century England, helping readers interpret the underlying political meanings of people's clothes. Jean Baudrillard, the famous French thinker and philosopher, claimed that monarchs and nobles display their privileges through "wasteful expenditure" (Baudrillard, 1998, p.22) in every era. However, he also stated that the wasteful expenditure is far from irrational and unreasonable, as it is positive, in advanced society, in its functionality rather than its rational usage. The core function of wasteful expenditure lies in its social aspects rather than individual ones: the increase in expenditure and the "waste" in ceremony will demonstrate values, differences and meanings. Thus it can be seen that clothes are important means to form class identities and display class concepts. In this sense, according to Baudrillard, dresses are no longer physical existence but reduced to be signs of differences (Baudrillard, 2015, p.82), and these signs are to be consumed for their features will help their consumers consolidate social status and realize social recognition.

THE CONTRAST STYLES OF CLOTHES: THE RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

Since the implement of the Sumptuary Law, simplified clothing styles came into fashion and the original sumptuous styles had been gradually abandoned largely because of the impact of the British Reformation in the 16th century on people's aesthetic standards.

For protestants, faith was reflected by their lifestyles including what they choose to wear. Simple styles and plain colors represented self-discipline and piety the protestants advocated, whereas sumptuous and gaudy clothes were related to human shortcomings like pride and wastefulness (Steele, 2005, pp.97-98). Dressing styles were employed by Renaissance protestants as a weapon of public opinion against the Catholics who were condemned for their excesses of dress. The 16th century French writer Deserps ever attacked Catholic clergies on their excessive dressing style in his book, condemning them well-dressed, abundant in eating but lacking of morality (Deserps,

2001, pp.74-77). Therefore, protestants showed temperance and piety through their plain-colored and minimalist dressing styles. In this sense, as an important symbol of personal temperament, different dresses, which was endowed with religious meanings, reflected the religious conflicts between the British Protestants and the Roman Catholics, and mirrored the Elizabethan intellectuals' great concern on faith crisis caused by luxury trend in protestant predominant society.

As a protestant poet, Spenser's detailed description of Duessa's lavish clothes and adornments suggested her Catholic identity.

A goodly Lady clad in **scarlot red**,
Purpled with **gold** and **pearle** of **rich assay**,
And like a **Persian** mitre on her head
Shee wore, with crowns and owches garnished

(FQ I, ii:13)

Spenser had cited the biblical allusion in Revelation about the Babylon Whore when depicting Duessa's appearance. We may find much in common between Duessa and the Babylon Whore when we compare the above-mentioned poem and the biblical lines that "the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls" (Rev, 17, p.4). The two images overlapped not only in their outer appearance but also in their negative impact: the Babylon Whore was accused of being the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, while Duessa, being considered a witch and alluded to the Scottish Queen Mary, was regarded as the central figure of the conspiracy against Queen Elizabeth I. "Scarlet red" and "gold and pearl" suggested the luxurious dressing styles of Catholic bishop, and the "Persian mitre" Duessa wore implied a depravity in faith as the Europeans regarded Persia a country of wealth, abundance and decadence in the 16th century. Duessa's witch image was intensified with her golden cup full of "death and despair" and "secret poison" (FQ I, viii, p.14) as the Babylon Whore also had a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication (Rev, 17, p.4). By depicting Duessa's dressing style, Spenser took his stand as a protestant poet to criticize and condemn the luxury trend among Catholics and their degeneration in faith. Because God commends modesty, excesses in dress would be deemed betraying the God. When Catholics became corrupting in their life styles, they would go withering away just like the final result of the ancient Babylon.

While Duessa was representative of the Catholic belief, her protestant counterpart Una was considered as the Christian truth, her dress style conforming to protestant characteristics. Let's see her appearance on the scene:

"Under a vele, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a **blacke** stole shee did throw"

(FQ I, i, 4)

“And on her now a garment she did weare,
All lily white, withoutten spot, or pride”

(FQ I, xii. 22)

Black and white were personal colors of Elizabeth I, her assertion of Protestant simplicity and austerity in monarchical regalia (Hamilton, 2006, P.1849). As Elizabeth's religious incarnation in the poetry, Una stood in sharp contrast against Duessa, whose gaudy dresses and extravagant ornaments symbolized a corruption of morality betraying God's precepts. Renaissance popes and cardinals such as Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga (1444 - 1483) had in fact been profligate in their spending habits and choice of dress, with their green or crimson damask gowns and silk slippers (Dewald, 2004, p.548). Compared with them, Protestant leaders like Martin Luther always chose simplified and dark-colored gowns, simply with a rope around the waist. The Calvinists and Anglicans promoted the simplicity fashion to its fullest extent: to clad themselves in sober black to echo their religious claims. This feature was reflected at the end of Book I when Una's parents was rescued by Red Crosse Knight:

“Forth came that auncient Lord and aged Queene,
Arayd in antique robes downe to the grownd,
And sad habiliments right well besene
A noble crew about them waited rownd
Of sage and sober Peres, all gravely gownd; ...”

(FQ I, xii. 5)

The word “sad” was used to describe plain color, and “gravely gownd” referred to the noble crew's dignified uniforms, both signifying the Protestant features in the 16th century. As we all know, the ancient Lord and aged Queen in the text were embodiment of Adam and Eve, the noble crew stood for Christian apostles, and Una represented the Christian Truth, thus the combination of Red Crosse Knight and Una was considered a religious metaphor of the religious truth pursuit of the secular masses.

The underlying relationship between contrasting dressing styles and religious opposition was also showed in Canto IV and Canto X. In Canto IV, the disdainful Queen Lucifera and her six counselors, incarnations of the Seven Deadly Sins, were narrated in religious metaphors. The third of the six counselors, Lechery, hid his filthiness underneath his fair green gown (FQ I, iv, p.25). Though clad in fair dress, he could not control his lust and led a debauchery life as his name suggested. The sharp contrast between Lechery's beautiful green gown and his lustful life precisely satirized dirty filthy mind of Catholics under their brilliant appearance. In the contrary, in Canto X Red Crosse Knight encountered in a holy Hospital seven Bead-men, incarnation of the Seven Good Acts to counterbalance the Seven Deadly Sins. The third Bead-man, counterpart of Lechery, was in charge of their wardrobe in which “were not rich types, nor garments gay, The plumes of pride, and wings of vanity, But clothes meet to keep keen cold away, And naked nature seemly

to array” (FQ I, x. p.39). The clothes in the Bead-men's wardrobe were in response to the Protestant assertion that the function of clothes should only be for keeping out the cold rather than showing off, otherwise it could be a sin.

Since 1533 when Henry VIII established the national religious status of the Church of England, Roman Catholics had never ceased their attempts to control the Church, weaken the Monarch's power, and proceed to interfere in England's domestic affairs. The religious policies shifted along with the throne changes in England in 16th centuries, and finally until Elizabeth's reign did England adopt a relatively moderate religious policy. During that turbulent era, conflicts between the Protestants and Roman Catholics never stopped bothering Elizabeth's Court, which resulted in a faith crisis concern among Protestants in England. As the corruption of the Roman Vatican had intensified social conflicts in England, taking it as an opportunity, the British Protestants denounced the Catholics on their extravagant life such as the dressing styles, and advocated frugality and simplicity for religious purpose of emphasizing orthodoxy and justice of the Anglicanism.

THE SIMPLIFICATION OF FASHION: THE CALL OF MORAL TRADITION

In 16th century England, excesses of lifestyle had been severely criticized by moralists and Sumptuous Laws were reinforced on the grounds of morality. James Durham ever commented that “men's minds are often infected with lascivious thoughts, and lustful inclinations, even by the use and sight of gaudy clothing; and light, loose, conceited minds discover themselves in nothing sooner than in their apparel, and fashions, and conceitedness in them” (Dewald, 2004, p.548). The Protestant Reformation played an enormous role in shifting dressing fashion as the Calvinistic Doctrine on morality and social fashion had taken root among common people. To purify the social fashion eroded by Catholic extravagance, Protestants reinterpreted the simplified dressing styles in terms of moral sense, exhorting public masses to reflect on themselves based on moral principles of self-discipline. The proposal of simple fashion echoed with the advocacy of the return of Medieval moral tradition such as chastity and temperance. Therefore, the call on simplicity in dresses was not only for religious purpose but also out of the need to eliminate unhealthy social tendencies and establishing moral models.

The God's commandments in Geneva Bible on temperance and morality had been used by Protestants as a theoretical weapon against Catholics. In Revelation, Babylon the great had been “the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Rev, 18, p.2), resulting in its fall. For the whore, “how much she hath glorified herself,

and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow gave her” (Rev, 18, p.7). The bad end of the Babylon whore served as a grave warning to admonish people to lead a temperate life. The kings’ indulgence and loss of virtue were the major reasons that Babylon was punished by God and “burned with fire” (Rev, 18, p.8). Spenser cited this allusion from Revelation in molding the Character of Duessa, metaphorically referring to Scottish Queen Mary who was a Catholic, conforming her dresses and adornments to that of the Babylon whore in Revelation (FQ I, ii. 13; v., p.21). The Roman Catholic Church was an analogy with Babylon the great, a place to hide evil, insinuated by the poet that it would be convicted by God and would not end up well.

God also admonished people to “be sober” (1Pe, 1, p.13) and not to be fashioning themselves according to the former lusts in their ignorance (1Pe, 1, p.14). English Protestants regarded simple and modest lifestyles including ways of dressing as following God’s commandments. What they had advocated in living styles, on one hand, was out of the need for political and religious struggles, and in an attempt to build domestic identification with national religion; on the other hand, was because of the popularity of nostalgia of morality in medieval times. In 16th century England, scholars and literati tried to awaken people’s reflections on National Characteristics, especially at moral level, making attempt to remodel Englishness among English people. And this process of self- discovery, self- identification and self-refashioning was the core of the Renaissance spirit in 16th century.

Spenser’s characterization in *The Faerie Queene* gave expression to his embrace of the return of medieval morality. Una, the virtuous lady in his poetry, attracted readers’ attention by her black stole and white veil as she first appeared with a milk-white lamb (FQ I, i., p.4). The white lamb suggested a harmonious relationship with God, and Una, as pure as the white lamb, just like the shepherd Christ, was the incarnation of representative of God. Though in plain-colored dress without complex ornaments, Una was no less than holy and pure with good virtues. She was a collection of all fine virtues commended by God: “She was in life” and “virtuous” (FQ I, i., p.5); the “goodly maiden Queene” (FQ I, xii. 8) did wear “all lily white, without spot, or pride” (FQ I, xii., p.22). The flower language of lily is purity and chastity. Spenser followed the tradition in English poetry of using flowers to symbolize human good characters, the artistic technique also being employed in his *Prothalamium* when he used “virgin lily” to sing of the beauty of spring as well as the purity of the bride (Smith, 1961, P.601). In Canto X of *The Faerie Queene*, Una turned to Dame Caelia who had three daughters named Fidelia, Speranza and Charissa, respectively symbolizing faith, hope and charity (1Co, 13, p.13), the three virtues in theology. The name

of Fidelia metaphorically means faith, the devout belief in God. She was attired all “in lily white” ((FQ I, x., p.13), which was the traditional color of faith.

Except for the color of dresses, Spenser also depicted a special clothing for women only - veil. As the manifestation of Una’s identity and virtue, veil repeated in Book I twice: “Under a vele, that wimpled was full low” (FQ I, i., p.4) and “He (Sansloy) snatcht the vele, that hong her face before” (FQ I, vi., p.4). As a feminine clothing, veil has four kinds of social functions, according to *The Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* (Steele, 2005, p.393). First, female space governing in both the domestic and public environment. Wearing a veil may express familial status as well as female position in a family. Secondly, distinction between marital status. Veils, veiled, and veiling may suggest a change in marital status. During a Christian wedding, a bride wears a veil. When the bride and groom recite vows then the groom uncovers the bride’s face, and this practice suggests the woman’s married status. Thirdly, religious affiliation. Young Christian girls, religious women or nuns dress modestly wearing white veils expressing their purity and devotion as they recite their acceptance of faith in church. Last, indication of geographic location. Veils, veiled, and veiling may also convey the geographic differences of the wearer. Take Una’s veil wearing practice as an example, on one hand, veiling herself suggests her virgin status, and the purpose is to protect her purity and chastity, keeping off gaze from others especially males. On the other hand, Una’s white veil indicates her piety and devotion in religious faith. Una’s white veil symbolizes women’s good virtues of temperance and purity which the poet spoke highly of. As a sharp contrast, Spenser denounced the indulgence of women behaviors in upper class society in 16th century, and he set three counter examples in Canto V. The bold Semiramis, the willful Sthenoboea, and the high-minded Cleopatra, proud and vain as they were, all of them ended up in disaster because of their indulgent behaviors (FQ I, v., p.50). In the same stanza, the poet commented that they were “forgetful of their yoke” (FQ I, v., p.50), which indicated his personal viewpoint that the reason for women’s corruption in morality was the lack of restraint from tradition and etiquette of polite society. By means of veil depiction, the poet expressed his inner voice of calling on return of the traditional morality and etiquette.

Compared with noble women’s indulgence in life, Renaissance noblemen were criticized by their excessive affectation and lack of masculinity. James Durham made comments on clothes of the noblemen in the 16th century as “emasculated and unmanned” (Dewald, 2004, p.548). It’s thus clear that it was a common phenomenon that men were emasculated and lacking of modesty in appearance in the 16th century. In response to this phenomenon, Spenser purposefully wrote about masculinity and heroic

features of male characters in his poetry. For example, he described the valiant posture of the Red Crosse Knight on horseback, and his mighty weapons:

“A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
Ycladd in mightie armes and silver shielde”
(FQ I, i., p.1)

“His warlike shield all closely cover'd was,
It framed was, one massy entire mould,
That point of speare it never percen could,
Ne dint of direfull sword divide the substance would.”
(FQ I, vii., p.33)

Armor and shield not only showed the heroic traits of the knight, highlighting man's power, they were also related to moral virtues in the poetry. One interesting detail was to be considered. In Canto VII, the Red Crosse Knight rested himself near a fountain, disarming all of iron-coated plate. With delighted mind, he was drunk of the stream. Comfortable environment, together with the witch Duessa's sweet words, made the mighty knight gradually turn feeble. “Poured out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd, Both carelesse of his health, and of his fame” (FQ I, vii.7), these two lines indicated the poet's great concern on the loss of martial spirit and heroic traits among noblemen. Witch Duessa represented the temptation of erotic feelings, while the fountain water and grassland metaphorically referred to secular material desires. Both were possible causes of moral deficiency. Once men were indulged with these desires (metaphorically described as “disarmed oneself” in the poetry), they would face with enormous disaster (in the poetry the Red Crosse Knight was defeated by the evil Giant when he rested himself near the fountain and gradually lost strength). The metaphors the poet employed made clear the poet's yearning for the return of the moral tradition from the medieval times.

Many scholars had taken the dressing problems into consideration when studying the nationality of the 16th century Britain. Scholars in the 16th century England viewed import of alien luxurious clothes including expensive textile materials as betraying the cultural tradition and political independence they live by. John Lyly, English writer of the 16th century, stated that wearing the exotic clothing was no different from being contaminated with alien sins (Lyly, 2000, p.153). Thomas Dekker ever used “bodies of traitors” to refer to those who dressed themselves in exotic luxurious clothes (Dekker, 1606, pp.59-60). Robert Greene, in his political satire booklet *A Qvip for an Vpstart Courtier*, affectionately recalled the past medieval times of fine virtue and morality, mentioning that people in that era paid more attention to their moral behaviors rather than their clothes (Greene, 1881-1886, p.235, p.251). Lin Meixiang had studied the issue of the English ethnicity construction, relating it to the Protestant religion, the awareness of nationality, and even the dressing problems

(Lin, 2015, p.90). As many 16th century English literature had reflected the adverse social atmosphere in upper class society, when studying literary works of this era, scholars may discuss the national, religious or moral issues from various aspects including dressing styles. When the textile materials were endowed with moral meanings, people's ways of dressing reflected various social problems such as social disorder, wealth loss, faith crisis, and moral decay.

CONCLUSION

As a royal poet, Edmund Spenser upheld the imperial power by means of writing. In *the Faerie Queene*, he passionately praised both the secular and religious incarnations of Queen Elizabeth, on her sovereign authority, her religious piety, and her virtue of purity. The portrait of Una and her dress suggested the Queen's virginity as well as her religious identity as the leader of the church of England. He took religious conflicts into discussion in his poetry through characterizing two opposing figures wearing strikingly different dresses. Focusing on clothing, he took his Protestant stand and criticized the corrupting Roman Catholics, expressing his love and loyalty for his country. As a Renaissance humanist, he placed his understanding of aesthetics and pursuit of goodly virtue on his literary work. He ever stated in *Letter to Raleigh* that the purpose of writing the allegory *the Faerie Queene* “is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline” (Spenser, 2001, p.714). As part of the characters' traits, dresses played an critical role in reflection of the poet's great concern on social morality.

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