

The Heptameron Study Guide

The Heptameron by Margaret of Navarre (Sicilian queen)

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Prologue

Prologue Summary

As a group of people are planning to leave the spas of Cauteret, the rains begin. Creeks and rivers are swollen and bridges have washed away, making travel complicated. One of the travelers, the widow Oisille, arrives at the abbey of Our Lady at Sarrance first. Meanwhile, two French noblemen who were staying at the spa have followed at a distance two ladies whom they find attractive. These ladies stay the night with their husbands at the home of a bandit. This bandit's home is attacked overnight. In the midst of the attack, the husband of one of the ladies, Longarine, is killed. Since the two men, Dagoucin and Saffredent, came to their aid, they are invited to travel with the remainder of the group. This group, which also includes Hircan and his wife Parlamente, finally reaches the Abbey of Saint-Savin after rough traveling.

Once at the abbey, the abbot tells the members of the group there are two other travelers, Nomerfide and Ennasuite, who have also taken refuge at that particular abbey. While the group is hearing Mass the next morning, another man who was with them at the spas runs up to the abbey. He is being chased by two men with drawn swords. After he is rescued from his pursuers, this man, named Geburon, joins the group at the abbey. As they are still unable to cross the river as a result of the flooding, the group is encouraged to stay at the abbey. That evening, however, an older monk returns from Sarrance where he tells them of a man named Simontaut who attempted to cross the river despite the strong current. Simontaut is now staying at the abbey in Sarrance. The monk also tells the members of the group that Oisille is also staying at the abbey in Sarrance. The members of the group decide to join their friends at this abbey in Sarrance and travel there the following day.

Although the abbot at the abbey of Sarrance is a hypocrite and not very nice, he does not refuse the travelers refuge there because he does not want to offend Seigneur de Bearn, a powerful man whom he knows is a friend of theirs. The members of the group discuss their condition and decide to have a bridge built so they can go home. Since the building of this bridge will take 10-12 days, Parlamente suggests the group find some structured way to pass the time. Oisille suggests the only activity that has ever helped her to pass the time is studying the scriptures. They finally agree to hear a scripture lesson, taught by Oisille, each morning. Then each afternoon, they agree to tell stories to one another. These stories have to be of circumstances the teller has either witnessed themselves or has heard from a reliable other source. Each of the ten refugees will tell one story each day they stay at the abbey. They estimate they will have to stay 10 days waiting for the bridge to be finished and during this time, a total of 100 stories will be told. The members of this group agree to give this gift of 100 stories to the lords and ladies of France when they return home from their trip. Simontaut is chosen to be the first storyteller.



Prologue Analysis

De Navarre uses her prologue as a way to introduce not only her main characters and the predicament in which they find themselves but also the framework for the rest of the novel. It is by unhappy circumstances that these ten travelers find themselves stranded at an abbey. As a result of severe flooding, they have been unable to return to their homes after spending a period of time at the spas in Cauterets, a town in France. As they try to make their way back home, the members of this group are attacked by bandits, chased by bears, endure hard travels and watch as their friends, spouses, servants and horses are killed by the hard journey. Members of the group are able to find some comfort in one another's presence when they reunite with one another at the abbey of Our Lady at Sarrance.

Since members of the group might become ill or depressed by their idleness while they wait for the bridge construction, the group finds a way to structure days so that they will be able to exercise their minds, bodies, and spirits. They plan to each tell one story a day. At the end of the ten days, the group intends to have told 100 stories. They plan to make a gift of these stories to the lords and ladies of their country once they return home. This plan, therefore, sets up the structure of the novel. It is a frame story where the story of the stranded travelers is the main story or the frame of the storytelling. The stories that the travelers will tell are secondary to this main story and will work to fill out the frame.

One of the themes that the storytellers quickly develop in their stories is that of hypocritical or abusive church leaders. Unknown to the travelers, they have taken refuge with one such monk. Although the abbot at the abbey in which they take refuge allows them to stay at his abbey, he does so only because he does not want to offend a high official whom he knows to be friends with the people who seek refuge at his abbey. Information in the text also tells the reader that the abbot is not very nice and is hypocritical. These personality traits come out to some degree when the travelers decide to fund the building of a bridge so that they can return home. Although the abbot knows this bridge will benefit him longer in the future than it will benefit the travelers, the abbot does not offer any monetary support toward the building of this bridge.



Stories One through Five

Stories One through Five Summary

In Story One, Simontaut tells a story of a man whose immoral wife leads to his downfall. By pursuing a lover, the wife causes her husband to commit the crime of murder against one of his friends. Both the man and woman suffer a devastating ending to their lives as a result of the woman's evil actions. After he finishes his story, Simontaut suggests that it is every woman's desire to torture and kill men. As he talks, Parlemeute realizes that she is Simontaut's female tormentor.

In Story Two, Oisille tells a story of the virtuous wife of a mule-driver. This woman denied her lover even when he pursued her openly. One day the man hides in her house and goes so far as to wound her fatally with his sword. When she is so weak that she can no longer run from him, he rapes her. The lady dies, but in her death is honored as a martyr of chastity. After the story, all the women voice their intention to protect their chastity just as the woman in the story did.

In Story Three, Saffredent tells a story in which a man whose wife is cheating on him with the King, teams up with the Queen to avenge himself. The man puts an inscription on a set of antlers in his home. From this inscription, the King realizes that the man knows the King is cheating with his wife. The King, however, never realizes that his own wife is also cheating on him. After his story is finished, Ennasuite suggests that Saffredent is a ladies' man. Saffredent then invites Ennasuite to tell the next story.

In Story Four, Ennasuite tells a story about a man who goes to great lengths to try to sleep with the lady of his choice. The lady, a princess, fights the man off and is fully aware who it was who has tried to attack her. Although the Princess wants to get revenge on the man, her lady-in-waiting convinces her the man's humiliation will be worse for him to live with than any corporal punishment.

In Story Five, two Franciscan friars decide to rape a woman who runs a ferry service. The woman outwits them by stranding them on two separate islands and then going for help. The people who lived in the village with the woman have fun calling the men hypocrites and punishing until they are rescued by their Father Superior and taken back to their abbey. Geburon suggests that this woman is more virtuous than the others in former stories because she was not aware of the need to be virtuous.

Stories One through Five Analysis

In these first five stories, themes begin to develop. The extensive nature of extramarital affairs is one of the themes that is introduced in these stories. Although all of the ladies listening to the stories vow to keep their own virtue, it is made obvious by their conversations, particularly the one between Simontaut and Parlemeute that there is some affection being exchanged between non-married members of the group. One



allusion that may not be easily understood is the reference to the set of antlers in the third story. During this time period, a man whose wife cheated on him was referred to in slang as a cuckold. These men were pictured as wearing horns or antlers that everyone could see with the exception of the man whose wife was cheating. In Story Five, however, it is the King who refers to the antlers. However, it is the King who is unaware that his wife is cheating on him. The man, whom the King is trying to embarrass, is already aware that his wife is sleeping with the King and is in turn sleeping with the Queen.

The idea of ladies keeping their chastity and virtue is a theme that develops quickly in this section of stories. The stories make it appear that the men of this time period, including men who are friars, are forever chasing women trying to get them to sleep with them. The women must fight, sometimes to the death, as the woman in Story Two did in order to keep from being raped. An opposite opinion of this virtuous view of women is given by Simontaut in his stories. Simontaut suggests that women were created to be tormentors of men. He indicates that members of the female sex were created only to torture and lead men into evil ways.



Stories Six through Ten

Stories Six through Ten Summary

In Story Six, Nomerfide tells a story of a woman who tries to cover up the fact that she has a lover by tricking her husband. Her husband sees past her trick and tells her that he knows about her affair. Although the husband is very angry, the woman manages to get her husband to come back to her. After this story, Hircan and Nomerfide have a verbal argument in which Hircan tells Nomerfide that she would not be able to cover up a wrongdoing as this woman had. Parlamente also suggests to the group that she is aware that her husband is cheating on her.

In Story Seven, Hircan tells about a merchant who covers up his affair with a young girl by attacking the mother. Since the woman is distracted by the merchant, the young girl is able to get away without her mother learning about their affair. In Story Eight, Longarine tells a story of a man who expected fidelity from his wife, while he fell in love with one of the family maids. The maid refuses the husband and finally tells her mistress of his advances. The wife instructs the maid to make a date to sleep with the husband in her dressing room. Instead of the maid, however, it is his own wife who is in bed. After he is finished, the man allows his friend to spend time with the maid, actually his wife. After the friend is finished, the wife gives the friend her wedding ring, believing him to be her husband. When the husband sees the ring on his friend's finger, he realizes what has happened. As a result, he gives himself the public disgrace of being a man whose wife cheated on him.

In Story Nine, Dagoucin tells of a virtuous gentleman who wastes away when the lady he loves is promised in marriage to another man. When the lady's mother learns of the gentleman's condition, she promises her daughter to him when he returns to health. The gentleman asks instead that he be allowed to hold and kiss the lady before he dies. The mother agrees and allows the girl to be held by her suitor. As the man dies, the lady realizes how strong her love for him really was. After this story, the group argues among themselves whether or not women are really capable of being virtuous, or are only so if the men who woo them don't press their case too sharply.

In Story Ten, Parlamente tells a story about a lady who was pursued by the man of her affections but did not give in to him. In this story, a man by the name of Amador pursues Florida, a lady he fell in love with when she was only twelve years of age. In order to be close to Florida, the man marries Florida's companion, Advanturada. One day, Amador tells Florida of his deep love for her. He notes, however, that he neither wishes to be her husband or her lover, but only to show his love by serving her. Florida voices confusion that Amador makes this speech concerning a relationship that she feels that he already shares with her. In the meanwhile, Advantura, falls down a flight of stairs and is killed as a result of her accident. Amador is unhappy as he realizes he will no longer have an excuse to be around Florida. In her attempt to console Amador, Florida goes to his



bedside. Florida is surprised by Amador's attempt to take her virtue. Florida is shocked because she believes their relationship is built upon virtue.

Several years later when Florida faces the opportunity to see Amador again, she hits herself in the face with a rock in order to deform her beauty. When she finds herself alone with Amador, Florida begs him to allow her to live her life of virtue and chastity. Florida must call for her mother in order to keep Amador from raping her. Later, Amador is sent to war again. During this battle, Florida's husband is killed. Amador is also taken captive. Knowing that he must either renounce his Christian beliefs or be tortured, Amador kills himself. At this point, Florida enters a convent and lives out her life as a nun.

Stories Six through Ten Analysis

The most interesting aspect of these final five stories told on the first day surfaces in the discussions that the storytellers have after their stories are finished. Note the differing opinions that both the men and women have of each other and the roles of the different sexes in life in general. For instance, Hircan makes the statement that women are made for men's pleasure. Saffredent, another man in the group, indicates that he believes that any man who was worth anything could get what he wanted from a woman if that woman really cared for him. Parlamente, rebuffs by telling a story of a woman who remained virtuous even though a man whom she loved tried to seduce her. She indicates that if the men in the group have always gotten what they wanted from the women they approached, they had approached only immoral women. While Stories Six and Seven are both stories about men who have outsmarted women, Stories Eight, Nine and Ten all have heroines who have either embarrassed their men or who have denied their men's desires.

Also notice the unusual characteristics of these stories. While some of the stories are very short, some, such as Story Ten, is quite long. This story accounts for more than 5 percent of the book. This is a very long story considering the fact that there are more than 70 stories in this book. Another unusual characteristic of this book is inclusion of unrealistic characters. For instance, in Story Ten Amador is described as being loved by both his friends and his foes. Although it may be sometimes said that a great warrior is respected or feared by his foes, it is rare that one is said to be loved by his foes.



Stories Eleven through Fifteen

Stories Eleven through Fifteen Summary

In Story Eleven, Nomerfide tells of lady Roncex who in her haste to use the outhouse, makes a mess of herself. Her friend misunderstands Roncex's cries for help and calls for masculine assistance because she believes Roncex is being raped. Therefore, Roncex is seen by all, men and women alike, covered in the filth she has gotten from the outhouse. In Story Twelve, Dagoucin tells a story of a duke who is killed because he asks a man under his command permission to sleep with his sister. The man values his sister's virtue more than the duke's life and kills the duke to keep his sister from this type of harm.

In story Thirteen, Parlamente tells a story about a young lady married to an old man who rekindles another woman's belief in her husband's love for her. A captain falls in love with the young lady and gives her a ring as a token of his affection. Instead of accepting the gift, the young lady sends the ring to the captain's wife. The captain's wife never learns the truth about the ring because her husband is killed before she has the chance to see him again. This story elicits an argument about the motivations of why a person does what they do. Nomerfide argues that if she ever received a gift from a man, she would keep it. Hircan points out that some women would only do what the lady in the story had done in order to make herself appear superior to other women. Ennasuite argues that the woman should be allowed to keep the ring since no one knew who it was from. Geburon points out the hypocrisy of this statement.

In Story Fourteen, Simontaut tells a story about Seigneur de Bonnivet. Bonnivet tricks a lady into believing that he is her Italian lover and then becoming this lady's lover because she realizes Bonnivet is more persistent and resourceful than the Italian man. In Story Fifteen, Longarine tells a story of a poor man who marries a rich lady only for her money. Because he treats the lady badly and cheats on her often, the lady soon develops a desire to get revenge on her husband. For this reason, the lady becomes involved in a variety of extramarital affairs even though her husband attempts to curb her access to her lovers.

Stories Eleven through Fifteen Analysis

In this section of stories, Story Eleven is the only one that is distinctly different from the others. In this story, a lady's friend jumps to the conclusion that because her friend is calling for her, the friend is being raped. Notice also that the friend suspects it is friars that are raping her friend. This immediate jump to conclusions that Roncex is being raped by friars indicates that the people of this time period almost expected these supposedly holy men to be up to no good.



The remainder of the stories seem to follow a certain pattern. In each story, a man falls in love with a lady, usually one who is already married. The lady generally rejects his advances. It is at this point that the stories vary. In one story, the brother of one of the ladies becomes involved and kills the duke because this duke wishes to sleep with his sister. In another, the more intelligent man tricks his lady into believing that he is someone else. In this way he gains access to the lady and is able to convince her that he is her ideal lover.

These stories elicit an argument about virtue and chastity. Following Story Twelve members of the group argue about the different ways that men and women view the virtue of women. Dagoucin, for instance, indicates that he believes that if a man truly loves a woman, he would not risk damaging her virtue as some of the men described in this section of stories have done. Ennasuite counters by saying that men will use the subject of a lady's virtue as a way to get what they desire from that lady. In this argument and based upon evidence gathered from the stories, it appears that men want a woman who is virtuous, but who will lay aside her virtuous nature in order to give them what they want.



Stories Sixteen through Twenty

Stories Sixteen through Twenty Summary

In Story Sixteen, Geburon tells of a widow who was wooed by a French gentleman for three years. After this time, the lady was convinced that his love was sincere. The first time they are together, they hear the sounds of swords outside their bedroom. The sword-bearers turn out to be chambermaids. The lady had engaged these chambermaids as one final test of the man's honor. Because she found him worthy, the lady was willing to take him as her lover.

In Story Seventeen, Oisille tells about the Seigneur de La Tremouille who has discovered that a man named Wilhelm has accepted money in an agreement to kill the king. The king decides to test Wilhelm and find out for himself if the rumor is true. The king confronts Wilhelm in the forrest, hinting that he knows the plans that Wilhelm has for him. Not long after this discussion, Wilhelm asks permission to leave the king's service.

In Story Eighteen, Hircan tells a story about a man who is tested sexually by a lady whom he desires. This lady permits him to lie in bed with her and talk, but will only allow kisses, nothing more. The lady tests him again by having him pursue one of her maids, who falls in love with the man. The lady then has the maid wait for the gentleman in bed when it was the lady whom the man was expecting. The man jumps out of bed when he realizes it is the maid. At this point the lady decides the man truly loves her and allows him to be her lover. Conversation after this story turns to the idea of rape and when it is permissible for a man to take a lady who has led him on by force.

In Story Nineteen, Ennasuite recounts the tale of a poor gentleman who sought the love of the beautiful Paulina. When he realized that nothing he could do would allow the two to be married, the man enters the monastic life. One day while hearing mass, Paulina sees her suitor. When Paulina realizes that the man is still in love with her she decides to join a convent. The man is overjoyed when he hears the Paulina has decided to join him in his chosen lifestyle.

In Story Twenty, Saffredent attempts to prove that if a man is discouraged in his love for a lady, he will soon be cured of his love for her. This man, Seigneur de Riant, finds the lady who he loves in the arms of a stable-boy. After this story, there is discussion if a lady so well raised would lower to such as base lover as a stable boy.

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Stories Twenty-One through Twenty-Five

Stories Twenty-One through Twenty-Five Summary

In Story Twenty-one, Parlemeute tells about a woman, Rolandine, who insisted upon remaining chaste until her father gave approval for her marriage. When her father finds out that Rolandine has gotten married in secret, her father renounces his daughter and sends her to live in a secluded castle in the forrest. While Rolandine is in captivity her bastard husband falls in love with another woman and eventually dies chasing his new woman. Rolandine calls for her father who sees his fault in the matter and takes his daughter back. Rolandine later marries and eventually inherits her father's estate.

In Story Twenty-two, Geburon tells of a monk who after a life of virtue began to lust after women. This monk becomes infatuated with a nun named Marie Hereot. Although the monk tries various tricks, threats, cruelty and bribes to get Marie to sleep with him, he is unsuccessful in all his attempts. Marie manages to pass a note to her brother noting all of the things that the Prior had done to her because she refused to have sexual relations with him. In this way, the Prior's evil actions were brought to light.

In Story Twenty-three, Oisille tells a story about a man who believes Franciscan monks to be faultless and takes their advice in all matters. A monk, however, tricks the man and his wife into a situation where the monk is allowed to sleep with the wife. As a result of his unquestioning belief in the monk's advice, the man's wife kills herself when she discovers that she has cheated on her husband. In the action of killing herself, she also kills her infant son. In the confusion following the wife's suicide, her husband is dealt a fatal wound by the wife's brother.

In Story Twenty-four, Dagoucin tells about Elisor, a man who was in love with the queen. When the queen learns about his love, she tests Elisor's love, by having him go away to a place where he would not see or hear from her for seven years. Seven years to the day, the queen is given a petition by a hermit. The petition indicates that the man had realized that although the queen was beautiful, she was also cruel. He returns only to say goodbye to the queen.

In Story Twenty-five, Longarine tells of the wife of an advocate who has an affair with a prince. Unfortunately on the night the two are to meet, the prince meets the husband of the wife instead. He quickly pretends that he has come to meet with the husband instead of the wife and asks for a drink. Despite this setback, the prince and the wife are able to meet that night. They continue meeting regularly after this session. After each meeting, the prince spends a good deal of time in prayer at a nearby monastery. The prince's sister, however, suspects there is something behind the prince's seeming piety. She presses her brother until he tells her the truth of his night time prayers.



Stories Twenty-One through Twenty-Five Analysis

Two of the stories in this section deal with the hypocritical nature of monks and holy men. In Story Twenty-two, for instance, a monk who has been well-known for his virtue all through his life suddenly ruins his reputation through his lust for one particular nun. This nun does not intend to let this monk use her as he hopes to and eventually alerts those higher in the church to the man's bad behavior. In Story Twenty-three, a man who puts his full trust in the opinion of monks loses his wife, child and even his own life because he takes the advice of a monk. These stories address the theme that even though a man may claim to be holy, he is still a man and is imperfect. No man is worthy of the complete trust or faith of another man.

Story Twenty-one differs from many of the stories in this section because it deals with a woman who must keep her marriage a secret. She has married a man not approved of by her father. For this reason, she will not let her husband have sex with her until her father will approve their marriage. When her father discovers the secret marriage, he disowns his daughter. Although the father is unwilling to take care of his daughter and provide her with a proper husband, he is also angry with her when she finds one for herself. Things turn out well for the girl despite this bad start, as she later marries a good man and inherits all of her father's property and riches.

In Story Twenty-five, Elisor realizes that although the lady he desires is beautiful, she is also cruel. Although the queen had intended to test the strength of Elisor's love by banishing him from her presence for seven years, Elisor uses his time during these seven years to realize how cruel the queen's actions were. To her disappointment, Elisor does not pass the queen's test of time. In his favor, however, Elisor used his time wisely and learned a valuable lesson about the ways in which a mean person can use another's love against them.



Stories Twenty-six through Thirty

Stories Twenty-six through Thirty Summary

In Story Twenty-six, Saffredent tells the story of d'Avannes, a fine-looking young man who falls in love with the wife of his adoptive father. Although d'Avannes tells this lady of his love, it is not until the time of the lady's death that she tells d'Avannes of her love for him. After her death, d'Avannes tells the lady's husband of her love for him. The lady's husband is touched that his wife's honor was so strong that she remained true to him even while loving another. In their conversation afterwards, members of the group discuss whether or not the woman was really virtuous since she held the desire for sin in her heart.

In Story Twenty-seven, Ennasuite tells of a woman who tricks her unwanted lover into going into an attic to wait for her. She calls up after him that she intends to ask her husband's permission to join him in the attic. The man begs her not to do so, but the woman insists. Hearing the news, the husband is pleased with his wife's trick and forgives the man, assuming he had already suffered enough.

In Story Twenty-eight, Simontaut recounts a tale about a trickster who is tricked. In this story a servant threatens to tell the lady of the house that Bernard du Ha was teaching the maids to dance. The servant makes an agreement that if Bernard du Ha brings him a ham pie, he will not tell of the crime that was committed. In anticipation of the pie, the servant invites several friends to dine with him. However, Bernard du Ha knows that he has done nothing wrong. He brings the servant nothing but a wooden shoe, sprinkled with spices to make it smell good. Du Ha also tells the lady and lord all about his experience with the servant. When the servant attempts to tell on du Ha, he is again embarrassed because it is he with whom the lord and lady are angry.

In Story Twenty-nine, Nomerfide describes a priest who manages to help his lover trick her husband into believing they are not having an affair. The priest and lady are together one day when the husband comes home unexpectedly. The lady sends the priest into the attic to hide. The priest leans out of the attic looking to see if it is safe for him to leave that he falls out, taking a winnowing basket with him. The priest makes a show of pretending that he is only returning the basket.

In Story Thirty, Hircan talks about a young widow who devotes herself to all things related to the church. The widow, however, tries to rely on her own power to keep her life holy. Through her attempts to keep her son chaste, she sets into action a chain of events that causes her son to fall in love with and marry his own daughter.

Stories Twenty-six through Thirty Analysis

Trickery is a theme that comes forward in this section of stories. In Story Twenty-eight a trickster falls into the trap in which he intended to snare another person. The unhappy



results that the servant gets from his attempts to trick another show that one should never try to trick a person who is actually smarter than himself. The priest in Story Twenty-nine, however, does manage to trick his lover's husband. Although it is the priest's own stupidity, shown by leaning out from the loft too far, that almost gets him into trouble, he gathers some wit and comes up with a good lie to cover his mistake. Story Twenty-nine is also a story about trickery, but one with a more serious theme. In this story the effects of a lady's sin become worse and worse even as she tries to make amends for what she has done. It is indicated in the story that the lady tries to go about fixing her sin on her own strength and without the help of God. In this way, she tricks herself into believing that she has some power over her circumstances. In the end, however, the worst that can happen takes place, her son marries his own daughter unknowingly, and the mother must live with the result of her sin the rest of her life.

Honor is another theme that is addressed in this section. In both Stories Twenty-six and Twenty-seven, the ladies act in an honorable fashion by not allowing their suitors to have their way with them. However, members of the group question whether or not it is really honorable just to not act on an emotion if a person still has this emotion in their heart. It is mentioned by Hircan that although this woman did not act in a dishonorable way, she shows signs of suffering with the sin of pride. He indicates he believes this sin of pride is worse in women than any other sin because it causes them to become concerned about their reputations to the point of being vain. In Story Twenty-seven, Simontaut asks if a woman can really be considered honorable if she turns down the advances of someone whom she finds unattractive.



Stories Thirty-one through Thirty-five

Stories Thirty-one through Thirty-five Summary

Geburon begins the story telling on the fourth day by telling the thirty-first story. In this story, a friar desires a lady so deeply that he kills two maids as well as a male servant and then kidnaps the lady in order to try to have his way with her. In Story Thirty-two Oisille tells the story of a man who caught his wife having an affair and killed her lover. The man makes his wife stay in the room where she and her lover would meet. She is forced to drink from a cup made from the skull of her lover. The man has also hung the lover's skeleton hangs in the room in which his wife stays. One day a man named Bernage happens to visit the castle. As he leaves the castle, Bernage suggests to the lord that he have pity on his wife since she seems so remorseful. The man considers Bernage's words and does take his wife back.

In Story Thirty-three, Simontaut tells about a girl believed to be the second virgin Mary. A wise count, however, determines that it is the girl's brother, who is a priest, who is the father of her baby. After the baby is born, the mother and her brother are burned together. In Story Thirty-four, Nomerfide tells of two Franciscan friars who overhear the conversation of the couple with whom they are staying and embarrass themselves because they believe they are about to be killed.

In Story Thirty-five, Hircan tells of a beautiful, virtuous lady who become infatuated with a priest. The lady writes of her love to the priest, but the letter is intercepted by her husband. The husband writes replies to the wife's letters, and finally suggests the two meet. The lady sets up a meeting, but instead of the priest, it is the husband who is dressed in the friar's robes. As the lady tries to embrace him, the "priest" repeats the word "temptation" and runs from her, making the sign of the cross. The husband takes a stick from under his habit and beats the wife with it. The following day the husband pretends to return home. He finds his wife claiming she has a cold that has affected the use of her arms and legs. The husband tells his wife he has invited the preacher for dinner. When the preacher arrives, the husband asks him to see his wife, whom he suggests is possessed. Sure enough, when the husband leaves the friar alone in the room with his wife, she screams at the priest, and bites and scratches him. The husband never tells his wife that it was he in the priest's clothing.

Stories Thirty-one through Thirty-five Analysis

Of the five stories in this section, three of them deal with clergy. As should be expected, two of these three clergy do not live up to the standard that one would expect from "holy" men. For instance, one friar kills three people, and then kidnaps a woman in an attempt to have sex with her. The second clergy has sexual relations with his sister, then tries to pass her pregnancy off as a second virgin pregnancy. Although the friar in the third story does nothing wrong, the lady in the story does develop an infatuation with

this priest. Luckily, the lady's husband discovers her infatuation and puts an end to her desires in a clever way.



Stories Thirty-six through Forty

Stories Thirty-six through Forty Summary

In Story Thirty-six, Ennasuite tells of the President of the Parlement of Grenoble who discovers that his wife is cheating. In order to protect his family's reputation, the president pretends that he does not know about the affair. Instead, his wife dies after eating a salad that her husband has made. Conversation following this story centers around the actions of the husband. Members of the group debate whether or not his action in killing his wife in retrospect was the proper course for him to take.

In Story Thirty-seven, Dagoucin recounts the tale of a lady who first neglects her household duties, then begins to be overly loving to her husband when she learns he is cheating on her. One day she finds him in bed with a chambermaid and almost kills him when she sets a fire in the room. She warns him that the next time his life is in danger, she might not have the patience to save his life again. They live the rest of their lives happily. After the story, the members of the group try to come to some consensus about the properness of the actions of the lady.

In Story Thirty-eight, Longarine talks about the actions of another virtuous woman whose husband decides to cheat on her. This wife is kind to her husband and sees to it that he will not become sick while at his lover's home. As a result of these actions, the man leaves his lover and goes back to his wife. In Story Thirty-nine, Saffredent tells about a maid who pretends to be a ghost so that she and her lover could have the house to themselves. The maid's game ends when the husband discovers what the maid is doing. In Story Forty, Parlamente tells the story of Rolandine's castle. Rolandine's father had the castle built as a place to imprison his sister. He imprisoned his sister in this castle because he accidentally killed the sister's husband and is afraid she might try to get revenge on her brother for the murder.

Stories Thirty-six through Forty Analysis

Murder is a theme that surfaces several times in this section of five stories. In the first story in this section the husband knows that his wife is having an affair, but does not let on that he is aware of what is happening. Instead of ever confronting his wife, the husband instead fixes her a salad that kills her. Although no one is aware that the man had been cuckolded, he is instead a secret murderer. In Story Thirty-seven, the lady attempts to kill her husband in a fire when she discovers him in bed with another woman. However, the lady wakes her husband and saves him from the blaze. Since she saved his life, the couple lives together happily for the rest of their lives. Similarly in Story Thirty-eight, the woman wins her husband's fidelity back through her kindness. Although the members of the group discuss whether they believe it is more productive to be cruel or kind to a cheating spouse, they never come to a conclusion as to which approach is the best.



Stories Forty-one through Forty-five

Stories Forty-one through Forty-five Summary

In Story Forty-one, Saffredent tells about a friar who attempts to get his way with a girl by suggesting that the girl wear his cord around her bare waist. He also insists that he must be the one to tie on the cord. When the girl's mother learns what has happened, she has the priest beaten for his forwardness. In Story Forty-two, Parlamente recounts a tale about a young lord's love for a common girl named Françoise. Although the lord could have forced Françoise to be with him, he instead respects her enough that he does not force her. The lord gives the girl permission to marry one of his servants. At the conclusion of the story, the group agrees that the prince's actions are as admirable as the girl's since he had opportunity to force himself upon Françoise but did not do so.

In Story Forty-three, Geburon tells a story of the lady Jambique who tries to have a secret affair with a man. She meets the man in the cover of darkness, and also wears a mask. During one of their meetings, the man makes a mark on the back of Jambique's dress with a piece of chalk so that he will recognize her the next time he sees her. Once Jambique's secret is out, she will no longer have anything to do with her lover. In Story Forty-four, Nomerfide tells about a Franciscan friar who honestly tells a questioning man that their religion is built upon the foolishness of women. For his honesty, the man gives the friar double the normal alms. This story sparks a discussion about how far women should go in believing friars and men of religious orders.

In Story Forty-five, Simontaut talks about a man who has sex with a man under cover of punishing her. Since the maid believes the wife has approved of what her master is doing, the girl continues to allow this. One day the man sleeps with the maid outside, and the neighbor sees what is happening. The man notices his neighbor watching and later takes his wife outside for the same action he had with the maid. When the neighbor approaches the wife to tell on the husband, the wife informs the neighbor that the woman she had seen her husband with was her. Because of the man's quick thinking, his sin is not discovered by his wife.

Stories Forty-one through Forty-five Analysis

The discovery of affairs is a theme in this section of stories. These stories indicate there are different and interesting ways in which affairs can be discovered. In Story Forty-five, for instance, the man is able to keep his wife from discovering his affair only because he is smarter than she is. Although the neighbor tries to tell the wife that her husband is cheating on her, the wife will not listen to the neighbor because she believes that it was she and not the maid who the husband was messing around with in the yard. In Story Forty-three, the lady in the story hopes to have a secret affair with a man that she finds attractive. The man, however, is not happy not knowing the identity of his secret lover. When the man discovers who his lover is and attempts to be affectionate with her in

public, the lady uses her power and influence in order to keep the man away from her for the rest of her life.

The theme of story Forty-four differs drastically from the other stories in this section. Instead of dealing with cheating spouses or lost loves, this story deals with the theme of women and the church. In this particular story, a man questions a friar closely about the foundations of the religion in which they believe. Because the husband believes the friar has been truthful when he tells the husband that religion is built upon the foolishness of women, he gives the friar an offering that is double the portion that he generally gives to the church. This story shows how deeply the people of this time period believed that the church and the clergy were affected by women. Since it was the women who had a great deal to do with charitable giving to the church, the clergy would adapt the church to be what women wanted it to be in order to keep the women there.



Stories Forty-six through Fifty

Stories Forty-six through Fifty Summary

In Story Forty-six, Oisille tells of the friar, De Vale. De Vale is in love with a judge's wife who does not like him. To try his luck, however, De Vale follows the woman into an attic. The woman kicks the friar in the stomach, causing him to fall down the stairs. Soon the friar is making moves toward a young girl. Believing the priest will cure her daughter of her laziness, the girl's mother allows the priest to punish the daughter for not getting out of bed. Instead of punishing the girl, however, the priest rapes her. By the time the girl tells her mother what has happened, the friar has already gone away from that town. He is not seen again.

In Story Forty-seven, Dagoucin tells of two friends who lived together and shared everything even after one of them was married. Suddenly, however, the married man tells his wife to no longer speak to the friend. The friend asks the married man why he is suspicious of him, an accusation on which the married man has no grounds. Thinking they have settled their differences the three live peacefully for awhile, then the married man again tells his wife not to treat the friend as she has been doing. When the friend finds out that the married man has again been suspicious of his intentions, the friend declares to his friend that he will make the action of which the married man had been so suspicious come to pass. The man leaves the household of his friend and does not stop pestering the wife until he has caused her to cheat on her husband with him.

In Story Forty-eight, Ennasuite tells of a Franciscan friar who tricks the bride at a wedding party into sleeping with him. When the new husband discovers what has happened to his wife, he goes in search of the friar. The friar, however, has already left the area and cannot be located. In Story Forty-nine, Hircan tells of a Countess who was wooed by several different men. The Countess allows each of these men, by turn, to spend a week in her room. She refers to this time as being in prison. None of the men is aware that the other men have been sleeping with the Countess, they believe themselves to be the only ones. However, one day the gentlemen talk together about their experiences in "prison." As they talk, they realize they have all been in the same prison. The men decide to trick the Countess. They dress up in iron chains and wait for the Countess to go to Mass. When she sees them, however, the Countess refuses to be embarrassed and instead it is the men who are embarrassed.

In Story Fifty, Longarine recounts the tale of Messire Jean-Pierre who isolates himself after the lady he loves refuses his advances. In his resulting sickness, the man receives blood letting treatments. Realizing that she is the cause of his sickness the lady finally allows the man to have what he desires. Jean-Pierre, however, does not realize that his bandages have come loose and he begins bleeding again. He dies in the lady's house as a result of his blood loss. Because the lady realizes she is the cause of her true lover's death, she kills herself with Jean-Pierre's sword.



Stories Forty-six through Fifty Analysis

Troubles in love abound in this section of stories. In the first story, a friar first tries to have his way with a judge's wife. When he is not successful, he moves on to a gullible woman's daughter and has sex with the girl under cover of punishing her. In the final story of this section, a denied love results in the death of two lovers. The stubborn woman is unwilling to admit her love for her suitor until he becomes ill as a result of the denied love. When the woman finally admits she has affection for the man, he is so caught up in loving her that he does not realize that his bandages have come loose. He bleeds to death. Realizing what has happened, the woman kills herself. Both of these deaths could have been avoided had the woman admitted her love for the man from the beginning.



Stories Fifty-one through Fifty-five

Stories Fifty-one through Fifty-five Summary

In Story Fifty-one, Oisille tells a story of a young woman who is put to death by a cruel Duke because the Duke's son has fallen in love with her. Although both the Duke's son and Duke's wife tried to protect the girl, they were unable to save her once the Duke made up his mind that she was unworthy of his son.

In Story Fifty-two, Simontaut tells a story of a cheap man who becomes the prey of a servant who allows the man to steal a lump of excrement disguised as sugar loaf. Believing that he can exchange the sugar for his supper, the man orders dinner at a local hotel. As the "sugar loaf" begins to thaw the man smells it odor. The man soon realizes that he has been the one who has been tricked. Following this story, the members of the group discuss the use of foul language and the ways one should react when someone uses language that offends them.

In Story Fifty-three, a Prince outsmarts his lover's husband in order to keep the lady to himself. After the story is told, the members of the group discuss whether they believe the lady was correct in keeping her marriage a secret from the prince. In Story Fifty-four, Saffredent tells about a man who is discovered by his wife kissing one of the maids. The wife laughs at the sight, and although the husband is not aware that she has seen the kiss and is laughing at him, he stops kissing the maids.

In Story Fifty-five, Nomerfide tells about a wife who outsmarts her husband's intent to sell a horse and give the profits of this sale to the poor after his death. The woman instructs that the horse be sold for one ducat. In order to keep from losing her money, the wife instructs that a cat be sold with the horse. The price of the cat will be 99 ducats. After this story, Parlamente suggests that the woman had done what her husband would have wanted her to do. She suggests that the man was not in his right mind when he indicated such a large amount go to the poor, and not to the support of his own family.

Stories Fifty-one through Fifty-five Analysis

Trickery is a theme that ties these five stories together. Although not the main theme of Story Fifty-one, it is through trickery that the Duke manages to convince his wife to persuade the girl to come back to his kingdom. Story Fifty-two, however, includes a less harmful trick. A man who is known for being cheap is tricked by a servant when the servant allows the man to steal what the man believes to be a sugar loaf. Instead, the package contains a lump of frozen human fecal matter. When this "loaf" begins to melt, the man realizes that it is he who has been tricked. Another example of cunning trickery occurs in story Fifty-five. A woman's husband has indicated that after his death he wishes for the proceeds of the sale of a particular horse go to the poor. Not wanting to lose any of her husband's wealth, the woman forms in plan in which she sells the horse

and a cat as a package deal. The cat costs 99 ducats but the horse only one ducat. The only stipulation is that the horse and the cat must be bought together. In this way, the woman makes money off the sale of the horse, but does not have to give this money to the poor.



Stories Fifty-six through Sixty

Stories Fifty-six through Sixty Summary

In Story Fifty-six, Hircan tells of a old friar and young priest imprisoned because they planned a fake marriage with a gullible woman and her daughter in order to receive the promised dowry. In Story Fifty-seven, Parlemeute tells the story of an English lord who has attached to his cloak a lady's glove decorated with jewels. The lord tells that the glove was the only token of the lady he loved so deeply yet did not tell of his love.

In Story Fifty-eight, Dagoucin recounts the tale of a woman who decides to have some fun with one of her gentleman suitors. She instructs the man to follow her to her room, then has two friends stand watch and call out "Help! Thief!" when they see him coming. Although he pretends that he is not, the suitor is angry and embarrassed by the trick his lady has played on him. In Story Fifty-nine, Longarine tells a second story about the lady in Story Fifty-eight. In this story, the lady sets up a situation so that she manages to catch her husband cheating on her with another woman. She uses this knowledge to her benefit to get her husband to take her to court in fine style just as she wants him to do.

In Story Sixty, Geburon tells of a good-natured man with a wild wife. This wife runs away with one of her suitors and refuses to return to her husband. The woman becomes fearful that her husband will involve the law in her escapade and pretends to get sick and die. Believing that his wife is dead, the man remarries. He discovers, however, that his first wife is indeed still alive. Church regulations force him to leave his second wife and go in search of the first one. The first wife is punished by being sent back to live with her first husband.

Stories Fifty-six through Sixty Analysis

The theme of the hypocritical or dishonest clergy is continued in this section of stories in Story Fifty-six. In this story the old friar and young priest decide to deceive a woman and her daughter and in this way steal the money set aside for the girl's dowry. Although the men devise a believable plan, the daughter and her mother recognize the husband priest at church one day. They later confront him concerning his true identity.

Stories Fifty-eight and Fifty-nine both deal with the same crafty lady. Although this lady's identity is not given, it is obvious that those hearing the stories recognize her by the description given of her actions. In the first story, the lady embarrasses her lover by having her friends help her call attention to the fact the man is coming to her room by calling out "Help! Thief!" when the man comes close to her room. The same woman manipulates her husband by seeing to it that she is able to catch him cheating with another woman. Since she catches him in the act of cheating with another woman, the wife is able to influence her husband so that he does exactly what she wants him to do.



Stories Sixty-one through Sixty-five

Stories Sixty-one through Sixty-five Summary

In Story Sixty-one, Saffredent tells a story in which a preoccupied man's wife has an affair with a canon she meets at church. Although the woman goes to great lengths to be with her canon, and even lives with him for a period of fifteen years, her husband takes her back when she is jailed as a result of her bigamous relationship. In Story Sixty-two, Longarine tells a story about a woman who accidentally lets her audience know that she is telling the story of her own rape.

In Story Sixty-three, Dagoucin recounts a story of a man who rejects the advances of women. In this particular story, the man is happily married. He pretends to be sick so that he does not have to attend a dinner party set up by the King at which four beautiful, young, single girls will be present. In Story Sixty-four, Parlamente talks about a man who isolates himself and dedicates himself to God after his true love rejects him. When the lady learns that her lover has joined a Franciscan monastery, she is deeply saddened because she had only intended to strengthen his love by rejecting him. When the lady realizes that she has lost her lover, she secludes herself in her own home.

In Story Sixty-five, Geburon recounts a tale about a soldier who decides to take a nap among the life-sized sculptures in a stone tomb. When a woman tries to place a candle on the sleeping man's forehead, he wakes, shouting. The woman believes she has witnessed a miracle. The priests, believing they might be able to make money off the tomb, are unhappy to learn the "miracle" was only a naturally occurring event.

Stories Sixty-one through Sixty-five Analysis

In Story Sixty-five, the priests show their real nature by hoping that they can make money from the miraculous coming to life of a stone statue in their church. When the priests learn that the miraculous statue was really just a sleeping soldier, they are disappointed because they will not have the opportunity to make money from this fake miracle.

Although the majority of the stories in this book deal with a man who leaves his wife in search of a new lover, Story Sixty-one deals with a woman who leaves her husband to live with a canon. Although one might expect this man to reject his wife after the way she has treated him, he instead takes his wife back when her lover deserts her and she is put in jail. The man in Story Sixty-three also acts differently from the way the men in the majority of the other stories have acted. While most men are described as being womanizers, this man actually tells a lie in order to keep from having to spend time with women who were not his wife.



Stories Sixty-six through Seventy

Stories Sixty-six through Seventy Summary

In Story Sixty-six, Ennasuite tells about a chambermaid who walks in on a princess and duke as they sleep together fully. The chambermaid incorrectly believes that she has caught a couple of young lovers messing around together. The married couple has a good laugh about the experience. In Story Sixty-seven, Simontaut tells of a couple who are abandoned on an island as a result of the man's betrayal. The man soon dies in this barren place, but the woman lives until a ship returns and takes her back to civilization. She is respected for the remainder of her life.

In Story Sixty-eight, a apothecary's wife almost kills her husband while attempting to give him medicine that she believes will make him love her again. In Story Sixty-nine, Hircan talks about a maid who tricks her master, who wants to sleep with her, into putting on her smock and sifting grain in her place. In Story Seventy, Oisille tells about a Duchess who ruins her own life in her attempt to get revenge on a man who did not love her as she thought that he should.

Stories Sixty-six through Seventy Analysis

Several of the stories in this section deal with the lengths to which people will go in order to get love and affection from the person from whom they desire love. For instance, in Story Sixty-nine the man willingly puts on the smock of a maid because he believes by doing so he will be able to sleep with the maid. In Story Sixty-eight, the apothecary's wife almost kills her husband when she gives him a dose of powder that she believes will make him want to sleep with her. In Story Seventy, the Duchess pushes so hard to learn the identity of the lover of a man whom she is attracted to that she causes her own husband to hate her.



Stories Seventy-one through Seventy-two

Stories Seventy-one through Seventy-two Summary

In Story Seventy-one, Parlamente tells about a saddler named Brimbaudier. Upon learning that his wife is near death, the man tries to take consolation from one of the maids in the room with them. The wife, who had not spoken for days, begins to yell at her husband telling him she is not dead yet. After this incident, the wife gets better and lives for years to nag her husband. In Story Seventy-two, Dagoucin recounts a tale of a monk who takes advantage of a nun while they are preparing a body for burial. In order to cover his sin, the monk tells the nun that God does not consider what they have done to be a sin. The nun continues to sleep with the monk and finally becomes pregnant. The nun asks permission to go to Rome. While on her journey, the nun pleads her case to a Duchess who has the monk be removed.

Stories Seventy-one through Seventy-two Analysis

On the eighth day, only two stories are told. The narrative stops suddenly just as Nomerfide is starting to tell the third story of the day. There is no explanation given for why the stories end at this point. These two stories do however follow the themes set up in the earlier stories. Story Seventy-two, for instance, deals with a monk who does not adhere to his vow of chastity. Instead the monk cons the nun into believing that what they are doing is not a sin. In the first story of this section, the man tries to have sex with a chambermaid even though his dying wife is in the same room. This story illustrates how likely it is for a man to try to cheat on his wife.



Characters

Oisille appears in Various Stories

Oisille is described as being an old widow. She is the oldest member of the group of storytellers. Due to her age, Oisille seems to have been appointed as the unofficial leader of the group. Oisille is the first refugee to make her way to the abbey of Our Lady at Sarrance. Her travel was so treacherous that by the time she arrived at the abbey, she had only one man and one woman servant left to accompany her. Oisille's favorite past time is reading and studying scripture. When Parlamente suggests the group find something to do to occupy their time until the bridge can be built, Oisille believes they should spend their day studying scriptures. As a compromise, Oisille is chosen to teach the group a scripture lesson each morning before they have their round of storytelling each day. The stories told by Oisille include Story Two, Story Seventeen, Twenty-three, Thirty-two, Forty-six and Fifty-one. During the conversations following each story, Oisille often defends the actions of the characters in the story, or defends the group of people being told about in each particular story. The stories that Oisille tells often include characters who sometimes appear unbelievable because they are so good. For instance, the lady in Story Two is so determined to protect her virtue that she is killed by a man trying to rape her.

Hircan appears in Various Stories

Hircan is Parlamente's husband. He is among the travelers who are attacked when they stay at the home of a bandit as they travel home from Cauteret. From his conversation following the stories, Hircan appears to be very jaded and insensitive in his attitude toward women. For instance, after Story Four, Hircan tells the group he believed the lord should have killed the old woman so that he could get what he wanted from the younger lady. Hircan is also very quick to discover the individual personalities of those around him. For instance, after Nomerfide tells Story Six, Hircan tells Nomerfide that he believes that she is the type of woman who would get very worked up if she knew a rumor was being spread about her but would not be clever enough to figure a way to stop the rumor. Hircan has a bad reputation as a ladies' man. Even his wife is aware that he has cheated on her in the past. The stories told by Hircan include Story Seven, Story Eighteen, Story Thirty, Story Thirty-five, Story Forty-nine, and Story Fifty-six.

The Abbot at Our Lady of Sarrance Abbey appears in Various Stories

Like many of the friars in the stories, this abbot who serves at the Abbey of Our Lady of Sarrance is described as being a hypocrite. He allows the group of travelers to stay at his abbey only because he does not want to offend anyone. The abbot knows these travelers are known and liked by many people in high society. His real reasons for



giving the travelers refuge comes not from hospitality or godly love, but instead from a desire not stay in the good graces of other people. When the group offers to have a bridge built so that they can go home, the abbot is happy they are paying the expense of the bridge because it will bring more visitors to his abbey. However, the abbot does not donate any money whatsoever to build the bridge. In fact, the abbot has work on the bridge speeded up so that the refugees will leave and he can go back to entertaining his lady guests as he would like to do. This character fits well the theme of the hypocritical monk, an important theme that appears in many of the stories that the travelers tell. This abbot enjoys spending time with the ladies even though he has supposedly taken a vow of chastity. In addition, he does not have the godly, loving attitude that one would expect a "holy" man should have.

Simontaut appears in Various Stories

In the Prologue of the novel, Simontaut watches as his servants are swept away and drowned when he tries to cross the Gave de Pau despite the fact the river is still badly flooded. Simontaut is taken by a shepherd to the abbey at Sarrance where he is reunited with Oisille. In this first story, Simontaut describes a woman who has caused major trouble for her husband by behaving immorally. After his story, Simontaut refers to women as devils and tormentors of men. It is indicated in this story that it is to Parlamente whom he refers as his own personal devil. It is apparent these two have had relations with each other prior to their time together at the abbey. Overall, Simontaut appears to have a very negative attitude toward women. He seems to believe that females have no empathy for or good feelings toward men at all.

Parlamente appears in Various Stories

Parlamente is a lady who is married to Hircan. She is among the travelers who stay at the bandit's home and are attacked by outlaws. It is Parlamente who suggests to Oisille that the group find some positive way to entertain themselves while the bridge is being built so that they can return home. It is discovered at the end of Story One that Parlamente and Simontaut are lovers. When Simontaut talks about the cruel ways in which he believes women treat men, Parlamente realizes that he is referring to her as his personal tormentor. In the interlude between Stories Six and Seven it is learned that Parlamente is aware that her husband has cheated on her. Parlamente tells several stories including Story Twenty-one, Story Forty, Forty-two, Fifty-seven and Sixty-four.

Longarine appears in Various Stories

Longarine travels away from the spas with Parlamente, Hircan and her own husband. While staying at the home of a bandit, Longarine's husband is killed when a fight begins. Among the stories told by Longarine include Story Eight, Story Twenty-five, Thirty-eight, Fifty, Fifty-nine, and Sixty-two.



Ennasuite appears in Various Stories

Ennasuite is one of the ladies who takes refuge at the abbey after her horse dies while being chased by a bear. Among the stories told by Ennasuite are Story Four, Story Nineteen, Story Twenty-seven, Thirty-six and Forty-eight.

Nomerfide appears in Various Stories

Nomerfide is one of the ladies who take refuge at the abbey after her horse dies while being chased by a bear. Nomerfide is the youngest member of the group of refugees. Nomerfide is very quick to respond to and become angry with remarks that come from the other storytellers. Nomerfide's stories include Story Six, Story Eleven, Story Twenty-nine, Story Forty-four and Story Fifty-five.

Dagoucin appears in Various Stories

Dagoucin is one of the men who follows Parlamente, Hircan and Longarine as they make their way home. When Dagoucin hears the fight in the house next door, he comes to the rescue of the ladies whom he has followed. Dagoucin tells Story Nine, Story Eleven, Story Twenty-four, Story Seventy-two, Story Forty-seven, and Story Fifty-eight.

Saffredent appears in Various Stories

Saffredent is one of the men who follows Parlamente, Hircan and Longarine as they make their way home. Saffredent and Dagoucin go to the aid of the ladies when they hear the fight break out in the house next to the one where they are staying. Saffredent tells the third story, Story Twenty-six, Story Thirty-nine, Story Forty-one, Story Fifty-four, and Story Sixty-one.

Geburon appears in Various Stories

Geburon arrives at the abbey of Saint-Savin after he is attacked by three men as he is sleeping. Geburon manages to wound one of the men. As the others are distracted by this wounded man, Geburon is able to run away from them to the abbey. Geburon is generally fair to those around him when he tells his stories. These stories do not paint either of the sexes in a bad light such as the stories told by the others sometimes do. Geburon's stories include the fifth story, Story Forty-three, and Story Sixty-five.



Objects/Places

Cauterets appears in Prologue

Cauterets is a spa town in France. It is from this town that the storytellers are traveling when they are stranded by rain and swollen rivers at the same abbey.

Abbey of Our Lady at Sarrance appears in Various Stories

The Abbey of Our Lady at Sarrance is the abbey where the travelers seek refuge. Oisille and Simontaut are the first to arrive at this abbey. The remainder of the group joins them later.

Home of a Bandit appears in Prologue

It is in this home that the travelers Hircan, Parlamente and Longarine are attacked by outlaws. Longarine's husband, who is never named, is killed in this attack.

Gave de Pau appears in Prologue

The Gave de Pau is the river that is badly swollen because of the heavy rains. It is because of this swollen river that the travelers are unable to return home and are stranded at the abbey.

Abbey of Saint-Savin appears in Prologue

The Abbey of Saint-Savin is the abbey where Hircan, Parlamente, Longarine, Ennasuite, Nomerfide, Saffredent, Dagoucin, and Geburon first take refuge.

Stories appears in Prologue

These stories are the tales that the members of the group tell to one another as they are waiting for a bridge to be built so they can return home. The members of the group plan to make a gift of these stories to the noble ladies and lords once they return to their own country.



Set of Antlers appears in Story Three

The King in Story Three suggests these antlers are an appropriate decoration for the man's house since the King is having an affair with the man's wife. The antlers represent the horns of a cuckold, a slang term for a man whose wife is cheating on him.

Vespers appears in Story Two

Vespers is the term for the evening prayers said by the monks at the abbey where the travelers are staying.

Whited Sepulchers appears in Story Five

Villagers use this term to describe the two friars who tried to rape the ferry worker.

A Ring appears in Story Eight

When the husband in this story sees his wife's wedding ring on his friend's finger, he realizes it was with his wife his friend has slept and not the maid.

Three Thousand Ducats a Year appears in Story Ten

Three thousand ducats a year is the amount of money which Avanturada's husband was to receive as a dowry for marrying the girl.

Top of a Flight of Stairs appears in Story Ten

It is from this location that Avantuada falls and injures herself so badly that she later dies.

A Stone that Lay on the Chapel Floor appears in Story Ten

It is this stone that Florida uses to injure her face in hopes that Amador will no longer find her attractive.

Convent of Jesus appears in Story Ten

After her husband's death, Florida joins this convent.



Jerusalem appears in Story Thirteen

It is to this holy city that the old man and his young wife hope to travel.

A Crucifix and a Pieta appears in Story Thirteen

The captain gives his lady lover the gift of a crucifix and a pieta as a way to remember him.

A Diamond Set in a Black-enamelled Band appears in Story Thirteen

The captain sends this diamond ring to his lady lover who later sends it to the captain's wife.

Felt Shoes appears in Story Fourteen

A woman tells her Italian lover to have a pair of felt shoes so that when he comes to see her his footsteps will not be heard.

A Cross appears in Story Fifteen

A man has his wife swear to tell the truth on this religious icon believing that its use would keep her from lying to him.

Convent of the Observant Friars appears in Story Nineteen

The Convent of the Observant Friars is the convent where Paulina's lover takes his VOWS.

Convent of Saint Clare appears in Story Nineteen

It is the Convent of Saint Clare where Paulina takes the veil.

Castle Chapel appears in Story Twenty-one

It is at this castle chapel that Rolandine meets her bastard lover so they can talk.



Book About the Knights of the Round Table appears in Story Twenty-one

Rolandine's bastard lover uses this book about the knights of the round table as an excuse to go into the room adjacent to Rolandine's so they can talk.

Castle in the Forrest appears in Story Twenty-one

It is in this castle in the forrest that Rolandine's father banishes after he learns that she has married her bastard lover.

Convent of Gif appears in Story Twenty-two

The Convent of Gif is the convent at which the priest meets the nun named Marie Heroet.

Paper Handed Through the Grille appears in Story Twenty-two

The nun Marie Heroet passes this paper containing the story of the abuses she has undergone at the Convent of Gif to her brother because she has no other way to communicate with him.

Abbey of Gy appears in Story Twenty-two

After the story of Marie's abuse at the hands of the priest comes out, she becomes Abbess of the Abbey of Gy.

Huge Steel Mirror Fashioned into a Cuirass appears in Story Twenty-four

Elisor wears this huge mirror on his chest in order to show the queen the identity of his true love.

Ring Broken in Half appears in Story Twenty-four

The queen gives Elisor half of this ring and keeps the other half for herself so that in seven years when Elisor returns from his isolation, they will remember each other.



Monastery of Our Lady of Montserrat appears in Story Twenty-six

It is to the Monastery of Our Lady of Montserrat that d'Avannes tells his adoptive father that he wishes to travel.

Ham Pie appears in Story Twenty-eight

Bernard du Ha promises to give the servant a ham pie in order to keep him from telling the lord and lady of the house he has been teaching the maids to dance.

A Wooden Clog appears in Story Twenty-eight

Instead of giving the servant a ham pie, Bernard du Ha gives him a spiced wooden clog.

Winnowing Basket appears in Story Twenty-nine

It is with this winnowing basket that the woman in Story Twenty-nine covers up the trap door in the loft.

A Dagger appears in Story Thirty-one

The Franciscan friar in Story Thirty-one uses a dagger to kill the servants in the household of the lady whom he has decided to kidnap.

Drinking Cup Made of a Skull appears in Story Thirty-two

The husband in Story Thirty-two makes his wife drink out of this strange cup made from the skull of her lover.

A Cupboard appears in Story Thirty-two

It is in this cupboard that the husband hangs the skeleton of his wife's lover.

Little Friars appears in Little Friars

In Story Thirty-three, the term "little friars" is what the couple call their pigs.



Pigsty appears in Story Thirty-three

It is in this shed for pigs that the couple finds one of the real friars hiding.

Herbs for a Salad appears in Story Thirty-six

The President in Story Thirty-six makes a salad for his wife with these herbs that kills her.

Arcade in a Garden appears in Story Forty-three

It is in this arcade that Jambique meets her lover.

Chalk Mark appears in Story Forty-three

Jambique's lover makes this chalk mark on the back of her dress so that he can identify her later.

The Pig appears in Story Forty-four

It is in this arcade that Jambique meets her lover.

Chalk Mark appears in Chalk Mark

Jambique's lover makes this chalk mark on the back of her dress so that he can identify her later.

The Pig appears in Story Forty-four

The Franciscan friar visits the de Sedan family in order to get the pig which is their yearly alm.

The Vineyards appears in Story Forty-eight

It is to these vineyards that the lord in this story has the butcher lure Francoise so that he can spend time with her.

In Prison appears in Story Forty-nine

It is the term "in prison" that makes the men who have been imprisoned by the Countess realize that they have not been the only ones held captive.



Iron Chains appears in Story Forty-nine

The men who have been used by the Countess dress up in iron chains in order to show that they are indeed her prisoners and so to embarrass her.

Epistle of Saint John the Evangelist appears in Sixth Day Prologue

The Epistle of Saint John the Evangelist is one of the books of the Christian Bible. It is from this book that Oisille has been teaching her fellow storytellers.

Apothecary's Shop appears in Story Fifty-two

The servant who disguises a piece of excrement as a sugar loaf works in this apothecary shop.

Large Lump of Excrement appears in Story Fifty-two

It is this piece of fecal matter that the servant disguises as a sugar loaf and then allows the man with the fur coat to steal.

Coat Lined with Fox Fur appears in Story Fifty-two

This fur-lined coat is ruined when a frozen lump of fecal matter thaws inside of it.

Horse appears in Story Fifty-five

In the dead husband's will he intends that this horse be sold and the proceeds go to help the poor. After his death, however, his wife sells the horse for merely one ducat.

Cat appears in Story Fifty-five

The cunning woman sells this cat for 99 ducats as a package deal with a horse. In this way the woman gets the money the horse is worth, but doesn't have to give the money to the poor.

A Lady's Glove appears in Story Fifty-seven

An English lord wears this highly decorated glove as a reminder of the lady that he loves deeply but is unwilling to tell of his love.



House in the Park appears in Story Fifty-nine

It is at this house in the park that the maid arranges for a husband, who has been pressing her for sexual favors, to meet her.

The New Testament appears in Story Sixty-seven

It is this book that the woman in Story Sixty-seven takes with her when she is abandoned on the island with her husband.

Spanish Fly Powder appears in Story Sixty-eight

It is with this powder that the apothecary's wife almost poisons her husband in her attempt to make him love her again.

Statue of the Virgin appears in Story Seventy-one

It is when the nun is praying in front of this statue that she realizes that she is no longer a virgin.



Themes

Hypocrisy of Clergy

Although some of the stories in this section present the members of the clergy in a positive light, there are several stories that indicate that not all members of the clergy take their vows seriously. Generally vows taken by men entering the clergy include the vow that one will remain chaste. Since many of these stories deal with men or women having affairs, it follows that these "holy" men are included in those who are attempting to enjoy the company of women. To be specific, it is not only the clergy in the stories told by the group of refugees who are trying to have their way with women, but apparently also the abbot of the abbey at which they are staying enjoys entertaining the women. It is indicated that this abbot orders the building of the bridge to be hurried along so that the group of travelers will be able to leave his abbey and he can go on entertaining the ladies as he likes to do.

One requirement of most monks and friars in this time period is that they are celibate or that they live out their lives without having sex with a woman. It is indicated in these stories told by the members of the group of refugees that these monks did not always take their vows seriously. In Story Forty-one, for example, the friar tries to get his hands on a young girl by suggesting that in order to do penance she must wear the friar's cord bound around her bare waist. The friar insists that he must be the one to tie the cord on the girl, in this way giving him access to her unclothed body. Another example of this hypocrisy occurs in Story Five. In this story, two friars try to take advantage of a female ferry worker. Fortunately the woman is intelligent enough to beat the friars at their own game.

In addition to having a soft spot for women, some priests also seem to have a greed for money. Several of these stories indicate that some priests have an unusual interest in money. In Story Fifty-six, for instance, an old friar and young priest attempt to cook up a plan to trick a woman out of her daughter's dowry. They arrange for the priest to marry the girl, thus getting the dowry for themselves. A final example of this trait of clerical hypocrisy appears in Story Sixty-five. In this story, a woman believes that a stone statue has come to life. Although the priests probably knew that it would be impossible for this statue to "come to life," they had hoped to be able to make money off the incident. Since clergy are not supposed to be interested in money making, especially not by being untruthful to people, these clergy are definitely hypocritical.

Life Mimics Stories

One theme that presents itself in this novel is the idea that life mimics art. As one reads the stories and then compares the circumstances of the storytellers' lives to those detailed in the stories, one begins to see many parallels between the lives of the storytellers and the stories they tell. For instance, one of the ideas often repeated in the



stories is the idea that friars and monks are hypocritical. These so called "holy men" chase after women, kill, kidnap and lie to get what they want. Although the storytellers are not aware, the monk with whom they are taking refuge is no more holy than many of the friars that appear in the stories. In the prologue, for instance, it is noted that the monk is only being hospitable towards the refugees because he does not want to offend the rich and influential people that they know. Later in the book, the monk actually demands that the bridge be built more quickly so that the refugees staying at his abbey can go home more quickly. This demand is not made because the monk is concerned about the comfort of his guests, he instead wants to be able to entertain lady guests as he is accustomed to when he has the abbey to himself.

Another interesting parallelism that can be seen between the lives of the storytellers and the stories they tell occurs when one considers the affairs described in the stories and the relations between the men and women telling the stories. It is known that Parlamente and Hircan are the only married couple in the group of storytellers. Even though Parlamente is married, this does not stop Simontaut from attempting to follow her home from the spa resorts. As the group discusses their opinions about the stories following each story, it soon becomes obvious that Simontaut believes that Parlamente is his own personal female tempter. This relationship between Parlamente and Simontaut is similar to the relationships between the men and women described in some of the stories.

Relations Between the Sexes

Relations between men and women is a theme that is very important in this novel. Notice in particular that it is sexual relations between the differing sexes that is very important. Most of the stories in this novel deal with ways in which both men and women try to get what they want from the other sex. This theme becomes evident from Story One when Simontaut tells a tale about a woman who causes her husband to commit murder as a result of her immoral behavior. It is Simontaut's belief that women were created by God to torment men. In real life, Parlamente realizes that Simontaut views her as his own personal female tormentor.

Story Eight is another story that illustrates the differing relations between men and women. The man in the story has no problem cheating on his wife. However, when the wife learns of her husband's affairs and attempts to put an end to them, she actually causes the man to disgrace himself. The husband believes he is sleeping with a maid. He has promised his friend that he will also let the friend have a turn with the maid. In reality and unknown to both the friend and the husband, it is the wife with whom they are both sleeping. Unknown to the wife, she cheats on her husband. Although it was common for husbands to cheat on their wives, it was considered a great disgrace for a woman to have cheated on her husband, even if the cheating was unintentional.

Another illustration of the way that the sexes differ can be seen in their differing views of chastity. It seems that the idea that a woman be faithful to her husband or lover is very important in this time period. Unmarried women were supposed to remain virgins until



they were married. While courting their ladies, the men seem to be very impressed by the idea that their woman is virtuous. They appear to see this virtue as one of the more important characteristics when choosing a wife or lover. However, as is seen in Story Ten, some men will use the praise of their lady's chastity against the lady. Although Armador praises Florida for her virtue, he uses this praise as a way to endear himself to the lady. He is hoping that this relationship will end with the two of them in bed. Florida, however, denies his advances and will not allow him to sway her.

Style

Point of View

This book employs a variety of points of view. In its entirety, the novel is written in the point of view of the third person. The narrator of the frame of the story is uninvolved in the action of the story, yet knows the actions of all of the characters. Instead of revealing the emotional status or private thoughts of any of the characters, the narrator simply records what has happened to the characters of the story as a disinterested third party might do. This action of recording is seen in the prologue of the book where the circumstances that have brought all of the characters to the same abbey are described. Notice that the narrator gives little emotional input into the story, only tells what happened as it happened.

As the novel progresses, each of the characters acts as a narrator as they tell their stories. Each of the storytellers uses his or her own point of view and own opinions when telling the stories. Therefore, the stories themselves are told from the first-person point of view of the person telling the story. After the stories have been told and the members of the group discuss their opinions of the prior story, the point of view switches back to the third-person narrator. These sections again simply record the conversation being shared between the members of the group. Although the reader gets the sense that the storytellers are emotionally involved in the discussions that follow each of the stories, little of this emotion is shown in the narrator's record of their conversation.

Setting

The foremost setting of this book is the abbey of Our Lady at Sarrance. It is early fall as the travelers make their way back to their homes from the spa at the town of Cauterets in France. As a result of heavy rains, the travelers must wait at this abbey until a bridge can be built so that they can cross the swollen Gave de Pau. The travelers choose to gather each day in a meadow on the abbey grounds in order to tell their stories and join in conversation.

Within the stories themselves, the characters visit a variety of settings. Story One, for instance, is set in the town of Alencon in France. The second story is set in Amboise, also a city in France. When reading these stories, take into consideration that one of the rules of the storytelling game is that the happenings in the stories must have been either seen firsthand by the storyteller, or shared by a reliable source. Since most of the storytellers are from France and Spain, most of the stories will be set in towns or cities located in one of these two countries. There are a few exceptions to the general rule that the stories be set in locations in France or Spain. These exceptions occur when the characters in the stories go to war or go exploring. In Story Sixty-seven, for instance, Captain Robertval makes a voyage to Canada.



Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is antiquated and for this reason may be difficult for some to understand. The novel is set in the time of ladies and knights, queens and kings. For this reason, it seems to take on almost a fairy tale atmosphere. It was a time when men worked to earn honor and enter the "service" of high-ranking ladies. This "service" usually involved some sort of sexual relationship between the two. Marriages in this time period were strictly restricted to occur only between people of similar social classes. For this reason, couples were often married who had no romantic love for one another at all. Or, in the instance of the man in Story Twelve, some men were even married to girls too young to be proper lovers to them.

It seems that it was generally accepted during this time period that men cheated on their wives. Although women also cheated on their husbands, these affairs were kept more private. It is for this reason that the women in the stories often leave clues for their lovers, such as unlocked doors or barking dogs, to show that they can spend time together without being discovered. In this time period it was very disgraceful for a man if it was known in public that his wife was cheating on him. It is for this reason that the man in Story Eight is so distraught when he causes his own wife to have sex with another man without her knowledge. The man who is known to have a cheating wife is often called a cuckold. These cuckolds were thought of as men with a disgrace that everyone could see but that man. Often this disgrace was depicted as a set of horns. This is why the king in story - refers to the antlers in the house of the man whose wife he is sleeping with as being a fitting decoration. The king is trying to flaunt the fact he is sleeping with the man's wife without actually saying so.

Virtue is another term used frequently in this novel. The virtue that is generally spoken of is the woman's ability to remain faithful only to her husband. A woman is thought to have lost her virtue if she sleeps around. Although they may not actually be virtuous themselves, the female storytellers included in this novel are deeply moved by stories of women who have fought to remain virtuous and in some cases have even died in the process of defending their virtue.

Structure

This book is structured in the form of a frame story. A frame story can be described as a group of stories within a story. The main story, or frame, sets the circumstances for the other stories being told. For instance, the frame, or main idea, of this story is that a group of people have been stranded together at an abbey as they wait for a bridge to be built so that they can return to their homes. As a way of entertaining themselves, the group of travelers decide to tell stories to one another as they are waiting.

The main circumstances of the story are set up in the prologue of the novel. After this prologue, the novel is split into seven different sections. Each of these sections represents a different day during which the travelers told stories. Each of the storytellers were to tell one story each day. The goal was to tell stories for a total of ten days which

would yield a batch of 100 stories. The novel abruptly ends following the conversation after Story Seventy-two as Nomerfide is just about to begin her next tale.

Almost as important to the framework of the novel as the stories themselves is the conversation that follows the telling of each story. Each story is followed by a short discussion of the events, people, or actions of the people in the prior story. Sometimes these periods of conversation lead into the subject matter of the next story. An example of this happens in Story Fifty-eight. As the group discusses the actions of the lady in this story, Longarine remembers another tale about this same lady. It is also during these periods of conversation that the individual characters are able to give their opinions of the stories that the other members of the group have told about.



Quotes

"Unless we have some amusing and virtuous way of occupying ourselves, we run the risk of [falling] sick" (Prelude, pg. 66.)

"However, you must bear in mind that we have not yet become so mortified in the flesh that we are not in need of some sort of amusement and physical exercise in order to pass the time" (Prelude, pg. 67.)

"Together with Monseigneur the Dauphin the ladies promised to produce ten stories each, and to get together a party of ten people who were qualified to contribute something, excluding those who studied and were men of letters" (Prelude, pg. 68.)

"There we can sit and rest, and each of us will tell a story which he has either witnessed himself, or which he has heard from somebody worthy of belief" (Prelude, pg. 69.)

"I think you'll agree that ever since Eve made Adam sin, women have taken it upon themselves to torture men, kill them, and damn them to Hell" (Story One, pg. 78.)

"She knew that the lady who had just taken Safferdent's words to be aimed at her was not in fact so much the object of his affections that he would put up with cuckoldry, disgrace or injury of any kind for her sake" (Story Three, pg. 89.)

"But there's always the risk that a cover-up will end up destroying the very thing it was meant to conceal, like a building that collapses because the roof's too heavy for the foundations" (Story Five, pg. 103.)

"It will be easier for me to hear about your little games than to have had to watch you playing them under my nose - though nothing you may do could diminish the love I bear you" (Story Six, pg. 104.)

"Malicious people are often just as good at smelling something bad when it doesn't exist, as they are when it does" (Story Seven, pg. 107.)

"It would be impossible to say which of them enjoyed themselves more - the wife deceiving her husband, or the husband who thought he was deceiving his wife" (Story Eight, pg. 109.)

"From what you've just said, the ladies you've been in love with can scarcely have been very faithful to you - or else you've only gone for immoral women anyway, and think that all the others are like them!" (Story Nine, pg. 120.)

"Those who truly seek virtue do not take the route you took" (Story Ten, pg. 144.)

"I still maintain that no man who loved perfectly, or who was loved by a lady, could fail in his designs, provided he went about things in a proper manner" (Story Ten, pg. 153.)



"In fact the more excuses she is offered for doing wrong, the more she should prove her virtue by resisting and overcoming evil with good, rather than rendering evil for evil - especially as the wrong one intends to inflict on another person often rebounds on to oneself" (Story Fifteen, pg. 202.)

"And so, Ladies, if you are wise, you will beware us men, even as the deer would beware the hunter if it had understanding. For our one pride and joy, our one true delight, is to see you get caught, and to take from you that which you prize more than life itself!" (Story Sixteen, pg. 208.)

"Anyone who can remain patient and chaste when beautiful women offer not only their beauty and their love, but also time, place and opportunity, will surely be virtuous enough to resist every single devil in Hell!" (Story Eighteen, pg. 217.)

"Whenever you hear that a man's taken a woman by force, you can take it from me that the woman in question must have deprived him of all hope of success by other means" (Story Eighteen, pg. 219.)

"I hold the view that no man will ever perfectly love God, unless he has perfectly loved some creature in this world" (Story Nineteen, pg. 228.)

"'I think that was the hardest thing for her to bear,' said Longarine, 'for when a couple are completely united in love, no burden is so heavy that it cannot be carried with a cheerful heart; but when one of them fails to meet the demands of duty and leaves the full burden to be borne by the other, the weight is beyond endurance'" (Story Twenty-one, pg. 253.)

"What you will see, then, from the story I am about to tell you, is that love doesn't change the heart but shows the heart as it really is - wanton in women who are wanton, wise in women who are wise" (Story Twenty-five, pg. 291.)

"Well, ladies, that shows you the difference between a wanton woman and a wise one, two women who demonstrate the different effects of love" (Story Twenty-six, pg. 304.)

"But all your pleasure is derived from dishonouring women, and your honour depends on killing other men in war. These are two things that are expressly contrary to the law of God" (Story Twenty-six, pg. 305.)

"She thought that it is opportunity that leads to sin, and did not realize that it is the reverse: sin manufactures opportunity" (Story Twenty-nine, pg. 317.)

"Thus one can see that there is nothing more dangerous than love when it is founded on vice just as there is nothing more human and laudable than love when it dwells in a heart that is virtuous" (Story Thirty-one, pg. 329.)

"That then, ladies, shows that you shouldn't listen to other people's secrets without being asked and so misunderstand their words" (Story Thirty-three, pg. 343.)



"Those blinded by love believe what they wish to believe and, vainly thinking that nothing but good could come of it, they were married, without anyone but the priest and some female companions knowing" (Story Thirty-nine, pg. 368.)

"Blessed is the man who has the power to do wrong and yet does not do it" (Story Forty-three, pg. 391.)

"But, Ladies, neither her prudence nor her hypocrisy could stop her intimate secrets from being revealed - as you will see from my story, in which the whole truth will be told, with the exception of the names of people and places, which will be altered" (Story Forty-three, pg. 391.)

"The fact is that we found our lives upon female foolishness, and so long as there exists foolish or stupid women in the world, we shall not die of hunger" (Story Forty-four, pg. 398.)

"For just as trusting a friend is the greatest honour one can do him, so mistrusting him is the gravest dishonor, because that means that one believes him to be other than one would like him to be" (Story Forty-six, pg. 409.)

"Husbands often actually make their wives do what they suspect, because a good woman is more likely to be overcome by despair than she is by all the pleasures in the world" (Story Forty-seven, pg. 412.)

"Therefore you may speak freely, for when we recount the evil doings of the men and women in our stories, we are not doing it in order to bring shame upon individuals, but in order to remove the esteem (and) trust placed in the mere creatures of God, by means of displaying the sorrows to which those creatures are subject, to the end that our hope may come to rest upon Him who alone is perfect and without whom all men are but imperfection" (Story Forty-eight, pg. 416.)

"It will teach you not to place trust in the present, hoping that things will remain the same for ever, (but) to recognize that the present is in constant change and to have thought for the future" (Story Sixty-four, pg. 419.)



Topics for Discussion

In what ways do the storytellers' lives mimic the stories that they tell?

Discuss the way in which a frame story works. Do you believe that the frame story is the best way this story could have been told? What other techniques can you think of that might have worked for this story?

Discuss the way in which clergy are presented in the novel. Do you believe the storytellers have a positive view of these men who represent God?

Discuss sexual relationships between men and women as described in the novel. Include specific examples from the novel to support the points that you make.

Explore the idea of chastity as it is presented in this novel. How is chastity viewed by men? In what way is it viewed by women? Describe the differences in the way that both men and women view chastity and the way that they use this virtue to get what they want from each other.

Based on these stories, do you believe it was more common for men to cheat on their wives, or women to cheat on their husbands? Defend your answer based on information from the novel. Include specific examples.

Discuss the idea of love versus infatuation as it is dealt with in this novel. Identify at least two stories in which a character, either a man or woman, was truly in love with another person of the opposite sex. Identify at least two stories in which a character was merely infatuated with another character. Compare and contrast the characteristics of both love and infatuation.