

Five British Writers

Day 9



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.

Ethical and Historical Investigations

Anna

Meghan

Shawn

Beki

Theoretical Explorations of Authorship

Rosie

Brian

Vienna

Genre Expectations

Lacardia

(Adam)

Juliana

Paul

A Return to Literary Legacy: *Pierre Bordieu's theory of 'Cultural Capital'*

Chaucer's Language

Sipen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye,
þe bor³ brittened and brent to brondez and askez,
þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wro³t
Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe...

14th c. English, Midlands

Bifel that, in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage...

14th c. English, Westminster

Shakespeare's Language

"all Greek to me"

"neither a borrower nor a lender be"

"more sinned against than sinning"

"vanished into thin air"

"sweets to the sweet"

"in a nutshell"

"too too solid flesh"

"to be or not to be"

"something is rotten in the state of..."

"the very pink of courtesy"

"sharper than a serpent's tooth"

"very like a whale"

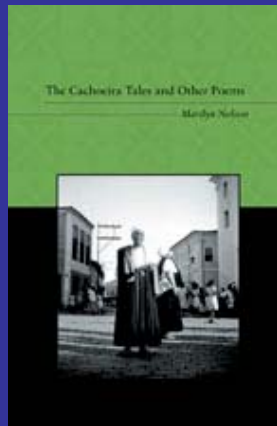
"to thine own self be true"

"If music be the food of love, play on..."

New Inspirations

Refreshing Chaucer

Maryilyn Nelson's *Cachoeira Tales*
Winner of the 2005 L. E. Phillabaum
Poetry Award



BBC 2003 6 episode TV series based on
the *Canterbury Tales*

Refreshing Shakespeare

2001 The Nomura Mansaku Company's
Kyogen of Errors, based on The Comedy
of Errors, from Japan

1997/2001 *Umabatha* The Zulu Macbeth
(South Africa)

2000 Grupo Galpao's *Romeu & Julieta* from
Brazil

1999 An Indian *Kathakali-King Lear* by the
Annette Leday/Keli Company

1998 Teatro Buendia's *Otra Tempestad* – a
Cuban interpretation of The Tempest

Historical Context

What is a 'Twelfth Night'?

- The Mystery of Twelfth Night 1601
 - Queen Elizabeth and chief guest, Don Virgino Orsino, saw a play (unspecified) performed by Shakespeare's company at Whitehall.

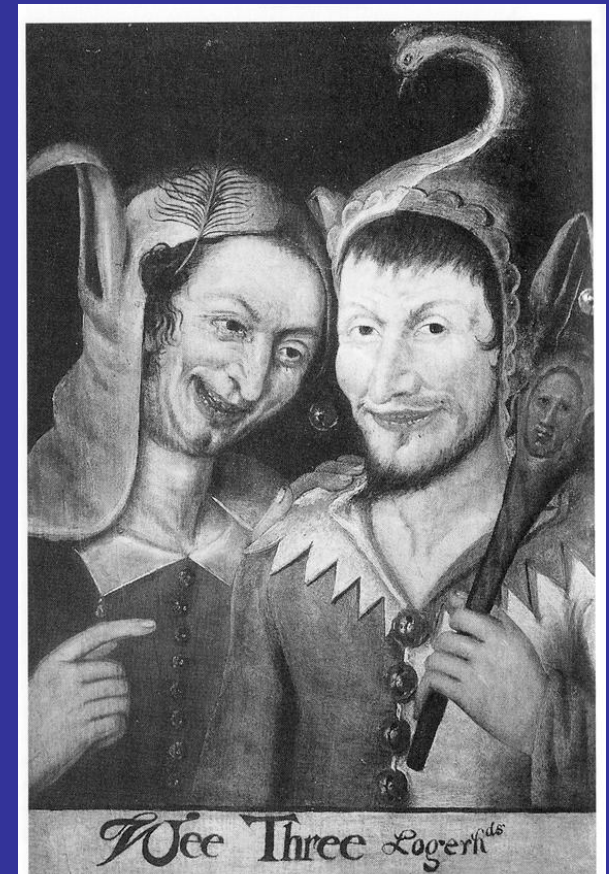
What is a fool?

- Robert Armin (c.1599) *Foole upon Foole* (1605)
- Jesse Bogdonoff (c. 2000)



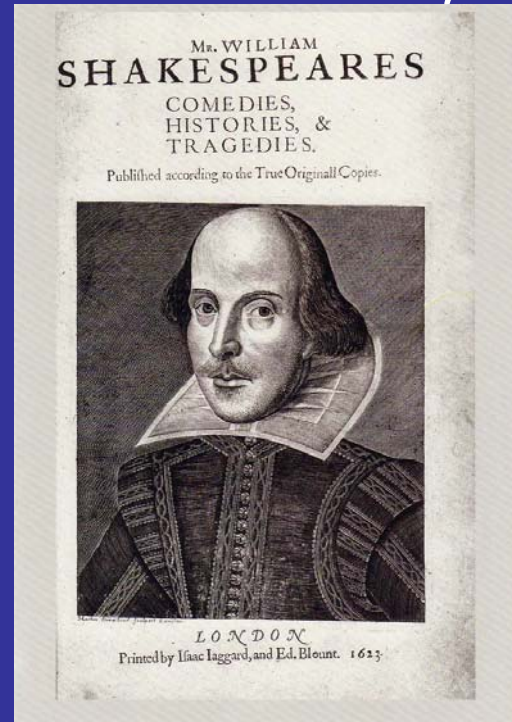
Where is Illyria?

- What about the 'Elephant' at the South of town?



10. This painting, probably of the seventeenth-century jesters Tom Derry and Archie Armstrong (holding folly-stick; see note to 1.5.32), may be an example of the trick picture referred to at 2.3.15-16, in which the two fools invite the viewer to make up 'we three'. But that is not quite certain, because 'loggerheads' were rounded pieces of wood with a long handle like Armstrong's folly-stick, so arguably there are three loggerheads in the picture already.

Twelfth Night! Keep reading...



Don't forget to hand in your first essay assignment first thing next class!

Follow all the directions, use the helpful hints we talked over last Thursday, and be sure to include the completed checklist as your coversheet.