


Allegory

# The Faerie Queene




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## GLORIANA, QUEENE OF THE FAERIES



- Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, sends 5 Knights on Quests
- + Arthur, who is seeking Gloriana
- + Britomart, who makes her own damn quest, thank you very much
- REFRACTION of the qualities of GOOD LEADERSHIP
  - HOLINESS (Redcrosse)
  - TEMPERANCE (Guyan)
  - CHASTITY (Britomart)
  - FRIENDSHIP (Cambell, Triamond)
  - JUSTICE (Artegall)
  - COURTESY (Calidore)
- Gloriana NEVER APPEARS IN THE TEXT
  - She is the SUNLIGHT that makes the RAINBOW of virtues

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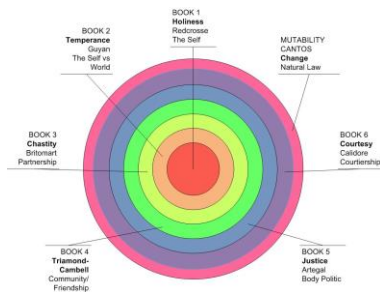
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## CONCENTRIC STRUCTURE




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## VERTICAL STRUCTURE: ALLEGORY




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## ALLEGORICAL IRONIES

Often, these levels of significance CONFLICT with or CONTRADICT one another.

Eg. A Knight fights with vigor and is the epitome of Knightly prowess

BUT

- He is described with beastly epithets (boars, lions, dragons)

SO

- On a spiritual level, he represents the sin of WRATH

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## SPENSER'S BIG QUESTION

How can the ideals of virtue be EMBODIED by flawed and limited human beings, be they ever so ardent and willing to meet the challenge given to them?

If God is Perfect, and God's laws are Perfect, then BY DEFINITION, a Fallen human being CANNOT live up to divine expectation and is therefore ALWAYS GUILTY.

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# The Muddy Stream

"... though [good deeds] be derived from the Spirit of God, as little streams from the spring-head, yet of our flesh, that mingleth itself with them, in the doing by the way, they receive corruption, as it were by infection, like as a river otherwise pure and clear, is troubled and mudded with mire and slime wherethrough it runneth" (Alexander Nowell, *Catechism*)

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# A HOPELESS CASE?

Two factors mitigate this seemingly hopeless case:

- HUMANISTIC: none of the Knights STARTS OUT embodying his virtue (except Britomart). They LEARN.
- SPIRITUAL: Each of the Knights is helped by Arthur, who is the representation of GRACE.



*"Sir Galahad guided by the 'Sword'..."*

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# REDCROSSE

"This garment is called an armor, because it defendeth us from assaults of the devil, the flesh, the world, the heat of persecution, the cold of defection" (Henry Smith on the 'armor of Christ').



*"Sir and the Knight of the Red Cross..."*

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## Armor

- Consider:
  - the representation of Redcrosse (1.1.1-3). What do we know about Redcrosse from the description of his armor and steed?
  - the “glistening” light of his armor in Error’s den (14.4).
  - Una’s exclamation: “Well worthy be you of that Armorie” (27.5)
- Compare to the language used to describe Redcrosse during his fight with Error: (v. 17, 24).

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## The Wandering Wood

Consider the “path” that leads into and out of the Wood: “Faire harbour” (v. 8); “labyrinth” (v. 11).

Consider

- how they enter onto the path that takes them from the Wood. (28.1-2);
- The juxtaposition of their escape with their meeting of the “aged Sire” (29.2).

Compare to the path they take *after* the battle with Error “which beaten was most plaine” (28.3).

What is the nature of the Wandering Wood?

What is the relationship between Redcrosse and the Wandering Wood / Error?

What accounts for this change?

Hint: consider Mephistophiles’ response to Faustus’s question about hell.

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## “The eye of reason” (1.2.5.7): Vision and Error

What is the significance of vision in the latter half of the canto?

Consider:

- Archimago’s presentation (v. 29, v. 35);
- The recurrence of “seeming”;
- False Una (v. 45-46), and her face like a “bayted hooke” (1.1.49.6).

What is the relationship between beauty and the Wandering Wood and between beauty and VISION?

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## Architecture of Images: Dreams and Waking

What is the significance of the lengthy dwelling on Morpheus who sends a "fit false dreame" (1.1.43-9) for Archimago?

Consider:

- Redcrosse's dream in which it "seemèd him his Lady by him lay" (1.1.47-7) and his waking to find Una in his bed (1.1.49);
- His dismay at finding his "gentle Dame so light, / For whose defense he was to shed his blood" (1.1.55-2-3);
- "saw his labour all in vaine" (1.1.55.8): The ambiguous pronoun "he" (1.1.55.8-9). Does it refer to Redcrosse or to the demon dream?

What does the dream episode tell us about the relationship between reality and illusion and about the Knight's quest for holiness and knightly honour?

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