

Five British Writers

Day 8



Review of First Essay Assignment

English 201.4 Five British Writers, 9/26

First Essay

Write a 2-3 page essay on one of the following sets of passages from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (there are three options).

Your essay should focus on the chosen set of passages, paying close attention not just to themes and ideas, but also style, language, and voice. You should pay attention to the context from which each passage is taken, and can also refer more generally to the tales studied so far, when relevant. Your essay should be comparative, integrating your analyses of the passages that you are considering.

Do not retype the passages as part of your assignment. Do follow all the checklist guidelines in formatting your assignment. Attach a completed checklist to the front of your essay.

This first essay is due at 1 p.m. on Thursday October 5 and is worth 20% of your grade.

Option 1:

Knight's Tale 2304-2310

Wife of Bath's Prologue 79-86

Franklin's Tale 1355-1366

In your essay, you may want to consider the positions of the different speakers, their use of imagery, their attitudes about sex and chastity, their relations to authorities and to author voice. (These are suggestions: You do not need to cover all these topics!)

Option 2:

General Prologue 737-746

Manciple's Tale 207-225

Wife of Bath's Prologue 688-696

In your essay, you may want to consider the nature of a textual narrator, the relationship between language and truth, the importance of performance and intent, and the attitudes towards language and authority suggested in these extracts. (These are suggestions: You do not need to cover all these topics!)

Option 3:

General Prologue 769-782, 790-801

Knight's Tale 2843-2852

Parson's Prologue 45-60

In your essay, you may want to consider the positions of the different speakers, their attitudes towards death, the different ideas of pilgrimage presented and how each is framed, the relationships proposed between stories and mental or spiritual health. (These are suggestions: You do not need to cover all these topics!)

3 Suggestions and A Helpful Hint:

Do not try to address all the considerations suggested for an option—you do not have enough space. Pick the consideration that most interests you and use it to bring together analysis of the selected passages.

Do use the evidence of the language and poetic features in making your point. Ask yourself: are the same words used in the passages with different effects? Does the rhyme scheme of the passage emphasize an important part of its meaning? Is there notable imagery, like personification, similes, metaphors, or important features of voice (like direct address) which impact the meaning of these passages and influence your comparison?

Read through the checklist guidelines RIGHT AWAY—do not wait until the last minute. If you have any questions, again, contact me RIGHT AWAY, so they can be answered before the deadline.

Hint: the proper citation for the *Canterbury Tales* appears on our syllabus on the list of required texts. Within your essay, cite each quotation parenthetically by line number and relevant abbreviation: KT for Knight's Tale, WBP for Wife of Bath's Prologue, FranT for Franklin's Tale, GP for General Prologue, MancT for Manciple's Tale, ParsP for Parson's Prologue. For example, I would quote a speaker's promise from the Parson's Prologue in this format: "I wol nat glose" (ParsP 45).

September 28, 2006

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UMass Boston

English 201

Dr. Kamath

Your Discussion Questions

1. Further Investigation of the Manciple and Melibee

Colin: In the Tale of Melibee there is more dialogue between the husband and wife; even though the wife is still in charge it is only because she can convince her husband to see her reason, not because she is weepy or tricky. How does this difference tie in with the use of prose that sets off Chaucer the Pilgrims Tale from the rest?

Valerie: Why does the Manciple feel it is important to tell a fable about the importance of silence, or rather minding one's own business, amongst the other pilgrims? Does he feel he is trying to speak to them or that his tale is clever? If we assume the position of the Manciple as he is described, and not Chaucer, the author, what would be his reasoning behind telling his tale with its subsequent fable?

2. Literature and Competition

Jon: Comment on the concept of competition (e.g., jousting) in relation to the *Canterbury Tales*.

Margaret: If, at this point, we had to choose a winner, who would it be and why?

Kate: Do we know who wins the contest?

3. Authorship and Textual Voice

Anna D.: Within all the tales in the *Canterbury Tales* the topic of voice has come up often, which voice do you think is the most important voice of all? Chaucer's?

Martha: Did Chaucer obliterate all the writers who came before by co-opting their stories to fit into his own creation, or did he resuscitate them, prolonging their lives and giving them boundless reach through the ages?

4. Literary Legacy

Taylor: What is the importance of Chaucer's work today? How has this one work influenced writing since?

Jessica: Do you think that *The Canterbury Tales* is important for students to read? Why or why not?

Bronwen: These tales have been told for entertainment purposes during the characters' pilgrimage to Canterbury. But, great time has been devoted to the telling- and reading- of them. Of what significance might these stories be- in general, in relation to the trip, and in relation to the characters- other than just being a source of entertainment for the pilgrims and the reader?

5. Ethical and Historical Investigations

Anna W.: Is there any significance to most of the tales having morals? Do these lessons always add to the complexity of the story like in the Manciple tale? Or are they just there to teach us knowledgeable meaning about life? And which seem to be better the tales with morals or the ones without?

Meghan: Using the *Prologue*, can we describe the rising middle class in the fourteenth century?

6. Theoretical Explorations of Authorship

Rosie: Did you agree- in a modern context- with Barthes' argument that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author?" Do you think this is relevant when reading Chaucer? Why or why not?

Brian: If we didn't know Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales*, how would it change the reading of them?

7. Genre Expectations

Lacardia: How do the *Miller's Tale* and *Knight's Tale* relate to one another?

Adam: As reader are you attracted more toward the comical, or dramatic side of Chaucer's characters in the *Canterbury Tales*?

Discuss the questions in your group and
Present your conclusions to the class!

Make sure everyone in the group has a chance to participate in
the discussion and participation, and that your presentation
refers to specific lines of text.

If you would like a slide to present your groups' results (with
chosen line numbers, connections, conclusions), come on
up and I will type one up for you.

Further Investigations of the Manciple and Melibee

Collin

Valerie

Tikeon

Literature and Competition

Jon

Margaret

Kate

Ed

Authorship and Textual Voice

Anna

Martha

Chris

Literary Legacy

Taylor

Jessica

Bronwen

Liz

Amanda

Ethical and Historical Investigations

Anna

Meghan

Shawn

Beki

Theoretical Explorations of Authorship

Rosie

Brian

Vienna

Genre Expectations

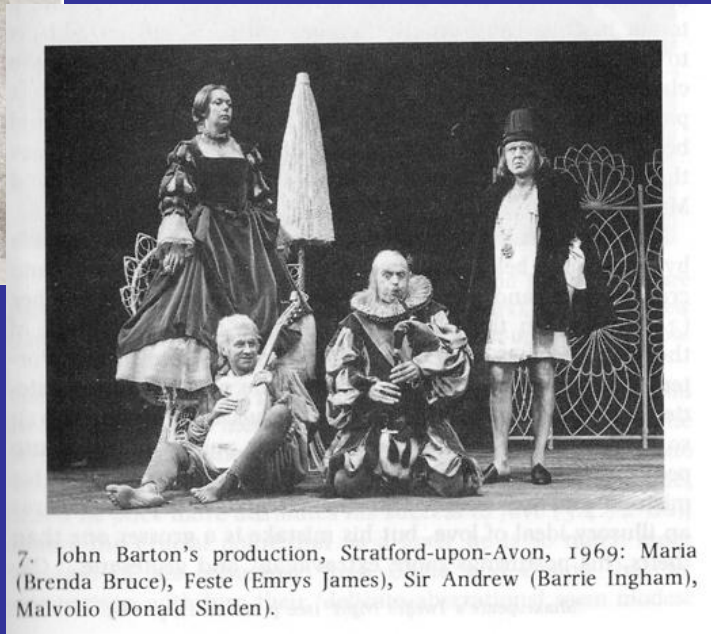
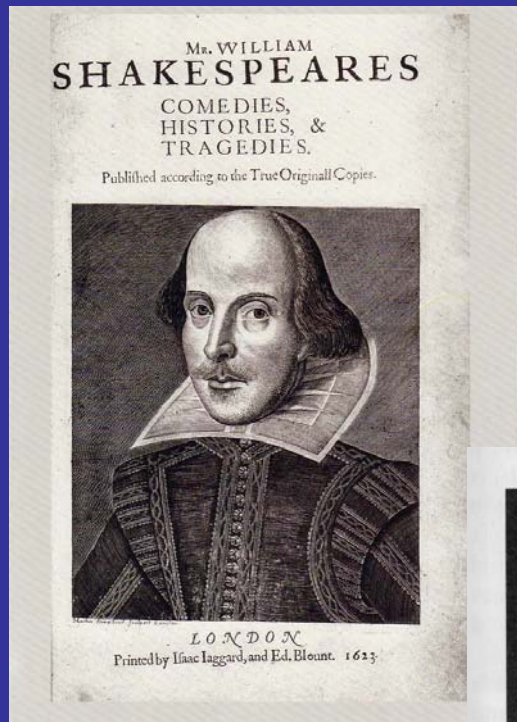
Lacardia

(Adam)

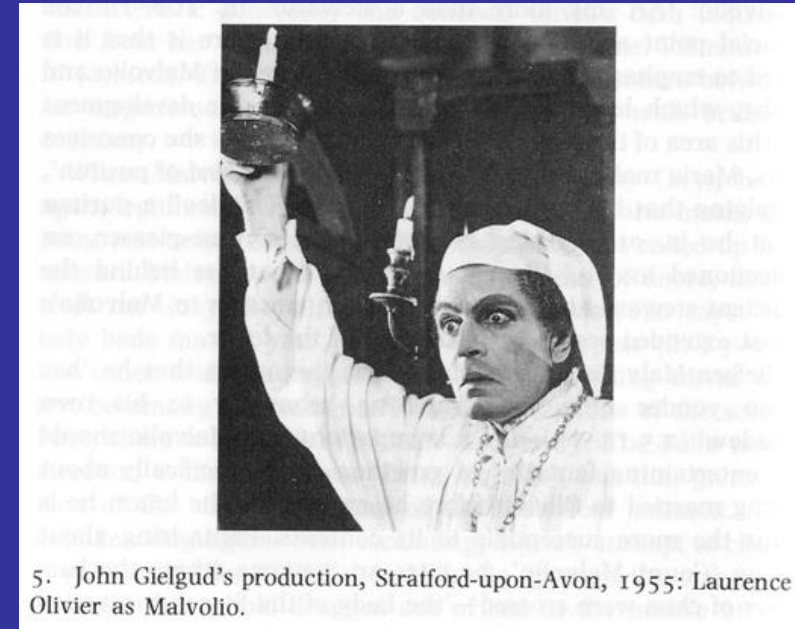
Julianna

Paul

Next Week: *Twelfth Night*!



7. John Barton's production, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1969: Maria (Brenda Bruce), Feste (Emrys James), Sir Andrew (Barrie Ingham), Malvolio (Donald Sinden).



5. John Gielgud's production, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1955: Laurence Olivier as Malvolio.