

The interruptions in the canterburys tales



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The interruptions by the miller and the wife of Bath, perfectly show how they both lose track of their themes during their prologues or tales.

And it's logical to believe that such different figures would have different reasons for behaving so. Truth is, it is quite obvious that whereas the wife of Bath still manages to present her points when she wanders off, the miller doesn't bother it at all. So it seems, the wife of Bath's interruptions possess richer personalities and meanings, which the miller's interruptions fail to achieve. To begin with, we see the miller drunkenly starts his tale of a typical farmer's daughter story, with which we along with the other pilgrims are too familiar.

And aside from that knowledge, we are all aware what a rough misogynist the miller is, so it takes us by surprise when the miller goes into elaborate details about the appearance of the carpenter's wife: She wore a cross-striped sash, all made of silk; / An apron also, white as morning milk, / She wore about her loins, gored to flare. / White was her smock; its collar, front and black, / Embroidered with black silk inside and out. / / She wore a brooch upon her lower collar / Broad as the boss upon a shield or buckler. / The shoes upon her legs were laced up high. / She was a peach, a dolly, and a daisy! / Fit for a prince to lay upon his bed / Or some good retainer of his to wed.

(82-83) The miller is so immersed in all these delicate descriptions that he pauses with "Now sir, and again sir!" (83) to remember the topic and goes back to story-telling. And actually we pause too, in astonishment, seeing him lose track of his storyline. This whole narration is so out of his

character that we are fully convinced that he is, actually, getting lost in his own fantasy of a fair girl. So all this interruption is a daydream for him in a sense. Read the lines: ??? Roam the world up and down, you??™ d never raise / A man whose wit and fancy could dream up / A prettier poppet, or a girl like that,??? (83) and it??™s clear to see that he is dreaming up this pretty girl, visualizing her image in his head. As a result, we can say he doesn??™t convey any specific idea behind the interruption, for he is simply intoxicated in his own fantasy of the girl??™s beauty.

On the other hand, I do think as we can see the miller as a representative of normal men in the Middle Age, we realize that the miller??™s fantasy could convey the general idea of what a man in the Middle Age would expect from his ideal girl. Nevertheless, the miller??™s interruption here still fails to present any significant ideas of his. He remains as a fierce misogynist through his prologue and tale. Conversely, the wife of Bath is a very forceful, vigorous and complicated figure. While her mind has a tendency to wander, every interruption she makes succeeds in telling us something. For example, in her prologue, she highlights the impression of her huge passion for sexual intercourse on our mind by telling us how she enjoyed her youth in sexual pleasure as she wanders off from telling us about her fourth husband: Now I will speak about my fourth husband.

/ My fourth husband was a libertine; / That is to say, he kept a concubine; /
And I was young, and passionate, and gay, / Stubborn and strong, and merry
as a magpie. / How I would dance to the harp??™s tunable / Music, and sing
like any nightingale, / ??! / And I recall my youth and gaiety, / It warms the

very cockles of my heart. /And to this day it does my spirit good / To think that in my time I??™ve had my fling.

/ ??; / But all the same I mean to have my fun. / And now I??™ll tell about my fourth husband. (230-231) What??™s more, as we read on, we listen to her talking about making up a suggestive dream to lead her fifth-husband-to-be to believe she loves him, and about how all these doings are following her mother??™s teachings, and then she realizes she has diverged from her stated goal and pauses, saying ??? But now, sirs, let me see??” what was I saying Aha! Bless me, I??™ve found the thread again.??? (233) This interruption surely can be viewed as the fact that she was deep in her memories, or that she is such a strong woman and has so many experiences and ideas to share that she has difficulty staying focused. But somehow, intentionally or not, it actually draws back our attention for the climax of her husbands??™ stories??” her violent resistance against the misogynic tradition. In general, these interruptions indicate what a talking machine she is, wandering off and back to her theme, telling us everything about her. She totally stands out from the normal women in her times.

Also, her constant interruptions beautifully demonstrate one of her beliefs, as said in her tale, ??? We women can keep nothing hidden.??? The digressions and interruptions are loaded with her viewpoints, acting as a powerful force pushing us forward, to the complete realization of the main idea of her prologue and tale: the way for a husband to avoid the trouble in marriage is to give reign to his wife. In conclusion, after looking into these interruptions, we see that the miller is lost in his fantasy which contributes nothing to his theme; however, the wife of Bath still has her points

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supporting her topic while she wanders off, pursuing her own pleasure, defying the conventional authority, and declaring her complete control over men. Also, the wife of Bath's success in sharing her own experiences brings us closer to her. We see the whole complex sides of humanity from her and her uniqueness of both modern and traditional thoughts, while the miller remains distant and flatly coarse in his misogynic conception of the world.