FIERCE WARS
AND FAITHFUL LOVES

THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF
THE REDCROSS KNIGHT
AND HIS FAITHFUL (SOMETIME) COMPANION

UNA

PSYCHO-DRAMATIS PERSONAE
Principal Archetypes

REDCROSS = † : Color him clueless green.
Abandons ♥d Ω for ω
a.k.a. St George → R : Dragonslayer, Patron Saint
of the English Church ( = Ω)

UNA = Ω : Color her blue.
She loses her ♥d † to ω

DUESSA = ω : Ω s [≠] Double, a Lady in Red, false ♥r of (inter alia)

ARCHIMAGO = ‡ : Double-Cross-Dresser
Basic Black
ARTHUR

= † : Dream ♠s Faerie Queene

[≈ Ω]

Pendragon

≈ ₫ : ≈ † as Ω's Knight –

χs Orgoglio – Σs †

∇ = Demonic Triad

♥ = love

Σ = save

≠ = parodies/inverts

χ = kill

≈ = almost

Δ = Holy Trinity

Supporting Emblems

(In Order of Appearance)

1. Dwarf [≠ Giant Orgoglio (7)] – Belongs to Ω but
goes with † - pops up at need (5, 7)

Error [≈ ω ≠ Charissa] – Sinuous, sensuous

Dragon Lady, χd by †

2. ‡ separates Ω & † – who flees & χs Sansfoy

[&Loy&Joy = ∇] – Former faithless lover of ω –
to whom † attaches himself – meets

Fradubio ( & Fraelissa) – Talking Tree ≈ †

[F&F/ω ≈ †&Ω/ω]
3. Loyal Royal Lion χs Kirkrapine – χd by Sansloy
   \{ Abessa Corcecca & Rapine \}
   \{ [Ignorance] [Superstition] [Greed] \} ⇒
   ⇒ \{ \nabla ≠ Δ : Fidelia, Speranza, & Charissa (10) \}
   Sansloy [\nabla FoyJoy] : ≈ χs ‡ [≈†], attacks Ω

4. †&ω at House of Pride [Lucifera ≠ Celia (10)
   ≈Orgoglio (7)] + 6 Counselors
   (Sloth Gluttony Lechery Avarice Envy Wrath) =
   7 Deadly Sins
   Sansjoy sometime sad ♥r of ω

5. ≈ χd by † – Σd by ω [ω in Hell ≈ † Σing † (8)] –
   † flees House of Pride

6. Ω Σd from Sansloy by Salvage Nation, from them
   by Satyrane
   Sansloy fights Satyrane – Ω flees, pursued by ‡

7. ω ♥s †, who’s ≈χd - imprisoned by Orgoglio.
   Dwarf tells Ω, who meets †

8. † χs Orgoglio, blinds Beast – Σs † - has ω stripped
9. † pursues Gloryane. †œ Sir Trevisan from Despair – to whom † then succumbs – œd by Ω - who takes him to

10. The House of Holiness – to be œd by Celia & daughters: ∆ = Faith - Hope - ♥ Contemplation shows † New Jerusalem – † → St George (R)

11. †R χs Dragon – œd by Well & Tree of Life,

12. Despite ωs objections - †R marries Ω –

And they live happily ever after—sort of:

for a short time:
Her joyous presence and sweet company
   In full content he there did long enjoy,
Ne wicked enuie, ne vile gealousy
His deare delights were able to annoy:
Yet swimming in that sea of blisfull ioy,
He nought forgot, how he whilome had sworne,
In case he could that monstrous beast destroy,
Vnto his Farie Queene backe to returne:
The which he shortly did, and Vna left to mourne.

(12.41)

Therefore rejoice . . . AND mourn for a brief Eternity.
That’s the way things are in Eddy’s World.

Let’s go back to the beginning:

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
   Ycladd in mightie armes and siluer shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,
The cruell markes of many' a blody fielde;
   Yet armes till that time did he neuer wield:
His angry steede did chide his foming bitt,
As much disdayning to the curbe to yield:
Full iolly knight he seemd, and faire did sitt,
As one for knightly giusts and fierce encounters fitt.  (1.1)
But on his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore,
   The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
   For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
   And dead as liuing euer him ador'd:
Vpon his shield the like was also scor'd,
   For soueraine hope, which in his helpe he had:
Right faithfull true he was in deede and word,
   But of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad;
Yet nothing did he dread, but euer was ydrad.       (1.2)

A louely Ladie rode him faire beside,
   Vpon a lowly Asse more white then snow,
   Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
   Vnder a vele, that wimpled was full low,
And ouer all a blacke stole she did throw,
   As one that inly mournd: so was she sad,
   And heauie sat vpon her palfrey slow:
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milke white lambe she lad.       (1.4)

How would you describe the visual/verbal activity that goes on in these passages?
Spenser’s style is paradoxical—at times bewilderingly so. How does this *Piers*-like profusion of meanings add up to an allegorical narrative?

In his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, Spenser explains:

“In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceiue the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery land” (B 717).

So, a single image or figure may have many meanings. But also, one cluster of meanings generates many images: “And yet in some places els I do otherwise shadow her.”

In Bk I, Elizabeth is shadowed, not only by
Una = England & the English Church
But also by Lucifera;
 i.e., Elizabeth’s Court is The House of Pride
And by Duessa—the Double, Miss Duplicity.

Things seem to have gone out of control. You begin to see, perhaps, why a literalist, or a strict constructionist, or a Puritan moralist (like Lord Burleigh, whom Spenser satirized in the Sixth Book of the poem) might take issue with what Spenser calls “a continued Allegory, or darke conceit” (B 716)
Spenser goes on to explain why he writes figuratively:

“The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline: Which for that I conceiued shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter, then for profite of the ensample.”

He seems to be making a concession to weakness, what he calls “the use of these days”:

“To some I know this Methode will seeme displeasaunt, which had rather haue good discipline deliuered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they vse, then thus clowdily enrapped in Allegoricall deuises. But such, me seeme, should be satisfide with the vse of these dayes seeing all things accounted by their showes, and nothing esteemed of, that is not delightfull and pleasing to commune sence. . . .” (B 717)

But he has a little surprise for us. He concludes by saying that his way of teaching is BETTER than straightforward “sermoning at large”: “So much more profitable and gratious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule.”
Why is an *ensample* more *profitable* than a precept?

**Experiential** rather than theoretical: “Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall *moralize* my song.”

Citing Spenser, OED gives, as definition 2.a., “To supply (a narrative) with a moral or a subject for moralizing.” [2]

For Spenser, as for his contemporary, Sir Philip Sidney, Poetry is a **Speaking Picture**: “A perfect picture . . . for [the poet] yeeldeth to the powers of the minde an image of that whereof the Philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess, the sight of the soule so much, as that other doth.” [3]

The poet moves us by “coupl[ing] the generall notion [or abstract principle] with the particular example.” That is, the one [philosophy] giveth the precept, and the other [history] the example.” Poetry gives us both.

So, we might say about “allegorical” teaching:

That the image is more vivid—more lively & more **lifelike**—than the mere precept. Instead of “Holiness,” we have the Adventures of Redcross.
“Speaking pictures” are also moving pictures, and images in motion tell a story.

When we think of Redcrosse in these terms—concretely, as a story, rather than abstractly as a figure of Holiness—what is the story?

Stories, then. On one level an externalized psychological narrative of an inexperienced-frustrated-confused youth struggling to find/make his way in/through the world.

And when we reflect on Spenser’s version of Everyone, we see that RC succeeds by failing, time after time. In theological terms, known as the “doctrine” of “The Fortunate Fall”: *O felix culpa! O felix peccatum Adae!*

Psychologically, the drama of lapse and recovery, because lapse makes recovery possible. (We are all always recovering from something.) Suffering is a necessary condition of growth.

Spiritually, the story of death and rebirth: we have to die to be reborn:

So RC succumbs to the depths of Despair (9) *in order that* he may ascend to the Heavenly City (10).
NOTES

1] In thinking about Spenser’s allegory, it may help to remember what I said about allegory in the lecture on *Piers Plowman & Everyman*: ALLEGORY is extended metaphor. E.g.:
“God is my Shepherd” is a metaphor. 
*Psalm 23* can be read as an allegory, in which some of the meanings of “Shepherd” are spelled out: guide, governor, provider (feeder). The corresponding meanings of Sheep are implied: error-prone, unruly, dependent.

(Note: if you are unable to access this site from the computer you are working on, try entering through the University Library’s SABIO Gateway.)

3] Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy*. Some passages (those not identified by page number in parentheses) are not in your anthology; they may be found online at: http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/%7Erbear/defence.html. This passage would occur in the space (** *) on page 961 of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Volume I.B.