



A Finished Man

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The poem has five stanzas of four iambic pentameter lines each in rhymed couplets, allowing the poem a style well suited for gentle satire, for which Wilbur's familiarity with Molière suits him. In the poem, an old and wealthy man reminisces during the dedication ceremony of a college gymnasium named after him. The poem's title plays with the connotations of the word "finished." The old man's wealth and prestige have brought him to a highly polished "finish" like a statue. He can even feel "the warm sun sculpt his cheek." His vanity shows in his hope that with time and money "he may be perfect yet." Yet "finished" can also mean that old man's life is over and done.

The poem's first three stanzas relate some embarrassing past incident of the old man's life, whether being "caught . . . in a lie" or being laughed at for an "appalling gaffe." These incidents still rankle the old man and lessen his self-esteem. He is delighted to have outlived the people who have seen him in a bad light. Wilbur suggests, however, that the old man is insecure. In old age, youthful embarrassments still have a hold on him.

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