

Lecture Series on
Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*
Book I Canto I: Lecture 3

By Dr. Pooja Agarwal
Department of English and Modern European
and Other Foreign Languages
(School of Languages)

iv

A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,
Upon a lowly Asse more white then snow,
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a blacke stole she did throw,
As one that inly mournd: so was she sad,
And heavie sat upon her palfrey slow;
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milke white lambe she lad.

- Explanation: The knight was accompanied by a lovely young lady wearing a black stole. She had with her milk white lamb. It is revealed later that the lady's name is Una. She is a princess of a kingdom that was ravaged by the dragon, whom she wants to avenge.

v

So pure an innocent, as that same lambe,
She was in life and every vertuous lore,
And by descent from Royall lynage came
Of ancient Kings and Queenes, that had of yore
Their scepters stretcht from East to Westerne shore,
And all the world in their subjection held;
Till that infernall feend with foule uprore
Forwasted all their land, and them expeld:
Whom to avenge, she had this Knight from far
compeld.

- Explanation: The poet describes the lady as being as innocent as the lamb. She was of royal descent. The Lady wanted to take revenge from the dragon.

vi

Behind her farre away a Dwarfe did lag,
That lasie seemd in being ever last,
Or wearied with bearing of her bag
Of needments at his backe. Thus as they past,
The day with cloudes was suddeine overcast,
And angry Jove an hideous storme of raine
Did poure into his Lemans lap so fast,
That every wight to shrowd it did constrain,
And this faire couple eke to shroud themselves
were fain.

- Explanation: Behind the Lady was a dwarf, carrying the basic requirements of the Lady.
- As the trio made their way, Jove, the God of thunder brought about a terrible storm, and the sky was overcast with clouds.

vii

Enforst to seeke some covert nigh at hand,
A shadie grove not far away they spide,
That promist ayde the tempest to withstand:
Whose loftie trees yclad with sommers pride,
Did spred so broad, that heavens light did hide,
Not perceable with power of any starre:
And all within were pathes and alleies wide,
With footing worne, and leading inward farre:
Faire harbour that them seemes; so in they entred
arre.

- Explanation: They sought to seek shelter. The trio entered a shady grove, which had trees with such thick, broad leaves that no light entered the shady grove.

viii

And forth they passe, with pleasure forward led,
Joying to heare the birdes sweete harmony,
Which therein shrouded from the tempest dred,
Seemd in their song to scorne the cruell sky.
Much can they prayse the trees so straight and hy,
The sayling Pine, the Cedar proud and tall,
The vine-prop Elme, the Poplar never dry,
The builder Oake, sole king of forrests all,
The Aspine good for staves, the Cypresse
funerall.

- Explanation: Dreading the tempest, the Knight, the Lady and the dwarf took shelter in the grove.
- There were many kinds of trees, including pine, cedar, oak, poplar, etc.

ix

The Laurell, meed of mightie Conquerours
And Poets sage, the Firre that weepeth still,
The Willow worne of forlorne Paramours,
The Eugh obedient to the benders will,
The Birch for shaftes, the Sallow for the mill,
The Mirrhe sweete bleeding in the bitter wound,
The warlike Beech, the Ash for nothing ill,
The fruitfull Olive, and the Platane round,
The carver Holme, the Maple seeldom inward
sound.

- Explanation: There were many more trees, such as laurel, fir, willow, birch, olive, among others.

x

Led with delight, they thus beguile the way,
Untill the blustering storme is overblowne;
When weening to returne, whence they did stray,
They cannot find that path, which first was showne,
But wander too and fro in wayes unknowne,
Furthest from end then, when they neerest weene,
That makes them doubt, their wits be not their owne:
So many pathes, so many turnings seene,
That which of them to take, in diverse doubt they
been.

- Explanation: Once the storm had passed, the trio left the shady grove, but there were so many paths and so many turnings, that ~~the three travellers ended up~~ losing their way.