

Love & Lust in 'Wife of Bath' and 'Tis Pity She's a Whore'

- **I nil envye no virginitee:
Lat hem be breed of pure whete-seed,
And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed.
And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle can,
Oure Lord Jesu refresshed many a man.
(142-146)**
 - The last time the Wife used the word "refresshed" was in her wish to be refreshed, or sexually fulfilled, half as often as Solomon.
 - Her reference to Christ refreshing people with barley bread, probably an allusion to a miracle in which he fed hundreds with just a few loaves of bread, therefore takes on a different meaning.
 - Or, the wife could be using sexual innuendos and saying that virgins and white break and non-virgins are barley bread.
- **They had me yeven hir gold and hir tresoor;
me neded nat do lenger diligence
To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence.
(204-206)**
 - Here the Wife explicitly connects love to money. She's saying that she has no need to please her husband because he's already yielded his property to her. But she could also be implying that by winning her husband's love, she's won his property.
- **Thou likenest wommenes love to helle,
To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle.
Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr;
The moore it burneth, the moore it hath desir
To consume every thyng that bent wole be.
(371-375)**
 - Here, men are comparing woman's love to hell, which is clearly a negative.
 - We consume love as desirable so, the more it burns, the more it has desire.
- **'He saugh amaid walking him biforn,
Of which maide anon, maugree hir heed,
By verray force, he rafte hire maidenhed'
(line 886-88)**
 - The abruptness and nature of the knight's crime are central to the Wife's purpose in telling the story. The whole of the prologue and tale are about the struggle for 'maistrie'. The knight expresses the extreme form of male mastery through rape; it is the Wife's intention to show the process by which he is humiliated and humbled, so that he can only find happiness once he has ceded absolute control to a woman.