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A Lusty Bachelor: The Language of Sexualization and Status in the Squire's Portrait

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A Lusty Bachelor:

The Language of Sexualization and Status in the Squire's Portrait

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

the Department of English
of the University of New Orleans

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts, with Honors in English

by

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Abstract

Chaucer scholars often neglect the Squire in their treatment of the *Canterbury Tales*, making it necessary to reassess the Squire's relation to the *Roman de la Rose* and the ways in which he is satirized through the parallels between his portrait and the *Roman*. Upon further examination of the Squire's portrait, it becomes apparent that the Squire is part of a larger satiric discourse on people who use their vocation for personal gain in the *Canterbury Tales* by means of comparison to Fausemblant of the *Roman*. Through careful scrutiny of the language of the Squire's portrait, this thesis analyzes the connections between Fausemblant and the other pilgrims who exhibit connections to Fausemblant.

Keywords: Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, Squire's portrait, Fausemblant, vocations

Very little has been written about the importance of sexual euphemism and overtones in the Squire's portrait of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. It seems as though critics have left this area of the *Canterbury Tales* untouched because they are priggish, or assume that every reader understands the euphemisms, or simply believe that sexual connotations are unimportant to understanding the greater themes of the text. Firstly, not every reader who comes to this text is capable of understanding some of the extremely complex euphemistic expressions Chaucer implements. Secondly, Chaucer uses these sexual hints to highlight key character flaws and satirize the pilgrims. Approaching the text without addressing the sexual hints ignores the fact that Chaucer employs bawdy themes in his *Canterbury Tales* for reasons more significant than appealing to a lowbrow audience. This process of achieving sexualized satire is intricately connected to the fact that these pilgrims are not as ideal as a surface reading may suggest. Upon careful analysis, readers can see that many of these sexualized pilgrims are also abusing their vocations or social statuses for personal gain. There is a whole web of connections between these sexual overtones and the negative character traits that Chaucer is criticizing in his own pilgrims. To understand why these pilgrims are ineffectual or otherwise exploit their positions in society, one must parse out the sexual euphemisms in their portraits. It is therefore necessary to speak of Chaucer's use of sexual overtones in the Squire's portrait as plainly as possible, bringing to light what these hints and euphemisms mean openly in order to connect them to the broader sexual satiric vocational discourse in the *Canterbury Tales*.

In the *Canterbury Tales*, the defining feature for all of the pilgrims is their social status or vocation. In fact, for many of these pilgrims Chaucer only provides the reader with the pilgrim's status or vocation in lieu of a proper name. The General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* uses an elaborate hierarchy to organize the pilgrims. They can be broken up into a set of categories

known as the Three Estates: those who pray, those who fight, and those who work. These estates constitute the most basic breakdown of the pilgrims' order of portraits in the General Prologue: nobility comes first, then clergy, then commoners, with a few exceptions. Within each of these categories is at least one pilgrim who exploits his or her position for personal gain, whether it is sexual partners, as in the case of the Squire, or money, as in the case of the Pardoner. Despite what they gain by abusing their positions, all of these pilgrims have portraits that feature sexualized language, typically in the form of euphemism. Chaucer uses sexualization to mock the pilgrims who exploit their positions; rather than simply portray the pilgrims as negative caricatures of those who abuse the system, Chaucer makes the reader view these pilgrims as contemptible and laughable at the same time. Seven pilgrims belong in this sexually satiric discourse on vocational abuse. The Squire, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Wife of Bath, Summoner, and Pardoner all can be described as ineffectual hypocrites who use their status as a guise for achieving their own selfish desires. In their portraits, they are mocked for their character flaws, and the main satiric target is their sexuality. The list of pilgrims who are sexualized in their portraits is long, but the first pilgrim portrayed is one of the most overlooked pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*—the Squire. His portrait seems straightforward and his Tale dull and incomplete, but the Squire is nonetheless an important figure in contextualizing the satiric discourse that Chaucer employs in the *Canterbury Tales* to attack people who exploit their positions for personal gain.

The *Roman de la Rose* is a primary source for the *Canterbury Tales*, but the ineffectual pilgrims of the vocational discourse are all satirized by way of this text. For example, the Squire is a cheap imitation of Deduiz and Amors, the Prioress and the Wife of Bath are both ironically compared to la Vieille, and the Monk, Friar, Summoner, and Pardoner share many beliefs that

Fausemblant expresses in his confession. While there are other pilgrims who exploit their vocations, these pilgrims are unique in that they are satirized through their sexuality by way of the *Roman*. Though it was originally written in Old French, the *Roman de la Rose* exists in a partial translation into Middle English called the *Romaunt of the Rose*. Chaucer is often credited with translating the section of this Middle English version called Fragment A. The *Roman* itself is an allegorical dream poem, the primary plot of which is driven by the squire Amans' (Lover's) desire for a rose which represents, in its most basic sense, a vagina. This rose exists almost exclusively as a detachment from the female body, meaning that Amans' sexual drive is much less about romance and more about the woman's body as a sexual object. For all of the ineffectual pilgrims' portraits to be based on a story of an elaborate sex dream highlights the importance of sexuality for these pilgrims' portraits. The fact that Amans is sexually objectifying his lover also cannot be ignored, since most of these sexualized pilgrims don't seem to have a particular interest in romantic affiliations. Their portraits instead suggest an increased focus on their sexual desire or appetite: the Squire hopes to impress women with his experience in battle; the Prioress uses her beauty and her manners to attract the male gaze; the Monk hunts for women like he hunts for game; the Friar marries off the women he has impregnated to hide the dalliances; the Wife of Bath marries to elevate her own status and sate her sexual desires; the Summoner blackmails and sexually manipulates youths whose secrets he knows; and the Pardoner appears to have a sexual relationship with the Summoner. This sex without romance is what makes the sexualization of the ineffectual characters so comedic.

Perhaps the most important character in the *Roman de la Rose* in relation to Chaucer's sexual vocational discourse in the *Canterbury Tales* is Fausemblant, or False Seeming. His confession can be found in the Middle English *Romaunt* translation in Fragment C, which

Chaucer likely also translated. Fausemblant is the son of Baraz (Fraud) and Ypocrisie (Hypocrisy), and typically goes around in the garb of a friar, though he only uses the robes of religion as a guise. He wears many disguises and hides his identity so that he can manipulate others without drawing suspicion. He tells Amors (Love) that he can be found in either worldly people or in religious, and nowhere else, which is to say that false seeming is ubiquitous (*The Romaunt of the Rose* C.6141-2). Typically, critics compare Fausemblant only to the Friar in the *Canterbury Tales*, but he is truly paralleled in each of the ineffectual pilgrims who are sexualized. In some way, every sexualized pilgrim is a representation of Fausemblant. In the *Roman* he is the allegorical representation of hypocrisy in one's vocation and the use of power and position for personal gain, but in the *Canterbury Tales* Chaucer gives Fausemblant multiple flesh and blood, tangible representations, allegory brought to life in a vivid array of loathsome human beings. Each of these pilgrims is a different iteration of Fausemblant and his multiple disguises. Like Fausemblant, they all use religion for their own purposes and all hypocritically use their positions in society to manipulate the world around them for their own gain.

Throughout his entire confession, Fausemblant stresses multiple times that if you want to find fraud and hypocrisy in people, you must look to their actions and not their garments. In the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer provides the reader with two different ways of understanding the pilgrims and their portraits. The first is a simple surface reading, taking the compliments of Chaucer the narrator and his descriptions at face value. This sort of reading typically leads the reader to believe that these pilgrims are good, wholesome people. The second way of understanding the pilgrims, however, depends on Chaucer the writer's use of euphemism and satire. When the reader approaches the portraits with this understanding, these pilgrims all appear to be truly abhorrent individuals. As Fausemblant recommends, when the reader looks at

Chaucer's pilgrims through this lens, focused on their actions rather than their appearance, it becomes obvious that the pilgrims' vocations are just disguises and that they are truly hypocrites.

The sexual satire on vocations begins with a particularly oblique example; the Squire's portrait includes subtle suggestion of his exploitation of his position as squire and of his prominent sexuality, but this only becomes obvious when one very carefully picks apart the metaphors and euphemisms of the portrait. Other pilgrims' portraits, like that of the Pardoner, are much more obvious in their depictions of sexuality and exploitation of status. The Pardoner's portrait is perhaps the most obvious example of this satiric discourse, meaning that Chaucer begins with the least obvious example and ends with the most obvious. There are many good reasons for this. The Squire is part of the nobility, which comes first in the Three Estates hierarchy system. Nobility was assuredly the intended primary audience of the *Tales*, so it would be poor form indeed if Chaucer had used the same offensively critical language of the Pardoner's portrait in the portrait of a noble. Secondly, the Pardoner is already the least likable pilgrim even before his portrait begins. The historic hatred of summoners and pardoners, who were well known for being swindlers, may be what led Chaucer to put him last in the General Prologue. The Pardoner is technically part of the clergy, and yet he is behind the commoners. The Squire is not nearly as faulted and corrupt as some of the other pilgrims, such as the Pardoner, but he remains vital to this discourse. He is perhaps the least offending fraud within the vocational satire, but this does not make him least important. Order and hierarchy is key to the *Canterbury Tales*, and so the positioning of the Squire as the first character in this list of sexualized pilgrims makes his the most intriguing of portraits. The more gentle nature of Chaucer's satire in the Squire's portrait may have led to critics overlooking his portrait and Tale; the satire is indeed

only apparent when one compares his portrait to those of the pilgrims whom Chaucer more obviously satirizes and to its source in the *Roman de la Rose*.

As he does with many of the other pilgrims, Chaucer sexualizes the Squire through multiple means in his portrait, using wordplay, inter- and intratextual parallels, and historical reference. The Squire displays the hypocrisy of Faussemblant through his lack of dedication to his position as defender of the faith and through his exploitation of his vocation to get the attention of women; by the end of the portrait it is clear that the Squire spends far too much time using his status as a squire for sex and too little time actually doing his job, much like some of the other pilgrims in the satiric discourse. Like many of the other pilgrims, the Squire seems on the surface to be the ideal, but by conducting a close analysis of the Squire's portrait and by decoding the sexual nuances in his portrait, one can see exactly how Chaucer begins his discourse of sexuality wherein the pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales* who neglect their vocations are preoccupied with sex.

The first twelve lines of the Squire's portrait not only create for the reader a mental image of the Squire, they also serve to satirize his efforts to be as sexually attractive as possible. In the second line of the portrait, these intentions are revealed quite plainly when he is described as a "lovyere and a lusty bachelor" (*The Canterbury Tales* I.80). In Middle English *lusty* could refer to passion, health, and vigor or to the sexual sin; for example, in his Tale, the Man of Law laments the deadly sin, saying, "O foule lust of luxurie, lo, thyn ende!" (*CT* II.925). Here the word *luxurie* comes from the Latin for the deadly sin *luxuria*, which is translated into modern English as "lechery" or "lust." The connection between *lust* and sexual desire in the original Middle English, therefore, remains intact even in the Squire's portrait. Similarly, *bachelor* is closest to the modern "bachelor," meaning an unmarried man, often colloquially used to describe

one who enjoys the company of women, but in Middle English it was also a status, meaning a low-ranking knight who had fought under the banner of another knight. Mention of the Squire's identity as a *lovyere* precedes mention of his vocation as a *bachelor*, implying his skewed priorities and marring his position with his sexual proclivities. This also links the Squire's sexuality with his job performance, which sets up a pattern that can be followed through the entire portrait. On the surface, the line might mean that the Squire is passionate about his position in his Order, or that he is a healthy young knight bachelor; however, when one reads the rest of the portrait, it becomes clear that this is meant to be taken ironically, meaning the Squire is too interested in sex to be the ideal knight bachelor.

In the following line, Chaucer provides the reader with the first physical description of the Squire: "With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse" (*CT* I.81). Not only does this line establish a theme that recurs through the rest of the General Prologue of excessive attention to personal appearance, it also establishes the Squire as an artificially attractive person. This becomes most obvious when one looks at Chaucer's translation of the portrait of Deduiz – Chaucer translates this as Mirth, but it would perhaps be more accurate to use Pleasure – in the *Roman*, which served as a source for the portrait of the Squire. Deduiz owns the idyllic garden Amans finds himself in at the beginning of the *Roman*, and he is a picturesque representation of an ideal male beauty. The Squire is here attempting to look like a romance hero like Deduiz, whose hair is "[c]risp" and "eek ful bright" or curled, but the Squire must simulate the appearance of such a hero because these features are not natural to him (*RR* A.824). Curling one's hair during Chaucer's time would have been very time consuming, something only people with the luxury of free time would be able to do. Rather than spend his free time training or otherwise better preparing for knighthood, the Squire instead devotes his time to preening. This

hairstyle also parallels the Pardoner's in his portrait, in which the Pardoner's hair is very carefully arrayed in a way that the Pardoner believes is fashionable: "By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde, / And therwith he his shuldres overspradde" (*CT* I.677-8). The Squire's simulation of a romance hero's hair is therefore compared to the bizarre hairstyle of the Pardoner, a particularly unsavory character, and it highlights the fact that the Squire is too attentive to his false appearance – his *faux semblant*.

With respect to his clothing, the narrator comments that "[e]mbrouded was he, as it were a meede / Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede" and that "[s]hort was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde" (*CT* I.89-90, 93). In a time when all embroidery was done by hand and red dye was expensive, the Squire's garment is surely attention-grabbing. The most important aspect of the Squire's beauty, however, is the artifice; the curled hair and expensive clothes are not natural, signaling that he may be making up for a sexual desirability that he does not really have. In the portrait of Deduiz, there are many similar images, though there are key differences that help the reader understand the irony of the Squire's portrait. Deduiz's face is "rody and whit in every place" (*RR* A.820). These descriptions make it clear that the Squire is attempting to be like the romantic ideal, Deduiz, but he can only become an approximation through artifice. Because Amors explicitly states that only ladies and men of ill repute wear face makeup, it is reasonable to assume that his friend and follower Deduiz has a naturally red and white face (*The Roman de la Rose* trans. Dahlberg 60-1). The Squire by comparison must wear white and red in his expensive gown because his face lacks the red and white pallor of Deduiz, and the comparison marks the Squire as a pleasure-seeking individual striving for the wrong ideal. And another portrait is alluded to in the Squire's physical description. The portrait of Amors also features flowers; however, in this instance, Amors is "nought clad in silk... [b]ut all in floures

and in flourettes” (RR A.890-1). The beauty of a purely natural gown made entirely of flowers would be unsurpassed, but the Squire still tries to imitate this garment with his own embroidered gown. By posing Deduiz and Amors as the ultimate idealizations of a romance hero, the Squire obviously falls short in his imitation; his artificial version of the romance hero is only a semblance of the real thing.

Once again, there is a surface text here that cannot go ignored; white and red were the colors used symbolically in knightly initiation. Robert J. Fehrenbach shows the significance of the symbolic garments used in an investiture in a French poem. For the white linen, the red robe, the white girdle, and the white coif, the following meanings are given, respectively: “purity, sacrificial blood for the Church, chastity, and innocence of the soul that is desired at the day of judgment” (6). These colors reflected in the garb of Chaucer’s Squire might denote an impatience for full knighthood or perhaps more likely a transitional stage between youth and adulthood, squire and knight, but the Squire has misrepresented these colors, using them to attract sexual attention despite the themes of purity, sacrifice, chastity, and innocence associated with them. This hint of hypocrisy once again links the Squire to Fausemblant: the Squire wears the garments appropriate to his station, but at the same time he uses these garments for an exploitative purpose that undercuts their intentioned purpose. The Squire uses the symbolic colors of knighthood to make himself more desirable, ignoring their true meaning and thus the meaning of his vocation as a squire.

In this physical description of his clothing, the Squire is also being compared to characters within the sexual satiric discourse of the *Canterbury Tales*. The color red in particular is referenced with sexual connotation in both the Wife of Bath’s and the Summoner’s portraits. In the Wife of Bath’s portrait, red is the color of her face – “Boold was hir face, and fair, and

reed of hewe” – and of her stockings – “Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed” (*CT* I.458, 456). In both of these instances, the color red denotes sexual vigor. As the Wife of Bath does with her vibrant stockings, the Squire is trying to draw attention to his legs with his short gown. The Wife of Bath is a very sexualized person in the *Canterbury Tales*, and the comparison being made between the Squire and the Wife of Bath signals the highly sexualized character of the Squire himself. Likewise, the Summoner is characterized as being very sexual in his portrait, with his “fyr-reed cherubynnes face” and his preference for drinking “strong wyn, reed as blood” (*CC* I.624, 635). Both of these aspects of the Summoner’s portrait are intended to highlight the Summoner’s lechery. The red shade of his face is a symptom of a condition known in Chaucer’s time as alopecia, a form of leprosy that could be sexually transmitted (Curry 45). The color white is also linked to lechery in this portrait; the Summoner has “whelkes white,” or pimples, likely coming from his venereal disease (*CT* I.632). Because white and red are so prominently featured in other portraits as being connected to sexuality, it stands to reason that the same is true for the Squire in his portrait.

Also included in the first half of the Squire’s portrait is a basic description of the Squire’s personality and experience:

And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie
 In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
 And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace. (*CT* I.85-8)

Rather than striving to be a good squire to show his devotion to the Order and the Church, the Squire conducts himself well during his time *in chyvachie*, or on cavalry expeditions, because he hopes to gain the favor of a lady. These lines are paralleled in the second part of the Canon’s

Yeoman's Tale, wherein the Canon's Yeoman explains how he once beguiled a priest into believing that he was able to transmute objects into silver. The Canon's Yeoman jests that no one is happier than the priest when he sees this seemingly real transmutation, not even a "knyght in armes to doon an hardy dede, / To stonden in grace of his lady deere" (*CT* VIII.1347-8). This link between the Squire's military experience and the Canon's Yeoman boasting about fraud suggests that the Squire is fraudulent and uses his station as a way to woo ladies. The first two lines of this passage from the Squire's portrait can be difficult to understand if one is unfamiliar with the Crusade of 1383. In his analysis of these four lines, Alan Gaylord argues that the references to Flanders, Artois, and Picardy are intended to be a satirical allusion that paints the Squire in a negative light. The Crusade of 1383, in which Flanders, Artois, and Picardy were invaded, was an unsavory experience in the minds of Chaucer's audience: "As a Crusade, it was a disgrace to a Christian nation and, as a military 'chyvachie,' a miserable failure" (Gaylord 343). This crusade, though conducted under the guise of the Church's spread of Christianity, was both a political skirmish meant to keep textile manufacturing cities, including Ypres and Ghent, under English control, and a religious skirmish concerned with the schism in the Church between the two rival popes. The Crusade of 1383 involved treachery, hypocrisy, and outright criminality. The fact that this crusade is the only one the Squire has been on and the fact that he did well to impress women means that he is being satirized for being a poor example of a squire and of knighthood in general. The Squire uses the religious fervor and importance of the Crusades to further his own desires, much as Fausemblant puts on the robes of a friar and preaches abstinence and poverty, yet eats like a king.

In the second half of the Squire's portrait, the primary focus of satire is the Squire's behavior and pastimes. This half begins with a description of the Squire's musical abilities:

“Syngynge he was, or floytnge, al the day” (*CT* I.91). While *floytnge* might be translated as “whistling,” especially when used in conjunction with *syngynge*, it would perhaps make more sense to translate it as “playing the flute” if one were to compare the Squire’s portrait once more with the *Romaunt*. During his speech on proper courtly behavior, Amors says that certain behaviors can greatly benefit courting efforts, namely harping and playing the cithern as well as fluting and dancing (*RR* B.2322). If indeed the intended meaning of *floytnge* is “playing the flute,” the Squire’s musical instrument of choice is much more phallic than the other two instruments Amors suggests a lover should play. Taken with the next line of the portrait – “He was as fresshe as is the month of May” – the sexual overtones in the lines become more obvious. The word *fresshe* – which here must also be translated as “sexually vigorous” and not simply “young” or “joyous” – is mentioned in two other notable places: in the Wife of Bath’s Tale and in the *Romaunt*. At the end of her Tale, the Wife of Bath closes her story with a short prayer for “[h]ousbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde,” *fressh* here having sexual connotations (*CT* III.1259). This sexually charged speech parallels the Squire’s portrait, once more connecting the Wife of Bath’s blatant sexuality with that of the Squire. During his speech about courtly conduct, Amors says Amans should wear a garland of “floures as fresh as May” (*RR* B.2277). This is the primary source for the phrase “fresshe as is the month of May,” and there are important differences between the text and its source; in Amors’ speech, it is the flowers that are fresh, but in the Squire’s portrait, it is the Squire who is fresh, further suggesting the inappropriate sexuality he displays.

Reference to *syngynge* also shows up in another portrait in the *Canterbury Tales*, and in this instance the Squire parallels Pardoner. The following lines can be interpreted as a joke about the Summoner and the Pardoner possibly having sex together: “Ful loude he soong ‘Com hider,

love, to me!’ / This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun; / Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun” (CT I.672-4). There are many comparisons to be drawn between this section of the Pardoner’s portrait and the Squire’s portrait. Firstly, in both portraits, singing is used in tandem with a sexual pun. Next, instruments that are blown into to produce sound – the *floyte* and the *trompe* – are both referenced to create a phallic image. Also, the phrase “bar to hym a stif burdoun” can be understood to mean that the Summoner bearing the Pardoner his “stiff walking stick” rather than simply a baritone harmony, whereas the phrase “born hym weel, as of so litel space, / In hope to stonden in his lady grace” can mean the Squire is hoping to have sex with his lady. The Pardoner is one of the most obvious characters who displays both inappropriate sexuality and neglect of his vocation. The Pardoner is certainly not supposed to be a likable character, and his inappropriate sexuality and corruption as a pardoner are the primary satiric targets in his portrait; the fact that the Squire parallels the Pardoner denotes the unfavorable reaction we are supposed to have to them both.

Further in his portrait, the Squire is described as being able to “juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write” (CT I.96). Each of these talents can be traced back to romantic pursuits; jousting and dancing, for example, are called services to Venus in the Knight’s Tale when the people of Athens hold a feast before the great tournament:

And eek the lusty seson of that May
 Made every wight to been in swich plesauce
 That al that Monday justen they and daunce,
 And spenden it in Venus heigh servyse. (CT I.2484-7)

The small scene reflects much of the same language as the Squire’s portrait and links such behavior with pleasure and love. Jousting and dancing are also potential signifiers of

inappropriate sexual conduct, as Chauncey Wood argues in a note on the matter: “the superficially dissimilar pursuits of jousting and dancing are yoked together and placed under the inspiration of lechery” (Wood 117). It is pertinent, therefore, to point to another instance of dancing being connected to lechery; in the Wife of Bath’s portrait, she is said to know the “olde daunce,” or that she knows how to have sex, meaning that the Squire’s dancing skill can also be connected to sexual skill (*CT* I.476). The ability to *purtreye* and *write* are also linked to romance, this time in the *Romaunt* when Amors advises the dreamer to make “[s]onges and complayntes” to move the heart of his lover (*RR* B.2326). The Squire’s ability to attract lovers is tied up in a very specific set of skills, particularly his ability to joust and dance, which are considered lecherous, and to compose portraits, which can be considered a romantic ability.

The last and perhaps most obvious sexual reference used to satirize the Squire is the comparison of the Squire to a nightingale: “So hote he lovede that by nyghtertale / He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale” (*CT* I.97-8). In this passage, the suggestion is that the Squire is so sexually active at night that he does not sleep, much like the nightingales that Chaucer’s audience believed would not sleep during mating season. These birds are first referenced in the opening of the General Prologue: “And smale foweles maken melodye, / That slepen al the nyght with open eye, / So priketh hem Nature in hir corages” (*CT* 9-11). The lines also refer back to the description of the Squire’s interest in fluting earlier in the portrait. Pliny the Elder comments in *Historia Naturalis* that the song of nightingales is as varied and lovely as the flute, further solidifying the comparison between the Squire’s sexual activities and his nighttime preoccupations (Pliny X.43). They also parallel lines from the Summoner’s portrait, in which he is said to be so “hoot” that he is “lecherous as a sparwe” (*CT* I.626). The Squire is also being compared to Amors in the *Romaunt*, who is so surrounded by birds that he is covered with them;

nightingales are the principle among these, as they are the birds that fly around his head (*RR* A.909-915). Rather than the comparison being another satiric jab at the Squire, however, this comparison seems to be much more straightforward. Since the *Romaunt* itself is centered around the quest for a rosebud which symbolically represents sexual conquest, it is unsurprising that Amors is also satirized for valuing frivolous romantic chivalry over militaristic Christian chivalry (Fleming 49). The Squire's portrait so often reflects the *Romaunt of the Rose* because the *Romaunt* itself is a criticism of an overly romantic squire who is not truly concerned with the Chivalric Code.

It may seem as though the Squire plays a minimal role in the *Canterbury Tales* and in the satiric discourse on the exploitation of vocations, but he is the most important pilgrim in this list of ineffectual sexualized pilgrims. While the other pilgrims may share some similarities with one or two of the ineffectual pilgrims, they all parallel or otherwise can be linked to the Squire. Without the Squire, the connections within this group of pilgrims become much more tenuous, making him vital to understanding Chaucer's satiric discourse. The Squire and his portrait contextualize the connections that the Prioress, Monk, Friar, Wife of Bath, Summoner, and Pardoner all have with Faussemblant. While a line by line comparison to the other pilgrims' portraits is revealing, it is also necessary to address the more general ways in which the themes present in the other pilgrims' portraits reflect themes found in the Squire's portrait.

Similar to that of the Squire, Chaucer's criticism of the Prioress is more gentle than his criticism of the other pilgrims who exploit their vocations, and the sexual tone of her portrait also appears more subdued. A prioress was tasked with the management of a convent and with leading the women of her order by example, but Chaucer's Prioress is more concerned with appearance and acting like a noble than with doing her job, details which are strongly

reminiscent of the Squire and his grooming habits. The virtues that she is supposed to show towards humans are instead directed towards animals, and she behaves more like a lady in court than a manager and spiritual leader of a cloister. The Prioress is also directly linked to Fausemblant and the idea of false-seeming in her portrait; her smile is “symple and coy” which seems a strange description of a holy woman, whereas Fausemblant says that he may look “simple e queie,” but he is really a schemer (*CT* I.199, *RR* 12003). This link between the Prioress and Fausemblant early in the portrait sets up a series of subtle hints in the portrait that she is a prioress in name only. Her name, Eglentyne, was a common romance heroine name, and her appearance is very much the portrait of an ideal beauty, much like the Squire. Her portrait, particularly her eating habits, is taken in part from the advice of la Vieille (Old Woman) of the *Roman*, a matronly old bawd who advises one of the characters how to best attract lovers. This includes instructions on how to comport oneself at the table in order to look refined and attractive (*RR* trans. Dahlberg 231-2). The Prioress’ obsession with table manners then suggests that she is interested in love, specifically a secular love which goes against her order’s teachings. The final line of her portrait reinforces the suggestion that she is more interested in romance than she ought to be; the phrase on her brooch – *amor vincit omnia* – occurs in the *Roman* as well. This phrase, originally from Virgil’s *Bucolics*, signals the denouement of the dream vision because it is the final piece of evidence that convinces the guards to allow Amans to kiss the rose, a moment full of sexual overtones. That this phrase ends the Prioress’ portrait highlights the fact that she, as the Squire does, uses her position for the attraction of sexual partners.

The Monk’s portrait is perhaps the first of the pilgrims who are satirized for being false-seeming where Chaucer presents hypocrisy in a more obvious manner. Unlike the Squire, who only uses his status to attract women, the Monk is described as openly disrespecting the

Augustinian code, holding the code to be “not worth an oyster,” and generally behaving in ways that were improper for a monk (*CT* I.182). He does not give a “pulled hen” about the books which state that holy men should not be hunters, and just as Fausseblant dines on good food and expensive drink, the Monk also enjoys a “fat swan” above all other meals (*CT* I.177, 206). Similar to the way bird imagery functions in the Squire’s portrait, these references to birds and expensive meals in the Monk’s portrait call attention to not just his taste in fine food but also his sexual appetite and his hypocrisy. It is interesting that a description of hunting occurs in the Monk’s portrait rather than the Squire’s portrait, where it would seem more appropriate. Hunting is a pastime of nobles like the Squire, not of holy men. The Monk is only able to hunt because he is an outrider, which means he exploits his position as a monk not confined to the cloister in order to live a life like a courtier. The word for hunting in the Monk’s portrait is “venerie,” a word which functions as a pun on both hunting and on sexual indulgence (*CT* I.166). The word *venerie* can mean both hunting for game with hunting for an object of sexual desire, making the link between the Monk and hunting inappropriate. The Monk’s job is to work and study and devote his life to his cloister, and because he neglects this and hypocritically attempts to live the life of a noble, Chaucer criticizes him using sexualized satire. The Squire does not openly disrespect and disobey his Order, but his portrait and its gentle satire introduces the exploitation that Chaucer further develops in the Monk’s portrait.

The Friar, as the next pilgrim within the sexual satiric discourse on vocations, is slightly more exploitative of his status than the Monk, and his portrait directly parallels that of the Squire. Chaucer borrows from Fausseblant’s portion of the *Roman* the most in the Friar’s portrait, a fact which is unsurprising considering Fausseblant appears in the garb of a friar in the dream vision. Like Fausseblant, the Friar wears the robes of religion but prefers the company of

powerful laypeople. The Friar is “biloved and famulier” with the franklins and more distinguished women of his country, but he refuses to have “with sike lazars aqueyntaunce” (*CT* I.215, 245). Fausemblant, in comparison, says that he would rather spend time with the King of France with the poor man despite the fact that he preaches poverty (*RR* C.6178-9). Fausemblant argues that men who are rich are the greater victims of sin, and therefore it is his duty to help those of greater sin (*RR* C.6516-20). Friars were meant to reach out to rich and poor, however, which makes the Friar’s and Fausemblant’s disdain for the poor especially hypocritical. The Friar’s portrait also parallels that of the Squire when the Friar is described as being “[c]urteis... and lowely of servyse,” a phrase which is strongly reminiscent of the end of the Squire’s portrait, where Chaucer the narrator says, “Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable” (*CT* I.250, 99). Ostensibly, this is intended to be a compliment from Chaucer the narrator to the Friar, but it follows the lines which describe the Friar’s disdain for the poor and is followed with a praise of his high virtues. The Friar ignores the most important virtue for a friar, charity, showing no charity towards the sick and poor. Chaucer’s parallel of the Friar to the Squire highlights the fact that the Squire is not as ideal as he first appears.

With her outrageous, dominant sexuality and her manipulation of her husbands, the Wife of Bath makes an interesting addition to the pilgrims who are paralleled to the Squire. Besides her status as wife, she also works as a clothing maker. To show off her clothes and advertise her trade, she always makes sure that none of the other wives of her parish “to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon” (*CT* I.450). In this way, the Wife of Bath exploits a religious sacrament in order to get attention, display power, and increase her own wealth. The Wife of Bath is such a successful clothing-maker that her work surpasses that of major textile cities Ypres and Ghent, a fact which is reminiscent of the Squire’s experience in the Crusade of 1383, the primary motive

of which was to control these important textile centers (*CT* I.448). The details of her outfit are also paralleled to the details of the Squire's clothing, as discussed previously. Her portrait also shares its source with the Prioress and primarily draws on la Vieille's advice in the *Roman*, where la Vieille says she should have emptied all of her suitors' purses in her youth (*RR* trans. Dahlberg 224). The Wife of Bath reveals in her Prologue that she marries her first three husband for her own financial advancement and her last two for their youth and attractiveness. She therefore uses her status as a sexually attractive woman in order to elevate herself and attract sexually satisfying partners, a theme which connects her to the Squire and his portrait.

While the Squire is simply an approximation of an ideal knight bachelor and not necessarily unattractive, the Summoner is one of the most reproachable pilgrims in the General Prologue, and Chaucer intentionally disturbs his reader by using grotesque imagery to paint the Summoner as particularly loathsome. In his portrait, the Summoner is repugnant not only for his sexuality but also for his manipulative extortion of sinners. According to Chaucer the narrator, "a fynch eek koude he pulle," or he can easily swindle people (*CT* I.652). The phrase, which parallels the "pulled hen" of the Monk's portrait and therefore the bird imagery of the Squire's portrait, links the Summoner's exploitation of his vocation with his inappropriate sexuality. He also seems to use his position to extort sex out of the young men and women of his diocese: "In daunger hadde he at his owene gise / The yonge girles of the diocise, / And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed" (*CT* I.663-5). The Summoner is here in a position of power over these youths, since he can report the secrets they have divulged to the ecclesiastical court. Just as Fausseblant revels in occupying his time with others' business so that he can further manipulate them, the Summoner makes a point to learn the secrets of the youths of his diocese (*RR* C.6979-80). Whereas the Squire attempts to attract lovers by boasting of his experience in the Crusades, the

Summoner intentionally sexually manipulates people by blackmailing them. Unlike some of the other sexualized pilgrims, he is incapable of hiding his sexuality because venereal disease has made his sex life apparent in his face. As discussed before the colors white and red, which symbolize sexuality in the Squire's portrait, are utilized in the Summoner's portrait to describe venereal disease. Chaucer vividly describes the symptoms of the Summoner's alopecia and leaves the reader revolted, elaborately detailing his face, of which "children were aferd" (*CT* I.628). The Summoner is an extreme example of the exploitation that is first introduced in the Squire's portrait, and the imagery introduced in the Squire's portrait is further expanded on with the Summoner.

The most extreme example in the sexual vocational satire is the Pardoner, whose portrait features more drastic versions of the same themes of the Squire's portrait. While Chaucer the narrator seems to have fallen for the guise of most of the other pilgrims, he sees right past the Pardoner's false semblance. There can be no mistaking that the Pardoner sells fake indulgences and relics; Chaucer the narrator informs the reader, for example, that the false relic he claims is Mary's veil is really a "pilwe-beer," or pillowcase (*CT* I.694). Though Chaucer the narrator is slow to come to the conclusion, he also understands that the Pardoner is a "geldyng or a mare," meaning he is a eunuch or a homosexual (*CT* I.691). Like the Squire's, the Pardoner's portrait features the use of the word *hoot* to create an implicitly sexual image; while the Squire loves so hot that he cannot sleep at night, the Pardoner has a purse in his lap that is full to the brim with "pardoun comen from Rome al hoot" (*CT* I.687). In his Prologue, the Pardoner freely admits his own hypocrisy, saying that while he preaches solely about greed, his "entente is nat but for to wyne," meaning that he preaches for profit (*CT* VI.403). This strong parallel to Fausemblant and the more obvious sexual overtones of his portrait mark the Pardoner as the final pilgrim in

this sexual discourse. The Pardoner exploits sinners seeking spiritual aid by selling them these false relics, making his offense the most serious out of any of the pilgrims within the sexual satire which begins with the Squire.

The Squire, while he is the first, is certainly not the only pilgrim to be criticized for being a hypocrite and sexualized because of it. He is, however, a most noteworthy example in light of general scholarly neglect. His comparison to Fausemblant highlights the fact that he uses his position as a squire as a disguise, a tool for him to get the attention of women. His hypocritical appropriation of the colors of knighthood and his service in the Crusade of 1383 only serve to paint him in a negative light, showing that he is in fact a reflection of Fausemblant from the *Roman de la Rose*.

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