

**Structure**

- 1-20 Prince Arthur with Una and RCK: recital of PA's lineage, education, quest; dream of Gloriana; exchange of gifts and parting
- 21-32 RCK and Una with Sir Trevisan: Trevisan's tale and RCK's angry response
- 33-54 RCK at Cave of Despaire: Despaire's arguments for suicide; RCK's susceptibility; Una's intervention; departure

**Stanza 1** Notice Chain of Virtues which recalls Great Chain of Being, ES's divine order in universe; emphasis on fellowship of PA, Una, and redeemed RCK

2-6 Una's inquiries about PA's lineage and quest (RCK still recovering)

Emphasis on Welsh ancestry and history (River Dee, Rauran hills—ES's compliments to all the Tudors)

Timon (name means *honor*) as principal tutor and Merlin as sometime advisor who creates and delivers marvelous weapons, including diamond shield and helmet with pearl-crusted crest (note parallels to Achilles's education and weapons)

Like RCK, PA ignorant of birth and lineage, except probably heir to king (RCK to discover his truth in Canto 10; Arthur in Book 2)

7- 12 PA's serious wound (an emotional wound), awakening of passion for woman instead of chivalry only: note PA's description of his pride, his disdain for romantic love and interest only in chivalry until dream and wound

Renewal of ES's exploration of courtly love tradition: (a) chaste, honorable love in service of worthy woman (e.g., RCK and Una); (b) passion, devotion filled with obstacles which lovers must overcome—dragons, love potions, husbands, wives, nosy dwarves, villains' tricks (e.g., Tristan and Iseult—especially in Bedier version). See Denis de Rougemont classic, *Love in the Western World*

Courtly love tradition allows for enchantments of potions, faeries, stars, moons

- 12-16 PA's dream of Gloriana, the Faerie Queen: central event in his life, cause of his quest, focus of his honor. In dream, FQ requests his love as already she "loves him deare"

Please read these stanzas closely—poetry is beautiful. PA's dream recalls RCK's dreams involving (a) False Una and (b) False Una and False Squire—but PA's dream of True FQ focuses his life and quest (thus pairing is virtuous and honorable) whereas RCK's dreams lead him astray. PA's heart "ravished."

- 17-20 Friendship of two knights, PA and RCK, and gift exchange

Diamond box containing balm which heals all wounds (clearly diamond =s that which cannot be broken, parallels PA's shield; doubtless product from Merlin to protect PA who has confidence he will not need balm and so parts with it to save RCK (how generous and sure!))

Some scholars maintain balm =s eucharist, blood of Christ which heals all; considerable disagreement

RCK gives PA New Testament—ironically; heretofore, RCK has failed to heed key ideas of NT and soon, at Cave of Despaire, will seem to have forgot all of Christ's and NT's focus on mercy and forgiveness

PA continues quest; Una recognizes RCK not ready yet for encounter with Satan, insists on more recovery

- 21-32 RCK but newly redeemed from nadir, in peril of spiritual and physical death—when PA found RCK in Orgoglio's dungeon, RCK wanted only to die; still a soul in danger, but eager to prove himself to Una, whom he has abandoned, betrayed, disappointed.

Sir Trevisan (name means *three visions* or *thrice seen*), noose around his neck, rides at breakneck speed (OK, pun intended) to escape Despaire whom, he imagines, follows and tries to recapture him; staring, terrified eyes; hair standing on end

Sir Trevisan's story with instance of courtly love involving friend, Sir Terwin (name means *fatigued, exhausted*), and cold, disdainful beloved who drove him to Despaire and, consequently, suicide. Note that Despaire's words can freeze the heart, as did the beloved lady's disdain for Sir Terwin; ironically, the result of this "frozen heart's blood" is the running of Sir Terwin's heart's blood when he stabs himself

Read closely 28 (Despaire like a snake) and 29 (our feeble hearts)

Sir Trevisan flees Despaire though himself half dead with dying feare

Still lacking self knowledge, RCK responds in strong terms: though he has been easily seduced by Archimago, Duessa, Lucifera, others—here, outraged, he immediately asks, "How may a man with idle speech be won to spoil the castle of his health?"

Hasty, he demands that Sir Trevisan lead him to Despaire that he may avenge the wrongs wrought on others like Sir Terwin (remember his haste in entering Errour's cave?)

33- 54

Owl =s traditional messenger of death

Visions of death everywhere, corpses, skeletons, endless evidence of despair

Description of Despaire himself in 35-36

Sir Terwin's bloody corpse, yet warm, and RCK's zeal for vengeance (see 36 and 37)

Despaire's arguments drawn from Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, other Stoics, Old Testament

He should die who merits not to live

He should die who loathes life, who is uneasy living

We must not prevent, but rather help those die who are mired in misery

After death, we may enjoy eternal rest and happy ease

Only a little pain, brief pain—then long ease; sleep after toil

God creates life, also allows life to end—natural courses; God never prevents us from deciding when to die

Death is necessary---why dread or postpone it?

The longer life, the greater sin

The greater sin, the greater damnation and punishment

In RCK's case, "life must life and blood must blood repay"—he has shed blood and will be summoned to pay for that with his own blood

Fickle Fortune can bring him much more woe if he lives longer

RCK needs death (stanza 45) because of his failures, his betrayals, his weakness and luckless misadventures—he could prevent future mishaps and miseries by dying now

His perjury to and betrayal of Una alone warrant shame and death

RCK defiled himself with Duessa, also warranting death

Since God is just, as RCK argues, clearly RCK's guilt demands justice, which is death eternal; better just to get it over with

Stanzas 48 and 49: RCK recognizes his deformed crimes, sees himself a miscreant weak and frail, feels hellish anguish

Stanza 50: RCK fearful of damnation; Despaire presents various means of suicide, and RCK accepts dagger

Still extremely weak from previous ordeals, particularly months languishing in Orgoglio's dungeon, RCK incapable of saving himself, easily succumbs to Despaire. Legal repentance, not true repentance; based solely on fear of justice, damnation. He has forgot, ironically, key of NT: mercy and forgiveness

When Despaire refers to God's justice and alludes to death as result of RCK's sins, he quotes only the first half of Romas 6:23: "The wages of sin is death"; Despaire omits the second half of the verse--"but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. . . ."

Una's intervention: see stanzas 52 and 53. Truth, the True Church remains faithful to the Christian even when guilty and guilt-ridden

Una reminds RCK of his quest: "Is this the battle" you promised to fight for me? And she reminds him of mercy (stanza 53) and salvation: after all, he is amongst those chosen: see Thessalonians 2:13: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in truth." She insists that justice leads to grace, not to damnation—the key to NT theology and Christianity.

"So up he rose"—RCK needs serious healing, and Una will now guide him to House of Holinesse (counterpart to Duessa's guiding him to House of Pride)

RCK's confrontation with Despaire represents a false start on the path to repentance and to justification. Repentance, and thus rebirth in the image of Christ, begins with the consciousness of sin. The beginning of any sinner's conversion is an especially crucial period. He will need careful, full treatment and healing in the House of Holinesse before facing Satan and completing his quest in Una's service.

John Calvin: "Consciousness of sin may lead to 'legal repentance' or to 'true repentance.' The sinner, wounded by the envenomed dart of sin and harassed by the fear of divine wrath, is involved in deep distress, without the power of extricating himself from knowledge of the greatness of his sins. Such men dread divine wrath, but by their considering God only as an avenger and a judge, they perished under that apprehension, and their repentance, therefore, was only, as it were, the antechamber of hell."

John Calvin: "We must not be overwhelmed by sorrow for sin, for to nothing are terrified consciences more liable than to fall into despair . . . and whatever Satan perceives to be dejected by a fear of God, he plunges further and further into the deep gulf of sorrow that they may never rise again."