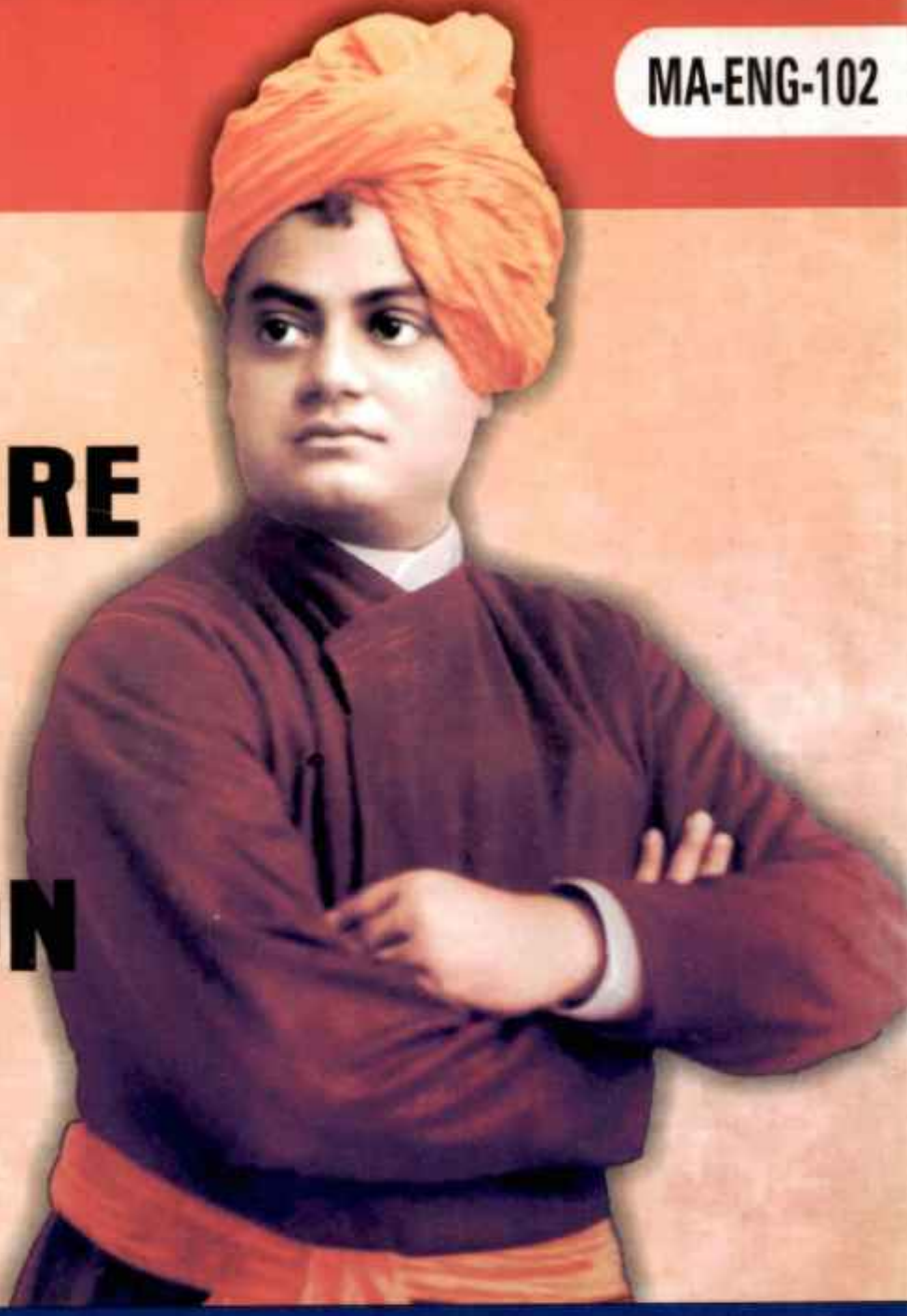
MA-ENG-102

ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM CHAUCER TO MILTON



DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

SWAMI VIVEKANAND
SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY
Meerut (National Capital Region Delhi)

Syllabus

Semester-1
English Literature from Chaucer to Milton (MA-ENG-102)
Credits: Total-4
Marks: Total-100 Internal-30; End-Semester Examinations-70
Duration (Hours per week): Total-5 (Lecture/Tutorial-5)

Unit-I:

- **Geoffrey Chaucer**

  The General Prologue', 'The Miller's Prologue and Tale', 'The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale', 'The Nun's Priest's Tale'.

Unit-II:

- **Edmund Spenser**

  April Eclogue' in *The Shepheardes Calender,* 'Letter to Raleigh', *The Faerie Queene:* Books III, V (Cantos 5, 6, and 7), and Book VI.

Unit-III:

- **William Shakespeare**

  Sonnets 18,29, 73, 94,110, 116, 129, 130,138.

Unit-lV:

- **John Milton**

  Paradise Lost: Book-1,2 and 12

Contents

UNIT–I

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Key points
- Introduction
- Biography of the author
- Plot
- Explanation
- Summary
- Characters
- Art of characterization and analysis of main characters
- Themes
- Humour, satire and irony in the prologue
- Review questions
- Further reading

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- Explain between the lines.
- Describe the various characters.
- Write the summary.
- Understand about the poet Geoffrey Chaucer.
- Explore various theme.

• KEY POINTS

Full Title: The Canterbury Tales

Written by: Geoffrey Chaucer

Written during: End of the 14th century

Written in: London, England

Published: in England in c. 1400 (unfinished at Chaucer's death)

Literary Period: Medieval

Genre: Estate satire

Setting: The road to Canterbury, England

• INTRODUCTION

Historical Context of **The Canterbury Tales**

The late 14th century was a chaotic time in England. The Catholic Church was undergoing huge shifts and changes. After the horrors of the Black Death, many people were questioning the Church's authority, and groups such as the Lollord rebelled against the power that priests wielded. Medieval society traditionally consisted of three estates: the church, the nobility, and the peasantry. The church represented people who prayed but did not work for a living; this holy sector of society was supported by the other two and was not supposed to be concerned with material goods. The nobility was strictly bound to many rules of chivalry and courtliness. The rest of the population consisted of the peasant working class. However, in the late 14th century, this structure was breaking down. Peasant revolts such as the Jack Straw rebellion of 1381 raged through the countryside. A new middle class consisting of educated workers such as merchants, lawyers, and clerks was beginning to gain power, particularly in urban areas. Chaucer himself was a member of this new middle class. The Canterbury Tales both depict and satirize the conventions of these turbulent times.

About:

The Canterbury Tales is at once one of the most famous and most frustrating works of literature ever written. Since its composition in late 1300s, critics have continued to mine new riches from its complex ground, and started new arguments about the text and its interpretation. Chaucer's richly detailed text, so Dryden said, was "God's plenty", and the rich variety of the Tales is partly perhaps the reason for its success. It is both one long narrative (of the pilgrims and their pilgrimage) and an encyclopedia of shorter narratives; it is both one large drama, and a compilation of most literary forms known to medieval literature: romance, fabliau, Breton lay, moral fable, verse romance, beast fable, prayer to the Virgin and so the list goes on. No single literary genre dominates the Tales. The tales include romantic adventures, fableaux, saint's biographies, animal fables, religious allegories and even a sermon, and range in tone from pious, moralistic tales to lewd and vulgar sexual farces. More often than not, moreover, the specific tone of the tale is extremely difficult to firmly pin down.

This, indeed, is down to one of the key problems of interpreting the Tales themselves-voice: how do we ever know who is speaking? Because Chaucer, early in the Tales, promises to repeat the exact words and style of

each speaker as best he can remember it, there is always a tension between Chaucer and the pilgrim's voice he ventriloquizes as he re-tells his tale: even the "Chaucer" who is a character on the pilgrim has a distinct and deliberately unchaucerian voice. Is it the Merchant's voice–and the Merchant's opinion – or Chaucer's? Is it Chaucer the character or Chaucer the writer? If it is Chaucer's, are we supposed to take it at face value, or view it ironically? It is for this reason that, throughout this Classiest, a conscious effort has been made to refer to the speaker of each tale (the Merchant, in the Merchant's Tale, for example) as the "narrator", a catch-all term which represents both of, or either one of, Chaucer and the speaker in question.

No-one knows for certain when Chaucer began to write the Tales – the pilgrimage is usually dated 1387, but that date is subject to much scholarly argument – but it is certain that Chaucer wrote some parts of the Tales at different times, and went back and added Tales to the melting pot. The Knight's Tale, for example, was almost certainly written earlier than the Canterbury project as a separate work, and then adapted into the voice of the Knight; and the Second Nun's Tale, as well as probably the Monk's, probably have a similar compositional history.

Chaucer drew from a rich variety of literary sources to create the Tales, though his principal debt is likely to Boccaccio's Meron, in which ten nobles from Florence, to escape the plague, stay in a country villa and amuse each other by each telling tales. Boccaccio likely had a significant influence on Chaucer. The Knight's Tale was an English version of a tale by Boccaccio, while six of Chaucer's tales have possible sources in the Meron: the Miller's Tale, the Reeve's, the Clerk's, the Merchant's, the Franklin's, and the Shipman's. However, Chaucer's pilgrims to Canterbury form a wider range of society compared to Boccaccio's elite storytellers, allowing for greater differences in tone and substance.

The text of the Tales itself does not survive complete, but in ten fragments (see 'The texts of the Tales' for further information and specific orders). Due to the fact that there are no links made between these ten fragments in most cases, it is extremely difficult to ascertain precisely in which order Chaucer wanted the tales to be read. This ClassicNote corresponds to the order followed in Larry D. Benson's "Riverside Chaucer", which is undoubtedly the best edition of Chaucer currently available.

• BIOGRAPHY OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Geoffrey Chaucer occupies a unique position in the Middle Ages. He was born a commoner, but through his intellect and astute judgments of human character, he moved freely among the aristocracy. Although very

little is definitely known about the details of his life, Chaucer was probably born shortly after 1340. Although the family name (from French "Chaussier") suggests that the family originally made shoes, Chaucer's father, John, was a prosperous wine merchant.

Both Chaucer's father and grandfather had minor standing at court, and Geoffrey Chaucer's own name appears in the household accounts of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster and wife to Prince Lionel. As a household servant, Chaucer probably accompanied Elizabeth on her many journeys, and he may have attended her at such dazzling entertainment as the Feast of St. George given by King Edward in 1358 for the king of France, the queen of Scotland, the king of Cyprus, and a large array of other important people. Chaucer's acquaintance with John of Gaunt (fourth son of Edward III and ancestor of Henry IV, V, and VI), who greatly influenced the poet, may date from Christmas 1357, when John was a guest of Elizabeth in Yorkshire.

Chaucer had a high-born wife, Philippa, whom he probably married as early as 1366. Chaucer may also have had a daughter, Elizabeth, and two sons, "little Lewis" (for whom he composed the Astrolabe, a prose work on the use of that instrument of an astronomer) and Thomas.

Chaucer was one of the most learned men of his time. He made numerous translations of prose and verse, including Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, saints' legends, sermons, French poetry by Macan and Deschamps, and Latin and Italian poetry by Ovid, Virgil, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. He also shows a wide knowledge of medicine and physiognomy, astronomy and astrology, jurisprudence, alchemy, and early physics. His knowledge of alchemy was so thorough that, even into the seventeenth century, some alchemists themselves considered him a "master" of the science — not a pseudo-science in Chaucer's time. According to the legend on his tomb in Westminster Abbey, the poet died on October 25, 1400.

Public Positions and Service

During 1359 to 1360, Chaucer served with the English army in France and was taken prisoner near Reims. He was released for ransom — toward which Edward himself contributed sixteen pounds — and returned to England. Later that same year, Chaucer traveled back to France, carrying royal letters, apparently entering the service of Edward as the king's servant and sometimes emissary.

Although he again served with the English army in France in 1369, by 1370 Chaucer was traveling abroad on a diplomatic mission for the king. Having been commissioned to negotiate with the Genoese on the choice of an English commercial port, Chaucer took his first known journey to Italy in December 1372 and remained there until May 1373. He probably gained

his knowledge of Italian poetry and painting during his visits to Genoa and Florence.

Chaucer's high standing continued during the reign of Richard, who became king in 1377. Throughout most of 1377 and 1378, his public services were performed chiefly in England. Chaucer received various appointments, including justice of the peace in Kent (1385), Clerk of the King's Works (1389), and, after his term as Clerk of the King's Works (sometime after 1390), deputy forester of the royal forest of North Peterson in Somerset. During this time, he was also elected Knight of the Shire (1386) and served in Parliament.

Chaucer continued to receive royal gifts, including a new annuity of twenty pounds, a scarlet robe trimmed with fur, and, after 1397, an annual butt of wine (104 gallons). When Henry IV was crowned, he renewed Richard's grants and gave Chaucer an additional annuity of forty marks. Throughout his public career, Chaucer came into contact with most of the important men of London as well as with many of the great men of the Continent. We have records of his frequent dealings with the chief merchants of the city, with the so-called Lollard knights (followers of Wylie, to whom John of Gaunt gave protection), and with the king's most important ambassadors and officials.

Payments to the poet during the last years of his life were apparently irregular, and his various "begging poems" — "Complaint to his Purse," for instance — together with records of advances which he drew from the royal Exchequer, have sometimes been taken as evidence that Chaucer died poor; but this is by no means certain. At any event, Geoffrey Chaucer's son Thomas took over Geoffrey Chaucer's new house in the garden of Westminster Abbey and remained in high court favor after Chaucer's death.

Chaucer's Work

Chaucer has presented caricatures of himself again and again — in such early poems as The Book of the Duchess, The Parliament of Fowls, Troilus and Criseyde, The House of Fame, and The Legend of Good Women, and also in his masterpiece, The Canterbury Tales. Chaucer's narrators are, of course, not the "real" Chaucer — except in certain physical respects — but the various caricatures have much in common with one another and certainly reveal, either directly or indirectly, what Chaucer valued in a man.

With the exception of the Troilus narrator, a very complicated and special case, all Chaucer's narrators are bookish, fat, nearsighted, comically pretentious, slightly self-righteous, and apparently — because of a fundamental lack of sensitivity and refinement — thoroughly unsuccessful in the chief art of medieval heroes: love. We may be fairly sure that the

spiritual and psychological qualities in these caricatures are not exactly Chaucer's. Chaucer's actual lack of pretentiousness, self-righteousness, and vulgarity lies at the heart of our response to the comic self-portraits in which he claims for himself these defects.

The ultimate effect of Chaucer's poetry is moral, but it is inadequate to describe Chaucer as a moralist, much less than satirist. He is a genial observer of mankind, a storyteller, as well as a satirist, one whose satire is usually without real bite. He is also a reformer, but he is foremost a celebrator of life who comments shrewdly on human absurdities while being, at the same time, a lover of mankind.

Critical Reception

Chaucer's depiction in his works of a variety of female figures in varying lights and contexts has led too much modern criticism focused on issues of sexuality and gender. In his study of Chaucer's narrative technique, E. Talbot Donaldson focuses on the stories of several female characters. Donaldson argues that while each of Chaucer's (male) narrators seems to provide a unified point of view, each actually describes things "simultaneously from several distinct points of view," permitting the reader to see potentials in the women that the narrator appears not to see, "preoccupied as he is with the ladies' outward beauty." R. Howard Bloch approaches the gender relationships in Chaucer's work by emphasizing medieval assumptions regarding female sexuality. Exploring the apparent disparities in "The Physician's Tale" between the characters' actions and motivations, particularly in respect to Virginia, Bloch explains that the religious conception of virginity at the time was such that a virgin ceased to be considered pure if she were even looked at with desire. The primary motivating moment in "The Physician's Tale," is, therefore, the moment Applies first sees and desires Virginia. S. H. Rigby similarly grounds his investigation of Chaucer's representation of women in medieval attitudes concerning women. Rigby points out that many medieval writers either placed women on a "pedestal" of virginity or condemned them to the "pit" as sexual predators or temptresses. In examining how Chaucer's heroines fit into these contemporary views, Rigby contends that while "The Wife of Bath's Tale" may seem to challenge such misogynist notions, the tale should in fact be read ironically. However, Rigby maintains, Chaucer does offer a balanced view of women in such works as "The Tale of Melibee" and "The Parson's Tale," where he presents women as "rational creatures with the potential to offer moral guidance to their husbands and who [have] a worthy respected part to play in society."

The Legend of Good Women has been the subject of a pair of recent studies on gender issues. Rather than a work about women, Elaine Tuttle Hansen argues, the Legend is actually more about men and how they are

"feminized." The legends Chaucer discusses, Hansen shows, includes those with literary heroes (Pyramus and Antony) who suggest the difficulty in attaining and maintaining manhood. Hansen states that the remaining heroes are trapped, "like women, in the plots of other men." David Wallace centers his study of The Legend of Good Women on the political context of Chaucer's world. Highlighting the parallels between Chaucer's work and that of Boccaccio and Petrarch, who similarly depicted the lives of ancient and classical figures, Wallace contends that Chaucer was trapped between his duties as a poet and as a political subject. Whereas Petrarch dealt with this conflict by speaking from a number of "feminized" positions, Wallace argues, Chaucer chose to position an "eloquent wife" between himself and the dominating masculine ruler of his world.

Other critics have focused on the relationship between language and gender issues in Chaucer's poetry. Carolyn Dinshaw argues that for Chaucer literary activity was always a gendered activity. She explores the relationship between the control of language and masculine power in the patriarchal society depicted in Chaucer's poetry. Similarly, Priscilla Martin examines the way silence and spoken language relate to gender and power in Chaucer's work. Martin demonstrates how, in Chaucer's time, feminine speech was connected to original sin and was often equated with "improper" female behavior. Chaucer's understanding of such issues, Martin argues, allowed him to "transcend" the boundaries of gender.

• PLOT

A. General Prologue

At the Tabard Inn, a tavern in sauthward, near London, the narrator joins a company of twenty-nine pilgrims. The pilgrims, like the narrator, are traveling to the shrine of the martyr Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The narrator gives a descriptive account of twenty-seven of these pilgrims, including a Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk, Man of Law, Franklin, Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-Weaver, Cook, Shipman, Physician, Wife, Parson, Plowman, Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, and Host. (He does not describe the Second Nun or the Nun's Priest, although both characters appear later in the book.) The Host, whose name, we find out in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, is Harry Bailey, suggests that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. He decides that each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whomever he judges to be the best storyteller will receive a meal at Bailey's tavern, courtesy of the other pilgrims. The pilgrims draw lots and determine that the Knight will tell the first tale.

B. The Miller's Prologue and Tale

The Host asks the Monk to tell the next tale, but the drunken Miller interrupts and insists that his tale should be the next. He tells the story of an impoverished student named Nicholas, who persuades his landlord's sexy young wife, Alisoun, to spend the night with him. He convinces his landlord, a carpenter named John, that the second flood is coming, and tricks him into spending the night in a tub hanging from the ceiling of his barn. Absolon, a young parish clerk who is also in love with Alisoun, appears outside the window of the room where Nicholas and Alisoun lie together. When Absolon begs Alisoun for a kiss, she sticks her rear end out the window in the dark and lets him kiss it. Absolon runs and gets a red-hot poker, returns to the window, and asks for another kiss; when Nicholas sticks his bottom out the window and farts, Absolon brands him on the buttocks. Nicholas's cries for water make the carpenter think that the flood has come, so the carpenter cuts the rope connecting his tub to the ceiling, falls down, and breaks his arm.

C. The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale

The Host is dismayed by the tragic injustice of the Physician's Tale, and asks the Pardoner to tell something merry. The other pilgrims contradict the Host, demanding a moral tale, which the Pardoner agrees to tell after he eats and drinks. The Pardoner tells the company how he cheats people out of their money by preaching that money is the root of all evil. His tale describes three riotous youths who go looking for Death, thinking that they can kill him. An old man tells them that they will find Death under a tree. Instead, they find eight bushels of gold, which they plot to sneak into town under cover of darkness. The youngest goes into town to fetch food and drink, but brings back poison, hoping to have the gold all to himself. His companions kill him to enrich their own shares, then drink the poison and die under the tree. His tale complete, the Pardoner offers to sell the pilgrims pardons, and singles out the Host come to kiss his relics. The Host infuriates the Pardoner by accusing him of fraud, but the Knight persuades the two to kiss and bury their differences.

D. The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue

After seventeen noble "falls" narrated by the Monk, the Knight interrupts, and the Host calls upon the Nun's Priest to deliver something more lively. The Nun's Priest tells of Chanticleer the Rooster, who is carried off by a flattering fox who tricks him into closing his eyes and displaying his crowing abilities. Chanticleer turns the tables on the fox by persuading him to open his mouth and brag to the barnyard about his feet, upon which Chanticleer falls out of the fox's mouth and escapes. The Host

praises the Nun's Priest's Tale, adding that if the Nun's Priest were not in holy orders, he would be as sexually potent as Chanticleer.

• · EXPLANATION

A. General prologue

(1-18)

People want to go on religious pilgrimages to spiritual places in the springtime, when the April rains have soaked deep into the dry ground to water the flowers' roots; and when Zephyrus, the god of the west wind, has helped new flowers to grow everywhere; and when you can see the constellation Aries in the sky; and when the birds sing all the time. Some people go to other countries, but many people in England choose to go to the city of Canterbury in southeastern England to visit the remains of Thomas Becket, the Christian martyr who had the power of healing people.

(19-34)

One spring, when I was making my own humble pilgrimage to Canterbury, I stayed at the Tabard Inn in the city of Southwark. While I was there, a group of twenty-nine people who were also making the same pilgrimage arrived at the hotel. None of them had really known each other before, but they had met along the way. It was a pretty diverse group of people from different walks of life. The hotel was spacious and had plenty of room for all of us. I started talking with these people and pretty soon fit right into their group. We made plans to get up early and continue on the journey to Canterbury together.

(35-42)

But before I begin my story, I should probably tell you all about the twenty-nine people in this group—who they were, what they did for a living, and what they were all wearing. I'll start by telling you about the knight.

(43-50)

There was an honorable KNIGHT, who had devoted his life to chivalry, truth, and justice. He had fought for his king in many wars throughout Europe and the Middle East and had won many awards for his bravery.

(51-78)

This knight had been there and done it all. He had helped conquer the city of Alexandria in Egypt in 1365 and had dined with royalty in Prussia on many occasions. He'd fought in Lithuania and Russia more times than any other Christian knight. He'd been at the siege of Algeciras in Grenada, Spain, and had conquered enemies in North Africa and Eastern Europe.

He'd been all over the Mediterranean Sea. He'd been in fifteen battles—three of them against the heathens of Algeria—and he'd never lost once. This knight had even fought with the pagan king of Istanbul in Turkey against another non-Christian. Despite his huge success and his noble lineage, he was practical, self-disciplined, and humble. Never had he said anything bad about another person. He truly was the most perfect knight in every way possible. Now, to tell you about his clothes. He rode fine quality horses, but he didn't wear flashy clothes. He wore a simple cotton shirt that had stains all over it from the chain mail he'd worn in the war he'd won just before starting out on the pilgrimage to Canterbury.

(79-100)

The knight's son was also with us, a young SQUIRE boy who was his father's assistant. He was a gentle, happy boy who was well on his way to becoming a knight himself. He was about twenty years old, of average height, and had very curly hair. He was also very strong and physically fit. He'd served in the army in some wars in Holland and France and had won honors there too, which he hoped would impress the girl he loved. In fact, he was so madly in love with this girl that he couldn't even sleep at night. He wore a very colorful long shirt that had wide sleeves, and it looked like a field full of red and white flowers. You could tell he was young and carefree because he sang and played the flute all day. He'd write poetry and songs, draw, dance, and joust. All in all, he was a nice young man—humble, polite, and always willing to help out his dad.

(101-117)

A Yeoman, or servant, accompanied the knight and his son, and since he was the only servant with them, he got to ride one of his master's horses. This servant wore a green hooded jacket and carried a bow and a bundle of arrows made with bright peacock feathers. The quality of the peacock feathers alone told you that he was a pretty meticulous guy who always paid attention to the little details. He was also an excellent woodworker. He had tan skin, short hair, and wore a wrist guard and a sharp, shiny dagger. He also wore a silver Saint Christopher's medal around his neck and a hunting horn with a green strap over his shoulder. He also carried a sword and a shield. I guess he was a forester who spent a lot of time in the woods.

(118-164)

There was also a Prioress, a nun named Madame Englantine, who ran a convent. She had a sweet and modest smile and was very friendly and easy to get along with. She sang hymns kind of through her nose, which actually sounded pretty good. She spoke French fluently—though still with an English accent. She prided herself on her proper manners and etiquette. For example, she always served herself small portions and took small bites

of food so that none would fall out of her mouth or get her fingers too messy. And before taking a drink, she would dab her lip with a napkin so that food didn't get all over her cup. She went to great lengths to appear well mannered and worthy of being a prioress. She was one of those people who felt so strongly for others that she would burst into tears if she saw a mouse caught in a trap. In fact, the only time she'd swear would be to say "By Saint Loy!" She had a few small dogs with her and would feed them only the finest food—roasted meat, milk, fine bread. She'd cry if one of those dogs died or was abused by someone else. She really did wear her heart on her sleeve. She had a fine nose, bright eyes, a small red mouth, and a broad forehead. In fact, her forehead was almost as wide as the span of my hand, since she was a good-sized woman. She wore a pretty cloak and a well-dressed pressed cloth around her neck. Around her arm she wore a rosary made of coral and green beads, and on this string of beads hung a golden brooch with the letter A and the inscription 'Amour vincitonmnia'—love conquers all. She was accompanied by three priests and another nun, who was her assistant.

(165-207)

There was also a Monk, a splendid chap, who inspected his monastery's lands. He was a man's man who loved to hunt and who might one day become the head of his monastery. He kept many elegant horses, and when he rode them you could hear their bridle bells jingle as clearly as the bells of his monastery. He liked all things modern and new and didn't care for old things, especially St. Benedict's rule that monks should live simply and devote themselves to prayer and work. He didn't give a damn for the notion that says monks can't be hunters or anything but churchmen. I myself agreed with him. Why should he drive himself crazy reading books and working inside all the time? How is that going to accomplish anything useful? To hell with St. Augustine's stupid rules. Instead, the monk was a horseman, and he kept fast greyhounds. He loved to go hunting, and his favorite catch was a fine fat swan. He spared no expense pursuing this hobby. It was therefore no surprise to see that the finest fur lined the cuffs of his sleeves or that he used a fancy golden pin to fasten his hood. In fact, it appeared to be a love knot, a symbol of enduring love. He had a shiny bald head and his face seemed to glisten. His eyes rolled about in his head and seemed to burn like fire. His brown horse was well groomed, his boots were well-worn, and his skin looked healthy, not pale like a ghost's. Indeed, he was a fine-looking churchman.

(270-269)

There was also a Friar named Hubert, who lived happily and excessively. He was a beggar, but a sweet talking one. Of all the friars in the world, he was the most playful. He was the best beggar in town and was

so smooth that he could even get the poorest little old ladies to give him money. As a result, he made more money than he actually needed, which meant that he could play like a puppy all day long. He was good at resolving legal disputes too, and did so wearing thick, bell-shaped robes that were so splendid he looked like the pope instead of a poor friar. He even pretended to have a lisp to make himself sound more dignified. He had married off many young ladies—much to his own dismay. Oh, he was one of the Church's finest all right! All the guys in town—and the women too—thought he was just great because, as he himself put it, there was no one who could hear confessions better than he could. All you had to do was slip him some change and he'd swear up and down that you were the most penitent person that ever lived, no matter what you'd done or how sorry you really were. And since bribes are easier than actual remorse, this guy had a lot of nice stuff, including a fair amount of jewelry in his robes that he'd use to win the ladies. He could also play the fiddle and sing the sweetest songs with a twinkle in his eye. He knew all the bars in town and every bartender and barmaid too. He knew them much better, in fact, than he knew any of the lepers or beggar women or other poor people whom he was supposed to be helping. It wouldn't have been fitting for him, the powerful man that he was, to be seen with such people. Besides, there's no money to be made hanging out with the likes of them. Instead, he'd spend all his time with the wealthy, flattering them so that they would give him money. Nope, no one was more virtuous!

(270-284)

There was also a Merchant who had a forked beard and wore clothes that looked like a jester. This businessman wore a beaver hat from Holland and had expensive-looking boots. He spoke very seriously, making sure that everyone knew how wealthy and successful he was. He was particularly obsessed with making sure that the navy-maintained order in the North Sea between England and Holland. He played the markets well and sold a lot of Dutch money in currency exchanges. This guy was pretty smart all right: He carried himself so well that no one suspected he was really heavily in debt. Whatever. He was actually a good guy, and it's too bad I never learned his name.

(285-308)

There was a Clerk from Oxford who studied philosophy. His horse was a lean as a rake, and so was he for that matter. He looked hollow and serious. He wore a threadbare cloak because he didn't make any money. He didn't have a job because he didn't want one. He'd rather own twenty philosophy books that have nice clothes or nice things. He used all the money his friends gave him to buy books, and he prayed for the souls of his friends for helping him to pursue his passion. Not surprisingly, he spent

most of his time reading. He was polite, but he spoke only when it was necessary and important to do so. His speeches were short and quick but very insightful and often about morality. He was both eager to learn and eager to teach.

(309-330)

There was a Sergeant of Law, too, who was both wise and slightly suspicious of everything. He spent a lot of his time consulting with his clients outside St. Paul's Cathedral in London. He was very wise and well respected and chose his words carefully when he spoke. He had served as the judge in a criminal court before, and his vast knowledge and wisdom had made him famous. He'd earned a lot of money as a judge and had become a great and powerful landowner. He had memorized all the laws, court cases, and decisions in England over the last 300 years and could therefore write the most perfect legal document. He was an incredibly busy person but always made himself look busier than he really was. He traveled in a simple multicolored coat that was tied together with a silk belt and some small pins. And that's all I really have to say about his clothing.

(331-360)

The judge traveled with a Franklin. He had a fleshy red face and a snow-white beard. He loved to eat a piece of bread soaked in wine for breakfast every morning. He was an epicurean and believed that the pleasures of the world bring true happiness. He owned a large house and frequently entertained guests who came from miles around. He always had the best bread and beer, and there was so much meat and fish that it must have rained wine and hailed food at his house. He also liked to mix up his diet according to the seasons. His chicken coops were actually filled with partridges and his stews filled with fish. I pity the chef who served him bland food! His dining room table was always loaded with food no matter what time of day it was. He wore a dagger and a white purse. He was a powerful member of Parliament and a former sheriff. Nowhere was there a worthier landowner.

(361-378)

There was also a Haberdasher—a hatmaker—a Carpenter, a Weaver, a clothing Dyer, and a Tapestry Maker. These men all belonged to the same workingmen union, called a guild. Because they belonged to the same guild, they all wore the same clothing too, which seemed to have been made just recently. They wore expensive accessories, including purses, belts, and even fancy knives with handles made of pure silver. Each of them seemed like he could have been a powerful leader of their guild or even a town council. They were certainly all wise enough and wealthy enough to do so. Their

wives would no doubt have pushed them to take such positions of power because they too would benefit from being married to men of such prestige.

(379-387)

The guilds men brought a Cook with them to make them tasty dishes on their journey—spicy chickens and tarts and whatnot. The cook certainly knew a good beer when he saw one and could roast, broil, fry, and stew with the best of them. His chicken stew was particularly good. Too bad he had a nasty sore on his leg.

(388-410)

There was also a Shipman, who came from the West, maybe as far away as the city of Dartmouth. He wore a cheap shirt that came down to his knees, and he rode an old, shabby horse. He also wore a dagger tied to a strap that hung across his chest. He had just recently brought over a wine merchant from Bordeaux on his ship—the Magdalen—and had gotten tan and more than a little drunk during the voyage. He was a good guy, but didn't let his conscience bother him. When he won battles at sea he would release his captives. He was an excellent navigator too and knew how to read the stars better than any other man. He could sail in any waters and knew all the safe spots from Tunisia and Spain to Sweden. He was hardy and had weathered many storms. He was both wise and practical in everything he did.

(411-444)

There was also a medical Doctor with us, the best doctor in the whole world. This doctor knew astrology and the workings of the natural world and would only treat his patients when it was astrologically safe to do so. He knew the movement of the planets and had studied all the great theories of disease and medicine. He knew the cause of every disease and where it came from. He was really a great doctor. Once he'd figured out which disease his patient had, he immediately gave him the cure. He and the pharmacists had quite the racket going and were quick to prescribe drugs so that they'd both profit. He ate simple food that was nutritious and easy to digest—nothing more—and he mostly read the Bible. He wore bright red and blue clothes made of the finest woven silk, but he saved the rest of his money because he really loved gold more than anything else.

(445-476)

There was a Wife from the city of Bath, England. She had a striking, noble face that had a reddish tint to it, though, sorry to say, she had a gap in her front teeth and was a little bit deaf. She wore a hat that was as wide as a shield, sharp spurs, and a pleated cloak over her legs to keep the mud off her dress. She also wore tightly laced red stockings and comfortable new shoes, and her kerchiefs were made of high-quality fabric. In fact, the ones

she wore on her head every Sunday were so nice they must have weighed ten pounds. She was so good at weaving cloth that she was even better than the famous weavers from the cities of Ypres and Ghent in Belgium. She'd lived an honorable life and had married five times, not counting her other boyfriends she'd had when she was young—though there's no need to talk about that now. She was the kind of woman who always wanted to be the first wife at church to donate to help the poor but would get angry and keep her money if any woman made a donation before she did. She rode her horse well and knew a lot about traveling because she'd been to so many foreign places. She'd been to Jerusalem three times, for example. She'd also been on religious pilgrimages to the cities of Rome and bologna in Italy, to the shrine of St. James in Spain, and to Cologne, France. She was a good conversationalist and liked to laugh and gossip with the others. She could tell lots of stories, especially romantic ones, because she was an old pro when it came to love.

(477-528)

There was also a poor Parson , the priest of a rural county church. He was a good man, a person who thought only holy thoughts and did only good deeds. He was very gentle, diligent, and always patient in the face of adversity. He wouldn't look down on any of his poor parishioners for not donating money to the church. In fact, he'd rather give them what little money he himself had, especially since he lived happily on very little. He didn't think himself better than others, but he would scold people for being too stubborn in their ways. The county where he lived was large and the houses were spread far apart, but that didn't stop him from visiting every one of his parishioners, rich or poor. With his walking stick in hand, he'd make his rounds from house to house no matter what, even if he was sick or it was raining. He truly was the embodiment of the teachings of Jesus Christ. He lived as he preached, which set the perfect example for his parishioners, his flock of sheep. He lived by the motto, "If gold rusts, what would iron do?" By which he meant, "The priest must live a holy life if he expects ordinary people to live holy lives; all hope is lost if he turns out to be corrupt." It's a shame whenever you see a filthy shepherd watching over clean sheep, which is why priests should live by example to show their sheep how to live. The parson remained loyal to his parishioners and would never think about leaving them for a more prestigious post in London or to make more money working for a church on a wealthy landowner's estate. He wasn't interested in wealth or status and wasn't obsessed with the philosophy of ethics or morality. No, he was merely a simple shepherd who sought to save the souls of his flock by living a good life himself and setting a good example. I believe he was the finest priest in the world.

(529-541)

There was also a Plowman in our group, who was actually the parson's brother. He wore a simple shirt and rode upon a horse. He was a lowly laborer who worked with his hands. His love for God was always foremost in his thoughts, when he was both happy and sad. He also thought about the needs and wants of other people and had just as much love for others as he had for himself. He had carted many loads of manure and would dig and work hard, all for the love of God and humanity if he could. He donated a good percentage of his income and the value of his other property to the Church on a regular basis. He was a good and loyal man who lived in happiness and peace.

(542-544)

There were six other people in our group too. There was a reeve, an overseer who looked after his master's property. There was also a miller, who owned a mill that turned grain into flour. There were also two court officials—a summoner, who was a bailiff in the court, and a maniple, who was in charge of buying food and provisions for the court. And finally, there was a pardoner, an official who sold formal pardons to criminals after they'd confessed their sins to God. And then, of course, there was me. And that was all of us.

(545-566)

The Miller was short, but he was still a pretty big guy—muscular, broad, and big boned. He liked to prove how strong he was by wrestling other people wherever he went, and he always won the manciple. There wasn't a door he couldn't either rip off its hinges or break down with a running headbutt. He wore a white coat with a blue hood and carried a sword and small shield at his side. He loved to talk, and he could tell the best bar stories, most of them about sex and sin. He would steal corn and then sell it for three times its worth. He had a beard that was as red as a fox and about the same size and shape as a gardening spade. He had a wide mouth; deep, gaping nostrils; and a wart on the tip of his nose that bristled with red hairs that looked like they grew out of a pig's ears. He could play the bagpipes well, and he played for us as we left town.

(567-586)

There was also a Maniple, a clerk in charge of buying food and provisions for the Inner Temple, one of the courts in London. Other manciples could really learn from this guy, who was so careful about what he purchased and what he spent that he always saved a lot of money. He worked for thirty lawyers, all of whom were very smart and educated in the law. At least a dozen of them managed the wealth and lands of some of the most powerful aristocrats in England. Their job was to help the lords save

money and help keep them out of debt. And yet the manciple was wiser with money than all of them! It's proof of God's grace that an uneducated man with natural intelligence, such as this maniple, can be smarter and more successful than some of the most educated men.

(587-622)

Then there was the Reeve, an overseer who looked after his master's lands and property in the town of Bawdeswell in Norfolk, England. He was a bad-tempered guy who got angry easily. The hair on his head was clipped very short like a priest's and nearly shaved clean around his ears. He also had a neatly trimmed beard, which was also shaved pretty close. He was tall and slender and had gangly legs that looked like sticks—you couldn't even see his calves. He'd been in charge of his master's estate since he was twenty years old. He was very meticulous about his job, and no one could fault him for being inaccurate. He always knew how much grain was in the granary and could figure out crop yields in advance based on solely on how much rain had fallen that year. He knew every one of his lord's horses, chickens, cows, sheep, and pigs. All the other peasants who worked for the landlord were terrified of the reeve because he could tell when they were lying or trying to cheat him. He'd been a carpenter when he was younger and was still pretty good at it. He had a house underneath some shade trees in the middle of a meadow. He knew more about money and property than his master, which is how he was able to save up a small fortune over the years. It also helped that he'd been quietly tricking his master all along, by lending him things he already owned, for example, and then taking the master's thank-you gifts in return. He rode a sturdy plow horse, a dappled grey named Scot, and wore a rusty sword. He wore a long blue coat that he wore draped around him, which made him look like the friar. He rode last in our group.

(623-668)

There was also a Summoner traveling with us, a man who worked as a bailiff in a religious court. He had a fire-red face just like a little angel's because he had so many pimples. He was a pretty sketchy guy who scared little kids because of his scabby black eyebrows and his scraggily beard. There wasn't a medicine or ointment in the world that could get rid of the pimples and boils on his face. He liked to eat garlic, onions, and leeks and drink wine that was as red as blood. And when he'd get good and drunk, he'd go about shouting like crazy in Latin. He really only knew a few words in Latin, only because he heard the judges say them day in and day out in the courtroom. He'd repeat them over and over like a parrot. And if anyone challenged him by asking to say something else in Latin, he'd simply repeat the same question over and over: "Question quid juris?" Which meant, "I wonder which law applies in this situation?" He was a friendly guy who'd

loan his girlfriend to you for a year for a bottle of wine, probably because he knew he could secretly find another girl on the side. He had all the ladies of the court wrapped around his little finger And if he caught another man cheating, he'd tell him not to worry about being punished by the Church because all he had to do was pay a bribe. On this subject, though, I know he was lying. Everyone should fear excommunication. He was riding around with a garland on his head to be funny, and he carried around a cake that he pretended to be his shield.

(669-714)

With the summoner rode a Pardoner from the hospital at Rouncivalle near London, a man who sold official pardons to criminals after hearing their confessions to God. He had eyes that popped out of his head like a rabbit's and a voice that sounded like the bleating of a goat. He didn't have a beard either, and I don't think he ever will have one. His face was always as smooth as if he had just shaven. His thin blond hair was as yellow as wax and hung in straight, stringy wisps from his head. Just for fun, he kept his hood packed up in his bag, thinking that without it he'd look cooler and more stylish with his hair falling over his shoulders. Instead, he wore only a cap that had a patch sewn on it, showing that he'd been to Rome to see the veil of St. Veronica with Jesus' face on it. In fact, he'd just come back from Rome, and the bag he carried on his lap was stuffed full of letters of pardon for him to sell. He and the summoner were close friends and together would belt out rounds of the song "Come here, my love." Not even a trumpet was half as loud as the summoner. I'm pretty sure the pardoner was either a eunuch or gay. Still, he was one of the most interesting pardoners in all of England. He carried a pillowcase in his bag that he claimed contained a bunch of holy objects, including Mary's veil, a piece of canvas from the sails of Saint Peter's fishing boat, a crucifix made of brass and jewels, and even a jar of pig bones. He could make more money in a day charging country bumpkins and priests to see these "relics" than those priests could earn in two months. And so, through flattery and deceit he'd make fools out of the country folk and their priests. But, to give him credit, he took churchgoing seriously and could read lessons and stories from the Bible well. And he was best at singing the offertory song because he knew he had to sing loudly and happily if he wanted people to donate their money.

(715-746)

So now I've told you as best I can everything about the people in our little group—who they were, what they looked like, what they wore, and why we were all together in the Tabard Inn in the city of Southwark, England. Next, I'm going to tell you about what we all did that night after we'd checked into the hotel, and after that i'lltell you about the rest of our

pilgrimage to Canterbury. But first, I have to ask for your forgiveness and not think me vulgar when I tell you what these people said and did. I've got to tell you these things exactly how they happened and repeat these stories word for word as best I can so that you get the facts straight without any of my interpretation. Jesus Christ told it like it is in the scriptures, and that wasn't considered to be vulgar. And Plato says (to the people who can read Greek anyway) that words must match the actions as closely as possible. I also beg your forgiveness if my storytelling changes your perception of the kinds of people these travelers were: I'm really not that clever, you see.

(747-768)

Our HOST, the owner of the Tabard Inn, welcomed all of us and served us dinner right away. The food was really good and the wine really strong, which we all were grateful for. The host seemed like he was a good enough innkeeper to have even been a butler in some great house. He was 100% man, big and with bulging eyes—bigger than any of the merchants in the markets of London, that's for sure. He spoke in a straightforward manner that conveyed his wisdom and his learning. He was also pretty jolly, and after dinner he started telling jokes and funny stories—after we'd paid the bill, of course—and said, "Gentlemen, I welcome you from the bottom of my heart. To tell you the truth, we haven't had as large a group of people all year who seem as happy as you. I wish I could think of some way to entertain you, and—oh, wait! I've thought of something and, best of all, it won't cost you a penny!

(769-783)

"You are all going to Canterbury, where the martyr, Thomas Becket will hear your prayers and bless you. God be with you and speed you on your way! Well, I figure that you'll probably tell stories and whatnot to pass the time during your journey because it'd be pretty boring otherwise. I said before that I want to entertain you, so with your permission, I ask that you listen to what I have to say. And I swear on my father's grave that if you aren't entertained as you ride off to Canterbury tomorrow, you can have my own head! Now hold up your hands, and don't say another word!"

(784-788)

I didn't take long for us to decide to do as he asked, and we told him to just tell us what to do.

(789-809)

"Gentlemen," he said, "listen carefully, and try to understand what I'm about to propose. I'll make this short and sweet. I propose that each of you tell us two stories to help pass the time on the way to Canterbury, and then tell two more stories about the olden days on the way back. And whichever one of you tells the most informative or funny story will get a free dinner

paid by the rest of us right here in my hotel when you all get back. And, to make sure you enjoy the journey, i'll pay my own way to go with you and be your guide. I'll also decide who tells the best story. And anyone who questions my judgment can pay the entire cost of the trip for everyone. Let me know if this sounds like a good idea to you, and i'll go get ready."

(810-821)

We all loved the idea and promised that we'd follow the rules of the bet and asked him to come with us to Canterbury and be the judge of the contest. We all ordered some wine and drank a toast, then immediately went to bed.

(822-841)

Our host got up the next morning at dawn and woke all of us up. We set out at a normal walking pace and rode to a stream where a lot of pilgrims on the way to Canterbury stop for a rest. Our host stopped his horse and said to us, "Gentlemen, your attention please. Remember our agreement from last night? Well, let's find out whose going to tell the first story. Remember that I'll be the judge and that anyone who disagrees with me will have to pay the cost of the entire trip for everyone from here on out. Now, let's draw straws before we go any further, and whoever gets the shortest straw will go first. Mr. Knight, my good man, I've decided that you'll draw first, so please take a straw. Come on over, madame Prioress. And now you, Mr. Clerk—come on, don't be shy! Come on, everyone, grab a straw."

(842-855)

Everyone drew a straw, and—to make a long story short—somehow the knight drew the shortest straw, whether by fate or accident. Everyone was relieved that he would be the first to go. And that was that. The good knight, for his part, didn't complain at all, but sucked it up and said, "Looks like it's me. Must be God's will! Now let's get going, and listen to my story."

(856-858)

And with that, we set out on our way to Canterbury. The knight began his story immediately and said . . .

B.1. Prologue to the Miller's Tale:

(1-19)

When the Knight finished talking, everyone agreed that he'd told a great story, one that was good enough to tell again sometime in the future. The classier people in the group particularly liked the story. Our Host laughed and swore, then said, "All right, all right, not bad! That was a great way to break the ice and begin our storytelling contest. Okay, let's see . . . Who's going to tell the next story? How about you, Mr. Monk? Can you tell

us anything as good as the Knight's story?" But the Miller, who was pale and drunk and nearly falling off his horse, interrupted without even an apology. With a booming voice like Pontius Pilate's, he drunkenly swore and blurted out, "By God's bloody bones, I got one for you that's better than the Knight's story!"

(20-23)

Our Host saw that the Miller was drunk from having had too much ale and said, "Hold on there, Robin, my brother. Let someone else who's in better shape tell the next story. Wait a little bit, and you'll get your chance."

(24-27)

"I swear to God, I won't wait," answered the Miller. "I'm going to tell my story right now, or else ditch you guys and go on by myself." "Go on then, dammit, and tell your story," our Host said. "You're a drunken fool and don't know what you're saying."

(28-35)

"Listen up, everybody," started the Miller. "I'm going to tell you a true story about a carpenter and his wife and how a young student made a fool outto the carpenter. But first you got to know that I'm pretty drunk. I can tell by the sound of my own voice. So if I make a mistake or anything, blame it on that ale we drank back in Southwark, not me."

(36-41)

The Reeve interrupted and said, "Stop your drunken babbling! It's a sin and bad form to hurt another man's reputation with such stories, especially when you drag their wives through the mud with them. Tell us a story about something else."

(42-58)

The drunken Miller shot back, "Why're you so pissed off, huh? My dear friend Oswald, we all know that unmarried men can't be the victims of adultery. I'm not saying that your wife cheats on you or anything. There are lots of respectable women out there, at least a thousand faithful ones to every adulteress. I'm married too, you know, just like you, but I wouldn't take it upon myself to suspect her of cheating. I think she's been faithful. Husbands shouldn't go around digging in God's secrets or in their wives'. You just gotta enjoy the pleasures God gives you and keep your nose out the rest."

(59-78)

Well, there really isn't a lot more to say except that this Miller wouldn't take no for an answer. He was determined to tell his raunchy story no matter what. I'm sorry that I'm including it here with the other stories in this collection, but, as I told you before, I promised to tell you exactly what

happened on our trip—for better or worse. I wouldn't be much of a storyteller myself if I left out some parts, now would I? So, I ask you well-mannered folk for your forgiveness. And for the love of God, don't blame me for what I'm about to tell you. In fact, those of you who think you might be offended by this story, just go ahead and skip to another one. There are plenty of other long and short stories about nicer things, such as nobility and morality and holiness. But if you stick with this one, well, don't say I didn't warn you. The Miller and the Reeve and some of the others were pretty trashy, as were their stories. Be well advised and don't blame me. And don't take seriously what was said in fun.

B.2. The Miller's tale

(1-12)

Once upon a time, there was a wealthy but oafish carpenter named John who owned a house in the town of Oxford. A poor young student Nicholas lived with him and was renting one of the empty rooms. This student had already finished some of his liberal arts courses but was entirely consumed by his passion for learning astrology. He knew how to calculate which course of action to take if you asked him if it were going to rain or shine, or if you asked about the future in all sorts of matters. I could go on and on, but you get the idea.

(13-34)

Now, this student went by the nickname Tricky Nicky because he was pretty clever and knew all about love and pleasure and sweet talk. He was pretty crafty and very cautious but looked as innocent as a little girl. He lived in a room by himself, which he kept neat and clean. He even used potpourri to keep it smelling fresh. He kept his astrology books, astrolabe, and counting stones—all crucial instruments for astrologers—on some shelves next to the head of his bed. A piece of red cloth covered his clothes chest, and on top of that he kept his guitar, which he often played beautifully in the evenings. He liked to play the holy song "Angelus ad Virginem" followed by a song called "The King's Tune." People loved to hear the sound of his voice because he sang so well. And that's how Nicholas spent his time, getting by and making ends meet with a little financial help from his friends.

(35-46)

Now, this carpenter had just gotten married to a girl he loved more than life itself. He kept her in the house all the time, though, because she was wild and only eighteen years old. He was much older, and he worried that if he didn't keep a close eye on her, she'd make him a cuckold . I guess he was too ignorant to have heard of the Roman philosopher Cato, who said

that people should marry someone at the same stage in life as themselves because young people and older people often want different things. But since he'd already made this mistake, there was nothing he could do but live with it.

(47-84)

Anyway, this young wife—whose name was Alison—was beautiful, with a body as small and slim as a weasel's. She wore an apron around her waist that was as white as milk. She also wore a blouse embroidered in black silk all the way around the collar. She had matching ribbons in her hair as well as a headband on the crown of her head. She wore a leather purse at her waist that had dangling tassels madé of silk and shiny metal beads. She also had a large brooch pinned to her collar, and her shoes were laced high up her legs. She had a flirtatious look in her eyes. She trimmed her eyebrows, too, which were black as coal and arched. Her skin, meanwhile, was as soft as sheep's wool, and her lips were as sweet as wine made from honey and as red as the reddest apple. She sparkled like a newly minted coin from the royal treasury. This girl was more beautiful to look at than an orchard full of spring blossoms. She was so beautiful, in fact, that you'd never be able to find someone who could even conceive of such beauty. Plus, she was happy and always smiling and playing or singing with that enchanting voice of hers. She was a rose, pure and simple, and fit for any king to sleep with—or any good man to make his wife.

(85-101)

Well now, it just so happened one day that Tricky Nicky was playing and teasing with Alison while the carpenter was away in the city of Olney on business. Those college boys can be pretty forward, you know, and in no time at all he had his hand on her crotch. He said, "I'm going to die if I can't have my way with you, my love." Then he grabbed her butt and said, "Make love to me right now, or, by God, I'm going to die!" She pulled away from him and twisted out of his grasp as she turned to him and said, "Stop it! I wouldn't even kiss you, let alone do anything else! Quit it, Nicholas, or I'llcry 'rape!' Now get your hands off me, you creep!"

(102-111)

Nicholas begged her for forgiveness and calmed her fears with sweet words, but he continued hitting on her all the same so that in no time at all, she'd fallen for him too. She swore on St. Thomas of Becket himself that she'd let him have his way with her as soon as they could safely get away with it. "My husband is so jealous that he'll kill me if he finds out," she explained to him. "This has to stay between you and me, and we have to be careful."

(112-120)

"Oh don't worry about that," Nicholas replied. "All that time I spent studying would be a waste if I couldn't fool a simple carpenter." And so they promised each other to bide their time and wait for the right opportunity to sleep with each other. And when everything was settled, he kissed her sweetly and caressed her a while between her legs before playing a fast but sweet song on his guitar.

(121-125)

Well, one day this young, good wife went to church on a holy day to pray. Her face was so radiant because she'd done herself up nicely before leaving the house.

(126-152)

Now, the parish clerk at this church was a guy named Absalom. He had curly blond hair that shone like gold, and he kept it parted down the middle of his head so that large locks fell down from his head like a fan. He had a ruddy complexion and eyes as grey as a goose. He wore red leggings with latticed shoes that went high up his leg and a light blue shirt that fit him smartly. On top of this he wore a surplice, which is a long white tunic that parish clerks often wear. God knows he was as giddy as a schoolboy. He was also pretty knowledgeable, though: He could cut hair well and give good shaves, and he was good at bloodletting too. He could also write legal contracts for property sales or other agreements. And he knew how to sing, dance all the new songs and styles that were all the rage with the students at Oxford, and play the fiddle. He also knew how to fiddle around with the ladies, if you know what I mean. In fact, there wasn't a bar or tavern in town where he wouldn't play, especially if they had cute little waitresses there. Truth be told, though, he was a little too prim and proper and squeamish, especially when it came to farting or loose speech.

(153-161)

So anyway, this priest named Absalom would go around town burning incense on holy days. Absalom especially liked to sense the women, while looking lovingly into their eyes. He particularly liked Alison, the carpenter's wife. She was so pretty and delightful that just looking at her would make his heart skip a beat. If she'd have been a mouse and he is a cat, there'd be no doubt that he would have snatched her up right away.

(162-183)

Absalom liked her so much that he wouldn't take offerings from any of the other women in town because he thought it would be like cheating on her. One night, he grabbed his guitar and went to the carpenter's house in the middle of the night. The moon shone brightly, and he was feeling very

lovesick. When he got to the house, he stood under a shuttered window and sang in a high-pitched voice as he strummed his guitar, "Now, dear lady, please take pity on me if you will." The carpenter woke up to the sound of the music, and he turned to Alison and said, "What is that? Alison, do you hear singing? Is that Absalom singing outside our house?" "Yes, God knows, John, I hear it very well," she snapped.

(184-196)

This went on for a long time, however, but Absalom had no luck. Pretty soon he became depressed. He tried everything he could think of: dressing up for her and combing his hair neatly, swearing to her that he'd do anything for her, singing like a nightingale, having his friends say nice things about him to her, sending her wine and treats and fresh pies. He even tried to buy her love. Some women like money, they say, some like kindness, and others like soft touches, but none of those seemed to work for Absalom.

(197-210)

One time, to impress Alison with his acting abilities, Absalom even stood on a makeshift stage and put on a little play in which he pretended to be King Herod from the Bible. But did it do him any good? No. Alison loved Tricky Nicky and thought that Absalom should take a hike. She gave him nothing but dirty looks in return and made a buffoon out of him so that he was the laughing stock of the town. You know, it really is true what they say: People want what they can't have and ignore what's right in front of them. No matter how hard Absalom tried, Alison showered all her affection on Nicholas.

(211-232)

Looks like you've got some competition there, Nicky! Well, one day while the carpenter was away in Olney again, Alison and Nicholas decided that they should play a little trick on her simpleton of a husband. And, if all went as planned, the two of them would even be able to sleep together at night, which was what both of them wanted to do very much. So, without any more fuss, Nicholas moved about a day or two's worth of food into his bedroom. He then told Alison to tell her husband that she hadn't seen Nicholas all day and that she guessed he was sick in bed in his room. Not even the maid's bustling around the house had woken him up. She was to say that his door had remained shut.

(233-236)

Nicholas did his part by staying shut up in his room all weekend. He ate there, slept there, and hung out there all-day Saturday and Sunday.

(237-244)

The foolish carpenter was pretty surprised that Nicholas's door stayed closed all weekend, and he wondered what could have made him so sick. "By St. Thomas," he said, "I'm pretty worried about Nicholas. God, I hope he isn't dead in there! This world is full of uncertainty and doubt. Why, just today I passed a funeral procession for a guy I saw walking about town just last Monday."

(245-247)

He called his servant, Robin, and said to him, "Go upstairs to Nicholas's room and bang on his door with a rock until he opens it. Then come back down and tell me what's going on."

(248-252)

Robin did as he'd been told and knocked on Nicholas's door like crazy. "Master Nicholas? Master Nicholas! Are you okay in there? Are you asleep? You haven't been out all day!"

(253-261)

Try as he might, though, he got no answer. He looked around and spotted a small hole in the bottom of the door that the cat used for creeping through. He knelt down and peered through it to see if he could spot Nicholas inside. And there he saw him, just sitting there, staring up at the ceiling with his mouth wide open as if he'd spotted a new moon. The servant ran back downstairs and told the carpenter exactly what he'd seen.

(262-278)

The carpenter began praying and said, "Help us, St. Frideswide! Look what's happened all of a sudden! Nicholas has gone insane from all that astrology he does. I knew this would happen, I just knew it! People shouldn't mess around with divine power. Yes sire, blessed be the ignorant who stick to what they already know. Nicholas isn't the first astrologer to suffer the consequences. Why, once I heard about another astrologer who fell into a ditch while walking through the fields with his eyes fixed on the sky. All that knowledge, but he sure didn't see that coming! All the same, God knows I pity Nicholas. By God, I'll give him a good scolding for wasting all his time studying.

(279-296)

"Go grab me a crowbar, Robin, and i'll pray the door while you shove it open. That'll wake him up, I bet." And with that he worked on prying the door while Robin, who was a pretty strong guy, worked the knob with all his might until the door finally broke down. Nicholas kept sitting there through it all with his mouth agape as if he were oblivious. The carpenter thought Nicholas had gone insane, so he grabbed him by the shoulders and

shook him hard, saying, "Hey! Nicholas! Look at me! Wake up and think of Christ's Passion." He then strode around the room muttering prayers to ward off elves and other spirits. He said things like:

(297-309)

"St. Benedict and Jesus Christ,

Save us from the poltergeist,

Let God above keep us from harm,

St. Peter's sister, hear this charm!"

At last Nicholas heaved a deep sigh and screamed, "It's the end of the world!" Startled, the carpenter jumped back, and said, "Huh? What baloney! Keep your mind on God, boy, as we are working men do." Nicholas replied, "Get me something to drink. Then I want to talk with you in private about something that concerns just the two of us. This isn't for anyone else to hear—just you and me."

(310-314)

The carpenter went downstairs, then returned with a quart of ale for Nicholas and himself to share. When they'd finished drinking, Tricky Nicky latched the door shut and sat down beside the carpenter.

(315-326)

"John, my host and my friend," he began. "You have to promise not to tell another living soul what I'm about to tell you because I'm going to let you in on one of God's little secrets. Tell this to anyone, and you'll go crazy and suffer God's wrath for betraying Him." "No," said the foolish carpenter, "I'm no blabbermouth. I swear by Christ not to tell, no matter what anyone says or does to me. My lips are sealed."

(327-335)

"Now John," said Nicholas. "I'm not lying to you when I say that I've learned through observation of the stars that there's going to be a torrential rainstorm on Monday night, which is going to be twice as bad as Noah's flood in the Bible. It's going to rain so hard that the whole world will be underwater in less than an hour. Everyone on Earth is going to die.

(336-339)

The carpenter was shocked. "No! My wife!" He exclaimed. "Is she going to drown? No, no, not my Alison! Isn't there anything we can do?"

(340-350)

"Yes, in fact there is," answered Tricky Nicky. "You can get out of this alive if you follow some simple advice from those who are wise in these matters. No matter how strange it may sound, do as I say. As the wise King Solomon once said, 'Always seek advice, and you won't regret it.' I tell you

that I know how to save you, your wife, and myself from drowning even though we don't have a ship. Haven't you heard the story about how Noah survived the flood because God warned him in advance?

(351-376)

"Yeah, of course," replied the carpenter. "In olden days."

"And haven't you heard how nervous Noah was before he'd gotten everyone on board the ark? His wife gave him so much trouble before getting on the ship that I bet he'd have given up all his animals not to deal with her if he could. The point is, we've got to hurry if we're going to make all the necessary arrangements to survive. We don't have much time.

"Here's what you need to do: Go out and find three large troughs or bathtubs for the three of us to use as boats to float in. Make sure you put enough food in each tub to last a day. We won't need any more that that because the flood will subside by nine o'clock the next morning. Now, you can't tell Robin, your servant, or Jill, your maid, any of this. Don't ask me why because I can't tell you all of God's secrets. Just know that God has given you a special opportunity—just as He gave Noah in the Bible—and I'll be able to save your wife too. We've just got to hurry because we don't have a lot of time.

(377-402)

"Now, when you've gotten these three tubs, you should take some rope and hang them from the rafters of the ceiling where no one will be able to spot them. Do this and then put some food in them and an axe so that we can cut ourselves free from the house and float away like swans. Do this and the next day we'll be able to say things such as, "How's it going, Alison? How're you doing, John? Don't worry, the flood will be over soon!" And you'll be able to reply, "Not bad! Look, it's morning and the flood is over!" And then we'll be lords of the world all our lives, just like Noah and his wife.

"Oh, but there's one other thing I forgot to mention: When we're in the boats and waiting for the flood, we can't talk to each other or make a sound, no matter what happens. We should be praying silently to ourselves because that's how God wants it.

(403-451)

"Oh, and you can't be too near your wife while you're in the tub hanging from the ceiling either. There's to be no hanky-panky between you two. Don't even look at her, in fact. Okay, I think that's everything. Now go, go get everything ready, and tomorrow night, when everyone else is sleeping, we'll get into our bathtubs and wait out the rains and the flood. There really isn't any time for useless talking. You know what they say, 'Send the

wise and say nothing.' Well, you're certainly pretty smart, John, so I don't need to say anything else. Our lives are in your hands."

The stupid carpenter went off to get things done, muttering, "Oh no," and, "Oh my God," as he went. He told his wife what Nicholas had told him. She, of course, was in on Tricky Nicky's game, but she pretended to be scared. She said, "No! Go on, go or else we'll all die! I'm your faithful wife, so go, my husband, and save us."

This carpenter began shaking out of fear of the flood he thought was coming to kill him and his beloved wife. He cried and moaned and sighed and looked forlorn. Men can die of imaginary curses. He went out and bought three large tubs and secretly brought them to his home. Then he made three ladders himself so that they could climb into the tubs when they were hanging from the ceiling. He also put some bread and cheese and beer in each tub—enough to feed each of them for a day. Then he sent his servant and maid to London so that he could hang the tubs without them knowing. And finally, on Monday night he blew out the candles, and they all climbed up into their tubs and remained quiet for a long time.

(452-484)

"In God's name, quiet, quiet!" Said Nicholas. "Sh!" Said the carpenter and his wife. The carpenter said his devotions and sat quietly praying, while straining his ears to hear the rain he expected would come.

The carpenter was concentrating so hard on his prayers that by curfew time at dusk he'd fallen fast asleep. He moaned in his sleep from all his worries. As soon as he began snoring, Nicholas and Alison climbed out of their tubs, down the ladders, and into the carpenter's bed below. There they made love all night long until just before dawn when the monks began chanting and the church bells began ringing.

The lovesick parish clerk Absalom, meanwhile, spent Monday in Osney for a night on the town with some friends. At one point he casually tried to ask one of his friends about John the carpenter. His friend pulled him aside outside the church and said, "You know, I'm not sure. I haven't seen him since Saturday. I guess he went out of town to buy wood from the woodcutter. You know, the one our abbot recommended to him. He usually stays there for a couple of days before coming back. He's either there or he's at home. I really don't know."

(485-521)

Absalom perked up when he heard that the carpenter was probably out of town. "Tonight's my chance to make my move on Alison," he thought to himself, "Since the carpenter doesn't seem to be around. In fact, tonight I'm going to knock quietly on Alison's bedroom window and tell her how much I love her. I'll be sure to get a kiss out of her at the very least, if not more! My

mouth has been just itching to kiss her all day long. And last night I dreamt that I was at a feast, a good sign to be sure. So, I'll catch a few hours' sleep, then stay up late and play all night, and visit her just before sunrise."

When the roosters began crowing just before dawn, Absalom woke up and carefully got ready. First, he chewed some licorice to make his breath smell sweet. Then he combed his hair and got dressed. Finally, he put a sprig of mint under his tongue so that his kisses would taste nice. When he finished he made his way over to the carpenter's house. He went up to Alison's bedroom window, which was so low it only came up to his chest. He cleared his throat, then rapped on the window, and said, "Hello? Sweet Alison? Honeycomb? My beautiful bird, my sweet cinnamon? Wake up, my darling, and speak to me. You don't know how much I want you, how much I need you. I break out in a cold sweat just thinking about you. I don't eat, and I melt when I see you. I'm like a lamb that craves its mother's milk. I'm so lovesick for you that I'm like a lost turtledove without its mate."

(522-549)

"Get away from the window, you jack fool!" Alison called from inside the house. "So, help me God, Absalom, I won't be coming to kiss you if I have to go over to that window. I don't love you. I love someone else much more. Now go away, damnit, and let me sleep or else I'llstart throwing rocks at you!"

"No, no," Absalom replied. "Woe the day I ever fell in love with you! Well, since I have no chance with you, just give me a little kiss then—out of respect for Jesus and for me."

"Will you go away if I give you a kiss?" She asked.

"Yes, of course, my darling," answered Absalom.

"Get ready then," she called out to him. "I'm coming." Then she turned to Nicholas lying in bed and whispered, "Be quiet and get a load of this!"

Absalom knelt down beneath the window ledge and said to himself, "Wow, I am good! I'm sure I'm going to get much more than a kiss tonight! Whatever you give, I'll take, my love!"

Alison quickly opened the window and said, "Come on now, hurry up. Let's get this over with before the neighbors see us."

Absalom wiped his lips dry to prepare for the kiss. It was so pitch black outside that you couldn't see a thing, which meant that Absalom couldn't see that Alison had stuck her naked butt out of the window instead of her head. Absalom leaned in and kissed her deeply in the middle of her ass.

(550-579)

Absalom sensed that something wasn't quite right, and he pulled back in surprise. He'd felt some long, rough hairs when he'd kissed her even

though he knew that she didn't have a beard. He quickly realized what had happened, and said, "Yuck! Yuck! What have I done?"

"Tee hee!" Snickered Alison as she slammed the window shut and Absalom stumbled backward.

Nicholas cracked up, "A beard! A beard! God, this is hilarious!"

Absalom heard Nicholas laughing inside, and he bit his lip in rage. "I'll get them back!" He swore to himself.

Well, you've never seen anyone rub his lips harder than Absalom. He used dirt, sand, straw, bark, and his arm sleeves to wipe his mouth as he kept saying, "Yuck!" Over and over again. He said, "I'd trade my soul to Satan himself if he would punish them for me. Why didn't I turn my head at the last moment?" All his burning passion for Alison had disappeared the moment he'd kissed her ass, and he was completely cured of his love sickness and now sick of women. He cried like a baby and swore he'd never love another girl again. He ran across the street to a blacksmith's shop, which was owned by a guy named Mr. Gervase, who happened to be working on some metal farming equipment. Absalom knocked on the shop door quietly and said, "Mr. Gervase? Please open up."

(580-603)

"Who's there?" Called out Gervase. "It's me, Absalom," he replied. "Absalom! What the devil are you doing up so early?" Asked the blacksmith. "What's the matter? You're after a taste of some girl, now aren't you? Yeah, you know what I mean!"

Absalom didn't say anything but let the joke slide. Mr. Gervase was more right than he could've possibly known. Instead, he said, "My friend, would you lend me that red-hot iron poker in the fireplace over there? There's something I need to use it for, but I'll bring it back to you right away."

"Go right ahead," Mr. Gervase answered. "I'd give you a bag full of money if you needed it, Absalom. I trust you. What in the world do you need a hot poker for, though?"

"I'd rather not go into it right now," Absalom said. "I'll tell you all about it tomorrow." And with that he took the iron poker by its cool handle, left the blacksmith's shop, and walked back across the street to the carpenter's house. He cleared his throat, then knocked on the bedroom window, just as he'd done earlier.

(604-629)

"Who's there knocking on the window?" Alison called. "It's not a thief is it?"

"No, my darling, it's me, Absalom, sweet love. I've brought you a gold ring that my mother once gave me," he said. "It's very beautiful and even engraved. I'll give it to you if you'll give me another kiss!"

Nicholas, who'd gotten up to pee, heard Absalom outside and thought he'd make the night even funnier by making the priest kiss his ass too. He opened the window quickly and stuck out his butt as far as it would go, just at the moment Absalom said, "Say something, my sweet bird, so I know where you are."

Nicholas answered by ripping off an enormous fart as powerful as thunder that nearly blinded Absalom. He was ready with the hot poker, though, and rammed it right at Tricky Nicky's butt.

The poker burned Nicholas's butt so badly that the skin started peeling off. Nicholas thought he'd die from the pain, and he screamed like a madman, "Help! Water! Help! Water! For God's sake, water!"

(630-653)

Nicholas's screaming and cries for water woke up the carpenter, whose first thought was, "It's coming! Noah's flood is here!" He bolted upright in his bathtub, grabbed the axe, and cut the rope holding the tub up in the rafters. The tub crashed to the floor in less than a second, which knocked the carpenter out cold.

Alison and Nicholas jumped at the noise of the crash, and they dashed out into the street crying for help. The neighbors ran to the scene where they found the tub and the unconscious carpenter, who'd broken his arm in the fall. When he finally came to, he tried to explain to the neighbors what had happened, but Alison and Nicholas told everyone that John was crazy. They said that he'd imagined it all, and had tried to get them to help him hang three tubs to prepare for "Noel's flood," as he ignorantly called it. It was too bad for the carpenter, but he really couldn't blame anyone but himself for his own foolishness.

(654-668)

The neighbors laughed hysterically when they heard the carpenter's story. They poked their heads inside the house to look up at the other two tubs hanging from the ceiling and chuckled. Try as he might, though, the carpenter couldn't get anyone to believe what had really happened. From then on he was known throughout town as the crazy carpenter, and everyone swore at him, made fun of him, and spread rumors about him.

And that is how the carpenter's wife was screwed, for all the carpenter's watchfulness and paranoia; how Absalom kissed her nether eye; and how Nicholas got his ass burned. Thank you, and God bless every one of us!

C.1. Prologue Of The Pardoner's Tale.

(1-43)

"Ladies and gentlemen," the Pardoner began, "whenever I give a sermon in church, I try really hard to speak out in a loud voice that resonates like a bell. I know all my sermons by heart and they're all centered on the same theme: 'Radix malorumestcupiditas'—the love of money is the root of all evil.

"The first thing I do when I preach is I tell people where I come from, and then I show all my letters authorizing me to preach and issue church pardons. These are letters that the pope himself has signed. I always start by showing the pope's official seal that's on my passport in order to protect myself from priests and government official who want to arrest me or stop me from doing Christ's holy work. After that, I tell my stories. I show all my letters signed by the pope, cardinals, and various bishops, and I sprinkle a few Latin sayings in here and there to spice up my sermons and make them sound holy. Then I pull out all my boxes crammed full of old cloth and bones, which everyone assumes to be holy relics. I've also got a piece of bone from the shoulder of a Jew's sheep that I keep in a brass box. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' I say, 'listen carefully. Put this bone in a well so that when your cow or calf or sheep or ox gets worms or is bitten by a snake, you can wash its tongue with the special well water and heal it. Furthermore, any sheep that has the pox or scabies that drinks from this well will be cured. And if an honest farmer drinks some of this well water before dawn, before breakfast, just as this Jew taught our ancestors, then all his farm animals will multiply. This water will also get rid of jealousy. If you make soup from it, you'll never doubt your wife's faithfulness again, even if you have reason to suspect she's cheating on you or if she's had an affair with two or three priests.

(44-94)

"'I also have this mitten that will increase your grain harvest, whether it's wheat or oats, if you wear it—and offer a small fee, of course.

"'Ladies and gentlemen, I warn you though, that my relics won't help any man who's committed a horrible sin or any woman, whether she's young or old, who's cheated on her husband. For those of you who remain seated and decline to come up and make an offering, well, we'll all know that you must fall into this category. But, all of you who've only committed little sins here and there should come up and see me. Make an offering in God's name, and i'll use my power that the pope has given me to pardon you so that you'll be absolved of your sins.'

"With this trick, I've earned myself a salary of about a hundred gold coins a year. I stand up there in front of the people like I'm a priest or

something and preach and tell a hundred lies like the kind I just mentioned. All the stupid people sit in front of me and soak up every word I say. I make a good show of it, straining my neck to look at all the people to the right and left of me, just like a bird in a barn. I gesticulate with my hands and speak quickly, which makes my speeches dramatic and fun to watch. I always preach about greed and the other deadly sins, which makes them happy to give away their money—namely, to me. I'm only in this for the money you know, not for cleansing immortal souls. Why, I don't give a damn if their souls are as rotten as garbage when they die! Of course, I'm not the first person who's preached with an ulterior motive either. Some priests give sermons to make people feel good about themselves so that they'll get promoted to bishop. Others preach for love of fame or to fan the fires of hate. I only preach to make money and sometimes to get back at people who've said nasty things about me or my fellow pardoners. I can rail against a person in the audience to ruin his reputation, for example, and, even if I don't mention his name, everyone will know whom I'm talking about. That's how I get back at my enemies, by spitting out my venom under the guise of being holy and virtuous.

(95-134)

"Let me put it another way: I preach out of sheer greed. That's why I usually only give sermons about how the love of money is the root of all evil. That way I can preach about the same sin that I myself indulge in. But even if I'm guilty of the sin of greed, that doesn't mean I can't help others not to be greedy, now does it? But who am I kidding? I said I'm not preaching to save their souls. I preach only because I want to make money, and that, my friends, is that.

"Anyway, then I tell the people all the old familiar tales that they just love to hear over and over again. Stupid people like to hear those old stories, you know, because they're easy to remember. And do you think that since I help cure the people of their greed by taking all their gold and silver that means I would ever live in poverty? Hell no! I refuse to live like a simpleton, working with my hands, making baskets. Being a traveling preacher is much more lucrative. I'm not trying to be an apostle who lives in holiness. No, I want money, nice clothes, and expensive food, even if I receive it from the poorest workingman or the poorest widow who can't even feed her own starving children. No! I want wine and a woman in every town. But listen, listen. Now that i've drunk a beer or two, I'm going to tell you a story that I hope you'll like because, even though I'm a pretty awful guy, I can still tell you a moral tale, one of the ones I usually tell people only for money. So sit back, relax, and I'll tell you my story."

C.2. The Pardoner's Tale.

(1-22)

Once upon a time there were three young men who lived in Belgium who liked to live on the wild side. They partied, gambled, visited brothels, and went to bars where they stuffed themselves with food and wine and danced all night and day to the music of harps and lutes and guitars. They lived gluttonous lives of sin, worshiping the ways of the devil. They cursed and swore like sailors and would tear the blessed Lord's body to pieces with their foul language and by using His name in vain, (as if the Jews hadn't already done enough damage when they'd had him killed). They encouraged each other to sin and would sit around and laugh at all the horrible things they did. And then the thin and shapely dancing girls and the young girls selling fruit and the singers with their harps and the whores and women selling sweets would come over to them to seduce them and encourage them to sin—which is so easy for gluttons to do anyway. Just look in the Bible for all those instances when wine and drunkenness led to sin.

(23-66)

Recall, for example, how Lot unknowingly had sex with his two daughters. He was in a drunken stupor and didn't know what he was doing.

Or remember the story of Herod, the man who, when he was drunk and full from feasting, ordered John the Baptist's execution, even though John hadn't done anything wrong.

Seneca also talks about drunkenness. He says that drunkenness and insanity are one and the same with the exception that insanity is a defect and lasts longer than drunkenness. Oh, gluttony is such an awful sin! It brought the downfall of mankind and doomed us until Christ saved us by sacrificing himself. Gluttony has caused so much trouble and corrupted the world so much.

You see, God banished Adam and Eve from Paradise to live lives of misery and toil because they were gluttons. Everything was fine in the Garden of Eden as long as Adam didn't eat anything, but they got kicked out when he ate the forbidden fruit on the tree. Oh gluttony, we have every right to hate you! If people only knew how much sickness and disease overeating causes, they'd eat more moderately, that's for sure. God! The wealthy glutton's taste for fine food and wine makes the working folk everywhere—in the East and West and North and South, on land and at sea—work to death. St. Paul knew this, which is why he wrote, " Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them " Ugh, it's awful, I swear, to talk about gluttony, and it's far worse to actually be a glutton and turn your mouth into a toilet from drinking so much red and white wine.

(67-110)

St. Paul, the apostle, wept when he said , "There are many men out there who will tell you that they don't care about Christ and say that their stomachs are their only gods. It makes me weep to just think about it." Stupid stomach! You are filled with corruption and dung. Both ends make awful sounds when burping or farting. It costs so much and requires so much effort to feed you! Just look at all the cooks who knead and grind and strain to make food for you to keep you satisfied! They mix spices and herbs and roots and bark to make tasty sauces for you. They even work extra hard to extract the marrow out of the animals' bones to give you something sweet to eat. Everyone who lives for these vices, though, is surely already dead for having sinned so much.

Wine only leads to lecherousness, and drunkenness leads to fighting and misery. Let me tell each of you drunkards out there that your face is disgusting and fleshy, your breath reeks, and no one wants to touch you. You're clumsy, you never know what you're saying, and you have no sense of decency because the wine has ruined your intellect and ability to speak. You can't even keep secrets when you're drunk, and you make an awful wheezing sound through your nose that sounds like you're saying, "Samson, Samson," even though, God knows, Samson in the Bible never had a drop to drink. You should stay away from both white and red wine, particularly from those cheap wines from Lee in Spain that are sold on Fish street and Cheap side. Drink that stuff and in no time, you'll be saying "Samson, Samson" for sure.

(11-140)

Let me put it this way: All the greatest deeds and triumphs you read about in the Old Testament that were done in the name of God, the omnipotent, were all done through prayer and without liquor. Just look in the Bible and you'll see what I'm talking about.

Or look at how the great warrior Atilla the Hun died in his sleep from a nosebleed he got from drunkenness. He died with nothing but shame and dishonor. Too bad. Leaders should always be sober. Or just remember the warning Lemuel—not Samuel; mind, you, but Lemuel—received about how judges who decide legal cases shouldn't drink wine. I could go on and on, but you get the idea.

Gluttony isn't the only horrible vice, though. Gambling is just as bad. Gambling rolls so many other vices into one, including lying and cheating. It goes against God and is the biggest waste of time and money. That's why being called a gambler is such a great shame. And the richer you are, the more shameful it is if you gamble. No one likes a king who is a gambler, for

example, because who knows if he'll also take such risks with the policies concerning his country and his people.

(141-166)

The Greek writer named Stilbon, who was a wise ambassador, was once sent from Sparta on a diplomatic mission to Corinth to strike an alliance between the two powers. But when he arrived, he happened to find all the Corinthian leaders participating in a great gambling tournament. That's why he turned around and immediately went straight back to Corinth, where he told the Corinthians, "I don't want to lose my good name, and I won't do you the dishonor of allying Sparta with gamblers. Send another ambassador to make the deal if you want, but I'd rather die than ally you with gamblers." That's what the wise philosopher said.

Then there's the example you can find in the writings of John Salisbury of the king of Parthia in Persia, who sent a pair of golden dice to King Demetrius, a gambler. This was a true sign that the king of Parthia looked down on Demetrius because of his bad habit. There are certainly lots of more important things a king can do all day besides gambling!

(167-198)

Oh, and then there's swearing, another evil that old books talk a lot about. Strong language is abominable, and swearing for no good reason is even worse. God on high forbade swearing altogether you know.

It says so in Matthew and Jeremiah. Jeremiah says, "Swear only to make a promise—not when you're lying—and then only in righteousness." Casual swearing for no real purpose is a sin. I mean, it's so bad that it's even one of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not use the Lord's name in vain." God thinks cursing is so bad that this commandment even comes before those against murder and other heinous crimes. God will have his revenge on anyone who swears too much, that's for sure! Saying things such as, "By God's own heart!" And "The blood of Christ!" Or "Seven's my lucky number and yours is three and five!" And "By God, if you cheat me, I'll kill you with this dagger!" Will all get you into trouble. And it all stems from gambling. So, for the love of Christ who died for our sins, don't curse, even if it's just a small swear. Okay, okay . . . Now I'll tell you my story.

(199-222)

Well one morning before the church bells had even rung for morning mass, the three rogues I was telling you about a minute ago were drinking in a bar. While they were sitting there, they saw a man ringing a bell as he led a cart with a dead body on it through the streets on the way to the graveyard. When the rogues saw this, one of them called the waiter over and said, "Go out right now and find out whose body that is."

"Mister, I don't need to go out there and ask," the boy replied. "Someone told me about a couple of hours before you came in here that it's an old friend of yours who was slain as he was sitting drunk in a chair last night. The shadowy thief that people call Death, who kills everyone in this land, drove his scythe into the man's heart and sliced it in two before silently moving on again. He has killed a thousand people during this outbreak of the plague. Sir, I should warn you, though, in case you ever meet him that you should be careful around him and always be prepared to meet him unexpectedly. That's what my mother always told me, anyway.

(223-248)

"By St. Mary," interrupted the bartender, "the kid is right. This year alone, Death has killed men, women, children, laborers, and wealthier folk alike in a large village just about a mile from here. I reckon Death probably lives there, and we'd be wise to be on guard in case we happen to meet him."

"By God's arms!" Said one of the rogues. "Is he really that deadly? Then I swear to God that i'll search all the streets and hunt him down! My friends, are you thinking what I'm thinking? Let's all grab hands and take an oath so that the three of us become brothers. We'll vow to kill this villain Death who has killed so many people. We'll find him and cut him down before nightfall!"

Together the three delinquents swore to live and die for the others just as if they'd been blood brothers from birth. Then they stood up, furious and very drunk, and set out for that village the bartender had told them about. On their way, they swore like sailors to kill Death, and they tore Christ's body apart with their foul language.

(249-276)

When they'd gone only about half a mile, though, they came upon a poor old man, just as they were about to hop over a fence. The old man greeted them politely and said, "Gentlemen, may God bless you and keep you well!"

"What the hell do you want, old man?" The most arrogant of the ruffians asked. "Why are you all wrapped up except for your face? And how have you lived to be so firkin old? Shouldn't you be dead by now?

The old man just looked him in the eyes awhile before finally saying, "Even if I walked all the way to India, I'd never find anyone who'd want to trade me their youth for my age, so I have no choice but to be as old as I am until God changes His mind.

"Unfortunately, Death doesn't want me either, which is why I'm as old and disgusting as I am. All I can do is wander around like a restless soul,

knocking my walking stick on the ground morning and night hoping Mother Earth will take me back. 'Mother Earth, let me in!' I say. 'Just look at how wretched I am. My flesh and blood and skin are all drying up. When will my tired bones be laid to rest? Mother, I wish I could trade that beautiful chest in my bedroom for a burial shroud to put myself in!' But so far, she hasn't helped me at all, which is why I'm so pale and rickety.

(277-305)

"Still, it isn't very nice of you to speak to an old man the way you did, unless he's done something really bad to you. Remember that it says 'Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head! '. In other words, respect your elders. Don't do or say things to an old man that you wouldn't want done or said to you. And may God go with you, wherever you go. As for me, I should continue on now."

"Not so fast, grams," one of the other hooligans said. "You're not going anywhere, old man. We're not going to let you get away that easily! You seem to know a lot about this bastard Death who's been killing our friends around here. I'm thinking that you're in cahoots with him, that you're his spy, and that you're trying to kill all the young people! By God and the Bible, you better tell me where Death is or you'll regret it!

"Well, gentlemen," the old man replied, "if you really want to find Death, then all you have to do is walk up this crooked path because I just left him over there in that grove of trees. See that oak tree? He's right under that one. He isn't going anywhere, and he's certainly not going to run away from you. May God who saved mankind save you!"

(306-338)

The three scoundrels ran off in that direction until they came to the oak tree. Instead of finding Death, though, they discovered about eight bushels of gold florins. They were so awestruck by the shiny gold coins that they completely forgot about hunting and killing Death. They sat down next to the bags of gold for a while, until the worst of the three finally said:

"My brothers, listen up. I've got an idea. I may goof off a lot, but I'm pretty sharp. Fortune has given us this treasure so that we can always live our lives in comfort and revelry. I'm sure we can find ways to spend all this! Who in God's name would have thought that today would be so lucky for us? I say this gold is ours because we found it. And if we could carry all this money to my house—or one of your houses—we'd never have to worry about money again. We can't move this money in broad daylight, though, because people would accuse us of stealing it and hang us for moving our own money. No, we'll have to transport it at night and do it as carefully as possible so that no one will see. Now, two of us should stay here and guard the money, while the third goes to town and gets some bread and wine for

us to eat until we can safely move the gold tonight. I think we should draw straws to see who should be the one to run to town and get the food.

(339-361)

He then put three straws in his fist and had each of the other two take one to see who'd be the runner. The youngest of the three picked the shortest straw, so he set off immediately for the town below. As soon as he was gone, one of the remaining two rogues turned to the other one and said, "You know, we swore an oath to be brothers, which is why I want to tell you something that I think will interest you. We have all this money here to divide among the three of us. But wouldn't it be great if we could figure out some way so that we'd only have to divide it between the two of us? Wouldn't you like that?"

"Yeah, that'd be great," the other one answered. "But I don't know how you're planning on doing that, considering our younger friend knows about the gold. What would we say to him? What are you thinking?"

"I have a plan that I think will work," the first rogue replied. "Can you keep a secret?"

"I swear I won't tell anyone anything," said the other guy. "I give you my word that I won't betray you."

(362-396)

"Well," the first one began, "there are two of us and only one of him, which means that we can take him. When he comes back, wait for him to sit down, and then jump up and grab him as if you wanted to horse around. Then, while the two of you are wrestling, I'll sneak up behind him and stab him with my dagger. Then you can pull out your dagger and do the same. Then we'll have all this money to ourselves and will only have to divide it two ways instead of three. That'll give each of us more money to play around and gamble with and do whatever we want." The other ruffian liked this idea, so the two of them agreed to this plan to kill their friend.

The youngest of the three, meanwhile, couldn't stop thinking about those bright new gold florins as he headed into town. "Lord!" He exclaimed to himself. "If only there were some way I could have all that money to myself. There wouldn't be any man alive who'd live as happily as me." He thought about it and thought about it until finally the devil himself, enemy of all mankind, put it in his thoughts that he should poison his two friends so that he could have all the money to himself. He headed straight for the town drugstore, where he asked the clerk if he could buy some poison to kill the rats in his house and the skunk that had been eating his chickens at night.

(397-426)

"Sure, I can sell you some strong poison," the clerk said. "This stuff is so strong that no living creature in the world will be able to survive if it eats or drinks this. It's fast-acting too, and will take effect in less time than it'd take you to walk a mile.

The young rogue bought the poison and then went to see a guy on the next street over to borrow three large empty bottles. He put poison in two of them, but he kept the third bottle clean for his own drink, which he knew he'd need later that night because he planned to move all the gold by himself. And after he'd filled the big bottles with wine, he headed back to where his two friends were waiting for him at the oak tree.

Well, there really isn't a lot more to say. The two older friends killed the youngest right after he'd returned with the food and wine, just as they'd planned. And when they'd finished, the first rogue said, "Now let's sit and relax for a bit before burying the body." As luck would have it, he grabbed and drank from one of the bottles with poison in it and gave the other poisoned bottle to his friend. And in no time at all, they were both dead.

(427-456)

These two scoundrels suffered horribly as they died. I doubt even Avicenna himself, the great Arab writer on medical herbs and poisons, had ever encountered such awful effects. Anyway, that's how these two hooligans died shortly after they'd killed their own poisoner.

You see what gluttony, lechery, and gambling gets you! Evil! Sin! Wickedness! Murder! All you arrogant, addicted villains with your swearing on Christ's body! How is it that you can treat your creator so horribly when he has saved you with his own precious blood?

Now, ladies and gentlemen, may God forgive you for your sins and keep you safe from the sin of greed. A holy pardon from me can save you—for a modest fee of a few silver coins. I also accept jewelry, silverware, and rings, mind you. I mean, this is a great opportunity here for you! This is in your own interest. I'm not trying to trick you here. Come on, ladies, trade in some of your extra clothing for a pardon. I'll write your name down in my official notebook so that you'll have no trouble going straight to heaven when you die. I will absolve you—those of you who make an offering, that is—of any past wrongdoing to make you as clean and holy as the day you were born. That's what I do, and may Jesus Christ, caretaker of our souls, receive my pardon.

(457-483)

Oh! But I forgot to add one thing. I have right here in my bag some holy relics that are as good as any other relics in England. The pope himself

gave them to me, actually. If any of you feels compelled by your faith to make an offering and see the relics, well then you can come right over here, kneel down, and humbly receive absolution from me. Or you're more than welcome to offer up your shiny new coins to receive a pardon every so often along the way so that you'll know you'll be free of sin and guilt by the time we reach Canterbury. You should all be glad that you have me, an excellent pardoner, riding with you in case you need to be forgiven. I mean, maybe you'll fall off your horse and break your neck or something and need to be pardoned before you die. Aren't you just lucky that I'm here so that your soul won't have any problem finding its way to heaven? I think that our Host here should be pardoned first because he runs a tavern, which is a veritable breeding ground for sin. Come here, sir Host, and be the first to make an offering. I'll even let you kiss all of my relics. That's right, it'll only cost you one silver coin. Take out your wallet, step up, and make an offering.

(484-506)

"Oh no," said the Host. "Christ send me to hell first! I'll never give you anything as long as I live. You'd call your own pants a relic and make me kiss them even though they're soiled with crap! By the true cross that St. Helena found, I wish I could have your balls in my hands instead of your so-called relics so that I could cut them off and have them smashed into pig turd!"

The Pardoner didn't say anything. He just stared at the Host because he was too angry to speak.

"Okay," said the Host. "No more fooling around, with you or anyone else." By this point, though, everyone was already laughing hysterically, which prompted the Knight to say, "All right, all right, that's enough. Mr. Host, I like you a lot, so please just give the Pardoner a kiss and make up. And Mr. Pardoner, calm down and go over to our Host. Let's put this behind us so that we can laugh and relax like we were doing earlier." And with that, the Pardoner and the Host kissed and put the matter behind them, and we all continued on our way to Canterbury.

D.1. The Prologue Of The Nun's Priest's Tale.

(1-36)

"Wait," said the Knight. "I can't take any more of this, sir. I'm sure what you're saying is true enough, but I think we've heard enough depressing stories to last us for a while. I certainly know it's hard for me to hear about wealthy people who live the good life suddenly losing everything they have! Now, it's nice to hear stories about poor people who hit a run of good luck and become more prosperous. That kind of story is much better to hear and tell." "Yes!" said our Host. "By Saint Paul's bell, you're absolutely

right! This Monk is going on and on about other people's bad luck and how life is a great tragedy. There's nothing we can do about it, he says—whatever will be, will be. It's a pain in the butt to hear about all this misery.

"Mr. Monk, God bless you, but I can't take any more of this! Your story is killing us. Hearing it is a waste of time because there's nothing to be gained by it. So Brother Peter—that's your name, right? —I'm begging you, please tell us a different story. God only knows that last story of yours was so boring that I would've fallen asleep and fallen right off my horse into the gutter if it weren't for the jangling of those bells on your horse's bridle. Then everything you said would've been for nothing because I wouldn't have been around to hear it! It's just like the old saying, 'If no one's listening, it isn't worth talking.'

(37-54)

"Now, I know a good story when I hear one—and that wasn't one. I know, why don't you tell us another one, maybe one about hunting? Yeah, that'd be good."

"Uh . . . no, I'm not really in the mood to tell a happy story," the Monk replied. "Why doesn't someone else take a turn?" So, our Host turned to one of the two priests traveling with the Prioress, a man named John, and said in his usual rude voice, "Hey pal, get over here. I know you aren't got much—just look at that pathetic horse you're riding! —but maybe you can pretend like you're better off and tell us a happier story." "Sure thing," Brother John answered. "I'll try and be a little happier for you." And this is what that priest, Brother John, told us:

D.2. The Nun's Priest's Tale

(1-26)

There once was a poor old widow who lived in a little cottage in a valley on the edge of a forest. She lived a simple life since her husband died, and she didn't have much. Still, she managed to support her two daughters with what she did have, which included three pigs and a sheep named Moll. Her house was pretty dirty, and she and her daughters ate peasant food of mostly milk and bread, sometimes with a bit of bacon or an egg or two on the side, because she was a dairywoman. She didn't have any use for gourmet tidbits or spicy sauces, or even red or white wine. She didn't have gout, so she could dance all she wanted, and she never really lost her temper. No, a modest diet, exercise, and a positive attitude were all the medicine she needed to stay healthy and strong.

(27-61)

This old woman had fenced-in her front yard and surrounded it with a dry ditch. In the yard she kept a rooster named Chanticleer. Chanticleer's comb was redder than the reddest coral and stuck up high into the air like a castle wall. He had a beak as black as obsidian, blue feet and toes, white claws, and feathers that burned with the color of gold. This rooster was better at crowing than any other rooster around. He had a clear, strong crow that was just as beautiful as the sound of a pipe organ playing in church at mass. He was also more dependable than any clock, even the clocks in the church abbeys. Instinct told him about the daily movements of the sun and the moon and the stars, and he'd keep in time with all of them, even if they moved only slightly.

Now, this cock had a harem of seven hens for his pleasure. These hens were both his sisters and his lovers and looked very much like him. The most beautiful of them all was the fair damsel Pertelote. Pertelote was modest, polite, and easy to get along with, and she was so charming that Chanticleer had been completely smitten with her since she was only a week old. He loved her through and through, and it was a pleasure to hear them singing "My love has gone away" together in harmony every morning when the sun came up—for back then, birds and animals could talk and sing, you know.

(62-87)

Well one morning at dawn, as Chanticleer was sitting on his perch in his hall with Pertelote and his other wives perched next to him, Chanticleer began groaning as if he were having a nightmare. Worried, Pertelote asked, "What's wrong, my dear? Why are you groaning like that? You're usually such a sound sleeper!"

"Nothing, nothing's wrong." Chanticleer answered. "I just had a horrible nightmare. It was so awful that my heart's still racing with fear. God, help me figure out what this dream means, and keep me safe from getting locked up! I dreamt that I was walking around in the yard when I saw an enormous doglike beast that wanted to catch me and kill me. This beast was a reddish-yellow color, but black on the tips of its tale and ears. It had a small nose and two glowing eyes. It's still scaring me to death just thinking about it, which is probably what caused my groaning."

(88-119)

"Ugh, go away!" Pertelote cried. "Shame on you, you coward! God knows you've lost my heart and all my love. I can't love a coward. No matter what women may say, deep down they all want husbands who are strong and brave and kind and know how to keep a secret, not someone who's stupid and foolish, nor someone who's scared of the sword! Shame on you

for telling me that something scares you. Be a man! And, God, this wasn't even real—it was a dream! Dreams are nothing but silliness caused by gas and indigestion from overeating. The fluids in your body must just be out of whack. This nightmare you had probably just means you had too much red bile in your stomach, which leads to bad dreams of fire and beasts that want to eat you, just as too much black bile in your stomach makes people dream about black bears and bulls and devils. Nightmares can come from other bodily fluids being out of whack too. I could go on, but you get the idea.

(120-149)

"Wasn't it the great Roman writer Cato who said, 'Pay no attention to your dreams?' Now, when we fly down from the rafters this morning, take a laxative, for the love of God, and purge your body of whatever it is that gave you those nightmares. I swear to God I'm only trying to help you. And since there isn't a pharmacy in this town, I'll show you the herbs that are growing in our yard that you should take to purge your system. Don't forget that you have a finicky stomach, and you wouldn't want to be caught sick when the sun rises and it's time to crow. If you are still sick when the sun comes up, I'll bet you a shilling that you've got malaria or some other kind of serious sickness. If so, you might have to take some kind of strange medicine or something to help you get rid of it. Now, buck up, husband, and do your father proud. Don't worry about your dreams. They're just polishers."

(150-180)

"Thank you for your advice, Madame," responded Chanticleer. "Cato certainly was known for his wisdom. But even though he said not to worry about dreams, there were plenty of other writers who were even older and wiser than Cato who said just the opposite. They seem to say from their own experience that dreams are signs of the happiness or tragedy that is to come. Let me tell you about some examples :

"One of the greatest authors people read once told a story about two friends who set out on a holy pilgrimage. On their journey they came to a town that was so crowded with people that they couldn't find so much as a cottage where they could both stay for the night. So, they decided to split up, and each went his own way to find somewhere to sleep. One of them found a place in an oxen barn. Fortune—who controls all our fates—smiled on the other man, who found a much better place to stay in an inn.

(181-208)

"Now, it just so happened that the second man had a dream about his companion in the middle of the night. His friend called to him in the dream and said, 'I'm going to be murdered tonight while I'm sleeping in the barn.

Hurry up and help me, dear brother, and save my life!' The second man jolted awake from the nightmare, but he quickly rolled over and fell back asleep because he thought the dream was nothing but nonsense. He had this same dream again, woke with a start, and went back to sleep again. On the third time, however, his friend appeared to him and said, 'I have been killed. Just look at the bloody wounds and gashes on my body! I was murdered for my money. Get up early tomorrow morning and go to the west gate of the town. There you'll find a cart full of dung in which my body has been secretly hidden.' And with a pale and pitiful face he told his friend all about how he was robbed and murdered. And wouldn't you know, everything in the dream turned out to be true. When the second man woke up in the morning, he set out for the oxen barn where his friend had stayed. When he got there, he began looking for his friend and calling out his name.

(209-242)

"The owner of the barn soon appeared and said, 'Sir, your friend has already left. He woke up early this morning and split.' Remembering his dreams from last night, the pilgrim was suspicious and ran to the west gate of the town. There, he found a cart of dung intended to be used as fertilizer, just as his friend had described in the dream. Outraged, he cried out at the top of his lungs for vengeance and justice. 'Police! Help! My friend was murdered last night, and his body lies in this cartload of dung. Police!' The townspeople rushed out, tipped over the cart, and found the man's body buried beneath a ton of dung.

"The police immediately arrested and tortured the man who owned the cart as well as the man who owned the oxen barn, who was stretched out on the rack. Both men eventually confessed their crime and were hanged by their necks. Oh bless the Lord, who is so just and true! He always reveals murder. Murder is unholy and abominable to God, who is so just and reasonable, that he won't allow it to remain hidden away. Even if it takes a year or two or three, I know that God will always make it be known.

(243-265)

"There is proof, Pertelote, that we should fear our dreams. I also read in the next chapter of that same book—and I'm not making this up—that a man dreamed about his own death right before he set out on a voyage to cross the sea. He and another man had some business or other in another country across the sea, but they had to wait a while at port until the winds were favorable. And finally, when the winds did change, the two men agreed to set out the next morning. That night, however, one of the men dreamed just before dawn that a man was standing over his bed, who said, 'If you sail tomorrow, you will drown.' The man woke up, told his companion

about the dream, and suggested that they wait one more day before setting sail.

(266-289)

"His companion, who was sleeping in the next bunk over, laughed at the man, and said, 'No dream is going to keep me from sailing tomorrow. I don't give a damn about your dreams because dreams are filled with nothing but nonsense. People are always dreaming about owls and apes and other crazy things, including things that never happened and will never happen. But it's no skin off my nose if you want to stay here and miss this golden opportunity to sail.' And so the next morning the unbelieving companion set out on the voyage by himself. But before he made it even halfway across the sea, somehow the ship's bottom split in two and sank in plain sight of all the other ships in the convoy, killing everyone on board. So, you see, my beautiful Pertelote, no one can be too careful when it comes to dreams because many of them are to be feared.

(290-317)

"Of course, there's the example of King Kenelm, the boy king of Mercia in old England, who dreamed of his own death just before he was murdered. His nurse explained the dream to him and told him to watch his back, but he didn't pay attention because he was only seven years old. I'd give anything for you to read that story, Lady Pertelote. And then there's the case of the old author Macrobeus who wrote about the dreams of the great Roman Scipio and argued that it's worth paying attention to dreams because they foretell the future.

"Furthermore, consider the story of Daniel in the Old Testament of the Bible, and ask yourself if the dreams in that story were mere nonsense. Read the story about Joseph, too, and ask the same question. Or look at the story of Pharaoh in Egypt and his baker and his butler to see what they thought of the power of dreams. If you study the history of faraway kingdoms and lands, you'll find that dreams can be pretty amazing things. I'm not saying that all dreams foretell the future, but some certainly can.

(318-351)

"Oh, and don't forget the story about King Croesus of ancient Lydia in Turkey. Didn't he dream that he sat in a tree, which meant that he would be hanged? Then there's Andromache, the wife of Hector, the warrior of ancient Troy. The night before he died she saw in a dream how he would be killed in battle with the Greeks. She begged him not to fight, but he wouldn't listen to her, which is why he died that day by the sword of the Greek warrior Achilles. Anyway, that's a long story, and I should really get going since the sun is about to come up. Let me just say this, though: That

dream I had last night doesn't mean I need a laxative, which I can't stand anyway. It means that something bad is going to happen to me.

"Now, let's stop talking about this and turn to happier things. God has really blessed me by giving you to me, Madame Pertelote. When I look at you—with those cute little ringlets of red around your eyes—all my fears just melt away. It really is true what they mean when they say in principle, mulierest hominis confusion, which ... uh ... um, I guess means that 'Woman is man's joy and the source of all his happiness.' Yeah, that's it. Because when I feel your soft side at night, even though I can't mount you because our perch is so small, I'm still so happy that no nightmare or dream can bother me!"

(352-377)

And with that, he flew down from the rafters to begin the day, his hens following after them. He clucked for them to come to him when he found some corn in the yard, and all his wives would come running. He rustled his feathers twenty times for Pertelote and mounted her just as many times too before noon. He looked like a fierce lion as he paced to and fro around the yard on his tiptoes, as it was beneath him to put his whole foot on the ground. He felt powerful and regal—as royal as a prince in his hall—and was no longer afraid.

The month of March—the same month when God had made the world and first made mankind—had passed, and the day was April 1. Proud Chanticleer, with his seven wives at his side, looked up at the bright sun, which was more than 21° through the sign of Taurus. His natural instinct alone told him that it was nine o'clock in the morning, and he crowed happily at the top of his lungs.

(378-446)

"The sun," he crowed, "has climbed across the sky more than 40°. Madame Pertelote, the light of my life, listen to the happy birds singing and the fresh new flowers sprouting from the ground. My heart is so happy!" But no sooner had he finished saying this than his happiness quickly vanished. God knows that happiness only lasts a moment. A poet should take note of this saying and write it in a poem sometime. Now, ladies and gentlemen, what I'm about to tell you is completely true, as true as that famous romance novel about Lancelot du Lac that women like to read so much. I swear it. Okay, back to the story.

It so happens that the night before, a sly and mischievous fox, who had been living in the nearby woods for the last three years, had entered the old woman's yard where Chanticleer and his wives lived. He'd slunk over to the bed of cabbages and had waited until midmorning for the right time to pounce on Chanticleer, as all murderers wait to strike. Oh wicked, lurking

murderer! You're just like the traitors Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus; Ganelon of France; and Simon of Greece, who caused the fall of Troy when he convinced the Trojans that the wooden Greek horse was a present. Oh Chanticleer, damn the day when you flew down from the rafters and into the yard! You should have paid attention to your dream and known that today would be a dangerous day for you. But, according to some philosophers, what God foresees is destined to happen and cannot be changed. Well, then again, any philosopher worth his salt would tell you that not everyone agrees that this is so. A hundred thousand men have tried to answer this question whether the future is already written or can be changed. I'm not really good at logic and picking apart the various arguments like St. Augustine can or like the philosopher Boethius or Bishop Bradwardine can. I'm not sure whether God's foretelling of an event means that it has to happen or whether I have free will and can choose to make it not happen.

I don't really want to get into all that. My story is just about a rooster, who, as you already know, foolishly listened to his wife after having had that dream I told you about. Women's advice is more harmful than good. It caused Adam to get kicked out of Eden, where he'd been happy and doing just fine. Okay, okay. I'm only joking. I don't want to offend anybody by saying that women are full of foolishness. There are lots of books on that subject, and you can read them and make up your own mind. I'm just telling you what the rooster thought, not what I think. I don't think there's anything wrong with women.

(447-503)

Well, Pertelote was happily sunbathing in the sand, and Chanticleer was singing away, more happily than a mermaid (for the naturalist Physiologist tells us that mermaids sing very happily). And as he was singing, a butterfly caught his eye, which then made him notice the fox lying low in the bushes. Surprised, Chanticleer choked, sputtered out a "cok, cok," and instinctively started to run away.

Chanticleer was going to fly away, but the fox immediately said, "Hey wait, mister, where are you going? Don't be afraid. I'm a friend. Honestly, I'd be pretty evil if I intended to hurt you. I just wanted to listen to you sing because you have the voice of an angel. You also have more feeling for music than any other singer. In fact, you sound just like your father, who was an excellent singer too. He would sing from the heart and so powerfully that he'd have to close his eyes and stand on his tiptoes and crane his slender neck to crow the notes. He was so proud of his ability to sing. I once read a story about how a boy broke a rooster's leg and how that rooster took his revenge years later when he decided not to wake the boy up on a very important day. That rooster was very clever, but he wasn't nearly as wise

as your father. Yes, I know your mother and father—God bless him! —and have entertained them at my house before. I was hoping I could have you over sometime too. Now, would you please sing for me, sing like your father?" Chanticleer was so flattered that he began to beat his wings, not recognizing the treachery in the fox's voice.

(504-534)

Watch out, my lords! There are many flatterers in your courts who will try to deceive you. These people will make you feel much better than those who actually tell you the truth. Read what the Bible says about flattery, and then watch out for those trying to trick you.

Chanticleer closed his eyes, stood on his tiptoes, stretched out his neck, and began to crow at the top of his lungs. The fox, who was named Sir Russell, immediately jumped out of the bushes and grabbed Chanticleer by the throat, threw him on his back, and carried him off into the forest before anyone could follow. Oh, cruel fate. There's nothing we can do! It's too bad that Chanticleer came down from the rafters this morning! And even worse that his wife didn't pay attention to his dream! And this all happened on a Friday too, the day of the goddess Venus. Oh Venus, the goddess of sex and pleasure, how could you let Chanticleer die on your day? Chanticleer was humbly devoted to you and did everything in his power to have as much sex as he could, not to have children, but for sheer delight alone. Oh, master poet Geoffrey of Vinsauf, if only I could find the words to damn Friday all to hell as vividly as you expressed your sorrow over King Richard I's death in your poetry. Then I'd be able to express my sorrow for Chanticleer!

(535-582)

The hens in the yard cried and grieved as they watched the fox snatch Chanticleer and carry him away. Never had there been such a ruckus, not even by the Trojan ladies when the Greek warrior Pyrrhus grabbed the Trojan king Priam by the beard and killed him with his sword, giving victory to the Greeks at Troy as the epic poem The Aeneid describes. Lady Pertelote screamed the loudest—much louder than the wife of King Hasdrubal of Carthage when the Romans killed her husband and burned the city—and she'd been so upset that she committed suicide by burning herself alive. These hens cried like the Roman senators' wives cried when the emperor Nero killed their husbands and burned the city of Rome. But I digress—back to my story.

Well, the old widow and her two daughters heard the commotion in the yard and ran outside to see what was the matter. They saw the fox running into the woods with Chanticleer on his back, and they cried out, "Oh my God! Help! Catch that fox!" as they chased after him. Some of the neighbors, including Talbot and Gerland, grabbed sticks and shovels and

whatever they could find and joined in the chase as they screamed like banshees. Coll, the dog, ran after the fox too, and the cows and pigs were running around, scared from the shouting and the barking of the dogs. The ducks and geese were squawking and flying away and even the bees flew out of the hive, so terrible was the noise. God help us! Not even the peasant rebel Jack Straw and his lot were half as loud when they attacked Flemish merchants as this bunch was as they ran after the fox. They blew trumpets and hunting horns, and hearing them, you would've thought the sky itself was falling.

(583-615)

Ah, but Fortune changes course quickly, and she will sometimes unexpectedly help those she frowned upon just a moment ago! Despite the fear running through him, Chanticleer—who still lay on the fox's back—spoke up and said, "Mr. Fox, if I were you, I would turn around and say, 'Go away, dummies! Damn you all! You'll never get your rooster back because, now that I'm at the edge of the forest, I'm going to eat him right here and now.'" The fox answered, "Hey, yeah, that's a good idea!" But as soon as he spoke, the rooster pulled himself out of the fox's mouth and flew high up into a tree.

And when the fox realized that he'd lost the rooster, he said, "Oh Chanticleer, I'm so sorry! I must've scared you when I grabbed you and brought you out of the yard. But sir, I wasn't going to hurt you. Come on down and let me explain. I promise I'll tell you the truth, so help me God." "No way," Chanticleer replied. "Fool me once, shame on you—but fool me twice, shame on me! You're not going to trick me again and get me to close my eyes and sing with your flattery. God punishes those who look the other way instead of seeing!" "No," said the fox. "God punishes those who aren't careful and talk too much when they should hold their tongue."

(616-626)

See? This is what happens when you're sloppy and not careful and listen to flatterers. This may have been a story about a fox and a rooster and a hen, but it's more a story of morality, my friends. As St. Paul says, we can learn something from the words others have written, so I hope you understand that this was a story about morality and not about barnyard animals.

Oh Lord, make us all good men if it is your will, and let us rejoice in you. Amen.

• SUMMARY

A. The General Prologue

The General Prologue opens with a description of April showers and the return of spring.

"When that April with his shouressoote / The drought of March hath pielicea to the root,"

he begins, and writes about the burgeoning flowers and singing birds. The sun has gone through the second half of the zodiacal sign Aires, the "Ram." Budding, lust-filled springtime is also the time when people desire to go on pilgrimage, and travelers from all corners of England make the journey to Canterbury Cathedral to seek the help of the blessed martyr.

Chaucer, the narrator, who is preparing to go on pilgrimage, is staying at the Tabard Inn, a tavern in Southwark. A diverse company of twenty-nine other pilgrims enter the inn, and the narrator joins their group.

The narrator and the other pilgrims drink, and they decide they will start their journey together the next morning. But before they begin, the narrator pauses the story to introduce the reader to the array of travelers in the company, saying that he will describe how each one of them seemed to him.

The narrator begins by describing the Knight, a noble man who loves chivalry and fights for truth and honor. The knight has travelled through Christian and heathen territories—Alexandria, Prussia, Russia, Lithuania, Granada, Morocco, Turkey—and has been victorious everywhere and universally praised for his valor. But his exploits are always conducted for love of Christ, not love of glory.

In addition to being worthy and brave, says the narrator, the Knight is modest and meek as a maid. He never speaks ill of anyone. He wears modest clothes, and his mail is stained with rust.

The narrator next describes the Knight's son, a Squire, who is a lively and lusty young knight in training. The Squire has curled hair and, though only of moderate height, is marvelously agile. He has taken part in chivalric expeditions in Flanders and northern France.

The Squire, says the narrator, wants to find favor with his lady. His tunic is embroidered with flowers, as if he had gathered a meadow and sewn it to his clothes, and his gown is short with wide sleeves. The Squire is constantly singing and playing the flute. He can also joust, dance, draw, and write well. The Squire is so passionately in love that he sleeps no more than a nightingale. He is always courteous, humble, and modest.

The only servant the Knight has with him is the Yeoman, who wears a green hood and coat. The Yeoman takes great care of his bow and sharp, keen peacock arrows. He has closely cropped hair and tanned skin. On his arm he wears a bright arm guard and carried a sword as well as a dagger.

The Yeoman also wears a badge of St. Christopher. The narrator guesses that, according to the Yeoman's dress, he is a forester.

The narrator next describes the Prioress, a nun named Madame Eglantine. She sings the liturgy through her nose. She speaks French elegantly, though in an English accent. She has excellent table manners: she never lets a morsel of meat fall from her mouth onto her breast, nor does she dip her fingers into the sauce. She wipes her lips so clean that not a speck of grease remains after a meal. The Prioress takes pains to imitate courtly manners and to remain dignified at all times.

The Prioress is so charitable and compassionate, the narrator says, that whenever she sees a mouse caught and bleeding in a trap, she weeps. She keeps small dogs, feeding them roast meat, milk, and fine white bread, and she weeps if any of them are trampled or if men beat them with a switch.

The Prioress wears a wimple draped to show off her well-formed nose, gray eyes, and small red mouth. The narrator observes that she has a wide forehead and that she is hardly underfed. Her cloak is very elegant. She wears a coral rosary with green beads, on which there is a gilded A, for Amos vinci omega: "Love conquers all."

The narrator notes that a second nun rides with the Prioress as well as a chaplain and three priests; however, these characters are only mentioned in passing in the General Prologue.

Next there comes a handsome Monk who conducts business outside the monastery. When he rides through the country, men can hear his bridle jingling as loud as the chapel bell. This monk is of the old, somewhat strict Benedictine order, but he lets the old ideas pass away to follow new customs. The Monk scoffs at the notion that monks cannot be holy if they go hunting and scorns the text that claims that a monk out of his cloister is not worth an oyster. The narrator claims to agree: why waste away indoors, and do as Augustine ordained? Let Augustine do his own work!

The Monk is a good horseman and rides along with a pack of swift greyhounds. His sleeves are trimmed with expensive squirrel fur, and his hood is fastened with a gold pin into an elaborate knot. His head is bald, and his face glows as if he had been rubbed with oil. He is a plump, lively man whose eyes gleam like fire under a cauldron.

The merry, wanton Friar is licensed to beg in a certain district. Of all the orders of Friars, his is the most inclined to gossip. The Friar has arranged and paid for many marriages of young ladies. He is well known to all the rich landowners and wealthy women in town, as he has full powers of confession and could absolve any sins sweetly and pleasantly. Many a

man is so hard of heart, says the narrator, that he cannot weep for his sins: instead of tears and prayers, these men give silver to poor friars.

The Friar is an excellent singer and knew every innkeeper and barmaid in every town. He disdains lepers and beggars as unworthy: instead, he deals with rich men with whom he can make a profit. Whenever he can make money, there is no man so virtuous. On days when conflicts are resolved, the Friar behaves not like a cloistered cleric but like a master or pope, donning an expensive cloak and frolicking. This friar, whose name is Hubert, also has a lisp.

A Merchant with a forked beard is also among the company. He is dressed in a multicolor cloak, fur hat, and boots. He speaks slowly, weighing the profit of expressing his opinions. He is good at borrowing money and was so dignified in business that no one can tell he was in debt, the narrator claims.

The Clerk is an Oxford University student, thin and dressed in threadbare clothes. He would rather have books than fine clothes or money. Though he is a philosopher, he has not found the philosopher's stone: what little money he has, he spends on books. He takes his studies very seriously, and whenever he speaks, his speech is full of moral virtue.

The wise and prudent Man of Laws is very well respected and highly sought after for his legal assistance. He is an excellent buyer of land. The Man of Laws is extremely busy and pretends to be even busier than he is. No one could ever find a flaw in his legal documents.

Next in the company comes the Franklin, a white-bearded, cheerful landowner whose main goal in life is pleasure and delight. He gives such elaborate meals that it seems to snow meat and drink in his house. He offers any dainty treat that men could think of. The food changes with the seasons, but it is always abundant.

Five guilds men are among the company: a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer, and a Tapestry-Maker. They are dressed well, with brightly polished belts and knives. Any one of them, says the narrator, could have been an alderman, as their wives would agree.

The guilds men hired a Cook for the journey. The Cook, Roger de Ware, is very skillful, but the narrator is repulsed by the pus-filled ulcer on his shin.

A Shipman rides as well as he could on a carthorse. He wears a dagger around his neck. When he was on his ship, he stole wine from the merchant, whose goods he was transporting, while the merchant slept. The Shipman knows all about navigation and the tides: his beard has been shaken with many a tempest.

The Physician bases his medical practice on principles of astronomy and diagnoses the cause of every malady based on the four humors: hot, cold, moist, and dry. He can quote all the ancient medical texts but knows very little about the Bible. The Physician practices moderation in his diet. Though he wears taffeta robes, he saved much of what he earned: gold is the best medicine, the narrator says, and the Physician therefore loves gold best.

The slightly deaf Wife of Bath, an excellent seamstress, is always first in line at parish offerings. If anyone brings alms before her, she becomes extremely angry. On her way to Sunday mass, she wraps her head in scarves that the narrator says must weigh ten pounds. Her stockings are as bright red as her face.

The Wife of Bath has been married five times (not to mention her other "company") and has gone on three pilgrimages to Jerusalem; she has also visited Rome, Cologne, and other foreign pilgrimage sites. She is gap-toothed; sits easily on her horse; and wears a wimple, an overskirt over her broad hips, and sharp spurs. The Wife of Bath gives excellent advice in matters of love, having a great deal of expertise.

A Parson from a small town is also among the company. He is poor in wealth but rich in holy thoughts and deeds. The Parson devotedly teaches the members of his parish, but he is loath to tithe them. Neither rain nor thunder nor sickness prevents him from visiting his parishioners: he picks up his staff and walk to all corners of his parish. In words and deeds, he gives his flock a noble example. He is even kind to sinners. He is a shepherd, not a mercenary. The Parson wants to draw people closer to God through graciousness and kindness. He never adopts a fussy manner and always stays true to Christ's teachings.

The Parson's brother, the Plowman, is a faithful worker who worships God and loves his neighbor as he loves himself. He threshes hay for Christ's sake and always pays his tithes fully; he wears a loose workman's tunic and rides on a mare.

The rest of the company is a Reeve, a Miller, a Summoner, a Pardoner, a Manciple, and the narrator himself: besides these, "they were name."

The Miller is a burly workman who always wins prizes at wrestling. He has a head and beard of thick red hair and a hairy wart on his nose. His nostrils and mouth are enormous. The Miller is a buffoon who told dirty stories and played the bagpipes; he steals corn, yet has a "tomb of gold."

The Manciple, a businessman who supplies a school of law with provisions, is always ahead in his dealings: even though he is uneducated, he is more clever than the lawyers he serves and is able to deceive them all.

The Reeve is a slender, choleric man with a closely cropped beard and stick-thin legs. No auditor can ever catch him: he knows the accounts of his lord's estate extremely well, and all the farm-managers, herdsmen, and servants fear him. The miserly Reeve has hoarded so much money that he is wealthier than his lord. He is a talented carpenter, and he always rides last among the company.

The Summoner has a disease that makes his face bright red and pimpled, gives him scaly skin, and makes his beard fall out. No medicine or ointment can treat the pustules. He loves onions and garlic, and when he drinks, he speaks only in Latin—at least, the few Latin phrases he knows. He is a buffoon, a good fellow: for a quart of wine, he will allow a man to keep his mistress for a year and excuse him in f The Summoner also knows how to swindle people. If a man's soul is in his purse, he says, in his purse he should be punished. But the narrator knows that wicked men need to fear execution as well. The Summoner also is the sole counselor for all the young women of his diocese. His staff is the sign of an ale-house, and his shield is a cake of bread.

The Pardoner, coming straight from the court of Rome, rides with the Summoner. He has thin yellow hair that he loops over his shoulders in long, elaborate strands, and to show it off, he rides bareheaded. His voice is as high as a goat's. The Pardoner has a wallet stuffed full of pardons from Rome as well as many religious trinkets, such as veils, goblets, and decorated crucifixes. He also has pigs' bones in a glass reliquary, which he tells poor people are relics from holy saints. He uses false flattery to make fools of both priests and laypeople. However, the Pardoner is a good singer and storyteller.

After providing descriptions of all the pilgrims who have assembled at the tavern in Southwark, the narrator begs the reader's forgiveness for anything unseemly in the tales, as the narrator is simply trying to report the pilgrims' words and characters as plainly and truthfully as he can. Whoever tells a tale about a man, he says, must repeat it word for word so that he does not tell falsehoods or make up words. As Plato says—for those who can read Plato—the word must be cousin to the deed. The narrator says that he has described the people to their full degree in plain language so that the reader will understand.

The narrator returns to the story of the first night he spent with the pilgrims. The merry Host, an excellent master of ceremonies and a fine citizen of Cheap side, puts everyone in a cheerful mood by serving a merry supper. After supper, when everyone has paid their bills, the host tells the pilgrims that they are the merriest company he has had under his roof all year and that he will add to their mirth free of charge.

The Host proposes that instead of riding dumb as a stone to Canterbury, the pilgrims should tell each other tales along the way to keep each other amused. The Host says that he would judge the tales, and that if they play the game he has invented, he swears by his dead father's soul that they will be entertained. By a unanimous show of hands, the company agrees to take his advice.

Delighted, the Host explains the game: Each pilgrim will tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two more on the way home. Whoever tells the best stories—that is to say, the ones that give the most significance and most pleasure—will have a free meal at the tavern upon his return, paid for by all the rest of the pilgrims. The Host decides that he will ride with the pilgrims, at his own cost, to serve as their guide in this merriment. Any pilgrim that disagrees with his judgment will have to pay all the expenses of the journey.

The pilgrims agree to the plan and beg the Host to serve not only as their guide but as governor, tale judges, and record-keeper.

The next morning, the Host, like a rooster, wakes up all the pilgrims and gathers them together. After they ride a mile or two, the Host reminds them of the agreements of the night before. The Host says that they must draw straws to see who will tell the first tale. He gives the privilege of drawing the first straw to the Knight, in deference to his rank. The Knight draws the short straw and nobly accepts the challenge.

• CHARACTERS

- **The Narrator**

The narrator makes it quite clear that he is also a character in his book. Although he is called Chaucer, we should be wary of accepting his words and opinions as Chaucer's own. In the General Prologue, the narrator presents himself as a gregarious and naïve character. Later on, the Host accuses him of being silent and sullen. Because the narrator writes down his impressions of the pilgrims from memory, whom he does and does not like, and what he chooses and chooses not to remember about the characters, tells us as much about the narrator's own prejudices as it does about the characters themselves.

- **The Knight**

The first pilgrim Chaucer describes in the General Prologue, and the teller of the first tale. The Knight represents the ideal of a medieval Christian man-at-arms. He has participated in no less than fifteen of the great crusades of his era. Brave, experienced, and prudent, the narrator greatly admires him.

- **The Wife of Bath**

Bath is an English town on the Avon River, not the name of this woman's husband. Though she is a seamstress by occupation, she seems to be a professional wife. She has been married five times and had many other affairs in her youth, making her well practiced in the art of love. She presents herself as someone who loves marriage and sex, but, from what we see of her, she also takes pleasure in rich attire, talking, and arguing. She is deaf in one ear and has a gap between her front teeth, which was considered attractive in Chaucer's time. She has traveled on pilgrimages to Jerusalem three times and elsewhere in Europe as well.

- **The Pardoner**

Pardoners granted papal indulgences—reprieves from penance in exchange for charitable donations to the Church. Many pardoners, including this one, collected profits for themselves. In fact, Chaucer's Pardoner excels in fraud, carrying a bag full of fake relics—for example, he claims to have the veil of the Virgin Mary. The Pardoner has long, greasy, yellow hair and is beardless. These characteristics were associated with shiftiness and gender ambiguity in Chaucer's time. The Pardoner also has a gift for singing and preaching whenever he finds himself inside a church.

- **The Miller**

Stout and brawny, the Miller has a wart on his nose and a big mouth, both literally and figuratively. He threatens the Host's notion of propriety when he drunkenly insists on telling the second tale. Indeed, the Miller seems to enjoy overturning all conventions: he ruins the Host's carefully planned storytelling order; he rips doors off hinges; and he tells a tale that is somewhat blasphemous, ridiculing religious clerks, scholarly clerks, carpenters, and women.

- **The Prioress**

Described as modest and quiet, this Prioress (a nun who is head of her convent) aspires to have exquisite taste. Her table manners are dainty, she knows French (though not the French of the court), she dresses well, and she is charitable and compassionate.

- **The Monk**

Most monks of the Middle Ages lived in monasteries according to the Rule of Saint Benedict, which demanded that they devote their lives to "work and prayer." This Monk cares little for the Rule; his devotion is to hunting and eating. He is large, loud, and well clad in hunting boots and furs.

- **The Friar**

Roaming priests with no ties to a monastery, friars were a great object of criticism in Chaucer's time. Always ready to befriend young women or rich men who might need his services, the friar actively administers the sacraments in his town, especially those of marriage and confession. However, Chaucer's worldly Friar has taken to accepting bribes.

- **The Summoner**

The Summoner brings persons accused of violating Church law to ecclesiastical court. This Summoner is a lecherous man whose face is scarred by leprosy. He gets drunk frequently, is irritable, and is not particularly qualified for his position. He spouts the few words of Latin he knows in an attempt to sound educated.

- **The Host**

The leader of the group, the Host is large, loud, and merry, although he possesses a quick temper. He mediates among the pilgrims and facilitates the flow of the tales. His title of "host" may be a pun, suggesting both an innkeeper and the Eucharist, or Holy Host.

- **The Parson**

The only devout churchman in the company, the Parson lives in poverty, but is rich in holy thoughts and deeds. The pastor of a sizable town, he preaches the Gospel and makes sure to practice what he preaches. He is everything that the Monk, the Friar, and the Pardoner are not.

- **The Squire**

The Knight's son and apprentice. The Squire is curly-haired, youthfully handsome, and loves dancing and courting.

- **The Clerk**

The Clerk is a poor student of philosophy. Having spent his money on books and learning rather than on fine clothes, he is threadbare and wan. He speaks little, but when he does, his words are wise and full of moral virtue.

- **The Man of Law**

A successful lawyer commissioned by the king. He upholds justice in matters large and small and knows every statute of England's law by heart.

- **The Manciple**

A manciple was in charge of getting provisions for a college or court. Despite his lack of education, this Manciple is smarter than the thirty lawyers he feeds.

- **The Merchant**

The Merchant trades in furs and other cloths, mostly from Flanders. He is part of a powerful and wealthy class in Chaucer's society.

- **The Shipman**

Brown-skinned from years of sailing, the Shipman has seen every bay and river in England, and exotic ports in Spain and Carthage as well. He is a bit of a rascal, known for stealing wine while the ship's captain sleeps.

- **The Physician**

The Physician is one of the best in his profession, for he knows the cause of every malady and can cure most of them. Though the Physician keeps himself in perfect physical health, the narrator calls into question the Physician's spiritual health: he rarely consults the Bible and has an unhealthy love of financial gain.

- **The Franklin**

The word "franklin" means "free man." In Chaucer's society, a franklin was neither a vassal serving a lord nor a member of the nobility. This particular franklin is a connoisseur of food and wine, so much so that his table remains laid and ready for food all day.

- **The Reeve**

A reeve was similar to a steward of a manor, and this reeve performs his job shrewdly—his lord never loses so much as a ram to the other employees, and the vassals under his command are kept in line. However, he steals from his master.

- **The Plowman**

The Plowman is the Parson's brother and is equally good-hearted. A member of the peasant class, he pays his tithes to the Church and leads a good Christian life.

- **The Guildsmen**

Listed together, the five Guildsmen appear as a unit. English guilds were a combination of labor unions and social fraternities: craftsmen of similar occupations joined together to increase their bargaining power and live communally. All five Guildsmen are clad in the livery of their brotherhood.

- **The Cook**

The Cook works for the Guildsmen. Chaucer gives little detail about him, although he mentions a crusty sore on the Cook's leg.

- **The Yeoman**

The servant who accompanies the Knight and the Squire. The narrator mentions that his dress and weapons suggest he may be a forester.

- **The Second Nun**

The Second Nun is not described in the General Prologue, but she tells a saint's life for her tale.

- **The Nun's Priest**

Like the Second Nun, the Nun's Priest is not described in the General Prologue. His story of Chanticleer, however, is well crafted and suggests that he is a witty, self-effacing preacher.

• CHARACTERS IN THE MILLER'S TALE

Nicholas

In the Miller's Tale, Nicholas is a poor astronomy student who boards with an elderly carpenter, John, and the carpenter's too-young wife, Alisoun. Nicholas dupes John and sleeps with Alisoun right under John's nose, but Absolon, the foppish parish clerk, gets Nicholas in the end.

- **Alisoun**

Alisoun is the sexy young woman married to the carpenter in the Miller's Tale. She is bright and sweet like a small bird, and dresses in a tantalizing style—her clothes are embroidered inside and outside, and she laces her boots high. She willingly goes to bed with Nicholas, but she has only harsh words and obscenities for Absolon.

- **Absalom**

The local parish clerk in the Miller's Tale, Absalom is a little bit foolish and more than a little bit vain. He wears red stockings underneath his floor-length church gown, and his leather shoes are decorated like the fanciful stained-glass windows in a cathedral. He curls his hair, uses breath fresheners, and fancies Alisoun.

- **John**

The dim-witted carpenter to whom Alisoun is married and with whom Nicholas boards. John is jealous and possessive of his wife. He constantly berates Nicholas for looking into God's "private," but when Nicholas offers John the chance to share his knowledge, John quickly accepts. He gullible believes Nicholas's pronouncement that a second flood is coming, which allows Nicholas to sleep with John's wife.

• CHARACTERS IN THE PARDONER'S TALE

The Three Rioters

These are the three protagonists of the Pardoner's Tale. All three indulge in and represent the vices against which the Pardoner has railed in his Prologue: Gluttony, Drunkeness, Gambling, and Swearing. These traits define the three and eventually lead to their downfall. The Rioters at first appear like personified vices, but it is their belief that a personified concept—in this case, Death—is a real person that becomes the root cause of their undoing.

- **The Old Man**

In the Pardoner's Tale, the three Rioters encounter a very old man whose body is completely covered except for his face. Before the old man tells the Rioters where they can find "Death," one of the Rioters rashly

demands why the old man is still alive. The old man answers that he is doomed to walk the earth for eternity. He has been interpreted as Death itself, or as Cain, punished for fratricide by walking the earth forever; or as the Wandering Jew, a man who refused to let Christ rest at his house when Christ proceeded to his crucifixion, and who was therefore doomed to roam the world, through the ages, never finding rest.

• CHARACTERS IN THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

Chanticleer

The heroic rooster of the Nun's Priest's Tale, Chanticleer has seven hen-wives and is the most handsome cock in the barnyard. One day, he has a prophetic dream of a fox that will carry him away. Chanticleer is also a bit vain about his clear and accurate crowing voice, and he unwittingly allows a fox to flatter him out of his liberty.

Penelope

Chanticleer's favorite wife in the Nun's Priest's Tale. She is his equal in looks, manners, and talent. When Chanticleer dreams of the fox, he awakens her in the middle of the night, begging for an interpretation, but Pertelote will have none of it, calling him foolish. When the fox takes him away, she mourns him in classical Greek fashion, burning herself and wailing.

The Fox

The orange fox, interpreted by some as an allegorical figure for the devil, catches Chanticleer the rooster through flattery. Eventually, Chanticleer outwits the fox by encouraging him to boast of his deceit to his pursuers. When the fox opens his mouth, Chanticleer escapes.

• ART OF CHARACTERIZATION AND ANALYSIS OF MAIN CHARACTERS

Art of Characterization

Chaucer was the first notable creator of characters in English literature. He had no model. So, he created his own style of character portrayal. In his work "The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales", he has painted the whole of the English nation during the fourteen the century, ranging from knightly class to the order of Clergymen. He is the first great painter of characters in English Literature. The Character sketches are brief, yet lucid and comprehensive. Both the in and out of the characters are depicted in such a superb way that the entire personality seems moving before the reader's eyes. It is, in fact, Chaucer's unique rich and original art of characterization that has enabled him to delineate memorable portraits.

For the purpose he employs several techniques of characterization, some of whom were popular among the contemporaries, while the others are purely his own.His art of characterization is specially marked by three things namely realism, types and individuals and wit and humor. He is very realistic in the portrayal of his age as well as his characters. His realism is particularly evident in his The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales and The Canterbury Tales. In these works he gave a minute and comprehensive picture of the English society of the fourteenth century. The pilgrims, whom Chaucer describes in the Prologue, are the living characters in the great drama of the social life of the period. In this way he realistically describes the social and religious condition of his age. Chaucer's pilgrims belong to different social ranks and positions, secular as well as religious. These pilgrims represent the important strands of the English society in Chaucer's age and elevate the poem to the level of a national portrait gallery. Thus, Chaucer makes the Canterbury Tales a great human document, containing a clear and comprehensive picture of the age. He succeeds wonderfully in making the poem a living picture of his own country of his own time.

Chaucer is the first great painter of character in English literature. In fact, next to Shakespeare he is the greatest in this field. In "The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" the twenty-nine portraits traced by Chaucer give us an excellent idea of the society at that time. Except for royalty and aristocracy, on one hand and the robbers or out casts on the other, he has painted in brief practically the whole English nation. The twenty-nine pilgrims, including the host, belong to the most varied professions. The Knight and the Squire presents the warlike element of the society. The learned and liberal vocations are signified by the Man of Law, the Doctor, the Oxford Clerk and the Poet himself. The Merchant and the Shipman stand for the higher commercial community while the Wife of Bath, an expert Cloth maker represents the traders and manufacturers. Agriculture is represented by the Ploughman, the Miller and the Franklin. The upper servants like Manciple and the Reeve and the lower servant like Yeoman and the Cook represent the town and Country between them. The Monk from his monastery, the Prioress from her convent, her attendant priests, the village Parson, the roaming Friar, the Pardoner and the Summoner sufficiently cover the casual categories of the religious order in those days.

To preserve the distinctions among these typical characters, Chaucer has indicated the differences in their clothes, manner of speech, habits and tendencies representing the common traits and the average characteristics of each profession. These personages, therefore, are not mere phantasms of the brain but real human begins.

These characters represent various types of contemporary society. They are no longer mere dummies or types but owing to their various peculiarities, their arguments and agreement and their likes and dislikes we recognize them as real living beings, true to the mold which all human nature is cast.

His world is almost freak-free and his characters are perfectly lifelike. Some of them are so modern that they seem to be living today. The old Knight is an example of the chivalrous character which is found in every generation. The Squire is just the typical man of any day. He was as fresh as is the month of May

The Merchant has all the vanity which comes from the growing of wealth, while the Man of Law like lawyers of all times, is piling up fees and buying land. We recognize in him the typical lawyer of our own day:

Nowhere so busy a man as he there was
And yet he seemed busier than he was

There are characters like the Prioress, the Monk, the Franklin, the Reeve, the Summoner, the Pardoner, and the Wife of Bath whom we do not identify at first. But none of them is really extinct. They have changed their name and profession but their chief part is an element of humanity. That is why when we accompany the Pilgrims on their way we feel quite at home and have no feeling of being among aliens.

The characters that Chaucer portrays in the Prologue are at once types and individuals true to their own age, and still more, representative of humanity in general. Another important feature of his characterization is the use of wit and humor. Chaucer remains one of the outstanding humorists in English literature and the Prologue bears out his genius as a comical author. The Canterbury Tales is deemed as a great comedy of the human society and this is particularly evident in the way he presents his characters .In fact, the Prologue reaches the height of a grand social comedy in poetry. This comic effect is finely achieved by his wonderful sense of wit and humor. Thus, the Prologue is not merely a wonderful document of the English social life of the 14th century but also as a delightful comedy of human life.

Chaucer's art of characterization is superb. He looks at his characters objectively and delineates each of the men and women sharply and cares singly. His impression of casualness, economy, significance and variety of every detail are examples of that supreme art which conceals art. In fact, there is a different method of almost every pilgrim. He varies his presentation from the full-length portrait to the thumb-nail sketch, but even in the brief sketches, Chaucer conveys a strong sense of individuality and depth of portraiture.

To sum up, we may say that, on the aisle of English poetry, Chaucer flourishes the fantastic colours of his words and paints different characters of his age with minute observation. Indeed, he is a great painter who paints not with colours but with words. His keen analysis of the minutest detail of his characters, their dresses, looks and manners enable him to present his characters lifelike and not mere bloodless abstractions. Thus, Chaucer is the master in the art of characterization.

Harry Bailey, the Host

The Host proves himself to be a very good tour guide, a position that is very hard to fulfill since he has to please such a wide variety of pilgrims. He proves himself capable of handling most of the arguments and keeping everyone in line. Even when the Cook gets drunk and falls off his horse, the Host is able to get him safely back astride.

The Host also calms differences such as the arguments between the Miller and the Reeve or between the Friar and the Summoner. He kids the Parson about being too much a prude. He is tolerant of the Wife of Bath in her long and, to some pilgrims, offensive prologue. When time grows short, he gently nudges the storytellers to get on with their narrations. He himself takes kidding easily. In general, he is a good leader, a good arbitrator of arguments, a peacemaker, and a man of the world who knows how to treat a diverse number of people.

• ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERS-

Miller

The Miller's physical stature fits his story, which is uncouth and, for many, obscene. He is a heavyset man, "a stout Carl (fellow) full big" of muscle and bone, and he is always the winner at wrestling. He is a fearful sight and vulgar. Most noticeable is a large wart with hairs growing out as long and as red as a thistle at the tip of his nose. If most of the pilgrims are going to Canterbury for religious reasons, the Miller is probably going to benefit from the curative powers which were heralded. He is an awesome fellow, and, like the Summoner, a person one would not want to meet in the dark. His tale is one of the best constructed and the best comic situations of the all the tales. As evidenced in his tale, the Miller also has an obvious grudge against carpenters and perhaps towards the Reeve himself, who was once a member of a carpenter's guild.

Knight

Socially, the Knight is by far the most prestigious person on the pilgrimage. He has fought in many battles and served his king nobly. (Readers should note that the Knight has not fought in secular battles; all

his battles have been religious battles of some nature.) He is the very essence of chivalry, honor, and courage. Similarly, he is the epitome of gentility, a man who loves truth, freedom, and honor. Everyone in the pilgrimage looks up to and respects him.

Despite his elevated position, the knight is also filled with humility. He does not participate in the quarreling or complaining, nor does he condemn it. Although he has distinguished himself several times in battle, he never talks about his brave and valorous deeds. He is completely satisfied with his station in life and is courteous to the other pilgrims without becoming friendly with them.

The Knight's Tale perfectly fits the Knight himself. He chooses a story filled with knights, love, honor, chivalry, and adventure. The main emphasis in the story is upon rules of honor, decorum, and proper conduct. For his hero, he chooses the Greek hero of legend, Theseus, who was the most highly thought of man in Ancient Greek culture; indeed, Theseus was the King of Athens, and Sophocles, in the Oedipus Trilogy, presents him as the ideal king. Thus Theseus, like the Knight himself, is an embodiment of all the ideal human virtues.

Pardoner

In his descriptions of the pilgrims in The Prologue, Chaucer begins with a description of the most noble, the Knight, and then includes those who have pretensions to the nobility, such as the Squire, and those whose manner and behavior suggest some aspects of nobility, such as the Prioress. Then he covers the middle class (the Merchant, the Clerk, and the Man of Law, for example) and ultimately descends to the most vulgar (the Miller and the Reeve). The reader must ask why the Pardoner is placed at the very end of the descending order.

From his prologue and tale, the reader discovers that the Pardoner is well read, that he is psychologically astute, and that he has profited significantly from his profession. Yet Chaucer places him at the very bottom of humanity because he uses the church and holy, religious objects as tools to profit personally. In the other great classic of the Middle Ages, Dante's Divine Comedy, Dante arranges hell into nine concentric circles. The first circle is reserved for the least offensive sinner, with each subsequent circle holding ever more evil sinners, finally ending in the most pernicious and vicious sinners, including betrayers such as Judas Iscariot and Brutus.

In the ninth circle of Dante's Inferno, the circle just above the betrayers, are the simonists, those sinners who make a practice of selling holy items, sacraments, or ecclesiastical offices for personal profit. The punishment for such perversion of holy objects was very severe.

Consequently, in the hierarchy of the medieval church, the Pardoner and his sin are especially heinous. The other pilgrims recognize the sins of the Pardoner, and their antagonism toward him is expressed by the Host at the end of the Pardoner's tale when the Pardoner has the effrontery and hypocrisy to try to sell one of his "pardons" to the Host.

Thus, while the Pardoner is the most evil of the pilgrims, he is nevertheless the most intriguing. The most provocative thing about the Pardoner is his open revelation about his own hypocrisy and avarice. Some critics have called him the most thoroughly modern character in The Canterbury Tales, especially in his use of modern psychology to dupe his victims. Likewise, his self-evaluation makes his character noteworthy: He maintains that, although he is not moral himself, he can tell a very moral tale. This concept alone makes him a character worth noting.

The Wife of Bath

The Wife of Bath is intriguing to almost anyone who has ever read her prologue, filled with magnificent, but for some, preposterous statements. First of all, the Wife is the forerunner of the modern liberated woman, and she is the prototype of a certain female figure that often appears in later literature. Above all, she is, for the unprejudiced reader, Chaucer's most delightful creature, even if some find her also his most outrageous. Her doctrine on marriage is shocking to her companions, evoking such responses that the single man never wants to marry. For the Clerk and the Parson, her views are not only scandalous but heretical; they contradict the teachings of the church. In fact, her views prompt the Clerk to tell a tale of a character completely opposite to the Wife of Bath's tale.

Her prologue presents a view of marriage that no pilgrim had ever conceived of and is followed by a tale that proves her to be correct. She expresses her views with infinite zest and conviction, with such determined assurance in the correctness that no pilgrim can argue with her logic; they can be shocked by it, but they cannot refute it. As she unfolds her life history in her prologue, she reveals that the head of the house should always be the woman, that a man is no match for a woman, and that as soon as they learn to yield to the sovereignty of women, men will find a happy marriage.

In her prologue, the Wife admirably supports her position by reference to all sort of scholarly learning, and when some source of authority disagrees with her point of view, she dismisses it and relies instead on her own experience. Because she has had the experience of having had five husbands — and is receptive to a sixth — there is no better proof of her views than her own experience, which is better than a scholarly diatribe.

The Squire

The twenty-year-old Squire was the Knight's son. With his fashionably curled locks he was a lusty bachelor and an aspirant to Knighthood. He was of average height and was wonderfully agile. He had conducted himself well in cavalry expeditions in the hope of gaining his lady's favor. He was singing / playing his flute all day long. He wore a fashionable short gown with long wide sleeves. He could compose lyrics, joust, draw, dance, and ride elegantly. He was courteous, modest and helpful.

Chaucer tells the readers that the young Squire could ride and sing, joust, dance, draw and write poetry. These references to simple everyday activities and the special qualifications required by the profession, enables Chaucer to paint a realistic portrait of the pilgrim

The Squire's curled locks and fashionably short gown embroidered with white and red flowers are appropriate for his role as a figure of romantic chivalry, and provide a stark contrast to the more serious religious aspects of chivalry represented by his father, the Knight.

The Yeoman

The Yeoman was the only servant brought along by the Knight. He was dressed in a green coat and hood and carried a sheaf of bright and sharp peacock arrows under his belt. He carried a large bow in his hand. His hair was closely cropped and his face was tanned. He carried a sword, a shield and a bright dagger. He wore a St. Christopher medallion on his beautiful breast of silver. He had thorough knowledge about forestry and woodcraft and carried a hunting horn.

The detailed description about the tools and equipment carried by the Yeoman serves to fortify Chaucer's assertion about the Yeoman's mastery in woodcraft. It should be noted that the Yeoman not only carries a bow sword and buckler which would indicate that he is on military service, but also a hunting horn which implies that he is a forester.

The Prioress

There was also a nun; a Prioress named Madame Eglantine (Sweetbrier) among the Canterbury pilgrims. She was very demure and her oath was, " by Sainte Loy". She sang the divine service with a pleasant nasal intonation. She spoke French fluently in the manner of the school of Stratford at Bow since she didn't know Parisian French. She had excellent table manners and didn't allow any morsel to fall from her lips nor wet her fingers deep in her sauce. She wiped her upper lip so clearly that no trace of grease was left on her cup after she had finished her drink. She had a good disposition and a pleasant and amiable bearing. She strove to imitate courtly manners and to be dignified in her manner. She was so charitable and full of pity that she would weep if she saw a mouse caught in a trap

She fed her 3 small dogs with roasted meat, or milk and fine bread. She was very sensitive and had a tender and affectionate heart. Her wimple was elegantly pleated. She had a broad forehead, straight nose, gray nose and soft small red lips. She wore a golden brooch with the inscription "Amos Vinci Romania".

Chaucer has drawn an exquisite portrait of the Prioress. He presents a lady who is utterly charming and elegant. The reader is told that the Prioress is simple and coy when she smiles. She has a broad forehead and sings the divine service with a pleasant nasal intonation. She is obviously a lady who has not forgotten her past of refinement and fine living. Her strongest oath is by St. Loy which implies that she hardly swears at all. Her tender heart overflows with pity when she sees dead or bleeding mice caught in a trap. She is fond of animals and feeds her dogs with meat and expensive fine bread. She is also vain about her personal appearance and exposes too much of her broad forehead. Her love of jewelry is evident from the rosary and the elegant gold brooch with the ambiguous motto 'Amor vincit omnia' (love conquers all). This type of love could imply both spiritual as well as human love. Since she is a nun it should rather have read 'Amor Dei' (love of God). The Prioress's affectations and her straight nose, gray eyes, and tender sensibility associate her with an elegant society lady rather than a nun. Thus Chaucer fills his portrait of the Prioress with subtle irony by praising her especially for her faults.

The Monk

The Monk was in charge of the monastery's estates and loved hunting. He was an able man who was fit to be an abbot. His stable had many fine horses. The Monk was the keeper of the lower houses. He found the rule of St. Maurus and of St. Benedict old and constrictive. He lived entirely according to the new manners of the world and allowed himself greater liberties. He didn't care a straw about the text, which said that hunters are not holy men and that a Monk who neglects his duty and discipline is like a fish out of water. He didn't believe in making himself mad by studying books or toiling with his hands as commanded by St. Augustine. The Monk was a keen rider and had swift greyhounds. He loved to track and hunt the hare. The sleeves of his coat were trimmed with the finest gray fur in the land. His hood was fastened under his chin with an intricate gold pin. His bald head shone as glass and his face shone as if anointed with oil. He was very fat and his eyes gleamed like a furnace under a cauldron. Chaucer says that he was a good prelate (church official) and loved to eat a fat roasted swan.

The Monk, Daun Piers, is an outrider; i.e. he looks after his monastery's estates. He is a perfect candidate for the post of an abbot. This post was generally reserved for those of noble birth instead of for the truly

devout and pious. This reflects that the Monk, like the Prioress, is born in a good family. He loves the good life and takes delight in hunting. He possesses thoroughbred hounds and wears the finest clothes that money can buy. Moreover he does not care about the details of St. Benedict's rule. He finds more pleasure hunting outside rather than devoting himself to study within his cloister. Chaucer is the master of irony and ostensibly agrees with the Monk's point of view. The result is that the reader comes to an entirely different conclusion about the Monk. It is evident that the Monk's way of life is a gross violation of his monastic vows. The Monk would have made a better administrator of the monastery instead of being entrusted with the task of ensuring the spiritual welfare of the people.

The Friar

The Friar was a jovial and merry man. He was a limiter i.e. a Friar licensed to beg within certain limits. He had mastered the art of small talk. He had arranged the marriage of many young women after seducing them himself. He was a pillar of the church and familiar with the frankeleyn and worthy women of the town. He was licensed to hear confessions and granted absolution easily. He believed that gifting silver instead of prayers and remorseful tears is the best way to show repentance. His hood was overstuffed with knives and other trinkets to give the good women. He had a merry voice and could sing and play very well on the harp. He was well acquainted with the taverns in town and knew every innkeeper and barmaid better than anyone, since it wasn't profitable to deal with poor people. The Friar was the best beggar in his order and was always able to extract money from people. The proceeds of his begging were far greater than the rent he paid to the church. He wore a double-breasted cloak and lisped in affectation to make English soft on his tongue. His eyes twinkled brightly in his head as the stars in a frosty night. The Friar was called Hubert.

The Friar numbers among Chaucer's portraits of the corrupt clergy. There were four orders of Friars in the medieval age: the Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Augustinians. Friars were mendicants and wandered from place to place and had the authority to hear confessions. Chaucer's Friar is a hedonist and well acquainted with the wealthy and the powerful. Moreover he is lascivious and has seduced many young women with his sweet talk and the trinkets that he always carries in his hood. He is obviously an important member of his order. However he is more worldly than spiritual. Chaucer ironically says that he is the best Friar while meaning the exact opposite.

The Merchant

The Merchant had a forked beard, was dressed in motley and rode a high horse. He wore a Flemish beaver hat and his boots were clasped

elegantly. He gave his opinions on English policy very pompously and these opinions were always dictated by his idea of what would be good for trade and lead to an increase of his own profits. He firmly believed that the sea between Middle burgh and Orwell should be guarded at all costs. He profitably sold French crowns called "shields" that he received in exchange for his goods. He was very dignified in the management of his affairs and nobody knew about his debts. Although he was a worthy man Chaucer, doesn't know his name.

The Clerk

There was also a serious Clerk of Oxford who had devoted himself to the study of logic. His horse was as thin as a rake. The Clerk was a very thin man. He wore a threadbare upper coat since he didn't have any source of income. He spent all that he got from friends on books and learning and prayed earnestly for the souls of those who gave him the means to study. He was very studious and didn't speak more than what was required. The little he spoke was full of moral meaning. He would gladly learn and also teach gladly.

The Clerk is among Chaucer's idealized portraits. There is no irony in his description. Chaucer has deep admiration for the Clerk's serious devotion to his study of philosophy.

The Sergeant at Law

The Sergeant at Law was a careful and wise lawyer. On many occasions he had been appointed directly by the king to serve as a judge. His skill and wide reputation had earned him huge fees and lavish presents. He always sought unentitled ownership of land. He seemed busier than he actually was. He remembers all the cases and decisions which had occurred since King William's time. He had the skill to draw up a legal document with the perfect phrasing. He could recite every statute by heart.

The Franklin

The Franklin accompanied the lawyer. His beard was as white as a daisy. He loved to eat bread dipped in wine in the morning. He was a true Epicurean and a big landowner. His bread and ale were of the finest quality and his cellar was always well - stocked. His menus varied in accordance with the seasons of the year. It snowed food and drink in his house. His coop was filled with fat birds and his fishpond was populated with breams and pikes. He presided over the sessions of the Justices of the Peace and was a Member of Parliament for his county. He had served as the King's administrative officer and auditor for his county. A short dagger and a silken pouch hung from his milk white belt.

The Haberdasher, Dyer, Carpenter, Weaver, and Tapestry-maker

All of them are dressed in the uniform of their guild. Their equipment was new and lavishly decorated. Their knives were mounted with silver and not cheap brass. Each of them was worthy to sit as a burgess on a dais in the guildhall. They were eligible to serve as aldermen since they were knowledgeable. Even their wives would agree that they earned enough income and owned large properties since it is very pleasant to be addressed as "madam" and have one's mantle carried like a queen's. The guilds men had a cook with them.

The Cook

The Cook accompanying the guilds men was the best judge of London ale. He was an expert in his trade. He could roast and boil, broil, fry, make stew and bake proper pies. It was a shame that he had an open sore on his shin since he could make the best chicken pie.

The Sea captain

The Sea captain was probably from Dartmouth. He could not ride a horse well. He wore a coarse knee length gown and carried a dagger that dangled from a cord around his neck. He had been tanned heavily by the summer sun. He tapped the wine casks that the wine merchant had brought from Bordeaux while the latter slept. He had no scruples. He knew all about tides and stream currents, and also about the harbors in Spain and Britain. Nobody could surpass his navigational skill from Hull to Carthage. The ship he captained was called "Magdalen".

The Physician

There was no match for the Physician in the entire world where medicine or surgery was concerned. He was trained in astrology and was able to cure his patients by placing their waxen figures in accordance with when a beneficent planet was ascendant. He knew the cause of every disease - whether it was hot or cold or moist or dry - and also which humor was responsible for it. But it was common knowledge that he was in league with the apothecaries and each worked to increase the other's profits. While he was well read in all the medical texts he devoted little time to read the Bible. His diet was moderate. He had made a considerable amount of money during the plague and was extremely reluctant to part with it. Since he prescribed gold in his medicines it can be assumed that he was especially fond of this metal.

The Plowman

The Plowman was the Parson's brother. He was a good and faithful laborer and lived in peace and perfect charity. Chaucer describes him as someone who loved God with all his heart and at all times and loved his

neighbor as himself. According to Chaucer he would willingly thresh, dig and ditch, free of charge out of Christian neighborliness. He paid his tithes honestly and promptly. He wore a laborer's smock and rode upon a mare.

The Reeve

The Reeve was a slender, choleric man with a close shaven beard. His hair was cut round by the ears and the top was tonsured like a priest's. He had long lean stick-like legs. He was efficient in managing a granary and a storage-bin. There was no accountant who could hoodwink him. He could foretell the expected yield by taking drought and rainfall into consideration. He had managed his lord's estate since his lord was 20 years old. He knew the petty secrets of every bailiff, shepherd and laborer and was hence feared among them. His house was ideally located on a hearth and shadowed by green trees. He had more spending power than his lord did because of the wealth that he had privately accumulated. In his youth he had learned carpentry. He rode upon a sturdy horse named Scot. He was from Norfolk, near Bawds well. He always rode last among the pilgrims.

The Summoner

The Summoner had a fiery-red, cherubic face, pimples, narrow eyes, black scabbed eyebrows and a scraggy beard. He was as lecherous as a sparrow. It was hardly surprising that children were afraid of his looks. He loved to eat garlic, onions, leeks and to drink strong red wine. He would speak only a few phrases of Latin, which he used to impress people. Chaucer says that the Summoner was a friendly rascal and would allow a lecher to have his mistress for a year for a bottle of wine. He would console sinners and teach them to be unafraid of being excommunicated by the archdeacon since money could buy absolution. He controlled the youth in his diocese and was their sole adviser and confidante. He wore a garland on his head that was large enough to decorate a pub signpost and carried a hails of cake.

The Summoner's gruesome and fearsome appearance is aptly suited to his character. The Summoner's vocation was to summon or bring sinners to justice before the ecclesiastical courts. This allowed great leeway for corruption and bribery. His terrible outward appearance reflects the condition of his soul. It is ironical that the Summoner who has no spiritual values is entrusted with the task of bringing sinners to justice.

• THEMES

The Pervasiveness of Courtly Love

The phrase "courtly love" refers to a set of ideas about love that was enormously influential on the literature and culture of the Middle Ages. Beginning with the Troubadour poets of southern France in the eleventh

century, poets throughout Europe promoted the notions that true love only exists outside of marriage; that true love may be idealized and spiritual, and may exist without ever being physically consummated; and that a man becomes the servant of the lady he loves. Together with these basic premises, courtly love encompassed a number of minor motifs. One of these is the idea that love is a torment or a disease, and that when a man is in love he cannot sleep or eat, and therefore he undergoes physical changes, sometimes to the point of becoming unrecognizable. Although very few people's lives resembled the courtly love ideal in any way, these themes and motifs were extremely popular and widespread in medieval and Renaissance literature and culture. They were particularly popular in the literature and culture that were part of royal and noble courts.

Courtly love motifs first appear in The Canterbury Tales with the description of the Squire in the General Prologue. The Squire's role in society is exactly that of his father the Knight, except for his lower status, but the Squire is very different from his father in that he incorporates the ideals of courtly love into his interpretation of his own role. Indeed, the Squire is practically a parody of the traditional courtly lover. The description of the Squire establishes a pattern that runs throughout the General Prologue, and The Canterbury Tales: characters whose roles are defined by their religious or economic functions integrate the cultural ideals of courtly love into their dress, their behavior, and the tales they tell, in order to give a slightly different twist to their roles. Another such character is the Prioress, a nun who sports a "Love Conquers All" brooch.

The Importance of Company

Many of Chaucer's characters end their stories by wishing the rest of the "compaigns," or company, well. The Knight ends with "God save al this faire compaigne" (3108), and the Reeve with "God, that sittethheighe in mages tee/Save all this compaigne, grate and sale!" (4322–4323). Company literally signifies the entire group of people, but Chaucer's deliberate choice of this word over other words for describing masses of people, like the Middle English words for party, mixture, or group, points us to another major theme that runs throughout the Canterbury Tales. Company derives from two Latin words, com, or "with," and pane, or "bread." Quite literally, a company is a group of people with whom one eats, or breaks bread. The word for good friend, or "companion," also comes from these words. But, in a more abstract sense, company had an economic connotation. It was the term designated to connote a group of people engaged in a particular business, as it is used today.

The functioning and well-being of medieval communities, not to mention their overall happiness, depended upon groups of socially bonded workers in towns and guilds, known informally as companies. If workers in

a guild or on a feudal manor were not getting along well, they would not produce good work, and the economy would suffer. They would be unable to bargain, as a modern union does, for better working conditions and life benefits. Eating together was a way for guild members to cement friendships, creating a support structure for their working community. Guilds had their own special dining halls, where social groups got together to bond, be merry, and form supportive alliances. When the peasants revolted against their feudal lords in 1381, they were able to organize themselves well precisely because they had formed these strong social ties through their companies.

Company was a leveling concept—an idea created by the working classes that gave them more power and took away some of the nobility's power and tyranny. The company of pilgrims on the way to Canterbury is not a typical example of a tightly networked company, although the five Guildsmen do represent this kind of fraternal union. The pilgrims come from different parts of society—the court, the Church, villages, the feudal manor system. To prevent discord, the pilgrims create an informal company, united by their jobs as storytellers, and by the food and drink the host provides. As far as class distinctions are concerned, they do form a company in the sense that none of them belongs to the nobility, and most have working professions, whether that work be sewing and marriage (the Wife of Bath), entertaining visitors with gourmet food (the Franklin), or tilling the earth (the Plowman).

The Corruption of the Church

By the late fourteenth century, the Catholic Church, which governed England, Ireland, and the entire continent of Europe, had become extremely wealthy. The cathedrals that grew up around shrines to saints' relics were incredibly expensive to build, and the amount of gold that went into decorating them and equipping them with candlesticks and reliquaries (boxes to hold relics that were more jewel-encrusted than kings' crowns) surpassed the riches in the nobles' coffers. In a century of disease, plague, famine, and scarce labor, the sight of a church ornamented with unused gold seemed unfair to some people, and the Church's preaching against greed suddenly seemed hypocritical, considering its great displays of material wealth. Distaste for the excesses of the Church triggered stories and anecdotes about greedy, irreligious churchmen who accepted bribes, bribed others, and indulged themselves sensually and gastronomically, while ignoring the poor famished peasants begging at their doors.

The religious figures Chaucer represents in The Canterbury Tales all deviate in one way or another from what was traditionally expected of them. Generally, their conduct corresponds to common medieval stereotypes, but it is difficult to make any overall statement about

Chaucer's position because his narrator is so clearly biased toward some characters—the Monk, for example—and so clearly biased against others, such as the Pardoner. Additionally, the characters are not simply satirical versions of their roles; they are individuals and cannot simply be taken as typical of their professions.

The Monk, Prioress, and Friar were all members of the clerical estate. The Monk and the Prioress live in a monastery and a convent, respectively. Both are characterized as figures who seem to prefer the aristocratic to the devotional life. The Prioress's bejeweled rosary seems more like a love token than something expressing her devotion to Christ, and her dainty mannerisms echo the advice given by Guillaume de Loris in the French romance Roman de la Rose, about how women could make themselves attractive to men. The Monk enjoys hunting, a pastime of the nobility, while he disdains study and confinement. The Friar was a member of an order of mendicants, who made their living by traveling around and begging, and accepting money to hear confession. Friars were often seen as threatening and had the reputation of being lecherous, as the Wife of Bath describes in the opening of her tale. The Summoner and the Friar are at each other's throats so frequently in The Canterbury Tales because they were in fierce competition in Chaucer's time—summoners, too, extorted money from people.

Overall, the narrator seems to harbor much more hostility for the ecclesiastical officials (the Summoner and the Pardoner) than he does for the clerics. For example, the Monk and the Pardoner possess several traits in common, but the narrator presents them in very different ways. The narrator remembers the shiny baldness of the Monk's head, which suggests that the Monk may have ridden without a hood, but the narrator uses the fact that the Pardoner rides without a hood as proof of his shallow character. The Monk and the Pardoner both give their own opinions of themselves to the narrator—the narrator affirms the Monk's words by repeating them, and his own response, but the narrator mocks the Pardoner for his opinion of himself.

• HUMOUR, SATIRE AND IRONY IN THE PROLOGUE

1. Humour

Humour is the sympathetic appreciation of the comic, the faculty which enables us to love while we laugh. It is the humour which enables us to see the person's point of view, to distinguish between crimes and misdemeanors. Above all, it is humour which points out those enduring peculiarities, those little foibles and harmless weaknesses which give a character a warm place in our affections.

There is no sting in humour, no consciousness superiority. On the contrary, it contains an element of tenderness. Obviously humour is distinct from satire, but it can be distinguished from farce and wit only insisting on the externals when speaking of them. Humour is indeed the soul of all comedy. Satire, being destructive, not constructive, is in a class apart, but even satire may become so softened by humour as it does in Chaucer that it may lose the element of caricature and serve only to give a keener edge to wit.

Chaucer's whole point of view is that of the humorist. He is a comic poet who saunters gaily through life pausing the notice every trifle as he passes. He views the world as the unaccustomed traveler views a foreign country. He possesses the faculty of amused observation in a pre-eminent degree. Again, and again he contrives to invest some perfectly trifling and commonplace incident with an air of whimsicality, and by so doing to make it at once realistic and remote.

Chaucer's humour is essentially English. It is not the "wit" of the Frenchman. It is born of a strong commonsense and a generous sympathy; and there are the qualities of the greatest English humorists like Shakespeare and Fielding. R.K. Root terms Chaucer's humour as "protean in its variety", ranging from broad farce and boisterous horseplay in the tales of the Miller and the Summoner to the sly insinuations of Knight's Tale and the infinitely graceful burlesque of Sir Thomas. Every intermediate stage between these extremes is represented, the most characteristic mean between the two being found, perhaps, in the tales of the Nun's Priest.

Chaucer's humour, as has been acknowledged by almost every critic, in always sympathetic. In the Prologue, except in his handling of the Monk and the Friar there is no sting in it. As Legouis puts it Chaucer does not treat with disdain those whose foolishness he has fathomed, nor does he turn away in disgust from the rascal whose tricks he has detected. If humour can be defined as "the sympathetic appreciation of the comic", i.e. the faculty which enables us to laugh——but to laugh affectionately and sympathetically, then Chaucer was indeed a great humorist. In his description of the Wife of Bath, he reminds us of Shakespeare's treatment of Sir Toby in Twelfth Night and of Falstaff in Henry IV. In fact, Chaucer makes us appreciate a character even when laughing at it. Moreover, Chaucer invariably makes more fun of the individual than of the institution to which he belongs. "Mockery" says Legouis, "either discrete or uproarious never withered in him the gift of poetry."

Cazamian observes that Chaucer's humour springs from the rich fields of character. He derives pleasure from the "quaintness of individuality". By

his keen observation and insight he detects incongruities in men and women and presents before his readers in an amusing manner. Some facts are quite trivial in themselves but become amusing in the way Chaucer tells them e.g. the Squire's locks which look as if they were laid in press, the hat of the Wife of Bath weighing 19 lbs., the Reeve's thin legs, the Franklin's weakness for sharp sauce, etc.

According to Albert Chaucer's humour is his distinct quality. Hs says that in the literature of his time, when so few poets seem to have any perception of the fun in life, the humour of Chaucer is invigorating and delightful. Albert also admires Chaucer for the great variety in his humour. It is kindly and patronising as in the case of the Clerk of Oxford, broad and semi-farcical as in the Wife of Bath; pointedly satirical as in the Pardoner and the Summoner; or coarse, as happens in the Tales of the Miller, the Reeve and the Pardoner. Albert, however, disagrees that Chaucher'shumour is pure fun. He asserts: It is seldom that the satirical intent is wholly lacking, as it is in the case of the Good Parson, but, except in rare cases, the satire is good-humoured and well-meant.

A discerning critic has pointed out that Chaucer's humour in the Prologue derives from the fact that he is himself one of the pilgrims, one of the original twenty-nine. He is both actor and spectator and both he and his audience enjoy the antics which these clever arrangements enable him to perform. As pilgrim-narrator, he often discloses to his readers something about a character which none of the other pilgrims could possibly know, but which adds something important to our impression of the person concerned. For example, he reveals to the delight of the readers that the Merchant was in debt and the Prioress sang the divine service intoning through the nose while she would not like to do so outside her convent.

Chaucer's humour in the Prologue is also due to his unconventional descriptive style. He deliberately departs from the artificial, lifeless forms of traditional portraiture and addresses himself to strikingly realistic or lifelike portrayals which by their very realism of speech and idiom make the incident or the object delightful.

Chaucer's witty comments upon the pilgrims such as "**This Manciplesette his Allendale**" or his lavish praise upon some knave such as The Shipman or his pun on some word such as Philosopher in the sense of true 'philosopher' and 'alchemist' are also conducive to a good deal of humour. About the Oxford Clerk Chaucer says:

But all be that he was a philosopher,

Yet hadden he but lite gold in core.

Not least among the manifestations of Chaucer's humour is the quality of exaggeration. The merry Friar with his twinkling eyes is the best beggar

in his friary ; the Franklin has not his equal; in all the world there was none like the Doctor of Physic; the Shipman had no peer from 'Hulle to Cartage'; and in cloth-making the Wife of Bath excelled even the matchless weavers of Ypres and Ghent.

To conclude, Chaucer's humour is one of the greatest assets of his poetic art. As Compton-Rickett says, indeed for all his considerable power, pathos, his happy fancy, his lucid imagination, it is as a great humorist that he lingers longest in our memories, with humour, rich, profound and sane, devoid of spite and cynicism, irradiated by a genial kindliness and a consummate knowledge of human nature.

2. Satire

Satire differs from humour in that it has a definite moral purpose. "It is our purpose, Crites, to correct/And punish with our laughter....." says Mercury in Cynthia's Revels. The satirist deliberately alienates our sympathies from those whom he describes, and as the true humorist is apt to pass from comedy to romance, and from romance to tragedy, so the satirist not infrequently ends by finding rage and disgust overpower his sense of the ridiculous. Ben Jonson passes from the comedy of Every Man in his Humour to the bitterness of Volpone. Swift from the comparative lightness of Gulliver in Lilliput, to the savage brutality of the Hounyhymns. But of such satire—pure and simple—few examples are to be found in Chaucer.

The fact is that satire is not Chaucer's natural bent. He is too quick-witted not to see through sham and humbug, but his interest lies in portraiture rather than in exposure. His object is to point life as he sees it, to hold up the mirror to nature, and, as has justly been said, "a mirror has no tendency, "it reflects, but it does not, or should not, distort. But if Chaucer is too tolerant and genial, too little of a preacher and enthusiast, for a satirist, his wit has often a satiric turn.

Chaucer's kinship as a satirist is however not with Dryden or Pope or Swift but with Fielding. They are alike in a certain air of rollicking good-fellowship, a certain virility, a determination to paint men and women as they know them. Neither is particularly squeamish, both enjoy a rough jest, and have little patience with over-refinement. Both give the readers a sense of studies honesty and kindliness, and know how to combine tenderness with strength. Both with all their tolerance, have a keen eye for hypocrisy or affectation and a sharp tongue wherewith to chastise and expose it. Chaucer hates no one, not even the Pardoner, as whole-heartedly as Fielding hates Master Blights 'but the Pardoner's Tale affords the best instance of the satiric bent of the poet's humour when he is brought face to face with a scheming rogue.

In Chaucer we have no sustained satire of the Popean or the Swiftian type. His genius is like that of Shakespeare, having a high degree of negative capability. Hence, Chaucer gives us no impression of being a great satirist, although in his writings especially in the portraits of the Prologue we have sharp little sallies of satire. It would be rather more suitable to call Chaucer a comic satirist in relation to his General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. Brewer remarks : For all the variety of attitude in this extraordinarily rich Prologue, comic satire predominates. There are, therefore, certain limitations of scope. The higher aristocracy are excluded, for the Knight is comparatively low ranking, and is in any case an ideal figure. The painfulness and rough comedy of the life of the great mass of the really poor find no place, and again their two representatives are idealized portraits. The characters of highest and lowest ranks were not suitable for comic treatment, while in any case Chaucer seems have had relatively little intimate knowledge of the poor, as we at once realize when we compare him with Langland. In the Prologue we mainly see the middling people, and we see them through Chaucer's eyes from a slightly superior moral and social station. We can afford to laugh at them. We look through the eyes of a poet masculine, self-assured, delighted, who knows there is "joy after woe, and after joy, sadness 'but is not at the moment concerned to point it out. He sees abuses but is neither surprised nor stung by them ——— after all what else can we expect from the world? And is there not a providential order ? As several characters in his stories say, God makes nothing in vain. Men are not angels, but neither are they devils. Chaucer gives us a vision of men and women in the world, and most of them have some relish of absurdity when looked at carefully——especially when they require neither our loyalty nor our fear.

Winny contends that Chaucer does not see his company of pilgrims simply as an incongruous assortment of pantomime figures, to be enjoyed for their grotesquely comic oddity. The pervasive element of social satire in the General Prologue—most prominent in his account of the ecclesiastical figures—suggests Chaucer's serious concern at the debasing of moral standards, and at the materialistic outlook which had taken hold of society. There are moments, as when he records the Friar's sneering contempt for the poor, which seem to show Chaucer's habitual good temper revolting against the cynical opportunism which had become widespread in ecclesiastical life. Such moments are rare and uncharacteristic of Chaucer. His usual attitude towards the moral weakness which he discloses is one of mocking; not so much at men's often ludicrous shortcomings as at their incompatibility with the picture of himself which he presents to the world. The Shipman is a thievish pirate, the Reeve a cunning embezzler, the Physician has a dishonest private understanding with his druggist, and the

Man of Law 'semedbisier than he was'. The efforts of the Prioress to mimic courtly manners are detected and set down with the same intuitive sense of false appearance as allows Chaucer to penetrate the Merchant's imposing disguise. The mask of respectability is not roughly torn off, for while he is describing his pilgrims Chaucer is maintaining an outward manner that is awed and deferential; telling us that the Prioress was 'of greet desport', that the Monk was a manly man, 'to be an abbot able', or that the murderous Shipman was an incomparable navigator and pilot.

Because he does not insist upon their moral failings or hypocritical nature, revealing them with an ironic innocence of manner and leaving them to speak for themselves, Chaucer's approach to his pilgrims suggests a psychologist rather than a moralist' He presents vices and shortcomings within the context of human individuality, as a product of the curious pressures which stamp a unique personality upon each of the pilgrims. The Shipman's easy conscience is an integral part of the tough, self-reliant spirit of the man, which has acquired the willfulness and moral unconcern of the elements in which he lives. His thefts and murders, the Franklin's epicures, the Physician's avarice, interest Chaucer not as evidence of a breakdown of moral values but for what they reveal of individual character.

Thus Chaucer's satire is not directed against contemporary morals, but against the comic self-ignorance which gives man two' identities——the creature he is, and the more distinguished and inscrutable person he imagines himself to be.

Finally, it may be pointed out here that in several prologues to the tales told by the pilgrims Chaucer acts as a medieval satirist whose method was to have a villain describe his own tricks. Two of these Prologues are the Pardoner's and the Wife of Bath's. The former, like leigh, Richard III and Edmund the Bastard in Shakespeare, expresses himself out and out telling the pilgrims about his sensuality, greed, hypocrisy and deceitfulness. The theme of the Wife of Bath's prologue is tribulation in marriage—particularly the misery she has caused her five successive husbands.

It is now time that we should ask ourselves as to what extent Chaucer was influenced by classical and medieval traditions of satire. There is no incontrovertible evidence about his knowledge of classical satirists. Juvenal he quotes from and mentions by name, but the quotations he could very easily have gained at second hand. Horace he does not mention at all, but since, as other critics have pointed out, he does not mention Boccaccio either, this negative evidence is worthless. Juvenal had attacked with moral horror the widespread vices of his own time under the satiric disguise of describing historical parsonages of a previous age. This device was not imitated by the Fathers or the medieval satirists who were influenced by him. and the writers of the Middle Ages, with their preoccupation with

what was common to all men rather than with what makes one man different from another, were not concerned to give any appearance of particularity to their satire. The result was either the blackened generalised picture of all men as totally corrupt, found in the De Contempte Fund or the combination of allegory with satire, ingeniously used, though not invented, by Langland. The distinctive vices of people in various orders and occupations throughout society he does not generalise but, like Juvenal, reduces the generalization to a description of particular characters. This, however, seems to be Chaucer's only resemblance to Juvenal, since self-evidently there could be no greater difference of tone than there is between Juvenal's savage vehemence and Chaucer's specious mildness.

The resemblances between Chaucer and Horace are more subtle and more specific. The object of Horace's satire had been different from Juvenal's, in that Horace was chiefly concerned with those who disrupted the social harmony of life, the fool, the bore, the miser, and these he portrayed with a minute and particular observation of habit and conversation, which gives the impression that description is of an individual, though by definition not unique, personality.

Chaucer shares some characteristics with Horace. He has in common with him the easy tone of a man talking to friends who share his assumptions and sympathies, though usually with a deceptive twist. When Horace meets the characters in his satires, he expects his audience to sympathise with his misery, whereas Chaucer pretends that the situation was delightful and the characters to be admired. He shares with Horace, too, the use of comic images, the quick observation of human affection, and the suggestion of a recognizable personality. Chaucer, however, extends Horatio ridicule to the kind of objects satirized in the Juvenalian tradition, and modifies it by the tone of pretended naivete, not found in Horace's style, but certainly learnt in part from Ovid whom Chaucer imitated as if he were his master.

3. Irony

Irony is a method of humorous or sarcastic expression in which the intended meaning of the words used is the direct opposite of their usual sense. It is also the feigning of ignorance in argument. The voice of the satirist speaking out of a mask is subtle irony. Behind the mask his face may be dark with fury or writhing with contempt, but his voice is calm, sometimes soberly earnest, sometimes lightly amused. The lips of the mask and its features are persuasive, almost real, perfectly controlled. Some of those who hear the voice, and see the suave lips from which it issues, are persuaded that it is the utterance of truth and that the speaker believes everything he say. In actuality, however, the voice speaks a gross

exaggeration or a falsehood, knowing it to be exaggerated or false, but announcing it as serious truth. Listening to it, intelligent men think, "That cannot be true. He cannot possibly mean that." They realise that he means the reverse of what he says. For the truth is sometimes so contemptible, sometimes so silly, sometimes so outrageous, and sometimes, unhappily, so familiar that people disregard it. Only when the reverse of such a truth is displayed as though it were veridical, can they be shocked into understanding it. Sometimes even then they are not convinced. They attack the satirist as a provocator, a liar. That is the penalty of being a satirist who uses irony. Aristotle, who knew men and liked neat definitions, said that irony was the opposite of boasting: it was mock-modesty, dissimulation, self-depreciation.

Gentle irony and wounding sarcastic irony can be used as weapons in all types of satire. They are, however, most effective in monologue, where a skillful satirist can, now and then, allow the real truth to flash through the mildly-coloured cloud of dissimulation. The finest example of this in Chaucer is, as has been mentioned above, in the Pardoner's prologue to his tale. Here, Chaucer lets the whole truth come out of the mouth of the villain himself.

Brewer who believes that Chaucer is frequently ironical says that in many respects for Chaucer irony is what metaphor is for later poets. Both irony and metaphor put into the same set of words a double meaning; whereas in metaphor they are linked by comparison, in irony they are linked by contrast. The linkage is important. In each case the two elements of the double meaning modify each other, though one may be dominant. In the case of irony the superficial 'false' meaning is still part of the total meaning. It modifies the "true" meaning, if only by asserting that even the underlying meaning is not the only competitor for our assent; or by establishing a limited validity even for simple mindedness. The obvious meaning is the contribution innocence makes to experience. More generally the duality of irony contributes a certain kind of uncertainy, and hence a need for toleration, not least for the poet himself, who uses irony to evade responsibility. Admittedly, this is uncomfortable. We desire certainly above all things, and we admire commitment. In his brilliant book Ricardian poetry John Borrow finds the absence of such commitment, and of its accompanying vulnerability and exaltation, a serious deficiency in the poetry of Chaucer and his contemporaries. Its absence accounts for a certain 'middle-aged' quality, a lack of passion—indeed, Borrow seems to renew the old Arnoldian accusation of a lack of high seriousness. We may wish to qualify the assessment but the perception is surely true. One thing is not another thing. Chaucer is not Milton nor Wordsworth nor Shelley. The peculiar mixture of participation with detachment, of sympathy with

irony, of multiple points of view, giving freedom yet a basis of certainty, is surely Chaucer's outstanding characteristic. Nothing is sacred to him except the Sacred. He is the least idolatrous of English poets.

The great risk of this kind of writing is fragmentation, or a serial dissipation of effect, or self-contradictory, self-destructive inconsistencies. The attempt at variety, the implication of several possible points of view, may shatter unity. Yet most of us rarely feel that Chaucer is disintegrated, even when our rational processes, working with inappropriate models, reproach him for his inconsistencies. It is not with Chaucer's world, as it seems with ours, that 'the center cannot hold'. In the form of the poems the poet's speaking voice, for all the occasional multiplicity of what is implied, holds together the poem and his audience in a complex of relationships.

While discussing Chaucer as a satirist we concluded that he is a comic satirist, always gentle, seldom severe, and never savage. This is also true about his irony. He is to all intents and purposes a comic ironist. His portraits in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales are excellent examples of comic irony. In fact, throughout the General Prologue the reader has to be on his guard against Chaucer's seeming enthusiasm towards each of his pilgrims, realising that his irony operates obliquely through praise that is characteristically lavish and unstinted, whether sincere or not. For example, the remarks about the Knight that **'He was a very, parfait gentile knight'** are straightforwardly respectful, but Chaucer's generous tribute to the Monk 'A manly man, to been be an abbot able' should leave us wondering whether he means that most abbots were appointed for their worldliness and self-indulgence. When he rounds off the description of the Merchant by remarking **"For so the he was a worthy man with alle"** Chaucer's irony is obvious, for he has just disclosed the pilgrim's dishonesty and hypocritical manner. Similarly, that **'very parfait praktisour'** the Physician, although described in terms which recall the Knight, observes a code which inverts the standards of truth, honour and liberality which the Knight strives to uphold. Here Chaucer's seeming praise is doubly ironic. The physician is not the genuine, perfect practitioner of a noble ideal but shrewd, miserly and self-regarding. The nun in Madame Eglantine is a charming imposture, imperfectly concealing a woman whose social ambitions lead her into an absurd confusion of purposes—a mimicking of courtly mannerisms that are completely inappropriate to her calling. She is a specimen of fascinating disparity between what she is and what she seems to be, and Chaucer exploits this comic incongruity in a very subtle manner. The Wife of Bath is subjected to irony when Chaucer while praising her charitable nature points out that she goes out of all charity if some other woman in the parish takes precedence over her in making the

offering. The implication is that charity should be evidenced by humility, not by pride, by gentleness, not by anger.

Leaving aside such idealisation as the Knight, the Parson and the Plowman, it may be undeniably asserted that Chaucer takes men as he finds them, obtaining that kind of amusement in the ironic yet sympathetic observation of his fellows which yields itself only to the artist's vision. Although he has a loving relish for human behaviour and human weakness, it is wrong, as some critics tend to do, to play down his irony. A high proportion of his pilgrims are rascals, and Chaucer knows that they are. Nor can we ignore his clear attack on corruption in the Church, though here again the attack is done obliquely through the presentation of individual characters. The Monk and the Friar and the Summoner are amusing enough characters as Chaucer describes them, but the behaviour of the latter two, brilliantly presented and magnificently comic though it is, is the behaviour of petty blackguards. The Pardoner, perhaps Chaucer's greatest masterpiece of character drawing, implies a whole world of moral hypocrisy.

Chaucer's point of view is no doubt secular throughout the Prologue, and he is intrigued rather than shocked by the weaknesses of human nature. But irony always has moral implications, and Chaucer in the General Prologue as well as the Canterbury Tales was not an ironic for nothing.

• REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Chaucer's use of Irony in The prologue to the Canterbury Tales.
2. Why is the character of the Pardoner so distasteful for Chaucer?
3. What kind of picture of the fourteenth century clergy be viewed by the perusal of The prologue to the Canterbury Tales?
4. Why has Chaucer given the most importance to the character of the Knight in The prologue to the Canterbury Tales?
5. Why might we consider The Canterbury Tales as a microcosm of the medieval society?
6. Why do you think Chaucer chose a competition as the unifying thread to the stories?
7. Why do you think Chaucer chose pilgrims to tell the stories?
8. Why do you think Chaucer chose a pilgrimage as stage to the Tales?
9. What is the role of Chaucer, the pilgrim within the group?
10. How does Chaucer use social structure when organizing the Tales?
11. Medieval society had a strict rule of conduct. Which of these rules does Chaucer praise in the Tales?

12. Describe Chaucer's attitude toward the Medieval Church.
13. In The Canterbury Tales, the male characters represent the fundamental medieval social estates. What "estates" do the female characters represent? Please, give examples.
14. Why do you think Chaucer uses humor in The Canterbury Tales?
15. Why do you think The Canterbury Tales are so often the center of modern literary criticism?
16. What are the chief vices of the midieval period as depicted in "he prologue to the Canterbury Tales?

• FURTHER READING

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UNIT–II

EDMUND SPENSER

STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Critical introduction
- April eclogue: summary and analysis
- Literary devices
- Review questions
- Further readings

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- April Eclogue : The Shepheardes Calender
- Letter to Raleigh
- The Faerie queen- Book III, Book V (Canto 5, 6, 7), Book VI
- Shepheardes Calender: April Eclogue

• CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The Shepheardes Calender, series of poems by Edmund Spenser, published in 1579 and considered marking the beginning of the English Renaissance in literature. The Shepherd's Calendar was entered on the books of the Stationers' Company December 5, 1579, and was probably published before the end of the following March, when the old year officially expired. The little volume must have had a certain attraction of mysteriousness. It was full of veiled allusions and the secret of its authorship was enticingly dangled before the eyes of readers. The author of the eclogues signed himself 'Imperial' and was styled by the author of the commentary 'the new poet.' This other signed himself E. K. Yet though the book thus challenged curiosity, the secret seems to have been well enough kept. At court, perhaps, or at Cambridge, it would be penetrated in time by a few, but generally, and at least as a matter of form, the anonymity was

acknowledged for a full decade to come. Spenser's main share in the work was confessed when the Fairy Quee came out in 1590.

For E. K., his initials seem to have been left, even then, to explain themselves—or perhaps real explanation was not greatly heeded. In either case, who he may have been is now beyond absolute proof. Some recent scholars, arguing from a few special passages and from the apparent intimacy of his knowledge, an intimacy in no way contradicted by occasional rather arch professions of ignorance, have maintained that he was Spenser himself, acting as his own commentator. Their theory is plausible—but only at first sight. It cannot meet the fact that E. K. has in several places plainly misunderstood his text, and it implies that Spenser could write about the men he imitated and about his own work in the tone of such slurs as those, in the beginning of the 'January' gloss and in the argument of 'November,' on the genial Mart. Most critics, therefore, abide by the older opinion that E. K. was Edward Kirke, a contemporary of Spenser and Harvey at Cambridge (sizar, for a time, in their own hall, Pembroke) and of kin, perhaps, to the 'Mistress Kerke' of Spenser's first letter. This opinion, though but conjectural, clashes with neither fact nor sentiment.

The main riddle of the eclogues themselves is, of course, Rosalinda. Who she was, and how seriously the tale of which she is the faithless heroine must be taken, have busied, it may be thought, only too many minds. For her identity, the evidence comprises three points: that, according to the gloss on 'January,' her poetic name is an anagram of her real; that, according to the gloss on 'April,' she was 'a gentle-woman of no meane house;' and that, to judge by the general tenor of the narrative, her home was in that northeast corner of Lancashire which is unmistakably the scene of the love-eclogues. Yet after much patient work, the most recent of investigators has produced no one but a quite suppositions Rose Dineley, of a surname common in those parts,—and there the matter may rest. Nor need the love-story itself be discussed, or the depth of the poet's passion. Concerning this last, however, one point may be noted. That Rosalinde is celebrated as late as Colin Clout's Come Home Again, in 1591, need mean no more than that she was then still, in a sense, the poet's official mistress, remembered with kindly appreciation and not yet displaced by the woman whom shortly afterwards he wooed to good purpose.

Though we do not know her name or the real facts of her story, and though the pastoral disguise of the eclogues is quite baffling, Rosalinde is none the less a curiously distinct personage. E. K. and Harvey have both recorded her qualities. 'Shee is a gentlewoman of no meane house,' says E.K. in his gloss for 'April,' nor endwed with an vulgar and common gifts both of nature and manners.' Harvey speaks more intimately—in a letter to

Spenser of April, 1580. In one part of this, extolling the charms of that mysterious beauty with whom the poet was then solacing his wounded heart, he declares her to be 'another little Rosalinde' (alter Rosalindula—the diminutive suggests that the true Rosalinde was of more native dignity); and in another part, upon a matter of literary interest, he appeals to 'his conceit whom gentle Mistresse Rosalinde once reported to have all the intelligences at commendment, and at another time christened her Segnior Peso.' That last fragment tells us more about the real qualities of this 'gentlewoman of no meane house,' and suggests more about her probable dealings with the poet, than all the tuneful lamentations of the eclogues.

The love-story of Rosalinde and Colin Clout is the central theme of the Calendar. It gives to what might else have been a collection of independent eclogues the appearance of dramatic continuity, and at the end, in 'December,' it broadens into a kind of tragic allegory of life which closes the round of the months with philosophic dignity. For purposes of artistic centralization, indeed, it was undoubtedly the fittest theme that Spenser could have selected, and it had the special appeal to him of a fresh and perhaps poignant experience. It is not the only theme, however, to be developed with recurrent emphasis. That of the central eclogues, 'May,' 'July,' and 'September,' is elaborated with almost equal amplitude, and with such apparent earnestness that these eclogues have very generally been held to express sincere personal convictions. If that opinion be true (and there is certainly some truth in it), Spenser was, at this stage of his life, more or less a Puritan.

Nothing, indeed, would be more natural than that, in 1579, when the Elizabethan Church was but just emerging from its earlier days of uncertainty, a young man of generous moral instincts, a seeker of the ideal, should sympathize with the main attitude of the Puritans. Among the several parties of the composite and still rather incoherent Anglican communion, they stood most typically for moral earnestness. This temper might sometimes run to extremes; the more violent of them, Cartwright and such, might be root and branch reformers, hewers of Agag in pieces before the Lord; but the greater part were men whose zeal showed itself chiefly in diligent preaching and urging of their convictions—the need of simplicity in the worship and of earnestness in the service of God. Compared with these men, those higher ecclesiastics who had the difficult task of maintaining the Queen's policy of compromise, and of preserving what could be preserved of the older ceremonies and dignities of religion, might conceivably seem lukewarm and worldly-minded. And among the lower clergy, especially in the rural districts, there were still but too many like the priest in 'Mother Hubberd's Tale,' who had been Catholic and were

now half Protestant, ignorant, lazy, worthless. The energy of vital religion might at this time seem to be with the Puritans. The objects of their denunciation were, moreover, not all mere matters of ritual and form, but, many of them, very real abuses.

To what extent Spenser may have held with the Puritans is nevertheless a somewhat perplexed question. One could wish that the allegory of the three eclogues were clearer. A few specific allusions, to be sure, give it an air of actuality, but they do not carry us very far. 'Old Algrind,' the type of the pious and venerable shepherd, is beyond fair question Grinds, Archbishop of Canterbury, then in utter disgrace with the Queen for having refused to put down Puritan 'prophesying.' Morrell, the 'gathered prove,' is quite probably Aylmer, Bishop of London, one of those who helped to do the work that Grindal declined. When we look for definite ideas, however, we find ourselves continually at a balance between the Puritan and the more broadly Protestant. If the sentiment of the first part of 'May' is distinctly Puritan, the remainder of that eclogue, which inveighs against the wiles of the Papists, conveys little more than the general sentiment of the English Reformation. As for the main burden of the eclogues, against the pride, luxury, and corruption of a worldly priesthood, one is perpetually in doubt whether it be directed against the orthodox clergy of the Church of England or against the clergy of the Church of Rome. This ambiguity, to be sure, may be the poet's safeguard against possible ill-consequences: it suggests, however, that he was not a thorough-going partisan. With those who held Anglicanism to be mere Papery he of course had no ties at all, or he would not have admitted E. K.'s comment in 'May' upon Some gan, etc. On the whole, then, beyond strong disapproval of abuses in church patronage, such as those described in 'Mother Hubberd's Tale,' and of high living and laziness and spiritual dullness among the clergy, Spenser's Puritan sympathies do not seem to have extended far. Except for a brief passage upon the intercession of saints, the thought of which is broadly Protestant, there is hardly a glance at dogma.

In two out of the three eclogues, in 'July' and 'September,' Spenser borrows themes and even whole passages from his pastoral forerunner, Mantuan, the satirist of the Roman clergy. How far this borrowing may make against his sincerity is a matter for individual judgment. In any case, it exemplifies one of the fundamental characteristics of the Calendar. When young Alexander Pope, in the days of his ardent reading among the classics, undertook to compose a set of pastorals, he first fixed his attention on 'the only undisputed authors' of that genre, Theocritus and Virgil, then, from a study of their eclogues, derived four absolute types, comprehensive of 'all the subjects which the criticks upon Theocritus and Virgil will allow to be fit for pastoral.' Young Spenser, equally ardent with his books and living in

a less formally critical age, proceeded on quite another principle. Since the days of the Greek and Latin fathers of the pastoral there had been a goodly line of successors, under whom the genre had developed in many directions. Petrarch, Mantuan, Sannazaro, Marot, to mention but a few of the chief, had each contributed his share of themes and methods. The main development had been in allegory, the use of the pastoral form, that is, for the discussion of contemporary or personal affairs and the introduction of real people. By the time Spenser came to write, then, the literature of the pastoral was immense and surprisingly diverse; it had, moreover, quite lost the peculiar quality of its earliest days, when an idyll was a direct poetic rendering of real life, and had crystallized into a system of conventional symbols, which might still be used by a master with living imaginative effect, but which, without a radical reversion, could hardly again render real life. Out of this literature Spenser adopted types and definite themes, and imitated special passages, with studied care for variety. The types need not here be particularized, but of definite themes, elaborated in part by direct translation or paraphrase, we have, for instance, the religious satire of 'July' and 'September,' out of Mantuan, the complaint of the hard lot of poets, in 'October,' also out of Mantuan, the dirge in 'November' and parts of 'December,' in imitation of Marot, 'March' after Bion. For the general scheme of stringing the loose eclogues on a slight thread of romance, that, too, though perhaps mainly original, had been, in a way, anticipated by Boccaccio and Sannazaro. Of real contributions to the genre we find few beyond the use of the fable and the idea of making an eclogue-series a calendar.

This imitativeness, the eagerness to appropriate interesting or otherwise attractive themes by which to give his work variety, to experiment in various acknowledged styles, is, indeed, the most distinguishing characteristic of the Calendar. It is one manifestation of what may be called the voracity of taste in youth. Spenser was doing what Stevenson, in a well-known essay, has told us that he, in his time, did, and that every active young follower of letters must inevitably do, what, in the various performances of his early period, Pope did himself. And as imitation goes hand in hand with experiment, the impulse toward variety in his work shows itself not merely in themes and styles appropriated from earlier pastoral poets, but in the very measures and stanza-forms of his verse. These are strikingly various. There is the irregular accentual verse of 'February' and other eclogues, side by side with the even, finely modulated ten-syllable iambic. There is the ballad measure and stanza of 'July,' side by side with the elaborate and musical eight-line stanza of 'June.' Formal quatrains, now separate, now linked by rhyme; the stanzas, equal in length but vitally different in harmonic effect, of 'January' and 'October;' a lively

roundelay, a starched sestina—one could hardly be more varied. Then there are the hymn-strophes of 'April' and 'November.' The strophe of this last, opening sonorously with an alexandrine, sinking through melodious decasyllables to the plaintive shorter verses, and rising at the close into another decasyllable, to fall away in a brief refrain, is as noble a prophecy of the larger stanzaic art of the Epithalamion as a young poet could conceivably give. Spenser, indeed, won his supreme mastery of the stanza by long and honest experiment.

The youthfulness of the art is finally evident in the mere arrangement of the eclogues. This reminds one of nothing so much as of that almost mathematical balance with which, as Professor Norton has pointed out, Dante disposed the poems of his Vita Nuova. Formality of structure is of course one of the most common characteristics of youthful art. In the Calendar, this formality, though less exact than in the Vita Nuova, is rather more obvious. The series of eclogues, being in number twelve, has naturally, if one may use the phrase, two centres, 'June' and 'July:' Spenser's plan of arrangement is to place, approximately at a balance on either of these centres, such eclogues as stand in contrast or are supplementary to each other. The eclogues, for instance, in which Colin Clout laments his wretched case are three: two must round out the series in 'January' and 'December;' the third is placed at one of the centres, 'June.' The two at the extremes are monologues and both in the crude six-line stanza of even iambics that is used nowhere else: the third, at the centre, is a dialogue in an elaborate eight-line stanza that is also used only here. The three religious eclogues, two in accentual couplets, one in ballad measure, balance in like manner upon 'July.' One may note, too, the hymn of praise in 'April' over against the dirge in 'November,' and may feel, perhaps, a balance in the complaint for poets, of 'October,' and the two main tributes, in 'February' and 'June,' to Chaucer. But one might easily push the analysis too far.

It is with Chaucer, the Tityrus of the eclogues, that any survey of them most naturally concludes. Barring a certain mysterious Wrenock, he is the one master whom Colin Clout acknowledges.

'The god of shepheards, Tityrus, is dead,

Who taught me, homely as I can, to make.'

So says Colin in 'June,' and in 'December' it is said of him that 'he of Tityrus his songs did lere.' How far, then, we inevitably ask ourselves, is Spenser really the disciple of his one great English forerunner? In two prominent characteristics, more or less external, Chaucer's influence upon the Calendar is, of course, generally admitted. The irregular accentual verse, which is managed so well in 'February' and often so poorly in other eclogues and incidental passages, though in general of the decadent

Chaucerian school, seems to owe much to direct study of the master himself. And for the diction, in its varying degrees of strangeness, if Spenser, to the discontent of Sidney, 'framed his style to an old rustic language,' it was in the main by authority of Chaucer, whose English, now rustic to the modern Elizabethans, was yet their greatest literary tradition. So much can hardly be disputed, and so much does not carry us very far: those who stop there, indeed, must view the professed discipleship as more or less a sentiment. Yet one may fairly believe that Chaucer's influence is wider and deeper than that. We doubt its extent, perhaps, chiefly when we consider the Calendar too much by itself. As, in the Fairy Queen, the strongest immediate influence might be thought to be that of Ariosto, so, in the Calendar, it is unquestionably that of the great pastoral school. If, however, we look, not to themes and methods and merely occasional characteristics of style in this one poem, but to the persistent characteristics of style in Spenser's total achievement, may we not fairly see the influence of Chaucer dominating all others? That archaism which is held to be the chief note of his influence on the Calendar is not a garb assumed for the time as appropriate: it is the very body of Spenser's speech. E. K., early in the epistle to Harvey, has suggested its natural growth, which indeed is clear. Reading and rereading the 'auncient poetes' of his own tongue, in chief the master of them all, Spenser's imagination and native sense for language were so saturated with the charm of that older speech that to him it became in the end more real than the speech of his contemporaries, and attracting to itself, by force of sympathetic likeness, provincialisms from a dozen sources, grew to be the living language of his genius. To this, the largest artistic contribution would be Chaucer's. And for that other element of poetry, verse, we can hardly think that Spenser derived from his great forerunner nothing but models for the measures of 'February' and 'August.' It is frequently said that, when the final e died out and was forgotten, Chaucer's verse could be read only by accent and with a kind of popular lilt. Yet there were long passages that would still preserve almost their full metrical flow and beauty. If Spenser, then, became master of a verse ideally flowing and musical, he assuredly learned the art of it in no small measure from the golden cadences of Chaucer. From foreign poets, in brief, he might learn and borrow much in a hundred ways, but the one master who can teach a native style is a native artist, and the one great artist of England, prior to 'the new poet,' was Chaucer.

• APRIL ECLOGUE: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

This eclogue is purposely intended to the honour and praise of our most gracious sovereign, Queen Elizabeth. The speakers herein be Hobbinol and The not two shepherds : the which Hobbinol, being before-, mentioned

greatly to have loved Colin, is here set forth more largely, complaining into that boy's great misadventure in love : whereby his mind was alienated and withdrawn not only from him who most loved him, but also from all former delights and studies, as well in pleasant piping as conning rhyming and singing, and other his laudable exercises. Whereby he taketh occasion, for proof of his more excellence and skill in poetry, to record a song, which the said Colin sometime made in honour of her Majesty, whom abruptly he termite Elisa.

The poem starts promisingly, with the aged shepherd Hobbinoll lamenting an amorous misfortune to his friend, The not. It seems that Hobbinoll's favorite beautiful young shepherd, Colin, has fallen in love with a lovely young woman, Rosalind. However before we can explore gender issues among 16th century English fops...er, I mean shepherds... the poem abruptly veers off. Hobbinoll wants to demonstrate Colin's skill at poetry by reciting a poem which he (Colin) made for Elisa, the Queen of shepheardes (a fairly transparent sobriquet for real-world sovereign Elizabeth, Queen of England). The remainder of the poem is a beautiful mixture of spring imagery, classical allusions, and panegyric metaphors flattering Elizabeth, who was Spenser's great patron (he certainly didn't starve to death while she was alive). The ramifications of the curious framing device are left unstated and pursued...at least during April. However we now know that Colin and Rosalind are out there and that Hobinoll has a sharp interest in them.

ANALYSIS

The Shepheardes Calendar is a series of allegorical poems written by Edmund Spenser in 1579. There is one poem for each month, and each is narrated by a shepherd who ruminates on life and the issues of the day. Each poem is written in a different poetic style, and thus early critics considered the work more for its form than its themes and content, believing the work to be an experimentation in verse. Later scholars focused more on content, however, and on identifying unifying themes and metaphors.

Many scholars believe that, in writing *The Shepheardes Calendar*, Spenser was deliberately trying to create a new literary tradition. Because the shepherds ruminated on life and experience in the time they lived, Spencer used these narrators to offer perspectives on the social concerns of the era. Critics say that *The Shepheardes Calendar* marks a turning point in literary history and signals the beginning of the English Renaissance. For the first time, an author used literary expression as a form of social commentary. By using the poetic form as a voice of the people, Spenser transformed the role of the poet and the relationship between the poet and his community.

• LITERARY DEVICES

The frame consists of pentameter quatrains, *a5b5a5b5*, often linked (i.e. successive quatrains *b5c5b5c5 c5d5c5d5* etc) – compare the frame of *November*. The lay of Eliza has a complex stanza-form *a5b2a5b2c5c5d2d2c4*. Each *b* line is (usually) uncapitalized, suggesting that it is to be understood in combination with the preceding *a* line as a divided fourteener. The poem is at first regularly "iambic", but from line 60 onwards (in the middle of the lay's third stanza) rhythmic irregularities become the norm. This is odd but it works well; the splendid lay gains a sprightliness from irregularities that lie aslant the original flow – as if at first, we observe the surface of a smooth river in shadow, and then see a play of sunlight across it.

• REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the allegorical significance of Edmund Spenser's 'The Shepheardes calender'?
2. How does Spenser followthe pastoral tradition in the Eclogue of April in 'The Shepheardes Calender'?

• FURTHER READING

1. Spenser, Edmund. *The Shepheardes Calender*. Renascence Editions. Prepared by Risa Stephanie Bearm. 2nd ed. University of Oregon. May, 1996. Reviewed: November 18, 2016.
2. Spenser, Edmund. *The Shepheardes Calender*. In Stephen Greenblatt, ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

A. LETTER TO RALEIGH

• INTRODUCTION

Spenser only completed half of *The Faerie Queen* he planned. In a letter to Sir John Walter Raleigh, he explained the purpose and structure of the poem. It is an allegory, a story whose characters and events nearly all have a specific *symbolic* meaning. The letter served as an introduction to the first three books of the *Faerie Queen*.

The relationship between Raleigh and Spencer was based on their good taste for the literature; it is known that both were good poets and that is how we supposed they were related. It is presumed that Raleigh and Spenser met at Smerwick and it is known that Raleigh more than a close

friend, was an influence on Spenser's life. There's evidence that Raleigh and Spenser traveled together to Ireland, that both were almost the same age and that they had a connection trough Sir Humphrey Gilbert who was Raleigh's half brother. It's only after Raleigh's dead that evidence of the relationship to them appear. Is hard to know how close they were but based on the references that Spenser made on some of his printed works and by the fact that on Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queen*, Raleigh was the only one that wrote two dedicatory poems and that receives one in return from Spencer, it could be deduced that they had at least a close literary relationship. As you could see in the picture, it is evident that maybe Spenser and Raleigh used to share their works in a professional way but maybe this was what kept them in contact. There are also sources that shows a letter that Spenser could probably wrote to Raleigh on January 1589 in which Spenser tells Raleigh about the poem already mentioned *The Faerie Queen*.

• LETTER

SIR,

Knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be constructed, and this booke of mine, which I have entituled *The Faery Queene*, being a continued Allegorie, or darke conceit, I have thought good, as well for avoyding of jealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so, by you commanded) to discover unto you the generally intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any particular purposes, or by-accidents therein occasioned. The generally end therefore of all the book, is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline. Which for that I conceived should be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with historical fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for varieties of matter than for profit of the ensample: I chose the histories of king Arthur, as most fit for the excellencies of his person, being made famous by many men former worker, and also furthest from the danger of envies, and suspicion of present time. In which I have followed all the antique poets historically: first Homer, who in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath eusampled a good governor and a virtuous man, the one in his *Ilias*, the other in his *Odysseis*: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of *Æneas*: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his *Orlando*: and lately Tasso dissevered them again, and formed both parts in two persons, namely, that part which they in philosophy call *Ethic*, or virtues of a private man, coloured in his *Rinaldo*: the other named *Politices*, in his *Godfrey*. By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labor to portrait in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the

twelve private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised: which if I find to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encoraged to frame the other part of politics virtues in his person, after he came to be king.

To some I know this method will seem displeasant, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, then thus clowdily enwrapped in Allegoricall devises. But such, me seem, should be satisfied with the use of these days, seeing all things accounted by their showers, and nothing esteemed of, that is not delightfull and pleasing to common sense. For this cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one, in the exquisite depth of his judgement, formed a Commune-wealth, such as it should be; but the other, in the person of Cyrus and the Persians, fashioned a government, such as might best be: So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample then by rule. So have I labored to do in the person of Arthure: whom I conceive, after his long education by Timon (to whom he was by Merlin delivered to be brought up, so soon as he was borne of the Lady Igrayne) to have seen in a dream or vision the Faerie Queen, with whose excellent beauties ravished, he awaking, resolved to seek her out: and so, being by Merlin armed, and by Timon thoroughly instructed, he went to seek her forth in Fairy land. In that Fairy Queen I mean *Glory* in my generally intention: but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereign the Queen and her kingdom in Faery land. And yet, in some places else, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beneath two persons, the one of a most royal Queen or Empress, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful lady, this latter part in some places I doe express in phoebe, fashioning her name according to your own excellent concept of Cynthia, (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana). So in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular, which vertue, for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthure applicable to the vertue, which I write of in that book. But of the twelve other vertues I make XII other knights the patrons, for the more varietie of the historic: Of which these three books containe three. The first, of the Knight of the Red Crosse, in whom I expresse Holinesse: the second of Sir Guyon, in whome I set fourth Temperance: the third of Britomartis, a Lady knight, in whom I picture Chastitie. But because the beginning of the whole worke seemeth abrupt and as depending upon other antecedents, it needs that yet know the occasion of these three knights several adventures. For the Method of a Poet historical is not such as of a Historiographer. For a Historiographer discourse of affairs orderly as they were done, accounting as well the times as the actions; but a Poet thruster into the middest, even where it most

concerned him, and there resourcing to the things forepart, and divining of things to come, make a pleasing analysis of all. The beginning therefore of my histories, if it were to be told by an Historiographer, should be the twelfth book, which is the last; where I devise that the Faery Queen kept her annual feast twelve dais; upon which twelve several days, the occasions of the twelve several adventures happened, which being undertaken by XII several knights, are in these twelve books severally handled and discoursed.

The first was this. In the beginning of the feast, there presented him selfie a tall clownish young man, who falling before the Queen of Faeries desired a bone (as the manner then was) which during that feast she might not refuse: which was that he might have the achievement of any adventure, which during that feast should happen; that being granted, he rested him selfic on the floor, unfit through his rusticity for a better place. Soon after entered a fair Ladies in mourning weeds, riding on a white Asse, with a dwarf behind her leading a warlike steed, that bore the Armes of a knight, and his spear in the dwarfed hand. She falling before the Queen of Faeries, complained that her father and mother, an ancient King and Queen, had bend by a huge dragon many years shut up in a brazen Castle, who thence suffered them not to is sew: and therefore besought the Fairy Queen to assign her some one of her knights to take on him that exployt. Presently that clownish person up starting, desired that adventure: whereat the Queen much wondering, and the Lady much gaine-saying, yet he earnestly importuned his desire. In the end the Lady told him, that unless that armor which she brought would serve him (that is, the armor of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul, V. Ephes.) that he could not succeed in that enterprise: which being forth with put upon him with due furniture thereunto, he seemed the goodliest man in al that company, and was well liked of the Lady. And eftesoones taking on him knighthood, and mounting on that strangle Courser, he went forth with her on that adventure: where beginners the first book, viz.

A gentle knight was pricking on the playne, etc.

The second day there came in a Palmer bearing an Infant with bloody hands, whose Parents he complained to have been slaine by an enchauntresse called Acrasia: and therefore craved of the Faery Queen, to appoint him some knight to performe that adventure, which being assigned to Sir Guon, he presently went fourth with the same Palmer: which is the beginning of the second book and the whole subject thereof. The third day there came in a Groome, who complained before the Fairy Queen, that a vile Enchaunter, called bussirone, had in hand a most fair Lady, called Amaretta, whom he kept in most grevious torment. Whereupon Sir Scudamour, the lover of that Lady, presently toke on him that adventure.

But being unable to perform it by reason of the hard Enchantments, after long sorrow, in the end met with Britomartis, who succored him, and resewed his love.

But by occasion hereof, many other adventures are intermedled; but rather as accidents then intendments. As the love of Britomart, the overthrow of Marinell, the miserie of Florimell, the vertuousness of Belphoebe; and many the like.

Thus much, Sir, I have briefly-over-run to direct your understanding to the well-head of the History, that from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit, ye may as in a handful gripe all the discourse, which otherwise may happily seem tedious and confused. So humbly craving the continuance of your honorable favor towards me, and the eternal establishment of your happiness I humbly take leave.

Yours most humbly affectionate,

EDM. SPENSER.

23 January, 1589.

• CRITICAL REVIEWS

Spenser's account of the design of the Faerie Queen is given in this undated letter to Sir Walter Raleigh. The letter is titled, "A Letter of the Authors expounding his whole Intention in the course of this Work: which for that it gives great Light to the Reader, for the better understanding is hereunto annexed."

Thomas Warton: "It must, however, be confessed, that there is something artificial in the poet's manner of varying from historical precision; a conduct which may be best illustrated from his own words. 'But because the beginning of the whole work see meth abrupt, and as depending upon other antecedents, it needs that ye know the occasion of these three knights several adventures. For the method of a poet historical, is not such as of a historiographer [. . .]. Thus according to this plan the reader would have been agreeably surprised, in the last book, when he came to discover, that all the adventures which he had just gone through, were undertaken at the command of the FAERIE QUEENE, and that all the knights had severally set forward to the execution of them from her annual birth-day festival; but Spenser, in most of his books, has injudiciously forestalled the first of these particulars; which certainly should have been concealed till the last book, not only to have prevented a needless repetition of the same thing, but that he might likewise secure an opportunity to himself of amusing the reader's mind with a circumstance new and unexpected" Observations on the Faerie Queen (1754) 9-10.

William Oldys? "In the letter to Sir Walter he says; 'In the person of Prince Arthur I set forth Magnificence in particular.' Probably this Magnificence (as the plan was certainly settled early) was frequently alluded to in the Cambridge correspondence. Harvey in 1580 says to him, 'I fear your Magnificence will hold us in suspense as long for your nine comedies': &c. meaning, I suppose, his being employed about Arthur will hinder other things. In Spenser's latin verses to him, Oct. 5, 1579, he says, 'you banter me (so great is your Magnificence)' &c. 'Tu tamen illudis (tua Magnificent a tanta est), &c.' A good deal of this letter alludes to this scheme" Faerie Queen, ed. Church (1758) 1:xxiv.

John Upton: "In every poem there ought to be simplicity and unity; and in the epic poem the unity of the action should never be violated by introducing any ill-joined or heterogeneous parts. This essential rule Spenser seems to me strictly to have followed: for what story can well be shorter, or more simple, than the subject of his Poem? — A British Prince sees in a vision the Fairy Queen; he falls in love, and goes in search after this unknown fair; and at length finds her. — This fable has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning is, the British Prince saw in a vision the Fairy Queen, and fell in love with her: the middle, his search after her, with the adventures that he underwent: the end, his finding whom he sought. But here our curiosity is raised, and we want a more circumstantial information of many things. — Who is this British Prince? what adventures did he undergo? who was the Fairy Queen? where, when, and how did he find her? Thus many questions arise, that require many solutions" Faerie Queene (1758) 1:xx-xxi.

John Payne Collier: "The Poet's Letter to Raleigh, 'expounding his whole intention,' bears date nearly two months after to the date of the entry [in the Stationer's Register], viz. '23 January 1589,' that is, in fact, 1590. There is little doubt that this letter was written last (because some explanation of the kind was thought by Raleigh to be necessary), and printed, with the seventeen sonnets to the leaders of the aristocracy, &c., after the whole body of the poem had been worked off the press" Poetical Works of Spenser (1862; 1875) 1:lxx.

• SUMMARY

Author's Letter

Addressed to Spenser's friend and court superior Sir Walter Raleigh (c. 1554–1618), the letter explains Spenser's intentions in the poem. He wants the poem to model a virtuous life for aspiring gentlemen and nobles. His inspirations include the history of King Arthur and poems by the epic poets Homer (9th or 8th century BCE), Virgil (c. 70–19 BCE), Ariosto (1474–

1533), and Torquato Tasso (1544–95)—an Italian poet who wrote the epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Each poet included an example of a noble hero. Spenser's version of Arthur will model the 12 moral virtues described by the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–22 BCE).

Some readers might prefer their moral lessons in clear sermons rather than vague allegories. But, Spenser believes an allegory is pleasanter to read and offers a better example of lived virtue. He'll draw on legends about Arthur to demonstrate this virtue. In his poem, Arthur will pursue the love of the Faerie Queen, also called Gloriana.

The character of Gloriana represents the excellence of Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603). The character of Belphoebe represents Queen Elizabeth's virtue and beauty. Arthur represents magnificence, the perfected form of all 12 virtues. The poem's first three books feature three knights who each portray a virtue. The Redcrosse Knight represents holiness, Sir Guyon represents temperance, and the female knight Britomartis or Britomart represents chastity.

A poet, unlike a historian, can relate events in any order he wants. So, Spenser's history will begin with the final chronological event of the Faerie Queen's annual 12-day feast. On the first day, a "tall clownish younger man" asks the queen to send him on any quest she hears about during the feast. Soon a woman in mourning clothes enters riding a white donkey. A dragon has besieged her parents' castle and kingdom. The clownish man begs to defeat the dragon. The woman tells him he must first wear the armor of a Christian man whom St. Paul describes in his letter to the Ephesians. He agrees and becomes a knight. At this point, the first of the poem's books begins.

On the second day of the feast the Palmer enters the queen's court carrying an infant who has bloody hands. The infant's parents have been murdered by the enchantress Acrasia. The queen selects Guyon to go on the quest. On the third day, a groom reports the enchanter that Busirane has captured a young woman named Amoret. A knight named Scudamour is chosen for the quest but cannot perform it; Britomart takes over and succeeds. Many other secondary stories interweave with the main story in the poem.

B. THE FAERIE QUEEN- BOOK III, BOOK V (CANTO 5, 6, 7) BOOK VI

• STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Key points
- Introduction
- Biography of the author
- Context
- Plot
- Summary and analysis
- Important quotes and analysis
- Characters
- Theme
- Review questions
- Further readin

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- Understand the summary of the 'Faerie Queen'.
- Describe the theme in 'Faerie Queen'.

• KEY POINTS

Author	: Edmund Spenser
Years Published	:1590–96
Type	: Epic Poem
Genre	: Allegory, Fantasy

• INTRODUCTION

The Faerie Queen was written over the course of about a decade by Edmund Spenser. He published the first three books in 1590, then the next four books (plus revisions to the first three) in 1596. It was originally intended to be twelve books long, with each book detailing a specific Christian virtue in its central character. When he presented the first three books at the court of Queen Elizabeth, Spenser was looking for the prestige,

political position, and monetary compensation he believed the work merited. However, he came away disappointed by the relatively small stipend (to his mind) that he received, and attributed his lack of spectacular success with Elizabeth to her advisor and Spenser's political opposite, Lord Burghley.

In Books Four through Six, Spenser seems to change the direction of the epic somewhat, possibly curtailing his ambition to reach twelve Books in total. Arthur still becomes an important figure in the epic, with his quest to reach Gloriana forming the backdrop to his interactions with the central knights of each Book, but the latter three Books are more intertwined than are the first three. Book 1 seems to be literally perfect as a stand-along story, whereas the other books leave an increasing number of unresolved plot threads to be resolved in later sections. Nonetheless, the six books Spenser managed to complete have their own internal consistency and leave nothing for a seventh section to wrap up. Edmund Spenser died before he could complete another book of The Faerie Queen.

• BIOGRAPHY OF EDMUND SPENSER

Edmund Spenser, (born 1552/53, London, England—died January 13, 1599, London), English poet whose long allegorical poem *The Faerie Queen* is one of the greatest in the English language. It was written in what came to be called the Spenserian stanza.

Youth And Education

Little is certainly known about Spenser. He was related to a noble Midlands family of Spencer, whose fortunes had been made through sheep raising. His own immediate family was not wealthy. He was entered as a "poor boy" in the Merchant Taylors' grammar school, where he would have studied mainly Latin, with some Hebrew, Greek, and music.

In 1569, when Spenser was about 16 years old, his English versions of poems by the 16th-century French poet Joachim du Bella and his translation of a French version of a poem by the Italian poet Petrarch appeared at the beginning of an anti-Catholic prose tract, *A Theatre for Voluptuous World lings*; they were no doubt commissioned by its chief author, the wealthy Flemish expatriate Jan Baptista van der Noot. (Some of these poems Spenser later revised for his *Complaints* volume.)

From May 1569 Spenser was a student in Pembroke Hall (now Pembroke College) of the University of Cambridge, where, along with perhaps a quarter of the students, he was classed as a sizar—a student who, out of financial necessity, performed various menial or semi-menial duties. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1573. Because of

an epidemic, Spenser left Cambridge in 1574, but he received the Master of Arts degree in 1576.

His best-known friend at Cambridge was the slightly older Gabriel Harvey, a fellow of Pembroke, who was learned, witty, and enthusiastic for ancient and modern literature but also pedantic, devious, and ambitious. There is no reason to believe that Spenser shared the most distasteful of these qualities, but, in the atmosphere of social mobility and among the new aristocracy of Tudor England, it is not surprising that he hoped for preferment to higher position.

Spenser's period at the University of Cambridge was undoubtedly important for the acquisition of his wide knowledge not only of the Latin and some of the Greek classics but also of the Italian, French, and English literature of his own and earlier times. His knowledge of the traditional forms and themes of lyrical and narrative poetry provided foundations for him to build his own highly original compositions. Without the Roman epic poet Virgil's *Aeneid*, the 15th-century Italian Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, and, later, Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), Spenser could not have written his heroic, or epic, poem *The Faerie Queene*. Without Virgil's *Bucolics* and the later tradition of pastoral poetry in Italy and France, Spenser could not have written *The Shepheardes Calender*. And without the Latin, Italian, and French examples of the highly traditional marriage ode and the sonnet and canzone forms of Petrarch and succeeding sonneteers, Spenser could not have written his greatest lyric, *Epithalamion*, and its accompanying sonnets, *Amoretti*. The patterns of meaning in Spenser's poetry are frequently woven out of the traditional interpretations—developed through classical times and his own—of pagan myth, divinities, and philosophies and out of an equally strong experience of the faith and doctrines of Christianity; these patterns he further enriched by the use of medieval and contemporary story, legend, and folklore.

Spenser's religious training was a most important part of his education. He could not have avoided some involvement in the bitter struggles that took place in his university over the path the new Church of England was to tread between Roman Catholicism and extreme Puritanism, and his own poetry repeatedly engages with the opposition between Protestantism and Catholicism and the need to protect the national and moral purity of the Elizabethan church. Contrary to a former view, there is little reason to believe that he inclined toward the Puritanical side. His first known appointment (after a blank of several years, when he may have been in the north of England) was in 1578 as secretary to Bishop John Young of Rochester, former master of Spenser's college at Cambridge. Spenser's first important publication, *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579 or 1580), is more

concerned with the bishops and affairs of the English church than is any of his later work.

Early Works

The Shepheardes Calendar can be called the first work of the English literary Renaissance. Following the example of Virgil and of many later poets, Spenser was beginning his career with a series of eclogues (literally "selections," usually short poems in the form of pastoral dialogues), in which various characters, in the guise of innocent and simple shepherds, converse about life and love in a variety of elegantly managed verse forms, formulating weighty—often satirical—opinions on questions of the day. The paradoxical combination in pastoral poetry of the simple, isolated life of shepherds with the sophisticated social ambitions of the figures symbolized or discussed by these shepherds (and of their probable readership) has been of some interest in literary criticism.

The *Calendar* consists of 12 eclogues, one named after each month of the year. One of the shepherds, Colin Clout, who excels in poetry but is ruined by his hopeless love for one Rosalind, is Spenser himself. The eclogue "April" is in praise of the shepherdess Elisa, really the queen (Elizabeth I) herself. "October" examines the various kinds of verse composition and suggests how discouraging it is for a modern poet to try for success in any of them. Most of the eclogues, however, concern good or bad shepherds—that is to say, pastors—of Christian congregations. The *Calendar* was well received in its day, and it is still a revelation of what could be done poetically in English after a long period of much mediocrity and provincialism. The archaic quality of its language, sometimes deplored, was partly motivated by a desire to continue older English poetic traditions, such as that of Geoffrey Chaucer. Archaic vocabulary is not so marked a feature of Spenser's later work.

The years 1578–80 probably produced more changes in Spenser's life than did any other corresponding period. He appears by 1580 to have been serving the fascinating, highly placed, and unscrupulous Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester and to have become a member of the literary circle led by Sir Philip Sidney, Leicester's nephew, to whom the *Calendar* was dedicated and who praised it in his important critical work *The Defence of Pose* (1595). Spenser remained permanently devoted to this brilliant writer and good nobleman, embodied him variously in his own poetry, and mourned his early death in an elegy. By 1580 Spenser had also started work on *The Faerie Queene*, and in the previous year he had apparently married one Machabyas Chylde. Interesting sidelights on his personal character, of which next to nothing is known, are given in a small collection of letters between Spenser and Gabriel Harvey that was printed in 1580. The ironies in that exchange of letters are so intricate, however, as to make

it difficult to draw many conclusions from them about Spenser, except that he was young, ambitious, accomplished, and sincerely interested in the theory and practice of poetry. In 1580 Spenser was made secretary to the new lord deputy of Ireland, Arthur Lord Grey, who was a friend of the Sidney family.

Career in Ireland

A discussion of English colonization of the vast estates in Munster, Ireland, that belonged to the 14th (or 15th) earl of Desmond, who died in 1583 while in rebellion against the English crown. Sir Walter Raleigh and the poet Edmund Spenser were among those who received some land.

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Sixteenth-century Ireland and the Irish were looked on by the English as a colony, although the supposed threat of an invasion by Spain and the conflict between an imposed English church and the Roman Catholicism of the Irish were further complicating factors. Irish chieftains and the Anglo-Irish nobility encouraged native resistance to newly arrived English officials and landowners. As Grey's secretary, Spenser accompanied the lord deputy on risky military campaigns as well as on more routine journeys. He may have witnessed the Smerwick massacre (1580), and his poetry is haunted by nightmare characters who embody a wild lawlessness. The conflict between Grey's direct, drastic governmental measures and the queen's characteristic procrastinating and temporizing style soon led to Grey's frustration and recall. But Spenser, like many others, admired and defended Grey's methods. Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (written 1595–96, published 1633), a later tract, argues lucidly for a typically 16th-century theory of rule: firm measures, ruthlessly applied, with gentleness only for completely submissive subject populations.

For four or five years from roughly 1584, Spenser carried out the duties of a second important official position in Ireland, deputizing for his friend Lodowick Bryskett as clerk of the lords president (governors) of Munster, the southernmost Irish province. The fruits of his service in Ireland are plain. He was given a sinecure post and other favours, including the right to dispose of certain forfeited parcels of land (he no doubt indulged in profitable land speculation). For a time he leased the small property of New Abbey, County Kildare, and on this basis was first designated "gentleman." Finally, he obtained a much larger estate in Munster. One of the chief preoccupations of the presidents of this province, scarred as it was by war and starvation, was to repopulate it. To this end, large "plantations" were awarded to English "undertakers," who undertook to make them self-sustaining by occupying them with Englishmen of various trades. In 1588

or 1589 Spenser took over the 3,000-acre (1,200-hectare) plantation of Kilcolman, about 25 miles (40 km) to the north and a little to the west of Cork. No doubt he took there his son and daughter and his wife, if she was still alive (she is known to have died by 1594, when Spenser married Elizabeth Boyle, a "kinswoman" of the earl of Cork, one of Ireland's wealthiest men). By acquiring this estate, Spenser made his choice for the future: to rise into the privileged class of what was, to all intents, a colonial land of opportunity rather than to seek power and position on the more crowded ground of the homeland, where he had made his poetic reputation. In his new situation he, like other undertakers, had much conflict with the local Anglo-Irish aristocracy and had limited success in filling the plantations with English families. Nevertheless, it was under these conditions that Spenser brought his greatest poetry to completion.

• CONTEXTS

An Allegory for a Queen

As features of an allegory, which is an extended metaphor in which characters and objects represent abstract ideas, heroes, villains, and supernatural forces populate The Faerie Queen. Medieval narratives often used allegory to tell stories about romance (in the original sense of stories about chivalry or adventure) and religion. The allegory synthesized mythological, classical, and biblical allusion to establish continuity between the old and the modern as well as to ease the transition into new thinking. Allegory also prevented overt criticism or instruction by prominent thinkers of the era.

Edmund Spenser's main characters, six noble knights, each stand for a different moral virtue. Some characters also represent really historical or mythological figures. The Red Crosse Knight is both a symbol of holiness and a version of the 3rd-century martyr Saint George. Arthur is both a version of the mythological King Arthur and a symbol of magnificence. And Gloriana, the Faerie Queen of the title, represents both the real Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) and what Spenser saw as the superiority of Protestant Christianity.

Religious divisions were vital issues for Spenser. His Protestant Christian background informs much of his work. Spencer considered Catholic influences on the Church of England, as did many others, signs of evil corruption. He and his contemporaries believed kings and queens served under the concept of "Divine Right." It was generally accepted that divinely chosen leaders bore responsibility for leading the country in godly virtue. The idea of the "divine right of kings" originates in Protestant doctrine.

His work reflects loyalty to a faith, a leader, and a nation. The Faerie Queene appeared during a time of intense religious and political conflict in Europe. Elizabeth I took the throne in 1558, after years of Catholic reign under Mary I, also called Mary Tudor (1516–88). Elizabeth was determined to make England a Protestant nation. She passed legislation to take power away from the Catholic Church, making herself Supreme Governor of the Church of England instead.

Her devotion to the Protestant faith caused great controversy in the rest of Europe. Soon she was branded as a heretic or rebellious queen. The Catholic King Philip II of Spain (1527–98) held particular concern, working to replace Elizabeth with a Catholic ruler. Though he'd hoped for Mary Stuart, known as Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–87), to take over, she was executed in 1587. King Philip increased his aggression against England. The two countries seemed to be headed toward war. In 1588 Philip planned a military takeover to restore England to Catholic power. He sent the Spanish Armada, an armed fleet of ships.

The attack failed, and Elizabeth kept the throne. She never married, and the English public honored her single-minded devotion to her country. She became known as Gloriana, the name Spenser uses in the poem. The Faerie Queen reflects Spenser's fear of Catholic control and his plea to the Elizabethan government to defend Protestant England.

The English Epic

Spenser was perhaps the first English poet to tackle the demanding form of the epic, a long narrative poem that celebrates heroes. The epic originated as a form of oral poetry and song. Epic heroes demonstrated not only their great accomplishments in battle, but also modeled the virtues their societies valued. As the poet described warriors of the past, he hoped to encourage listeners in the present. Many epic poems begin as Spenser's does, with an ode to the Muses, the goddesses who preside over the creative arts.

Spenser looked to written epics for inspiration. He drew from two of the best-known epic poets in Western literature: Greek poet Homer (9th or 8th century BCE) and Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BCE). Homer's Odyssey incorporates Greek myth as Homer narrates the long journey home of the soldier Odysseus. Virgil's Aeneid tells the tale of Aeneas, Rome's divinely appointed founder. Virgil proved a particularly strong influence on Spenser. The Faerie Queen models its syntax, or arrangement of phrases, after the structure of written epic poems. Spenser includes invocations to the Muse and several extended metaphors, similar to Greek and Latin epics.

However, Spenser wanted to make his epic distinctly English. He had an English audience in mind and a Christian worldview as his basis. Many of the poem's settings reflect the pageantry and wealth of the royal Elizabethan court. The virtues framing the poem borrow from both classical and English sources. The traits temperance, friendship, and justice come from Greek philosopher Aristotle's (384–22 BCE) list of moral virtues. But the traits holiness, chastity, and courtesy are associated with the Christianity practiced in medieval England. Though the poem frequently draws from Greek and Roman mythology, it just as frequently references doctrines of the Christian faith.

Medieval, Arthurian, and Italian Romances

Spenser infused the epic form with plenty of love and romance. In addition to calling on the Muses in his introduction, he invokes Cupid the god of love. He drew from literature of his native England and longer romances from France and Italy.

Spenser borrows the legendary King Arthur of the Britons, still a prince in The Faerie Queen, from ancient British and Celtic myths. These myths later developed into the genre of Arthurian romances featuring the hero and his round table of knights. Medieval bishop Geoffrey Monmouth (d. 1155) collected legends of Arthur and other ancient British rulers in his book History of the Kings of Britain. Spenser draws from Monmouth's fanciful "history" in The Faerie Queen as he describes Arthur's genealogy.

The medieval romance emerged as a literary form in France. Authors used the medieval courtly love traditions—a code of behavior for ladies and their lovers that developed in the later Middle Ages—to entertain their audience with stories of chivalry. Poets before Spenser combined epic and romantic tropes. Among Spenser's favorites was Orlando Furioso (1516) by Italian poet Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533), a wildly popular poem of the Italian Renaissance. Ariosto combines the romantic misadventures of his hero Orlando with a secondary love story and the drama of a religious conflict in Paris.

Italian romances often featured multiple stories intertwined in a single narrative. Spenser borrows this technique known as interlacement to weave several stories into a unified whole. The stories provide extra opportunities for diversion and commentary.

Spenser wants his romance to instruct as well as entertain. He believed adventurous and romantic stories could provide moral commentary and model ethical principles—while still keeping a reader captivated.

Form, Stanzas, and Syntax

Spenser never finished the book he planned to write. He hoped for 12 books in the poem, six addressing private moral virtues and six addressing

public political virtues. The virtues he chose to come from Greek philosopher Aristotle. In his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle discusses the virtues of temperance, justice, and friendship, all of which Spenser includes.

As Spenser was embarking on a new combination of epic, allegory, and romance, he created a new nine-line stanza form. Each stanza has eight lines of 10 syllables with a final 12-syllable line at the end. The first eight lines use iambic pentameter, or five pairs of unstressed-stressed syllables. Each pair is considered a metric foot. Iambic pentameter is the most common meter in English poetry. Its rhythm gives the stanza a sense of unity. The final line completes the stanza in iambic hexameter, a meter associated with classical Latin and Greek poetry including epics. Lines in iambic hexameter have 12 syllables and six metric feet. The rhyme scheme is ABABBCBCC.

In his stanza form Spenser borrows from French and Italian literature. The eight-line stanzas and rhyme scheme mimic Old French ballads and the Italian ottava rima stanza of eight lines. Also borrowing from this tradition, English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1342–1400) used a similar eight-line stanza in part of his long poem The Canterbury Tales (1387–1400).

At the time, Spenser's twist on the form seemed revolutionary. It eventually became known as the Spenserian stanza. Romantic poets, who were part of the literary, artistic, and intellectual movement beginning at the end of the 18th century, such as John Keats (1795–1821) and Lord Byron (1788–1824), revived and adapted the Spenserian stanza in their work, keeping it alive.

• PLOT

The Faerie Queen has six books-

Book I: Holiness

Book II: Temperance

Book III: Chastity

Book IV: Friendship

Book V: Justice

Book VI: Courtesy

• BOOK 1

Book 1 chronicles the quest of the Redcross Knight, who represents the virtue of holiness. The Redcross Knight's goal is to defeat a dragon

terrorizing the kingdom of his faithful lady Una. As the Redcross Knight travels he encounters many challenges to his faith, including the deceptive wizard Archimago and the enchantress Duessa. He also meets and befriends Arthur, a noble prince who seeks his love—the Faerie Queen Gloriana.

After repenting of his sin in the House of Holiness, the Redcrosse Knight learns it is his destiny to become the English Saint George. He kills the dragon and frees Una's kingdom.

• BOOK 2

Book 2 follows Guyon, a knight who represents the virtue of temperance, or moderation. Guyon hopes to conquer Acrasia, an enchantress who lures men with the indulgent pleasures in her Bower of Bliss. Guyon and his assistant, the wise Palmer, teach lessons of temperance to people they meet on the way. Though Guyon is led by Mammon (a reference to the worship and love of money) into the underworld, he resists, finds his way back from hell, and survives.

Guyon and Arthur rest at the House of Temperance. There Arthur reads a chronicle of British history and Guyon learns more about the history of Faery land. Guyon destroys Acrasia's bower and frees her prisoners.

• BOOK 3

Book 3 introduces Britomart, a female knight who represents the virtue of chastity or sexual abstinence and devotion to a lover. Britomart has fallen in love with the knight Artegall after seeing him in the wizard Merlin's magic mirror. Merlin tells Britomart that she and Artegall will found the city of London or Troynouant. They will also begin the Tudor royal dynasty leading to Queen Elizabeth I.

Along the way, Britomart rescues Amoret, a woman trapped by the evil wizard Busirane. She continues on her quest at the end of Book 3 since she hasn't met Artegall yet.

• BOOK 4

Book 4 celebrates the virtue of friendship and its connection to love. The knights Cambell and Triamond, who represent true sacrificial friendship, compete in a tournament and show devotion to one another. Book 4 also continues many stories begun in Book 3, including Britomart and Amoret's search for their lovers.

• BOOK 5

Book 5 follows Regal who represents the virtue of justice. With his enforcer Talus, Artegall embarks on a mission to free the princess Irena and her kingdom from the giant Grantorto. Artegall rectifies many instances of injustice along the way. He is briefly enslaved to the Amazon queen Radigund until Britomart rescues him.

Artegall and Arthur travel to the palace of Mercilla, who represents mercy. There, he sees Duessa tried for her crimes and sentenced to death. While Artegall kills Grantorto and frees Irena, Arthur releases a woman named Belge and her kingdom from the tyranny of the monster Geryoneo.

• BOOK 6

Book 6 follows Calidore, a knight who represents the virtue of courtesy. Calidore is on a mission to capture the Blatant Beast, a loud monster representing slander or false statement. On his quest, Calidore challenges several discourteous knights. He also meets the knight Calepine and his lady Serena, who is bitten by the Blatant Beast.

As Calidore travels, he stumbles upon a peaceful field of shepherds. Enchanted by their simple lifestyle, he stays for a while and woos the shepherdess Pastorella. But, a tragedy finally forces him back into action as a knight. He subdues the Blatant Beast. Later, however, the Beast escapes and roams the world.

• TWO CANTOS OF MUTABILITY

These two Cantos tell the story of Mutability or Change and her attempt to rule the heavens. A proud goddess, Mutability feels her reign on Earth is not enough. She challenges Jove the king of the gods for celestial rule. She makes her case to Nature, describing the constant transformations of the natural world and the planets.

Nature, however, decides change itself is temporary since all things will eventually return to their original, perfect state. She refuses to let Mutability rule the heavens. In a final incomplete Canto, Spenser hopes to earn a place in the unchanging afterlife.

The Faerie Queen Plot Diagram

A. Introduction:

- Arthur begins seeking the Faerie Queen.

B. Rising action :

- The Redcross Knight and Una meet Arthur.

- In the Castle of Temperance Arthur reads Britain's history.
- Arthur defeats Malegar outside the Castle of Temperance.
- Foretell flees and Arthur pursues her unsuccessfully.
- Amoret is rescued by Arthur.
- In his travels Arthur resolves a conflict between knights.
- Mercilla tries and condemns Duessa as Arthur watches.

C. Climax :

- When Geryoneo threatens Belge's kingdom, Arthur defeats him.

D. Falling action:

- Timias and Arthur reunite after a long separation.
- The savage man and Arthur begin traveling together.

E. Resolution:

- Arthur defeats the discourteous Turpin.

• SUMMARY WITH ANALYSIS

BOOK – III CHASTITY

SUMMARY

Canto 1

Guyon, Arthur, and Arthur's squire Timias encounter a knight whom they do not recognize. The knight jousts with Guyon, knocking him from his horse. Guyon and the knight reconcile despite Guyon's wounded pride. Unbeknownst to any of the three travelers, the unknown knight is Britomart, a woman on her own quest.

A beautiful woman runs by the group, followed by a man apparently intent on raping her. Arthur and Guyon follow the woman, while Timias gives chase to the woman's attacker. Britomart, unmoved by fleeting beauty, continues on her way. She finds adventure in the form of six knights attacking a lone defender. Taking the cause of the weaker party, Britomart defeats three of the aggressors while the single knight defeats one and the last two surrender. The lone knight is revealed to be Redcross. The two defeated knights take Britomart and Redcrosse to Castle Joyous. There they meet the mistress of the castle, Malecasta, whose practice is to sleep with any knight who seeks shelter. Redcross rejects her proposition, claiming a previous betrothal (to Una from Book 1). Malecasta's minions accost Redcross, but their mistress's attention turns to Britomart, whom she still believes to be a man. Telecast secretly goes to Britomart's bed, but is horrified to learn her mistake and faints. The six knights from the previous battle arrive to defend Malecasta, and one of them wounds

Britomart with an arrow. Redcross arrives to aid Britomart, and the two escape Castle Joyous together.

Canto 2

As they travel, Britomart reveals her story to Redcross. She has fallen in love with the knight Artegall, although she insults him to Redcross that she might hear his reputation defended by another knight. Britomart had been struck by Cupid's arrow when seeing Artegall's image in a magic mirror. Her nurse, Glauce, attempted to cure her love sickness through magic and potions, but failed.

Canto 3

Britomart continues her personal history, describing how Glauce's last attempt to help lead Britomart to Merlin, whose magic mirror brought this upon Britomart in the first place. Merlin advises Britomart to give in to her love, citing her destiny to produce a line of noble rulers. Thus advised, Britomart set out on her quest. Once her story is finished, Redcrosse and Britomart part as friends.

Canto 4

As Britomart muses over her sorry state, the knight Marinell arrives and they do battle. Britomart wounds him, but his mother appears to take him away to heal.

In the meantime, we learn that the woman Arthur and Guyon pursued is Flonne, Marinell's beloved. She is still being pursued by the lustful ruffian, who is in turn being pursued by Times. When they stop to rest, Arthur muses over his own unfulfilled love and resigns himself to a lonely night in the forest.

Canto 5

The next morning, Arthur learns that Foretell is searching for her beloved Marinell, whom she thinks is dead. Arthur sets out to find her. Timias, meanwhile, has caught up with Florimell's attacker only to be ambushed by him and his two brothers. Timias bests the three men, but receives a dangerous wound to the thigh. He faints from blood loss. Belphoebe the huntress arrives and heals him. Timias falls in love with her, but is left to mourn that fate has caused him to become impassioned by the virginal (and therefore unavailable) beauty.

Canto 6

Belphoebe's background is described. She is the daughter of Chrysogonee, a faerie maid, who bore her and her twin sister, Amoretta. Chrysogonee was sleeping when she gave birth, and nymphs owing allegiance to Diana found the newborn babies. Diana kept phoeba while

Venus took charge of Amoretta. Belphoebe was raised to be a huntress; Amoretta, to be a mother to the souls of the Garden of Adonis.

Canto 7

Florimell, still fleeing her would-be rapist, finds refuge at a witch's cottage. The witch's son lusts for her, but Florimell is able to fend him off until she can sneak away. Angered that her son remains impassioned by an unrequited love, the witch sends a beast to hunt down and kill Florimell. Florimell escapes, but the horse she was riding does not. When the horse's remains are found, they are mistaken for Florimell's. Meanwhile, the giantess Arganta attempts to capture the Squire of Dames, but the knight Palladine drives her away.

Canto 8

Back at the witch's house, the witch creates an imitation Florimell out of snow and wax to sate her lovesick son's lust. The knight Braggadocchio and his squire Trompart steal the false Florimell, and then lose her to another knight. The real Florimell continues her flight by crossing the water, only to be accosted by a lustful sailor. The sea god Proteus rescues her, only to seek her for himself. Florimell resists him. Elsewhere, Satyrane and the Squire of Dames meet Paridell, himself in pursuit of Florimell.

Canto 9

Satyrane, the Squire of Dames, and Paridell arrive at Malbecco's castle, but Malbecco refuses them entry. Britomart arrives and she and Paridell battle, but Satyrane ends the conflict and reconciles them. The four plot together to burn Malbecco's castle to the ground, but Malbecco is intimidated by this threat and allows them to enter. Paridell makes amorous overtures with the lady of the castle, Hellenore, at dinner, while he and Britomart relate their respective lineages.

Canto 10

Paridell convinces Hellenore to run away with him. Hellenore steals some of Malbecco's money and sets the rest aflame. As they are escaping, Hellenore cries out for help, forcing Malbecco to choose between saving his wife or his money. He cannot decide at first, but eventually pursues Paridell and his wife. En route, he meets Braggadocchio and Trompart, whom he requests to chase Hellenore with him. The three find Paridell alone; he has abandoned Hellenore in the forest. Braggadocchio nearly battles Paridell, but slyly manages to avoid it. Trompart advises Malbecco to protect his remaining money by burying it safely in the ground, only to return later to steal it for himself. Malbecco resumes his pursuit of Hellenore, ultimately finding her cavorting with satyrs in the forest. That night, he begs Hellenore to come back to him, but she refuses. Driven mad with jealousy, Malbecco runs away through the dark night until his body

wastes away. Only his super humanly jealous spirit remains to wander the earth.

Canto 11

Leaving Malbecco's castle, Britomart and Satyrane encounter the giant Ollyphant (brother to Arganta), chasing a young man. Britomart and Satyrane pursue, the giant, but are separated in the forest. Britomart finds a knight Sir Scudamore bemoaning his inability to rescue his beloved Amoretta from an evil wizard. Britomart agrees to help him. As they approach the castle, they discover that a flaming porch protects it; Britomart charges through it unharmed, but Scudamore is forced back. Britomart observes that the interior of the castle is decorated with tapestries depicting the conquests of Cupid.

Canto 12

Britomart lurks in the chamber of Cupid watching a procession pass by. Cupid, followed by Fancy, Desire, Hope, and Doubt pass by. Amoretta follows them while carrying her own beating heart on a silver tray. The next night, Britomart sees the procession again, but this time she follows it to the wizard Busyrane's chamber. She sees Busyrane chanting spells and writing with Amoretta's blood. Britomart attacks him, driving him down and nearly killing him, but Amoretta prevents her from striking the killing blow. Amoretta explains that she needs Busyrane to reverse his enchantments before he dies. Busyrane does so, but escapes with his life. Britomart brings Amoretta to Scudamore; the two join in an embrace so loving that they appear to merge into a single being. Britomart remembers her own love for Artegall and renews her desire to be with him.

ANALYSIS

Canto 1 and II

As with Book I, Spenser begins Book III with a classical-style invocation of his Muse, Clio, and a humble criticism of his own poetry. However, in this book we will see how the poet is far more influenced by the Italian romantic epic than the classical epic. Homer and Virgil were extraordinary poets, but they were not most preoccupied with the subject of love; for this, Spenser finds Ariosto and Tasso much more useful. He imitates them in the character of Britomart, the warrior maiden; in the theme of battle fought to defend a maid's honor; and in the involvement of magical characters (like Merlin, whom we will see in the next Book). Of course, The Faeire Queen is also very different from the Italian romances; Spenser treats the trials of love with a high seriousness and makes it part of his ever-present allegory of Christian right and wrong. As a whole, the poem is more indebted to the Italian genre than anything else, but in the

end its mood and the meaning under its surface are Spenser's own original creations.

Just as Redcross was (or became) the ideal personification of Holiness, Britomart is Chastity. She represents this by the purity of her love for Arthegall—which admits no lust—and by her resistance to those who would try to corrupt or dishonor true love, like the six knights and Malecasta. However, she also has other qualities, which show Spenser's view of chastity as a central and many-sided virtue. In modern times, we tend to see chastity simply as the avoidance of lust, but for Spenser it is something more positive. Britomart is strong in battle, which reflects the strength of will that chastity gives a person; in fact, her strength saves Redcrosse, which proves that chastity is essential to holiness. Outside of battle, though, she is weak and humble, showing the Christ-like sides of chastity. Of course, Britomart also shows some weakness in these first two cantos, when she is nearly ruined by the love of the strange knight in Merlin's mirror. This is due to her inexperience; just like Redcrosse, she is in some need of maturing.

Another similarity between Book I and Book III is the use of a House (castle) to represent a particular virtue or vice or a group of several. Here in Canto ii, we have the House of Joyeous (joyfulness), which does not seem like anything bad or immoral. We see, though, that the place has a most un-Christian joy: the joy of carelessness and the indulging of pleasures. Malecasta, appropriate to her name--which literally means "badly chaste"--is the opposite of Britomart, just as Duessa was the opposite of Una. Her "love" is nothing but physical desire; mistaking Britomart for a man, "her fickle hart conceived hasty fire...she was given all to fleshly lust, / And poured forth in sensuall delight (III.i.47-48)." Spenser makes fun of Malecasta's "fickle hart" by having her accidentally fall for another man--she is so fast, she doesn't even wait for a knight to get out of his (or her) armor.

It is a sign of Britomart's innocence that she does not immediately see Malecasta's desire for what it truly is. Likewise, her vision is clouded by the sight of Arthegall in her father's mirror; rather than rejoicing that she will have such a fine husband, she frets over the new feeling in her heart. She misinterprets it "Yet [she] thought it was not love, but some melancholy (III.ii.27)." Glauce, her nurse, tries to comfort her, saying, "For who with reason can your aye reprove, / To love the sealant pleasing most your mind, / And yield your heart, whence ye cannot remove (III.ii.40)." That is, love is in accord with reason, is not tainted by lust, and is fated anyway, so why resist it? Britomart resists because she cannot admit that any feeling so strong can still permit chastity; this negative view of the virtue is what she must change in the course of the Book.

Canto 3, 4 and 5

Merlin's discourse on the history of the Britons takes up nearly all of Canto iii, certainly more than was required to convince Britomart that she should go after Arthegall. This is because its larger purpose is not to contribute to the poem's plot, nor even to the allegory. Spenser includes the long history to establish a direct connection between characters in The Faerie Queen—especially Arthur—and his sovereign, Queen Elizabeth. As much as the poet praises the Queen on her own merits, he also seeks to increase her stature and her place in history, by connecting her, in an unbroken chain, to the legendary heroes of Britain. Not only is she related to the great Arthur, but to the legendary founder of the Britons, Brute, and through him to the Trojans (this link will be brought up in detail in a later canto). This device of establishing ancestry has its roots in the New Testament—the Gospel of Matthew begins by tracing the line of Abraham through David to Christ. More applicable for Spenser is Virgil's connection in the Aeneid between Aeneas and Caesar Augustus—it is a secondary purpose of the poem to make that link, just as the justification of Elizabeth's rule is for The Faerie Queen. Of course, not all of Spenser's history can be proven; the earlier dates (pre-800) and people involve much speculation. Spenser's most important source is Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain, from which the legend of King Arthur first arose. Monmouth invented much of this "history", and so Spenser's interpretation may at certain points be a few levels removed from the truth. However, the important thing is that no one could disprove most of his history, and so by incorporating it into The Faerie Queen, Spenser helped to make it a more authoritative version. It was simpler, anyway, to view the history of British rule by the Britons as a single chain.

With the plot of the poem, however, Spenser moves farther and farther away from an unbroken chain in these cantos. The story of Britomart is supposed to form the central plot of the Book, and yet we see the subplots—like the pursuit of Florimell—taking over the story, even if they have little to do with Britomart. Spenser picks up and drops different plot lines almost indiscriminately—for example, we hear an extensive background of Marinell, but after he is wounded, he disappears and does not reenter the poem until a different book. If there is a flaw in Spenser's ability to create a complex world that draws on many sources, it is the confusion that sometimes confronts the reader at keeping track of all the characters and plotlines. We note that the poet himself became a bit confused—when he had the dwarf claim that Florimell left home after Marinell's death, he forgets that she was already seen on the run two cantos ago.

What these numerous subplots do add to the poem is an extension of its allegory, an extension best achieved by adding new characters. In Foretcil ,

we have a woman who desires chastity but not in the same way as Britomart. She is not so much active as she is acted upon, as the object of men's desire. She is Beauty, the kind of beauty that will always inflame lust in men; since this is not balanced with active, forceful chastity (Britomart), Florimell becomes a much-abused character. Belphoebe has a better lot, and yet she, too, is lacking something when compared to Britomart. Belphoebe is chaste, and actively so, but she is static in her chastity. She is the limit of what chastity can be without leading to Christian love, which is why she is out in nature, unadorned, like the satyrs. It is the transition toward love within chastity that Spenser admires in Britomart.

Canto 6 and 7

The principal point of interest in these two cantos is the Garden of Adonis. This passage is the best example of Spenser's wide diversity of sources; he draws on everything from Homer to Chaucer to The Romance of the Rose in constructing this remarkable Paradise. The theme of an idyllic garden, of course, has its origin in the Garden of Eden--but as a part of the fanciful land of The Faerie Queene, the Garden of Adonis is not particularly grounded in Christian theology. The philosophical ideas expressed in the passage are mostly Platonic or neo-Platonic: the relation between form and matter, the reincarnation of beings, the cyclical nature of life. Of course, at the least reincarnation was incompatible with mainstream Christian thought in Spenser's time; the Garden is not so much an expression of the poet's beliefs as it is an elegant creation for its own sake.

There is no allegory here--in general, the meaning of the place is presented straightforwardly. The association of the Garden with Venus immediately gives it a mythical quality, and the poet treats the philosophical ideas as he has treated the classical myths: useful in creating an imaginative setting but only because the Christian truth is another layer deep. The Christian meaning of the Garden of Adonis naturally relates to the theme of Book III, chastity. The important element is the healthy sexuality of the place, where "each paramour his leman [lover] knowes, / Each bird his mate, ne any does envie / Their goodly meriment, and gay felicite (III.vi.41)." Spenser is by no means in favor of a sterile chastity when he champions that virtue; though those in the Garden may have too much pleasure, it is a productive pleasure, which keeps the wheel of life turning and does not promote jealousy or lust. We have seen, and will continue to see, many worse uses of sexuality in Book III, by way of contrast.

For example, in Canto vii, we see the continued misfortune of Florimell to be lusted after by each man she meets. She does not try to use her beauty for seduction, and yet upon seeing her, the old hag's son "cast to love her in

his brutish mind; / No love, but brutish lust, that was so beastly bind (III.vii.15)." Spenser fully realizes the danger of beauty without a positive chastity and, perhaps, admits a generally lustful character in most men--we will see such incidents as these repeated. On the other hand, in the "giantess" **Argante**, we have the embodiment of the extremes to which a woman's sexual desire can go. Her great size allegorically represents the enormity of her pride and perversion: She has committed incest and even "suffered beasts her body to deflower (III.vii.49)." While characters like Florimell and Belphoebe represent chastity missing an essential element, they are made to look holy by Argante, who represents the total rejection of chastity or even discretion. Thus, only true chastity can conquer the giantess; as the squire reveals, the knight who chased Argante off is actually a warrior maid like Britomart--Palladine is her name.

Canto 8 and 9

Florimell's woes continue in canto viii, which is almost entirely concerned with men who lust after and abuse her or her false counterpart, the creation of the old hag. The false Florimell does not seem to mind it much when she is taken by Braggadocchio--who, as his name suggests, is a braggart, long on words but short on actions--and then by a stronger knight. But the real Florimell is in misery as men continue trying to violate her, the fisherman with force and Proteus with persuasion, and turn violent when she refuses. While Spenser is certainly not giving her the best treatment, he is in a way sympathetic to her. She could have avoided all of this trouble by giving herself up to lust early on, but she persists for the sake of her virtue. She takes the high ground, which is why she is not persuaded by Proteus' shape shifting. The many forms he can assume represent changeable, impermanent physical life. Her Beauty, though physical, is made higher than earthly things because of her chastity and her love, and so it has nothing to do with a being as fickle as Proteus.

Malbecco is a very familiar character in literature: The old man who marries young and is then constantly suspicious of his youthful wife. Spenser very likely took the Malbecco-Hellenore-Paridell love triangle idea from The Miller's Tale in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. We can see this by the way Malbecco is mocked in the poem and kept in the dark---just like Chaucer's old carpenter. However, as Hellenore's name suggests, there is also a connection with Helen of Troy. Helen was the wife of a Greek king, and she was stolen by the Trojan Paris, which initiated the Trojan War. Paridell reinforces this connection by showing that he is descended from Paris; he plans to steal Hellenore just like his ancestor stole Helen.

The discussion of Trojan ancestry also serves another purpose, outside the poem's plot: to glorify the English nation and Queen Elizabeth. Spenser (and most in his day) would have considered the Trojans the greatest race

of ancient times, since they founded Rome, the greatest empire of ancient times. Rome was, thus, called a "second Troy" (as Britomart mentions)--and Spenser links his people with antiquity by calling London a "third Troy." Through the mouths of Britomart and Paridell, he relates the legend that Britain was founded by Brute, a Trojan who fled Troy after he accidentally killed his father. Again, this is historical speculation on Spenser's part--no definitive records exist to prove or disprove the claim. The idea that the British Empire would be greater than Rome seems a bit forced, but it is essential for Spenser's justification of Queen Elizabeth as the greatest of all monarchs. In a more subtle way, this claim continues an argument of Book I--that the Church of England is destined to be greater than the Church of Rome.

Canto 10, 11 and 12

Malbecco receives a fate that is appropriate for his jealousy and failure to love his wife: He loses both her and his money and so spends the rest of his life consumed by thoughts of jealousy. That is not all, however; Malbecco is an interesting circumstance of a man being transformed into an allegorical figure. After a time, he "is women so deformed, that he has quight / forgot he was a man, and Gealosie is high [called] (III.xi.60)." He becomes jealousy itself, and, thus, he never really dies. We see the same circumstances in other characters but only after the fact: The huge perversions of Argante and Ollyphante have made them into giant beasts. Seeing the actual transformation within Malbecco shows Spenser's view that vices can consume a man. Malbecco "forgot he was a man"--he let a certain quality possess him and rob him of his identity. All at once, this lends a great deal more credibility to Spenser's allegorical characters; they are not merely symbols or pictures of an abstract ideal, but they are also a very real example of what can happen to a man who has no moderation. Certain physical qualities may be exaggerated, but in characters like Jealousy, we can see the destroyed spirit of a human being beneath the allegory.

These last three cantos bring the Book to a surprising conclusion, at least from the perspective of the plot. After the main character, Britomart, was absent from the story for several cantos, she finally returns to be central to the story in cantos xi & xii. And yet, the action of those two cantos concerns another subplot, the separation of Scudamore and Amoret. The main plot line, Britomart's quest to find Arthegall, is never resolved nor is it even advanced after the first half of the Book. This does not seem to concern Spenser much; what is more important is that the allegory is advanced. Previously, we have seen characters meant to contrast with Britomart--generally a weaker version of chastity (Florimell) or unchecked lust that seeks to remove chastity (Argante, the fisherman, etc).

However, none of these is the true enemy of Chastity as embodied in Britomart, because she is not merely concerned with preserving her maidenhood. Her Chastity is ordered toward Christian love, and so her true enemies are those that seek to destroy love, not just chastity. Her archenemy (in the Book) is Busirane, who (as we can predict from seeing the maske) intends to remove the heart of Amoret; she is wounded in the chest when Britomart finds her, just like the woman in the procession whose heart was then plucked out. The enchanter is no great physical challenge to Britomart, but his sinister intent, strengthened by his magic, is to remove Amoret's capacity to love by removing her heart. In this way, he is a great danger to a champion of Christian love.

Britomart's battle is not won by extraordinary might because her great virtue lies in moderation. She is capable of superlative physical acts but only because her chaste heart is neither too rash nor too timid. This is what allows her to pass through the fire; while Scudamore ran toward it "with greedy will, and envious desire," she passes through in calm confidence (III.xi.25). This is also the meaning of the strange signs she sees in the castle; over every door are written the words, "be bold"—but over just one door, she sees, "be not too bold." Had she leapt to battle at the first sign of the mask or kept trying to force open the immovable door, she surely would have used up her strength. Instead, she is patient and spends two nights in the castle waiting alertly for the right moment. This patience, combined with powerful action at the appropriate time, gains her an easy victory and brings the allegory of love to a conclusion. True, it is disappointing that we do not see the end of Britomart's own quest; but Book III is more a collection of episodes than a continuous plot. While Britomart is its declared hero it is not necessary for her to reach her ultimate goal within the Book; having witnessed the quality of her patience, we know that she will in the end.

BOOK – IV - FRIENDSHIP

SUMMARY

Canto 1

The wizard Busyrane kidnapped Amoretta on her wedding day, so her marriage to Scudamour remains unconsummated. Amoretta expresses fear at man's love and a growing discomfort at traveling with this stranger (as Britomart is still disguising her femininity). Britomart and Amoretta arrive at a castle and find lodging there, only to find that the custom of that place is for any knight without a paramour to claim any single woman who is present, or himself be locked out for the night. A knight lays claim to Amoretta, but Britomart defeats him in combat. Seeking to solve the

problem of the knight's impending lockout, the knights and ladies call the Seneschall, who rightly awards Amoretta to Britomart as her champion. To prevent the young knight's exile, Britomart lays claim to him, revealing herself a woman by taking off her helmet and letting her hair flow down. The observers are struck by her beauty, comparing her to the war goddess Bellona, and the young knight is given haven as payment for the debt to Britomart. Seeing Britomart's femininity and strength, Amoretta is freed from her fears. The two women spend the night together talking about their respective loves.

The next day, Britomart and Amoretta depart the castle and encounter two knights, Blandamour and Paridell, and their two ladies, Duessa and Ate. Blandamour encourages Paridell to challenge Britomart, but Paridell remembers his last encounter with the disguised knight and does not want to risk a second defeat. Bland amour challenges Britomart and is defeated.

After Britomart leaves, Scudamour and Britomart's nurse, Glauce, arrive. Blandamour bears ill will toward Scudamour, but asks Paridell to challenge the knight in his stead. Paridell and Scudamour battle and Scudamour gains the upper hand. In a fit of battle-fury, Scudamour nearly kills Paridell, but Duessa prevents him with conciliatory words. Ate, however, seeks to cause strife, and so claims to have seen Amoretta dallying with a knight whose shield bore the heads of many broken spears (Britomart). Scudamour, angered at the possibility of Amoretta's unfaithfulness (and still unaware that Britomart is a woman), takes his anger out on the nurse Glauce. He nearly kills her, but comes to his senses and merely declares her a vile accomplice to the traitorous Britomart. Glauce makes a personal vow to clear Britomart's name.

Canto 2

Glance attempts to reason with Scudamour, but Blandamour and Paridell speak harshly to her and her words go unheeded. Blandamour, Paridell, and their ladies ride on and encounter the young knight Ferraugh, who has recently taken the false Florimell from Braggadocchio. Blandamour lusts after the imitation Florimell, but tries to get Paridell to fight for him again. Paridell does not rise to the challenge, citing his recent battle as taking his turn, so Blandamour must fight Ferraugh. Blandamour wins the battle by taking Ferraugh unawares and claims Florimell for his own, but Paridell is filled with envy toward him. Ate seizes this opportunity to drive a wedge between Paridell and Blandamour by reminding Paridell of all the little offences Blandamour has committed against him. Blandamour and Paridell eventually battle, while Duessa and Ate encourage their anger. Their fight seems capable of going on forever, but that the Squire of Dames arrives and breaks up their conflict. The Squire of Dames encourages the two knights to unite in Florimell's cause, but

Blandamour is suspicious at first. Blandamour describes Satyren contest for Florimell's girdle, being held nearby, and the two knights agree to participate in it.

Blandamour, Paridell, and their respective ladies come upon Cambell and Triamond, with their respective wives Canacee and Cambina. Canacee had once been so highly desired for a bride that her brother Cambell had to hold a tournament: the knight who could defeat him would gain Canacee for his own. Canacee gave her brother a magic ring which would heal his wounds and renew his strength, making him a formidable foe. Triamond is revealed to be one of three brothers, triplets born to the fay Agape; their mother approached the Fates and made a bargain: when the thread measured out for one brother is cut, the remainder would be added to the other brothers' life-threads.

Canto 3

The tale of the three brothers' challenge to Cambell is told. The first brother, Priamond, fought Cambell, but was slain. Priamond's soul, instead of rising to heaven, entered into the bodies of his brothers Diamond and Triamond. Diamond then battles Cambell, but is also slain. His soul (and the portion of Priamond's soul that was his) enters Triamond. Triamond, now with the life-force of three men, battles Cambell. Cambell kills Triamond, but he loses only one soul to the killing stroke, and so rises again to battle. Cambell, afraid he is now facing some dark power, fights more cautiously, extending the battle. Triamond is struck a killing blow again, but again he rises, having lost only one of the two souls within his body. The two men fight even more, both becoming exhausted. Cambell's magic ring restores his vitality, but the battle is interrupted by the arrival of Triamond's sister Cambina, riding a chariot pulled by mighty lions. Cambell falls in love with Cambina at first sight, and the contest is resolved with Triamond winning Canacee while Cambell takes Cambina for his bride.

Canto 4

Everyone arrives at Satyrane's tournament. Braggadocchio sees the false Florimell and wants her back, but declines to fight Blandamour for her. On the first day of the tournament, Triamond fights well but is eventually defeated when Satyrane wounds him with a spear. Since Triamond is wounded, Cambell puts on Triamond's armor the second day to fight on his behalf. Cambell, too, is successful, until he is surrounded by one hundred men. Triamond notices his friend's plight but cannot find his armor, so he wears Cambell's armor into the battle. Cambell and Triamond claim victory on the second day. On the third day, Artegall arrives and is

challenged by Britomart, who does not recognize him as the man she saw in the magic mirror. She defeats him.

Canto 5

As the tournament ends, each knight presents his lady to be judged in a beauty contest. The false Florimell wins, but cannot wear the prize: the girdle of the true Florimell. The other women try on the girdle, but it only fits Amoretta. The false Florimell steals the girdle back. Britomart, the winner of the tournament, is offered the false Florimell as her prize, but she declines. Cambell and Triamond are similarly offered the lady, but they too decline. The remaining knights begin to fight over her, so it is decided that the false Florimell herself should choose the knight to have her. She chooses Braggadocchio.

In the meantime, Scudamour has stopped to rest on his hunt for Amoretta, but he cannot sleep for thinking of his wife's alleged unfaithfulness.

Canto 6

Scudamour meets Artegall, and the two agree to lay in wait for Britomart (whom they both still think to be a man). Britomart arrives and does battle with Artegall. Artegall holds his own this time, and manages to strike Britomart's helmet, cracking it open. When he sees Britomart's face, Artegall immediately falls in love with her; Scudamour sees her face as well, and is reassured that Amoretta was not unfaithful to him after all. Scudamour asks Britomart where Amoretta is, but Britomart only knows that one morning she awoke to find Amoretta missing. Britomart agrees to help Scudamour find his wife. Artegall plies his suit with Britomart, but she feigns indifference and does not admit that she was on a quest to find him all this time. Artegall parts company with Britomart, but the two indicate they will meet again.

Canto 7

While Britomart was sleeping, Amoretta was captured by a half-man, half-beast who takes her back to his cave. There Amoretta meets Aemylia, another captive of the man-monster, who reveals to Amoretta that the creature rapes then eats his captives. When the beast returns, Amoretta flees the cave. Before the monster can reach her, Belphoebe and Timias intervene. Timias battles the creature, but in the conflict accidentally wounds Amoretta. When he sees Belphoebe, the beast flees in terror. Belphoebe manages to hit the creature in the throat with an arrow as he escapes. Timias attempts to revive the wounded Amoretta, but when Belphoebe returns to the scene, she accuses Timics of behaving lustfully toward the woman. Belphoebe then runs away, leaving Timics in anguish, which eventually leads to his becoming a hermit in the woods.

Canto 8

Belphoebe eventually returns to Timias and realizes that his love for her is true. Meanwhile Arthur encounters Amoretta and Aemylia in the woods. Arthur heals Amoretta's injury and the three attempt to gain shelter from the hag Sclaunder. Instead of sheltering them, Sclaunder chases them away while accusing Arthur of being a thief and Amoretta and Aemylia of being whores. The three then find a young squire being dragged by a dwarf while a giant follows. Arthur beheads the giant and frees the squire. The grateful young man tells how his friend and fellow squire Amyas was captured by the giant and forced to become his daughter's lover. The squire, Placidas, resembles Amyas enough to pass for him, so he offered to take Amyas' place. Placidas attempted to knock out the dwarf, but failed; that is when Arthur found him. Aemylia hears the story and recognizes Amyas as her beloved. The group then plans to rescue the captive squire.

Canto 9

Brandishing the giant's head, Arthur gains entry to his castle. Amyas is freed while Arthur speaks to the giant's daughter, Poeana. Poeana agrees to stop forcing herself on captive men, but simultaneously learns that Placidas is attracted to her. Amyas is reunited with his beloved Aemylia and Arthur departs with Amoretta.

Arthur and Amoretta discover several knights (Blandamour, Paridell, Druon, and Claribell) fighting over the false Florimell. The entire group then attacks Britomart because they think she has stolen the lady. Arthur intervenes on Britomart's behalf, explaining that she did not take the false Florimell. Blandamour and Paridell take turns defending and attacking each other. Arthur eventually calms all of the knights and asks Scudamour to tell how he won Amoretta.

Canto 10

Scudamour tells how he won Amoretta. He defeated twenty enemies and overcame various trials to enter the Temple of Venus, where he won the Shield of Love. He then found Amoretta surrounded by Womanhood, Shamefastness, Cheerfulness, Modesty, Courtesy, and Obedience. They agreed to let Amoretta depart with him when they saw he had the Shield of Love. Then Scudamour and Amoretta were married.

Canto 11

Florimell, still captive to the sea god Proteus, awaits his return from the wedding of the rivers Thames and Medway. Proteus invites his friends and family to the wedding at his castle; among the guests is Marinell's mother, a sea nymph, who brings her son to the wedding.

Canto 12

During the wedding, Marinell strays from the crowd and hears Florimell wailing over her fate. From her cries, he learns that she had fled after hearing of Marinell's downfall, thus making the knight partially responsible for her present distress. Marinell returns home with his mother, full of sorrow over his inability to free Florimell. Marinell's mother takes his situation to Jove, who uses his influence to free Florimell from Proteus. Marinell and Florimell are at last wed.

ANALYSIS

Canto 1

Much has been made of Amoretta's fear of man's love, with most critics agreeing that she is still learning to reconcile her upcoming roles as wife and mother with her terror at the unknown. It is later revealed that Scudamour took Amoretta through violence; Busyrane has kidnapped her, so Amoretta's experience with male expressions of passion has made her prone to these fears. Britomart's example of chaste love is necessary to teach Amoretta the strength of feminine virtue and its ability to complement male power. Britomart is seen as embodying a balance between masculine and feminine strengths, in that she is both a powerful warrior and a beautiful woman.

The later incident with Ate reveals that the lady's allegorical standing as an agent of Strife. She seeks to drive friends (Blandamour and Paridell) and lovers (Scudamour and Amoretta) apart. The effects of Ate's unfounded accusations against Britomart and Amoretta will be long lasting; it is not until much later that Scudamour discovers Britomart's identity and ends his worries over Amoretta's unfaithfulness with the knight.

Canto 2

Two groups of four (tetrads) are set up in contrast to one another: Blandamour, Paridell, Duessa, and Ate form the negative tetrad, demonstrating flawed or inadequate friendship, love, and courtesy; Cambell, Triamond, Canacee, and Cambina. Blandamour and Paridell are not truly friends, but merely traveling-companions who choose to tolerate one another. Thus, Ate is able to cause strife between them and Duessa lies to enrage them further toward one another. Their long, unresolved battle symbolizes the discord between men who have not truly offered themselves as friends to one another. The intervention of the Squire of Dames, a somewhat puckish character, prevents further bloodshed through levity and by redirecting their focus elsewhere: the tournament held by Satyrane to award Florimell's girdle to the fairest lady in the land. That the two men can put aside their differences to head toward the tournament shows how a

passion for fame and a beautiful woman can—at least temporarily—overcome antipathy. Of course, Spenser makes sure the reader knows that a woman's influence (Ate's words) brought the discord to the surface in the first place.

The positive tetrad is only partially introduced in this Canto. Canacee is held up a yet another model of virtuous femininity, while Cambell is able to defend her honor with no hint of lust or self-interest since he is not just a knight, but her brother. An element of fairy tale is introduced in the form of Cambell's magic ring, while the back-story for Triamond establishes him as part-Fay and potentially superhuman through the intervention of his mother Agape's deal with the Fates.

Canto 3

Cambell's might (and the power of his magic ring) is displayed his in battle with Priamond and Diamond, while his piety is hinted at when the seemingly dead Triamond rises to continue in combat. Two powers come into conflict: the magic of Canacee's ring and the deal of the Fates with Triamond's mother. In both cases the heroic knight is protected by the influence of a woman, be she loving sister or protective mother. The interdependence of male and female in virtuous living, first introduced most clearly in the person of Britomart, here undergoes further development in this tetrad.

Like the battle between the jealous Blandamour and Paridell, Cambell and Triamond's duel seems likely to go on for days but for the timely arrival of Cambina—who is coincidentally Triamond's sister. Cambina represents Concord (harmony) as she ends the battle between the two noble knights through the touch of her magic staff. That Cambell is enamored of her at first sight serves to reinforce the harmonic balance symbolized by these four characters: Cambell will now marry Triamond's sister, and Triamond will marry Cambell's sister. Thus, the two men will be doubly connected in bonds of friendship that no force can break.

Canto 4

Braggadocchio maintains his place as a figure that talks big but acts little. Cambell and Triamond, however, show their character through their actions. They literally bear each other's burdens in the form of armor. The message here is that true friendship brings the friends so close that they are practically interchangeable—what affects Triamond affects Cambell, and vice versa.

Canto 5

Florimell's girdle becomes a symbol of true chastity. Spenser makes an interesting comment on courtly life by having only one woman—Amoretta,

worthy to wear the girdle. Of special note is that the contest publicly demonstrates Amoretta's chastity despite Ate's strife-causing words to Guyon. The false Florimell steals the girdle back, showing how false beauty can win public acclaim despite not being truly qualified for the real prize.

Canto 6

Artegall and Britomart finally meet, but they fight. Artegall proves himself a match for Britomart, the only knight to do so. They literally break away one another's armor, symbolically getting through each other's emotional defenses, until Britomart's broken helmet reveals her beauty to Artegall, who is love struck. This revelation also serves to put Scudamour's doubts about Amoretta to rest, since he cannot imagine Amoretta having been unfaithful to him with a woman (particularly the chaste and honorable Britomart). Unfortunately, just as Scudamour was not present to see Amoretta vindicated at Satyrane's contest, Amoretta is not present to be reconciled with Scudamour when he learns to the truth.

Canto 7

The man-beast is another symbol of lust, and is easily defeated by the chaste Belphoebe, who is not subject to such weaknesses. Belphoebe's misreading of Timias' intentions toward Amoretta reveal her own growing affection for Timias; again chastity is portrayed not as perpetual virginity, but as true rather than false love.

Canto 8

The reconciliation of Belphoebe and Timias echoes the meeting of Artegall and Britomart, as well as foreshadowing the latter couple's eventual union. Spenser wants to make it clear to the reader that no woman need remain unwed to remain chaste; it is likely he had his own unwed, virginal Queen Elizabeth in mind as she clearly has an analog in Belphoebe as much as she does in Gloriana, the Faerie Queen.

Amyas and Placidas offer another example of true friendship, this time among the squires rather than the knights. The virtue of friendship is not for nobility alone, but for every man who would have it.

Canto 9

Amyas and Placidas end up forming a balanced tetrad similar to that of Cambell, Triamond, and their wives. Amyas is reunited with his beloved, while Placidas gains the favor of Poeana (who does not seem to mind the change of lovers since the two men are similar looking). Here the contest came from the female side, with Poeana striving for a love she could not have, while Placidas plays the role of Cambia in bringing concord to the situation.

Canto 10

Here we have the problematic account of Scudamour's first encounter with Amoretta. Though held up as a paragon of virtue, Scudamour actually fought his way into the Temple of Venus to take her—essentially by force—from the goddess. Once he obtains the Shield of Love, he no longer has to use violence to reach Amoretta; in fact, Venus seems to give Amoretta freely to Scudamour regardless of any feelings on Amoretta's part. The shield symbolizes the truth of his love, as well as the protection he offers Amoretta, but it is only after the trial of Busyrane and her exposure to the example set by Britomart that Amoretta was able to reconcile herself to being Scudamour's willing bride. Their tangled relationship is finally set right, but not through the virtue of the knight, as in most of the other accounts in the epic.

Cantos 11 and 12

The wedding between the rivers serves as backdrop to the reunion of Marinell and Florimell. Having seen what the false Florimell is capable of, the reader is more sympathetic to the problems brought upon the true Florimell simply because she is beautiful. Spenser again locks the reader firmly into a pagan setting, which he uses, rather than destroys, to reunite Florimell and Marinell. Still, Marinell remains a man holding on to his mother's apron strings; it is through his mother's intervention, not through any direct action of his own, that Marinell regains Florimell. The Book dedicated to Friendship ends with the only wedding ceremony in the epic, suggesting that Friendship can be the basis for marriage as well as a bond between members of the same sex.

BOOK – V JUSTICE (Artegall)

SUMMARY

Canto 1

The Faerie Queen gives Artegall his quest: he must rescue Eirena from her captor, Grantorto. He sets forth armed with a solid understanding of justice and a magical sword. His tutor in justice, Astraea, gives him the iron man Talus as his squire.

Artegall and Talus encounter a squire standing over the headless body of a lady. The squire tells how he came across a knight named Sanglier, who forced the squire to trade their respective women. When Sanglier's lady raised an objection to the trade, the knight beheaded her then left with the squire's woman in tow. Talus hunts down Sanglier and brings him and the lady to Artegall. Rather than explain himself, Sanglier demands trial by combat to decide who is telling the truth about the ladies. The squire balks

at the demand, knowing that Sanglier will kill him. Artegall devises an alternate test: he will cut the living lady in two and give half to each man. The squire refuses this choice, demonstrating his true love for the lady. Artegall awards her to the squire and hangs the dead woman's head around Sanglier for a year as punishment.

Canto 2

Florimell's dwarf tells Artegall and Talus that their passage to the wedding of Marinell and Florimell is barred at a bridge guarded by a Saracen named Pollente who demands tribute. Artegall challenges Pollente, but the Saracen cheats by opening a trap door beneath Artegall. The two continue their fight in the river below the bridge, where Artegall cuts off Pollente's head. Artegall and Talus reach Pollente's castle, where his daughter Munera attempts to distract them by throwing gold from the walls. Talus breaks down the door and the two enter. Inside they find Munera hiding beneath a mound of gold. Talus cuts off her golden hands and silver feet, and then throws her into the river. Talus then melts all her gold and pours it into the river with her.

Artegall and Talus then find a crowd on the beach listening to the speech of a giant. In this speech, the giant encourages everyone to redistribute the resources of the earth, from forests and mountains to monetary wealth. Artegall opposes this idea as a disruption of God's system of distribution and raises the counter-argument that wing, light, and right or wrong cannot be quantified and redistributed. Talus then throws the giant into the water. The crowd grows angry with Artegall, but Talus scatters them.

Canto 3

Artegall and Talus arrive at the wedding of Marinell and Florimell, only to find Marinell surrounded by foes at the wedding-tournament. Artegall hides his identity by borrowing Braggadocchio's shield and enters the fray. When Artegall and Marinell prevail at the tournament, Braggadocchio accepts the praise for having aided Marinell. Braggadocchio then goes so far as to proclaim his own, false Florimell the more beautiful of the two. Artegall almost challenges the boastful knight, but then the false Florimell melts. The true Florimell retrieves the girdle the snow-and-wax Florimell had claimed and puts it on.

Guyon arrives and accuses Braggadocchio of riding a horse he stole from Guyon long ago. Artegall judges between them; when Guyon points out a mark in the horse's mouth, Artegall gives him the horse. Talus shaves Braggadocchio's head, removes his shield, and breaks his sword in punishment.

Canto 4

Traveling on, Artegall and Talus encounter two couples fighting over a treasure chest. The two men are brothers, Amidas and Bracidas, who each inherited and island from their father. The movement of the ocean eventually pushed the islands together, making Amidas' island larger. Then Philtra, Bracidas' betrothed, left him for Amidas. Amidas' own betrothed, Lucy, was cast off into the sea to float toward Bracidas' island. As she floated in the ocean, Lucy came upon a chest full of treasure. Artegall is asked to judge between the two couples: he decides that since Amidas has kept the extra land the sea gave him, Bracidas and Lucy may keep the chest the sea gave to them in turn.

Artegall and Talus then encounter a knight who is being dragged to his death by a group of women. Artegall and Talus rescue the knight, who tells them his name is Turpine and relates his story. A powerful woman named Radigund has made it her practice to defeat male warriors, and then make them wear dresses and do women's work. Artegall, Talus, and Turpine go to Radigund's castle and battle her horde of female warriors until night falls. Radigund sends her maid to negotiate with the three, and Artegall agrees to one-on-one combat with Radigund. The prize: the loser will serve the victor in any way the victor decides.

Canto 5

Artegall defeats Radigund in combat, but when he removes her helmet he is amazed at her beauty. Radigund seizes the moment to turn the tables on Artegall, stunning him. Then Turpine is hanged while Talus escapes the female warriors. Artegall is forced to do women's work while wearing a dress, but Radigund has become infatuated with him and seeks to seduce him. She enlists the aid of her maid, but the maid instead offers to help Artegall escape if he will give himself to her. Artegall plays along with the maid's temptation, but does not give in to her desires.

Canto 6

Talus locates Britomart and explains what has befallen Artegall. Enraged, Britomart sets off immediately for Radigund's castle. On the way, they meet an old man, Dolon, who secretly believes Britomart killed his son Guizor because he recognizes her companion, Talus. In reality, Artegall killed Guizor, who was working for Pollente the Saracen. Dolon offers shelter and rest to Britomart, but sets a trap for her in his house. Britomart avoids the trap by staying awake all night. Dolon flees the justice Talus threatens to mete out upon him, but his remaining sons are killed attempting to stop Britomart and Talus from leaving.

Canto 7

Britomart and Talus stop at the Temple of Isis on their way to rescue Artegall. Britomart is allowed to enter, but Talus is denied entry. Britomart sleeps at the foot of Isis' statue and has a strange dream: a crocodile attacks her, wins her love, and conceives a lion with her. The next morning an acolyte of the temple interprets the dream to mean that Britomart and Artegall will marry and raise a great king.

Britomart departs the Temple of Isis and, accompanied by Talus, arrives at Radigund's castle. Radigund offers Britomart the same terms as she offered Artegall: single combat, with the victor dictating terms of service to the vanquished. Britomart refuses these terms, choosing instead to follow the path of chivalry. Britomart and Radigund fight, with Britomart the victor. Unlike Artegall, Britomart does not hesitate to kill Radigund. Meanwhile, Talus enters the castle, killing several of Radigund's warriors on the way. Britomart rescues Artegall, but is appalled at the sight of him in women's clothing. She forces the remaining female warriors to swear allegiance to Artegall, the leaves. Artegall and Talus continue on their way.

Canto 8

Artegall and Talus come across a woman being pursued by two knights; these knights are themselves being pursued by a third knight. The lady runs to Artegall, and one of the two pursuers turns to face his own pursuer. The third knight reveals himself to be Arthur, who has been trying to rescue the lady Samient. Samient is made to Mercilla, queen of a kingdom under siege by the evil Souldan and his wife Adicia. Samient had been sent to make peace with Adicia, but the lady first dismissed her, then changed her mind and sent the two knights to reclaim her. Arthur saw the knights in pursuit and decided to intervene. Arthur and Artegall to agree to deal with the situation together.

Artegall puts on the armor of one of the dead knights and rides back to Adicia's castle; pretending to have captured Samient. The two are admitted to Adicia's castle, and then Arthur arrives and openly demands Samient's release. Enraged, Souldan attempts to run over Arthur in his chariot. They battle, and Souldan is mangled when his chariot turns over on him. Arthur then hangs Souldan's armor on a tree for Adicia to see. Upon seeing her husband's armor, Adicia flies into a rage and attempts to kill Samient. Artegall protects Samient, but is forced to fend off dozens of enemy warriors. Adicia flees into the forest, where she eventually lives out her life as more feral animal than human.

Canto 9

Arthur, Artegall, Talus, and Samient travel in the direction of Mercilla's castle while Samient relates the story of Malengin, a madman who robs and kills travelers who come this way. Arthur and Artegall use Samient to lure Malengin out into the open. Malengin flees when he sees talus, but Talus is able to catch up and slay him.

They continue on to Mercilla's court, where Arthur and Artegall see the trial of Duessa. Duessa is sentenced to death for her several crimes. Arthur pities Duessa, but Artegall sternly wishes for swift justice. Mercilla herself hesitates to execute Duessa for the time being.

Canto 10

Duessa is finally executed. Then two brothers arrive at Mercilla's court seeking help. The cruel Geryoneo gained the favor of their mother, Belge, then began offering her children to a man-eating monster. These two brothers are Belge's oldest sons. Arthur offers his aid, freeing Artegall to continue on his quest to rescue Eirena.

Arthur meets Belge, who directs him to the castle Geryoneo has usurped. When he arrives at the castle, Arthur is told that Geryoneo is away, leaving a deputy in charge. Arthur kills the deputy and three knights who attack him. Geryoneo, hiding in the castle, sees Arthur's skill and flees. Arthur then retakes the castle for Belge and her remaining sons.

Canto 11

Geryoneo returns to retake his castle. He is described as a giant having three bodies and multiple arms. Geryoneo and Arthur battle, and Arthur is victorious. Arthur then confronts the horrible idol through which Geryoneo had been throwing Belge's sons to the hideous monster below. The monster, a beast with the body of a dog, face of a woman, tail of a dragon, wings of an eagle, and claws of a lion, emerges to attack Arthur. Arthur has a difficult time but eventually slays the monster. Then he rides off.

Artegall and Talus, meanwhile, meet the knight Sergis. Sergis bears the news that Eirena will be killed in ten days if no champion is found to defend her. They head toward Grantorto's castle, only to encounter a knight fighting of several men while a lady screams in the distance. Arthur and Talus join the knight and drive off his enemies. The knight introduces himself as Burbon; he has been fending off an attempt to capture his lady Flordelis by Grantorto's men. He confesses to having given up his shield, which has drawn unwanted attention and hostility to him because it used to belong to Redcrosse. Artegall scolds Burbon for giving up his honor (in the form of the shield). They finish off the rest of Grantorto's men and rescue Flordelis, only to have the lady complain to Burbon for failing to defend her better. Artegall then scolds Flordelis for her ingratitude, and Burbon and his lady ride away. Artegall, Sergis, and Talus continue toward Grantorto's castle.

Canto 12

Artegall, Talus, and Sergis arrive in Eirena's kingdom, now under the sway of Grantorto. Artegall and Grantorto fight, with Artegall triumphant. Eirena is restored to her throne and immediately begins setting things right in her kingdom. Artegall is summoned back to the court of the Faerie Queen. On his way there, he is confronted by Envy and Detraction, two hags who unleash the Blatant Beast on him. Talus drives all three enemies away, staid only from killing them by Artegall's intervention. The two then head to the court of the Faerie Queen.

ANALYSIS

Canto 1

Artegall, the knight of Justice, faces his first test in the form of two men contesting over one woman. He solves the problem by borrowing a tactic of Solomon's, the threat to cut a baby in half for two alleged mothers, and it works. Unlike Artegall, who must learn the way to apply justice to worldly situation, the Man of Iron is dispassionate justice, lacking both pity and the creativity to solve quandaries such as the one presented here. He acts as a foil to Artegall, meting out justice where Artegall wavers, but also needing to be held in check as he unrelentingly slaughters the unjust without pity.

Canto 2

Pollente represents the crime of extortion, and is justly executed for the crime (per the law of Spenser's day). Munera demonstrates how guilt transfers from the sinner to those who benefit from the sin, and she is similarly subject to Talus' absolute justice. The giant is more complicated, representing a political theory similar to a full democracy, but going against the "law of God" as those in Spenser's day understood it. That the giant is beaten first by a logical argument demonstrates Artegall's growing sense of the application of justice.

Canto 3

Artegall fall into a kind of judge/executioner relationship here. Again, Artegall is forced to use his wits to dispense justice; clearly true justice is not a matter of black and white distinctions (such as Talus would use), but of understanding complex situations and the people who create them. Nevertheless, Talus is the instrument of punishment and Braggadocchio finally gets his comeuppance.

Canto 4

Artegall attempts to apply justice to two very different cases. The case between the brothers is essentially a property rights dispute, which he judges in a manner appropriate to the common law of Spenser's England.

The second case involves the so-called "law of nature" in Radigund's reversal of gender roles. Rather than assert any superior moral code, however, Artegall ventures into single combat with Radigund; he thus makes the dispute personal and loses his standing as the agent of impersonal Justice.

Canto 5

Artegall's wrong-headed approach to bringing Radigund to justice misfires when Radigund's beauty overwhelms him. A separate quality, passion, has interfered with his application of Justice, and so he falls. Nonetheless, Artegall maintains his chastity even as he is humiliated by Radigund and tempted by her maid.

Canto 6

Britomart is called upon to rescue Artegall, connecting the private virtue of Chastity to the public virtue of Justice. Just as Artegall's own personal chastity keeps him morally upright while in captivity, so does Chastity incarnate—Britomart—make her way toward him to free him from the consequences of his misplaced sympathy for Radigund. Although not described in lustful terms, it is clear that Artegall's response to Radigund's beauty was a challenge to his faithfulness to Britomart; thus it is appropriate that Britomart should be the one to set things right.

Canto 7

The incident in the Temple of Isis foreshadows the complementary role Britomart will play in Artegall's life. Just as Isis mitigated Osiris' harsh judgments, so will Britomart temper Artegall's brand of justice with her own mercy. However, Britomart at present is nearly as relentless as Talus in her mission. She refuses Radigund's terms of combat (avoiding Artegall's misstep) and insists on following the chivalric code instead. When she defeats Radigund, she kills her without pity, as she is unaffected by Radigund's beauty. On the other hand, she acts as an agent of mercy when she stops Talus from killing every warrior in Radigund's castle.

Canto 8

Arthur and Artegall join forces to bring justice to Souldan and Acidia. Artegall again resorts to cleverness (even downright deception) in his pursuit of Justice, while Arthur—the more perfected knight of Justice—can challenge Souldan openly. However, Justice is not merely the provenance of mortals: Souldan's attempt to use an unfair advantage, his chariot, proves to be his undoing; thus a higher law of Justice is demonstrated to be at work. Artegall, having infiltrated the castle, is able to ensure Justice by protecting Samient (thus tempering Justice with Mercy) and thereby driving Adicia away to become a feral creature. Again, it is not Artegall who

declares Adicia feral; a higher law is at work, delivering unto the criminals just punishment for their crimes.

Canto 9

Mercilla's court is the epitome of order and lawfulness. Duessa the duplicitous is finally being tried for her crimes, showing the reader that this is indeed a place of justice. Arthur's pity for Duessa serves to emphasize Artegall's refusal to let his feelings get in the way of justice, thus proving that Artegall has become a more sober knight of Justice.

Canto 10

Arthur becomes embroiled in yet another property dispute, this one with even more serious issues at stake with the sacrifice of Belge's children. While Arthur takes up the cause of justice, Artegall returns to his original quest, the rescue of Eirena.

Canto 11

Burbon here represents the man who has cast away his holiness (Redcrosse's shield) because it has become inconvenient to hold onto it. In keeping with the theological disputes of Spenser's day, Burbon also represents Henry IV, who rejected his Protestant upbringing and converted to Catholicism to end the bloody conflicts with French Catholics. Spenser clearly comes down in favor of Protestant values, even when holding them leads to widespread death and destruction. Artegall, a good representative of (Protestant) piety, is disgusted by Burbon's cowardice.

Canto 12

Artegall at last dispenses the Justice he was set forth to deliver: Grantorto is defeated and Eirena is restored to her throne. Again favoring political rather than moral allegory, Spenser's Artegall represents Lord Grey, Elizabeth's agent in charge of quashing the Irish rebellion. He drives out Grantorto, the symbol of Catholicism, while Talus—the system of justice and not a person—slaughters Grantorto's men (Irish Catholics). That Artegall meets obstacles en route to the court of the Faerie Queene is a parallel to Lord Grey's own scandal (the name of the Blatant Beast) surrounding his return to Elizabeth's court in England.

• IMPORTANT QUOTES

1. at shame and sorrow of that fall he took;
For never yet, with warlike armes he bore,
And shiuvering speare in blondie field first shook,
He found himself dishonored so sore.

(Book 3, Canto 1, stanza 7)

Guyon has been unhorsed by a mysterious knight whose shield bears the has broken spearheads of enemies vanquished. Guyon is embarrassed

by his defeat, in no small part because he had issued the challenge to this unknown knight. The reader soon learns that this knight is Britomart, the woman in disguise, and cannot help but imagine how much more deeply the sometimes-temperate Guyon would have been shamed to know he had been bested so easily by a woman.

2. there deuiz'd a wondrous work to frame,
Whose like on earth was never framed yit,
That even Nature self enuide the same,
And grudg'd to see the counterfet should shame
The thing it selfe. In hadn she boldly tooke
To make another like the former Dame,
Another Florimell, in shape and looke
So liuely and so like, that many it mistooke.

(Book 3, Canto 8, stanza 6)

The witch with whom Florimell unwittingly took refuge now seeks to cure her son's lovesickness for the girl. Florimell has escaped, but the witch seeks out the counsel of "sprights"—nature spirits—to solve the problem. They tell her to make a false Florimell, which they will inhabit to give the semblance of life.

The witch's construction of the false Florimell is replete with images of building a machine or puppet. The false Florimell is a kind of sixteenth-century imagining of a robot. All her features are made from real, but artificial, items and given movement by the uprights, which enter the frame and move the parts.

This false Florimell goes on to cause many problems, the most common of which is her false beauty's ability to incite men to violence over her.

3. substance is not chaunged, nor altered,
But th'only forme and outward fashion.

Narrator, Book 3, Canto 6

This quote promises stability in the midst of temporary change. While describing the Garden of Adonis the poet observes that all plants and animals in the garden grow, transform, and die. But their eternal substance or essence remains constant. The Garden represents healthy sexual desire and generation of life, ensuring new plants and animals arise which share the substance of the old. This assurance will be echoed in Two Cantos of Mutability when Nature says all things will eventually return to their original, perfect state.

4. bold, be bold, and every where Be bold.

Narrator, Book 3, Canto 11

When Britomart enters the temple of Busirane to rescue Amoret she sees this challenge and warning. The mysterious statement reflects the risks Britomart and other characters take for love. When Britomart seeks Artegall in Faery land, she needs boldness and courage. Too much boldness leads to danger; Book 3 explores the many consequences of love gone wrong. But true virtuous love, the hardest kind of love to achieve, requires bravery. Amoret shows her own boldness by withstanding Busirane's torture.

5. name was Talus, made of yron mould,
Immoueable, resistlesse, without end,
Who in his hand an yron flale did hould,
With which he thresht out falshood, and did truth vnfould.

Book 5, Canto 1, stanza 12

Talus, a man made of iron, is given to Artegall (the knight of Justice) as his squire. Talus is justice devoid of mercy, an unrelenting force whose means of obtaining truth is violence. He acts as a foil to Artegall, who is moved too much by pity in at least once case but in the end learns how to properly blend justice with mercy. Talus cannot be the champion of justice, for he (it?) is incapable of learning mercy as Artegall is.

6. reto the Blatant beast by them set on
At him began aloud to barke and bay,
WIth bitter rage and fell contention,
That all the woods and rockes nigh to that way,
Began to quake and tremble withdismay;
And all the aire rebellowed again.
So dreadfully his hundred tongues did bray,
And euermore those hags thems selues did paine,
To sharpen him, and their owne cursed tongs did straine.

Book 5, Canto 12, stanza 41

The Blatant Beast, embodiment of slander, is described in all its terrible might. Spenser saw slander and scandal as one of the most insidious vices, and describes its far-reaching effects here and elsewhere. The beast has a hundred tongues with which to speak its lies, and the very rocks shake at the power of its false words.

7. O can he rule the great, that cannot reach the small.

Artegall, Book 5, Canto 2

Artegall takes on a giant who believes his scales can administer justice to the world. The giant has lofty ambitions: he wants to level the mountains and topple tyrants. Instead, Artegall challenges him to weigh and measure a single word. The giant then attempts and fails to balance the concepts of right and wrong. The quote indicates any ruler who attempts to "rule the

great" must begin with humility. He should trust divine power over forces larger than himself and know his place in the world.

8. Justice, though her dome she doe prolong,

Yet at the last she will her owne cause right.

Narrator, Book 5, Canto 11

When Spenser wrote Book 5, he felt that Europe was rife with injustice. Spenser's characters similarly endure miscarriages of justice. Artegall languishes as a slave to the Amazon queen Radigund, and the princess Irena is imprisoned by the giant Grantorto. Spenser reassures himself and his readers injustice is always temporary. He personifies justice as an outside force with her own long-term plan for victory.

9. Vertues seat is deepe within the mynd,

And not in outward shows, but inward thoughts defyned.

Narrator, Book 6, Proem and Canto 1

Spenser explores the nature of virtue in this quote, writing that true virtue is a state of mind, a condition of the soul, not just a series of actions. Courtesy, for instance, requires more than following a code of manners. It requires an innate nobility, possibly derived from noble birth.

More broadly the quote demonstrates how to tell good people from evil ones in a world of duplicity. Anyone can perform correct actions, but their motives may be selfish. The poem is full of enchanters and insincere, wicked people who pretend to be good for personal gain. The truly virtuous, however, are unable to disguise themselves as wicked. Characters like Timias and the savage man, for instance, fall into unfortunate circumstances. But those who meet them can see their true good natures anyway.

10. Who will not mercie unto others shew,

How can he mercy ever hope to have.

Calidore, Book 6, Proem and Canto 1

After fighting the rude knight Crudor, Calidore is about to kill him when Crudor begs for his life. Calidore's courtesy gives him modesty and humility. He knows he may be the one asking for mercy one day. The quote also recalls Spenser's Christian worldview. He believes all humans are sinners who need divine mercy to enter heaven.

11. It is the mynd, that maketh good or ill ...

wretch or happie, rich or poore.

Melibee, Book 6, Canto 9

Melibee the shepherd left a rich courtly life for a simple life in the fields. Here he tells Calidore, a wealthy knight, the lessons he's learned in

poverty. Material circumstances don't create contentment or misery. Each person creates conditions for themselves. Other characters in the poem express similar sentiments. When Guyon is tempted by Mammon's riches in Book 2, he maintains he has all he needs. In Book 5 Artegall argues divine justice has given each person what they require to survive.

12. Yet armes or weapon had he none to fight,
Ne knew the vuse of warlike instruments,
Saue such as sudden rage him lent to smite,
But naked without needfull vestiments,
To clad his corpse with meete habiliments,
He cared not for dint of sword nor speere,
No more then for the strokes of stawes or bents:
For from his motehrs wombe, which him did beare
He was invulnerable made by Magicke leare.

Book 6, Canto 4, stanza 4

Spenser describes the Savage Man in terms that become problematic given his allegorical treatment of nobility and courtesy in this book. The Savage Man has no highborn lineage, but is nonetheless the agent of aid to Calidore, the knight of Courtesy. He is immune to normal weapons, and so has no need of the conventional clothing worn by "civilized" people. His savagery is depicted as something positive, suggesting that there are those in the world who are by nature virtuous, and that upbringing and moral instruction are not an absolute or exclusive means to achieving virtue.

• CHARACTERS

- **Arthur**

The central hero of the poem, although he does not play the most significant role in its action. Arthur is in search of the Faerie Queen, whom he saw in a vision. The "real" Arthur was a king of the Britons in the 5th or 6th century A.D., but the little historical information we have about him is overwhelmed by his legend. Prince Arthur appears initially as a rescuer of first Una, and later, the Red Cross Knight. Much of the Arthurian legend is incorporated, including the story of Merlin and his role in Arthur's birth. Arthur is in love with the Faerie Queen, whom he has dreamt of but never seen, and is on his way to find her when he encounters Una. After saving the Red Cross Knight and uniting him with Una, Arthur continues on his journey with Guyon. Later, Arthur will assist both Artegall and Calidore on their quests. Arthur is excessively moral and virtuous, serving the Faerie Queen with the same ardor as exists in the Arthurian legends.

- **Faerie Queen (also known as Gloriana)**

Though she never appears in the poem, the Faerie Queen is the focus of the poem; her castle is the ultimate goal or destination of many of the poem's characters. She represents Queen Elizabeth, among others, as discussed in the Commentary. She is the Faerie Queen, who orders the Red Cross Knight to undertake a mission to rescue Una's parents. Gloriana is meant to represent Elizabeth I. She is a virgin queen and the knights who fight for her belong to the Order of Maidenhead. Although she has a small role, the Faerie Queen is the motivation for many of the knights' activities.

- **Redcross**

The Redcross Knight is the hero of Book I; he stands for the virtue of Holiness. His real name is discovered to be George, and he ends up becoming St. George, the patron saint of England. On another level, though, he is the individual Christian fighting against evil—or the Protestant fighting the Catholic Church. He carries a shield that is dented and battered due to the many battles that he has fought. There is a cross on the shield that is the color of blood. The Red Cross a Knight is a heroic figure, representing England's Saint George and the generic Christian man. The Red Cross Knight is impetuous and easily fooled, not always able to see beyond the obvious. He is confident of his abilities when he undertakes the mission, but after many confrontations, he is nearly suicidal. The Red Cross Knight is rescued by the teaching of the church in the House of Holiness. He is successful after a lengthy battle with the dragon and is married to Una.

- **Una**

Una is a beautiful woman, who is descended from the King and Queen of the West, a daughter of Adam and Eve. She is Redcrosse future wife, and the other major protagonist in Book I. She is meek, humble, and beautiful, but strong when it is necessary; she represents Truth, which Redcross must find in order to be a true Christian. She represents truth and the true church. She requests the Faerie Queen help in rescuing her parents. As she accompanies the Red Cross Knight, she rides a donkey, as did Christ when he arrived in Jerusalem. She also leads a lamb, the Paschal Lamb, a symbol of sacrifice. Una can advise the knight, but she cannot force him to listen to her wisdom, nor protect him from his own impetuous decisions. When she is deserted, she is assisted by the lion who willingly sacrifices his life for her. After Una is reunited with the Red Cross Knight and the dragon slain, she is married to the Red Cross Knight.

- **Duessa**

The opposite of Una, she represents falsehood and nearly succeeds in getting Redcrosse to leave Una for good. She appears beautiful, but it is only skin-deep.

- **Archimago**

Next to Tessa, a major antagonist in Book I. Archimago is a sorcerer capable of changing his own appearance or that of others; in the end, his magic is proven weak and ineffective.

- **Britomart**

The hero of Book III, the female warrior virgin, who represents Chastity. She is a skilled fighter and strong of heart, with an amazing capacity for calm thought in troublesome circumstances. Of course, she is chaste, but she also desires true Christian love. She searches for her future husband, Arthegall, whom she saw in a vision through a magic mirror.

- **Foretell**

Another significant female character in Book III, Foretell represents Beauty. She is also chaste but constantly hounded by men who go mad with lust for her. She does love one knight, who seems to be the only character that does not love her.

- **Satyrane**

Satyrane is the son of a human and a satyr (a half-human, half-goat creature). He is "nature's night," the best a man can be through his own natural abilities without the enlightenment of Christianity and God's grace. He is significant in both Book I and Book III, generally as an aide to the protagonists.

- **Error**

Error is a monster, half woman and half serpent. She represents Eve and the serpent who deceived her. Error is surrounded by thousands of sucking offspring who gnaw at her. She cannot tolerate the light that is reflected from the Red Cross Knight's shield and she attacks him. After she is killed, her corpse vomits books and papers. Error is an important influence on John Milton who uses her as a model for Sin in Paradise Lost.

• THEMES

Duty and Responsibility

Throughout the Faerie Queen, Spenser emphasizes the importance of performing one's duty and accepting responsibility to complete the quest. Several heroic figures emerge during the course of the poem and each is given a question to undertake, a monster or demon to extinguish. Each time, the hero must overcome disadvantage and hurdles to succeed, but the importance of the quest is always the overriding concern. Although the Red Cross Knight must fight several demons and overcome despair, he always continues on the quest to rescue the King and Queen of the West. Similarly,

Artegall must be rescued himself by Britomart. And although he really wants to continue with her, he must complete the quest of freeing Irena. Calidore is also momentarily distracted, enjoying a brief pastoral respite, but he also realizes that he must complete his quest in subduing the Blatant Beast. Throughout this epic, Spenser makes the same point again and again: mankind must be responsible and fulfill the duties set before them.

Deception

For Spenser, deception is most often represented by the Roman Catholic Church and by Spain, which most clearly represents Catholicism in Britain. Archimago and Duessa represent how deception will attempt to prevent the honorable man from completing his journey and prevent him from meeting with god. During this period, the division between the Catholic world and Protestant world was filled with suspicion and animosity. Spenser uses this idea as a way to posit that an ideal Britain is one in which the true religion, the Anglican Church, defeats the monstrous Roman Catholic Church. This idea is personified by the Red Cross Knight's overcoming the tricks played by Archimago and Duessa. Since all good men will be tempted, these two characters reappear throughout the epic, thus requiring their defeat by several honorable knights. Spenser's audience would have easily identified Archimago and Duessa as representing the Catholic Church or key Catholic personages, such as Mary, Queen of Scots.

Friendship

The bond between all men, his relationship with everyone around him, is important to Spenser's work. None of the knights acts alone. The Red Cross Knight needs the help of Prince Arthur to succeed. And Arthur misses his squire, Timing, when he is lost. Arthur reappears frequently in the epic, each time to bond with another knight and help him in his quest. No knight works alone, with each one requiring the friendship of another to complete his quest. In addition to the friendships between men, friendship becomes the central focus of Book IV. The two women, Britomart and Amoret, continue the search together to find their true loves, illustrating the importance in women's friendships in achieving goals.

Humanism

Humanism was an intellectual movement of the Renaissance, beginning in Italy and quickly moving across Europe and into England. Sir Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus were important authors of this movement, which promoted the education of a Christian gentlemen. Ideally, the education of Christian gentlemen emphasized, as a first concern, a preparation for public service. There was an emphasis on classical texts and on learning Latin language, the language of diplomacy. Spenser's purpose

in composing The Faerie Queen was to create a model for the ideal gentlemen. He sought to educate the public to chivalric ideals by recalling the medieval romance that he thought presented a better society. Spencer's text not only revives the classical epic, which in its purest form, had not been used since Virgil, but it emphasizes the ideals of charity, friendship, and virtue, which are the hallmarks of the Humanistic movement. Prior to the Reformation, Humanism embraced Catholicism as a representative ideal, as was the case with Sir Thomas More. But after the reformation, Protestantism became the ideal for Humanists in England, such as Spenser.

Justice

Justice is an important theme throughout The Faerie Queen, but in Book V, it is the central focus. Sir Artegall is the champion of Justice. As Spenser creates him, Artegall has the power to dispense justice, but he also discovers that justice can be a complex issue, with not every man receiving what is due him. Artegall discovers that what is right or fair is not always clearly defined. With Sir Sanglier, Artegall must use wit to devise a Solomon-like decision to expose the guilty party. Later, Artegall must rule on the consistency of law when he settles a dispute between Bracidas and Amidas. Artegall also discovers, when dealing with the Amazons, that sometimes justice, tempered by pity, does not work well. The trial of Duessa, that completes Book V, illustrates that justice is effective when applied to solve problems.

Virtue

Virtue is a theme that runs throughout The Faerie Queen. According to Spenser, the virtuous will succeed at completing their journey or quest. Every knight who undertakes a quest for the Faerie Queen is forced to confront obstacles or deception. That each knight succeeds is a result of his inner strength, both his commitment to his quest, but just as importantly, his commitment to a moral life. The knights deserve to win because they are good, virtuous men. To contrast with a life of virtue, Spenser provides the example of virtue's enemies. In Book I, the Red Cross Knight meets with Lucifera, who is the mistress of Pride. Her six wizards are Idleness, Gluttony, Lechery, Avarice, Envy, and Wrath. These seven deadly sins constitute the opposite of the virtuous ideal. In Book III, four women must fight to preserve their chastity: Britomart, Florimell, Belphoebe, and Amoret. Spenser uses four different examples, and there are several others throughout the six books, to illustrate how important chastity is in a Christian life. Morality is essential to the chivalric ideal in other ways. When Arthur rescues Amoret, in Book IV, there is never any question that he will deliver her, unmolested to her destination. He is an honorable knight, as are Artegall, Guyon, and Calidore. Each man performs according

to their code, which makes virtue, morality, and chastity, an essential part of each man's personality.

• CHIVALRIC SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CLASSES

Spenser chose to set his epic in a romanticized medieval fantasy world full of knights, monsters, and damsels in distress. He uses this environment to give power to his allegorical statements, but at the same time, he includes an undercurrent of criticism for feudal Britain (and the class system his own age had inherited from it). Along with virtuous knights, Spenser includes noble savages (the Savage Man), honorable squires (Tristram), and even battle-hardened women (Britomart and Radigund). The knights, who are supposed to be the ideal of virtue, are often the most wrong-headed characters in the epic.

Protestantism versus Catholicism

Although The Faerie Queen can be read as a simple allegory of virtue, there are too many overt criticisms of the Catholic Church to keep the work theologically neutral. The monster Errour vomits Catholic tracts upon Redcrosse in Book 1, and Grantorto stands in for Catholicism as a whole in Book 6. Throughout the epic, Godliness is equated with Protestant theology, while falsehood and the destruction of lives are attributed to Catholic sources.

Chastity

Spenser makes much of female Chastity in The Faerie Queen, and not just in the book devoted to that virtue (Book 3). Britomart is the ideal of chastity, yet she does not seek to remain a maiden; her quest is to find the man she has fallen in love with and marry him. Belphoebe, the virgin huntress, eventually develops a relationship with Arthur's squire Timias. Arthur himself looks forward to the day when he will woo and win the Faerie Queen herself. Each of these strong female figures points to the real-life Queen Elizabeth, whose continued celibacy caused great concern among many of her subjects (who feared she would leave no heir to continue her glorious reign). In some ways, the entire epic is not just dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I, but it also aims to change her mind and push her into accepting a suitor.

The Pervasive Effects of Slander

Through the Blatant Beast in Books 5 and 6, Spenser expounds the effects slander can have upon its victims. The Blatant Beast bites its prey, leaving them poisoned and dying. Only self-control, good living, and forthrightness of speech can cure them of their ills. Spenser uses the poisoning of Serena to show how a woman's virtue can suffer even when she has done no wrong; he uses the poisoning of Timias following Belphoebe's

misperception of his intentions toward Amoretta to show a similar evil worked upon an upright man. Spenser had real-world counterparts in mind for these episodes: well-known political figures had been the victims of slander and could not escape its detrimental effects even after the allegations were disproved. The Blatant Beast is the one creature left alive by the questing knight: apparently, Slander is subject to repression (the Beast's jaws can be bound for a while) but not complete elimination (the Beast still lives).

• QUESTIONS

1. What is Spenser's view of "courtly love"?
2. The Faerie Queen is a strongly Protestant work in which Spenser intentionally incorporates his own beliefs into the Story. What has made the poem popular among readers of all faiths, not just Protestants?
3. Why doesn't Britomart remove her armor at Castle Joyeous? What mistake does that lead Malecasta into?
4. Why does Britomart malign Artegall?
5. Why does Florimell flee Faerie Court? Why does she flee Prince Arthur?
6. What is darkly humorous about Cymoent's attempt to protect her son from the prophecy's fate?
7. Describe Belphoebe and her twin's birth and upbringing.
8. Explain personal, historical, political allegories in Spenser's The Faerie Queen.
9. Who are the women Spenser refers to in Book One of The Faerie Queen?
10. What are the main features of Spenserian stanza (as seen in The Faerie)?
11. Is Spenser trying to redeem women in book 3 of the Faerie Queen?
12. How successful is Spenser in creating fanciful worlds in the Faerie Queen?

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UNIT–III

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE SONNET-18, 29, 73, 94, 110, 116, 129, 130, 138.

STRUCTURE

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- Define sonnet
- Answer the question based on sonnets.
- Explain the given lines from the sonnets
- Discuss about the author-William Shakespeare

• INTRODUCTION

A sonnet is a 14-line poem that rhymes in a particular pattern. In Shakespeare's sonnets, the rhyme pattern is ababcdcdefef gg, with the final couplet used to summarize the previous 12 lines or present a surprise ending. The rhythmic pattern of the sonnets is the iambic pentameter. An iamb is a metrical foot consisting of one stressed syllable and one unstressed syllable — as in dah-DUM, dah-DUM dah-DUMdah-DUMdah-DUM. Shakespeare uses five of these in each line, which makes it a pentameter. The sonnet is a difficult art form for the poet because of its restrictions on length and meter.

Although the entirety of Shakespeare's sonnets were not formally published until 1609 (and even then, they were published without the author's knowledge), an allusion to their existence appeared eleven years earlier, in Francis Meres' Palladis Tamia (1598), in which Meres commented that Shakespeare's "sugred Sonnets" were circulating privately among the poet's friends. Approximately a year later, William Jaggard's miscellany, The Passionate Pilgrim, appeared, containing twenty poems, five of which are known to be Shakespeare's — two of the Dark Lady sonnets (Sonnets 138 and 144) and three poems included in the play Love's labour Lost. Apparently these five poems were printed in Jaggard's miscellany (a collection of writings on various subjects) without Shakespeare's authorization.

Without question, Shakespeare was the most popular playwright of his day, and his dramatic influence is still evident today, but the sonnet form, which was so very popular in Shakespeare's era, quickly lost its appeal. Even before Shakespeare's death in 1616 the sonnet was no longer fashionable, and for two hundred years after his death, there was little interest in either Shakespeare's sonnets, or in the sonnet form itself.

The text of Shakespeare's sonnets generally considered to be definitive is that of the 1609 edition, which was published by Thomas Thorpe, a publisher having less than a professional reputation. Thorpe's edition, titled Shake-speare's Sonnets: Never Before Imprinted, is referred to today as the "Quarto," and is the basis for all modern texts of the sonnets.

The Quarto would have lapsed into obscurity for the remainder of the seventeenth century had it not been for the publication of a second edition of Shakespeare's sonnets, brought out by John Benson in 1640. A pirated edition of the sonnets, Benson's version was not a carefully edited, duplicate copy of the Quarto. Because Benson took several liberties with Shakespeare's text, his volume has been of interest chiefly as the beginning of a long campaign to sanitize Shakespeare. Among other things, Benson rearranged the sonnets into so-called "poems" — groups varying from one to

five sonnets in length and to which he added descriptive and unusually inept titles. Still worse, he changed Shakespeare's pronouns: "He's" became "she's" in some sonnets addressed to the young man so as to make the poet speak lovingly to a woman—not to a man.

William Shakespeare Sonnet-18, 29, 73, 94, 110, 116, 129, 130, 138.

Benson also interspersed Shakespeare's sonnets with poems written by other people, as well as with other non-sonnet poems written by Shakespeare. This led to much of the subsequent confusion about Shakespeare's order of preference for his sonnets, which appear to tell the story, first, of his adulation of a young man and, later, of his adoration of his "dark lady."

The belief that the first 126 sonnets are addressed to a man and that the rest are addressed to a woman has become the prevailing contemporary view. In addition, a majority of modern critics remain sufficiently satisfied with Thorpe's 1609 ordering of those sonnets addressed to the young man, but most of them have serious reservations about the second group addressed to the woman.

Another controversy surrounding the sonnets is the dedication at the beginning of Thorpe's 1609 edition. Addressed to "Mr. W. H.," the dedication has led to a series of conjectures as to the identity of this person. The two leading candidates are Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, and William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke.

Because Shakespeare dedicated his long poem "Venus and Adonis" to Southampton, and because the young earl loved poetry and drama and may well have sought out Shakespeare and offered himself as the poet's patron, many critics consider Southampton to be "Mr. W. H."

The other contender for the object of the dedication is William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Shakespeare dedicated the First Folio of his works, published in 1623, to Pembroke and Pembroke's brother Philip. Pembroke was wealthy, notorious for his sexual exploits but averse to marriage, and a patron of literary men. Critics who believe that Mary Fitton, one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honor, was the Dark Lady of Sonnets 12–54, are particularly convinced that Pembroke is "Mr. W. H.," for Pembroke had an affair with Fitton, who bore him a child out of wedlock; this extramarital affair is considered to parallel too closely the sexual relationship in the sonnets to be mere coincidence.

In addition to their date of composition, their correct ordering, and the object of the dedication, the other controversial issue surrounding the sonnets is the question of whether or not they are autobiographical. While contemporary criticism remains interested in the question of whether or not the sonnets are autobiographical, the sonnets, taken either wholly or individually, are first and foremost a work of literature, to be read and

discussed both for their poetic quality and their narrative tale. Their appeal rests not so much in the fact that they may shed some light on Shakespeare's life, nor even that they were written by him; rather, their greatness lies in the richness and the range of subjects found in them.

• OVERVIEW OF SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Although Shakespeare's sonnets can be divided into different sections numerous ways, the most apparent division involves Sonnets 1–126, in which the poet strikes up a relationship with a young man, and Sonnets 127–154, which are concerned with the poet's relationship with a woman, variously referred to as the Dark Lady, or as his mistress.

In the first large division, Sonnets 1–126, the poet addresses an alluring young man with whom he has struck up a relationship. In Sonnets 1–17, he tries to convince the handsome young man to marry and beget children so that the youth's incredible beauty will not die when the youth dies. Starting in Sonnet 18, when the youth appears to reject this argument for procreation, the poet glories in the young man's beauty and takes consolation in the fact that his sonnets will preserve the youth's beauty, much like the youth's children would.

By Sonnet 26, perhaps becoming more attached to the young man than he originally intended, the poet feels isolated and alone when the youth is absent. He cannot sleep. Emotionally exhausted, he becomes frustrated by what he sees as the youth's inadequate response to his affection. The estrangement between the poet and the young man continues at least through Sonnet 58 and is marked by the poet's fluctuating emotions for the youth: One moment he is completely dependent on the youth's affections, the next moment he angrily lashes out because his love for the young man is unrequited.

Despondent over the youth's treatment of him, desperately the poet views with pain and sorrow the ultimate corrosion of time, especially in relation to the young man's beauty. He seeks answers to the question of how time can be defeated and youth and beauty preserved. Philosophizing about time preoccupies the poet, who tells the young man that time and immortality cannot be conquered; however, the youth ignores the poet and seeks other friendships, including one with the poet's mistress (Sonnets 40–42) and another with a rival poet (Sonnets 79–87). Expectedly, the relationship between the youth and this new poet greatly upsets the sonnets' poet, who lashes out at the young man and then retreats into despondency, in part because he feels his poetry is lackluster and cannot compete with the new forms of poetry being written about the youth. Again,

the poet fluctuates between confidence in his poetic abilities and resignation about losing the youth's friendship.

Philosophically examining what love for another person entails, the poet urges his friend not to postpone his desertion of the poet— if that is what the youth is ultimately planning. Break off the relationship now, begs the poet, who is prepared to accept whatever fate holds. Ironically, the more the youth rejects the poet, the greater is the poet's affection for and devotion to him. No matter how vicious the young man is to the poet, the poet does not-emotionally cannot-sever the relationship. He masochistically accepts the youth's physical and emotional absence.

Finally, after enduring what he feels is much emotional abuse by the youth, the poet stops begging for his friend's affection. But then, almost unbelievably, the poet begins to think that his newfound silence toward the youth is the reason for the youth's treating him as poorly as he does. The poet blames himself for any wrong the young man has done him and apologizes for his own treatment of his friend. This first major division of sonnets ends with the poet pitiably lamenting his own role in the dissolution of his relationship with the youth.

The second, shorter grouping of Sonnets 127–154 involves the poet's sexual relationship with the Dark Lady, a married woman with whom he becomes infatuated. Similar to his friendship with the young man, this relationship fluctuates between feelings of love, hate, jealousy, and contempt. Also similar is the poet's unhealthy dependency on the woman's affections. When, after the poet and the woman begin their affair, she accepts additional lovers, at first the poet is outraged. However, as he did with the youth, the poet ultimately blames himself for the Dark Lady's abandoning him. The sonnets end with the poet admitting that he is a slave to his passion for the woman and can do nothing to curb his lust. Shakespeare turns the traditional idea of a romantic sonnet on its head in this series, however, as his Dark Lady is not an alluring beauty and does not exhibit the perfection that lovers typically ascribe to their beloved.

• BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Family Background

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, a small town of about 1,500 people northwest of London. John Shakespeare, William's father, made his living primarily as a tanner and a glover but also traded wool and grain from time to time. John Shakespeare also served although not at one time as the town ale taster inspector of bread and malt, a petty constable, city chamberlain, alderman, and high bailiff like a mayor, the city's highest public office. Mary Arden, William

Shakespeare's mother, brought a long and impressive family lineage to her marriage to John, one that traces itself back to William the Conqueror. In the mid-1570s, John Shakespeare's fortune began to decline mysteriously some say it was because of his wife's Catholicism, although that claim is unsubstantiated , and it was largely mortgages made on properties Mary brought to the marriage that helped to sustain the family.

Education and Marriage

Shakespeare attended school in Stratford-upon-Avon. Although there are no records to prove his enrollment, critics accept it with considerable certainty. At school, Shakespeare would have studied reading and writing in English as well as in Latin and Greek and Roman writers including Horace, Aesop, Ovid, Virgil, Seneca, and Plautus. The extent to which he would have been familiar with the works of such ancient classics is unknown, but studying Shakespeare's plays and long poems suggests he had at least a degree of knowledge about them in their original forms, not merely translations.

In November 1582, at age 18, William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, 26. Their first child, Susanna, was born the following May; twins, Hamnet and Judith, followed in 1585. Little information is available regarding Shakespeare's life from the time of the twins' birth until 1592 when he received his first public recognition as an upcoming young dramatist and actor in London. We know that at some point he left his family in Stratford, but we know few specifics. Critics hold several theories. One asserts that during the mysterious seven-year period Shakespeare worked as an assistant master of a grammar school. Another popular theory maintains Shakespeare worked as a butcher's apprentice during this time but ran away to London where he was received into the theater. Another theory holds that during the seven-year period, Shakespeare made a living as a deer poacher who was eventually sent away from Stratford as punishment. Other theories contend Shakespeare was a moneylender, a gardener, a sailor, a lawyer, or even a Franciscan. Unfortunately, though, none of these theories is any more likely than another; no one knows with complete certainty what Shakespeare did between 1585 and 1592. All we know for sure is that by 1592 he had arrived in London, leaving his family behind, and had begun what is perhaps the most successful literary career the world has ever known.

Life in London

Before the Great Plague of 1592-1593, in the time when Shakespeare first came to London, the city boasted several acting troupes. In 1558, when Queen Elizabeth I ascended the throne, any gentleman could maintain a troupe of actors. By 1572, it became illegal for any nobleman below the rank

of baron to maintain a troupe, although other companies could perform by obtaining a special license, which had many performance restrictions. Although this arrangement severely restricted the number of acting troupes, it extended governmental sanction to the remaining licensed companies.

William Shakespeare Sonnet- 18, 29, 73, 94, 110, 116, 129, 130, 138.

When the Great Plague of 1592-1593 hit, closing the theaters and decimating the population of England, many acting companies dissolved, while others were forced to amalgamate with other troupes for survival. Two preeminent companies emerged in 1593, and they would rival each other for years. One company, The Lord Admiral's Men, was headed by Edward Alleyn with financial banking from Philip Henslowe. The other dominant troupe, The Lord Chamberlain's Men the troupe in which Shakespeare was actor, dramatist, and shareholder, later renamed The King's Men when James I took the throne in 1603, was run by the Burbage family.

Acting troupes were organized under a shareholding plan wherein financial risk and profits were divided among those actors who had become part owners of the company by buying shares in it. The troupes, comprised entirely of men and young boys, employed about 25 actors. Roughly fewer than half of a troupe's actors were shareholders and not all owned equal shares, but those considered especially valuable to the company were encouraged to become shareholders since this ensured their continued service and loyalty. To become a shareholder, an actor had to put up a considerable sum of money; when he retired or died, the company paid the actor or his heirs for his share. Non-shareholding adult members of a company, however, were considered hirelings of the shareholders and worked under contracts promising them a weekly wage of about 5-10 shillings, although they were frequently paid less.

Shakespeare became a shareholding member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1599. Scholars estimate that until about 1603 the average payment for a play was £6 six pounds; by 1613 the price had risen to £10 or £12. In addition to his fee, the playwright was given all the receipts minus company expenses at the second performance but remember, if the show was bad, there may not be a second performance. Once these fees were paid, however, the play was considered property of the troupe. Printers often pirated more popular works, and troupes sometimes sold publication rights during times of financial stress. Such publishing practices, combined with the fact playwrights, including Shakespeare, didn't write with the intention of preserving their plays but with the goal of making money, makes it difficult for scholars to pinpoint definitive texts. In Shakespeare's case, only about half of his plays were published during his lifetime.

In fact, it wasn't until 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death in 1616, that all his plays were assembled into one volume. This collection, referred to as The First Folio because it was printed in folio format, the largest, most expensive, and most prestigious kind of book , included previously published plays as well as plays never before published. Some of the works in The First Folio can be traced to the author's original version of the text including blotted lines and revisions, yet some were recreated from prompt books annotated versions of the play script that contain detailed directions for the action, settings, etc. or even the memories of the actors themselves helping to explain some of the inconsistencies found in different editions of the plays.

Shakespeare's Work

Between the years of 1588 and 1613, Shakespeare wrote 38 plays. His dramatic work is commonly studied in four categories: comedies, histories, tragedies, and romances. In addition, Shakespeare wrote several Ovidian poems, including Venus and Adonis 1593 and The Rape of Lucrece 1594. Shakespeare is also well known for his sonnet sequence written in the early 1590s, which is composed of 154 interconnected sonnets dealing with issues such as love, fidelity, mortality, and the artist's power and voice.

Although we commonly single out Shakespeare's work as extraordinary and deserving of special attention, at the time of the plays' performances they were typically dismissed as popular entertainment. Whereas Shakespeare's works are studied today as timeless masterpieces, the original audiences knew the plays were good but did not recognize them as exhibiting the apex of the dramatic art form. In fact, Shakespeare, despite all the attention his name has generated since the late eighteenth century, was not the most popular dramatist of his time. Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's contemporary and Britain's first Poet Laureate, and Christopher Marlowe, a slight predecessor to Shakespeare, were both commonly held in higher esteem than the man whose reputation has since eclipsed both of his competitors.

In fact, Shakespeare's reputation as Britain's premier dramatist did not begin until the late eighteenth century. His sensibility and storytelling captured people's attention, and by the end of the nineteenth century his reputation was solidly established. Today Shakespeare is more widely studied and performed than any other playwright in the Western world, providing a clear testament to the skills and timelessness of the stories told by the Bard.

• HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Life and Times of William Shakespeare

Likely the most influential writer in all of English literature and certainly the most important playwright of the English Renaissance,

William Shakespeare Sonnet-18, 29, 73, 94, 110, 116, 129, 130, 138.

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, England. The son of a successful middle-class glove-maker, Shakespeare attended grammar school, but his formal education proceeded no further. In 1582, he married an older woman, Anne Hathaway, and had three children with her. Around 1590 he left his family behind and traveled to London to work as an actor and playwright. Public and critical success quickly followed, and Shakespeare eventually became the most popular playwright in England and part owner of the Globe Theater. His career bridged the reigns of Elizabeth I (ruled 1558-1603) and James I (ruled 1603-1625); he was a favorite of both monarchs. Indeed, James granted Shakespeare's company the greatest possible compliment by endowing them with the status of king's players. Wealthy and renowned, Shakespeare retired to Stratford, and died in 1616 at the age of fifty-two. At the time of Shakespeare's death, such luminaries as Ben Jonson hailed him as the apogee of Renaissance theatre.

Shakespeare's works were collected and printed in various editions in the century following his death, and by the early eighteenth century his reputation as the greatest poet ever to write in English was well established. The unprecedented admiration garnered by his works led to a fierce curiosity about Shakespeare's life; but the paucity of surviving biographical information has left many details of Shakespeare's personal history shrouded in mystery. Some people have concluded from this fact that Shakespeare's plays in reality were written by someone else—Francis Bacon and the Earl of Oxford are the two most popular candidates—but the evidence for this claim is overwhelmingly circumstantial, and the theory is not taken seriously by many scholars.

Although there is continuing debate among scholars about when Shakespeare wrote his sonnets (some say it was as early as the 1580s; some say it was as late as the first decade of the 17th century), most agree that they were likely written in the early 1590s, possibly when the theaters were closed due to plague. Certainly by the mid-1590s, individual poems began to appear in compilations like The Passionate Pilgrim. This places the sonnets in the midst of what C.S. Lewis called "the golden age" of 16th century literature, in the same decade that Spenser and Sidney's major works first appeared in print—and that Shakespeare himself wrote some of his most important plays.

It also places the sonnets in a period of relative political calm. After years of conflict abroad, Elizabeth had defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588. Though she was aging—and did not have an heir—she was secure on her throne, a universally admired figure. Though Shakespeare's culture was on the verge of dramatic and violent change, the Sonnets, with their

focus on domestic matters, affairs of the heart, seem insulated from that change.

• CHARACTERS IN THE SONNETS

Characters of the sonnets

When analysed as characters, the subjects of the sonnets are usually referred to as the Fair Youth, the Rival Poet, and the Dark Lady. The speaker expresses admiration for the Fair Youth's beauty, and—if reading the sonnets in chronological order as published—later has an affair with the Dark Lady, then so does the Fair Youth. Current linguistic analysis and historical evidence suggests, however, that the sonnets to the Dark Lady were composed first (around 1591–95), the procreation sonnets next, and the later sonnets to the Fair Youth last (1597–1603). It is not known whether the poems and their characters are fiction or autobiographical; scholars who find the sonnets to be autobiographical have attempted to identify the characters with historical individuals.

Fair Youth

The "Fair Youth" is the unnamed young man addressed by the devoted poet in the greatest sequence of the sonnets (1–126). The young man is handsome, self-centered, universally admired and much sought after. The sequence begins with the poet urging the young man to marry and father children (sonnets 1–17). It continues with the friendship developing with the poet's loving admiration, which at times is homoerotic in nature. Then comes a set of betrayals by the young man, as he is seduced by the Dark Lady, and they maintain a liaison (sonnets 133, 134 & 144), all of which the poet struggles to abide. It concludes with the poet's own act of betrayal, resulting in his independence from the fair youth (sonnet 152).

The identity of the Fair Youth has been the subject of speculation among scholars. One popular theory is that he was Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton, this is based in part on the idea that his physical features, age, and personality might fairly match the young man in the sonnets. He was both an admirer and patron of Shakespeare and was considered one of the most prominent nobles of the period. It is also noted that Shakespeare's 1593 poem Venus and Adonis is dedicated to Southampton, and in that poem a young man, Adonis, is encouraged by the goddess of love, Venus, to beget a child, which is a theme in the sonnets.

A problem with identifying the fair youth with Southampton is that the most certainly eatable events referred to in the Sonnets are the fall of Essex and then the gunpowder plotters' executions in 1606, which puts Southampton at the age of 33, and then 39 when the sonnets were

published, when he would be past the age when he would be referred to as a "lovely boy" or "fair youth".

William Shakespeare Sonnet-18, 29, 73, 94, 110, 116, 129, 130, 138.

Authors such as Thomas Tyrwhitt and Oscar Wilde proposed that the Fair Youth was William Hughes, a seductive young actor who played female roles in Shakespeare's plays. Particularly, Wilde claimed that he was the Mr. W.H. referred to in the dedication attached to the manuscript of the Sonnets.

The Dark Lady

The Dark Lady sequence (sonnets 127–152) Shakespeare is the most defiant of the sonnet tradition. The sequence distinguishes itself from the Fair Youth sequence with its overt sexuality (Sonnet 151). The Dark Lady is so called because she has black hair and dun coloured skin. The Dark Lady suddenly appears (Sonnet 127), and she and the speaker of the sonnets, the poet, are in a sexual relationship. She is not aristocratic, young, beautiful, intelligent or chaste. Her complexion is muddy, her breath "reeks", and she is ungainly when she walks. The relationship has a strong parallel with Touchstone's pursuit of Audrey in As You Like It. The Dark Lady presents an adequate receptor for male desire. She is celebrated in cocky terms that would be offensive to her, not that she would be able to read or understand what's said. Soon the speaker rebukes her for enslaving his fair friend (sonnet 130). He can't abide the triangular relationship, and it ends with him rejecting her. As with the Fair Youth, there have been many attempts to identify her with a real historical individual. Lucy Negro, Mary Fitton, Emilia Lanier, Elizabeth Wriothesley, and others have been suggested.

The Rival Poet

The Rival Poet's identity remains a mystery. If Shakespeare's patron and friend was Pembroke, Shakespeare was not the only poet that praised his beauty; Francis Davison did in a sonnet that is the preface to Davison's quarto A Poetical Rhapsody (1608), which was published just before Shakespeare's Sonnets. John Davies of Hereford, Samuel Daniel, George Chapman, Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson are also candidates that find support among clues in the sonnets.

It may be that the Rival Poet is a composite of several poets through which Shakespeare explores his sense of being threatened by competing poets. The speaker sees the Rival Poet as competition for fame and patronage. The sonnets most commonly identified as the Rival Poet group exist within the Fair Youth sequence in sonnets 78–86.

• SONNET-18 (SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY?)

A. INTRODUCTION

B. TEXT

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

C. SUMMARY

The speaker opens the poem with a question addressed to the beloved: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" The next eleven lines are devoted to such a comparison. In line 2, the speaker stipulates what mainly differentiates the young man from the summer's day: he is "more lovely and more temperate." Summer's days tend toward extremes: they are shaken by "rough winds"; in them, the sun ("the eye of heaven") often shines "too hot," or too dim. And summer is fleeting: its date is too short, and it leads to the withering of autumn, as "every fair from fair sometime declines." The final quatrain of the sonnet tells how the beloved differs from the summer in that respect: his beauty will last forever ("Thy eternal summer shall not fade...") and never die. In the couplet, the speaker explains how the beloved's beauty will accomplish this feat, and not perish because it is preserved in the poem, which will last forever; it will live "as long as men can breathe or eyes can see."

D. STRUCTURE

Sonnet 18 is a typical English or Shakespearean sonnet, having 14 lines of iambic pentameter: three quatrains followed by a couplet. It also

has the characteristic rhyme scheme: ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. The poem reflects the rhetorical tradition of an Italian or Petrarchan Sonnet. Petrarchan sonnets typically discussed the love and beauty of a beloved, often an unattainable love, but not always. It also contains a volta, or shift in the poem's subject matter, beginning with the third quatrain.

The couplet's first line exemplifies a regular iambic pentameter rhythm:

× / × / × / × / × /

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, (18.13)

/ = ictus, a metrically strong syllabic position. × = nonictus.

E. EXPLANATION

Shall I compare Thee to a Summers day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

William Shakespeare opens the poem with a question addressing his friend: "Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?" The speaker is in confusion whether he should compare the young man's beauty with that of summer or not. And then he drops the idea as he believes that his friend is too perfect to be compared with the summer. In the next line he emphasizes that his dear friend is more lovely and temperate than the summer. Whereas the summer is extreme with its harsh days, his love's beauty is gentler and more restrained than the summer.

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:

The speaker has personified summer here. He says that the violent summer winds are a threat to the beautiful new flower buds that popped up in the early summer. He argues that summer doesn't last very long; it will end and is only for a short lease. The summer must abide by the agreements made to the weather.

Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;

Further explaining, using personification of nature, the poet says that sometimes the sun (the eye of heaven) is too hot and sometimes too dimmed due to clouds. So, the poet refers the sun as the "eye of heaven" and the golden face of the sun as "his gold complexion". The poet is praising the beauty of his beloved friend indirectly by showing us the shortcomings of the otherwise-beautiful summer season.

And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;

Here the speaker says that everything changes with time. Even the most beautiful things fade and lose their charm. He says that all the beautiful things (every fair) will eventually become less beautiful (declines) from the previous state of beauty (from fair). This degradation happens by chance or by the rule of nature (nature's changing course) which remains unmodified (untrimmed). Here the word "untrimmed" may also be taken as untrimmed sails on a ship. It explains that nature is a ship with sails which aren't adjusted according to the course of the wind for a better course.

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou lowest;

Though the beauty of things declines with time, the beauty of youth i.e. his beloved friend will not degrade. The beloved's summer, i.e. his happy summer days, is eternal and will never fade of its charm nor will the beauty of his friend (fair thou lowest). 'lowest' or otherwise interpreted by many as 'lowest', conveys the idea that beauty is something which is borrowed from nature and it must be paid back as the time goes by.

From this line the tone of the poem has changed. Through lines 1-8, the poet has been pointing out the limitations of the summer and now he has started praising his friend's beauty directly.

Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,

Death will not be able to boast (brag) seeing the lover wandering under its shade. The speaker personifies death here. He opines that although death has always had an upper hand over life, the beauty of his friend will live in his poem (eternal lines) through eternity (to time thou grow'st). The death will never be able to lay hands on his beloved as he is immortal. Death is shown as someone who can 'brag' about the souls he has taken to the darkness i.e. underworld (in his shade).

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

These two last lines are couplets and here William Shakespeare makes a prediction that this poem about his beloved's beauty will be acclaimed throughout the ages till men live on this earth. As long as life will go on, his poem will be read by men and women and through his poem, his love will also live.

This sonnet is the first in which the poet has mentioned the longevity of youth's beauty as eternal. Another important theme here is the power of the speaker's poem to defy time – the immortality of art.

• SONNET-29

A. INTRODUCTION

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes' by William Shakespeare is part of the "Fair Youth" sequence of poems. In these poems, the speaker expresses his love and adoration for a young man. The sequence stretches from sonnet one all the way to sonnet 129. They are the largest subsection within the 154 sonnets Shakespeare wrote during his lifetime.

B. TEXT

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
I all alone be weep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

C. SUMMARY

Resenting his bad luck, the poet envies the successful art of others and rattles off an impressive catalogue of the ills and misfortunes of his life. His depression is derived from his being separated from the young man, even more so because he envisions the youth in the company of others while the poet is "all alone."

Stylistically, Sonnet 29 is typically Shakespearean in its form. The first eight lines, which begin with "When," establish a conditional argument and show the poet's frustration with his craft. The last six lines, expectedly beginning in line 9 with "Yet"—similar to other sonnets' "But"—and resolving the conditional argument, present a splendid image of a morning lark that "sings hymns at heaven's gate." This image epitomizes the poet's delightful memory of his friendship with the youth and compensates for the misfortunes he has lamented.

The uses of "state" unify the sonnet's three different sections: the first eight lines, lines 9 through 12, and the concluding couplet, lines 13 and 14.

Additionally, the different meanings of state—as a mood and as a lot in life—contrast the poet's sense of a failed and defeated life to his exhilaration in recalling his friendship with the youth. One state, as represented in lines 2 and 14, is his state of life; the other, in line 10, is his state of mind. Ultimately, although the poet plaintively wails his "outcast state" in line 2, by the end of the sonnet he has completely reversed himself: "... I scorn to change my state with kings." Memories of the young man rejuvenate his spirits.

D. STRUCTURE

'When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes' by William Shakespeare is a fourteen-line, traditional Shakespearean sonnet. The poem is structured in the form which has come to be synonymous with the poet's name. It made up of three quatrains, or sets of four lines, and one concluding couplet, or set of two rhyming lines.

The poem follows a consistent rhyme scheme that conforms to the pattern of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG and it is written in iambic pentameter. This means that each line contains five sets of two beats, known as metrical feet. The first is unstressed and the second stressed. It sounds something like da-DUM, da-DUM.

As is common in Shakespeare's poems, the last two lines are a rhyming pair, known as a couplet. They often bring with them a turn or volta in the poem. They're sometimes used to answer a question posed in the previous twelve lines, shift the perspective, or even change speakers. In this case, the turn is followed by a summary of the speaker's attitude. Despite his depressive moments, he would not change anything when he thinks on "thee".

E. EXPLANATION

Lines 1-4

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone be weep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,

In the first lines of 'When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes' the speaker begins by describing a particular mental and emotional situation he's often in. "When," he says he feels disgraced in the eyes of luck or fortune and "men" he finds himself weeping over his outcast state. At these moments he feels terrible as though heaven is deaf to his plight and God is not listening to his cries. This mournful speaker curses his "fate," whatever that may be.

Lines 5-8

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;

The next quatrain continues on the same themes. He wishes, in these moments, that he was more hopeful. That he had the characteristics of those who are "more rich in hope" than he. The idealized man this speaker has in mind has a lot of friends and a "scope" that is more pleasing. He has more opportunities than the speaker does and a lot more skills. Although the speaker does not reveal in these lines what he is so upset about, it is clearly something fundamental. He feels as though he's lacking something that other men have.

He adds at the end of this quatrain that he no longer enjoys that which he used to love the most. The man is in a deep depression.

Lines 9-14

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

In the last six lines of 'When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes' the speaker, unlike in most of Shakespeare's sonnets, does not provide a solution to the problem. There does not appear to be a clear way out of this mindset, but there is a balm.

When is despairs about his own fate and life he thinks on "thee" This "thee" is the "fair youth" to whom so many of Shakespeare's sonnets are dedicated. He thinks about this person, becomes happy, and his state is improved. He uses a similar to compare his rising spirits to a "lark at break of day arising / From sullen earth".

The speaker as a lark leaves behind all his mundane earthly problems and is elevated to a higher plane. He feels, in these happier moments, that he is able to sing hymns at "heaven's gate," directly to God.

The final lines of 'When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes' summarize the previous twelve. They state very clearly that the fair youth's love is the only thing that brings the speaker happiness. He feels wealthy in these moments, richer than kings. There is no one he'd rather trade places with.

• SONNET- 73

A. INTRODUCTION

Sonnet 73 is part of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets. Moreover, this sonnet is part of the Fair Youth sequence, a series of poems (from sonnets 1 to 126) that are addressed to an unnamed young man. The Fair Youth sequence has strong romantic language that portrays intense imagery. Particularly, Sonnet 73 focuses on old age and is addressed to a friend (the unnamed young man).

B. TEXT

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fades in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,
Consume with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceive, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

C. SUMMARY

In this poem, the speaker invokes a series of metaphors to characterize the nature of what he perceives to be his old age. In the first quatrain, he tells the beloved that his age is like a "time of year," late autumn, when the leaves have almost completely fallen from the trees, and the weather has grown cold, and the birds have left their branches. In the second quatrain, he then says that his age is like late twilight, "As after sunset fadeth in the west," and the remaining light is slowly extinguished in the darkness, which the speaker likens to "Death's second self." In the third quatrain, the speaker compares himself to the glowing remnants of a fire, which lies "on the ashes of his youth"—that is, on the ashes of the logs that once enabled it to burn—and which will soon be consumed "by that which it was nourished by"—that is, it will be extinguished as it sinks into the ashes, which its own burning created. In the couplet, the speaker tells the young man that he must perceive these things, and that his love must be strengthened by the knowledge that he will soon be parted from the speaker when the speaker, like the fire, is extinguished by time.

D. STRUCTURE

Sonnet 73 is a Shakespearean sonnet. This means that the poem has three quatrains and a final rhyming couplet. It has an ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme and it is composed in iambic pentameter. The main theme in Sonnet 73 is the process of aging and how the lyrical voice feels about it. Most of the poem is introspective with a pensive tone, but, the final couplet, addresses the unnamed young man directly.

E. EXPLANATION

Line 1-4

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

In the first stanza, the lyrical voice constructs a metaphor in order to characterize the nature of old age. Throughout these first lines, the lyrical voice relates old age to a particular "time of the year". First, old age is portrayed as autumn, where "yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang". The lyrical voice suggests that aging is similar to the moment of the year when the leaves have almost completely fallen, the weather is cold, and the birds left their branches. This metaphor emphasizes the harshness and emptiness of old age. This can be read, especially, when the lyrical voice says that "boughs [...] shake against the cold" and "Bare ruin'd choirs". Sonnet 73 portrays the lyrical voice's anxieties towards aging, and, in this particular stanza, the lyrical voice seems to be implying that autumn is the particular time of the year when death occurs. Moreover, the lyrical voice compares his aging process to nature, and, particularly, to autumn.

Line 5-8

In me thou sees the twilight of such day
As after sunset fades in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

In the second stanza, the lyrical voice compares the process of aging to the twilight. As the lyrical voice feels troubled about aging, he/she uses another metaphor to describe how he/she feels towards old age. The lyrical voice says that old age is similar to the twilight, as it can be seen in him/her ("In me thou seest the twilight of such day"). Then, a particular scenario is described, where the sun fades ("As after sunset fadeth in the west") and night approaches ("Which by and by black night doth take away"). This metaphor emphasizes the gradual fading of youth, as the twilight shifts to

night "by and by". Notice that, in the final line, death is directly related to this particular time of the day ("Death's second self") and it is described as the one that brings eternal rest ("seals up all in the rest"). As in the first stanza, these lines portray aging as the end of a cycle. In the previous stanza, this cycle is represented by the different natural seasons, and in this stanza the cycle is represented by the moments of the day.

Line 9-12

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.

In the third stanza, the lyrical voice compares him/herself to ashes. The lyrical voice mentions that there are remains of fire in him/her ("In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire/That on the ashes of his youth doth lie"). This fire represents youth, and, according to the lyrical voice, it will soon be consumed. Again, this metaphor shows the lyrical voice's troubled thoughts about aging. Notice the lyrical voice's emphasis on the consummation of this fire: "As the death-bed wereon it must expire/Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by".

Line 13-14

This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

In the final couplet, the lyrical voice defines a purpose. The lyrical voice notices that his/her love for his/her significant other grows stronger, as he/she ages, and despite the old age. The couplet addresses this young unnamed man from the Fair Youth sequence ("thou"). The lyrical voice tells this young man to strengthen his love and to understand everything that he/she has said throughout the stanzas ("This thou perceives, which makes thy love more strong"). The possibility of dying, the old age, emphasizes the need to love even more than before ("To love that well"), taking into account that he or the loved one could soon part from the world.

• SONNET- 94

A. INTRODUCTION

'Sonnet 94,' also known as 'They that have pow'r to hurt, and will do none,' is number ninety-four of one hundred fifty-four sonnets that the Bard wrote. Of this series, sonnets 1-126 belong to Shakespeare's famous Fair Youth sequence. These poems are all devoted, in one way or another, to a young, beautiful man. There has been a great deal of speculation about who

this young man could possibly be, but no single identity has ever been decided upon.

This particular sonnet shows the speaker feeling slightly more negatively towards the youth than he has in the past. Rather than expressing a willingness to live and die for the youth, he is through an extended metaphor, desiring the ease with which the youth could lose his beauty and goodness.

B. TEXT

They that have power to hurt, and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow;
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense;
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others, but stewards of their excellence.
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself, it only live and die,
But if that flower with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity:
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds.

C. SUMMARY

The first eight lines of this very difficult sonnet are devoted to the description of a certain kind of impressive, restrained person: "They that have pow'r to hurt" and do not use that power. These people seem not to do the thing they are most apparently able to do—they "do not do the thing they most do show"—and while they may move others, they remain themselves "as stone," cold and slow to feel temptation. People such as this, the speaker says, inherit "heaven's graces" and protect the riches of nature from expenditure. They are "the lords and owners of their faces," completely in control of themselves, and others can only hope to steward a part of their "excellence."

The next four lines undergo a remarkable shift, as the speaker turns from his description of those that "have pow'r to hurt and will do none" to a look at a flower in the summer. He says that the summer may treasure its flower (it is "to the summer sweet") even if the flower itself does not feel terribly cognizant of its own importance ("to itself it only live and die"). But if the flower becomes sick—if it meets with a "base infection"—then it becomes more repulsive and less dignified than the "basest weed." In the

couplet, the speaker observes that it is behavior that determines the worth of a person or a thing: sweet things which behave badly turn sour, just as a flower that festers smells worse than a weed.

D. STRUCTURE

'Sonnet 94 ' by William Shakespeare is a fourteen-line traditional Shakespearean sonnet. This form requires that the sonnet be made up of three quatrains, or sets of four lines, and one concluding couplet or set of two rhyming lines. The poem follows a consistent rhyme scheme that conforms to the pattern of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG and it is written in iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter means that each line contains five sets of two beats, known as metrical feet. The first is unstressed and the second stressed. It sounds something like da-DUM, da-DUM.

The last two lines (known as a couplet) are a rhyming pair. They often, but not always, bring with them a turn or "volta" (in Italian) in the poem. They're sometimes used to answer a question posed in the previous twelve lines, shift the perspective, or even change speakers.

E. EXPLANATION

Lines 1-4

They that have pow'r to hurt, and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who moving others are themselves as stone,
Unmovèd, cold, and to temptation slow,

In the first lines of 'Sonnet 94,' the speaker begins by setting out the attributes that he believes are pleasing to God and heaven. It is not revealed until the end of the second quatrain what the lines are leading up to. At this point, he just lists out different ays that people act. He thinks about those who have the "pow'r to hurt" (an example of syncope) and do not do so. These people, as well as those who are beautiful but do not give in to temptation, are pure and worthy of God's affections.

Lines 5-8

They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense.
They are the lords and owners of their faces;
Others but stewards of their excellence.

The speaker believes that those he described in the first stanza are the ones whoa re going to "inherit heaven's graces". They are the people who will become stewards of the earth and keep everything from falling to disrepair. They are the "lords and owners of their faces" because they can

control their desires. The "Others" are only "stewards" of their beauty and "excellence". They use their beauty to a specific end.

Lines 9-14

The summer's flow'r is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die.
But if that flow'r with base infection meet,
The basest weed out braves his dignity.
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

In the third and final quatrain of 'Sonnet 94', the speaker seems to change directions. He starts talking about "The summer's flow'rs" and how they seem "sweet" to those who experience them. But, to the flower, the experience might be different. It might experience life as simple progress from life to death.

The speaker is working with an extended metaphor for value and purity, as relates to the Fair Youth and his actions, in this sonnet. He considers the flower further, suggesting that if it let itself get infected with a parasite then weeds would be more valuable than it is. One's value is tied up entirely with one's deeds. If someone, the youth, acts poorly, then that will rot one's nature until it is destroyed.

• SONNET-110

A. INTRODUCTION

The poet deeply regrets his lapse of attention to the young man and wishes to show his disgust and self-reproach. He lists his faults and expresses resentment at being bound to his "motley" course and for selling "cheap what is most dear" — his love for the young man. Almost masochistically, he believes that he has hurt himself, a self-injury deserving the youth's reproach as well.

B. TEXT

Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made my self a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences of affections new;
Most true it is, that I have looked on truth
Askance and strangely; but, by all above,
These blenches gave my heart another youth,
And worse essays proved thee my best of love.
Now all is done, have what shall have no end:

Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof, to try an older friend,
A god in love, to whom I am confined.
Then give me welcome, next heaven the best,
Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.

C. SUMMARY

The poet deeply regrets his lapse of attention to the young man and wishes to show his disgust and self-reproach. He lists his faults and expresses resentment at being bound to his "motley" course and for selling "cheap what is most dear" — his love for the young man. Almost masochistically, he believes that he has hurt himself, a self-injury deserving the youth's reproach as well.

Sonnet 110 is unified by the poet's notion of truth and the many different ways truth is expressed: "'tis true," "Most true," "looked on truth," and "pure and most loving." The sonnet incorporates the poet's movement from regret of an earlier behavior to his fawning over the young man. In the first quatrain, the poet admits that he offended the young man by his actions, although just what those actions were he doesn't say until in the second quatrain: He displayed affection for "another youth." However, this brief relationship has only strengthened his love for the young man, whom he calls "my best of love." Vowing never again to "grind / On newer proof, to try an older friend," the poet begs the young man, "Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best," and he ingratiates himself to the youth by calling him his "pure and most most loving breast." The double use of the word "most," although it seems falsely affected, emphasizes the deep emotion the poet has for the youth, "A god in love" to whom the poet is "confined."

D. EXPLANATION

Lines 1-4

Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made my self a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences of affections new;

The poet laments that it is a fact that he has been here and there that means not so much an admission of travelling, as one of being unfaithful. He has been indiscriminate in his choice of lovers, and made himself look foolish in front of others; the line is simply a self-mocking realistic reference to his activities over the last few months or years.

Lines 5-8

Most true it is, that I have looked on truth

Askance and strangely; but, by all above,

These blenches gave my heart another youth,

And worse essays proved thee my best of love.

He further admits that he has allowed his thoughts to be divided and has made what was valuable to him appear worthless and used new friends to assist him in making old mistakes again. He admits that the worst fact about his actions is that he has indulged in what is untrue and treated true love with contempt and strange behavior but the fact of all this is that such actions have actually made him feel young again and by making friends with others has shown him that his love is the best among all. That means that his actions have made him realize the true value of his love.

Lines 9-12

Now all is done, have what shall have no end:

Mine appetite I never more will grind

On newer proof, to try an older friend,

A god in love, to whom I am confined.

Now he has done with all these actions except maintaining his love that has no end and that he will no longer go out into the world for such desires and new lovers anymore which only causes suffering to his old friend who he compares to a god saying that he is committed to his love.

Lines 13-14

Then give me welcome, my heaven the best,

Even to thy pure and most loving breast.

At the end he asks his god of love to embrace him in arms and to welcome him in the pure and loving heart as from now on he has limited himself or dedicated himself to his love as it the next best thing to heaven for him.

• SONNET- 116

A. INTRODUCTION

Sonnet 116: 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds', which is easily one of the most recognised of his poetry, particularly the first several lines. In total, it is believed that Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, in addition to the thirty-seven plays that are also attributed to him. Many believe Shakespeare's sonnets are addressed to two different people he may have known.

The first 126 sonnets seem to be speaking to a young man with whom Shakespeare was very close. As a result of this, much has been speculated

about The Bard's sexuality; it is to this young man that Sonnet 116 is addressed. The other sonnets Shakespeare wrote are written to a mysterious woman whose identity is unknown. Scholars have referred to her simply as the Dark Woman, and must have been written about her identity.

B. TEXT

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never worte, nor no man ever loved.

C. SUMMARY

This sonnet attempts to define love, by telling both what it is and is not. In the first quatrain, the speaker says that love—"the marriage of true minds"—is perfect and unchanging; it does not "admit impediments," and it does not change when it find changes in the loved one. In the second quatrain, the speaker tells what love is through a metaphor: a guiding star to lost ships ("wand'ring barks") that is not susceptible to storms (it "looks on tempests and is never shaken"). In the third quatrain, the speaker again describes what love is not: it is not susceptible to time. Though beauty fades in time as rosy lips and cheeks come within "his bending sickle's compass," love does not change with hours and weeks: instead, it "bears it out ev'n to the edge of doom." In the couplet, the speaker attests to his certainty that love is as he says: if his statements can be proved to be error, he declares, he must never have written a word, and no man can ever have been in love.

D. STRUCTURE

This is a true Shakespearean sonnet, also referred to as an Elizabethan or English sonnet. This type of sonnet contains fourteen lines, which are separated into three quatrains (four lines) and end with a rhyming couplet (two lines). The rhyme scheme of this sonnet is ababcdcdefef gg. Like most of Shakespeare's works, this sonnet is written in iambic pentameter, which

means each line consists of ten syllables, and within those ten syllables, there are five pairs, which are called iambs (one stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable).

E. EXPLANATION

In the first two lines, Shakespeare writes,

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments.

These lines are perhaps the most famous in the history of poetry, regardless of whether one recognizes them as belonging to Shakespeare. Straight away, Shakespeare uses the metaphor of marriage to compare it to true, real love. He is saying that there is no reason why two people who truly love should not be together; nothing should stand in their way. Perhaps he is speaking about his feelings for the unknown young man for whom the sonnet is written. Shakespeare was unhappily married to Anne Hathaway, and so perhaps he was rationalising his feelings for the young man by stating there was no reason, even if one is already married, that two people who are truly in love should not be together. The second half of the second line begins a new thought, which is then carried on into the third and fourth lines. He writes,

Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.

Shakespeare is continuing with his thought that true love conquers all. In these lines, the speaker is telling the reader that if love changes, it is not truly love because if it changes, or if someone tries to "remove" it, nothing will change it. Love does not stop just because something is altered. As clichéd as it sounds, true love, real love, lasts forever.

The second quatrain of Sonnet 116 begins with some vivid and beautiful imagery, and it continues with the final thought pondered in the first quatrain. Now that Shakespeare has established what love is not—fleeting and ever-changing—he can now tell us what love is. He writes,

O no, it is an ever fixed mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken...

Here, Shakespeare tells his readers that love is something that does not shift, change, or move; it is constant and in the same place, and it can weather even the most harrowing of storms, or tempests and is never even shaken, let alone defeated. While weak, it can be argued here that Shakespeare decides to personify love, since it is something that is intangible and not something that can be defeated by something tangible,

such as a storm. In the next line, Shakespeare uses the metaphor of the North Star to discuss love. He writes,

It is the star to every wand'ring bark,

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

To Shakespeare, love is the star that guides every bark, or ship, on the water, and while it is priceless, it can be measured. These two lines are interesting and worth noting. Shakespeare concedes that love's worth is not known, but he says it can be measured. How, he neglects to tell his reader, but perhaps he is assuming the reader will understand the different ways in which one can measure love: through time and actions. With that thought, the second quatrain ends.

The third quatrain parallels the first, and Shakespeare returns to telling his readers what love is not. He writes,

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come...

Notice the capitalization of the word "Time." Shakespeare is personifying time as a person, specifically, Death. He says that love is not the fool of time. One's rosy lips and cheeks will certainly pale with age, as "his bending sickle's compass come." Shakespeare's diction is important here, particularly with his use of the word "sickle." Who is the person with whom the sickle is most greatly associated? Death. We are assured here that Death will certainly come, but that will not stop love. It may kill the lover, but the love itself is eternal. This thought is continued in the lines eleven and twelve, the final two lines of the third quatrain. Shakespeare writes,

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

He is simply stating here that love does not change over the course of time; instead, it continues on even after the world has ended ("the edge of doom").

Shakespeare uses lines thirteen and fourteen, the final couplet of Sonnet 116, to assert just how truly he believes that love is everlasting and conquers all. He writes,

If this be error and upon me proved

I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

In this part of Sonnet 116, Shakespeare is telling his reader that if someone proves he is wrong about love, then he never wrote the following words and no man ever loved. He is conveying here that if his words are untrue, nothing else would exist. The words he just wrote would have never

been written, and no man would have ever loved before. He is an adamant about this, and his tough words are what strengthen the sonnet itself. The speaker and poet himself are convinced that love is real, true, and everlasting.

• SONNET- 129

A. INTRODUCTION

'Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame' by William Shakespeare, also known as Sonnet 129, is a fourteen line poem. It is is structured in the form which has come to be synonymous with the poet's name. It is made up of three quatrains, or sets of four lines, and one concluding couplet, or set of two rhyming lines. The last two lines often bring with them a turn or volta in the poem. They're sometimes used to answer a question posed in the previous twelve lines, shift the perspective, or even change speakers.

B. TEXT

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action: and till action, lust
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight;
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad.
Mad in pursuit and in possession so;
Had, having, and in quest to have extreme;
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;
Before, a joy proposed; behind a dream.
All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

C. SUMMARY

This complex poem grapples with the idea of sexual desire as it exists in longing, fulfillment, and memory. (That is to say, it deals with lust as a longing for future pleasure; with lust as it is consummated in the present; and with lust as it is remembered after the pleasurable experience, when it becomes a source of shame.) At the beginning of the poem, the speaker says that "lust in action"—that is, as it exists at the consummation of the sexual act—is an "expense of spirit in a waste of shame." He then devotes the rest of the first quatrain to characterizing lust as it exists "till action"—that is,

before the consummation: it is "perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame / Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust."

In the second quatrain, the speaker jumps between longing, fulfillment, and memory. No sooner is lust "enjoyed" than it is "despised." When lust is longing, the fulfillment of that longing is hunted "past reason"; but as soon as it is achieved, it becomes shameful, and is hated "past reason." In the third quatrain, then, the speaker says that lust is mad in all three of its forms: in pursuit and possession, it is mad, and in memory, consummation, and longing ("had, having, and in quest to have") it is "extreme." While it is experienced it might be "a bliss in proof," but as soon as it is finished ("proved") it becomes "a very woe." In longing, it is "a joy proposed," but in memory, the pleasure it afforded is merely "a dream." In the couplet, the speaker says that the whole world knows these things well; but nevertheless, none knows how to shun lust in order to avoid shame: "To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell."

D. STRUCTURE

In the case of sonnet 129, the couplet changes the tone. It includes expressions of regret and acceptance of how men have and will continue to live. It is much less argumentative than the opening lines.

The poem follows a consistent rhyme scheme that conforms to the pattern of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG and it is written in iambic pentameter. This means that each line contains five sets of two beats, known as metrical feet. The first is unstressed and the second stressed. It sounds something like da-DUM, da-DUM.

E. EXPLANATION

Lines 1-2

Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame

Is lust in action; and till action, lust

In the first quatrain of 'Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame', the speaker begins by stating that the "expense of spirit" is a wasteful thing. He is specifically speaking about men and the phrase "expense of spirit" suggests that the lustful man is losing some sort of internal power. When this happens, the man is feels shame. This is an interesting way to begin a poem and suggests a lot about the speaker. Especially considering the contextual details which go along with this poem, as were mentioned in the introductory section.

While the speaker is addressing the reader from a rather detached point of view, it is evident as the poem progresses that the way he was speaking about men or human beings in general also applies, and maybe specifically applies, to him.

Lines 3-4

Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,

Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trus

To be more exacting, the speaker states that the waste of shame comes from "lust in action." This is any sexual act. It is lust as it is occurring. In the second half of the second line, which is a great example of a caesura, the speaker goes into a passionate, and undeniably angry and frustrated list of emotions that are associated with the lead up to a sexual act.

For example, the speaker says that "lust is... murderous." It is "bloody" and "full of blame". He goes on to refer to it as "extreme, rude, cruel." The final phrase in this list is perhaps the most interesting, he speaks of the emotional and physical desire associated with the prelude to sex as being untrustworthy. It is a state of being one should not choose to give into as it will lead to, as the first line stated, an eventual feeling of shame.

Lines 5-8

Enjoyed no sooner but despisèd straight,

Past reason hunted; and, no sooner had

Past reason hated as a swallowed bait

On purpose laid to make the taker mad;

This is made all the clearer at the beginning of the second quatrain of 'Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame' . The speaker states that no sooner is lust and sex enjoyed then it becomes "despised". The temporary pleasure that one gets from feeling lust and then acting on lust is very limited. In the next lines the speaker tries to convince himself, and the reader, that when one is feeling lust they are "passed reason." It brings one into a state that is closer to madness than happiness. It can make "the taker" lose his mind.

The reference to man as "the taker" is an interesting one. It is connected to the traditional role in a sexual coupling between a man and a woman, that the man takes his pleasure from the woman. Not the other way around. But, in this case it also speaks to the man taking on the desire of the moment. He accepts the consequences when he engages in sexual actions.

There is a great example of anaphora in lines six and seven. Shakespeare uses and re-uses the phrase "past reason." A reader should also take note of the fact that the third word in both of these lines begins with the letter "h."

Line 9-12

Mad in pursuit and in possession so,

Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;

A bliss in proof and proved, a very woe;

Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.

The speaker remains focused on the madness one is forced into before and after engaging in a lustful activity. As was stated in the previous lines man becomes "Mad in pursuit and in possession so." The entire quest brings one to extremes. From the "had" to the "having."

In the next two lines of 'Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame' the speaker focuses on the joys and pleasures which are associated with sex. These are the extremes that men quest for in the previous lines. Everyone knows, the speaker is inferring, that bliss is a state that humans will undoubtedly seek. But, when it happens and it is over it is woeful. In the final line of the quatrain the speaker says that before sex, one is in a state in which joy is being proposed. But, when the sex is behind them, it becomes just a dream. All the negative consequences outlined in the first few lines are made real.

Lines 12-14

All this the world well knows; yet none knows well

To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

In the final rhyming couplet, the tone changes significantly. The angry, passionate and determine tone of the first 12 lines dissolves. Now, the speaker is addressing the situation from a more detached, and accepting point of you. He states that everyone in the world "well knows" everything that he has said so far.

Everyone knows that to give in to lust would be to "shun the heaven" but all the same, men do what they feel like they want to. And they are led to "this hell."

• SONNET- 130

A. INTRODUCTION

Sonnet 130 is a parody of the Dark Lady, who falls too obviously short of fashionable beauty to be extolled in print. The poet, openly contemptuous of his weakness for the woman, expresses his infatuation for her in negative comparisons. For example, comparing her to natural objects, he notes that her eyes are "nothing like the sun," and the colors of her lips and breasts dull when compared to the red of coral and the whiteness of snow.

B. TEXT

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far more red, than her lips red:

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,
As any she belied with false compare.

C. SUMMARY

This sonnet compares the speaker's lover to a number of other beauties—and never in the lover's favor. Her eyes are "nothing like the sun," her lips are less red than coral; compared to white snow, her breasts are dun-colored, and her hairs are like black wires on her head. In the second quatrain, the speaker says he has seen roses separated by color ("damasked") into red and white, but he sees no such roses in his mistress's cheeks; and he says the breath that "reeks" from his mistress is less delightful than perfume. In the third quatrain, he admits that, though he loves her voice, music "hath a far more pleasing sound," and that, though he has never seen a goddess, his mistress—unlike goddesses—walks on the ground. In the couplet, however, the speaker declares that, "by heav'n," he thinks his love as rare and valuable "As any she belied with false compare"—that is, any love in which false comparisons were invoked to describe the loved one's beauty.

D. STRUCTURE

The rhetorical structure of Sonnet 130 is important to its effect. In the first quatrain, the speaker spends one line on each comparison between his mistress and something else (the sun, coral, snow, and wires—the one positive thing in the whole poem some part of his mistress *is* like. In the second and third quatrains, he expands the descriptions to occupy two lines each, so that roses/cheeks, perfume/breath, music/voice, and goddess/mistress each receive a pair of unrhymed lines. This creates the effect of an expanding and developing argument, and neatly prevents the poem—which does, after all, rely on a single kind of joke for its first twelve lines—from becoming stagnant.

E. EXPLANATION

Lines 1-4

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far more red, than her lips red:

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

The first quatrain is all about the appearance of the mistress, what she isn't like. Shakespeare doesn't hold back in his denial of his mistress's beauty. It's there for all to see in the first line. When Shakespeare was writing this sonnet it was all the rage to compare a lover's eyes to the sun and sunlight - Shakespeare completely negates this, using the phrase 'nothing like' to emphasise the fact that this female's eyes are not bright.

The second line focuses on the mistress's lips and informs the reader that they are not that red, not as red as coral (the marine corals), again the perfect colour for the perfect female.

In lines three and four the anatomy of the mistress is further explored in unorthodox fashion. In Shakespeare's time the ideal woman was white, slender, blonde haired, red-lipped, bright-eyed and had silky smooth white skin. Not so the woman of sonnet 130. Her breasts are a dull grey-brown colour, not snow white. And she has dark hair that stands out like wires. Imagine that, comparing your lover's hair to strands of thin metal.

Lines 5-8

I have seen roses damasked, red and white,

But no such roses see I in her cheeks;

And in some perfumes is there more delight

Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

The second quatrain takes the reader a little deeper and in the paired lines five and six the notion that this mistress is not your ideal female model is reinforced. She doesn't have rosy cheeks, even if the speaker has seen plenty of natural damask roses in the garden.

If the classic, lovely and fragrant English Rose is absent, at least this mistress has no pretence to a sweet smelling breath. Her breath reeks, which may mean stinks or may mean rises. Some say that in Shakespeare's time the word reeks meant to emanate or rise, like smoke. Others claim it did mean smell or stink. Certainly in the context of the previous line - some perfume - the latter meaning seems more likely.

Lines 9-12

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

That music hath a far more pleasing sound:

I grant I never saw a goddess go,

My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:

The third quatrain introduces the reader to the mistress's voice and walk and offers up no extraordinary claims. She speaks and walks normally. She hasn't a musical voice; she uses her feet to get around. Though the speaker admits that he has never seen a goddess move, he is still sure that his lover moves like an ordinary person, simply walking on the ground.

Lines 13-14

And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,

As any she belied with false compare.

The final couplet, a full rhyming affirmation of the speaker's love for the woman, his mistress. Not only is the speaker being blatantly honest in this sonnet, he is being critical of other poets who put forward false claims about woman. He's not prepared to do that, preferring instead to enhance his mistress's beauty, deepen his love for her.

• SONNET- 138

A. INTRODUCTION

From the classic Shakespeare 154-sonnet sequence, sonnet 138 is from the third thematic group, "The Dark Lady Sonnets," which are as appropriately labeled as the second thematic group is mislabeled.

B. TEXT

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed:
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O! love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love, loves not to have years told:
Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

C. SUMMARY

Sonnet 138 presents a candid psychological study of the mistress that reveals many of her hypocrisies. Certainly she is still very much the poet's mistress, but the poet is under no illusions about hercharacter: "When my love swears that she is made of truth, / I do believe her, though I know she

lies." He accepts without protest her "false-speaking tongue" and expects nothing better of her. Cynically, he too deceives and is comforted by knowing that he is no longer fooled by the woman's charade of fidelity to him, nor she by how young and simpleminded he presents himself to be.

In a relationship without affection or trust, the two lovers agree to a relationship based on mutual deception. Both agree never to voice the truth about just how much their relationship is built on never-spoken truths: "But wherefore says she not she is unjust? / And wherefore say not I that I am old?" Note that the sentence construction in these two lines is identical, similar to how both the poet and the woman identically feign lying when each knows that the other person knows the truth.

The main theme of the concluding two lines is lust, but it is treated with a wry humor. The poet is content to support the woman's lies because he is flattered that she thinks him young — even though he knows that she is well aware of just how old he is. On the other hand, he does not challenge her pledges of faithfulness — even though she knows that he is aware of her infidelity. Neither is disposed to unveil the other's defects. Ultimately the poet and the woman remain together for two reasons, the first being their sexual relationship, the second that they are obviously comfortable with each other's lying. Both of these reasons are indicated by the pun on the word "lie," meaning either "to have sex with" or "to deceive": "Therefore I lie with her and she with me, / And in our faults by lies we flattered be."

C. STRUCTURE

Rhyme Scheme: The poem follows the ABAB rhyme scheme in the first three stanzas whereas the couplet follows the AA rhyme scheme.

D. EXPLANATION

Line 1-4

When my love swears that she is made of truth
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.

The speaker in Shakespeare's Sonnet 138 spills forth the bizarre admission that when his adulterous mistress assures him of her fidelity and truthfulness, he seems to accept her word on the issue. However, he knows she is telling a bold-face lie. Of course, the speaker makes it clear that he is only pretending to believe her.

In fact, he is well aware that he cannot believe her, and he is convinced of her prevarication. But the speaker then admits to being a liar as well. He wishes to have her believe that he is as unsophisticated as a young man. He

thus pretends to accept her lies, for the purpose of making her to believe his pretense as he attempts to act younger than he is.

Line 5-8

Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
On both sides thus is simple truth supprest.

In the second quatrain, the speaker summarizes all the lying and falsifying on both sides: he is aware that she knows he is not a young man. He is not in his prime, so he confesses that his pretending remains in vain.

She does not actually believe he is a young man, anymore than he accepts that she is his faithful lover. They both exaggerate and lie all for the sake of their silly, stupid, licentious game.

Line 9-12

But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O! love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told:

In the third quatrain, the speaker tries to rationalize their deceptions, as he makes the absurd claim that, "love's best habit is in seeming trust." However, this speaker is creating a character, pretending to believe what the poet/speaker knows to be untrue.

The poet/speaker knows the value of truth; he is a mature man who realizes that such feigned "trust" is not trust at all. These lovers cannot, in fact, trust each other: each knows that the other is lying.

Line 13-14

Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

The couplet offers no hope of assuaging the situation. It simply demonstrates that the relationship between these two pretenders is based solely on sexual attraction: "I lie with her and she with me." The speaker is punning the word "lie." He has made it abundantly clear that these so-called lovers "lie" to each other, and thus when he claims that they lie "with" each other, he is referencing only their sexual relationship, that is, lying in bed as sexual partners.

The speaker says that they are flattered by this absurd arrangement. However, because flattery is hardly a strong basis on which to build a relationship, the speaker leaves it up the reader to determine that the

relationship is truly a sad one—despite the gay glee they may experience as they "lie" together and then lay each other.

• REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How far has Shakespeare unlocked his heart in his sonnet? Answer with reference to the sonnets in syllabus?
2. Summarize 94sonnet in your own words
3. Define Shakespearean Sonnet with example.
4. Discuss the mood which is depicted in the 130th Sonnet written by Shakespear.
5. Interpret the meaning of couplet in sonnet 116.
6. What is the rhyme scheme of Shakespearean sonnet?
7. In Sonnet 18 lines 4 and 5 what is the "Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,/And often is his gold complexion dimmed," referring to?
8. Determine what is being discussed in Sonnet 110.
9. In Sonnet 29, how does the poet describe himself? Why does he feel sorry for himself?
10. In Sonnet 116, what is the significance of the opening stanza? How does he describe true love?
11. What is the resolution of sonnet 116?
12. Sonnet 130 is filled with negative images of his mistress. How does he describe her? What is the purpose of these negative images?
13. Discuss briefly how the tone of Shakespeare's sonnets changed over time? What differences do you see in 18 as compared to 138.
14. Select two sonnets from each of the two major divisions (Sonnets 1–126 and 127–154). How do they differ in mood and the treatment of love?
15. Which sonnets do you find most shocking, and why?
16. In the sonnets, what views does Shakespeare express regarding the nature of true love and the miseries of misguided love?
17. Write an essay in which you discuss the poet's changing attitudes toward the young man.
18. How does the poet's love for the young man differ from his love for the Dark Lady?
19. How does Shakespeare indicate that time may be conquered? How do the sonnets themselves indicate that time may be conquered?
20. Discuss the theme of immortality as presented in the sonnets, citing specific lines as support for your views.
21. What role does nature play in the sonnets? Is nature linked with one specific theme? If so, which theme, and how?
22. Sonnet 18 is one of the most famous poems in the English language. Why do you think this is the case? How does the speaker use natural imagery to create a picture of the young man's beauty?
23. Discuss the portrayal of beauty in the sequence as a whole. Is beauty an immortal ideal, or is it vulnerable to time? How is beauty valued

differently in a poems like Sonnets 1, 18, and 60 than in a poem like Sonnet 146? How does "beauty" contrast with "worth"? How is beauty treated in Sonnet 130?

24. Sonnet 94 is one of the most difficult, and in many ways one of the most ambiguous, of all the sonnets. What are the speaker's feelings for the people "that have pow'r to hurt and will do none"? What is the significance of the summer's flower?
25. Discuss the theme of love in the sonnets. Do the young man sonnets express a different ideal of love than the dark lady sonnets? Is the ideal of love described in Sonnet 116—without which the speaker "never writ, nor no man ever loved"— constant throughout the sonnets?

• FURTHER READING

- "First edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets, 1609". *The British Library. Retrieved 18 February 2019.*
- *Shakespeare, William (2010). Duncan-Jones, Katherine (ed.). Shakespeare's Sonnets. Bloomsbury Arden.* ISBN 978-1408017975.
- Shakespeare, William. Callaghan, Dympna, editor. *Shakespeare's Sonnets.* John Wiley & Sons, 2008. p.x. ISBN 978-0470777510.
- Stanley Wells and Michael Dobson, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 439.
- *Dautch, Aviva (30 March 2017). "Shakespeare, sexuality and the Sonnets".* British Library. *Retrieved 20 May 2019.*
- Jo Shapcott, On Shakespeare's Sonnets–A Poets' Celebration, ed. by Hannah Crawforth and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 89.
- Imtiaz Dharker, On Shakespeare's Sonnets–A Poets' Celebration, ed. by Hannah Crawforth and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 78.

UNIT–IV

JOHN MILTON (PARADISE LOST-BOOK-I, II AND XII)

STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Key points
- Introduction
- Biography of the author
- Plot
- Important explanation
- Summary and analysis
- Characters
- Analysis of main characters
- Grand style of Milton
- Critical reviews
- Themes
- Review questions
- Further reading

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- Answer the questions based on Book-1, 2 and 12.
- Describe the various characters in the books.
- Explain the important quotation and passages.
- Write about the grand style of poet John Milton.

• KEY POINTS

- Full Title Paradise Lost
- Author John Milton
- Type of Work Poem
- Genre Epic
- Language English
- Time And Place Written 1656–1674; England
- Date Of First Publication First Edition (ten books), 1667; Second Edition (twelve books), 1674
- Publisher S. Simmons, England
- Narrator Milton
- Tone Lofty; formal; tragic
- Setting (Time) Before the beginning of time
- Setting (Place) Hell, Chaos and Night, Heaven, Earth (Paradise, the Garden of Eden)
- Protagonist Adam and Eve

• INTRODUCTION

As early as his second year at Cambridge, John Milton had attempted to write an epic—a school exercise in Latin concerning the Gunpowder Plot. By his fourth year, he had expressed interest in composing an epic poem in English, possibly dealing with King Arthur. At this point in his life, Milton was certainly familiar with the classical Homeric epics of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as well as Virgil's *Aeneid*. Milton also knew Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which, while not technically an epic, has many epic characteristics. Finally, on his Grand Tour, Milton had met Giovanni Batista, the Marquis of Manso and biographer of Torquato Tasso, author of the epic *Jerusalem Delivered*.

From these sources, we can see the kind of poem that Milton had begun to envision. From Homer forward, the epic had been an extended narrative dealing with a hero or group of heroes attempting to achieve a specific goal. This goal frequently has to do with actions, events, or ideas that tend to define a culture either through history, values, or destiny, or, at times, all three. Any poem can be heroic, but the epic is separated from other heroic narratives through its magnitude and style. In simplest terms, epics are

very long and written in a highly elevated style. The original Homeric epics, sometimes called *primary epics*, were orally recited by bards and involved ritualistic presentations.

Written, or *secondary*, epics made up for the lack of the bardic setting through heightened style and formal structures. These epics were always serious, involving important events, crucial to the culture of the author and his audience. Similarly, the poem dealt with public, even national, concerns rather than the private world of the artist. In terms of style, the epic was written in elevated, soaring language. For the Greeks and Romans, part of the elevated language was the use of hexameters. Moreover, the epic could contain a variety of forms such as narrative, lyric, elegy, satire, debate, and many others. The length of the poem allowed the author enormous leeway to present different types of poetry within the overall framework of the epic. The epic also was typified stylistically by beginning *in medias res* (in the middle of things) and using extended similes and metaphors, sometimes called *epic similes*. Generally, epics, before Milton, glorified warfare and heroism in warfare, focusing on heroes who distinguish themselves in battle.

Milton came to the epic form with these ideas, but he also had his own epic in mind. Originally, Milton's notion seems to have been to follow the pattern of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid* closely. His impulse to write on King Arthur, to create the *Arthurian*, lends itself readily to the epic pattern. Over time though, Milton changed his mind about this epic. In the *Reason for Church Government*, he wonders "what king or knight before the conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of the Christian hero." The first answer to this query is obviously Arthur, but the second answer, upon reflection, is no one. By the Restoration, Milton's ideas of Christian hero and British epic were in flux.

The reasons for Milton's changed attitude toward his epic poem seem apparent. The changes in Milton's life are ample reasons for artistic changes. In the years between his Latin poems in which the epic theme of King Arthur is raised, Milton had seen his political fortunes rise and fall, had lived in hiding, had been imprisoned and freed with loss of prestige and reputation, had seen his hopes for a Christian nation fall apart, had gone blind, and had suffered through the deaths of two wives and two children. The young man filled with idealistic enthusiasm and nationalistic pride had been replaced by a man who now looked for a Christian hero who might embody "the better fortitude/Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom," as he says in the prologue to Book IX of *Paradise Lost*. In the same prologue, he

adds that he does not wish "to dissect / With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights / In Battles feign'd." None of such mainstays of earlier epics, he adds, give "Heroic name / To Person or to Poem."

Milton's whole concept of what an epic subject should be had changed. War, conquest, heroism in battle seemed like shams, and in Book VI of *Paradise Lost*, he wrote battle scenes that mock the epic convention. By the time he wrote his epic, Milton had found true heroism in obedience to God and in the patience to accept suffering without the loss of faith.

Exactly when Milton began *Paradise Lost* is open to question. Edward Phillips, Milton's nephew and early biographer, claimed to have heard parts of *Paradise Lost* as early as 1642. That Milton may have written poems and speeches that became a part of his epic well before the 1660s is not just possible but probable. In his Cambridge epic in Latin on the Gunpowder Plot, *In Quintum Novembris*, Satan appears as a character. In fact, in that early exercise, Satan calls a council of devils, and at the end of the poem, God laughs at the futility of the evildoers. Foreshadowing of *Paradise Lost* then occur as early as 1626. Further, in the Trinity manuscript of the 1640s, which contains a number of ideas for projects that Milton intended to pursue, there is an outline for a play called *Adam paradise*, containing a number of features that appear in *Paradise Lost*.

However, even though evidence exists that ideas for and sections of *Paradise Lost* existed well before the 1660s, strong evidence in the poem itself suggests that the main scenes and ideas of the epic occurred after 1660. That is, Milton had the idea for an epic poem while still in college. Over a period of close to 40 years, the plans for that epic developed and changed. Milton wrote many poems, songs, and speeches that seem now to be parts of *Paradise Lost*. But the one overriding fact remains that not until he was blind and finished with government work did Milton bring all that he had thought and worked on together into a complete epic structure.

In the end, Milton chose not to copy Homer and Virgil, but to create a Christian epic. His creation is still a work of great magnitude in an elevated style. Milton chose not to write in hexameters or in rhyme because of the natural limitations of English. Instead he wrote in unrhymed iambic pentameter, *or blank verse*, the most natural of poetic techniques in English. He also chose a new kind of heroism to magnify and ultimately created a new sort of epic — a Christian epic that focuses not on the military actions that create a nation but on the moral actions that create a world.

• BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN MILTON

Early Years

John Milton was born in London on December 9, 1608. His parents were John Milton, Sr. and Sarah Jeffery, who lived in a prosperous neighborhood of merchants. John Milton, Sr. was a successful scrivener or copyist who also dabbled in real estate and was noted as a composer of liturgical church music. The Milton were prosperous enough that eventually they owned a second house in the country.

Milton seems to have had a happy childhood. He spoke of his mother's "esteem, and the alms she bestowed." Of his father, Milton said that he "destined me from a child to the pursuits of Literature, ... and had me daily instructed in the grammar school, and by other masters at home." Though the senior Milton came from a Catholic family, he was a Puritan himself. Milton's religion, therefore, was an outgrowth of family life and not something he chose at a later period in his maturity.

Education

Sometime, as early as age seven but perhaps later, Milton became a student at St. Paul's school, which was attached to the great cathedral of the same name. St. Paul's was a prestigious English public school — what would be called a "private school" in the U.S. Milton spent eight years as a "Pigeon at Paules," as the students were known, and came out a rather advanced scholar. He had studied the Trivium of Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic and had probably been exposed to the Quadrivium of Mathematics, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music. He had also learned Latin well, was competent in Greek and Hebrew, had a smattering of French, and knew Italian well enough to write sonnets in it. The one language he did not study was English. Some of his language acquisition — Italian — came from private tutors hired by his father.

Also, at St. Paul's, the young Milton made a friendship that was among the closest of his life with Charles Diodati. After leaving St. Paul's, the two young men would write each other in Latin. Through his friendship with Diodati, Milton came into contact with many of the foreign residents of London.

In 1625, Milton matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge, intending to become a minister. Instead, Milton's facility with language and his abilities as a poet soon made the ministry a secondary consideration. Also, Milton was not pleased with the medieval scholastic curriculum that still existed at Christ's College. This displeasure caused him to become involved in frequent disputes, including some with his tutor William Chappell. In 1626, perhaps because of this dispute or perhaps because of some other minor infraction, Milton was "rusticated" or suspended for a brief period. Whatever the reason, Milton did not seem to mind the respite from Christ's,

nor did the rustication impede his progression through the school in any significant way.

In March 1629, Milton received his BA and three years later, in July 1632, completed work on his MA. In completing these degrees, Milton had already become an accomplished poet. His first significant effort was the Christmas ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." Evidence also exists that he completed *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* ("The Cheerful Man" and "The Pensive Man") while in college. These works had not achieved any notoriety for Milton, but they do demonstrate the genius that was within him.

Early Literary Work

After Milton's graduation, he did not consider the ministry. Instead, he began a six-year stay at his father's recently purchased country estate of Horton with the stated intention of becoming a poet. Milton made his move to Horton, a village of about 300 people, in 1632, saying that God had called him to be a poet. One of his first great works, *Comus, a Masque*, was written around this time.

In 1637, Milton's mother died, possibly of the plague. That same year, one of his Cambridge friends, Edward King, a young minister, was drowned in a boating accident. Classmates at Cambridge decided to create a memorial volume of poetry for their dead friend. Milton's poem, untitled in the volume but later called *Lycidas*, was the final poem, possibly because the editors recognized it as the artistic climax of the volume. Whatever the reasoning, the poem, signed simply J. M., has become one of the most recognized elegiac poems in English.

Influences Abroad

Having been through the years at Cambridge and six more at Horton, Milton took the Grand Tour, an extended visit to continental Europe. Such a tour was viewed as the culmination of the education of a cultivated young man. Milton as a true scholar and poet wanted more from this tour than just a good time away from home. He wanted to visit France and especially Italy. In Paris, in May of 1638, he met the famed Dutch legal scholar and theologian Hugo Grotius. Grotius' ideas on natural and positive law worked their way into many of Milton's political writings.

In Italy, Milton met a number of important men who would have influence on his writing. In Florence, he most likely met Galileo, who was under house arrest by the Inquisition for his heliocentric views of the solar system. Milton had a lifelong fascination with science and scientific discovery. Book VIII of *Paradise Lost* mentions the telescope and deals with planetary motions. Also in Italy, Milton attended an operatic performance

in the company of Cardinal Francesco Barbering. The actual opera is not known but may have been one by Museo Clemente, who was popular at the time. Milton's own knowledge of and love for music shows up in much of his poetry, and, in some ways, *Paradise Lost* is operatic poetry. Finally, in Italy, Milton met Giovanni Batista, Marquis of Manso, who was the biographer of the great Italian epic poet, Torquato Tasso. Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* was obviously an influence on Milton's own epic poetry. To what extent Batista was also an influence is difficult to determine, but Milton did write the poem, *Mansus*, in his honor.

At this point in his journey, Milton planned to go to Greece but had to cut his tour short. Civil war was simmering in England; in addition, Milton learned that his old friend Charles Diodati had died. Late in 1638, Milton returned to London, where in 1639, he settled down as a schoolmaster for his nephews and other children from aristocratic families. For the first time in his life, Milton was on his own, earning his own way in the world.

Writing Career and Marriage

At this time, Milton began writing prose pamphlets on current church controversies. The political climate was charged as Charles I invaded Scotland, and the Long Parliament was convened. Milton wrote pamphlets entitled *Of Reformation*, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, and *Animadversions* in 1641, and *The Reason for Church Government* in 1642. For the young poet, the Puritan aspect of his work, at least in the public eye, began to take precedence over his poetry. Milton more and more sided with the idea that the church needed "purification" and that that sort of reform could not come from a church so closely connected to the king.

In 1642, the Civil War began, and its effects touched Milton directly. That same year, he married Mary Powell, daughter of a Royalist family from Oxford. A month after the marriage, Mary returned to Oxford to live with her family. The precise reasons for her leaving Milton are not known. Personal problems, political differences, or simple safety (Oxford was the headquarters for the Royalist army) may have motivated her. Milton's brother, Christopher, also announced as a Royalist at about this same time.

Whatever the reason for Mary Powell's desertion of Milton, he published the pamphlet *On the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* in 1643, followed by *On Education* and *Areopagitica* in 1644. Each of these works centered on the need for individual liberty. The ideas that Milton expressed in these writings are commonplace values today, but in the 1640s, they were so radical that Milton acquired the nickname, "Milton the divorcer."

Around 1645, Mary Powell returned to Milton. Once again, the reasons for her return are unclear. Charles I had lost the Battle of Naseby and any hope for military victory. The Powell family, avowed Royalists, were now in danger. They were ejected from their home in Oxford as Charles' power waned. Within a year of Mary's return to Milton, her entire family had moved in with the couple.

With the return of Mary and the arrival of her family, Milton was suddenly the head of a large household. His first collection of poetry, entitled *Poems*, was published in 1646. The volume included *Lycidas*, *Comus*, and "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." In July, seven months after *Poems* was published, Milton's first daughter, Anne, was born. The marriage that had begun inauspiciously now seemed, if not perfect, at least sound.

Shortly after the reunion of Milton with his wife and the birth of his first child, both his father-in-law, Richard Powell, and his own father died. Milton was left with a moderate estate. He complained at this point that he was surrounded by "uncongenial people," a problem that was resolved a few months later when all the Powell relatives moved back to Oxford. Milton and his wife and daughter then moved into a smaller house in High Holborn. For the first time, the couple had a reasonably normal life and family. In 1648, a second daughter, Mary, was born.

The year 1649 marked a decisive change in Milton's life. Charles I was executed, with Milton probably in attendance. The murder of a king was shocking to the people of a country that had always lived under a monarchy and for whom the king had an aura of divinity. Milton attempted to justify the situation with his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*.

This pamphlet, along with Milton's other work for the Puritans, resulted in his being offered the position of Secretary for the Foreign Tongues. Milton now assumed full-time political office, corresponding with heads of states or their secretaries in Latin, the lingua franca of the day. Among other duties, he also responded to political attacks on the new Cromwellian government, particularly those attacking the philosophy and morality behind the violent overthrow of the monarchy. To this end, Milton wrote *Eikonoklastes* in response to *Eikon Basilike*, supposedly written by Charles the night before his execution, and *Defensio pro populo Anglicano* in response to Salmatius' *Defensio Regia*. During this period, Milton worked out of official lodgings in Scotland Yard.

Later Years

During 1652, Milton suffered a number of traumatic events. First, his eyesight, which had been growing weaker, gave out completely, probably because of glaucoma. By 1652, Milton was totally blind. Second, his young son, John, (b. 1651) died under mysterious circumstances. Third, his wife died from complications in giving birth to the Milton's third daughter, Deborah. And fourth, Pierre du Moulin published the pamphlet *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* (Outcry of the King's Blood), a pro-Charles pamphlet to which Milton was ordered to reply. Milton's reply was entitled *Defensio Secunda*, which was published in 1654. By that time, Andrew Marvell, Milton's friend and fellow poet, was working as his assistant. Milton was also allowed to cut back on his official labors and to use an amanuensis (akin to a secretary) as an aide.

Even with his personal and physical problems, Milton continued to write. His major personal project in the 1650s was *De Doctrina Christiana*, a work in which he tried to state formally all of his religious views. In 1656, he married Katherine Woodcock, who died two years later. He would marry for the third time in 1663 to Elizabeth Minshull, who became his nurse as his health declined in his later years.

With the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, Milton's political fortunes were reversed. As Royalists gained power, Milton went into hiding at the home of a friend. During this time, his *Defensio pro populo Anglicano* and *Eikonoklastes* were publicly burned. Milton stayed in hiding until Parliament passed the Acts of Oblivion, pardoning most of those who had opposed Charles II. Even so, Parliament considered arresting Milton, an act which was carried out in October 1659. Fortunately for Milton, neither Charles nor his cohorts were especially bloodthirsty or vindictive, and Milton was released in December.

By the time of the actual restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Milton was hard at work on *Paradise Lost*. Milton had long considered writing a major work on the grand themes of Christianity. His familiarity with the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, *The Divine Comedy*, and *Jerusalem Delivered* inclined him to the epic format. His preparations for the ministry as well as the natural bent of his Puritanism led him toward the subject of Man's fall. During much of the early 1660s, he worked on his epic and, in 1667, finally published *Paradise Lost*, an epic in ten books. He followed up his masterpiece with *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* in 1671. Milton is thus one of a relatively small group of creative geniuses whose

greatest works were written after they turned 50. The years of essay and pamphlet writing did not diminish his creative spark.

In 1674, Milton published the second edition of *Paradise Lost*, revising it to make a total of twelve books. Mostly he rearranged rather than rewrote. For example, he made what had been Book X into Books XI and XII. After the publication of the second edition, his health deteriorated, and on November 9, 1674, Milton died of complications from a gout attack. He was 66 years old. He was survived by his third wife and two of his daughters by Mary Powell. He was buried near his father's grave in Cripple gate. By 1700, *Paradise Lost* was recognized as one of the classics of English literature.

• PLOT

BOOK-I TO BOOK – XII

Milton invokes a Heavenly Muse to help him describe the "Fall of Man." The action begins with Satan and his devils in Hell after they have been defeated by God's army. The devils construct Pandemonium, a meeting place, and discuss how they will continue their revolt against God. Beelzebub suggests they corrupt God's new creation, Earth, and Satan agrees. Satan offers to cross the abyss and find Earth alone. As he leaves Hell he meets his children, Sin and Death, who follow him and build a bridge from Hell to Earth.

God predicts that Satan will corrupt humans, and the Son offers to sacrifice himself for humanity's sake. Satan travels past Chaos and Night and finds Earth. He pretends to be a cherub and sneaks past the angelic guard. Satan enters Paradise and its beauty causes him painful envy, but he resolves to bring evil out of God's goodness. Satan sees Adam and Eve, the first humans, and overhears them discussing God's commandment forbidding them from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

That night Adam and Eve have innocent sex and fall asleep, and Satan turns into a toad whispering to Eve. The Archangel Gabriel finds Satan and confronts him. Satan considers fighting but then God hangs Golden Scales in the sky and Satan flees. Eve wakes up from a dream about disobedience. To ensure the couple's free will, God sends the angel Raphael to warn Adam and Eve about Satan.

Raphael eats with Adam and Eve and then describes Satan's war in Heaven. Satan was jealous of God's Son, and he convinced a third of the

angels to rebel with him. Only one angel, Abdiel, left his cause and returned to God. The angel armies fought, with Michael leading Heaven's army. The rebels experienced pain but couldn't be killed. On the second day the rebels fired cannons at the good angels, but then the Son drove them out of Heaven and into Hell. Raphael warns Adam about Satan's attempts to corrupt him.

Raphael tells the story of creation: the Son created light, then the stars and planets, and then the animals and humans. Adam asks Raphael more about the cosmos, but Raphael warns him about seeking too much knowledge. Adam tells Raphael his first memories and admits his physical attraction to Eve, and then Raphael returns to Heaven.

After seven days Satan returns to Eden and possesses a serpent. Meanwhile Eve suggests that she and Adam work separately. Adam resists this idea but relents. Satan finds Eve and flatters her. She asks how he learned to speak, and Satan says he ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. He suggests that Eve should eat the fruit to prove her courage and to become a goddess, and Eve hesitates but then eats. She offers some to Adam, who realizes Eve has fallen, but he eats the fruit so they won't be separated. The two experience lust for the first time and have sex.

God sends the Son to punish the couple. The Son punishes the serpent to slither on the ground, Eve to have pain in childbirth and submit to her husband, and Adam to labor for his food. Meanwhile Satan returns to Hell and sends Sin and Death to infect Earth. Satan and the devils are punished by being turned into serpents.

After the Fall, the angels rearrange the earth to make it less hospitable, and the animals become carnivorous and unfriendly. Adam and Eve blame each other and fight, and then Eve accepts the blame and considers suicide. Adam suggests they have revenge on Satan by being obedient to God, and they both weep and repent.

God sends Michael to expel the couple from Paradise. Before he does so Michael shows Adam a vision of the future, including his children's crimes and many sinful generations, and then the flood, when God kills all humans except Noah's family. He sees the Tower of Babel, the creation of Israel, the Exodus from Egypt, and finally Jesus as the Son incarnate. Michael explains the Son's sacrifice to atone for the Fall and save humanity. Adam is comforted, and then he and Eve tearfully leave Eden.

Book 1

1. "Nor had they yet among the sons of Eve
Got them new names, till wand'ring o'er the earth
Through God's high suff'rance for the trial of man" (1.364-6).

This describes how Satan's associates were allowed to "wander" over the earth because of God's "sufferance," or forbearance after the Fall. The most important word here is "trial," a word that comes up repeatedly in the poem and in Milton's other writings. It suggests something like a test of man's virtue, which is made manifest when he is tempted and refuses.

2. "If once they hear that voice, (their liveliest pledge
Of hope in fears and dangers [...] they will soon resume
New courage and revive" (1.274-5; 278-9)

The power of Satan's voice is an important theme throughout *Paradise Lost*. Here, the emphasis is on the actual sound of Satan's voice and how it renovates the fallen angels' despair. At other moments in the poem his voice is just as effective, though it achieves different results; he uses it to trick Eve, for example, in Book 9, whereas in the early books his speeches seduce us (as readers) into admiring him.

3. "Farewell happy fields
Where Joy former dwells: hail horrors, hail
Infernal world" (1.249-51).

As a punishment for his sin, Satan must exchange the "happy fields" of Heaven for the "horrors" of Hell. As a result of their sins, both Adam and Eve and Satan must say "farewell" to their respective paradises, as if some notion of exile from one's "home" were intimately bound up with the idea of sin. Note also the alliteration in this line ("h" and "f" sounds), a sonorous effect that contrasts with the bleakness of the picture.

4. "For who can yet believe, though after loss,
That all these puissant legions whose exile
Hath emptied Heav'n shall fail to re-ascend,
Self-raised, and repossess their native seat?" (1.631-4)

Satan thinks so highly of his army that he has no doubts about their ability to "repossess their native seat." The pride he takes in his rebellion is evident as well in the fact that he grossly exaggerates ("emptied Heav'n") the number of angels who joined his rebellion (we learn later that only a third of the angels fell with Satan).

5. "How such a united force of gods, how such
As stood like these, could ever know repulse?" (1.629-30)

Satan is proud of his army, so proud that he's absolutely baffled that it was defeated. He thinks that a force as strong as his should never have known "repulse." His pride was so blinding that he didn't realize that God would easily "repulse" such a band, even though they "stood" like "gods."

6. "and enraged might see
How all his malice served but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy shown
On Man by him seduced, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance poured" (1.216-20)

Satan's plans to get revenge will backfire; all his "malice" does exactly the opposite of what he wants because it serves to "bring forth/ Infinite goodness." Also, he will experience "treble confusion," a state not unlike that in which he finds himself at the beginning of the poem. In a sense, then, he will end up right where he began when he made his plans for revenge.

7. "Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side, under the lee" (1.203-7)

Milton compares Satan to a giant creature that some "pilot" might mistake ("deeming some island") for an island; the point of the simile is that Satan seems like one thing (a heroic leader, an unjustly maligned angel), but is really another. In other words, he's a gigantic symbol of deception.

Book 2

1. "a Goddess armed
Out of thy head I sprung! Amazement seized
All the' Host of Heav'n. Back they recoiled afraid
At first and called me Sin, and for a sign
Portentous held me" (2.757-61).

What's a poem without a character named Sin? Sin springs out of Satan's head – a strange birth indeed. Milton alludes here to a mythological story where Athena (ancient Greek goddess of wisdom, victory, and other things) sprung from Zeus' head. Who better than Satan to give birth to

something as far from wisdom as sin? The passage says as much about Sin as it does about Satan and about Milton's relationship to ancient myth.

2. "His thoughts were low,
To vice industrious but to nobler deeds
Timorous and slothful. Yet he pleased the ear
And with persuasive accent thus began" (2.115-8)

Much like Satan, Belial (described here) is a bad dude; he's just as dangerous too because he "pleases the ear" with "persuasive accent[s]." Milton often points out the way in which what is "pleasing" can cause us to ignore someone's love for "vice." The voice, not just Satan's but God's as well, is a very powerful force in *Paradise Lost*.

3. "I fled, but he pursued (though more, it seems,
Inflamed with lust than rage) and swifter far, Me overtook, his mother, all dismayed,
And in embraces forcible and foul
Engend'ring with me of that rape begot
These yelling monsters" (2.790-5)

Death is the product of Sin's relationship with Satan (her father), and he in turn has sex with his mother; actually, he rapes her because he is "inflamed with lust." Milton describes Adam's desire for Eve after the Fall in similar terms as here; thus Adam and Eve both "burn" in "lust" as a result of an "inflaming" desire. As evident here, this combination of words can lead to no good.

4. "Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing
Becam'stenamoured, and such joy thou took'st
With me in secret, that my womb conceived
A growing burden" (2.764-7)

Satan has sex with his daughter ("joy thou took'st/ With me in secret") in what is a gross parody not only of family in general, but also of the relationship between God and His Son (3.63). Moreover, Satan is, essentially, having sex with his own image, which suggests that he really only loves, or desires, himself. Narcissism anyone?

5. "he seemed
For dignity composed and high exploit:
But all was false and hollow" (2.110-12)

Milton here describes Belial; notice the rhetoric of "seeming." It is implied in the famous simile about the island (described above), and

discussed more explicitly here. Belial is "false and hollow," a description that resonates nicely with the canon sequence (described below). Things are not always what they seem in this poem; in fact, they are often not what they "seem."

6. "Thither full fraught with mischievous revenge
Accurst, and in a cursèd hour, he hies" (2.1054-5)

Satan's "revenge" is "mischievous." So much is clear. Notice the repetition of "curse" in both "accurst" and "cursed," as if we could forget that Satan is up to no good and that his actions will certainly have consequences. The same type of repetition is evident in the alliteration of "full fraught" and "he hies," a technique that makes the line memorable while also emphasizing Satan's evil dedication.

7. "and by proof we feel
Our power sufficient to disturb His Heav'n,
And with perpetual inroads to alarm,
Though inaccessible, His fatal throne,
Which if not victory is yet revenge" (2.101-5)

Moloch proposes that the fallen angels continue to batter God's throne through what he earlier calls "open war" (2.51). Here, he importantly suggests that achieving "victory" is not necessarily as important as being really annoying. He wants to make "perpetual inroads," almost like some annoying insect, because this will at least be some form of "revenge," which is not necessarily synonymous with victory, but is just as valuable.

• SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

BOOK-1

Summary

Book I of *Paradise Lost* begins with a prologue in which Milton performs the traditional epic task of invoking the Muse and stating his purpose. He invokes the classical Muse, Urania, but also refers to her as the "Heav'nly Muse," implying the Christian nature of this work. He also says that the poem will deal with man's disobedience toward God and the results of that disobedience. He concludes the prologue by saying he will attempt to justify God's ways to men.

Following the prologue and invocation, Milton begins the epic with a description of Satan, lying on his back with the other rebellious angels, chained on a lake of fire. The poem thus commences in the middle of the

story, as epics traditionally do. Satan, who had been Lucifer, the greatest angel, and his compatriots warred against God. They were defeated and cast from Heaven into the fires of Hell.

Lying on the lake, Satan is described as gigantic; he is compared to a Titan or the Leviathan. Next to Satan lies Beelzebub, Satan's second in command. Satan comments on how Beelzebub has been transformed for the worse by the punishment of God. Still he adds that it is his intention to continue the struggle against God, saying, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (263).

With effort, Satan is able to free himself from his chains and rise from the fire. He flies to a barren plain, followed by Beelzebub. From the plain, Satan calls the other fallen angels to join him, and one by one they rise from the lake and fly to their leader. As they come, Milton is able to list the major devils that now occupy Hell: Moloch, Chemos, Baalem, Ashtaroth, Astarte, Astoreth, Dagon, Rimmon, Osiris, Isis, Orus, Mammon, and Belial. Each devil is introduced in a formal cataloging of demons. These fallen angels think that they have escaped from their chains through their own power, but Milton makes it clear that God alone has allowed them to do this.

This devil army is large and impressive but also aware of its recent ignominious defeat. Satan addresses them and rallies them. He tells them that they still have power and that their purpose will be to oppose God, adding, "War then, War / Open or understood, must be resolv'd" (661-62).

This speech inspires the devil host, and under Mammon's direction, they immediately begin work on a capital city for their Hellish empire. They find mineral resources in the mountains of Hell and quickly begin to construct a city. Under the direction of their architect, Mulciber, they construct a great tower that comes to symbolize the capital of Hell, Pandemonium. The devil army, flying this way and that, is compared to a great swarm of bees. When the work is done and the capital completed, they all assemble for the first great council.

Analysis

Milton begins *Paradise Lost* in the traditional epic manner with a prologue invoking the muse, in this case Urania, the Muse of Astronomy. He calls her the "Heav'nly Muse" (7) and says that he will sing "Of Man's First Disobedience" (1), the story of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace. As the prologue continues, it becomes apparent that this muse is more than just the classical Urania, but also a Christian muse who resides

on Mt. Sinai, in fact the Holy Spirit. In these first lines, Milton thus draws on two traditions — the classical epic exemplified by Homer and Virgil and the Christian tradition embodied in the Bible as well as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*.

Milton further emphasizes in the prologue that his theme will be *Man's* disobedience to God's will, implying not only Adam's disobedience, but all mankind from first to last. He does add that his subject will include the "greater Man" (4) who saved all others from the original disobedience. Moreover, his intention will be to "justify the ways of God to men" (26) through the aid of "Eternal Providence" (25). By "justify," Milton means more than simply to explain; he means that he will demonstrate that God's actions in regard to man are just. This goal suggests that Milton was not bothered by any sense of false modesty, an idea underscored by his statement that he will write in a high style and attempt a purpose never tried before. The one truly poignant line in this prologue is Milton's request of the muse, "What in me is dark / Illumine" (22 — 23), with its oblique reference to Milton's blindness, a subject he will return to more directly in the prologue that begins Book III. At no point in this prologue and invocation does Milton mention Satan, who, though he is the main character of the poem, is not the actual subject.

Following the invocation and prologue, Milton continues in the epic style by beginning *in medias res*, in the middle of things. Satan is first seen lying in the pit of Hell. That a great religious epic focuses on Satan, presents him first, and in many ways makes him the hero of the poem is certainly surprising and something of a risk on Milton's part. Milton does not want his audience to empathize with Satan, yet Satan is an attractive character, struggling against great odds. Of course, Milton's original audience more than his modern one would have been cognizant of the ironies involved in Satan's struggles and his comments concerning power. The power that Satan asserts and thinks he has is illusory. His power to act derives only from God, and his struggle against God has already been lost. To the modern audience, Satan may seem heroic as he struggles to make a Heaven of Hell, but the original audience knew, and Milton's lines confirm, that Satan's war with God had been lost absolutely before the poem begins. God grants Satan and the other devils the power to act for God's purposes, not theirs.

Also, at this point in the narrative, Satan is at his most attractive. He has just fallen from Heaven where he was the closest angel to God. He has not completely lost the angelic aura that was his in Heaven. As the poem

progresses, the reader will see that Satan's character and appearance grow worse. Milton has carefully structured his work to show the consequences of Satan's actions.

The catalog of demons that follows Satan's escape from the burning lake follows an epic pattern of listing heroes — although here the list is of villains. This particular catalogue seems almost an intentional parody of Homer's catalogue of Greek ships and heroes in Book II of the *Iliad*. The catalogue is a means for Milton to list many of the fallen angels as well as a way to account for many of the gods in pagan religions — they were originally among the angels who rebelled from God. Consequently, among these fallen angels are names such as Isis, Osiris, Baal, and others that the reader associates not with Christianity but with some ancient, pagan belief. Of the devils listed, the two most important are Beelzebub and Belial. (For a complete description of each devil, see the List of Characters.)

The final part of Book I is the construction of Pandemonium, the capital of Hell. A certain unintentional humor pervades this section of Book I as well as Mammon's argument in Book II. In both cases, a sense of civic pride seems to overcome the devils, and they act on the idea that "Hell is bad, but with a few improvements we can make it lots better, even attractive." In both Mammon and the hellish architect, Mulciber, the attitude of the mayor whose small town has been bypassed by the Interstate comes out. They both seem to think that with improvements Hell may be nice enough that others may want to relocate.

Milton's real goal here, though, is to establish Hell's capital, Pandemonium — a word which Milton himself coined from the Latin *pan* (all) and *demonium* (demons). Thus, the capital of Hell is literally the place of all demons. With the passage of time, the word came to mean any place of wild disorder, noise, and confusion. This idea is subtly emphasized with Milton's choice of Mulciber as the architect. Mulciber was another name for Hephaestus, the Greek God of the Forge, who was tossed from Olympus by a drunken Zeus. Mulciber is consequently a figure of some ridicule and not the most likely architect to build a lasting monument.

One other aspect of the construction of Pandemonium is worth consideration. Mammon and the other devils find mineral resources including gemstones in their search for building materials. This discovery of resources suggests that the Hell Milton has imagined is a multifaceted place. In the first scene, as Satan and the others lie chained on the burning lake, Hell seems totally a place of fiery torture and ugliness. The

construction of Pandemonium shows that there is more to Hell. Geographic features such as a plain and hill, mineral resources such as gemstones, and even the possibility for beauty seem to exist in Hell. Other aspects of Hell will be brought forward in later books. All in all, Milton depicts a Hell that has more than one essence, or, at least in the opening books, seems to.

Book II

Summary

At the start of Book II, Satan sits on his throne like a Middle Eastern potentate and addresses the assembled devils as to the course of action they should follow. Four of the devils speak — Moloch, Belial, Mammon, and Beelzebub — with Beelzebub being Satan's mouthpiece. Each speaker offers a different attitude concerning a solution for their Hellish predicament: Moloch proposes open warfare on Heaven; Belial proposes that they do nothing; Mammon argues that Hell may not be so bad, that it can be livable, even comfortable, if all the devils will work to improve it; and Beelzebub, Satan's mouthpiece, argues that the only way to secure revenge on Heaven is to corrupt God's newest creation: Man.

Beelzebub's (Satan's) plan carries the day, and Satan begins his journey up from Hell. At Hell's Gate, he is confronted by his daughter, Sin, a being whose upper torso is that of a beautiful woman but whose lower body is serpent-like. All around her waist are hellish, barking dogs. Across from Sin is her phantom-like son, Death.

Satan persuades Sin to open the gates, which she does, but she cannot close them again. Satan ventures forth into the realm of Chaos and Night, the companions that inhabit the void that separates Hell from Heaven. From Chaos, Satan learns that Earth is suspended from Heaven by a golden chain, and he immediately begins to make his way there. As Satan creates the path from Hell to Earth, Sin and Death follow him, constructing a broad highway.

Analysis

Book II divides into two large sections. The first is the debate among the devils concerning the proper course of action. The second section deals with Satan's voyage out of Hell with Sin and Death — the only extended allegory in *Paradise Lost*.

The council of demons that begins Book II recalls the many assemblies of heroes in both the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. Further the debates also seem based on the many meetings that Milton attended in his various official capacities. In his speech, each devil reveals both the characteristics of his

personality and the type of evil he represents. For example, Moloch, the first to speak, is the unthinking man of action. Like Diomedes in the *Iliad*, he is not adept in speech, but he does know how to fight. He is for continued war and unconcerned about the consequences. But, moreover, the attitude toward violence exhibited by Moloch reveals a particular type of evil. In the *Inferno*, Dante had divided evils into three broad categories: sins of appetite, sins of will, and sins of reason. In the Renaissance, these categories still dominated much thought concerning the nature of evil. In Moloch, the reader sees a straightforward example of the evil that comes from the will. Unthinking violence is the result of lack of control of the will. And for Moloch, the "furious king" (VI, 357), violence defines his character.

In contrast to Moloch, Belial as a character type is a sophist, a man skilled in language, an intellectual who uses his powers to deceive and confuse. His basic argument is that the devils should do nothing. Belial wishes to avoid war and action, but he couches his arguments so skillfully that he answers possible objections from Moloch before those objections can be raised. He, in fact, rises to speak so quickly that the assembly is not able to respond to Moloch's idea. Belial also suggests the possibility that at some point God might allow the fallen angels back into Heaven, though these arguments seem specious at best and simply an excuse for cowardly inactivity. In terms of evil, Moloch uses reason for corrupt purposes. The use of reason for evil was theologically the greatest sin because reason separates man from animals. Belial's sophistry is not as corrupting as Beelzebub's and Satan's fraud will be, but it is still a sin of reason. Milton, in fact, introduces Belial as fair and handsome on the outside but "false and hollow" within (112). Milton makes the point about reason straightforwardly at the end of Belial's speech by referring to it as "words cloth'd in reason's garb" (226), as opposed to simply words of reason.

Belial's persuasive speech for nothing is followed by the practical, materialistic assessment of Mammon. Mammon sees the little picture. He finds no profit in war with God or in doing nothing. Hell, he argues can be made into a livable, even pleasurable place. In Heaven, Mammon always looked down at the streets of gold. In Hell, he sees the gem and mineral wealth and thinks that Hell can be improved. In terms of sin, Mammon exhibits the sin of the appetite. Here the basic instinct of appetite controls the person. Mammon's desire for individual wealth controls his assessment of everything. The proverb that one cannot serve God and Mammon both easily translates to the idea that one cannot serve both God and one's appetite.

Finally, Beelzebub rises to speak — and he speaks for Satan. His argument to attack God by corrupting Man is Satan's argument. This idea is essentially a fait accompli; Satan has intended this plan all along and simply uses Beelzebub to present it. The entire council has been a sham, designed to rubber stamp Satan's design, a design that also allows Satan to leave Hell. Beelzebub's speech and actions are like those of Belial in that they pervert reason. But unlike Belial's arguments, Beelzebub's involve treachery against his fellow demons. All the devils have involved themselves in treachery against God, but now Beelzebub and Satan compound this treachery by defrauding their own companions. The devils have seemingly been given a choice within a council, but in fact this seeming choice was illusion. They have been set up to do Satan's bidding. For many Renaissance thinkers, this type of treachery would have been considered Compound Fraud, the worst sin of all.

At this point, Satan begins his journey out of Hell to search for Earth and Man. The devils left behind explore Hell, finding various geographic areas including fire and ice, but also mountains and fields. Their exploratory activities along with their sports, songs, and games suggest another concept of Hell — Limbo, the part of Hell Catholicism recognized as reserved for virtuous pagans and unbaptised babies, a part of Hell that is Hell only in that those in it can never be in the presence of God. Limbo is an earthly paradise, and Milton seems to suggest that the fallen angels could have that for their punishment if they were content to accept their defeat by God.

As the devils explore Hell, Satan makes his way toward the gate out of Hell. This section of Book II begins the one extended allegory in *Paradise Lost*. An *allegory* is a literary work in which characters, plot, and action symbolize, in systematic fashion, ideas lying outside the work. While much of *Paradise Lost* deals with Christian ideas and theology, only in this section does Milton write in a true allegorical manner.

At the locked gate where he may exit Hell, Satan finds two guards: his daughter, Sin, and his grandson, Death. The way Sin and Death were created explains the nature of allegory. Sin was born when Satan, in Heaven, felt envy for Jesus. Sin sprang from Satan's head (symbolically his thoughts) just as Athena (wisdom) sprang from the head of Zeus. Death was born of the unnatural union between Satan and his daughter. Finally, adding to the general nastiness of the story, Death raped his own mother, Sin, creating the Cerberus-like hellhounds that gather around her waist.

The allegorical interpretation of this story is, in its simplest form, easy to follow. Satan's envy for Jesus was a sin, which becomes manifest in the character of his daughter, Sin. That is, the concept of sin in Satan's mind literally becomes Sin, a character. Sin, in conjunction with satanic evil, produces Death. Finally, Sin and Death together produce the hellhounds that will come to plague all mankind. The allegory here can be explored more deeply, but basically it explains, through characters and action, how sin and death entered the universe. Similarly, the fact that Sin opens the gate of Hell for Satan is also allegoric as is her inability to close it. Thus Satan, by leaving Hell, brings Sin and Death into the world.

Next Satan confronts the characters Chaos and Night. These two represent the great void that separates Earth from Hell. They are also part of the complex Renaissance cosmogony, but on the most basic level they represent the vast unorganized part of the universe away from Heaven and Earth. Hell lies on the other side of Chaos, and Night shows just how far removed Hell is, both figuratively and literally, from God.

Chaos and Night welcome Satan's attempt to cross the space between Heaven and Hell because they too lie outside the purview of Heaven. Satan becomes the pioneer who crosses the wilderness of Chaos and Night to find Earth, and in this effort he gains heroic stature. Within the allegory, however, he is simply charting the path for Sin and Death, since they follow him, building a broad highway. Once again the allegory is clear: Satan brings Sin and Death into the world where they will convey countless souls back across the broad highway to Hell. Also, the gate of Hell has been left open, and evils can now go from Hell to Earth at will.

Book XII

Summary

Book XII continues Michael's presentation of biblical history to Adam. He begins with the story of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. Nimrod was known as a great hunter, and Michael adds that men "shall be his game" (30). By this the angel refers to Nimrod's rule over men that ultimately leads him to challenge God through the construction of the Tower of Babel. God stops this enterprise by changing the languages of those constructing the tower so that they cannot work together. Adam is upset that some men have dominion over others. Michael explains that because men cannot control their passions, other men take control of societies. God sends unjust rulers to control some groups so that they lose their personal freedom.

Michael goes on to explain that so many people in the world are wicked that God eventually decides to focus on the Israelites and their faithful

leader, Abraham, who carries the seed that will ultimately produce the Savior. Here, Michael moves quickly through the stories of Jacob and Joseph followed by the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt to the rise of Moses as leader of the great exodus from Egypt. Moses leads the people into the desert, receives the Commandments from God, and begins to establish laws for the people. Adam asks why men need so many laws, to which Michael responds that the need for laws shows the degeneration of people. The laws help men remember to do those things that they should know to do by themselves. Even so, Man cannot truly be saved until Jesus comes to sacrifice himself for all Mankind.

Joshua eventually leads the Israelites to the Promised Land where they set up a society in which they are ruled by judges and kings. The greatest king is David whose lineage will carry the seed of the Savior. David's son, Solomon, will build the great temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. However, later kings will allow such a falling away from God that God will allow the entire nation to fall into captivity in Babylon. Factions in the society will fight among themselves for long periods of time until, under Roman rule, the Messiah will be born to a virgin.

When Adam expresses interest in the coming battle, Michael then explains that the Messiah's victory over Satan will not occur in a literal fight. Instead, the Son will become human in Jesus, will suffer for his beliefs, and will be executed. However, after three days, Jesus will rise from the dead, thereby overcoming Death that Adam loosed upon the world. Jesus will also send out disciples to spread his message to the entire world. Those who obey God's commands will be saved and have eternal life. At the end of time, Jesus will judge the living and the dead, and the truly faithful will enter the most wonderful paradise of all.

Adam is pleased to learn all that Michael has told him, and his greatest pleasure is to have learned that death will actually lead to a great reward. He says that his fall will now become a happy blame, or what some call *felix culpa*. The goodness of God will, through death, provide all Mankind with the chance to live eternally with God. Adam sees this possibility as an even greater good than his having remained sinless in Eden. Michael praises Adam for his reason and tells him to add faith, virtue, patience, temperance, and love to his understanding and he will lead a good life and ultimately be with God.

It is time for the humans to leave Eden. Michael instructs Adam to wake Eve and at a later time tell her all that he has learned from the angel.

When Eve is awakened, she says that she has learned much from her dream. She knows that her place is with Adam, and that she will always go where he goes. Further she is comforted, knowing that the Messiah will come from her seed.

Adam and Eve leave Eden. Michael leads them through the Eastern Gate and down to the plain. Behind them they see the flaming sword that protects Eden from intruders. A brand new world lies before them, and they know that God will be with them. Holding hands, they make their way into the world.

Analysis

Book XII appears to be a simple continuation of Book XI, and, in fact, in the first edition of *Paradise Lost*, Books XI and XII were one book. In the second edition, Milton changed his original ten book format to twelve. One of the changes was the division that created Books XI and XII. Biblical scholars in the seventeenth century dated the Creation at 4,000 b.c. and the flood at 2,000 b.c. So Milton divided his original Book X into two 2,000 year sections, each ending with a savior — Noah in Book XI and Jesus in Book XII. He also arranged for a slightly different presentation in each book. Book XI is presented as a series of almost scene-like visions, each complete in itself. Book XII is much more narrative. Michael says that he will now tell the story, and he presents a grand sweep of historical events rather than a scene-by-scene account.

The historical events that Michael narrates in Book XII continue to develop themes and ideas that have run through all of *Paradise Lost*. The first event is the story of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. Adam's concern about this story is the fact that one man has dominion over others. Adam comments that God gave Man dominion over animals but not over his fellow man. Michael admires Adam's reasoning but shows that domination of man over man is a part of Adam's original sin. When a person allows his reason to be controlled by either his appetite or his will, he reverses the proper order that God intended. God, seeing that Man lets "unworthy powers" (91) rule within himself, then allows tyrants to appear among men and assert authority over them.

This emphasis of reason as the pre-eminent faculty in Man is one of Milton's main themes in *Paradise Lost*. In the *Inferno*, Dante had divided all sin into three categories: sins of appetite, sins of the will, and sins of reason. The worst sins were those of reason because they perverted the part of man that makes him distinguishable from other creatures. In *Paradise*

Lost, Adam and Eve both commit sins of the appetite: she upon eating the apple, he in his passion for Eve above all else. Adam also commits a sin of the will by eating the apple even though his reason tells him to do so is wrong. However, neither Adam nor Eve commits a sin of reason; they are unable to deny seriously any of their actions. Satan commits the sins of reason. His speech to Eve is a perfect example. He uses reason to persuade Eve to eat the apple. By using his reason for fraudulent purposes, he commits what the Middle Ages and Renaissance would have considered to be the worst type of sinful act.

Milton evidently agrees with Dante's ideas of sin, at least in a general way. Throughout the poem, Milton makes reason stand out as the faculty that Man must rely on. In the story of Nimrod, Michael justifies one man's domination over another on Man's inability to keep reason at the forefront in decision making. All the evils that come into the world, whether they involve appetite or will, are really there because of a breakdown of reason.

In the second part of Michael's recounting of history in Book XII, the angel begins to focus on certain heroes within a specific culture — the Israelites. He tells of Abraham, alludes to Jacob and Joseph, presents Moses as a type of savior, and presents the history of the Israeli kings, beginning with Joshua leading the people into the Promised Land followed by accounts of David and Solomon.

Michael explains that God grew weary of the iniquities of the world, and left most nations to "their own polluted ways" (110). He turned his attention instead to "one peculiar Nation" (111), the Israelites, who were to spring from Abraham, a man faithful to God. This account by Michael explains why the Jews (Israelites) were the "Chosen People." God found the faithful man, Abraham, and decided to concentrate his attention on the people and nations that came from that individual. Rather than destroy the rest of the world for its sinfulness, God simply turned away from it to focus on Abraham and his people. Abraham obeys God's commands and goes into Canaan, a land that God promises to all of his future generations. There, Abraham establishes the beginnings of the Kingdom of Israel.

Another important aspect of the selection of Abraham and the Israelites by God is the passage of "the Seed." God had said that the seed of Eve would bruise the serpent, and in Book XII, Michael makes clear that "By that seed/Is meant thy Great Deliverer" (148-49). The "Great Deliverer" is, of course, Jesus, who will come to save Mankind from sin and death. Therefore, Michael's explanation about the Chosen People becomes clearer

to Adam. These people, the Israelites, carry the seed of the Messiah; they are chosen initially because of Abraham's godliness, but they are chosen because the Messiah must come from them. Adam begins to see the point of Michael's history lesson.

The nature of this lesson is extended by the humans that Michael chooses to lift up as examples, particularly Moses. The figures of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David are all, in varying degrees, prefigurations of Jesus. The practice of "typological allegory or symbolism" began very early in the Christian church. The basis behind this idea was to make the Old Testament more theologically compatible with New Testament for Christians. The general idea was that figures and events in the Old Testaments were types or prefigurations of characters and events in the New Testament. That is, Noah, as the savior of the world in Exodus, prefigures Jesus, the savior of the world in the Gospels. This sort of typological study went beyond the Bible. Classical heroes like Aeneas, Hercules, or Dionysus were sometimes presented as types of Jesus or other important New Testament characters. The justification for this sort of analysis was that God had control of the entire world, and so even in pagan societies, he had provided shadows that pointed the way toward Jesus and Christian belief.

Michael's description of Moses shows Milton's typological intentions. When the Israelites want to know God's will, they ask Moses to be their mediator, a function, which Michael says, "Moses in figure bears, to introduce / One greater of whose day he shall foretell" (241-42). In other words, Moses as mediator with God prefigures Jesus performing the same function in the New Testament. Earlier, Michael has stated the general idea that events and characters inform "by types / And shadows, of that destin'd Seed to bruise / The Serpent, by what means he shall achieve / Mankind's deliverance" (232-35). This statement is very close to a definition for typological symbolism. The characters and events Michael describes are "types and shadows" all pointing toward the Christ of the New Testament. Moses is the most fully explained of these types, but Abraham, Joshua, and David all serve similar functions. The Chosen People carry the seed literally and symbolically that will ultimately bruise the serpent.

Finally, Michael comes to the Savior himself. Here at last, in Michael's description of Jesus and his mission, Adam sees the complete working out of his fall and God's transformation of it. The Son, born of God and the seed of Adam and Eve, becomes Man, takes on Man's sins, and accepts death in order to overcome it. Thereafter, those who believe and accept God's laws

will be able to overcome death also. Adam, at last, sees the entirety of God's plan and is exultant. He shouts joyously, "O goodness infinite! goodness immense, / That all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good" (469-71). Here Adam expresses the idea of the "happy fault" or, in Latin *felix culpa*. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, Jesus would not have been born, Mary would not have been sanctified, and salvation would not have come into existence. These things are greater than what would have existed if the fall had not occurred; therefore, Adam's fall was ultimately for the good.

The idea of the "happy fall" stands in contrast to the more common notion that Adam's action simply created sin and death and destroyed Man's chance for blissful, paradisiacal immortality. Both concepts of the fall existed in seventeenth-century theology, and Milton chooses to accentuate the *felix culpa* as part of his justification of God's ways to Man. By emphasizing the good that will emerge from the fall of Man, Milton makes the end of *Paradise Lost*, if not triumphant, at least optimistic. Adam and Eve are no longer the beautiful, but strangely aloof, innocents of Books I through VIII. At the end of the epic, as they leave Eden, Adam and Eve are truly human. Their innocence has been transformed by experience, and they now approach the world with a greater knowledge of what can happen and what consequences can follow evil actions. The pride they had in their inability to do evil has been replaced with the knowledge of what evil is and how easy it is to give in to both pride and evil.

In the end, Adam expresses what he has learned from Michael:

Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,
And learn to fear that only God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simple meek; that suffering for Truth's sake
Is fortitude to highest victory,
And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life (561-571).

This lesson that God is always at work in the world, often through seemingly insignificant people and things, that the greatest heroes are those who suffer for truth, and that death leads to eternal life are the

images of hope and possibly triumph at the end of the poem. Adam and Eve go forth at the end with each other—and with God. They know that through obedience, love, and reason, they can live good lives and overcome the evil that they have done. Their knowledge and their hope thus stand as Milton's justification for God's ways.

• CHARACTERS

Main Characters

Satan

Head of the rebellious angels who have just fallen from Heaven. As the poem's antagonist, Satan is the originator of sin—the first to be ungrateful for God the Father's blessings. He embarks on a mission to Earth that eventually leads to the fall of Adam and Eve, but also worsens his eternal punishment. His character changes throughout the poem. Satan often appears to speak rationally and persuasively, but later in the poem we see the inconsistency and irrationality of his thoughts. He can assume any form, adopting both glorious and humble shapes.

Adam

The first human, the father of our race, and, along with his wife Eve, the caretaker of the Garden of Eden. Adam is grateful and obedient to God, but falls from grace when Eve convinces him to join her in the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge.

Eve

The first woman and the mother of mankind. Eve was made from a rib taken from Adam's side. Because she was made from Adam and for Adam, she is subservient to him. She is also weaker than Adam, so Satan focuses his powers of temptation on her. He succeeds in getting her to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree despite God's command.

God the Father

One part of the Christian Trinity. God the Father creates the world by means of God the Son, creating Adam and Eve last. He foresees the fall of mankind through them. He does not prevent their fall, in order to preserve their free will, but he does allow his Son to atone for their sins.

God the Son

Jesus Christ, the second part of the Trinity. He delivers the fatal blow to Satan's forces, sending them down into Hell, before the creation of Earth.

When the fall of man is predicted, He offers himself as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of mankind, so that God the Father can be both just and merciful.

Devils, Inhabiting Hell

- **Beelzebub**

Satan's second-in-command. Beelzebub discusses with Satan their options after being cast into Hell, and at the debate suggests that they investigate the newly created Earth. He and Satan embody perverted reason, since they are both eloquent and rational but use their talents for wholly corrupt ends.

- **Belial**

One of the principal devils in Hell. Belial argues against further war with Heaven, but he does so because he is an embodiment of sloth and inactivity, not for any good reason. His eloquence and learning is great, and he is able to persuade many of the devils with his faulty reasoning.

- **Mammon**

A devil known in the Bible as the epitome of wealth. Mammon always walks hunched over, as if he is searching the ground for valuables. In the debate among the devils, he argues against war, seeing no profit to be gained from it. He believes Hell can be improved by mining the gems and minerals they find there.

- **Mulciber**

The devil who builds Pandemonium, Satan's palace in Hell. Mulciber's character is based on a Greek mythological figure known for being a poor architect, but in Milton's poem he is one of the most productive and skilled devils in Hell.

- **Moloch**

A rash, irrational, and murderous devil. Moloch argues in Pandemonium that the devils should engage in another full war against God and his servant angels.

- **Sin**

Satan's daughter, who sprang full-formed from Satan's head when he was still in Heaven. Sin has the shape of a woman above the waist, that of a serpent below, and her middle is ringed about with Hell Hounds, who periodically burrow into her womb and gnaw her entrails. She guards the gates of Hell.

- **Death**

Satan's son by his daughter, Sin. Death in turn rapes his mother, begetting the mass of beasts that torment her lower half. The relations between Death, Sin, and Satan mimic horribly those of the Holy Trinity.

Angels, Inhabiting Heaven and Earth

Gabriel

One of the archangels of Heaven, who acts as a guard at the Garden of Eden. Gabriel confronts Satan after his angels find Satan whispering to Eve in the Garden.

Raphael

One of the archangels in Heaven, who acts as one of God's messengers. Raphael informs Adam of Satan's plot to seduce them into sin, and also narrates the story of the fallen angels, as well as the fall of Satan.

Uriel

An angel who guards the planet earth. Uriel is the angel whom Satan tricks when he is disguised as a cherub. Uriel, as a good angel and guardian, tries to correct his error by making the other angels aware of Satan's presence.

Abdiel

An angel who at first considers joining Satan in rebellion but argues against Satan and the rebel angels and returns to God. His character demonstrates the power of repentance.

Michael

The chief of the archangels, Michael leads the angelic forces against Satan and his followers in the battle in Heaven, before the Son provides the decisive advantage. Michael also stands guard at the Gate of Heaven, and narrates the future of the world to Adam in Books XI and XII.

• ANALYSIS OF MAIN CHARACTERS

Satan

Some readers consider Satan to be the hero, or protagonist, of the story, because he struggles to overcome his own doubts and weaknesses and accomplishes his goal of corrupting humankind. This goal, however, is evil, and Adam and Eve are the moral heroes at the end of the story, as they help to begin humankind's slow process of redemption and salvation. Satan is far from being the story's object of admiration, as most heroes are. Nor

does it make sense for readers to celebrate or emulate him, as they might with a true hero. Yet there are many compelling qualities to his character that make him intriguing to readers.

One source of Satan's fascination for us is that he is an extremely complex and subtle character. It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, for Milton to make perfect, infallible characters such as God the Father, God the Son, and the angels as interesting to read about as the flawed characters, such as Satan, Adam, and Eve. Satan, moreover, strikes a grand and majestic figure, apparently unafraid of being damned eternally, and uncowed by such terrifying figures as Chaos or Death. Many readers have argued that Milton deliberately makes Satan seem heroic and appealing early in the poem to draw us into sympathizing with him against our will, so that we may see how seductive evil is and learn to be more vigilant in resisting its appeal.

Milton devotes much of the poem's early books to developing Satan's character. Satan's greatest fault is his pride. He casts himself as an innocent victim, overlooked for an important promotion. But his ability to think so selfishly in Heaven, where all angels are equal and loved and happy, is surprising. His confidence in thinking that he could ever overthrow God displays tremendous vanity and pride. When Satan shares his pain and alienation as he reaches Earth in Book IV, we may feel somewhat sympathetic to him or even identify with him. But Satan continues to devote himself to evil. Every speech he gives is fraudulent and every story he tells is a lie. He works diligently to trick his fellow devils in Hell by having Beelzebub present Satan's own plan of action.

Satan's character—or our perception of his character—changes significantly from Book I to his final appearance in Book X. In Book I he is a strong, imposing figure with great abilities as a leader and public statesmen, whereas by the poem's end he slinks back to Hell in serpent form. Satan's gradual degradation is dramatized by the sequence of different shapes he assumes. He begins the poem as a just-fallen angel of enormous stature, looks like a comet or meteor as he leaves Hell, then disguises himself as a more humble cherub, then as a cormorant, a toad, and finally a snake. His ability to reason and argue also deteriorates. In Book I, he persuades the devils to agree to his plan. In Book IV, however, he reasons to himself that the Hell he feels inside of him is reason to do more evil. When he returns to Earth again, he believes that Earth is more beautiful than Heaven, and that he may be able to live on Earth after all. Satan, removed from Heaven long enough to forget its unparalleled

grandeur, is completely demented, coming to believe in his own lies. He is a picture of incessant intellectual activity without the ability to think morally. Once a powerful angel, he has become blinded to God's grace, forever unable to reconcile his past with his eternal punishment.

Adam

Adam is a strong, intelligent, and rational character possessed of a remarkable relationship with God. In fact, before the fall, he is as perfect as a human being can be. He has an enormous capacity for reason, and can understand the most sophisticated ideas instantly. He can converse with Raphael as a near-equal, and understand Raphael's stories readily. But after the fall, his conversation with Michael during his visions is significantly one-sided. Also, his self-doubt and anger after the fall demonstrate his new ability to indulge in rash and irrational attitudes. As a result of the fall, he loses his pure reason and intellect.

Adam's greatest weakness is his love for Eve. He falls in love with her immediately upon seeing her, and confides to Raphael that his attraction to her is almost overwhelming. Though Raphael warns him to keep his affections in check, Adam is powerless to prevent his love from overwhelming his reason. After Eve eats from the Tree of Knowledge, he quickly does the same, realizing that if she is doomed, he must follow her into doom as well if he wants to avoid losing her. Eve has become his companion for life, and he is unwilling to part with her even if that means disobeying God.

Adam's curiosity and hunger for knowledge is another weakness. The questions he asks of Raphael about creation and the universe may suggest a growing temptation to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. But like his physical attraction to Eve, Adam is able to partly avoid this temptation. It is only through Eve that his temptations become unavoidable.

Eve

Characters Eve

Created to be Adam's mate, Eve is inferior to Adam, but only slightly. She surpasses Adam only in her beauty. She falls in love with her own image when she sees her reflection in a body of water. Ironically, her greatest asset produces her most serious weakness, vanity. After Satan compliments her on her beauty and godliness, he easily persuades her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.

Aside from her beauty, Eve's intelligence and spiritual purity are constantly tested. She is not unintelligent, but she is not ambitious to learn,

content to be guided by Adam as God intended. As a result, she does not become more intelligent or learned as the story progresses, though she does attain the beginning of wisdom by the end of the poem. Her lack of learning is partly due to her absence for most of Raphael's discussions with Adam in Books V, VI, and VII, and she also does not see the visions Michael shows Adam in Books XI and XII. Her absence from these important exchanges shows that she feels it is not her place to seek knowledge independently; she wants to hear Raphael's stories through Adam later. The one instance in which she deviates from her passive role, telling Adam to trust her on her own and then seizing the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, is disastrous.

Eve's strengths are her capacity for love, emotion, and forebearance. She persuades Adam to stay with her after the fall, and Adam in turn dissuades her from committing suicide, as they begin to work together as a powerful unit. Eve complements Adam's strengths and corrects his weaknesses. Thus, Milton does not denigrate all women through his depiction of Eve. Rather he explores the role of women in his society and the positive and important role he felt they could offer in the divine union of marriage.

God

Characters God

An omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent character who knows everything before it happens. Attempting to present such an unimaginable character accurately, Milton appropriates several of God's biblical speeches into his speeches in *Paradise Lost*. God loves his creation and strongly defends humankind's free will. He presents his love through his Son, who performs his will justly and mercifully.

God, in *Paradise Lost,* is less a developed character than a personification of abstract ideas. He is unknowable to humankind and to some extent lacks emotion and depth. He has no weaknesses, embodies pure reason, and is always just. He explains why certain events happen, like Satan's decision to corrupt Adam and Eve, tells his angels what will happen next, and gives his reasoning behind his actions in theological terms. God allows evil to occur, but he will make good out of evil. His plan to save humankind by offering his Son shows his unwavering control over Satan.

The Son

Characters The Son

For Milton, the Son is the manifestation of God in action. While God the Father stays in the realm of Heaven, the Son performs the difficult

tasks of banishing Satan and his rebel angels, creating the universe and humankind, and punishing Satan, Adam and Eve with justice and mercy. The Son physically connects God the Father with his creation. Together they form a complete and perfect God.

The Son personifies love and compassion. After the fall, he pities Adam and Eve and gives them clothing to help diminish their shame. His decision to volunteer to die for humankind shows his dedication and selflessness. The final vision that Adam sees in Book XII is of the Son's (or Jesus') sacrifice on the cross—through this vision, the Son is able to calm Adam's worries for humankind and give Adam and Eve restored hope as they venture out of Paradise.

• GRAND STYLE OF MILTON

In modern times, Milton's style first received general criticism from T.S. Eliot. Eliot praised Milton in "A Note on the Verse of John Milton" (Martz 12-18): "[W]hat he could do well he did better than anyone else has ever done." Then Eliot added, "Milton's poetry could only be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever." The general thrust of Eliot's criticism is that Milton's purposely adopted grand style is both so difficult to accomplish and so complicated (in places) to understand that it causes a deterioration in the poetic style of those who are influenced by it and cannot meet its demands. "In fact," said Eliot, "it was an influence against which we still have to struggle."

Eliot's prime example is from Book V as Satan addresses his followers concerning the Son:

Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
If these magnific Titles yet remain
Not merely titular, since by Decree
Another now hath to himself ingross't
All Power, and us eclipst under the name
Of King anointed, for whom all this haste
Of midnight march, and hurried meeting here,
This only to consult how we may best
With what may be devis'd of honors new
Receive him coming to receive from us
Knee-tribute yet unpaid, prostration vile,
Too much to one, but double how endur'd,
To one and to his image now proclaim'd? (V, 772-784).

That Satan's point here is obscured by the language cannot be denied. Most readers are probably unaware that a question is being asked until

they see the question mark at the end of the passage. The meaning here can be puzzled out, but it is difficult to call such writing good, let alone great. Many readers, from put-upon high schoolers to experienced scholars took Eliot's criticism to heart. Often, they overlooked the fact that Eliot did not suggest that Milton was a bad poet; rather he suggested that the grand style could lead to bad poetry, particularly by the many who used Milton's style as the paradigm of great English poetry.

Defenders of Milton quickly appeared to answer Eliot. C. S. Lewis, in his work *A Preface to* Paradise Lost, and Christopher Ricks in *Milton's Grand Style* both mounted vigorous defenses of Milton's style. Lewis in particular argued that Milton needed this particular style for a "secondary epic," his term for an epic meant to be read rather than the "primary epic," which was presented orally in a formal setting and meant to be heard. Lewis' basic point was that the grand style provided the formality of setting that the secondary epic, by the nature of its composition, lost.

Both Lewis and Ricks offered numerous counter examples to show that Milton's style was sublime. Certainly, aside from Shakespeare, no other writer in English could manipulate the language as Milton did. His justly famous description of Mulciber falling soars:

from Morn
To Noon he fell, from Noon to dewy Eve,
A Summer's day; and with the setting Sun
Dropt from the Zenith like a falling Star (I, 742-745).

Or consider the pathos, poignancy, and hopefulness that fill the last few lines of the epic:

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.
They hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way. (XII, 645-650)

However, the questions about Milton's style cannot be answered by playing a game of bad line versus good line. The answer to the question posed by Eliot and opposed by Lewis and Ricks is of such a subjective nature that it can never be truly settled. Arguments about Milton's style will persist just as they do about the styles of Henry James, Jane Austen, even James Joyce. One man's sublimity is another's conundrum.

What *can* be accomplished is a clear description regarding what Milton's grand style consists of and how he made use of it in the poem. With

this information, the reader can at least have an objective foundation on which to base his subjective opinion.

Allusions and Vocabulary

The first aspect of the grand style that most readers notice is the number of allusions and references, many of which seem obscure, along with the arcane and archaic vocabulary. In just the first few lines of the poem references to "Oreb" (7), "That Shepherd" (8), "chosen seed" (8), "Siloa's Brook" (10), and "Aonian Mount" (15) occur. The purpose of the references is to extend the reader's understanding through comparison. Most readers will know some of the references, but few will know all. The question thus arises whether Milton achieves his effect or its opposite. Further, words such as "Adamantine" (48), "durst" (49), "Compeer" (127), "Sovran" (246) and many others, both more and less familiar, add an imposing tone to the work. *Paradise Lost* was not written for an uneducated audience, but in many editions the explanatory notes are almost as long as the text.

Sentence Construction

Besides the references and vocabulary, Milton also tends to use Latinate constructions. English is a syntactical language using word order in sentences to produce sense. Latin, in contrast, is an inflected language in which endings on words indicate the words' functions within a sentence, thereby making word order less important. Latin verbs, for example, often come at the end of the sentence or a direct object may precede the subject. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton seems purposely to strive for atypical English syntactical patterns. He almost never writes in simple sentences. Partly, this type of inverted, at times convoluted, syntax is necessary for the poetics, to maintain the correct meter, but at other times the odd syntax itself seems to be Milton's stylistic goal.

In this passage from Book VIII, the exact meaning of the words is elusive because of the Latinate syntax:

soft oppression seis'd
My droused sense, untroubl'd though I thought
I then was passing to my former state
Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve (VIII, 291-296).

Lewis, and others who admire the grand style, argue that in passages such as this, the precise meaning matters less than the impressionistic effect, that the images of drowsing, insensibility, and dissolution occurring in order show the breakdown of a conscious mind, in this case Adam's, as

God produces a dream vision for him. Certainly this passage, as difficult to understand literally as it is, is not bad writing. The reader understands what Adam is experiencing. However, in the hands of lesser talents than Milton, such writing becomes nonsense.

Extended Similes

Another aspect of Milton's style is the extended simile. The use of epic similes goes back to Homer in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but Milton uses more similes and with more detail. A Miltonic simile can easily become the subject of an essay, perhaps a book. Milton's similes run a gamut from those that seem forced (the comparison of Satan's arrival in Eden to the smell of fish [IV, 166]) to those that are perfect (Eden compared to the field where Proserpine gathered flowers [(IV, 268]). But, in all cases, a critical exploration of the simile reveals depths of unexpected meaning about the objects or persons being compared. Once again, Milton achieves a purpose with his highly involved language and similes. The ability to do this seems almost unique to Milton, a man of immense learning and great poetic ability.

Repeated Images

Besides extended similes, Milton also traces a number of images throughout the poem. One of the most apparent is the image of the maze or labyrinth. Over and over in the poem, there are mentions of mazes — like the tangled curls of Eve's hair — which finally culminate with the serpent confronting Eve on a "Circular base of rising folds, that tow'r'd / Fold above fold a surging maze" (IX, 498-499). Other images also run throughout the poem as a kind of tour de force of imagination and organization. Each image opens up new possibilities for understanding Milton's ideas.

No doubt, particular aspects of Milton's style could be presented at great length, but these are sufficient. Milton intended to write in "a grand style." That style took the form of numerous references and allusions, complex vocabulary, complicated grammatical constructions, and extended similes and images. In consciously doing these things, Milton devised a means of giving the written epic the bardic grandeur of the original recited epic. In so doing, he created an artificial style that very few writers could hope to emulate though many tried. As with the unique styles of William Faulkner and James Joyce, Milton's style is inimitable, and those who try to copy it sometimes give the original a bad name.

Milton's style is certainly his own. Elements of it can be criticized, but in terms of his accomplishment in *Paradise Lost*, it is difficult to see how

such a work could be better written in some other style. Milton defined the style of the English epic and, in a real sense, with that style, ended the genre. After Milton and *Paradise Lost*, the English epic ends.

• THEMES

The Importance of Obedience to God

The first words of *Paradise Lost* state that the poem's main theme will be "Man's first Disobedience." Milton narrates the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience, explains how and why it happens, and places the story within the larger context of Satan's rebellion and Jesus' resurrection. Raphael tells Adam about Satan's disobedience in an effort to give him a firm grasp of the threat that Satan and humankind's disobedience poses. In essence, *Paradise Lost* presents two moral paths that one can take after disobedience: the downward spiral of increasing sin and degradation, represented by Satan, and the road to redemption, represented by Adam and Eve.

While Adam and Eve are the first humans to disobey God, Satan is the first of all God's creation to disobey. His decision to rebel comes only from himself—he was not persuaded or provoked by others. Also, his decision to continue to disobey God after his fall into Hell ensures that God will not forgive him. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, decide to repent for their sins and seek forgiveness. Unlike Satan, Adam and Eve understand that their disobedience to God will be corrected through generations of toil on Earth. This path is obviously the correct one to take: the visions in Books XI and XII to demonstrate that obedience to God, even after repeated falls, can lead to humankind's salvation.

The Hierarchical Nature of the Universe

Paradise Lost is about hierarchy as much as it is about obedience. The layout of the universe—with Heaven above, Hell below, and Earth in the middle—presents the universe as a hierarchy based on proximity to God and his grace. This spatial hierarchy leads to a social hierarchy of angels, humans, animals, and devils: the Son is closest to God, with the archangels and cherubs behind him. Adam and Eve and Earth's animals come next, with Satan and the other fallen angels following last. To obey God is to respect this hierarchy.

Satan refuses to honor the Son as his superior, thereby questioning God's hierarchy. As the angels in Satan's camp rebel, they hope to beat God and thereby dissolve what they believe to be an unfair hierarchy in Heaven.

When the Son and the good angels defeat the rebel angels, the rebels are punished by being banished far away from Heaven. At least, Satan argues later, they can make their own hierarchy in Hell, but they are nevertheless subject to God's overall hierarchy, in which they are ranked the lowest. Satan continues to disobey God and his hierarchy as he seeks to corrupt mankind.

Likewise, humankind's disobedience is a corruption of God's hierarchy. Before the fall, Adam and Eve treat the visiting angels with proper respect and acknowledgement of their closeness to God, and Eve embraces the subservient role allotted to her in her marriage. God and Raphael both instruct Adam that Eve is slightly farther removed from God's grace than Adam because she was created to serve both God and him. When Eve persuades Adam to let her work alone, she challenges him, her superior, and he yields to her, his inferior. Again, as Adam eats from the fruit, he knowingly defies God by obeying Eve and his inner instinct instead of God and his reason. Adam's visions in Books XI and XII show more examples of this disobedience to God and the universe's hierarchy, but also demonstrate that with the Son's sacrifice, this hierarchy will be restored once again.

The Fall as Partly Fortunate

After he sees the vision of Christ's redemption of humankind in Book XII, Adam refers to his own sin as a *felix culpa* or "happy fault," suggesting that the fall of humankind, while originally seeming an unmitigated catastrophe, does in fact bring good with it. Adam and Eve's disobedience allows God to show his mercy and temperance in their punishments and his eternal providence toward humankind. This display of love and compassion, given through the Son, is a gift to humankind. Humankind must now experience pain and death, but humans can also experience mercy, salvation, and grace in ways they would not have been able to had they not disobeyed. While humankind has fallen from grace, individuals can redeem and save themselves through continued devotion and obedience to God. The salvation of humankind, in the form of The Son's sacrifice and resurrection, can begin to restore humankind to its former state. In other words, good will come of sin and death, and humankind will eventually be rewarded. This fortunate result justifies God's reasoning and explains his ultimate plan for humankind.

• REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of Paradise Lost Book-I ?

2. Who is the Hero of "Paradise Lost" Book-I
3. Milton Justifies the "Ways of God to Men" in Paradise Lost
4. Explain and justify Milton's use of God as a character. Consider how the work would be different if God were not a character.
5. Is it possible to defend the idea that Satan is the true hero of *Paradise Lost*? Explain why or why not.
6. Does Milton's grand style enhance or detract from the power of his story? Be sure to consider ideas from both sides of this argument.
7. What is the cause of the conflict between God and Satan?
8. What is the purpose of Book XII? Is it necessary for Milton's purpose?

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सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।
सर्वे भद्राणिः पष्यन्तु माकष्चिद् दुःख भाग्भवेत्।।

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Swami Vivekanand
SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY
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Meerut, Uttar Pradesh 250005
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Website : www.subhartidde.com, E-mail : ddesvsu@gmail.com