

Max Shi

HLI 114

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I pledge my honor that I have abided by the Stevens Honor System.

Midterm Exam

A) Question 1:

In Lancelot, women are depicted as a subject of admiration, a sacred being that cannot be harmed or disrespected, and should be protected by any means, by the order of chivalric code. While this seems obvious when talking about Guenevere, as of course Lancelot would treat his love with the utmost respect, the treatment of the nameless damsel who tries to trick Lancelot is especially telling. Lancelot, seeing the woman in danger, risked his life to save the woman whom he had nothing to do with, and when he realized he was being tricked, continued to treat her respectfully and simply refused her advances. He does not dismiss her, but leaves the woman to dismiss herself after she realizes Lancelot dislikes her company. Here, women are put on a pedestal and are put above the knight. This is in comparison to the Lays of Marie de France, where women are seen as equal to the men in the story, even being the leader in both stories creating the plans to escape with their love. In Equitan, the seneschal's wife plays an equal part in contriving the death of her husband, saying "she began at once to contrive scenarios that would let her arrive at the widowhood to which he had made reference." In the Two Lovers, it is the woman that creates the final idea. In both stories, however, it seems to be the woman as the cunning and thoughtful characters, with the women in Equitan and Two Lovers both playing equal or bigger roles in the plot than the men, and even Guenevere who creates the plan for Lancelot to sneak into her room.

B) Question 1:

Dante needs Virgil for a few reasons. The first reason is to appeal to the reader as a voice of reason and objectivity. Virgil is a well-known Roman poet, who created the Aeneid, one of the greatest works of that era. His character appeals to ethos, in his authority to speak clearly and accurately about what is happening in Hell. Thus, as he is explaining Hell to Dante, the audience will also take his word for what is happening. Another reason for Virgil to be Dante's guide is that, as Dante's favorite poet, he appeals to the trust that Dante will have in following him as a guide. It is natural that, if possible, a trusted character dear to Dante will be sent to him to guide him through an unknown land such as Hell, so this simply adds to the narrative of the story. Finally, it is important that an ancient poet such as Virgil is used as a guide due to his history predating the practices of baptism and religion, as it would be unthinkable for him to be in hell should he have been baptized. He has committed no sin, which is important for his appeal as a symbol of authority in the story, yet he can appear in the story as a resident of the "limbo" layer of Hell for those historical characters that cannot be assigned to either Heaven nor Hell.

C) Question 2:

The priest and the barber in Don Quixote play an important role as a perspective of society in the story. It provides a benchmark and reference point for what others thought of his actions, compared to biased parties such as Don Quixote himself, or Sancho Panza, who is simply playing along with Quixote's actions. As his friends, they have a duty to help Quixote return to normal,

which they do in the burning of the books. During this chapter, however, the two characters play a different role, almost legitimizing the works that Quixote is reading by going through each book one-by-one and even keeping some of the books for themselves. They say about one book, “‘Good heavens!’ cried the priest. ‘Fancy Tirante the White being here! Give it to me, my friend: I reckon I’ve found in this book a treasure of delight and a mine of entertainment’” (Quixote, 56). In this sense, by naming some famous books, the priest and the barber are showing the power of these works of art in changing reality for Quixote, and legitimizing how Quixote has driven himself to become a knight. With such famous and impactful books, the priest and the barber affirm the extent to which Quixote has a love of chivalric romances, and how much trouble Quixote must have gone through to obtain these rare books. Thus, the priest and the barber play both the role of delegitimizing Quixote’s behavior as a perspective from society, but also legitimize it with the inclusion of famous and valuable books.

D) Question 1:

Sonnet 130 can be broken down into two sections, being the first twelve lines and the last two lines. In the first twelve lines, Shakespeare compares his mistress’s physical traits and behaviors to objects, such as her eyes to the sun, the redness of her lips to coral, the whiteness of her skin to snow, or her breath to perfumes. The object of each comparison evokes a sense of beauty, especially in that period, where poets would often use the same objects to emphasize their beauty. However, in each comparison, Shakespeare affirms how his mistress never matches up to the object, for example, saying “I love to hear her speak, yet will I know that music hath a far more pleasing sound.” In this sense, Shakespeare is almost insulting his mistress, saying that he knows that she would never match up to the same beauty comparisons of other poets at the time, and that he sees her imperfections. However, in the last two lines of the sonnet, Shakespeare says, “And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare as any she belied with false compare.” His affirmation of love, despite the imperfections he sees, is a sobering reality to the world of these poets, where he says people are not perfect, and yet, his mistress is still the subject of his love. The sonnet is both a love poem and a satirical poke at the standards of love poems of the time, calling out poets for making impossible and unrealistic comparisons about female beauty.