

THE REPRESENTATION OF WEALTH
IN
CHAUCER'S "CANTEBURY TALES"

BY

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THE REPRESENTATION OF REALITY

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BY

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CERTIFICATION:

I certify that this dissertation is my
own work and has not been submitted
to any other University.

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SUMMARY OF
THE REPRESENTATION OF REALITY IN CHAUCER'S "CANTERBURY TALES"

By

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THE REPRESENTATION OF REALITY IN CHAUCER'S "CANTERBURY TALES."

This study has been made in terms of the 'figural' interpretation of reality, in accordance with Erich Auerbach's definition:

" I use the term figural to identify the conception of reality in late antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages . . . In this conception, an occurrence on earth signifies not only itself, but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms, without prejudice to the power of its concrete reality here and now. The connection between occurrences is not regarded primarily as a chronological or causal development, but as a oneness within the divine plan, of which all occurrences are parts or reflections."

(My Italics.)

Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*; Anchor Books, New York, 1957; p. 490.

The Canterbury pilgrimage is represented in a 'figural' sense. Not only is it a pilgrimage from London to the shrine of St. Thomas Beckett in Canterbury, made allegedly in a certain year of Chaucer's historical life, but it is as well a spiritual pilgrimage between the two cities described by St. Augustine, one founded on Christian 'caritas' and the other on self-love or 'cupiditas'. At the same time, the journey is a figure for the life of man, which is in this view a pilgrimage through the world to 'Jerusalem celestial' his heavenly home. Earthly life is a form of exile from this 'domum . . . aeternam in caelis'. The spiritual aspect of the pilgrimage, which is treated significantly by Boethius in his *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, is exemplified by the Parson in his Prologue and Tale at the conclusion of the journey.

Five of the Canterbury Tales have been considered from this point of view: the Knight's, the Franklin's, the Physician's and Pardoner's (considered together), and the Nun's Priest's. In each study the Parson's Tale has been used as a frame of reference.

Under the heading of Order in the Knight's Tale and the Franklin's Tale, the discussion of these two Tales is intended to show that in each case

the universe is that described by Boethius in his philosophical work

De Consolatione Philosophiae, which Chaucer translated into English.

The chief characteristics of the Boethian universe are wholeness and order. Whatever does not submit to the order imposed by the 'faire cheyne of love', originating from God, that binds the universe 'in accordable feith by faire moevinges', in so doing forfeits its very existence. Hence the love which will not be governed by any law -- the mad passion supposedly inspired by the arrows of Cupid, the pagan god of love -- is no more than an illusion. The effects of this illusion are opposed in the two Tales under discussion to the reality, the ordered universe ruled by the love of God, identified with the Christian 'caritas'. In the Knight's Tale the love of Palamon and Arcite for Emelye is discussed in these terms. Chaucer has emphasised the association of Emelye with the goddess Diana, particularly in her form as Proserpina, Queen of the Underworld -- the world of unreality, of chaos, fragmentation and eternal darkness which is set against the real universe, orderly, whole and lit by the love of God as the earth by the sun. The Christian idea of hell enters into both the Knight's Tale and the Franklin's, and is discussed with reference to the Parson's Tale, in which the sufferings of the damned are graphically described. The pangs of the 'love' inspired by Cupid are identified with the pains of hell. Chaucer has shown in particular that the effect of this love is to divide and to split asunder -- as the bonds of kinship and blood brotherhood between Palamon and Arcite were severed by their common passion for Emelye. A comparison of Emelye with St. Cecile, the subject of the Second Nun's Tale, makes clear the difference between the 'caritas' by which St. Cecile united two brothers to herself in mutual love, and the 'cupiditas' by which Emelye divided two sworn 'brothers', while herself remaining indifferent to both of them.

The love of Aurelius for Dorigen in the Franklin's Tale is of the same nature as that of Palamon and Arcite for Emelye, and involves the same underlying assumptions. In discussing the Franklin's Tale the work of Andreas Capellanus on courtly love is quoted as a text of its conventions. The Franklin's Tale deals overtly with illusion, and the form of the Tale is such that the narrator, the Franklin, is himself presented as being deluded because of his 'Epicurean' belief that 'pleyn delit is verraily

'felicitee parfyt'. In Boethian terms 'felicitee parfyt' or 'perfect blissfulness' (which has the senses both of 'happiness' and 'blessedness') resides only in God, and is the sum total of all the things that men desire. The 'pleyn delyt' that the Franklin mistakes for perfect bliss is but a fragment of true bliss. With such a view of life, it follows that his view of the Tale he tells is likely also to be a fragmentary one. This proves in fact to be so. The Franklin's attitude towards his own Tale contrasts with the Knight's view of his Tale, for the Knight, a man of perfect integrity, is by this token able to distinguish between illusion and reality. Theseus in the Knight's Tale plays a role corresponding with that of the Knight in the pilgrimage framework of the Tales, and his presence there is a reflection of the pilgrim-narrator's own sense of the wholeness of the divine plan.

The Pardoner's and Physician's Tales are discussed under the heading of Fertility and Sterility in the Physician's and Pardoner's Tales. One of the characteristics of all living creatures, as Boethius explains, is that they desire to live as long as they may, and to perpetuate their own lives by generation and multiplication. The Physician's and Pardoner's Tales are linked by this concept. The Pardoner is presented as a eunuch in a dual sense. Not only is he incapable of physical procreation, but he is spiritually infertile as well. It is in this sense that Virginia, the heroine of the Physician's Tale, is his opposite. She is a young girl who has dedicated herself to chastity and to virtuous life, and who accepts death rather than dishonour. There is a strong parallel between Virginia and the pattern of Christian virtue and dedicated virginity described in St. Jerome's letter to Eustochium, De Custodia Virginitatis. Virginia is the type of the 'eunuchus dei', while the Pardoner is the epitome of the 'eunuchus non dei'. Virginia's chastity is spiritually fruitful, while the Pardoner's impotence is associated with spiritual barrenness and death. The Pardoner's Tale of three evil men who set out in search of Death and find it, assumes another dimension in this perspective. The Pardoner himself is the inverse of the Parson, who in his Tale guides men along the path of Penitence to the 'Tree of Life'. The Pardoner, ironically so styled, directs men along

the path of impenitence which he himself treads, to the 'tree of death' that figures in his Tale. The relationship of the Pardoner to Faux-Semblant in the Roman de la Rose is discussed, and also the connection between significant passages of the Roman and both the Pardoner's and the Physician's Tales. These passages deal particularly with the concept of 'multiplication', both spiritual and physical. Just as the Parson in his spiritual 'fructuousnesse' is a 'propre man', so the Pardoner represents an extremity of perversion in that the only sense in which he can be fruitful and multiply is the material one.

In dealing with the Nun's Priest's Tale the De Consolatione Philosophiae has again been taken as a starting point for discussion:

"(Men) have hir eien so wont to the derknesse of earthly thinges that they ne may nat lyften hem up to the light of cler sothfastnesse, for thei ben lyk to briddes of which the night lighten hir lokynge and the day blendeth hem." (Book IV, Pr. 4)

In this Tale the dream of Chauntecleer the Cock, which is a genuine warning of a danger that lies ahead, is a glimpse of 'cler sothfastnesse' granted him in his sleep, although in the daytime he is distracted -- 'blended' -- by his ordinary pleasures and chooses to ignore the warning. One of the central concerns of this Tale is seeing in the sense of spiritual vigilance. The Cock is used emblematically in mediaeval art to represent this quality, because a cock crowed when St. Peter denied Christ. In the Nun's Priest's Tale spiritual vigilance is opposed to the vice of 'negligence, or reccheleesnesse', against which the Nun's Priest warns his audience at the conclusion of the Tale. The Fox too has emblematic significance, as mediaeval bestiaries explain. He is a symbol of the devil, the evil tempter who lies in wait to deceive the unwary with his flattery and guile.

The first of the 'exempla' adduced by Chauntecleer in support of his contention that he should fear his dream has been interpreted in the present study as a doctrinal 'nucleus' of the Tale. This 'exemplum' bears a relationship to the Gospel narrative of Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, which preceded the three denials of Peter. The watchword

vigilate, et orate, ut non iniretis in tentationem. Spiritus uidem promptus, caro autem infirma' is from this point of view a pivot about which the Tale revolves. Simultaneously it expounds the doctrine that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; the 'drede' of God is the 'remedie' advocated in the Parson's Tale against the sin of 'negligence, or recchelesnesse'. The question of free will, as it is discussed in the Nun's Priest's Tale, is involved in this doctrine. The resolution of the problem of free will is embodied in the 'povre widwe' who owns Chauntecleer and his wives, and whose humble and godly life in Christian abstinence and 'hertes suffisaunce' is described in the opening lines of the Tale. In the portrait of the widow Chaucer has exemplified the voluntary submission of the will of man to God's will -- the 'drede of god' that is the beginning of wisdom. It was because Chauntecleer allowed his natural 'drede' of the Fox to be overcome by his pleasure in his enemy's flattery -- because he 'wynked' when he should have seen, 'al wilfully' -- that he was caught and almost brought to grief. The portrait of the widow stems largely from a source hitherto unnoticed for this Tale, the Adversus Iovinianum of St. Jerome, from the part of it in which St. Jerome counters the Jovinian heresy that those who have been baptised in full faith cannot again be turned aside by the devil. The Tale is a 'figural' presentation of St. Jerome's reply, that no one is safe from temptation, that the Christian must at all times be vigilant in spirit, for though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.

In conclusion, it can be said that each of the Canterbury Tales that has been studied is constructed as a 'cortex' intended to convey an inner 'nucleus' of meaning in which Chaucer depicts his conception of an ultimate reality. Each bears out the avowal made by Chaucer himself in his 'retracciouns' at the end of the Tales, that

"Al that is written is written for our doctrine,
and that is myn entente."

(Parson's Tale, X(1) 1083.)

THE REPRESENTATION OF REALITY IN CHAUCER'S "CANTERBURY TALES".

"Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
 The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour
 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
 Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
 Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
 And smale foweles maken melodye,
 That slopen al the nyght with open ye
 (So priketh hem nature in hir corages);
 Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
 And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
 To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
 And specially from every shires ende
 Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
 The hooly blisful martir for to seke..." (I(A) 1-16) (i)

In describing the start of the Pilgrimage to Canterbury, Chaucer could assume a dual response in the minds of his audience. Spring in the earthly cycle would naturally be associated with Lent in the calendar of the Church. The seasonal renewal of fecundity and growth in the world corresponds with the celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead, and brings with it a sense of spiritual re-awakening in the 'corage' of man in response to his earthly environment. The barren drought of March is 'perced to the rote' by the generative force of April's 'shoures sote', descending like heavenly grace to impregnate the earth with 'vertu' which flowers both in the soil and in the soul. Nature celebrates the anniversary of the Creation -- 'The month in which the world bigan, That highte March'; Zephirus 'inspires' the fields like a creating deity breathing life into clay, bringing forth the hope of fruitful harvest. The 'yonge' runs, like an impetuous lover, through the sign of the Ram, symbol of fiery lust, while

(i) All quotations from Chaucer's works are from the Complete Works edited by F. N. Robinson; London, Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 1957.

the birds -- Yeats' 'dying generations' -- sing all night in their own response to the irresistible 'priking' of nature.

In this context, and 'in that seson' of pulsing life and renewal of growth, men turn eagerly to the hope of spiritual renewal offered by Lenten fasting and penitence, and by pilgrimage:

"The pilgrimage is set down in the calendar of seasons as well as in the calendar of piety; nature impels, and supernature draws. 'Go, go, go,' says the bird; 'Come,' says the saint." (ii)

The journey to Canterbury is undertaken in a dual sense:

"Any pilgrimage during the Middle Ages.... was ideally a figure for the pilgrimage of the Christian soul through the world's wilderness toward the celestial Jerusalem. The pilgrimage of the soul was not in itself a journey from place to place, but an inner movement between the two cities so vividly described by St. Augustine, one founded on charity, and the other on cupidity. Love moved the pilgrim's feet, and determined the direction of his journey."

D.W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer;
Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963; p. 273

Saint Augustine uses the image of the 'peregrinus', unable to find peace or happiness as long as he is kept from his native country. He compares to this 'peregrinus' the Christian in his earthly life, whose sole aim is to reach his home after the weary journey: 'aedificatiōem ex Deo habemus, domum non manufactam, aeternam in caelis' (II Cor. 5, 1). His life on earth, in fact, is a pilgrimage, a journey to a certain goal; the journey is the means by which he may at last attain his ultimate object. The essential reality is in the goal of the journey, but the way is made significant by that to which it leads. 'Cum ergo ipsa (Deus) sit patria, viam se quoque

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- (ii) Arthur W. Hoffman, Chaucer's Prologue to Pilgrimage: the Two Voices; reprinted in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, edited by Edward Wagenknecht; New York, Oxford University Press, 1959.

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nobis/.....

nobis fecit ad patriam." (iii) This is the basic assumption in an understanding of what constitutes reality in Chaucer's work. It is perhaps best expressed in a passage from St. Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana:

"Quomodo ergo, si essemus peregrini, qui beate vivere nisi in patria non possemus, eaque peregrinatione utique miseri et miseriam finire cupientes, in patriam redire vellemus, opus esset vel terrestribus vel marinis vehiculis quibus utendum esset ut ad patriam, qua fruendum erat, pervenire, veleremus; quod si amoenitates fineris, et ipsa gestatio vehiculorum nos delectaret, et conversi ad fruendum his quibus uti debuimus, nollemus cito viam finire, et perversa suavitate implicati alienaremur a patria, cuius suavitas faceret beatos: sic in huius mortalitatis vita peregrinantes a Domino, si redire in patriam volumus, ubi beati esse possimus, utendum est hoc mundo, non fruendum; ut invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciantur, hoc est, ut de corporalibus temporalibusque rebus aeterna et spiritualia capiamus." (Lib. I, Cap. IV.)

Quoting from St. Paul (Rom. I, xviii-xx), St. Augustine explains that the events of this life are to be understood by the Christian as manifestations of a hidden reality which is invisible to man in his state of exile. The image of the 'peregrinus' is itself used by St. Paul, as when, having spoken of the faith of the patriarchs, he concludes:

"Iuxta fidem defuncti sunt omnes isti, non acceptes repromissionibus, sed a longe eas aspicientes, et salutantes, et confitentes quia peregrini et hospites sunt super terram. Qui enim haec dicunt, significant se patriam inquirere. Et si quidem ipsius meminissent de qua exierunt, habebant utique tempus revertendi: nunc autem meliorem appetunt, id est, caelestem. Ideo non confunditur Deus vocari Deus eorum: paravit enim illis civitatem." (Heb. 11, xiii-xvi.)

(iii) St. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana; Lib. I, Cap. 11. Obras de San Agustín en edición bilingüe; Tomo XV; edición preparada por Fr. Balbino Martín, O. S. A.; Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid, MCMLVII.

When Chaucer tells of the Pilgrims sheltering overnight at Harry Bailey's inn in Southwark, and setting out for the shrine of St. Thomas next day, he is speaking of man, 'hospes', earth-bound only temporarily, and 'peregrinus', embarking on his journey through life: travelling onwards to a destination 'aeternam in caelis', lying outside the bounds of time and beyond this world. The present study is a series of projections of the ultimate reality which Chaucer, in his artist's attempt of the divine act of creation, was seeking to express. In creating his artificial world of 'sondry folk' Chaucer was making manifest the 'invisibilia... per ea quae facta sunt', and in choosing a pilgrimage setting he was dramatising the spiritual pilgrimage described by St. Augustine and by his beloved mentor, Boethius, in the De Consolatione Philosophiae.

The full significance of the Canterbury pilgrimage is not explicitly stated until the framework is completed in the Parson's Prologue and Tale:

"I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose
To knytte up al this feeste, and make an ende,
And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende
To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage
That highte Jerusalem celestial." (X (I) 46-51)

The 'parfit glorious pilgrymage' is described in the same imagery of fertility, procreation and growth as the springtime setting into which the pilgrims are first introduced. The love of God offers to the soul the same hope of renewal as the spring rains bring to the earth. A seed lies dormant in the soul --

"...a seed of grace, the which seed is rooder
of sikernesse, and this seed is egre and hoot.
The grace of this seed spryngeth of God thurgh
remembrance of the day of doom and on the
peynes of helle... The heete of this seed is
the love of God, and the desdryng of the joye
perdurable. This heete draweth the herte of a
man to God." (X (I) 117-120)

Through Penitence, a road 'f- noble... and ful coverable, which may nat faile to man ne to wo man, that thurgh sinne hath misgo to the righte way of Jerusalem ca stial', the seed may be brought to growth and fructioun, and the pi rim may attain the goal of all pilgrimages, and the desired fruit of all Christian lives:

"Thanne shal men understonde what is the fruyt of penauce; and, after the word of Jhesu Crist, it is the endeles blisse of hevene, ther joye hath no contrariouste of wo ne grevaunce; ther alle harmes been passed of this present lyf..." (X (I) 1076-77)

The pilgrimage framework connects two events. The first is the actual pilgrimage made, as Chaucer tells it, in the springtime of a certain year of his historical life. This is the journey documented in the General Prologue and in the links between the Tales. The second, a double event, is 'figural' (iv): it is the journey every man makes between birth and death 'in this viage', on this earth, and the parallel journey made by his soul along the 'weyes espiituels that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and to the regne of glorie', or alternatively, away from God to

"the lond of mysege and of derknasse, wher as ther is noon ordre or ordinaunce, but gria drede that evere shal laste." (X (I) 177)

This 'figural' event shows plainly through the teasing facundity in nature evoked by the opening lines, with their matter-of-course progression from the physical to the spiritual: 'Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages...' In the final assessment, made at length by the Parson, the ultimate reality

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- (iv) "I use the term *figural* to identify the conception of reality in late antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages... In this conception, an occurrence on earth signifies not only itself, but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms, without prejudice to the power of its concrete reality here and now. The connection between occurrences is not regarded primarily as a chronological or causal development, but as a oneness within the divine plan, of which all occurrences are parts or reflections." Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*; Anchor Books, New York, 1957; p. 490.

lies beyond the events we 'see' and hear about as the journey progresses and as the Pilgrims tell their Tales. The actual pilgrimage, whether historical or otherwise, is but the 'cortex' or surface, which serves to indicate the inner meaning, the 'nucleus'.

The Parson as he is described in the General Prologue is a 'mirror' in the mediaeval sense of 'pattern of perfection': he is a 'good man... of religioun', poor in the material sense, but 'riche... of hooly thoght and werk'; one who taught 'Cristes loore... but first he folwed it hymself'. His Tale, a full-blown sermon upon Penitence, with an exposition of the Seven Deadly Sins, is a plain statement of the moral values assumed in the artist's conception, and I have therefore found it appropriate, in considering other Tales and their tellers, to refer to this Tale as a kind of 'rewle', since its position, attribution and presentation seem to confirm that Chaucer intended it so to be regarded (v).

Chaucer has crowned his unfinished masterpiece with a Tale that 'not only epitomises the Canterbury Tales; it fittingly serves to cap all of Chaucer's poetry.' (vi). I have included a study of the Nun's Priest's Tale because even the most tentative effort to touch the 'veritas de re' in the Tales must fail without a consideration of it. In epitomising the whole work this Tale, of all others, expresses the 'figural' interpretation of reality as well as ever it has been done.

"The here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and which will be fulfilled in the future; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omni-temporal, something already consummated in the realm of fragmentary earthly event."

Auerbach, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

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- (v) L. Chaskalson, The Place of the Parson's Tale in the Structure of the 'Canterbury Tales'; unpublished dissertation; University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1966.
- (vi) Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition; University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles; 1964; p. 238.

"That the world with stable feyth varieth accordable chaungynges; that the contrarious qualites of elementz holden among hemself allyaunce perdurable;... al this accordaunce of thynges is bounde with love, that governeth erthe and see, and hath also comendement to the hevене. And yif this love slakede the bridelis, alle thynges that now loven hem togidres wolden make batayle continually, and striven to fordo the fassoun of this world, the which they now leden in accordable feith by fayre moevynges. This love halt togidres oeples joyned with an holy boond, and knytteth sacrament of mariages of chaste loves; and love enditeth lawes to trewe felawes. O waleful were mankynde, yif thilke love that governeth hevене governede yowr corages." (Boece, Bk. II, Met. 8.)

The most notable characteristic of reality in its mediaeval conception was order. 'God hath creat alle thinges in right ordre, and no-thing withouten ordre, but alle thinges been ordeyned and nombred.' (XII 217) God the creator of the ordered universe is the source of all good, and his all-embracing love binds together 'in accordable feith' the elements, by nature unlike and discordant, that comprise it. This unifying force is the special quality of divine love. It proceeds from wholeness. The 'sovereyn good' from which creation proceeds and towards which all created things strive to return, is the totality of the partial blisses which men, in their imperfect understanding, variously designate 'perfect bliss.'

"Blisfulnesse is a parfyt estat by the congregacioun of alle goodes; the which blisfulnesse... alle mortal folk enforcen hem to geten by diverse weyes. Forwhy the covetise of verray good is naturely iolauntyd in the hertes of men, but the myswandrynge error mysledeth hem into false goodes... the corage (of men) alway reherscheth and seketh the sovereyne good, al be it so that it be with a dyrkyd memorie; but he not by which path, ryght as a dronke man not nat by which path he may retourne hom to his hous." (Boece, III, Pr. 2)

This 'parfyt estat' of true bliss is an organic whole, comparable to the body of man in that

"...yif the parties of the body ben so devyded and disseverid the ton fro the tother that thei destroyen unite, the body forletith to ben that it was befor... Every thing is in his substaunce as longe as it is oon; and whanne it forletith to ben oon, it dyeth and peryssheth." (Boece Bk. III, Pr. II)

Wholeness is a prerequisite for existence, as Boece proves at length. The

desire to live "ne cometh nat of the wilnynges of the soule, but of the bygvnynges of nature. . . And this charite and this love, that every thing hath to hymself, ne cometh nat of the moevynge of the soule, but of the entencioun of nature (1). . . Thilke thing that desireth to be, and to duelle perdurably, he desireth to ben oon." (Boece : III, Pr. 11) The love that draws together the universe and makes it one whole, in the semblance of its creator, is the love that 'every thing hath to hymself' which reflects this tendency to unity: this love is 'caritas', charity, which binds together the diverse elements of the universe and 'enditith lawes to trewe felawas'. Its opposite is a force which, instead of uniting, effects division: which instead of urging created beings to converge towards their Creator, the source of all good, draws them apart from one another and away from the sovereign good. Such a movement of the spirit is not only against nature, but against existence. For the most fundamental condition of being is the condition of unity. Whatever resists the natural tendency of created beings to return to the source of their being, is denying existence:

"For thei that forleten the comune fyn of alle thinges that ben, thei forleten also therewithal for to been. . . For thilke thing that withholdeth ordre and kepeth nature, thilke thing is, and hath beinge; but what thing that failleth of that (that is to seyn, he that forleteth naturel ordre), he forleteth thilke beinge that is set in his nature." (Boece . IV, Pr. 2.)

This other force is characterised by the reverse of 'accordable feith': it is marked by division and strife which tends to 'fordo the fassoun of this world'. The result of a movement away from the source of being and the sovereign good is a progressive negation of being. Evil is non-being, and so is chaos.

Boethius does not give this negating force any name in his Consolation, although in Book III, Prose 11 he names the positive force for good 'caritas', Christian charity. Chaucer associates the love which divides rather than unites men with the pagan good of sensual love, Cupid. The tension or opposition between 'caritas' and 'cupiditas' is that described by St. Augustine:

(1) "Adeo haec sui caritas non ex animal motione sed ex naturale intentione procedit."

Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae III, Pr. 11, line 96.
Loeb Classical Library, London, 1962.

"Two loves have produced two cities: one, in which the love of God unites all men; a second, wherein all citizens, regardless of time and place, are united by their love of the world. Augustine differentiated the two societies in several ways: love of God or love of the world; love of God to the point of self-contempt or love of self carried to a contempt of God; love of the flesh or love of the spirit. In every case, however, they are distinguished by love, which is their very root... After (St. Augustine) had distinguished between a distorted love of self and holy charity, he immediately added: 'These are two loves, the one of which is holy, the other unholy; the one social, the other individualist; one takes heed of the common utility because of the heavenly society, the other reduces even the commonweal to its own ends because of a proud lust of domination; the one is subject to God, the other sets itself up as a rival to God; the one is serene, the other tempestuous; the one is peaceful, the other quarrelsome;... the one directs its effort to the neighbour's good, the other to its own.'" (Etienne Gilson, foreword to *St. Augustine's City of God*; abridgement edited by Vernon J. Bourke; Image Books, New York, 1958.)

Chaucer is often drawing upon the tension between these two loves when he speaks of 'Love', playing upon the paradox implicit in the two senses:

"For so I hope my soule best avaunce
To preye for hem that Loves servaunts be,
And wryte hir wo, and live in charitee."

(*Troilus and Criseyde* Bk. I, 47-49)

"O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!
Ful sooth is seyed that love ne lordshipe
Wel noght, his thankes, have no felaweshipe.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun."

(*Knight's Tale*; I(A) 1623-27)

Both the Franklin's Tale and the Knight's have at their centre this tension between the love that binds together the universe, drawing men towards the wholeness of 'sovereyn good... set in sovereign God', and that which draws them away, leaving strife and chaos in its wake. Both describe the 'mis-wandrings' of men in search of false 'goodes', or forms of 'bliss' which are only fragmentary parts of the whole, the 'sovereyn good'. Each reflects the extent of the teller's comprehension of the divine plan, and each in its own way exhales the special quality of Chaucer's humour, that nothing is so serious that it can never be laughed at, nor anything so

frivolous or trivial that it sustains no serious purpose. When in his 'retracouns' the poet says "'Al that is writen is writen for our doctrine", and that is myn entente', he is speaking of a life's work.

A. THE KNIGHT.

The Knight is presented primarily in relation to the basic concept of reality, wholeness. He fulfils the condition that 'al thing that is hath so longe his dwellinge and his substaunce as longe as it is oon.' (Boece III, Pr. 11) He is presented as 'oon', one integral whole, a seamless unity of the spirit and the outward man. His nobility of station is equalled by his personal worth: he is, and has been in word and deed throughout his life, 'a verray parfit gentil knight.' (I(A) 72) Like all men, he has spent his life in the pursuit of 'verray good', but he has not mistaken a part for the whole. He has devoted his noble heritage, both ancestral rank and inherited wealth, to honourable causes: his life has been dedicated to Christian chivalry. Nor have his rank and intrinsic worth caused him to fall into the sin of pride; for although his conduct is marked by the 'generale signes of gentillesse' (2), he has also the crowning virtue of 'humilitee, or mekenesse':

"And though that he were worthy, he wa. wys,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yet no vileinye ne sayde
In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight." (I(A) 68-71)

This is a virtue, 'thurgh which a man hath verray knowleche of hymself.... he biknoweth with his owene mouth that he is swich as him thinketh that he is in his herte.' (X(I) 477, 481) A man who knows himself may perceive the truth; he is capable of seeing clearly. He is 'maked goddes knight by the seking of trouthe to comen to the verray knowleche of god.' (Boece IV, Met. 1) Through his own integrity he is able to distinguish between what is, and what is not. Illusions, as the Knight, being wise, well knows, abound in this world, and it is with a certain kind of illusion that his Tale is concerned: but the teller himself clearly understands which is the illusion and which the reality.

- (2) "Now been ther generale signes of gentillesse, as eschewynge of vice and ribaudye and servage of synne, in word, in werk, and contenance; and usynge vertu, courtesye, and clenness, and to be liberal, that is to seyn, large by mesure;... Another is to remembre hym of bountee, that he of oother folv hath receyved./ Another is to be benigne to his goodé subgetis;.../ Another is, a man to have a noble herte and a diligent, to attayne to heighe vertuose thynges."/ (X(I) 454-59)

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

"Order, which characterizes the structure of the poem, is also at the heart of its meaning." Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition; Berkeley, 1964; p. 181.

The Knight's Tale has at its heart the theme of the orderly universe threatened by the forces of disorder. The theme is expressed in terms of brotherhood and strife; of the love that 'enditeth lawes to trewe felawes' and its opposite, the love that is 'free' and knows no law except itself. Each of the principal characters -- Palamon and Arcite, Emelye, Theseus -- is conceived within the frame of reference provided by the majestically wheeling Boethian universe. Chaucer took his source, the Teseida of Boccaccio, and with a sure hand moulded a courtly romance into a tale whose resonancé reaches beyond time, place and circumstances into the timelessness that Boethius called 'the sovereyn day'.

Palamon and Arcite.

Professor Muscatine has pointed out that Chaucer's 'crowning modification (of the Teseida) is the equalization of Palamon and Arcite'. (p. 180). Their parts in the Knight's Tale are brought to a balance which suggests the two halves of a symmetrical whole. This image is exact, for the principle underlying the story of their love for Emelye is the division of unity!

"God had two purposes in deriving all men from one man. His first purpose was to give unity to the human race by the likeness of nature. His second purpose was to bind mankind by the bond of peace, through blood relationship, into one harmonious whole". (St. Augustine, City of God, Bk.XIV, Ch. 1)

Palamon and Arcite are discovered 'ligging by and by, Both in oon armes...'; they are not only near kinsmen 'of sustren two y-born', but also sworn brothers, the bond of the oath doubling the strength of their blood relationship.

Chaucer illustrates this additional force by mentioning, in a significant digression, the sworn brotherhood of Theseus and Perotheus (3). They were

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- (3) Although Perotheus -- 'Peritoo' -- has a larger role in the Teseida than in the Knight's Tale, Boccaccio does not mention this incident from the history of his friendship with Theseus. It is Chaucer's addition.
Il Teseida; ed. Salvatore Battaglia; Autori classici e documenti di lingua pubblicati dalla R. Accademia della Crusca, Firenze, 1938. bound/.....

bound by the same oath as Palamon and Arcite, and so firm was the bond that the oath was honoured even beyond death:

"For in this world he loved no man so,
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.
So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan that con was deed, soothly to telle,
His felawe wente and soughte hym down in helle, -
But of that storie list me nat to write." (I(A) 1196-1201):

Besides the double bond of kinship and sworn brotherhood, there is between Palamon and Arcite the bond of shared tribulation, which Arcite acknowledges when, as yet ignorant of the wound Palamon has suffered, he attempts to console his cousin:

"For Goddes love, taak al in pactence
Cure prisoun, for it may noon oother be.
Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of S turne, by som constellacioun,
Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn;
So stood the hevene whan that we werc born.
We moste endure it; this is the short and playn." (I(A) 1084-91)

Arcite counsels fortitude in the face of adversity by which they are both, as he believes, destined to be tried. In this he is assuming the Boethian doctrine:

"...That alle fortune what so evere it be, of hem that ben eyther in possesstoun of vertu, or in the encre of vertu, or elles in the purchasyng of vertu, that thilke fortune is good...for therefore it is called 'vertu,' for that it sustenith and enforceth by his strengthes that it nis nat overcomen by adversites." (Boece IV, Pr. 7)

Arcite's speech clearly implies a belief in a universal order whose ultimate purpose, although not apparent to him or to Palamon, is for the best -- so that the present misfortune must be borne with courage, for it is a trial of their 'vertu'. It is by 'Goddes love' the 'caritas' that 'governeth erthe and see...', that Palamon is adjured to have patience, and by the knowledge of it the Lady Philosophy promises Boethius he will be healed of his 'maladye'. The seizure of 'love' upon Palamon is described accordingly, as though it were a sudden fit of illness, or a deadly wound:

"...I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye
Into myn herte, that wol my hane be..." (I(A) 1096-97)

Bodily ailments or wounds were regarded as disturbances of the balance or harmony of the bodily humours, equivalent in the state of health to the

'elementz/...

'elementz (that) holden among hemself allyaunce perdurable' when bound together by divine love, but which 'would make batayle continually, and striven to fordo the fassoun of this world' if this love 'slakede the bridelis'. This image of implied discord sets the stage for the change which is about to come upon the relationship of Arcite and Palamon. Arcite in his turn looks out, and declares himself 'sleen' by Emelye's fresshe beautee'; whereupon Palamon angrily reminds him of their oath:

"I nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour
For to be fals, ne for to be traitour
To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,
That nevere, for to dyen in the peyne,
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,
Neither of us in love to hyndre oother,
Ne in noon oother cas, my leewe brother;
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me
In every cas, as I shal forthren thee, -
This was thyn ooth, and myn also, certeyn;....." (1(A) 1123-39)

In reply Arcite utterly repudiates the bonds both of kinship and of sworn brotherhood. So absolutely does he deny the belief in an orderly universe implied in his first speech, that the change can only be imputed to a sudden onset of insanity. (4) His new point of view is motivated by his love for Emelye, and it is immediately clear that *this love is something* diametrically opposed to 'Goddess love' by which he had urged his cousin to be patient:

"And thou art fals, I telle thee outright,
For paramour I loved hire first er thow.
What wiltow seyen? Thou woost nat yet now
Whether she be a woman or goddesse!
Thyn is affeccioun of hoolyntesse,
And myn is love, as to a creature;
For which I tolde thee myn aventure
As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.
I pose that thow lovedest hire biforn;
Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe,
That 'who shal yeve a lovare any lawe?'
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
Than may be yeve to any erthely man;
And therefore positif lawe and swich decree
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.
A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed.
He may nat fleen it, though he sholde be deed...
And therefore, at the kynges court, my brother

(4) Chaucer does in fact explain Arcite's actions and speech thus in 1(A) 1372-76.

Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.
 Love, if thee list, for I love and ay shal;
 And soothly, leewe brother, this is al." (I(A) 1154-10,
 1181-84.)

Arcite here makes a distinction between 'affeccioun of holynesse' and 'love, as to a creature'. The first evidently denotes the love which is directed towards the source of good and which binds all things 'in accordable feith by fayre moevynges'. The second, the 'love, as to a creature', is evidently opposed to it. Arcite takes as his authority on this love an 'olde clerke', Boethius in a subtly ironic role. The 'sawe' is from Bk. III, Met. 12 of the Consolacioun, which recounts how Orpheus was granted the boon of leading his wife back from the Underworld on the condition that he did not look back at her until he regained the earth:

"But we wolen putten a lawe in this and covenaut in the yifte; that is to seyn that, til he be out of helle, yif he loke byhynde hym, that his wyf schal comen ageyn unto us." But what is he that may yeven a lawe to loverys? Love is a grettere lawe and a strengere to hymself (thanne any lawe that mer. mai yyven). Allas! whanne Orpheus and his wyf weren almost at the termes of the nyght (that is to seyn, at the iaste boundes of helle), Orpheus lokede abakward on Eruyce his wif, and lost hire, and was deed." (Boece, Bk. III, Met. 12)

The love that knows no laws is set against the love that 'enditith lawes to-trewe felawes'. Arcite recalls the tale of Orpheus' loss in order to deny both 'Lawe' and 'covenaut' (5): the law of love that 'halt togidres peples joyned with an holy bond' and the 'holy bond' itself, the covenant of his sworn brotherhood to Palamon. The covenant once broken, the shade of Eurydice vanishes into the mists of the nether world; from which Boece concludes:

"This fable apertenith to yow alle, whosoevere desirith or seketh to lede his thought into the sovereyn day (that is to seyn, into cleernesse of sovereyn good). For whoso that evere be so overcomen that he ficche his eien into the put of helle (that is to seyn, whoso sette his thoughtes in erthly thinges), al that evere he hath drawen of the noble good celestial he lesith it, whanne he looketh the helles (that is to seyn, into lowe thinges of the erthe)." (Boece III, Met. 12)

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- (5) "Sed lex dona coerceat" is translated by Chaucer "but we wol putte a lawe in this, and covenaut in the yifte".

'love, as to a creature' is the love of St. Augustine's 'city of the world' whose citizens 'worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator' (6). 'Ech man for him-self' is the watchword of the city founded upon this love; 'whereas in the City of God all citizens serve one another in charity. (City of God, Bk XIV, Ch 28). The vow of Arcite and Palamon had been in the spirit of this latter love -- 'that thou sholdest trewely forthren me in every cas, and I shal forthren thee'. The conquest made by the fatal beauty of Emelye over the hearts of both knights is the irresistible desire of Orpheus, who 'loked abakward'; for 'Emelye the bright' is a shadowy Eurydice drawing the two lovers after her 'into the putte of helle', causing them to lose 'al that evere (they) hath drawn of the noble good celestial'.

The analogy between the love of Palamon and Arcite for Emelye and that of Orpheus for Eurydice, which led him to venture down into hell, can be taken further. Among Chaucer's additions to his source was the description of Diana's temple, following descriptions of the temples of Venus and Mars (7):

"Depeynted been the walles up and doun
Of huntyn, and of shamefast chastitee.
Ther saugh I how woful Calistopee,
Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
Was turned from a womman til a bere,
And after was she maad the loode-sterre;
Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre.
Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.
Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree,...
Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,
For vengeance that he saugh Diane al naked;
I saugh how that his houndes have hym caught
And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.
Yet peynted was a litel fermer moor
How Atthalante hunted a wilde boor,
And Meleagre, and many another mo.
For which Dyane wroughte hym care and wo..." (1A) 2054-72

Emelye is a devotee of the goddess Diana, to whom she prays in her 'thre formes', Luna, Diana and Proserpina -- Luna as the cold and inconstant

(6) Romans 1. 25; quoted by St. Augustine, City of God Bk XIV, Ch 28.

(7) Muscatine (op. cit., p.180) suggests that the description of Diana's temple was added in the interests of symmetry. This seems to me a secondary reason for its inclusion.

moon, Diana as the cruel goddess of hunting and 'shamefast chastitee' upon the earth, and Proserpina as 'quene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe'. Three of the myths depicted in the temple frescoes share a significant common factor. 'Calistopee' (Callisto) incurred Diana's wrath and was turned into a she-bear, in which form she was hunted down by her own son. Actaeon in the form of a hart was torn apart by his own hounds, while Meleager, after slaying the Calydonian boar (sent by Diana) slaughtered his mother's brothers, an act which moved his mother to bring about her son's death. (8) Each of these myths centres upon the rupture of a strong natural bond, the denial of a tie of love and loyalty. Each, for this reason, is related to the denial of the covenant between Palamon and Arcite. Diana, in the form of Proserpina, was Queen of Hell, and in this fact lies the key to the symmetrical universe depicted in this Tale. Once stricken by the love that is 'free', ungoverned by any law, Palamon and Arcite spurn the rule of order. They enter into a region of chaos and unreality:

"For thilke thing that withholdeth ordre and kepeth nature,
thilke thing es, and hath beinge; but what thing that
faileth of that (that is to seyn, he that forleteth naturel
ordre), he forleteth thilke beinge that is set in his nature."
(Boece IV, Pr. 2)

If a man forswears the rule of order, he denies his very being. The kingdom of non-being, of disorder, is Hell, 'the regne of Pluto derk and lowe' over which Diana - Proserpina reigns:

"And eek job seith that in helle is noon ordre of rule. And
al be it so that God hath creat alle thynges in right ordre,
and no thyng witho .x. ordre, but alle thynges been
ordeyned and nombred; yet nathelees, they that been
dampned been nothyng in ordre, ne holden noon ordre."
(X(ii) 217-18)

This, then, is the 'regne' into which the two brother-knights fall when they are almost simultaneously struck down by love for Emelye. The love that now rules them is characterised by the strife and discord that immediately breaks out between them: 'Greet was the strife and long bitwixe hem tweye...'. All their subsequent actions and reactions are conditioned by it. Arcite's

(8) Callisto: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 401-530
Actaeon: *Ibid.* III, 138 ff.
Meleager and Atalanta: *Ibid.* VIII, 298 ff.
Ovid: *Metamorphoses*; translated by F. J.
Miller; Loeb Classical Library; Heinemann,
London, 1964.

response to being freed from captivity is not to rejoice in his liberty, but to plunge into the depths of despair:

"How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte;
He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously;
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.
He seyde, 'Allas that day that I was born!
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
Now is me shawe eternally to dwelle.
Noght in ourgatorie, but in helle....
O deere cosyn Palamon, 'quod he,
Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.
Ful blisfully in orison maistow dure, --
In orison? certes nay, but in paradys!
Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,
That hast the sighte of hire, and I th'absence..." (I(A) 1219-26
1234-39)

The imagery of this lament is explicitly that of the sufferings of the damned soul in hell. Release from orison is eternal damnation, while retention in captivity is 'paradys':

"...he that is in helle hath defeaute of light
material... He that is in helle shal have defeaute
of the sighte of God; for certes, the sighte of
God is the lyf perdurable." (X(I) 182, 184)

Since Arcite, in his 'love, as to a creature' worships and serves 'the creature rather than the Creator', the sight of Emelye is his 'light material' and his 'lyf perdurable'. Like a damned soul, he feels the oangs of death 'thurgh his herte smyte', yet he is condemned to live:

"...the peyne of helle; ...is lyk deeth for the
horrible angwissh, and why? For it peyneth
hem evere, as though they sholde dye anon;
but certes, they shal nat dye." (X(I) 213.)

He seeks occasion to 'sleen him-self', but finds none: 'they shul desyren to dye, and deeth shal flee fro hem.' The climax of his meditation upon his fortune is ironically Boethian:

"We witen nat what thing we preyen heere:
We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.
A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,
But he noot which the righte way is thider,
And to a dronke man the way is slider.
And certes, in this world so faren we;
We seken faste after felicitee,
But we goon wrong ful often, trewely." (I(A) 1261-67)

Boethius uses the image of the drunken man to explain man's natural tendency

to seek the 'sovereyn good' (Boece III, Pr. 2). For Arcite and for Palamon Emelye is the source of light and life, the 'sovereyn good' to which they turn in worship, and for which they strive. The 'love, as to a creature' is in fact 'affectioun of holinesse', in the sense of 'affectation', for the service and worship that should be directed to the Creator is addressed to his creature. Palamon on the other hand sees imprisonment as hell while freedom is at least the road to Paradise, and likewise laments in Boethian terms:

"What governance is in this prescience,
That guiltles tormenteth innocence?" (I(A) 1313-14)

The state of mind in which a man questions the ordering of the universe is diagnosed by the Lady Philosophy as gravely disturbed:

"...thow hast foryeten by whiche governementz
the world is governed, forthy weenestow that
thise mutacions of fortunes fleten withouten
governour. Thise ben grette causes, nought
only to maladye, but certes grette causes to
deth." (Boece I, Pr. 6)

Palamon too faras 'as he that dronke is as a mous'; he seeks the 'sovereyn good' with a 'dyrkvd memorie', for he, no less than Arcite, has 'foryeten by whiche governementz the world is governed'. His plaint is the cry of the uncomprehending:

"What is mankynde moore unto you holde
Than is the sheen that rouketh in the folde?
For slayn is man right as another beest...
And whan a beest is deed he hath no payne;
But man after his deeth mot wepe and pleyne..." (I(A) 1307-09,
1319-20)

"Et homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit.
Comparatus est iumentis insipientibus,
Et similis factus est illis....
Sicut oves in inferno positi sunt:
Mors depascet eos." (Psalm 48: 13, 15)

Palamon, like Arcite, sees himself condemned to a living death, a hell on earth in which he burns in torment until figuratively he is reduced to ashes:

"Therwith the fyr of jealousie up sterte
Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte
So woodyly that he lyk was to biholde
The boxtree or the asshen dede and colde..." (I(A) 1299-1302)

The question posed by the narrator at the end of the first part of the poem, when the sufferings of both the 'lovers' and 'prisoner' have been described, has no answer. The walled garden 'ther as this Emelye hadde hir playynge' is 'evene joynant' to the grim tower in which the two knights were confined, a juxtaposition which seems to suggest that the lover held in bondage by his desire is no more/

more free than the prisoner in the dungeon. Both Arcite and Palamon continue to suffer 'in angwish and in wo' -- 'I noot which hath the wofullere mester'-- and it makes no difference to the degree of Arcite's pain that his prison is invisible.

In the second part of the poem we see Arcite enjoying what Palamon had called 'the fruyt... of al our stryff'. The fruit of strife is confusion, and what Arcite undergoes is a complete inversion of personality:

"His slep, his mete, his drynke, is hym biraft,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;
His eyen holwe, and grisly to biholde,
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde,
And solitarie he was and evere allone,
And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone;
And if he herde song or instrument,
Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe,
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
And in his geere for al the world he ferde,
Net oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,
Engendred of humour malencolik,
Biforen, in his celle fantastik.
And shortly, turned was al up so down
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful love daun Arcite." (I(A) 1361-64, 1369-79)

Each of these symptoms, all quite typical of the 'lovers maladye of Hereos' has a parallel in the pains of hell described by the Parson. The lover loses his appetite: 'the miseise of helle shal been in defaute of mete and drinke' (X(I)194). He becomes thin, and assumes the appearance of death-in-life: 'And for-as-muche as they shul nat wene that they may dyen for peyne, and by hir deeth flee fro peyne, that may they understonden by the word of Job, that seith: "ther-as is the shadwe of deeth."' (X(I) 211)

He is always alone: 'in helle is no solas ne no frendshipe' (X(I)206); he weeps when he hears music: 'Who-so thanne wolde wel understande these peynes, and biþinke him weel that he hath deserved thilke peynes for his sinnes, certes, he sholde have more talent to syken and to wepe than for to singen and to pleye.' (X(I)228) His voice becomes unrecognisable: the damned 'have no vois to speke to (God)' (X(I) 226). Under the influence of his affliction Arcite becomes unstable to the point where he develops the fearful consequence of the 'lovers maladye', 'manye', in which "the 'imaginativa,

quae est versus partem anteriori cerebri' is corrupted, so that the patient
'putat bonum quod non est bonum, et putat honestum, quod non est.'

His inner hierarchy and with it his moral judgement is turned 'up-so-down'. (10)
The 'inner hierarchy' is the ordinance by which

"God sholde have lordshipe over resoun, and resoun
over sensualitee and sensualitee over the body of man.
But soothly, whan man synneth, al this ordre or
ordinaunce is turned up-so-down... For sensualitee
rebellethe thanne agayns resoun, and by that way
leseth resoun the lordshipe over sensualitee and over
the body..." (K(I) 262-63, 265)

It is because of this sudden inversion in his inner hierarchy that Arcite is
plunged into an upside-down universe, the inverse of the ordered universe
ruled by God; just as in the orderly system directed towards sovereign
good all things are bound to one another by love, so in the chaotic 'nether'
universe all is discord:

"for neither God ne no creature shal been freend to hem,
and everich of hem shal haten oother with deedly hate.
'The sones and the doghtren shullen rebellen agayns
fader and mooder, and kynrede agayns kynred, and
chiden and despien everich of hem oother bothe day
and nyght, '... evere the moore fleschly kynredes that
been in helle, the moore deedly hate ther is among hem."
(K(I) 200-01, 206)

This is the 'up-so-down' domain over which Diana as Proserpina rules as
queen, and Arcite's malady is directly due to his worship of Diana's acolyte,
Emelye. It is therefore fitting that when the god Mercury appears to Arcite
in a dream (another of Chaucer's additions) he is arrayed as he was when he
tricked the hundred-eyed Argus into sleeping. Argus represents the watchful
'eye' of the reason, which in the afflicted lover has been put out by Cupid's
arrow. Mercury gives Arcite an ambiguous forecast of his fate:

"... 'To Atthenes shaltou wende,
'Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende.'" (I(A) 1391-92)

Arcite wakes, looks at himself in a mirror, and realises that his malady has
so changed him that he is unrecognisable. He resolves thereupon to conceal
his rank, dress poorly and offer his services in Athens as a mental. He takes

(10) Robertson, D.W., Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer*; Princeton,
1963; p. 49. The quotation cited is from Bernard of
Gordon, *Lilium medicinae* (Lyons, 1574), pp. 208-10.

the name 'Philostrate', which Chaucer, following Boccaccio's 'Filostrate', took to mean 'vanquished by love'. The inversion caused by Arcite's servitude to the love that knows no laws is completed: the noble knight, sprung of the 'blood royal' of Thebes, masquerades as a 'povre labourer', having changed his very identity, for he cannot recognise his image in the mirror. He disguises his princely rank and becomes a 'hewer of wood and drawer of water' (11), thus denying his very nature as it was decreed by divine ordinance:

"But certes, sith the tyme of grace cam, God ordeyned that som folk sholde be moore heigh in estaat and in degree, and som folk moore lough, and that everich sholde be served in his estaat and in his degree..." (X(I) 771.)

The inversion of rank, from the highest degree of lordship to the lowest degree of servitude, reflects and continues the inversion of Arcite's inner hierarchy, and puts his own disturbance in a wider perspective:

"...ne the commune profit myghte nat han be kept, ne pces and rest in erthe, but if God hadde ordeyned that som men hadde hyer degree and som men lower..." (X(I) 773)

Not to recognise one's own face in a mirror, and not to acknowledge one's hereditary status, is not to know oneself:

"For certes swich is the condicioun of alle mankynde, that oonly whan it hath knowynge of itself, thanne passeth it in noblesse alle othere thynges; and whan it forletith the knowynge of itself thanne it is brought bynethen alle beestes." (Boece, II, Pr. 5)

Arcite, having 'forleten the knowinge of him-self', seems destined for the fate Boethius predicts. As he muses on the pass to which he has come --- 'For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name'---and on his unhappy love, Palamon overhears him and boldly accosts him, crying

"I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye.
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,
But I wol love hire oonly and namo;
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo." (I(A) 1587-90)

(11) Compare Josue 9. 22-23: "...nos decipere fraude voluistis... Ilaque sub maledictione eritis, et non deficiet de stirpe vestra ligna caedens, aquasque comportans in domum Dei mei."

I(A) 1422: "Wel coude he hewen wode, and water bere."

Palamon has passed through the same torments as Arcite and has come to a similar condition of inversion where he no longer knows himself: he is not the cousin and sworn brother of Arcite but 'Palamoun, thy mortal foe'.

Chaucer embodies this mutual non-recognition in the imagery of the passage in which the two meet in ungoverned combat:

"This Arcite and this Palamon ben met,
 Tho chaungen gan the colour in hir face,
 Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
 That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,
 Whan hunted is the leon or the bere;
 And hureth hym come russhyng in the greves,
 And breketh bothe bowes and the leues,
 And thynketh, 'Heere cometh my mortal enemy!
 Withoute faille, he moot be deed, or I;
 For outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,
 Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe,' -
 So ferdien they in chaungyng of hir hewe,
 As fer as everich of hem oother knewe." (I(A) 1636-48)

In the 'chaungyng of hir hewe' the two are no longer princes and knightly brothers, but are brought 'binethen alle beastes'.

They attack one another like the 'wood leoun', the 'cruel tygre', or like 'wilde bores'. It is no knight but a 'fiers.... leoun' who draws his sword on Palamon and roars forth the challenge of lawless love:

"For I defye the seurete and the bond
 Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.
 What, verray fool, thynk wel that love is free,
 And I wol love hire maugree al thy myght!" (I(A) 1604-07)

At the point when Theseus intervenes between Palamon and Arcite, the strife between them, the only product and fruit of the love that is 'free', reaches its zenith. When Palamon responds to the lord's call for a halt in the free-for-all 'with-uten juge or other officers', his reply is the beginning of a summing-up of the position in which he and Arcite now find themselves. No longer rejoicing in 'this charite and this love, that every thing hath to hymself', by which all creatures desire to preserve life, they are now 'Two woful wrecches... two caytyves That been encombred of our owne lyves'. Palamon in his state of servitude to Cupid, with totally inverted understanding of what 'caritas' is, begs Theseus 'for seynte charitee' to slay both him and his kinsman. Not 'knowing' himself, he fails also to recognise his mirror-half, his 'brother y-sworn ful depe': the bond of natural love and sworn loyalty has

been disavowed, and the two regard one another as mortal enemies. Theseus adds to Palamon's unintentional confession the fact that these two noble knights, both escaped from prison, both with freedom within their grasp, who 'mighte han lived in Thebes royally' as befitted their princely rank, had come back to Athens 'maugree hir eyen two', despite the obvious peril to their lives and all the objections that reason with its keen spiritual sight would have lodged against their returning to Theseus' domain. Finally, and most pertinently, the 'beste game of alle' is that the object of their passion does not even know that Palamon and Arcite exist, still less that they were about to slay each other for her sake. The source of their 'light', the centre of their upside-down universe, 'Emelye the brighte', so far from having the all-seeing 'purveaunce' of the centre of the real universe, knows nothing about their sufferings and cares less. In the terms of their own chosen domain-- the 'regne' of Cupid, god of love-- they have no existence, because Emelye is indifferent to both of them. And since both have rejected the dominion of the love that 'enditeth lawes to trewe felawes' they have equally ceased to exist in the ordered universe centred about God:

"For thei that forleten the comune fyn of alle thinges that ben, thei forleten also therwithal for to been.... For thilke thing that withholdeth ordre and kepeth nature, thilke thing es, and hath beinge; but what thing that faileth of that (that is to seyn, he that forleteth naturel ordre), he forleteth thilke beinge that is set in his nature." (Boece Bk. IV, Pr. 2)

The state in which the 'pilours' found them lying on the battlefield -- 'nat fully quike, ne fully dede'-- is not much different to the condition to which their love for Emelye has reduced them. 'Woful wrecches' and 'caytives' that they are, their life is 'lively form of death'-- for

"...as seith Seint Gregorie, 'To wrecche caytyves shal be deeth withoute deeth, and ende withouten ende, and defeaute withoute faillynge. For hir deeth shal alwey lyven, and hir ende shal everemo bigynne, and hir defeaute shal nat faille.'" (X(I) 214-15)

The analogy of Orpheus, venturing into the depths of hell in the vain hope of regaining his shadowy Eurydice, is relevant and consistent in relation to the equally vain quest of Palamon and Arcite. It is this idea that emerges when Arcite, victorious in battle and 'almost at the termes of night (that is to seyn, at the laste boundes of helle)', is confounded by a trick of Saturn, falls from

his horse and is mortally injured. At the point of attaining his prize, he loses it:

"This ai and som, that Arcite moot dye;
For which he sendeth after Emelye,
And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:
'Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte
To yow, my lady, that I love moost;
But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
To verr aboven every creature,
Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure.
Allas, the wo! alas, the peynes stronge,
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deeth! alas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departynge of oure compaignye!
Allas, myn hertes queene! alas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? what asketh men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone, withouten any compaignye.
Fare wel, my sweete foo, myn Emelye!..." (IfA) 2761-80)

The 'service of (his) gost' is a fittingly unreal ministration to the illusion for which Arcite has suffered so much. About to leave the world, Arcite recovers from his 'maladye'; on the point of being freed from the bonds of earthly time and entering eternity, the wound he received through his eye from Cupid's dart is miraculously healed. He sees clearly how ephemeral earthly love is, and how brief man's life. At the same moment, in his restored spiritual health and clarity of vision, he recognises Palamon once more. Blinding his 'swete fo' to take him in her arms. Arcite speaks of his cousin, no longer his 'mortal enemy' but his beloved kinsman and sworn brother. He commends Palamon to Emelye not for their love of her, by which they were divided, but 'for love of God':

"I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
Had strif and rancour many a day agon
For love of yow, and for my jalousye.
And Juppiter so wys my soule gye,
To speken of a servaunt proprely,
With alle circumstances trewely --
That is to seyen, trouthe, honour, knyghthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, estat, and heigh kynrede,
Fredom, and al that longeth to that art --
So Juppiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne knowe I non
So worthy to ben loved as Palamon..." (IfA) 2783-94)

So the 'love that governeth hevne' regains its sovereignty over Arcite and Palamon and renews the 'holy bond' between them. The final resolution, in which this love comes to be established between Palamon and Emelye, knitting together the 'sacrement of mariage of chaste loves', remains for Theseus to bring about.

Emelye.

The poetic figure in which the mistress is compared to the sun, in brightness and life-giving warmth, is used in the Knight's Tale in a special sense shaped by the peculiarly Boethian universe of the Tale. Emelye's devotion to Diana is reflected in the characteristics associated with her by Chaucer, which in turn figure in the myths depicted on the walls of Diana's temple. The sundering effect of Diana's influence, portrayed in the myths of Callisto, Actaeon and Meleager, has already been discussed. Diana's influence is obviously baleful, as the cruel punishments she metes out indicate, and as her association with the 'derke regiou' of Pluto suggests. She is also capricious, like the inconstant moon, and cold, as the wooden response of Daphne ('Penneus' daughter... Dane') to the passion of Apollo seems to show. Emelye's cruel, albeit unconscious, indifference and caprice (12) is like Diana's, as is her power to sever the bonds of kinship and the covenant between Palamon and Arcite. Their first view of her is a foretaste of this power:

"And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
She walketh up and down, and as hire liste'
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
To make a subtil gerland for hire hede;
And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong." (I(A) 1051-55)

The 'subtil gerland' with which Emelye adorns herself has an analogue in another of the Canterbury Tales, that told by the Second Nun, a version of the 'glorious lif and passiou' of St. Cecile. Cecile is married to a young man called Valerian, whom on their wedding night she converts to Christianity. She sends him forth to be baptised, promising him that when baptism has 'purged (hym) fro sinne', he will be enabled to see with his own eyes the angel who guards her chastity. Valerian is 'christened' by Pope Urban and returns

(12) Boccaccio is more explicit about this quality of Emilia's than is Chaucer. Teseida VIII, 124-26.

to Cecile, whom he finds standing in their bed-chamber with the angel beside her. The pair receive from the angel two crowns of roses and lilies which have miraculous virtue:

"With body cleane and with unwemmed thought
Kepeth ay wel thise coronas,' quod he;
'Fro paradys to yow have I hem brought,
Ne nevere mo ne shal they roten bee,
Ne lese hir soote savour, trusteth me;
Ne nevere wight shal seen hem with his ye,
But he be chaast and hate vileynye.'" (VIII(G) 227-31)

Valerian asks as a boon that he may bring his brother Tiburce to 'han grace To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place.' Tiburce is brought, and becomes aware of the scent of the marvellous 'corones', although as yet he cannot see them:

"And whan that he the savour undernoom,
Which that the roses and the lilies caste,
Withinne his herte he gan to wondre faste,

And seyde, 'I wondre, this tyme of the year,
Whennes that soote savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer.
For though I hadde hem in myne handes two,
The savour myghte in me no depper go.
The sweete smel that in myn herte I fynde
Hath chaunged me al in another kynde.'" (VIII(G) 243-52)

Valerian promises his brother sight of the crowns if he will 'bileve aright and knowen verray trouthe.' Tiburce wonders if he is dreaming, and Valerian replies that until this time of his conversion he had indeed been 'in dremes... But now at erst in trouthe our dwelling is.' Tiburce hears the word of God from Cecile and Valerian, agrees to be baptised and is joyfully welcomed into the Church by Cecile:

"And she gan kisse his brest, that herde this,
And was ful glad he koude trouthe espye.
'This day I take thee for myn allye,'
Seyde this blisful faire mayde deere,
And after that, she seyde as ye may heere:

'Lo, right so as the love of Crist,' quod she,
'Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wise
Anon for myn allye heer take I thee,
Syn that thou wolt thyne ydoles despise.'" (VIII(G) 290-98)

Cecile is in many ways the antithesis of Emelye. Her rose and lily crown effects the union of two brothers, who become her 'allies' in Christ. The

'subtil gerland' of Emelye, on the other hand, is associated with the severing of a bond of brotherhood. Cecile causes both brothers to love her as well as each other, and loves them in return, while Emelye, inspiring in each of her lovers a mad passion for herself, turns them frenziedly against one another and is in turn coldly indifferent to both. Cecile's chastity is fruitful, for it brings into the Church the souls of her husband and his brother -- 'the fruit of thilke seed of chastitee' -- while the chastity of Emelye, votaress of Diana the huntress, is cold, cruel and spiritually barren. Cecile takes a young man 'ful lyk a fiers leoun' and sends him 'as meke as ever was any lamb' to be baptised; Emelye's lovers from being chivalrous princes, become a 'wood leoun' and a 'cruel tygre'. Cecile brings the two brothers from unreality -- 'In dremes... han we be unto this tyme, brother' -- into the realm of truth, while Emelye turns her two knights from the acceptance of reality implicit in Arcite's attempt to comfort Palamon (I(A)1084-93) to a flat denial that reality, which is universal order, exists -- for 'who shal yeve a lover any lawe?' And while Cecile converts her husband and his brother from the worship of idols to the faith of Christ, Emelye converts her two lovers to idolatry of herself. As Cecile is compared to the heavens in brightness and to the sun, being

"...round and hool in good perseverynge,
And brennyng evere in charite ful brighte" (VIII(G) 117-18)

so Emelye is 'Emelye the bright' and 'Emelye the shene', who rises with the sun in an implied equivalence of splendour, and sings 'as an augel, hevenysshly'. As Cecile is identified with 'charitee', so Emelye is 'affection of holnesse', cupiditty mistaken for charity because the senses so desire it -- Venus singing like a heavenly angel. She is made by Chaucer into an embodiment of cupidinous love, a cause of strife and destruction, a 'selkud wodenesse' (13) that lures men away from the ordered universe which constitutes reality into a private hell where is 'noon ordre of rule' and where 'the erthe ne shal here hem no fruit' (X(1) 219). Emelye herself presides coldly over this region like Diana in her form as Proserpina -- "Quene of the regne of Pluto

- (13) "Perhaps the attitude of (the middle class) to the courtly love of the knightly romances is best conveyed by four 14th-century lines:

"Love is a selkud wodenesse
That the idel man ledeth by wildernesse
That thurstes of wilfulnesse,
And drinket sorwenesse."

Gervase Mathew, Marriage and Amour Courtois in late 14th-century England; in Essays presented to Charles Williams, Oxford, 1947.

derke and lowe'. The strand of meaning picked out when Arcite cites Boethius' account of Orpheus and Eurydice is no isolated image, but part of a complex of structural webbing in the Knight's Tale. Emelye is associated with the queen of Hell, Dante's 'regina dell'eterno pianto', and the connecting link is the beautiful and beloved Eurydice, an unreal shadow following Orpheus up to the realm of day, of light and reality, but lost never to become real again because he could not resist breaking his covenant and departing from the rule of order. The brightness of 'Emelye the shene' is not that of the sun, but of the moon, Luna, shining in the heavens when the light of truth, reason and reality has gone (14): Diana on the earth; transforming men into beasts and preserving a cold chastity which is truly fruitlessness; and Proserpina, queen of the Underworld, the world of disorder and unreality to which the unlucky worshippers of this 'goddess of three formes' are sent. The 'freendlich ye' that Emelye casts upon Arcite when he is victorious is like the eye of the moon, for it is 'the favour of Fortune':

"Cete amur est en tel balance:	4775
Si tost come 'l pert l'esperance	
Dou profit qu'ele veult ataindre,	
Faillir la couvient e esteindre,	
Car ne peut bien estre amoureux	
Cueurs qui n'aime les genz pour eus,	4780
Ainz se feint e les vait flatant,	
Pour le profit qu'il en atent.	
C'est l'amour qui vient de Fortune,	
Qui s'eclisse come la lune	
Que la terre obnuble e enombre	4785
Quant la lune chiet en son ombre,	
S'a tant de sa clarté perdue	
Con dou soleil pert la veüe,	
E quant el ra l'ombre passee,	
Si revient toute e: uminee	4790
Des rais que li soiauz li montre,	
Qui d'autre part relust encontre:	
Cete amour est d'autel nature,	
Car or est clere, or est ocure."	4794
<u>Le Roman de la Rose (15)</u>	

- (14) In Hell, it is always night. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* I, 60: "là dove 'l sol tace..."; III, 22-23: "alt'i guai/rischiavan per l'aere sanza stelle"; V, 28: "Io venni in luogo d'ogni luce muto..."

"Job clepeth helle 'the lond of derknesse'...for he that is in helle hath defaute of light material." (X(1)-181-82)

- (15) Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose; publié par Ernest Langlois; Société des Anciens Textes Français, No. 62; 1919-24.

Emelye...

Emelye's love, then, is like Emelye herself: inconstant, capricious, shining not 'in charitee ful brighte' but with the uncertain radiance of moonshine. Emelye herself is one of the gifts of Fortune:

"Thanne shal I yewe Emelya to wyve
To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace." (I(A) 1861-62)

When Fortune departs from a man, says Boethius, she takes her friends away with her, and leaves him only his own friends (Boece, Bk. II, Pr. 8). Hence Arcite, in the moment of dying, realises that his beloved Emelye, his 'swete foo', is about to leave him because she is Fortune's friend, not his own:

"... If thou be right happy - that is to seyn, if thou be right riche - thou shalt fynde a greet nombre of felawes and freendes. And if thy fortune change that thou weste povre, farewell freendshipe and felaweshipe; for thou shalt be aloonne withouten any compaignye, but if it be the compaignye of povre folk."

(The Tale of Melibeus, VII 1558-60 (B 2748-50)) (16)(my italics)

"What is this world? what asketh men to have?

Now with his love, now in his colde grave

Allone, withouten any compaignye.

Fare wel, my weete foo, myn Emelye!..." (I(A) 2777-80)

The worship of Emelye in 'affeccioun of holinesse' is also the worship of the fickle goddess Fortune. Her inconstancy is the 'propre stableness in the chaungeinge of hir-self' shown by Fortune to those who come to know her true nature. Emelye, as centre of her lovers' personal universe, a friend and gift of Fortune and sharing the mutability of that goddess, contrasts in the Knight's Tale with the stability and permanence of the 'first weever' from whose wholeness all creatures are derived.

Theseus

Duke Theseus is unquestionably the central personage of the Knight's Tale, dominating and to some extent controlling its action. His authority as temporal lord encompasses all the events upon which the tale is focussed. He rules Palamon and Arcite by right of conquest, and as husband of her older sister exercises authority over Emelye as well. The Tale begins with his conquest of the Amazons and ends as he brings about the marriage of Emelye

(16) "Se tu as amé, - c'est a dire, riches, - tu trouveras grant nombre de compaignons et d'amis. Et se ta fortune se change que tu soles povres, que tu demourras tout seul." (Le Livre de Melibeus et Prudence 836-38; Bryan, W.F., and Dempster, Germaine; Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales", New York, 1958; p. 600.

and Palamon, by which is secured the 'obeisance' to Athens of Thebes. In this magisterial role he somewhat resembles the Knight who tells the Tale, who is the first described of all the Pilgrims and draws the 'cut', 'of which ful blythe and glad was every wight', since it is appropriate to the rank and status of 'this gode man' that his Tale be accorded first place. The Knight intervenes as by right in two incidents described in link passages: he 'stintes' the Monk of his wearisome recital of tragedies bewailing the changeableness of Fortune, and he reconciles the Host and Pardoner after the latter's ire has been aroused by a well-deserved insult. Each time he is acting on his own innate authority to restore harmony and order, for the Monk's disorderly ramble is as discordant as the exchange of words between the Host and the Pardoner. Theseus plays an identical role in his Tale, using the same words -- 'Ho! Namore...!' when he parts the disorderly combatants in the grove. Like the Knight, Theseus is 'oon', one integral whole: a lord and leader of men not only by right of birth and outward trappings of ceremony, but by intrinsic worth. He has the 'bountee and prowesse' which 'only ... may enhaunsen every man over other men' (Boece IV, Pr. 3); in his actions he is ruled by that property of mankind, reason, by which alone man is made lord of creation; he shows the qualities of the true knight -- 'trouthe, honour... wisdom, humblesse, estaat... fredom' (II(A) 2789-91). By virtue of his tempora. 'gentillesse', his noble ancestry, Theseus is 'lord and governour' of Athens; and since 'he is gentil that doth gentil dedis' (III(D) 1170), his fitness to rule men holds true in the widest sense. He wields his powers with justice, moderation and mercy, in awareness of the responsibilities of lordship.

Three of Theseus' conquests are mentioned before the main focus of the Tale is reached, with the finding of Palamon and Arcite. These are his conquest of 'the regne of Femenye', whose queen he marries; his victory over the Minotaur 'which that he slough in Crete', and his conquest of Thebes. Each of these victories has a symbolic value in the estimation of Theseus' role. The subjugation of the kingdom of militant women, and his symbolic marriage to their queen, is a restoration of order:

'For (God)/.....

"For (God) he made (woman) nat of the hewed of Adam,
for she sholde nat clayme to greet lordshipe. For
ther as the womman hath the maistrie, she maketh
to muche desray..." (X(I) 926-27)

The dominance of man over woman, of husband over wife, is as fixed in the divine ordinance of things as the hierarchy of God over the reason of man, reason over sensuality and sensuality over man's body. The courtly love relationship in which the lover is the abject 'servant', submissive and obedient to his mistress' every whim, is a perversion of the divinely decreed order. In marriage, the only 'leefful assemblinge of man and of woman... a ful greet sacrament', the woman should be 'subget to hir housbonde... first, in obedience' (X(I) 930). The situation of the Knight's Tale, in which two lovers strive to oust one another in the service of the same mistress, is merely ridiculous in the view founded on ordered reality. Theseus suggests the absurdity of the dilemma:

"Ech of you bothe is worthy doutelees,
To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees
I soeke as for my suster Emelye,
For whom ye have this strif and jalousye.
Ye woot yourself she may nat wedden two
Atones, though ye fighten everemo...
This is to sevn, she may nat now han bothe,
Al be ye never so jalouse ne so wrothe..." (II(A) 1831-40)

The Parson seems to have considered this droll situation in his summing-up of the nature of 'verray mariage':

"...it was ordeyned that o man sholde have but o womman, and o womman but o man,...for a man is hewed of a womman; algate, by ordinaunce it sholde be so. For if a womman hadde mo men than oon, thanne sholde she have moo hevedes than oon, and that were an horrible thyng bifore God; and eek a womman ne myghte nat plesse to many folk at oones. And also ther ne sholde nevere be pees ne reste amonges hem;..." (X(I) 921-23)

The 'stryf' and 'jelousye' resulting from the joint adoration of Palamon and Arcite comes both of Diana's influence and of the wound inflicted on each by Cupid's arrows, for the two are closely related causes. The nature of the love which forbids 'pees ne reste amonges hem' is contrasted, by implication, with the binding and ordering love that 'knytteth sacrament of mariages of chaste

loves' (Boece II, Met. 8)

Theseus' victory over the Minotaur, whose image appears on his pennant, is significant in that this fabulous monster, half man and half bull, symbolises the bestial part of man. The Minotaur is 'a man by nature, a demon through pride, and a bull through lechery.' (17) By slaying the monster Theseus has given another proof of his innate nobility:

"For sothe, o manere gentrie is for to oreise, that
apparailleth mannes corage with vertues and
moralitees, and maketh hym Cristes child. For
truste wel that *over what man that synne hath*
maistrie, he is a verray cherl to synne." (X(II) 462-63)

"Whoso wol ben myghti he moot daunten his cruel
corages, *ne putte nat his nekke, overcomen,*
undir the foule reynes of lecherie. For al be it
so that *thi lordschipe strecche so fer that the*
contre of Ynde quaketh at thy comaundementz...
yit yif thou maist nat putten away thi foule dirke
desires, and dryven out fro the wrecchide com-
pleyntes, certes it nys no power that thou hast." (Boece III, Met. 5)

The conquest of Thebes, besides providing a context for the story of Arcite and Palamon, is important thematically. 'The history of Thebes had perpetual interest for Chaucer as an example of the struggle between noble designs and chaos.' (18) Palamon and Arcite are of the royal Theban house, 'the blood royal of Cadme and Amphion'. Cadmus who 'of the citee first was crowned king', was the legendary sower of the dragon's teeth, from which a host of armed warriors sprang up who fought each other until only five were left: so that from its very origin Thebes was associated with strife. The full subjugation of Thebes, the purpose for which Theseus arranges the marriage of Palamon and Emelye, is equivalent from this point of view to the triumph of order over chaos. In the Teseida the marriage of Palemone to Emilia takes place immediately after Arcite's death, by general consent of the Greeks, in order to fulfil Arcite's dying wish and to end their sorrow in joy. But in the Knight's Tale

(17) Holcot, In Librum Sapientiae; quoted in D.W. Robertson,
Jr., *op. cit.* p. 156.

(18) Charles Muscatine, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

the marriage is brought about after 'certeyn yeres' as a matter of political expediency:

"Than seemed me ther was a parlement
At Athenes, upon certein pointz and caas;
Among the whiche pointz ysoken was,
To have with certein contrees alliaunce,
And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce.
For which this noble Theseus anon
Leet senden after gentil Palamon..." (I(A) 2970-77)

Only when love is brought within the frame of universal order, when the parties submit to the bonds of 'verray mariage', can it become a force which works for the 'comune profit', a stabilising factor instead of a dangerous movement in the direction of chaos.

Theseus and his father Egeus stand alone in the Tale in their understanding of the workings of Fortune. The gifts of Fortune, according to the Parson's Tale, are 'richesses, highe degrees of lordshipes, preisinges of the peple':

"Certes also, whoso prideth hym in the goodes of fortune, he is a ful greet fool; for somtyme is a man a greet lord by the morwe, that is a caytyf and a wrecche er it be nyght; and somtyme the richesse of a man is cause of his deth; somtyme the delices of a man ben cause of the grevous maladye thurgh which he dyeth. Certes, the commendacioun of the peple is somtyme ful fals and ful brotel for to triste; this day they preyse, tomorwe they blame." (X(I) 471-73)

Theseus appears first as a conqueror 'swich... That gretter was ther noon under the sonne'. He rides to war beneath a banner in which 'the rede statue of Mars.... shyneth'; yet in the temple of Mars erected at his behest Conquest is depicted like Damocles,

"... sittynge in greet honour,
With the sharpe swerd over his heed
Hauynge by a soutil twynes threed." (I(A) 2028-30)

The first incident of the Tale occurs as Theseus returns in triumph from his conquest of Scithia and his marriage to its queen. He is met by 'a companye of ladies' in deep mourning who address him as 'Lord, to whom Fortune hath yiven Victorie,' and who tell him that as Fortune has raised him to the summit of success, so she has plunged them from the heights to the depths:

"For certes/.....

"For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle,
 That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene,
 Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene,
 Then'ed be Fortune and hire false wheel,
 That noon estaat assureth to be weel." (I(A) 922-26)

Clearly Theseus understands the precariousness of his triumph, for he has compassion on these victims of Fortune's 'false wheel', and hastens to avenge their wrongs. He perceives also that the victory by which Emelye is to be won will be an uncertain 'grace' of Fortune, as his own victories have been. Before Arcite has seen Emelye he counsels fortitude in the face of their fate. But after they have been smitten both Arcite and Palamon complain against their respective lots, each imagining that Fortune has been kinder to the other:

"O deere cosyn Palamon, 'quod he,
 'Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.
 Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure, --
 In prison? certes nay, but in paradys!
 Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,
 That hast the sighte of hire, and I th'absence..." (I(A) 1234-39)

"Allas, 'quod he, 'Arcite, cosyn myn,
 Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn...
 For, as by wey of possibilittee,
 Sith thou art at thy large, of prison free,
 And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage
 Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage..." (I(A) 1281-82
 1291-94)

The people of Athens, too, murmur against fate in mourning for Arcite:

"Why woldestow be deed, ' thise wommen crye,
 'And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?' (I(A) 2835-36)

But Theseus' attitude towards the changeableness of Fortune is voiced by his father Egeus, who comforts him:

"No man myghte gladen Theseus,
 Savynge his olde fader Egeus,
 That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
 As he hadde seyn it chaunge bothe up and down,
 Joye after wo, and wo after gladness,
 And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.
 'Right as ther dyed nevere man,' quod he,
 'That he ne lyvede in erthe in some degree,
 Right so ther lyvede never man,' he seyde,
 'In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.
 This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
 And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro.
 Deeth is an ende of every worldly soore.'" (I(A) 2837-49)

It is characteristic of Theseus' nobility that he can see further than the common people, whose view is circumscribed by earthly goods and the pleasures of the flesh; further, too, than Palamon or Arcite, whose vision is much the worse for their having been wounded through the eyes by the 'fury darts' of Love. Theseus is aware that beyond the immediate bounds of time and space on earth the ordered universe extends into eternity and infinity. Relative to it, man's earthly life is merely a brief journey from birth to dying. It is only during this short span that man is 'in-with the floor of Fortune' (Boece II Pr. 1) and subject to her whims. Moreover, Fortune herself is not what she seems. There is above all things the 'wyse purveyaunce' of the First Mover, from which proceeds the 'order destinal':

"And this like ordre constreyneth the fortunas and the dedes of men by a bond of causes nat able to ben unbowerd: the whiche destynal causes, whan thei passen out fro the bygynnynges of the unmevabele purveyaunce, it moot nedes be that thei ne be nat mutable. And thus ben the thinges ful wel governed yif that the symplite duellynge in the devyne thought scheweth forth the ordre of causes unable to ben ibowed. And this ordre constreyneth by his propre stables the moevable thingis, or elles thei scholden fleten folyly. For which it es that alle thingis semen to ben confus and trouble to us men, for we ne mowen nat considere thilke ordenaunce. Natheles the propre maner of every thing, dressynge hem to gode, disponith hem alle." Boece IV, Pr. 6.

Fortune is not random chance, but a minister of Providence, bound by 'an uneschuable bindinge to-gidere, which that descendeth fro the welle of purveyaunce that ordeineth alle thinges in hir places and in hir tymes'. (Boece V, Pr. 1) This is what Theseus perceives, acts upon and implements.

Hence it is that when Arcite, disguised as Philostrate, rides into the fields on a May morning, into the 'snare' of Fortune and the arms of his rival, it is by 'aventure' that he encounters Palamon hiding in a bush. The agent which ultimately directs his 'aventure' and impels him to this meeting is the same that brings Theseus to the spot where the two are apparently trying to hack one another to death:

"The destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world over al

The purveyaunce/.....

The purvefaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
 So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
 The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,
 Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
 That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeer.
 For certainly, oure appetites heer,
 Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
 Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
 This mene I now by myghty Theseus..." (I(A) 1663-73)

In his knowledge of the ordered nature of the real universe, the good and worthy lord stands in duty bound to suppress within his own domain any act that tends towards disorder and eventual chaos. When the noble duke comes upon Arcite and Palamon, 'that foughten brems, as it were bores two', his only thought is to restore order in his realm:

"And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,
 And pulled out a swerd, and cride, 'Hoo!
 Namooore, up oeyne of lesyng of youre heed'...
 But telleth me what myster men ye been,
 That been so hardy for to f'ghten heere
 Withouten juge or oother officere,
 As it were in a lystes roially." (I(A) 1705-13)

His first angry reaction to Palamon's confession is 'Ye shal be deed, by mighty Mars the rede!'; his second is the considered judgement of the true knight, the 'gentil' lord:

"For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.
 And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
 He hath considered shortly, in a clause,
 The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause,
 And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
 Yet in his resoun he hein bothe excused..." (I(A) 1761-66)

Reason overrules Theseus' anger, as in the orderly condition of man's spirit it should do:

"Ire, after the philosophe, is the fervent blood of
 man yquyked in his herte, thurgh which he woie
 harm to hym that he hateth. For certes, the herte
 of man, by eschawfyng and moevyng of his
 blood, wexeth so trouble that he is out of aile
 juggement of resoun." (X(I) 536-37)

But Theseus recalls himself to the 'juggement of resoun', arguing that the good lord is also merciful. He speaks gently and humourously to Palamon and Arcite of their folly, telling them that he too has been thus foolish in his time:

"And therefore/....."

"And therefore, syn I knowe of loves payne,
 And woot hou soore it kan a man distreyne,
 As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,
 I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas..." (I(A) 1815-18)

His judgement is in perfect accord with his avowed object of maintaining the rule of law within his domain. Palamon and Arcite will meet their destiny, whatever it may be, at a formal battle in the royal lists, with Theseus himself acting as 'even juge and trewe' of the outcome. The date is set for fifty weeks later, to allow 'fervent blood' to cool down. There will be no disorderly brawling while this lord rules.

The lists prepared by Theseus for the encounter are a miniature representation of the cosmos, 'a maner wonderful cercle or envioninge of the simplicitee devyne' (Boece III, Pr. 12). Like its prototype it is circular (in token of wholeness), and in it every man has his own place:

"The circutt a myle was aboute,
 Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
 Round was the shap, in manere of compas,
 Ful of degrees, the heighte of sixty pas,
 That whan a man was set on o degree,
 He letted nat his felawe for to see.
 Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
 Westward right swich another in the opposit." (I(A) 1887-94)

The construction of the lists and the details of the temples bear out in their symmetry Theseus' promise of an impartial judgement. When the tournament-day comes the two chief combatants are 'bothe y-liche honoured' by the duke, and their companies are symmetrically arrayed upon the field:

"In al the world, to seken up and down,
 So evene, withouten variacioun,
 Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye;
 For ther was noon so wys that koude seye
 That any hadde of oother avauntage
 Of worthynesse, ne of estaat, ne age,
 So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.
 And in two renges faire they ham dresse." (I(A) 2587-94)

When the tourney has been won Theseus bows to the verdict of Fortune, whose gift victory is:

"I wol be trewe juge, and no partie.
 Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,
 That by his fortune hath hire faire ywonne." (I(A) 2657-59)

Once more he is at pains to contain the passions which gave rise to the tournament within the frame of order, for immediately the issue has been decided the strife must cease:

"For which anon dur Theseus leet crye,
 To stynten alle rancour and envye,
 The gree as wel of o syde as of oother.
 And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother..." (II(A) 2731-34)

It falls to Theseus also to see that all the rites are properly performed when Arcite dies, and it is he who chooses the site of Arcite's funeral pyre: the clearing in which he came upon Arcite and Palamon locked in battle, the same place upon which the lists were built, becomes the 'sepulture'. Where the 'hote fires' of love consumed Arcite's soul, there symbolically the flames will consume his fleshly remains. It is incumbent on the lord to lead his subjects to the truth in all things, and by choosing this particular spot for the accomplishment of 'th'office funeral' he is demonstrating the nature of the consuming passion that divided Palamon and Arcite.

With the funeral over and the mourning rites completed in due form, Theseus has one final task to perform. He has shown his people, in his actions and decisions in all that has gone before, that law and order must be upheld in the affairs of men, for disorder is the path to destruction. He now calls Palamon and Emelive to him, in the interests of the 'alliaunce' of men, and speaks to them of 'thilke love that governeth hevене':

"The firste Moevere of the cause above,
 When he first made the faire cheyne of love,
 Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente.
 Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente;
 For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
 The fyr, the evr, the water, and the lond
 In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee,
 That same Prince and that Moevere," quod he,
 'Hath stablissed in this wretched world adoun
 Certeyne dayes and duracioun
 To al that is engendred in this place,
 Over the whiche day they may nat pace,
 Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge....
 Thanne may men by this ordre wel discernen
 That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.
 Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
 That every part dirryveth from his hool;
 For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng
 Of no partie or cantel of a thyng,
 But of a thyng that perfit is and stable,
 Descendynge so til it be corruptible.
 And therefore, of his wise purveiaunce,
 He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,
 That spesces of thynges and progressiouns
 Shullen endure by successiouns,
 And nat eterne..." (II(A) 2987-3015)

Theseus in his wisdom knows the answer to the question on Arcite's lips in his moment of dying. A man's death is but a part of the divine plan, so small a part in so immense a pattern that only the all-knowing God -- 'Jupiter the king' -- can comprehend it in its entirety. Man should not ask 'why?', but should merely accept the ordinance of the 'first moevere' in the assurance that whatever proceeds from his 'welle', the source of all goodness, is good. His decree is unalterable, and to rebel against it would be both foolish and unruly:

"Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye....
 And heer-agayns no creature on lyve,
 Of no degree, availleth for to stryve.
 Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,
 To maken vertu of necessitee,
 And take it weel that we may nat eschue,
 And namely that to us alle is due.
 And whoso gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,
 And rebel is to hym that al may gye." (II(A) 3034, 3039-45)

The 'faire cheyne' of love that binds together the elements of the universe is the same to which Theseus 'in his reson' submitted his will when he overcame the anger aroused in him when Palamon confessed to his identity. His willingness to forgive is not only a mark of 'gentillesse', but a sign of his own humility, that 'vertu, thurgh which a man hath veray knowledge of him-self, and holdeth of him-self no prys ne deyntee as in regard of hise desertes, consideringe evere his freletee.' (X(I) 477). Theseus in his time has been a love-sick fool, and his own 'freletee' makes him compassionate towards the folly of Palamon and Arcite. This is the greatest of Theseus' qualities: humanity. While knowing that man is potentially ennobled by his reasonable soul, he yet understands that the flesh is weak.

Although the Knight's Tale is set in pagan times, Chaucer makes a clear distinction between the devotion of Palamon, Arcite and Emelye to their respective patrons and the broadly theistic piety of Theseus. Theseus serves in turn Mars, who figures on his banner when he rides to war and Diana, when he goes hunting; and feels a humorous compassion with the lovers because in his youth he too served the god of Love and his mother Venus. Though he has worshipped each of these deities as it suited his purpose, he is bound to none of them. Ultimately he submits himself to the supremacy of 'Jupiter the king',

who/.....

who is represented as trying to 'stente' the strife of Mars and Venus. That these two were once lovers (I(A) 2383-90) is most apt as a comment on the nature of cupidinous love. Jupiter has the role of peacemaker and ordering force in the heavens just as Theseus, the good lord, fills this role in his own realm. Saturn is the polar opposite of Jupiter: it is his intrinsic nature to stir up 'strife and drede', and when required to quench it he uses a treacherous sleight that cuts down Arcite in his moment of triumph, so that joy is turned to sorrow.

The wisdom of Theseus includes a knowledge of Saturn's powers as well as of the orderly universe ruled over by Jupiter, whose 'welle' is the 'soverein good' in which 'perfeccioun of blisfulnesse is set'. His understanding is in the threefold sense stipulated by the Lady Philosophy for 'hele of corages': he knows 'what is the ende of thinges', he knows 'by which governements the world is governed', and finally, and most importantly, he knows himself. He understands the relationship of mankind to the cosmos, the littleness of human life and earthly lordship in the face of the eternal omnipotence of the 'first moevere', the ephemerality of earthly possessions and earthly loves. In this knowledge of himself a man 'passeth ... in noblesse alle other thinges' (Boece II, Pr. 5).

"The crowning nobility, as expressed by the poem, goes beyond a grasp of the forms of social and civil order, beyond magnificence in any earthly sense, to a perception of order beyond chaos. When the earthly designs suddenly crumble, true nobility is faith in the ultimate order of things."

Muscantine, op. cit., p. 190.

B. THE FRANKLIN.

"...forwhy thilke thing that every man desirith moost over alle thynges he demeth that it be the sovereyn good; but I have diffyned that blisfulnesse is the sovereyn good; for which every wyght demeth that thilke estat that he desirith over alle thynges, that it be blisfulnesse.

Now hastow thanne byforn thyne eien almost al the purposaunde forme of the walefulnesse of mankynde: that is to seyn rychesses, honours, power, glorie, and delitiz. The whiche delit conly considered Epicurus, and juggid and establissyde that delit is the soverayn good, for as moche as alle othere thynges, as hym thoughte, byrefte away joye and myrthe from the herte." (Boece III, Pr. 2)

The portrait of the Franklin in the General Prologue describes him in terms of this passage of the Consolation:

"To lyven in delit was evere his wone,
For he was Epicurus owene sone,
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
Was verray felicittee parfit." (I(A) 335-28)

The remainder of the Franklin's portrait speaks of him as one who loves the pleasures of the table, who has held such notable offices as justice of the peace, 'knyght of the shire', 'shirreve' and 'countour' -- a man of substance in the material sense, one who has a sturdy sense of his own importance and a desire to make it known. The Franklin's comments on the (unfinished) Squire's Tale, which precedes his own, disclose a little more about him: namely, that this 'worthy vavasour', although not himself of noble birth, aspires eagerly to 'gentillesse'. What he means by 'gentillesse' is central to an understanding of the Tale he is about to tell. Just as he believes that 'pleyn delit' is the sovereign good, so he believes that one of the parts of 'gentillesse' -- its outward form -- is true nobility. The Squire has recounted a courtly romance abounding in rhetorical ornament and self-conscious 'elocutio', one that

"...is nat able a dul man to devyse.
He mooste han knowen love and his servyse,
And been a feestlych man as fresch as May,
That sholde yow devyysen swich array..." (V(F) 279-81)

Since the Squire himself is 'as fresh as is the month of May' and one who

well/.....

well knows 'love and his servyse' he is, despite his modest disclaimers, admirably suited to the telling of his Tale. The Host required of him 'somwhat of love', and having by the Franklin's praise the young Squire more than adequately met the challenge:

"In feith Squier, thou hast thee wel yquit
And gentilly. I preise wel thy wit,
Quod the Frankeleyn, 'considerynge thy yowthe,
So feelyngly thou spekest, sire, I allow the!
As to my doom, ther is noon that is heere
Of eloquence that shal be thy peere..." (V(F) 673-78)

Like the speech of knight who came to King Cambyuskan's court, the Squire's style is

"After the forme used in his langage,
Withouten vice of silable or of lettre;
And, for his tale sholde seme the bettre,
Accordant to his wordes was his cheere,
As techeth art of speche hem that it leere..." (V(F) 100-04)

In other words, the appearance, the 'cortex', is perfect; but one wonders what the condition of the 'nucleus' is. The fragment that exists of the unfinished Squire's Tale leads the reader to suspect that there may be little substance beneath the courtly correctness of the surface. But this, to the Franklin, is 'gentillesse': a 'gentil wight' is one who speaks with the correct inflections and uses the appropriate figures of rhetoric in the proper manner. If the words are 'peynted... and kembde at point-devys' then the Franklin desires to look no further for proof of 'gentillesse'. Hence the impatience of the Host, who butts rudely into the Franklin's account of his son's failings with 'Straw for your gentillesse.' The 'gentillesse' that the Franklin is at pains to acquire for his son is entirely a matter of outward trappings -- in speech, clothing, bearing and manner. As with his belief that 'delit' is 'verray felicittee parfit', so he believes that these external appearances of 'gentillesse' are the thing itself. In both cases, he mistakes a part for the whole.

Having only a superficial knowledge of the nature of true 'blisfulnesse', the Franklin can have only an equally imperceptive view of the truth. His vision is, in fact, confined to the external aspects of what he sees, and he is therefore deluded by appearances as the Knight, in the wisdom born of his integrity, is not. His Tale reveals that he is taken in by the material aspects

of nobility./.....

of nobility, and by the apparent 'gentillesse' of courtly love. It is fitting that his Tale should deal with 'apparence', and more fitting still that he himself should so obviously not understand it.

The Franklin's Tale

The present discussion of the Franklin's Tale concentrates on its treatment of love and marriage, and in particular its attitude towards the nature and degree of the order assumed in both. The word 'love' as used in this Tale has the ring of ambiguity already touched upon in relation to its use in the Knigh's Tale:

"Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrie.
Whaw maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!
Love is a thyng as any spirit free..." (N(F) 764-67)

The 'god of love' who thus precipitately flees is Cupid, whose arrows afflict men with the kind of love that Boethius opposes to the 'caritas' that 'governeth erthe and see, and hath also comaundement to the hevene', that 'knytteth sacrament of mariages of chaste loves', and 'enditith lawes to trewe felawes'. The lawes 'endited' by this divine love are 'naturel lawe... in his right point', the same that the Parson expounds in his discussion of 'verray mariage'. The lordship of husband over wife, and the acceptance by the wife of the husband's dominance, is fundamental to the Christian concept of marriage. The obedient submission of the wife is at the basis of the marriage relationship, and at the same time it is incumbent upon the man, 'by ordinaunce', to assume the 'maistrie' and to act as 'heved' and reasonable faculty of his wife, while she obeys him, loves him and is faithful to him. These are the chief assumptions which Chaucer expects his audience to share as they listen to the Franklin's exposition of his own 'Epicurean' views of the life and loves of the 'gentils'.

The Marriage of Arveragus and Dorigen

Two conflicting kinds of love are represented in the Franklin's account of the courtship and marriage with which his Tale begins. One of these can apply only to courtship, and the other to marriage. The laws of courtly love are set out at length in the De Amore of Andreas Capellanus, to which recurrent reference will be made, while those of the other kind of love as applied to marriage are stated in the following (condensed) passage from the Parson's discussion of the Remedium contra peccatum Luxurie:

"trewe/....."

"Trew effect of mariage... maketh the hertes al oon
 of hem that been ywedded, as wel as the bodies..
 This is verray mariage, that was establissed by
 God, or that synne bigan, whar natureel lawe was
 in hi. right poynt in paradys; and it was ordeyned
 that o man sholde have but o womman, and o womman
 but o man, as seith Saint Augustyn, by manye resouns.
 First, for mariage is figured bitwixe Crist and holy
 chirche. And that oother is for a man is heved of a
 womman; algate, by ordinaunce it sholde be so...
 Now comth how that a man sholde bere hym with
 his wif, and namely in two thynges, that is to seyn,
 in suffraunce and reverence, as shewed Crist whan he made
 first womman. For he ne made hire nat of the heved
 of Adam, for she sholde nat clayme to greet lordshipe.
 For ther as the womman bath the maistrie, she maketh
 to muche desray... Also, certes, God ne made nat
 womman of the foot of Adam, for she ne sholde nat
 been holden to lowe; for she kan nat paciently suffre.
 But God made womman of the ryb of Adam, for womman
 sholde be felawe unto man.... Now how that a womman
 sholde be subget to hire housbonde, that telleth Saint
 Peter. First, in obedience. And eek, as seith the
 decree, a womman that is wyf, as longe as she is wyf,
 she hath noon auctoritee to swere ne to bere witness
 withoute leve of hir housbonde, that is hire lord; algate,
 he sholde be so by resoun.... A wyf sholde eek be mesurable.....
 in beringe... and discreet in alle hire wordes and hire
 dedes. And aboven alle worldly thyng she sholde loven
 hire housbonde with al hire herte, and to hym be trewe
 of hir body. So sholde an housbonde eek be to his wyf."

(X(1) 920-38)

The Parson's account of 'verray mariage' is a useful gloss on the marriage agreement arrived at by Arveragus and Dorigen. After a model courtship, in which Arveragus undertakes 'many a greet emprise' for his lady's sake, suffers 'wo... payne, and... distresse' because he dares not speak of his love, and finally comes secretly to an agreement with her, Dorigen accepts him in marriage. She takes pity on his 'penaunce' because he is worthy, 'and namely for his meke obeysaunce'. This vital requirement of the courtly lover Arveragus promises to extend into their married life: but for the sake of appearances he retains the right to keep 'the name of soveraynetee':

"And for to lede the moore in blisse hir lyves,
 Of his free wyl he swoor hire as a knyght
 That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,
 Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie
 Agayn hir wyl, ne kithe hire jalousie,

But/.....

But hire obeie, and folwe hir wyl in al,
 As any lovere to his lady shal,
 Save that the name of soveraynetee.
 That wolde he have for shame of his degree." (V(F) 744-52)

In promising Dorigen perpetual obedience Arveragus is honouring the commandment of courtly love that says: 'Being obedient in all things to the commands of ladies, thou shalt ever strive to ally thyself to the service of Love.' (19). The same table of rules states that 'if the parties concerned marry, love is violently put to flight.' (20) Hence the first part of the Franklin's Tale is the statement of a paradox: between 'Love' and marriage there exists an irreconcilable conflict. When Dorigen humbly thanks her husband for his liberality, her good intentions are undercut by the audience's awareness that 'a man is heved of a woman; algate, by ordinaunce it sholde be so', and by the imagery in which she couches her reply:

"She seyde, 'Sire, sith of youre gentillesse
 Ye proffe me to have so large a reyne,
 Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us tweyne,
 As in my gill, were outhere werre or stryf.
 Sire, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf;
 Have heer my trouthe..." (V(F) 754-59, my italics)

The implied concept is that of the horse and rider, a familiar representation of the body guided by the reasonable soul (21). The ordinance which requires that the husband be 'heved' of his wife states also that 'god sholde have lordshipe over reson, and reson over sensualitee, and sensualitee over the body of man' (X(I) 262). The relationship of reason to the flesh is figured in that of the head to the body, and of a man to his wife. (22) The 'headless' wife, no less than the horse on too lax a rein, is doomed to

(19) Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love; translated by John Jay Parry: Frederick Ungar, New York, 1959; p. 81.

(20) *Ibid.*, p. 156. ('How Love may come to an End.')

(21) E.g. in St. Jerome, Adversus Jovinianum Lib. II, cap. 10: "Sensus corporum quasi equi sunt, sine rationes currentes, anima vero in aurigae modum retinet frena currentium. Et quomodo equi absque rectore praecipites ruunt: ita corpus sine ratione et imperio animae, in suum fertur interitum." (Migne, 299) See also Canterbury Tales IV (D) 384-90, IV (D) 813-15.

(22) See, for instance, X(I) 332: "For truste wel, though so were that the feend tempted Eve, that is to seyn the flesh, and the flesh hadde delit in the besettes of the fruit defouled, yet certes, til that reson, that is to seyn, Adam, consented to the ettinge of the fruit, yet stood he in the staat of innocence." come/

come to grief. Dorigen is restrained only by 'the name of stoveraynetee', a check insufficient to save her from her own silliness.

The Franklin's earnest discussion of the qualities of the courtly lover is in harmony with his superficial 'Epicurean' view of life:

"For o thyng, sires, saufly dar I seye,
That freendes everych oother moot obeye,
If thev wol longe holden compaignye.
Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!
Love is a thyng as any soirit free.
Wommen, of kynde, desuren libertee,
And nat to been constreyned as a thral;
And so doon men, if I sooth seve shal.
Looke who that is moost pacient in love,
He is at his avantage al above.
Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn,
For it vengysseth, as thise clerkes seyn,
Thynges that rigour sholde nevere atteyne.
For every word men may nat chide or oleyne.
Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot I goon,
Ye shul it lerne, wher so ve wole or noon;
For in this world, certein, ther no wight is
That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys.
Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,
Wyn, wo, or chaungynge of complexioun
Causeth ful o'te to doon amys or sneken.
On every wrong a man may nat be wroken.
After the tyme moste be temperaunce
To every wight that kan on governance.
And therefore nath this wise, worthy knyght,
To lyve in ese, suffrance hire bihight,
And she to hym ful wisly gan to swere
That nevere shoide ther be defaute in here." (V(F) 761-90)

'Trendes', or courtly paramours, must obey one another voluntarily in order to preserve the love between them. When the ordained bonds of husband to wife are established by marriage 'Love' flies away:

"We declare and we hold as firmly established that love cannot exert its powers between two people who are married to each other. For lovers give each other everything freely, under no compulsion of necessity, but married people are in duty bound to give in to each other's desires and deny themselves to each other in nothing." The Art of Courtly Love, pp. 106-07.
(Judgement given by the Countess of Champagne.)

The law of 'kinde,' by which both men and women 'desuren libertee,' is the

law of the flesh, whose promptings no man may refuse (23). 'Love' of this sort is a carnal passion which does not accept any other law than itself, scorning the restraint of the bonds imposed by divine love. Men and women 'of kinde' desire such freedom, for 'the flesch coveteth agayn the spirit, an' the spirit agayn the flesh...' (X(I) 342). The bonds of marriage go counter to the natural inclination of 'kinde' to be subject only to its own whims.

Elaborating on this explanation of 'Love', the Franklin proceeds next to an exposition of 'pacience' and 'suffrance' which leans distinctly towards the Wife of Bath's usages of these terms:

"Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,
And han a sweete soiced conscience,
Sith ye so dreche of Jobes pacience.
Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan dreche;
And but ye do, certein we shal yow teche
That it is fair to have a wyf in peas.
Oon of us two moste howen, doutelees;
And sith a man is moore resonable
Than woman is, ye moste been suffrable." (III(D) 431-42)

The Wife of Bath plays on the senses of 'resonable', demanding tolerance or 'suffrance', in effect complete submission, while inflicting suffering; and in secondary sense she refers to the lordship that reasonable Adam should have over fleshly Eve -- but in her case does not. In speaking of patience and 'suffrance', the Franklin is using terms subtly twisted from their Christian context:

"Suffrance suffreth swetely alle the anovaunces
and the wronges that men doon to man outward...
Pacience...suffreth swetely every mannes
goodnesse, and is nat wrooth for noon harm that
is doon to hym...And therefore seith the wise man,
'If thou wolt ven' ysse thyn enemy, lerne to
suffre'...Of pacience comth obedience, thurgh
whiche a man is obedient to Crist and to alle hem
to whiche he oghte to been obedient in Crist.
And understand wel that obedience is perfit, whan
that a man booth gladly and hastily, with good
wille orderly, al that he sholde do. Obedience
general is to perfourme the doctrine of God and
of His sovereyns, to whiche hym oghte to ben
obedient in alle rightwisnesse." (X(I) 655, 658, 660, 674, 676)

(23) Compare with the image of 'proude Bayard' used by Chaucer
in *Troilus and Criseyde* Book I, 218-38.

Patience/.....

Patience in love, according to the Franklin, 'venquisseth...things that rigour sholde never atteyne.' The 'enemy' vanquished by such patience is the same 'swete foo' whom the dying Arcite molored to take him in her arms: the beloved lady who is the centre of the lover's universe. The Christian concept of patience and suffrance is expressed by St. Paul's 'Charitas patiens est, benigna est... omnia suffert...' (I Cor. 13: 4, 7). The Franklin here applies the concept to courtly love, and of such 'paciencie' comes obedience -- the upside-down courtly love situation in which the man is obedient to the woman, who is his 'sovereyn', and whom, in terms of the laws of 'Love', he worships and serves. In fact the enemy whom by his 'paciencie' he 'vanquishes', the 'swete foo', actually holds him in thrall. The double sense of 'suffering' is present also in the courtly love relationship: the lover must acquaint himself with pain as well as with patience, because

"Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex... That love is suffering is easy to see, for before the love becomes equally balanced on both sides there is no torment greater, since the lover is always in fear... No one can number the fears of one single lover... But even after both are in love the fears that arise are just as great..." (My italics)
The Art of Courtly Love, pp. 28-29 ("What Love is.")

'Lerneth to suffre', says the Franklin, for if you do not, 'Love' will teach you. Tolerance is equally necessary, for

*"Tre, siknesse, or constellacioun,
 Wyn, wo, or chaunginge of comolexioun
 Causeth ful ofte to doon amis or speken..."* (V(F) 781-83)

Since the Franklin is speaking of 'temperance', or self-restraint, and 'governance', it is noteworthy that he omits from his 'sentence' the one overruling cause of misdoing and mis-speaking. All the factors he mentions are secondary to the free will, which governs man's conduct, and which can, if a man has 'knowledge of hemself', prevent misdoing:

*"Minsinc peut on, se mout n'est nices,
 Garder sei de touz autres vices,
 Ou sei de vertuz destourner,
 S'il se veaut a mal atourner;
 Car frans vuoleirs est si poissanz,
 S'il est de sei bien quenoiiesanz,
 Qu'il se peut toujours garantir,
 S'il peut dedenz son cuer sentir*

17569

17572

Que pechiez vueille estre ses maistres,
Coment qu'il ait des cors celestres...."

17578

'Mais raisonable creature,
Seit mortuus on, seit devins anges,
Qui tuit deivent a Deu loanges,
S'el se mesquenoist come nice,
Cist defautz li vient de son vice,
Qui le sen li trouble a enivre
E pot de franc vouloir user;
N'est riens qui l'en puisse escuser."

17862

17865

17870

Le Roman de la Rose. (24)

'Governance' is dependent for its success on a man's self-knowledge.

In the rightful order of governance, and in self-knowledge, Arveragus would have mastered his passions with the bridle of reason and would have asserted his authority over Dorigen. But 'to live in *ese*' he has abdicated from his rightful lordship: having expressly disavowed his authority, he must moderate the prompting of reason instead. He must also resist the use of 'imaginacioun', as we will see. The 'Epicurean' Franklin praises him as both 'wyse' and 'worthy' for this decision, since by it he enjoys the best of both worlds -- or seems to:

"Heer may men seen an humble wys accord;
Thus hath she tak hir servand and hir lord,
Servant in love, and lord in mariage;
Thanne was he bothe in lordshipe and servage.
Servage? nay, but in lordshipe above,
Sith he hath bothe his lady and his love;
His lady, certes, and his wyf also,
The which that lawe of love acordeth to.
And whan he was in this prosperitee,
Hoom with his wyf he gooth...." (V(F) 791-800)

Arveragus appears to have won the sweets of two entirely opposite laws of love. In terms of *one*, he is Dorigen's adoring slave, and in the other, her husband and lord -- 'the which that lawe of love acordeth to'. His enjoyment of this paradoxical condition may perhaps be measured by the fact that after only 'a yeer and more' of 'this blisful lyf' he betakes himself to England. While he is absent Dorigen is approached by the lover whose wooing forms the chief matter of the Tale, and yet when he returns

"No thyng list hym to been ymaginatyf,
If any wight hadde spoke, whil he was oute,
To hire of love; he hadde of it no doute.
He nought entendeth to no swich mateere..." (V(F) 1094-97)

(24) These two passages are based on Boethius V, Pr. 2 and following *prosaes*. I have chosen to quote from the *Roman de la Rose* for the sake of brevity. The italics are mine.

One may legitimately surmise that Arveragus' lack of 'imaginacioun' is due to the abdication of his reason when he abjured the 'maistrie' in marriage:

"For the wit comprehendith withoute-forth the figure of the body of the man that is establischid in the matere subgett; but the ymaginacioun comprehendith only the figure withoute the matere; resoun surmountith ymaginacioun and comprehendith by an unversel lokynge the comune spece that is in the singular peces; "

(Boece Bk. V, Pr. 4.)

Reason is 'al-only to the linage of mankinde', and enables man to have knowledge of himself:

"For certes swich is the condicioun of alle mankynde, that oonly whan it hath knowynge of itself, thanne passeth it in noblesse alle othere thynges; and whan it forleith the knowynge of itself thanne it is brought bynet'ten alle beestes." (Boece Bk. II, Pr. 5)

Having disavowed the lordship which the husband should exercise 'by resoun' over his wife, Arveragus has fallen in the intellectual hierarchy described by Boethius to the level of 'wit of the body', a faculty of lower kind than 'imaginacioun', as 'imaginacioun' is lower than reason. 'Wit', which man shares with low forms of life, 'ne may no-thing comprehende out of matere', so that Arveragus concerns himself only with what he can see in relation to his marriage. Like the Franklin, he is satisfied with appearances and 'nought entendeth' his mind further. The 'name of soveraynetee' satisfies him without the actuality; and this is why, when Dorigen confesses her folly, he reacts as he does:

"This housbonde, with glad chiere, in freendi, byse
Answerde and seyde as I shal yow devyse:
'Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay'
For God so wisly have mercy upon me,
I hadde wel levere ystiked for to be
For veray love which that I to yow have,
But if ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save.
Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe"--
But with that word he brast anon to wepe,
And seyde, 'I yow forbode, up payne of deeth,
That nevere, whil thee lasteth lyf ne breeth,
To no wight telle thou of this aventure, -
As I may best, I wol my wo endure, -
Ne make no contenance of hevynesse,
That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse.'" (V(F) 1467-68,
1474-86)

A wife/.....

A wife whose husband is her lord may swear no oath without his permission: if, therefore, Dorigen has sworn, Arveragus must see to it that the oath is honoured, or else admit to Aurelius that he holds no lordship over his wife. Hence the 'apparence' of lordship that Arveragus retains 'for shame of his degree' ends by shaming him outright -- for a man who 'putte his wyf in jupartye' is by any standards 'lewed' -- both foolish and wanton. 'Shame of his degree' makes being cuckolded seem less shameful than admitting that he does not have the 'maistrise' in his marriage --- the 'name of soveraynetee', a mere illusion, is worth more to him than his wife's chastity. So much, then, for the 'gouvernaunce' of this 'wyse worthy knight' in his conduct of his marriage.

'Purveyaunce' and 'gouvernaunce'.

The Franklin's discourse on 'paciencie' and 'suffrance' has an imolation not immediately obvious in the context of his discussion of love and marriage. This emerges in Dorigen's plaintive address to 'eterne god'. In her husband's absence she suffers the pangs of 'Love' in as full a measure as any heroine of courtly romance:

"For his absence wepeth she and siketh,
As doon this noble wywes whan hem liketh,..." (V(F) 817-18)

She displays all the symptoms of the 'lovers maladye of Hereos' previously observed in Arcite, and falls likewise into 'swich rage' that her friends evidently have cause to fear that she too may succumb to her 'derke fantasye' and be afflicted with 'manye', that dreaded disorder of the 'celle fantasyk' in which the patient develops an inverted sense of values. In this precarious state of mind she wanders along the sea-shore and reflects piteously upon the 'grisly rokkes blake' that endanger Arveragus' return:

"Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveiaunce
Ledest the world by certein gouvernaunce,
In ydel, as men seyn, ye no thyng make.
But, Lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake,
That smen rather a foul confusion
Of werk than any fair creacion
Of swich a parfit wys God and a stable,
Why han ye wrought this werk unreasonable?
For by this werk, south, north, ne west, ne eest,
Ther nys yfostred man, ne bryd, ne beest;
It dooth no goode, to my wit, but anyeth.
Se ye nat, Lord, how mankynde it destroyeth?
An hundred thousand bodyes of mankynde
Bin rokkes slayn, al be they nat in mynde,
Whiche mankynde is so fair part of thy werk

That/... ..

That thou it madest lyk to thyn owene merk.
 Thanne semed it ye hadde a greet chiertee
 Toward mankynde; but how thanne may it bee
 That ye swiche meenes make it to destroyen,
 Whiche meenes do no good, but evere anoyen?
 I woot wel clerkes wol seyn as hem leste,
 By argumentz, that al is for the beste,
 Though I ne kan the causes nat yknowe.
 But thilke God that made wynd to blowe
 As kepe my lord! *this my conclusion.*
 To clerkes lete I al disputison.
 But wolde God that alle these rokkes blake
 Were sonken into helle for his sake!
 These rokkes sleen myn herte for the feere." (V(F) 865-93)

Dorigen in this speech is murmuring against the order of creation. Such 'grucching or murmuration'

"...spryngeth of inpacience agayns God... agayns
 God it is, whan a man gruccheth agayn the payne
 of helle, or agayns poverté, or los of catel, or agayn
 reyn or tempest... And alle these thynges sholde
 man suffre paciently, for they comen by the rightful
 juggement and ordinaunce of God." (X(I) 499-501)

Dorigen's 'inpacience' leads her thus querulously to question the 'rightful
 juggement and ordinaunce of god' which men ought to 'suffre paciently'.
 She dismisses the arguments of 'clerkes.... that al is for the best Though (she)
 ne can the causes nat y-knowe', but nevertheless these arguments are
 relevant:

"...no thing is lefevel to folye in the resaume of
 the devyne purveaunce.... syn that the
 ryght stronge God governeth alle thinges in
 this world. For it nis nat lefevel to man
 to comprehenden by wit, ne unfolden by word,
 alle the subtil ordenaunces and disposiciounis
 of the devyne entente. For only it owghte
 suffice to han lokid that God hymself, makere
 of alle natures, ordeineth and dresseth alle
 thingis to gode; whil that he hasteth to with-
 holden the thingis that he hath makid into his
 semblaunce... he chasith out alle yvel fro
 the boundes of his comynalite by the ordre of
 necessite destinable. For which it folweth
 that, yif thou loke the purveaunce ordeynynge
 the thinges that men wenen be: outrageous
 or haboundaunt in erthis, thou ne schalt nat
 seen in no place no thing of yvel." (Boece Bk. IV, Pr. 6)

It is no more 'levelful' to Dorigen than to anyone else to understand why the fearful black rocks are where they are; however, not only is she suffering from 'lovers maladye' and perhaps 'manye' as well, but she is also, due to her husband's vow, bereft of her 'heved'. Hence it seems to her that the 'chiertee' of God towards mankind at the time of creation, when he made man 'lyk to (his) owene merk' has diminished -- that the immutability of the unmoved mover, the 'parfit wys god... and stable' is in doubt. Dorigen's dual handicap of headlessness and 'lovers maladye' gives her an upside-down perspective. She is ruled not by 'chiertee' but by her desire for Arveragus, and she postulates a chaotic universe centred upon 'gery Venus' (IfA 1528-39) and her son Cupid instead of the majestically ordered cosmos described by Boethius. Here the centre is neither 'eterne', nor 'parfit wys', nor 'stable', but merely 'thilke god, that made wind to blow', a deity as unpredictable and as unstable as 'Venus herself'. The 'governaunce' of such a system is by no means 'certein', for if a work wrought by the Creator who makes all things 'in-to his semblaunce' is 'unresonable', then so is the Creator; and if this is so, then creation itself is a 'foul confusoun', and nothing can be certain.

Dorigen shares with Aurelius the disordered perspective of the lover, and the resulting 'inpacience' against the divine 'purveyaunce'. Aurelius' attempt to improve upon the order of creation is, however, more ambitious than Dorigen's. While she merely expresses her dissatisfaction, he goes so far as to suggest the means whereby creation may be adjusted to suit his purposes. In offering his ingenious plan for concealing the rocks Aurelius addresses not an overruling deity such as the 'parfit wys god' to whom Dorigen complains, but Phoebus Apollo as lord of the sun, imploring him to intercede on his behalf with his sister 'Lucina', who, through the influence of the moon, rules the tides. Neptune and Pluto figure also in his prayer, as lords respectively of the sea and the underworld. The universe as it appears to Aurelius in his 'raving' is anything but a whole co-ordinated system guided by one all-powerful ruler. It is a series of apparently autonomous fragments -- sun, moon, sea and land, each ruled by its own petty deity, each deity pursuing his own ends: as though, in Boethian terms, 'alle thinges ben referred and brought to nought, and floteren

with-out/.....

with-oute governour, despoiled of oon as of hir propre leved.' (Boece III, Fr. 11)
 (25) Aurelius is, of course, 'out of his wit' to hope for aid from Apollo, whose power in any case he rates below that of his lady. His promise of devotion to one of the many gods is comparable to the devotion in the Knight's Tale of Palamon, Arcite and Emelye each to one particular patron deity. Such an attitude is consistent with the fragmented and unreal lover's universe, presided over by an uncaring 'queen of everlasting lamentations'.

Dorigen's friends, fellow-seekers with the Franklin of 'pleyn delg', see that the hard facts of reality disturb her, and try to divert her by taking her to 'othere places delitable' where she need not be oppressed by the sight of the sinister rocks. They offer her an 'ordinaunce' more congenial than the divine ordinance:

"So on a day, right in the morwe-tyde,
 Unto a gardyn that was ther bisyde,
 In which that they hadde maad hir ordinaunce
 Of vitaille and of oother purveyaunce,
 They goon and pleye hem al the lonye day.
 And this was on the sixte morwe of May,
 Which May hadde peynted with his softe shoures
 This gardyn ful of leves and of floures;
 And craft of mannes hand so curiously
 Arrayed hadde this gardyn, trewely,
 That nevere was ther gardyn of swich prys,
 But if it were the verray paradyse." (V(F) 901-12, *my italics*)

The 'purveyaunce' of this courtly circle is in accord with their concept of 'felicitee parfy'. Everything about this man-made paradise is designed to give delight, to enchant the senses and to cast out thoughts of harsh reality. It is intentionally reminiscent of the garden 'walled al with stoon' made by that other 'Epicurean', Januarie (26), the dotard hero of the Merchant's Tale.

(25) "...ad nihil unum cuncta referuntur et uno veluti vertice destituta sine rectore fluitabunt..." Boethius, De Consolatione, Lth. 114 Fr. 11, lines 113-15.

(26) Compare lines I (A) 355-38 of the Franklin's portrait with the following passage from the Merchant's Tale:

"Somme clerkes holden that felicitee
 Stant in delit, and therefore certeyn he,
 Th' noble Januarie, with al his myght,
 In honest wyse, as longeth to a knyght,
 Shoop hym to lyve ful deliciously.
 His housynge, his array, as honestly
 To his degree was makid as a knyghtes.
 Amonges othere of his honeste thynges,
 He made a gardyn, walled al with stoon,
 So fair a gardyn woot I nowher noon.
 For, out of doute, I veraily suppose
 That he that wroot the Romance of the Rose
 Ne koude of it the beautes wel devyse..." (IV, (C) 2021-33)

There/...

There is an inevitable similarity between Januarie's concept of marriage and the Franklin's:

"How myghte a man han any adversitee
That hath a wyf? Certes, I kan nat seye.
The blisse which that is bitwixe hem tweye
Ther may no tonge telle, or herte thynke." (IV(E) 1338-4)

"Who koude telle, but he hadde wedded be,
The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee
That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf?" (V(F) 803-05)

Januarie attempts to establish his earthly paradise in the belief that

"Yet is ther so parfit felicitee
And so greet ese and lust in mariage,
That I shal have myn hevене in erthe heere..." (IV(E) 1642-43, 1647)

Evidently Arveragus' object in giving over the effective 'maistrie' to his wife was to enjoy 'hevene in erthe' -- 'for to lede the more in blisse hir lyves'. This metaphorical paradise is paralleled by the garden, the artificial Eden in which the meeting of Dorigen and the enamoured squire Aurelius takes place. Both have gone there 'to play hem al the longe day', protected from the realities of life by the 'haut mur bataillie' which encloses the garden of 'Deduit le mignot, le cointe': as with the garden in the Roman de la Rose, all the unpleasant facts of life, including Time, Age, Poverty and Sorrow, are on the outside. Chaucer does contrive to suggest their exclusion --

"The odour of floures and the fresshe sighte
Wolde han makid any herte lighte
That evere was born, but if to greet siknesse,
Or to greet sorwe, helde it in distresse..." (V(F) 913-16)

-- but within the walls there is only 'beautee with plesaunce'. (27) The fallacy of the terrestrial paradise is brought home as the seasons change:

"And this was, as thise bookes me remembre,
The colde, frosty seson of Decembre.
Phebus wax old, and hewed lyk laton,
That in his hooete declynacion
Shoon as the burned gold with stremes brighte;
But now in Capricorn adoun he lighte,
Where as he shoon ful pale, I dar wel soyn.

(27) 'Plesaunce' gives 'beautee' a specifically sensual connotation.

The word has often a sexual association, as

"Namely a-bedde badden they meschaunce,
Ther wolde I chyde, and do hem no plesaunce." (III(D) 407-08)

"Hath Kynde the wrought al only hire to plesse?
Let be, and thynk right thus in thi disese:
That, in the dees right as ther fallen chaunces,
Right so in love ther come and gon plesaunces."
Troilus and Criseyde, IV, 1496-99

The bittre frostes, with the sleet and reyn,
Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd..." (V(r) 1243-51)

Clearly the walls of the garden cannot effectively exclude time; nor, as Aurelius, Dorigen and Arveragus are to discover, can they keep away any other aspect of reality.

It is in this garden that Aurelius at last confesses his love to Dorigen. When she understands his 'entente', her first response is as correct as any exponent of 'naturel lawe in his right point in paradys' could wish: she rejects his addresses. But the 'delitable' influence of the earthly 'paradys' in which Aurelius makes his avowal asserts itself, and in a spirit of 'pley' she gives him an alternative answer:

"Aurelie," quod she, "by heighe God above,
Yet wolde I graunte yow to been youre love,
Svn I yow se so pitously complayne.
Looke what day that endeloug Britayne
Ye remoeve alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon,
That they ne lette ship ne boot to goon, --
I seye, when ye han maad the coost so clene
Of rokkes that ther nys no stoon ysene,
Thanne wol I love yow best of any man,
Have heer my trouthe, in al that evere I kan." (V(r) 989-998)

Dorigen gives her playful 'trouthe' 'in al that ever I kan': the point in question is, can she give her troth? For, 'as seith the decree',

"...a womman that is wyf, as longe as she is a
wyf, she hath noon auctoritee to swere ne to
here witnessse withoute leve of hir housbonde,
that is hire lord; algate, he sholde be so by resoun." (X (D) 931)

This is clearly a matter of which 'ordinaunce' one chooses: in the garden of delights, amid the 'urveyaunce' of those who would make their paradise on earth, and who accept the conventions of love that require that the lady be 'sovereyn' in all things, Dorigen may conceivably give such an oath.

But once outside the garden, 'amidde the toun', in the stream of life, and in the 'rightful ordinance of god' under which a husband assumes the lordship over his wife, the oath is invalid. When, as a result of taking this oath, Dorigen is 'unwar wrapped... in (the) cheyne' of Fortune, she is in fact only being caught up in the chain of the larger 'purveyaunce' which includes the little garden and takes no account of its walls. The 'cheyne'

of Fortune/.....

of Fortune is in fact

"...thilke ordre, proceedinge by an uneschuabale
byndinge tgidre, which that descendeth fro
the welle of purgacione, that ordeyneth alle
thingis in hir places and in hir tymes..." (Boece, Bk. V, Pr. 1.)

Dorigen's 'murmuration' against Fortune (V (F) 1355-1456) would be 'inpatient' if it were not so comically unfounded. Had the poor lady been able rationally to consider the causes of her dilemma, she would have realised that 'unwar' chance has had no more to do with it than with her meeting with Aurelius as she goes distractedly to the garden to keep her 'trouthe':

"Of aventure ⁽⁸⁴⁾happid hire to meete...
For wel he spyed whan she wolde go
Out of hir hous to any maner place.
But thus they mette, of aventure or grace..." (V(F) 1501, 1506-08)

And by the same token of irrationality, only a man as 'sik and wood for love' (r(A) 1600) as Aurelius could have taken Dorigen's promise seriously and have set about trying to fulfil the impossible condition. Even he, when confronted 'right in the quikkest strete' with the realisation that nowhere but inside the walled garden could such a promise be valid, has to admit

"That fro his lust yet were hym levere abyde
Than doon so heigh a cherlyssh wrecchednesse
Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse..." (V(F) 1522-24)

True 'gentillesse', as it exists outside the garden of delights, as it was 'establisshed' and 'ordeyned' by God 'er that sinne began, whan naturel lawe was in his right point in paradys', knows no seasons: unlike the fickle Phoebeus to whom Aurelius had pinned his faith, it is 'stable' and 'eterne', and remains unmoved by quaint fashions like the conventions of courtly love.

The Love of Aurelius.

In Aurelius we recognise the youth the Franklin would wish his own son to be. Like the pilgrim Squire, Aurelius is fresh and handsome, richly clad, excels at singing and dancing, is

"Yong, strong, right vertuous, and riche, and wys,
And wel biloved, and holden in greet prys." (V(F) 933-34)

This young man has all the external marks of 'gentillesse' which the Franklin has admired in the Squire. He is in love, in the conventional courtly manner, with Dorigen, but dares not tell her so:

"Withouten coppe he drank al his penaunce.
He was despayred; no thyng dorste he seye,
Save in his songes somewhat wolde he wreye

His/.....

His wo, as in a general compleynnyng;
 He seyde he lovede, and was bilowed no thyng.
 Of swich meters made he manye layes,
 Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelayes,
 How that he worste nat his sorwe telle,
 But langwischeth as a furey dooth in helle;
 And dya he moste, he seyde, as dide Ekko
 For Narcissus, that dorste nat telle hir wo." (V) (F) 942-52)

The furies who 'anguish' in Hell are those described by Dante, who depicts them actually undergoing torment instead of inflicting it:

"E quel, che ben connohe le meschine
 della regina dell'eterno pianto,
 'Guarda', mi disse 'le feroci Erine....'
 Con l'unghe si fendea ciascuna il petto;
 battiensf a palme, e gridevan sì alto,
 ch' i' mi strinsi al poeta per sospetto."

(Inferno Canto IX, 43-45, 49-51.)

These handmaids of Proserpina, 'regina dell'eterno pianto', inflict suffering upon themselves. They represent in Dante's allegory the despair and fruitless remorse for sin which does not lead to penitence (28). Both the image and its allegorical implication apply to Aurelius, for his torment is self-inflicted and his sufferings in the surrogate 'Inferno' which is the lover's world are his 'penance' for which he is 'despeyred'. The reference in Aurelius' songs to the death of Echo for love of Narcissus elaborates on the theme of fruitless suffering. Aurelius 'drank' his pains 'with-outen coppe', an image it seems logical to relate to the Narcissus legend. (29) In the Roman de la Rose version Narcissus comes upon a well in the garden of Deduit, and stoops to drink from it:

(28) See note on Canto IX of the *Inferno*, translation by J. D. Sinclair; London, 1948; pp. 128-30.

(29) The metaphor 'with-outen coppe' is regarded by editors as obscure -- see Robinson, note on this line on p. 273 of his edition; Phyllis Hodgson, note on p. 88 of her edition (Athlone Press, London, 1960). The literal interpretation offered above is suggested in addition to such other possible meanings as 'in full draught' or 'with difficulty'.

"Quec/.....

"Iluec pensa que il bevroit:	1480
Sor la fontaine toz adenz	
Se mist lors oor boivre dedenz,	
Si vit en l'eve clere e nete	
Son vis, son nes, e sa bouchete,	1484
E cil maintenant s'esbaï,	
Car ses ombres si le traï	
Qu'il cuida veoir la figure	
D'un enfant bel a demesure....	1488
... il musa tant a la fontaine	1493
Qu'il amâ son ombre demaine,	
Si en fu morz a la parclose:	
Ce fu la soms de la chose,	1496
Car, quant il vit qu'il ne porroit	
Accomplir ce qu'il desiroit,	
E qu'il estoit si pris par fort	
Qu'il n'en poist avoir confort	1500
En nule fin ne en nul sen,	
Il perdi d'ire tot le sen,	
E fu morz en poi de termine."	1503

When Narcissus bent over the well he was about to drink 'with-outen cornee', directly from the surface of the water: and so it was that he came face to face with his own reflection and fell hopelessly in love with it. 'Scem sine corpore amat, corpus nutat esse, quod umbra est.' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 417) In this way all amorous passions begin. The lover conceives a desire for a shadow, an insubstantial image made, though not by 'craft of mannes hand' (30), yet by his own mind, by his imagination dwelling upon what his eyes have seen (31).

(30) The kind of self-delusion represented by the Pygmalion legend is a 'substantial' form of the same process: the only difference is that while Narcissus' image remained eternally beyond his grasp, Pygmalion could fondle his statue. See *Roman de la Rose* 20811-21183, and discussion by Robertson, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-104.

(31) The *Roman de la Rose*, 1537-82, explains how anyone who gazes into the well of Narcissus sees, through 'deus pierres de cristal' which represent his own eyes, an image with which he must, irresistibly, fall in love -- 'car cuido, li fiz Venus, seme ici d'Amors la graine.'

This/.....

This is the process described in Andreas' definition of love:

"Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex... That this suffering is inborn. I shall show you clearly, because if you will look at the truth and distinguish carefully you will see that it does not arise out of any action; only from the reflection of the mind upon what it sees does this suffering come. For when a man sees some woman fit for love and shaped according to his taste, he begins at once to lust after her in his heart; then the more he thinks about her the more he burns with love... This inborn suffering comes, therefore, from seeing and meditating. Not every kind of meditation can be the cause of love, an excessive one is required; for a restrained thought does not, as a rule, return to the mind, and so love cannot arise from it." (The Art of Courtly Love, no. 28-29)

Aurelius compares himself to Echo, whose burning passion for Narcissus eventually robbed her of corporeal existence (Ovid, Metamorphoses, III, (370-401). The love of Aurelius for Dorigen is thus set at once upon a basis of illusion. Aurelius' love, like Echo's, has no substance, only a voice, in his profusion of 'songes, comoleintes, roundels, vielayes'. The object of his love has no substance either: it is an image in his mind which bears the same relation to the real Dorigen that Narcissus' reflection in the water bore to his corporeal self. So also with Aurelius' fruitless 'penance' and the reality, the 'fruitful penitence' which rewards men with 'the endless blisse of paradis'. The 'grace' Aurelius looks for when he gazes at Dorigen in the corner of the dance is her favour: like the Furies who serve the Queen of Hell, he serves his mistress, while she, like Emelye in the Knights Tale,

knows/.....

knows nothing of his 'entente' and does not respond to his passion. Both his service and his self-inflicted 'peynes smerte' are in vain, for they can only be requited 'in play', never in reality. When he expresses the wish that on the day that Arveragus had gone to England he, Aurelius, 'had went ther never I sholde have come ageyn', he unwittingly speaks the truth, because he did in effect descend into a private hell of unreality when he conceived his passion for Arveragus's wife.

When *Dorigen* makes it clear that she will have no 'mercy' on Aurelius he goes away feeling the death-like pains of the suffering lover:

"He seeth he may nat fro his deeth asterte;
Hym semed that he felte his herte colde..." (V(F) 1022-23)

Like Arcite and Palamon, he languishes in a hell where 'it peyneth hem evere as though they sholde dye anon: but certes they shal nat dye.' (X(I) 213) 'Dispeyred in this torment', he takes to his bed, and spends two years suspended in indecision 'whether he wol live or dye'. The fact of his lying so long 'er any foot he mighte on erthe goon' suggests how far removed from reality he is all this time. His is a private universe which no one else can enter: although it centres about his beloved, she is cold and indifferent, and Aurelius suffers all alone from his invisible 'surgenure'. His situation is an epitome of all that distinguishes illusion from reality: its disorderliness, its fragmentation, its 'up-so-doun' conception of the universe, its suspension somewhere between death and life; its 'privee' nature (32) for it is confined to the experience of only one man, or else to a small group of initiates like the closed

- (32) Compare the quest of Sir Thopas, who falls into a 'love-longinge' directed at no object whatever, and subsequently dreams that an 'elf-queen' will be his 'lemman':

"Into his sadel he clamb anon,
And priketh over stille and stoon
An elf-queene for t'espye,
Til he so longe hath riden and goon
That he found, in a grave woon,
The contree of Fairye
So wilde:

For in that contree was ther noon
That to him durst syde or noon
Neither wyf ne childer: " (V(F) 800-06 (92 1990-96))

circle/...

circle of magicians; and its ephemerality -- for when at last 'his woful herte of penaunce hadde a lisse', it is only for one night.

Aurelius' excursion into the realms of magic must be seen as the desperate attempt of one who 'for verray wo' has 'breyde... out of h's wit' to impose an illusion on the sternly ordered 'purveyaunce' which constitutes reality. Magic is the pursuit of

"...yonge clerkes that been lykerous
To reden artes that been curious,
Seken in every halke and every herne
Particuler sciences for to lerne..." (V(F) 1113-22)

These 'curious' arts are not common and public knowledge, but are secret and hidden in 'halkes and hermes'. They offer 'particuler science', that is, partial knowledge, which applies only to fragments of the whole. The desire to pursue these arts is 'likerousnesse', in the sense of what St. Augustine calls 'fornicationis animae' (33). St. Augustine says of occult knowledge and 'divination' that Christian doctrine forbids them:

"...hoc de omnibus imaginariis signis sentiendum est, quae vel ad cultum idolorum, vel ad creaturam eiusque partes tanquam Deum colendas trahunt, vel ad remedium aliarumque observationum curam pertinent; quae non sunt divinitus ad dilectionem Dei et proximi tanquam publice constituta, sed privatae appetitiones rerum temporalium corda dissipant miserorum." (34)

This prohibition obviously includes not only 'magik naturel' but also the secret love of Aurelius for Dorigen which leads him to seek out a practitioner of magic. Though the Franklin hastens to assure his audience that 'swich folye... in our dayes is nat worth a flye.'

"For booly chlrches feith in o'ne bileve
Ne suffreth noon illusioun us to greve..." (V(F) 1133-34)

(33) De Doctrina Christiana, Lib. II, Cap. XXIII, 35.

(34) Ibid., 36.

the further implication concerning the love-service of the 'lusty squira, servant of Venus' remains for that audience to draw. It is not, evidently, clear to the Franklin.

Aurelius' credulity, and that of his brother, is hinted at when the latter determines to find at Orleans 'som old felawe... that hadde the mones mansions in mynde' -- for such a man is lunatic, already in English usage of Chaucer's time. Such a state of delusion is the result of 'fornicationis animae', as St. Augustine explains:

"Hinc enim fit ut occulto quodam iudicio divino, cupidi malarum rerum homines tradantur illudendi et decipiendi pro meritis voluntatum suarum, illudentibus eos atque decipientibus praevaricatoribus angelis; quibus ista mundi pars infima, secundum pulcherrimum ordinem rerum, divinae providentiae lege subiecta est. Quibus illusionibus et deceptionibus evenit, ut istis superstitiosis et perniciosis divinationum generibus multa praeterita et futura dicantur nec aliter accendant, quam dicuntur; multaque observantibus secundum observationes suas eveniant, quibus implicati curiosiores fiant, et sese magis magisque inserant multiplicibus laqueis perniciosissimi erroris." (De Doctrina Christiana; Lib. II, Cap. XXIII, 35.)

The 'tregitour' of Orleans greets the two brothers with an impressive display of sleight-of-hand prescience, and follows up his advantage with a spectacular demonstration of his powers. All the scenes shown to Aurelius in the magician's house -- a mansion as 'wel arrayed' as either Januarie's or the Franklin's -- relate to his own pitiful condition. There are representations of the hunt of Venus (35) -- the bleeding harts, dying of arrow-wounds, the falconers hawking at the heron; there are knights jousting for a lady's favour, and finally, and

(35) Robertson, op. cit., pp. 263-64, 190-94.

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(35) Robertson, op. cit., pp. 263-64, 190-94.

most effectively, Aurelius sees himself apparently dancing with Dorigen. Seeing his victim well caught by this last 'plesance', the magician claps his hands, and the illusion vanishes with the swiftness of the 'god of love' -- 'and farewell: al our revel was ago'. The 'appareance' having gone, the magician returns to matters of substance: 'soper', and the amount of his 'guerdon'. His bargaining shows a shrewd understanding of 'this amorous folk':

"For love inevitably forces a man to give without regard to what he should give and what he should not; and this is not generosity, but what ancient common sense calls prodigality, a vice which sacred Scripture teaches us is a mortal one -- one for which no abundance of goods can suffice -- and thus it brings every man, regardless of who he is, to the depths of poverty." (The Art of Courtly Love, Bk. III; n. 191)

Dorigen in her longing for her absent husband set 'al this wyde world... at noght', and although the magician demands the truly unimaginable sum (in mediaeval terms) of a thousand pounds as his price,

"Aurelius, with blisful herte anon,
Answerde thus: 'Fy on a thousand pound:
This wyde world, which that men seye is
round,
I wolde it yeve, if I were lord of it.
This bargayn is ful dryve, for we been knyht.
Ye shal he payed trewely, by my trouthe.'" (V(F) 1226-31)

This is not the 'freedom' or liberality which is one of the 'signes of gentillesse', but 'fool-largesse, that men clepen wast' (X(I) 813):

"For even if a lover whould gain the whole world,
but suffer some detriment or hindrance in his lo-
he would look upon all the rest as the deepest
poverty, but he would think that no penury coul
harm him so long as his love was as he wished it
to be." (The Art of Courtly Love, Bk. III, p. 190)

So Aurelius 'with blisful herte' binds himself to the magician who, by

"his/....."

'his japes and his wretchednesse', calculates the time of a spring tide which 'for a wyke or twaye' conceals the black rocks. In this way Dorigen's condition is fulfilled, and she is duly called upon to 'holden hir biheste'. And when, meeting Dorigen in the streets of the town, Aurelius realises that the oath taken in the garden of delights is 'agayns franchise and alle gentillesse' outside the little Eden, he is faced with the rudest of disillusionments:

"Aurelius, that his cost hath al forlorn,
Curseth the tyme that evere he was born;
'Allas', quod he, 'allas, that I bihighte
Of pured gold a thousand pound of wighte
Unto this philosophe! How shal I do?
I se namoore but that I am fordo.
Myn heritage moot I nedes selle,
And been a beggere; heere may I nat dwelle,
And shemen al my kynrede in this place..." (V(f) 1557-65)

He has promised this stupendous sum for an illusion which was intended to purchase another *illusion*, but the payment is all too real. It is at this point that we come to grips with 'gentillesse' in the Franklin's understapding of the term. 'Gentillesse' consists of wealth and its concomitant display, and when a man can no longer afford to pay for it, he is no longer 'gentil'.

This is the sum of the series of illusions piled one upon another which has constituted the course of Aurelius' passion for Dorigen. For a love significantly compared to that of Echo for Narcissus or of Narcissus for his own reflection, Aurelius elicited from Dorigen a phantom oath on an impossible condition. To fulfil the condition he turned for aid to a 'subtile tregitour' who had 'the mones mansions in minde' -- whose wit, in other words, was no less benighted than that of the lover himself. The magician demanded an impossible price, which Aurelius, with a liberality born of his ailing reason, 'blisfully' agreed to pay, although he did not have it. An 'appearance' of Dorigen's fantastic desire was produced, so that the oath Dorigen swore had to be put to the test: and in the process the nature of her husband's 'lordship' over her was tested as well, and found to be as insubstantial as the 'appearance'. The final illusion tested

and/.

and exposed by Aurelius' misfortune is the Franklin's. His notion of 'gentillesse', so finely represented by Aurelius, is that it resides in a man's appearance and his possessions. Aurelius owns all the good gifts of fortune -- 'richesses, highe degrees of lordshipes, preisinges of the peple' -- and yet,

"whoso prideth hym in the goodes of fortune,
he is a ful greet fool; for somtyme is a
man a greet lord by the morwe, that is a
caytyf and a wrecche er it be nyght." (XII 471)

So it proves with Aurelius, when his lovesick 'penaunce' turns into real repentance for his folly and he is faced with the prospect of going 'a-lagged in my kirtle bare'.

'Whiche was the moste free?'

The conclusion of the Franklin's Tale returns us to its assumption of order. The divine 'purveyaunce' governs every one of the characters in the Tale, as it governs all other men, and the illusion of 'freedom' -- with no restraint by the laws of the divine ordinance -- underlies all other illusions. The apparent freedom of Dorigen from the rule of her husband almost results in a situation that denies the very nature of marriage -- for adultery is 'brekinge of feith... and whan that feith is broken and lorn, soothly Cristendom stant veyn and with-uten fruit'. In the divine ordinance no man is 'free' -- not Arveragus, though 'of his free wil' he abjures his lordship; nor Dorigen, left 'headless' and distraught; nor Aurelius, driven 'out of his wit' by the unattainable delights apparently offered him in the earthly paradise; nor the magician, whose grandiose passes intended to reverse the laws of nature succeed only in concealing the facts 'for a wyke or tweye'. Nor, in the alternative sense, has any of these been generous. Arveragus in fact gave nothing, because what he appeared to be giving was not his to give; Dorigen was not called upon for her contribution; Aurelius despite his solemn absolution, had nothing due to him; and the 'subtile treghtour' performs the grand coup in unreality: in return for the illusion he produced, he will accept what he gave -- nothing -- and consider himself well paid. And like the god of love and his own ephemeral 'apparences', he vanishes, saying

"It is y-nogh, and farewel, have good day!"

FRUITFULNESS AND STERILITY IN THE PHYSICIAN'S
AND PARDONER'S TALES.

"And thus certes maistow wel seen how greet is the diligence of nature; for alle thinges renouelen and publysschen hem with seed ymultiplied, ne ther nys no man that ne woot wel that they ne ben ryght as a foundement and edifice for to duren, noht oonly for a tyme, but ryght as for to dure perdurably by generacion... nature desfireth and requireth alwey, the werk of generacioun, by which generacioun only duelleth and is susteyned the longe durablete of mortal thinges. And thus this charite and this love, that every thing hath to hymself, ne cometh not of the moevynge of the soule, but of the entencioun of nature. For the purveaunce of God hath yeven to thinges that ben creat of hym this, that is a ful gret cause to lyven and to duren, for which they desiren naturely here lif as longe as evere thei mowen." (Boece III, Pr. 11.)

The Physician's Tale and the Pardoner's Prologue and Tale are so unequal in artistic merit that the fact of their being linked seems largely to have been ignored by critics. Yet thematically, the two parts of the fragment complement each other. The Physician's Tale of Apollus and Virginia enriches one's understanding of the Pardoner and offsets the steely brilliance of his tale of the pursuit of Death.

"Generacioun" is a theme of both parts of the fragment, in the sense of spiritual fertility and sterility. (36) The spiritual fertility of Virginia in the Physician's Tale is contrasted with the impotence, both physical and

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- (36) The basis of the following discussion of the Pardoner and his Tale is Robert P. Miller's essay, Chaucer's Pardoner, the Scriptural Eunuch and the Pardoner's Tale; Speculum (1955), 180-99. It will immediately be obvious that the present study assumes Dr. Miller's interpretation of the Pardoner's eunuchry, and his lucid discussion of the 'eunuchus non dei'.

spiritual/.....

spiritual, of the Pardoner. The two tales have another common theme that flows from the concept of spiritual fertility; that is, the conquest of death. These two themes emerge in the obliquely allusive link passage that connects the Physician's Tale to the Pardoner's prologue. In it, the Host reflects upon the tale of Appius and Virginia and compliments the Physician with typical malapropos:

"This was a fals cheri and a fals justise.
As shameful deeth as herte may devyse
Come to this juges and hire advocatz!
Algate this sely mayde is slayn, alas!
Allas, to deere houghte she beautee!
Wherefore I seye al day that men may see
That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature
Been cause of deeth to many a creature.
Hire beautee was hire deth, I dar wel sayn.
Allas, so pitously as she was slayn!
Of bothe yiftes that I speke of now
Men han ful ofte moore for harm than prow...
I pray to God so save thy gentil cors,
And eek thyne uryals and thy jurdones,
Thyn ypocras, and eek thy galiones,
And every boyste ful of thy letuarie;
God blesse hem, and oure lady Seinte Marie!
So moot I theen, thou art a propre man,
And lyk a prelat, by Seint Ronyan!.....
Myn herte is lost for pitee of this mayde.
Thou beel amy, thou Pardoner, he sayde,
'Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon.'
'It shal be doon,' quod he, 'by Seint Ronyon!
But first,' quod he, 'heere at this alestake
I wol bothe drynke, and eten of a cake.'
But right anon these gentils gonne to crye,
'Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye!
Telle us som moral thyng, that we may leere
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere.' (VI CC) 289-300,

304-10, 317-26)

The Host laments that Virginia's 'beautee was hir deeth', and moralises that beauty, a gift of Nature, may bring with it as much harm as good. He evidently misses the point of Virginia's beauty, which is not mere 'hele of body (that) passeth ful lightly, and eek it is ful ofte encheson of the siknesse of oure soule'. (X(1)458). Although the comeliness that attracted

this/.....

'this fals juge that hight Apius' was external, Virginia's excellence' was an inner and integral quality:

"And if that excellent was ire beautee,
A thousand fold moore virtuous was she.
In hire no lack of comlyoun
That is to preyse, as by discrecioun.
As wel in goost as body chaste was she;
For which she floured in virginitee
With alle humylitee and abstinence,
With alle attemperance and patience,
With mesure eek of beryng and array." (VIC) 39-47)

The beauty of her spirit is durable, and in it she 'flours', bearing 'thilke precious fruit that the book clepeth 'the hundrad fruit'... Centesimus fructus' (X(I) 860). Such beauty does not cause death, but ensures that death has no mastery over its possessor:

"Ex quo ostenditur virginatatem non mori....
sed manere cum Christo, et dormitionem eius,
transilium esse, non mortem."

St. Jerome, Adversus Jovinianum 7, 26. (Migne, 247)

The 'Ypocras' and 'Galianes' jocularly thrown in by the Host together with 'urinals' and 'Jordanes' in the commendation beginning "I pray to god, so save thy gentil corse", suggests the context of a passage from the Roman de la Rose on which Chaucer drew in the preceding Tale. This describes how nature continually re-creates while Death destroys. Though the life of the species cannot be extinguished from the earth, yet no individual living creature can escape Death. No subtle art of the physician can enable any man ultimately to evade death, nor can the physician himself escape:

"Ainsinc fuient tuit cil qui vivent,	15943
Qui volentiers la mort eschivent.	
Mort, qui de neir le vis a taint,	
Cueit apres tant qu'el les ataint;	
Si qu'il a trop fiere chace:	
Cil s'en fuient e Mort les chace	15949
Dis anz ou vint, trente ou quarante.....	15952
Lors va quanqu'el el tient, depeçant	
E si'l peuent outre passer,	
Cueurt'ele apres senz sei lasser,	
Tant qu'el tient en ses liens,	15956
Maugré touz les fisiciens	

E les/.....

E les fisiciens meismes:
 Onc nul eschaper n'en veismes:
 Pas Ypocras ne Galien,
 Tout fussent bon fisicien.... 15960
 E ceus qui ne peuent tant occure,
 Nes repeut riens de Mort rescourre. " 15964

With this passage in mind, the words of the Host and Physician imply a healthy scepticism both for the art of healing and its practitioner. 'God so save thy gentil cors' suggests 'Despite the trappings of your profession, your body must go the way of all flesh.' The compliment to the Physician -- 'thou art a propre man, And lyk a prelat, by seint Ronyan!' -- is similarly double-edged. The context of the story of Appius 'li faus juige' and Virginia in the Roman links the physician with the 'avocat' and the worldly priest in their common avarice:

"Avocat e fisicien 5091
 Sont tuit lié de cet lien;
 S'il pour deniers science vendent,
 Trestuit a cete hart pendent.
 Tant ont le gaeing douz e sade
 Que cist voudrait, pour un malade 5096
 Qu'il a, qu'il en list seissante,
 E cil pour une cause trente,
 Veire deus cenx, veire deus mile
 Tant les art couvettise e guile. 5100
 Si sont devin qui vont par terre:
 Quant il preeschent pour aquerre
 Eneurs ou graces ou richeces,
 Il ront les cueurs en teus destreces. " 5104

The 'doctour of physik' is, like the Franklin's 'tregitour', an expert in 'magik naturel' and a 'verray parfit practisour' (37). Chaucer makes a point

(37) The O.E.D. gives as the earliest recorded sense of 'practyse' 'the action of scheming or planning (esp.) in an underhand way and for an evil purpose;..... trickery, artifice.' (Practice, I. 6.a.)

of the/.....

of the Physician's love of gold as he does of the Pardoner's. The 'veray parfit practisour' who 'wan in pestilence' and the 'noble ecclesiaste' who has made his fortune from the sickness of men's souls have theoretically a common goal: the defeat of Death. Their actual goal is also the same: the acquisition of money. A good priest is a healer of souls, a servant of 'Jesu Crist, that is our soules leche', one who by reclaiming the souls of the wayward multiplies the congregation of the faithful: who is, in a spiritual sense, *virile* and capable of increase, a 'propre man'. 'Seint Ronyan', taking from the 'urinals' and 'Jordanes' a faint flavour of kidneys, is a 'ribaudye' turning also upon the idea of virility (38). In this sense the Pardoner takes it up, and is immediately understood and cried down by the 'gentils'. But neither the Pardoner nor the Physician is fecund in the sense in which a 'prelat' ought to be a 'propre man'. For both 'multiplication' has a loud metallic ring:

"So that ye offren alwey newe and newe
Nobles and pens, which that be gode and trewe..."
(VI (C) 929-30.)

'Cortex' and 'nucleus'.

The character and conduct of the Pardoner owe much to the confession of Faux-Semblant in the Roman de la Rose. Faux-Semblant or 'false-seeming' is the son of Barat (fraud) and Ypocrisie. His constant companion is Astenance Contrainte, the 'amie' who is with child by him, awaiting the birth of the Antichrist. This 'fruit' of the union of Faux-Semblant and Astenance Contrainte, is non-being, the product of two nullities: for 'the nature of yvel nis no-thing' (Boece III, Pr. 12) Faux-Semblant is a husk, a 'cortex' without a living 'nucleus':

"(Je) vois par toutes regions	11213
Cerchant toutes religions;	
Mais, de religion, senz faille,	
J'en lais le grain e preing la paille;	11216
Pour ganz embacier i ablt.	
Je n'en quier, senz plus, que l'ablt."	11218

(38) O. E. D. Ruyon, 2 (Ronyan) The male organ..

From /

From this ancestral background the Pardoner derives his fraudulence, his false appearance of holiness (faux-Semblant wears a monk's habit) and a suggestion of the physical impotence that constrains him to abstinence.

By preliminary contrast with the Pardoner's falsity, Chaucer establishes with careful definition a prototype of integrity in his portrait of Virginia. She has, to begin with, an historical existence. The Physician's Tale is presented as a true story, recorded by a respected Roman historian (39):

"...for this is no fable,
But known for historical thyng notable;
The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute..." (VI(C) 155-57)

Historical truth is common and public knowledge; thus Virginia's fame while she lived spread far and wide, as goodness is 'the comune fyn of alle thynges that ben':

"For in hir lyvyng maydens myghten rede,
As in a book, every good word or dede
That longeth to a mayden vertuous,
She was so prudent and so bounteous,
For which the fame out sprong on every syde,
Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde..." (VI(C) 107-12).

Her reality is confirmed by Chaucer's description of her, in which he departs both from his principal source in the Roman de la Rose (5589-559), and from Livy's original:

"Fair was this mayde in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may see;
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
Yformed hire in so greet excellence,
As though she wolde seyn, 'Lo! I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and paynte a creature,
When that me list; who kan me countrefete?
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or paynte; for I dar wel seyn,

- (39). 'As telleth Titus Livius' -
Ab Urbe Condita; I, 183-88, xlii-xlviii; reprinted in
Bryan & Dempster, op.cit, pp. 402ff.

Apelles/.....

Apelles, Zanzis, shoide warche in veyn
 Outher to grave, or peynite, or forge, or bete,
 If they presumed me to countrefete.
 For He that is the formere principal
 Hath maked me his *vicatre general*,
 To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
 Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
 Under the moone, that may wane and waxe;
 And for my werk right no thyng wol I axe;
 My lord and I been ful of oon accord.
 I wode hire to the worships of my lord... " (VI(C) 7-26)

The lengthy passage of the Roman on which Chaucer drew for these lines describes the toil of Nature, ceaselessly replenishing the earth. Human skill and artistry can never hope to approach the perfection of Nature's creation;

"Bien la vous vouseisse descrire,	16165
Mais mes sens n'i pourrait souffire.	
Mes sens! Qu'ai je dit? c'est du meins.	
Non ferait veir nus sens humains,	
Ne par voz vive ne par notes;	16169
Ne Pygmalion entaillier;	16177
En vain s'i pourrait travailler	
Parrasius; veire Apelles,	
Que je mout bon peindre apel, les	
Beautez de li jamais descrive	
Ne pourrait, tant eüst a vivre.... "	16182
Zeusis neis par son bel peindre	16185
Ne pourrait a tel forme ataindre..... "	

Her workmanship surpasses even man's praise, still more his emulation,
 for the source of its beauty is the godhead itself.

"Tant est bele que plus n'en sai	16232
Car Deus, li beaus outre mesure,	
Quant il beauté mist en Nature,	
Il en fist une fontaine	
Toujours courant e toujours pleine,	
De cui toute beauté desrive;	
Mais nus n'en sei ne fonz ne rive. "	16238

Virginia's loveliness is genuine not only insofar as it was made by Nature

'er/.....

'er she was born', but in that it is spiritual as well as bodily. The fountain of natural beauty, 'toujours courant e toujours pleine', mingled with the endlessly flowing stream of divine grace in her creation. Her integrity is absolute, the exquisite 'cortex' overlaying a 'nucleus' whose beauty is greater yet because it is lasting. The province of Nature is the sub-lunary sphere -- 'ech thing in my cure is under the mone, that may wane and waxe' -- and in this realm of hers every creature she forms is subject to her own laws. Though the individual, like the inconstant moon, waxes and grows to maturity only to wane and die, yet the species reproduces itself and lives on, defeating death:

"Cete manier neis ont	15999
Trestoutes les choses qui sont	
Desouz le cercle de la lune	
Que, sil en peut demourer l'une,	
S'esplece tant en li vivra	
Que ja Mort ne l'aconsivra.	
Mais Nature douce e piteuse,	16005
Quant el voit que Mort l'envieuse,	
Entre li e Corrupcion,	
Viennent metre a destruccion	
Quantqu'eus treuvent dedenz sa forge,	
Toujourz martele, toujours forge,	
Toujourz ses pieces renouvele	
Par generacion nouvele....."	16012

Nature's solution to the problem of mortality is physical generation, the forging of new creatures in the same mould over and over again. But Virginia represents an alternative solution. Her spiritual beauty, drawn from the stream of divine grace as her outward beauty is from Nature's boundless fountain, is of an order above the sub-lunary. It is not diminished by earthly time: it is not subject inevitably to death as the body is. Virginia, like the Lady Eustochium (40) looks beyond earthly

- (40) S. Hieronymi, Epistola XXII: Ad Eustochium, Paulae filiam, de custodia virginittatis. Migne, 394 ff. (See Bibliography p.130.) Chaucer's portrait of Virginia's virtue stems obviously from a Christian treatise on virginity. The De Virginibus of St. Ambrose has been suggested (Bryan & Dempster, op. cit., p.407 f.) The epistle of St. Jerome to Eustochium is another possibility, and has been preferred in the course of the present study. Chaucer did make verifiable use of it in the Parson's Tale (X(II) 345-46), and probably elsewhere, for instance in the Monk's Tale. The same concept is expounded in St. Jerome's treatise Adversus Jovinianum (Migne 211 ff.)

life:

"Crescat et multiplicetur ille, qui impleturus est terram.
Tuum agmen in coelis est... Nubat, et nubatur ille...
Cuius terra tribulos et spinas generat, et culus herba
sentibus suffocatur. Meum semen centenaria fruge foecundum
est. (Ad Eustochium, cap, 19; Migne, 405-06)

Although she forgoes fruitfulness in the carnal sense by which Nature renews
life in the sub-lunar kingdom, yet of such dedicated chastity as hers
springs the fruit that multiplies its seed an hundred fold. She is 'as wel
in goost as body chast'-- 'sancta corpore et spiritu' (41) -- and she
'flours in virginitee' according to the traditional interpretation of the
parable of the sower (Matt. 13, 3-23) to which the passage just
quoted refers (42). Being 'hooly in herte and clene of body'.

"thanne is she spouse to Ihesu Crist, and
she is the lyf of angeles. She is the
preisynge of this world and she is as
thise martirs in equalitee; she hath in hire
that tonge may nat telle na herte thynke." (X(1) 949-50)

By such 'generactoun' as this death is indeed vanquished. The hosts
of virgins 'quos castravit non necessitas, sed voluntas...qui se
castraverunt propter regna coelorum' (Adv. Jov. I, 12; Migne 228) are
the elect of mankind. Virginia, by her 'sovereyn bountee', attains the
'hyeste degree that is in this present lyf'. (X(1) 868).

Juxtaposed with this maiden of 'hyeste degree' is the 'gentil
Pardoner of Rouncival'. It is obvious that Chaucer has used the polarity

(41) I Cor. vii, 34; Ad Eustochium 38, Migne 422; Adversus Jovinianum, I, 13; Migne 231.

(42) Ad Eustochium, 19. The exegesis of the parable is that the seed that fell on fertile ground and brought forth fruit thirty-fold refers to the 'first manere of chastitee', chastity in marriage; that which brought forth fruit sixty-fold refers to chastity in widowhood, while the seed that brought forth fruit an hundred-fold refers to virginity. See also Adversus Jovinianum I, 3; Migne 213.

of the/.....

of the two characters to obtain part of his effect. As Virginia is placed at the highest rank of mankind, so the Pardoner, despite whatever claim he may have to 'gentillesse' and despite his undoubted affluence, is the very lowest creature upon God's earth.

"The man knows and freely admits the evil of his character. And worse yet, besides knowing the evil of cupidity and still practising it, he is proud, even boastful, of his abilities.... Acting out of neither ignorance nor frailty, he is recognizable as the man impenitent in sin.... Chaucer has produced a daring and effective irony in creating as his Pardoner the eunuch who presumptuously glories in the one unpardonable sin."

(Miller, op. cit., pp. 189, 193)

The Pardoner's account of his own way of life, given in his prologue, contrasts point by point with Chaucer's 'auctorial' presentation of Virginia. As Virginia embodies integrity, so in the Pardoner integrity is turned inside out. Everything about the 'noble ecclesiast' rings false. While Virginia has 'no countrefeted termes.... to seme wys', he 'safrons' his preaching with Latin words which neither he nor his equally illiterate audience understands. She speaks 'after hir degree', and he affects an incongruous 'hauteyn speche'. Her words redound in 'vertu and in gentillesse'; his are 'an hundred false japes' and snippets of 'olde storie'... for lewed peple loven tales olde'--- and it pays better to entertain than to edify. Virginia flees idleness, keeping herself 'ever in bisy'ness To dryve hir out of ydel slogardye'; the Pardoner embraces it:

"I wol nat do no labour with myne handes,
Ne make baskettes, and lyve therby,
By cause I wol nat beggen ydelly.
I wol noon of the apostles countrefete..." (VI(C) 444-47)

She drinks no wine, for

"...wyn/....."

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"...wyn/....."

"...wyn and youthe dooth Venus encesse,
As men in fyr wol casten oille or gresse..." (VI(C) 59-60; (43))

-- but the Pardoner boasts that he will 'drinke licour of the vyne, And have a joly wenche in every toun'. His Prologue is evidently spoken at the 'alestake' where the company halts at the conclusion of the Physician's Tale (VI(C) 314-28, 456-58), and he is clearly as experienced a 'haunter' of 'folye' in taverns as any of his three 'riotours'. Virginia withdraws to an opposite extreme of asceticism:

"And of hir owene vertu, unconstreyned,
She hath ful ofte tyme syk hire feyned,
For that she wolde fleen the compaignye
Where likly was to treten of folye,
As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces,
That been occasions of daliaunces..." (VI(C) 61-66)

The Pardoner is quite as conspicuous as the Wife of Bath in his attire, 'al of the newe jet', while Virginia modestly observes 'resure eek of hering and array'. His goat-like bleat and mincing effeminacy contrast with her 'falcond ful wommanly and playn', and his blatancy with her 'maydens shamfastnesse'. He mounts the pulpit, leering scraggy-necked upon the congregation like some hideous travesty of the Holy Ghost,

"And est and west upon the peple I bekke,
As dooth a dowve sittynge on a berne.
Myne handes and my tonge goon so yerne
That it is joye to se my bisynesse." (VI(C) 396-99)

--while she, observing St. Jerome's caution 'Nec tibi diserta multum velis videri' (Ad Eustochium, cap. 29; Migne, 215), is ever 'discreet....

- (43) "Hoc primum moneo, hoc obtestor, ut sponsa Christi vinum fugiat pro veneno. Haec adversus adolescentiam prima arma sunt daemonum... Vinum et adolescentia, duplex incendium voluptatis est. Quid oleum flammæ adijcimus? Quid ardenti corpusculo fomenta ignium ministramus?" (Ad Eustochium, cap. 8; Migne, 399)

It is worth noting that in this case Chaucer exactly reproduces the imagery used by St. Jerome, strengthening the case for this epistle as a source.

in/.....

in answering'.

The curious passage of the Physician's Tale (44) on the duties of a guardian seems thematically relevant when considered in the context of the whole fragment. The Pardoner cheerfully admits that

"...myr entente is nat but for to wyne,
And nothyng for correccioun of synne.
I rekke nevere, when that they been beryed,
Though that hir soules goon a-blakeberyed." (VI(C) 403-06)

This attitude towards his charge is entirely worthy of Faux-Semblant, and is also that of the 'newe shepherde':

"...they that han any right to governe, and ne taken of hym namore kep, anon as they fynden any contrarie or any anoy. Thise beere the newe shepherdes that leten hir sheep wityngly go renne to the wolf that is in the breres, or do no fors of hir owene governaunce..." (K(U) 720-21)

Hence, in the Physician's Tale, the guardian of innocence is warned

"both war, that by ensample of youre lyvyng,
Or by youre negligence in chastisyng,
That they ne perisse; for I dar wel seye,
If that they doon, we shul it deere abyen.
Under a shepherde softe and negligent
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb toten." (VI(C) 97-102)

The seller of pardons to the impenitent 'sellen the soules that lambes shoude

- (44) F. W. Robinson, describing this passage (VI(C) 72-102) as a 'rather extraordinary digression', offers the suggestion that it is topical, referring to the events surrounding the marriage and divorce of Elizabeth of Lancaster, daughter of John of Gaunt, whose mistress Katherine Swynford had been the governess of his children. See his note on lines 72 ff. of the Physician's Tale, p. 727 of his edition.

kepen/.....

kepen to the wolf that strangleth hem." (XII 792). He contrasts with the sternly virtuous father of Virginia, who chooses death for his beloved daughter rather than dishonour:

"Ther been two weyes, outhur deeth or shame,
That thou most suffre.....
O gemme of chastitee, in pacience
Take thou thy deeth, for this is my sentence.
For love, and nat for hate, thou must be
deed;" (VI(C) 214-15, 223-25)

The Pardoner's role alternates between 'newe shepherds' and wolf in sheep's clothing. He and his fellow-parasites who 'pilen and doon extorcious to holy chirche' are

"...the develes wolves, that stranglen the
sheep of Jhesu Crist; and doon worse than
wolves. For soothly, whan the wolf hath
ful his wombe, he stynteth to strangle sheep.
But soothly, the pillours and destroyours of
the godes of hooly chirche nedo nat so, for
they ne stynte nevere to pile." (XII 768-69)

The Pardoner, the pilgrim Friar and the Monk all emerge in some measure from the confession of Fauch-Semblant. They run all with the same pack --

"...des vallez antecrit, Des larrons don il est escrit Qu'il ont abit de saintee E vivent en tel feinte; Dehors sembions aigneaus plissables, Dedenz som's lous ravissables."	11713
	11718

The 'confession' of the Pardoner in his Prologue and Tale has a structure of 'cortex' and 'nucleus' that suggests the character of the Pardoner himself. In his Prologue the Pardoner describes his aims and the methods he uses to achieve them, and in the prefatory part of his Tale (463-660) he gives a virtuous demonstration of his various arts. These are the outer shell of the man, a fabric of lies and fraudulence, at once revolting and fascinating to behold. But in the Tale itself, that bare

and brilliant/.....

and brilliant account of the pursuit of Death (661-894), he exposes the core of his own being. The Pardoner does not merely preach about spiritual death, nor yet does he only pursue it in his way of life. He does more: he embodies it:

"thei (that) forleten the good wilfully,
and turnen hem wilfully to vices
forleten nat oonly to ben myghti, but thei
forleten al outrelly in any wise for to been.
For thei that forleten the comune fyn of alle
things that ben, thei forleten also ther-
withal for to been. For right as thou
myghtest seyn of the careyne of a man, that
it were a deed man, but thou ne myghtest
nat symply callen it a man; so graunte I
wel forsothe that vicious folk ben wikkid,
but I ne may nat graunte absolutely and
symply that thei ben. For thilke thing
that withholdeth ordre and kepeth nature,
thilke thing es, and hath beinge; but what
thing that faileth of that (that is to seyn,
he that forleteth naturel ordre), he forleteth
thilke beinge that is set in his nature."

(Boece Bk. IV, Pr. II) (My italics.)

'Multiplicacioun'.

Man, like all other creatures, strives instinctively 'to duren
nat only for a time, but.... to duren perdurably by generacioun'.
The spiritual equivalent of this aim is 'the blisful lyf that is perdurable',
the 'endeless blisse of hevене' which the Parson, in his 'knytinge up'
of the Pilgrims' tales, points out as the goal of every pilgrimage through
this world. He sums up, at the very end of his Tale, the means by which
it may be won:

"This blisful regne may men purchase by
poverte espirituel, and the glorie by
lowenesse, the plentee of joye by hunger
and thurst and the reste by travaille, and
the lyf by deeth and mortification of synne." (XII 1023)

This is/.....

This is the life of asceticism and dedication chosen by Virginia. But the body of the Parson's sermon deals with another road to 'Jerusalem celestial', one which may be followed by the whole of fallible humanity --

"a ful noble wey and a ful covenable, which
may nat faille to man ne to woman, that
thugh sinne hath misgoun fro the righte
wey of Jerusalem celestial; and this wey
is cleped Penitence." (X(II) 80)

True repentance for sin is 'the tree of life to hem that it receiven'; accordingly the Parson's homily is fittingly set in the place of honour at the end of the Canterbury Tales, counterpoising the tale of the Knight in its place of secular honour at the beginning. The Pardoner occupies the same position in the General Prologue's file of portraits as the Parson's sermon does in the body of the Tales, likewise in apposition to the Knight: but there is no honour in his being so placed. True penitence, as the Parson explains, requires 'Contricioun of herte, Confessioun of Mouth, and Satisfaccioun'. The latter may be in the form of some bodily penance enjoined upon the penitent by the priest to whom he makes confession, or it may legitimately be converted into alms for the poor. That is the punishment for sin: but forgiveness comes only from God, and only with 'the verray sorwe that a man receiveth in his herte for his sinnes, with sad purpose to shryve him, and to do penance, and nevermore to do sinne.' (X(II) 129). The Pardoner, barely acknowledging his titular office as quaestor, or collector of alms, for the Hospital of the Blessed Mary of Rouncevalle, affects the right to give pardon, not only 'a poena', by remission of punishment in the form of alms, but 'a culpa', by forgiveness of sin, irrespective of 'contritio cordis'. He displays 'bulles of popes and of cardinales', the 'letters of indulgence' by which the Pope, as successor to St. Peter, claimed the right to remit the whole or part of the punishment due for sins, provided the sinner was truly penitent; and his bulis are forgeries. He offers 'reliques' for the devotion

of the/.....

of the ignorant and superstitious, and his relics are faked. Although questors were forbidden to preach, he delivers sermons of oily eloquence - learned 'by rote'. His alms-collecting function is a grim joke, for he preaches 'of no-thing but for covetlyse' and the alms he wrings from his ignorant and poverty-stricken audiences all go to support the vices of the 'noble ecclesiaste' himself. He is, in short, a mockery of the office he claims -- that of a 'suffisant, pardoneur', a guide to the life-giving 'tree' of Penitence, whose fruit is 'the endlees blis of hevne'.

'Multiplicacioun' is enjoined by Nature upon man, as upon all other creatures, while he lives in her sub-lunar realm. Thus, the Pardoner sells the use of his relics for the multiplying of 'bestes and... stoor', of grain, and of other earthly goods. Yet he, himself, though purporting to be a 'propre man', is no more capable of increase in the physical sense than in the spiritual. A passage from the Roman de la Rose (5927-7152) which Chaucer evidently had in mind when he framed the Host's insult (VI(C) 951-55) suggests what kind of concept the reader is led to form of the Pardoner. The lover reproves Raison for lacking 'courtoise' because she has so named the 'coilles' of Saturn instead of using a euphemism, when telling the story of how Jupiter castrated his father. Raison counters that there can be no sin in naming what God has created, and that these organs serve the divine purpose of renewing life by 'generacioun'--

"Four l'espiece avoir toujours vive	6969
Par renouvelance naive,	
C'est par naissance recheable	
E par chance renaissable,	
Par quel Deus la fait tant durer	
Qu'el ne peut la mort endurer.	6974

She argues that a rose by any other name.....

"Se je, quant mis les nons aus choses	7109
Que si reprendre e blasmer oses,	
Coilles reliques apelesse	

E reliques/.....

E reliques coilles clamasse,
 Tu, qui si m'en morz e depiques,
 Me redeïsses de reliques
 Quas ce fust laiz moz e vilains.... 7115
 Je fis les moz e sui certaine 7119
 Qu'onques ne fis chose vilaine;
 E Deus, qui est sages e fis,
 Tient a bien fait quanque je fis... " 7122

Raison goes on to quote a few of the needless euphemisms then current for the word 'coilles', among them 'bourses'. Chaucer seems to have fixed on this image for an exact parallel of the Pardoner's perverted and unnatural kind of 'multiplicacioun', perhaps associating it with the lines describing Nature at her forge, working ceaselessly to counter the ravages of Death:

"Toujourz martelee, toujourz forge, 16010
 Toujourz ses pieces renouvele
 Par generacioun nouvele;
 Quant autre conseil n'i pout metre,
 Si taille empreintes de tel letre
 Qu'el leur done fourmes veraies,
 En coinz de diverses moneies... " 16016

And it is only in 'coinz de diverses moneier' that the Pardoner can multiply. He teems in nobles, sterlings, pence and groats, but in no other sense at all;

"Com forth anon, and kneleth heere adoun,
 And mekely receyvethe my pardoun;
 Or elles taketh pardoun as ye wende,
 Al newe and fressh at every miles ende,
 So that ye offren, alwey newe and newe,
 Nobles or pens, whiche that be goode and trewe... "
 (VI(C) 925-30)

He vends spiritual rebirth, the spurious prospect of buying a soul 'as clene and eek as clere as ye were born... ', but the seed of his own 'engendrure' is like the 'confiture' purchased by the youngest of the three villains of his Tale -- a substance of which 'noght but the mountance of a corn of whete' suffices to kill a man: a seed whose fruit is Death. Like every other living creature, the Pardoner has in him 'of entencioun

of nature' the desire to 'duran p rdurable by generacioun', but the extremity of his perversion manifests itself in the product of his 'generacioun'. His is the true mettle of the brethren of Rounc! al:

"...cum venerint questores....Runcivallenses,
multa promittunt, multa mendacia pro
pecunia multiplicat." (Quoted in The Pardoner's Tale,
edited by N. Coghill and C. Tolkien; London, 1950; p. 18.)

He 'fathers' neither other living creatures nor the spiritual increase in which the Host enjoins the good Parson to be 'fructuous': he lives only 'pro pecunia multiplicat'. 'This charitee and this love, that every thing hath to him-self', which moves all other creatures to reproduce and multiply, does not stir in the soul of the Pardoner. The force that moves in him is the negation of such 'charitee', cupidity. This is 'radix malorum', the root of all evil, from which grows not the 'tree of life' which is Penitence, but the tree of death which figures in the Pardoner's Tale.

The Host's offer to the Pardoner is a predictable reaction to his effrontery. To the Pardoner's 'Unboked anon thy purs:' he replies, drawing upon the latent sense of 'bourse', that the charlatan should first prove the worth of his own 'purs':

"I wolde I hadde thy coillions in myn hond
In stide of relikes or of seintuarie.
Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie;
They shul be shryned in an hogges toord!" (VI(C) 952-55)

After the Pardoner's detailed account of the plans - never effected - of his three villains to 'carie' their precious gold to a place of safety where they can enjoy it, the implication of the Host's offer of help in carrying the Pardoner's 'bourses' is very plain. The function of reproduction has been perverted in him to the point where he can multiply only the contents of his purse -- and that holds a heavy load indeed. The organs of generation 'par quel Deus la fait tant durer qu'el ne peut

la mort/.....

la mort endurer' -- withered, functionless, fittingly representative of the physical and spiritual eunuch, are rightly consigned with the 'hogges toord' to the 'commune gonge'.

Cupidity, the grasping lust that is 'radix omnium malorum' is the essence of the Pardoner. On the other hand, the story of Appius and Virginia in the Roman de la Rose is told in the course of a discussion of charity, the principle which dominates Virginius when he chooses rather to kill his daughter 'par amour, senz haine', than submit her to shameful usage. Raison has asserted that

"...plus tient grant necessité	5503
Amout, qui vient de charité,	
Que joustice ne fait d'assez....	5505
Se joustice iert toujourz gisanz,	5527
Si serait Amour soufisanz	
A l'over bele vie e bone,	
Senz jousticier nule persone;	
Mais senz Amour joustice non."	5532

Men who loved one another in charity, says Raison, would not wrong one another --

"E puis que Forfaiz s'en trait,	5553
Joustice de quei servirait?"	

The judge, charged with the administration of justice, must first justify himself by being a man of integrity and diligence, never 'lasches e negligenz, Ne couveiteus, faus ne feintis'. Raison then tells the tale of Appius and Virginia. It is noteworthy that the Summoner, that terrifying 'frend and compeer' of the Pardoner, ought to have brought the Pardoner before the ecclesiastical courts for his open defiance of the Church's laws against the traffic of indulgences. Instead, the two are singing in harmony, 'Joustice' bearing a 'stif burdoun' to 'Porfaiz'. The song they sing is 'Com hider, love, to me': the Pardoner, his eyes glaring with unnatural lust, warbling shrilly to the Summoner 'hoot and lecherous', fiery-faced with the hellish torment of his revolting and incurable disease --

"al hir body y-covered with 'fyr that nevere
shal quenche, and with wormes that nevere
shul dyen...." (X(I) 210)

The true spirit of 'cupiditas', the 'love' to which they sing, is nowhere more vividly realised.

"O Cursed Sinne...."

In the first two hundred lines of his Tale, the Pardoner inveighs against the vices of 'glotonye, luxurie and hasardrye', and blasphemy. All these impinge upon the Pardoner's own pet failing, 'that same vyce which that I use, and that is avaryce'. Gluttony, according to St. Jerome, is the mother of avarice --

"Porro ciborum aviditas, quod avaritiæ sit,
et animum quasi quibusdam compedibus degravatum
in terra tenet, quis ignorant?"

Adv. Jov. Lib II, cap. 8; Migne 297

'Luxurie' is the nursling of gluttony:

"Esus carniū, et potus vini, ventrisque
saturitas, seminarium libidinis est.
Unde et Comicus: 'Sine Cerere, inquit,
et Libero friget Venus'

Adv. Jov. Lib II, cap. 7; Migne 297

'Hasardrye' and 'false othes' are among the 'twigges' of avarice.

"Now comth hasardrie with his apurtenaunces,
as tables and rafles, of which comth deceite,
false others, chidynges, and alle ravynes,
blasphemyng and reneiyng of God, and hate
of his neighbores, wast of goodes,
mysspendyng of tyme, and somtyme manslaughtre."
(X(I) 793).

All these the Pardoner sweepingly condemns. His performance in this, particularly, is the subject of the Host's penetrating remark at the conclusion of the Pardoner's Tale, the source of which has already been quoted. In the course of this passage of the Roman, Raison is in fact discussing the purpose of language. Although God made all things, it was the reason of mankind that invented the

names by which we know them. God did not confer names upon his creatures, because he had given to man the precious gift of speech -- to be used for specific purposes, divinely appointed: and here Raison calls on the authority of Plato. Words, says Plato in the Timaeus, are given us that we may make our meaning and intention known, that we may teach and learn by them.

"...Ancels m'oposes	7083
Que, tout ait Deus faites les choses,	
Au meins ne fist il pas le non,	
Ci te respon: espoir, que non,	
Au mains celui qu'eles ont ores;	
Si les pot il bien nomer lores	
Quant il prumierement cria	
Tout le monde e quanqu'il a;	7090
Mais il vost que nons leur trouvasse	
A mon plaisir e les nomasse	
Proprement e comunement,	
Pour creistre nostre entendement;	
E la parole me dona,	
Ou mout très precieus don a.	
E ce que ci t'ai recité	
Peuz trouver en auctorité,	
Car Platons lisait en s'escole	
Que donee nous fu parole	7100
Pour faire noz vouleis entendre,	
Pour enseigner e pour aprendre."	7102

If this indeed is the proper use of language, then Chaucer's reason for employing Raison's example, the substitution of 'reliques' for 'coilles' (7106 ff.), relates to the superlative hypocrisy of the Pardoner's whole performance. He has debased the divine gift of speech, 'mout très presieus don', to the point where a word has no meaning. The Pardoner's words do not explain his intention, but conceal it; they are not spoken in order to impart or to gain knowledge; but 'of nothing but for covetise'. His words are husks, worthless offcasts, fit 'reliques' of dead meaning to enshrine in 'an hogges torde'. The Pardoner is the inversion of the faithful shepherd, the Poor Parson of whom Chaucer says:

"This noble ensamble to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte, and afterward he
taughte." (II(h) 496-97)

When the Host, in the same double-imagery as he uses to insult the Pardoner, calls on the Parson to 'Unbokel, and shew us what is in thy male', the good priest gives proof by his reply that he is truly 'a proore man, and lyk a prelat'. The Parson sows no 'drai', but good 'whete' of sound doctrine, and he preaches only the essence of what in his own living he practises. But the Pardoner gives to his 'shepe' the 'noble ensamble' of a shepherd who is directly in league with 'the wolf that is in the breres'. He practises avidly all the vices against which he preaches with an eloquence 'affyled' by his insatiable desire to 'winne gold and silver'. When he denounces 'plotonye', he does so with a patently sensuous appreciation of what he condemns:

"Out of the harde bones knocke they
The mary, for they caste noght away
That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote.
Of spicerie of leef, and bark, and roote
Shal been his sauce ymaked by delit,
To make hym yet a newer appetit.
But, certes, he that haunteth swiche delices
Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices." (VI(C) 541-48)

His advice to abstain from 'wyn and dronkenesse' exudes a potent 'fumositee' of good-fellowship as he tells the sinner how and where to get best value of his sinning:

"Now kepe vow fro the white and fro the rede,
And namely fro the white wyn of Lepe,
That is to selle in Fvashstrete or in Chepe.
This wyn of Soaigne crepeth subtilly
In othere wynes, growynge faste by,
Of which ther ryseth swich fumositee
That whan a man hath dronken draughtes thre,
And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe,
He is in Soaigne, right at the toun of Lepe, -
Nat at the Pochele, ne at Burdeux toun;
And thanne wol he serve 'Sampson, Campsoun!'" (VI(C) 562-72)

Similarly, in his 'definition' of 'hasardye' he casts upon it the eye of a practical man:

"Hasard is veray meeder of leavynges,
Out of deceite, and cursed forswerynges,
Blasphemy of Crist, manslaughter, and wast
also
Of catel and of tyme; and forthermo,
It is contrarye and contrarie of honour
For to ben holde a commune hasardour. " (VI(C) 591-96)

One is reminded of the irrefutably argued point made by Andreas
Capellanus concerning the Golden Rule:

"According to the divine mandate, every man is
bidden to love (his neighbour) as himself.
But even without the divine mandate and
considering only worldly convenience, we are
bound to love our neighbours, for no one can
get along without neighbours even for a short
time."
Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love: Book III;
Trans. John Jay Parry, p. 188

For the Pardoner, even more than for this worldliest of chaplains, there
are no other considerations than 'worldly convenience'. Lies, deceit,
blasphemy and murder may be reasonably serious, if discovered, 'wast of
catel' somewhat more so: but social standing - 'God hit forbode'
that we lose that! His 'word or two' against blasphemy has the same
ring of vicarious zest as his polemic against gluttony:

"And forther over, I wol thee telle al plat,
That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous
That of his othes is to outrageous.
'By Goddes precious herte', 'By his nayles',
And 'By the blood of Crist that is in Hayles,
Bevene is my chaunce, and thyn is cynk and
treve!"
'By Goddes armes, if thou falsly playe,
This daggere shal thurghout thyn herte go!'-
This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones two,
Forsweryng, ire, falsnesse, homycide,
Now, for the love of Crist, that for us dyde,
Lete youre othes..." (VI(C) 648-59)

The glancing reference to the question of transubstantiation in the tirade against gluttony suggests again the point made by the 'coilles-reliques' debate. The Pardoner cries

"O womi-e! O bely! O styvnyng cod,
Fulfilled of dony and of corrupcioun!
At either ende of thee foul is the soun.
How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!
Thise cookes, how they stamoe, and streyne,
and grynde,
And turnen substaunce into accident,
To fulfille al thy likerous talent!" (VI(C) 534-40)

He is echoing Innocent III's denunciation of gluttony:

"Alius contundit et colat, alius confundit
et conficit, substantiam vertit in accidens,
naturam mutat in artem, ut saturitas transeat
in esuriam, ut fastidium revocet appetitum,
ad irritandum gulam, non ad sustentandam
naturam; non ad necessitatem supplendam,
sed ad aviditatem exolendam."
Innocentii III, De Miseria Humane Conditionis;
Lib. II, can. xvii (2) (45a)

Professor Robinson says that 'Chaucer can hardly have used this phrase (l. 539) without thinking of the current controversy about the Eucharist.' (45) The controversy centred upon Wycliffe's denunciation of the doctrine of transubstantiation as a 'blasphemous folly', because it presupposes the possibility of an accident existing without its substance. The word 'substance' is used for reality as distinguished from outward appearance; 'accident' comprises the outward qualities by which the reality is apprehended. The bearing of this complex of ideas upon the Host's (and our own) view of the Pardoner lies in the similarity of his own performance to that of 'thise cookes'. He takes words, god-given

(45) Note on ll. 537 ff. of the Pardoner's Tale, p. 730 of F. N. Robinson's edition.

(45a) Lotharii Cardinalis (Innocentii III): De Miseria Humane Conditionis; edidit Michele Maccarrone; Thesaurus Mundi, Lugano, 1955.

vehicles of man's thought, instruments 'pour enseigner e pour aprendre', and by his own hypocrisy drains them of their reality, making them mere shells, 'accident' without 'substance', bones from which the 'marv' has been knocked out. Spiritual eunuch that he is, his words are as impotent as he. He 'stampes, and streynes, and grindes' and all for avarice, child of gluttony, in the precise image of the Parson's delineation:

"whan the wolfe hath ful his wombe,
he stynteth to strangle sheep. But
soothly, the pilours and destroyours
of the godes of hooky chyrche no do
nat so, for they ne stynte nevere to
pile." (C(II) 709)

The Pardoner does not preach 'ad sustentandam naturam' to satisfy the divine principle of man's nature, which demands that the individual soul strive to prolong its life -- the spiritual equivalent of 'this charitee and this love, that every thing hath to him-self. ... for which all creatures desiren naturally hir lyf as longe as ever they move'. He preaches 'for nothing but for coveityse', for cupidity, moved by a force which militates against natural order. As he turns substance into accident, so 'naturam mutat in artem' living and life-giving nature is turned into something that neither lives nor sustains life: into an artefact, a replica which apes truth and nature in its outward appearance, its accident, but for all that is substantially false and dead.

"Manduca et bibe, et si tibi placet, cum
Israele lude consurgens, et canito:
Manducemus et bibemus, cras enim
moriemur. Manducet et bibat, qui post
cibos exspectat interitum; qui cum
Epicuro dicit: Post mortem nihil est, et
mors ipsa nihil est. Nos Paulo credimus
intonanti: Esca ventri, et venter escis.
Deus autem et hunc et illam destruet."

Adv. Iov. II, cap 6. Migne. 294.

The Pardoner, one of the 'magistri mendaces' of whom St. Jerome warns (quoting II Peter, II, Adv. Jov. I cap 39.) is 'fonte sine aqua' a fountain from which comes, not the life-giving water of good counsel, but 'diaboli venena' (46) Those who imbibe it may indeed 'stepte (up) al drunken' and go out to seek Death.

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- (46) "Libentius antidotum Christi bibet, cum diaboli venena praeceperint."
Adv. Jov. I, cap. 4; Migne 215.

Section III/.....

THE 'CHAUCERIAN MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVE':REALITY IN THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE.

"The whole spirit of this poem is to erase or at least to overleap the boundaries: animal and human, fiction and truth severally join and separate, change partners and flirt here. The one constancy in the poem is this shifting of focus, the Chaucerian multiple perspective which itself virtually constitutes the theme."

Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition; p. 239.

The Nun's Priest's Tale telescopes into its brief span as much that Chaucer has to say about the nature of reality as any or perhaps all of the other Tales. It is the crown jewel of the collection, carefully prepared for and exquisitely set in the fragment whose climax it is. It is surely the tale of 'best sentence and most solas' that would have won the prize 'soper', if it had been awarded.

Stylistically, the Tale is a 'tour d'adresse'. It is the more brilliant for being contrasted with the two offerings of 'Chaucer the pilgrim', who proves the Man of Law's assertion that he 'can but lewedly. On metres and on ryming craftily'. This earnest 'popet'-figure, evidently following the Host's criterion to the letter, attempts to tell first the tale of 'most solas' -- the Tale of Sir Thopas, composed of unmitigated froth all in 'rym dogerel' -- and next delivers what apparently he intends as the Tale of 'best sentence' -- the Tale of Melibee, which vies with the Parson's Tale in the weight of its unleavened, indigestible morality. After the pilgrim Chaucer comes the Monk, lover of 'venerye' in an ambiguous sense, who chooses to tell a series of tragedies in 'exametron' but is stopped after the seventeenth recital by the Knight. The reason for the interruption is not only that he is boring the company, but that he does not know what he is talking about. His tales about the tricks of Fortune, with their moral, 'Lat no man truste on blind prosperitee', make no sense

because among other reasons, the prosperous Monk himself so patently does not either practise or believe in what he preaches. The truth of the matter, as demonstrated in his own person, does not accord with the 'sentence' offered by his tales; he 'jangles' like the bells on the bridle of his well-fed palfrey. Hence, when he refuses rather huffily the Host's invitation to 'sey somewhat of hunting', a subject on which the Monk could speak with real authority, the master of ceremonies calls upon one of the most insignificant of the company, one of the three priests in the service of the Lady Prioress, for the next Tale. The Tale told by this priest is 'of a cok', who fell from a dung-hill with as cataclysmic a fall as any of the 'popes, emperours or kinges' of the Monk's tragedies when they fell 'from heigh degree into miserie'; and in it 'sir John' succeeds, as notably as Chaucer the Pilgrim failed, in combining 'sentence' with 'solas' into a consummate whole.

When the Host called upon the Monk to tell his tale, he complimented that 'fair prelat' in imagery strongly suggestive of the fertility-sterility paradox discussed in relation to the Pardoner's and Physician's Tales:

"I pray to God, yeve hym confusioun
That first thee broghte unto religioun!
Thou woldest han been a tredefowel aright
Haddestow as greet a leeve, as thou hast
myght,
To parfoume al thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest bigeten ful many a creature."

(VII 1943-48 (B2 4537-49))

The Monk's physical procreative potential obviously leaves nothing to be desired. What he was required to show by his Tale was his spiritual 'engendrure', and in this he failed signally. The Nun's Priest is commended, in an epilogue to his Tale, in the same imagery of fertility -- with an additional accolade for his command of rhetoric:

"Sire Nonnes Preest, 'oure Hooste seide snoon,
 'I-blessed be thy breche, and every stoon!
 This was a murie tale of Chauntecleer.
 But by my trouthe, if thou were seculer,
 Thou woldest ben a trede-foul aright.
 For if thou have corage as thou hast myght,
 Thee were ned3 of hennes, as i'wene,
 Ya, moo than seven tymes seventene.
 See, whiche braunes hath this gentil preest,
 So gret a nekke, and swich a large breest!
 He loketh as a sperhawk with his yen;
 Him nedeth nat his colour for to dyen
 With brasile, ne with greyn of Portyngale..." (VII 3447-59;
 (B2 4637-49))

The compliment paid to the Nun's Priest is of as high an order as the Host's final words to the Pardoner were insulting. On the evidence of his Tale, he is praised for his spiritual virility. He is also commended for having the vision of a 'sperhawk', a bird akin to the 'royal eagle', and credited with the eagle's piercing vision (17). It is this last quality, which Professor Muscatine has called the 'Chaucerian multiple perspective', that most distinguishes the tale of Chauntecleer and Pertelote.

At the end of the Tale the Cock, the Fox and the Nun's Priest together reach to the moral 'nucleus':

"Thou shalt namoore, thurgh thy flaterye,
 Do me to synge and wynke with myn ye;
 For he that wynketh, whan he sholde see,
 Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee!
 'Nay', quod the fox, 'but God yeve hym
 meschaunce,
 That is so undiscreet of governaunce
 That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees.'
 Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees
 And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
 But ye that holden this tale a folye,
 As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
 Taketh the moralite, goode men.
 For seint Paul seith that al that writen is,
 To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis;
 Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille." (VII 3429-43;
 (B2 4619-33))

With 'jangling' is associated the delightful commentary on rhetoric and other poetic arts entwined throughout the 'B' fragment, and most conspicuous in this Tale. The Fox's conclusion refers not only to his own 'faux pas', but suggests as well Chauntecleer's show of 'scholarship', and extends back in its dramatic context to hint at the 'clapping' of the Monk and the 'drasty speche' of the pilgrim Chaucer. It also encompasses the Nun's Priest's delicious sense -- which is Chaucer's too -- of his own scholarly absurdity. In the ensuing discussion I have chosen to concentrate on the conclusions of the Cock and the Nun's Priest, and I have consequently been 'negligent' of this other, equally important, aspect of the Tale. The form of this poem cannot be dissociated from its content -- in contrast to the heavy ineptitude of the Monk's 'examstrons', for instance, or the rocking-horse 'rym dogerel' of Sir Thopas. The Nun's Priest's Tale speaks, in every sense, for itself; it has the inevitability of a work shaped to perfection by what it says. Wherever the narrative takes rhetorical flight, the device of rhetoric delicately, subtly and steadfastly pursues the purpose of the Tale and governs its mood. There is never too much; as the Host remarks, the Nun's Priest 'nedeth nat his colour for to dyen With brasil, ne with greyn of Portingale', -- unless, indeed, he is laughing at himself, as he does so easily. The commentary on 'jangling', and on rhetoric unskilfully used, pervades the whole Tale. But I have not drawn particular attention to it in this study.

In a simplified view of its structure, the Nun's Priest's Tale comprises at least four areas of experience, enclosed one within the other like an Oriental carved ivory ball. Primarily, there is the pilgrimage setting, which includes the Nun's Priest and the other pilgrims, notably the narrators of the 'B' fragment -- the Prioress, Chaucer himself and the Monk and perhaps even the Man of Law, who

in his/.....

In his Prologue makes unflattering observations about Chaucer. Immediately within the Tale is the poor widow who owns the hen-yard; next, the hen-yard itself, in which struts the lordly Cock and his 'paramours'. Within this again is another world, an inner universe which seems to expand and include all the others -- the world of Chauntecleer's dream and the stories of dreams that he relates in support of his interpretation of his own 'avisioun', which take up in bulk almost a third of the Tale. Reality in this structure is right as its core, and at the same time all around its periphery. The dream of Chauntecleer is a vision of reality, while at the same time the widow whose humble roof he shares lives her simple life in continual contact with this same reality.

A passage from the De Consolatione Philosophiae of Boethius explains the significance of the 'inner universe' of the Tale, as I have defined it above:

"(Men) have hir eien so wont to the derknesse
of erthly thinges that they ne may nat lyften
hem up to the light of cler sothfastnesse,
But thei ben lyk to briddes of whiche the
nyght lightneth hir lokynge and the day blend-
ith hem." (Boece, Bk. IV, Pr. 4)

Chauntecleer is, after all, only a bird, albeit a magnificent one, and to his kind 'the night lightneth hir lokinge, and the day blindeth hem.' In the night, in his sleep, Chauntecleer is vouchsafed a flash of clear sight in the form of an 'avisioun', a prophetic dream. In the day-time, when he 'caste(th) up hise eyen to the brighte sonne', its light blinds him as men are blinded by the light of truth because their eyes are accustomed to 'the derknesse of erthely thinges'. One of the central concerns of the Tale is seeing. To see is to have one's eyes open, to be awake; to be watchful or vigilant. The cock is used emblematically in mediaeval art to represent Christian vigilance, not only because it announces the coming of dawn, but because a cock crowed when St. Peter denied Christ for the third time. The vice

opposed to the quality of 'vigilance' or wakefulness is 'accidie', or sloth, with its many 'speces', of which 'negligence' or 'recchelesnesse', and 'sompnolence' are the most pertinent to this Tale. The Parson in his Tale has much that is relevant to say about these vices:

"Now certes, this foule synne, Accidie, is eek a ful greet enemy to the liflode of the body; for it ne hath no purveaunce agayn temporeel necessitee; for it forsloweth and forsluggeth and destroyeth alle goodes temporeles by recchelesnesse... Thanne cometh sompnolence, that is, sleggy slombrynge, which maketh a man be hevy and dul in body and in soule; and this synne comth of Slouthe. And certes, the tyme that, by wey of resoun, men sholde nat slepe, that is by the morwe... Lo! what seith Salomon: 'whoso wolde by the morwe awaken and seke me, he shal fynde.' Thanne cometh negligence, or recchelesnesse, that rekketh of no thyng. And how that ignoraunce be mooder of alle harm, certes, negligence is the norice... Of the remedie of these two synnes, as seith the wise man, that 'he that dredeth God, he spareth nat to doon that him oghte doon." (Parson's Tale X(ii) 685, 706-07, 709-10, 712.)

At the same time, it is necessary to bear in mind the good man's words on the vice of Flattery, since Chaucer associates with his central concept of 'seeing' the Parson's implied imagery of the flatterer as a mirror which gives back a falsely enhanced reflection:

"Lat us now touche the vyce of flateringe, which ne comth gladly but for drede or for coveitise. Flaterye is generally wrongful preisinge... (It) maketh a man to enhauncen his herte and his countenance. Flatereres been the develes enchauntours; for they make a man to wene of him-self be lyk that he nis nat lyk. They been lyk to Judas that bitrayed a man to sellen him to his enemy, that is, to the devel..."

(Parson's Tale X(ii) 612-13, 614-16.)

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These passages will repeatedly be referred to in my discussion of the Tale.

I have already said that the dreams recounted by Chauntecleer, and his own dream, lie at the heart of the poem's structure, and are its particular 'nucleus' of 'ultimate' reality. In explanation, I refer to the sources of the two chief examples adduced by the Cock in support of his assertion that

"...no man sholde been recchelees
Of dremes, for I sey thee, doutelees,
That may a dreme ful sore is for to drede." (VII 3107-09)
(B2 4297-99)

Both the dream-stories told in VII 2984-3104 are found in two works which Chaucer may have used: the De Divinatione of Cicero, and the Facta et Dicta Memorabilia of Valerius Maximus (48). Valerius borrows the accounts from Cicero, and one may hazard a guess that 'oon of the gretteste auctors that men rede' is a punning reference to the cognomen of Valerius, with a further implication which will be discussed below.

Assuming for the moment that Valerius was, in fact, Chaucer's 'auctoritee' (since his versions expand on Cicero's, and Chaucer's on his), Chaucer modified the accounts in a most interesting way. To the first account he added (among other things) the details that the two friends went on a pilgrimage and that one of the two was 'logged in a stalle... with oxen of the plough'; also that the dreamer in this story dreams twice that his friend appeals for help (in both Valerius and Cicero the dreamer is warned only once, and sees his friend dead in a second dream). He adds as well the significant phrase 'Bihold my bloddy woundes depe and wyde!'. There is also a stress in the Chaucerian version, present but much less marked in Valerius, on the operation of fortune: such phrases as 'and happed so', 'as it wolde falle', and 'as was his aventure of his fortune That us governeth alle as in comune....'. The conclusion beginning 'O blisful god, that

(48) The Nun's Priest's Tale, edited by Kenneth Sisam, London, 1957; pp. 39-40. Both sources are given by Sisam. The text of Valerius' versions is reprinted in Bryan and Dempster, op. cit., pp. 662-63.

art so just and trewe',' (VII 3050-57), which concerns divine justice, is entirely Chaucer's. Valerius' wording of the sentence in which he describes the dream after the death of the murder victim gives a clue to the direction of Chaucer's modifications:

*hunc idem ei saucius oblatus obsecravit
ut, quoniam vitae, suae auxilium ferre
neglexisset, nec saltem ultionem non
negaret...* (49) (lines 10-11) (My italics.)

The dreamer's failure to save the life of his friend was an act of 'negligence'; instead of acting immediately on his first humane impulse to seek out his friend's lodging, 'humanissimum propositum tamquam supervacuum damnavit et lectum ac somnum repetit'. (lines 8-9). He returned to his slumbers when he should have been wakeful.

In the second story, Chaucer added another traveller as well as an accentuated slant to his own version. This second 'felewe' casts scorn on the possibility that the first man's dream is prophetic:

"No dreem," quod he, "may so myn herte agaste
That I wol lette for to do my thynges.
I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges,
For swevenes been but vanytees and japes...
But sith I see that thou wolt heere abyde,
And thus for-sleuthen wilfully thy tyde,
God woot, it reweth me; and have good day!"
(VII 3088-91 (B2 4278-81))
(VII 3095-97 (B2 4285-87))

The phrase 'And thus for-sleuthen wilfully thy tyde' is reminiscent of the description of Accidie, which 'ne hath no purveaunce agayn

- (49) Valerius Maximus, Factorum et dictorum memorabilium, libri novem, ed. C. Balm; Leipzig, 1865; Lib. I, Cap. VII, 10.
Bryan and Dempster, op. cit., p. 667.

temporel necessitee; for it forslaweth and forsluggeth, and
destroeyeth alle goodes temporeles hy reccheleesnesse....'

The originals attribute the dream to the poet Simonides. Valerius' version ends:

"Memor autem benefici elegantissimo carmine
aeternati consecravit, melius illi et diuturnius
in animis hominum sepulcrum constituens quam
in desertis et ignotis harenis struxerat." (50) (Lines 7-9)

The scoffer in Chaucer's account is full of concern for his 'things' -- his worldly affairs. He would rather entrust his life to a solidly material ship than to a warning given by spiritual means. This man, like the dreamer in the first story who ignored the dream-warning until it was too late, was 'recchelees', while the man who heeded the warning was vigilant. The 'necessitee' for which the sceptic made 'purveaunce' was entirely material, while the man who heeded the dream's message was making provision 'diuturnius' --- looking further ahead than his immediate earthly concerns. As in his version of the first story, Chaucer here points out the workings of chance -- 'but casually the shippes botme rent'. In this case the originals have nothing equivalent.

The first account given by Chaucer, then, seems to have the import that men should be vigilant, not 'negligent, or racchelees' -- wakeful, not 'sompnolent'. The second story adds that this vigilance applies to spiritual matters, even more than to temporal and material concerns. The first story appears to be related, through Chaucer's obvious Christianisation of his source, to the events in the life of Christ which led to the cock's becoming a symbol of Christian vigilance. St. Matthew's account of Peter's denial of Christ tells first how, after the Last Supper, Jesus went with his disciples to the

(50) Valerius Maximus, op.cit., Lib.I, Cap.vii, 3;
Bryan and Dempster, op. cit., p. 663.

Mount of Olives, where he prophesied to them: 'Omnes vos scandalum patiemini ista nocte.' (Matt. 26, xxxi.) Peter replied: 'Et si omnes scandalizati fuerint in te, ego nunquam scandalizabor.' The Gospel according to St. Luke gives the words of Jesus to Peter at this point as follows:

"Ait autem Dominus: Simon, Simon, ecce Satanas expetivit vos ut cribaret sicut triticum: ego autem rogavi pro te ut non deficiat fides tua." (Luc. 22, xxxi-xxxii.)

Jesus then prophesied that before the cock crew, Peter would deny him three times that night. After this, taking aside Peter and the two sons of Zebedee in the Garden of Gethsamene, Jesus said to them: 'Sustinete hic, et vigilate mecum.' Having prayed, he returned to find the disciples asleep:

"...et dicit Petro: Sic non potuistis una hora vigilare mecum? Vigilate, et orate ut non intretis in tentationem. Spiritus quidem promptus, caro autem infirma." (Matt. 26, xi-xii.)

After praying again, Jesus again found the three men asleep: 'invenit eos dormientes: erant enim oculi eorum gravati.' Once more he left them and prayed, and then came to them saying:

"Dormite iam, et requiescite: ecce appropinquavit hora, et Filius hominis tradetur in manus peccatorum. Surgite, eamus: ecce appropinquavit qui me tradet." (Matt. 26, xiv-xi.)

Following the betrayal and apprehension of Jesus came the three denials of Peter:

"Tunc coepit detestari et iurare quia non hominem. Et continuo gallus cantavit. Et recordatus est Petrus verbi Iesu, quod dixerat: Prius quam gallus cantet, ter me negabis. Et egressus foras, flevit amare." (Matt. 26, lxxiv-lxxv.)

The parallel between Chaucer's account of the first story and the Gospel narrative is not in the three denials of Peter but in the Agony

in the Garden of Gethsemane. Like the drowsy disciples, this dreamer twice 'turned him, and took of this no keep', and by the time of the third dream it was too late to save his friend. Hence the watchword 'Vigilate, et orate ut non intretis in tentationem. Spiritus quidem promptus, caro autem infirma' is to this story what the accounts of the dreams in the Tale are to the Tale as a whole: the core of its meaning, the 'nucleus' of the structure. At this level of meaning, 'oon of the gretteste auctors that men rede' is one of the Four Evangelists. Chauntecleer's third example, the legend of St. Kenelm, is negatively related to the concept of vigilance, for Kenelm's soul, being sinless, went straight to heaven as his dream had foretold. He had no need to fear the 'traison' of being forced to meet death in a state of spiritual unreadiness, 'so holy was his herte'. As one whose flesh was so youthful and innocent that it had never yet been tempted to yield to its 'infirmity', he needed no warning to be vigilant in spirit: he was 'redy for to meet (deeth) evermore' as the virtuous Christian should be.

The recommendation that men be vigilant is not the only concern of the dream-narrative. It is necessary also to account for the stress Chaucer has laid on the workings of chance, or Fortune, in the incidents he makes Chauntecleer recount, and for the counterbalance to this in the concluding lines of the first story:

"O blisful God, that art so just and trewe,
Lo, how that thou biwreyest mordre alway!
Mordre wol out, that se we day by day.
Mordre is so wlatson and abhomyneable
To God, that is so just and resonable,
That he ne wol nat suffre it heled be,
Though it abyde a yeer, or two, or thre.
Mordre wol out, this my conclusoun." (VII 3050-57)

(B2 4240-41)

This/

This passage (51) applies to 'mordre' the concept of divine justice set out, for instance, in Ecclesiastes 8, xi-xiii:

"Etenim quia non profertur cito
Contra malos sententia,
Absque timore ullo
Filii hominum perpetrunt mala.
Attamen peccator ex eo quod centies facit malum,
Et per patientiam sustentatur,
Ego cognovi quod erit bonum timentibus Deum.
Qui verentur faciem eius,
Non sit bonum impio,
Nec protongentur dies eius,
Sed quasi umbra transeant qui non timent faciem Domini."

Faith in the absolute justice and equity of God's judgement is expressed in the creed that wisdom is the fear of God. The 'drede of god' is the 'remedie' of the sins of 'sompnolence' and 'negligence, or recchelesnesse' given in the Parson's Tale, from Ecclesiastes 7, xix: 'Qui timet Deum nihil negligit' -- 'He that dredeth god, he spareth nat to doon that him oghte doon.' It was the matter of 'drede', the question of what a man, or a cock, should fear, that sparked off the debate between the hero and heroine of this Tale, Chauntecleer and Pertelote:

"And he answerde, and seyde thus: 'Madame,
I pray yow that ye take it nat agrief.
By God, me mette I was in swich meschief
Right now, that yet myn herte is soore afright..."

"'Avoy!' quod she, 'fy on yow, hertelees!
Allas!' quod she, 'for, by that God above,
Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love.
I kan nat love a coward, by my feith,
How dorste ye seyn, for shame, unto youre love
That any thyng myghte make yow aferd?
Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?
Allas! and konne ye been agast of swevenys?
Nothyng, God woot, but vanitee in swevenys?'"
(VII 2892-95, 2908-11, 2918-21 (B2 4082-85, 4098-101, 4108-11)).

- (51) The conclusion 'Mordre wol out' applies also to the legend of St. Kenelm, the most notable feature of which, apart from Kenelm's prophetic dream, is the miraculous manner in which the murder was made known and avenged, despite the secrecy in which it was committed and despite the apparent inviolability of the murderer, who was Kenelm's elder sister. See Sisam's edition of this Tale, p. 44.

Pertelote's/.....

Pertelote's advice is 'dredeth no dreem', and Chauntecleer's reply is to cite the examples here discussed, interspersing them with the remarks 'Here may men seen that dremes been to drede', and

"By swiche ensamples olde maistow leere
That no man sholde been to reccheles
Of dremes; for I seye thee, doutelees,
That many a dream ful soore is for to drede."
(VII 3106-09 (B2 4296-99))

Although when he concludes his arguments his 'drede' is overcome by the beauty of Pertelote's face, for she is,

"...so scarlet-reed aboute youre yen
It maketh al my drede for to dyen",

nevertheless the outcome proves that Chauntecleer's fear was justified, and was in fact the 'wise' reaction under the circumstances.

Opposing the perfect and even-handed justice of God is the concept of Fortune, or rather that view of it that the Monk takes in his seventeen 'Tragedies':

"... Fortune aiwey wole assaille
With unwar strook the regnes that been proude;
For whan men trusteth hire, thanne wol she faille,
And covere hire brighte face with a clowde."
(VII 2763-66 (B2 3953-56))

In the Monk's cloudy understanding, Fortune is a capricious jade, and the operation of chance is like the turn of the dice:

"Thy sys Fortune bath turned into aas,
And yet for thee ne weep she never a teere."
(VII 2661-62 (B2 3651-52))

Yet this is not at all the view that emerges from the passage at present under discussion in Chauntecleer's first 'exemplum' (VII 3050-57, B2 4240-47). In this story justice was done. Although Fortune 'us governeth alle as in comune', yet God is 'hisful... just and trewe', and God is the ultimate arbiter of men's actions. The view of Fortune put

forward in the Nun's Priest's Tale differs significantly from that offered in the Monk's Tale. The Nun's Priest prefaces the introduction of the Fox into the tale by declaring sententiously. --

"But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas,
For evere the latter ende of joye is wo..."
(VII 3204-05 (B2 4394-95))

--yet the breaking of the Fox into the hen-yard is 'by heigh imaginacioun forn-cast'; the Fox had lived in the grove beside the widow's cottage for 'veres three', but the divine intelligence, that 'surmounteth the environinge of the universitee, and... looketh al aboven', foresaw that on that particular night this 'Greek Sinon' would take it into his head to make a raid on the dusty little Troy. It is not by mere 'cas' that Chauntecleer's 'revei and solas' became 'wo', for chance, or 'hap' is no random force, but part of an ordered system:

"Hap is an unwar betydinge of causes
assembled in thingis that ben doon for
som oother thing; but thilke ordre,
procedinge by an uneschuable hyndinge
togidre, which that descendeth fro the
welle of purveaunce, that ordeyneth alle
thingis in hir places and in hir tymes,
makith that the causes rennen and assemblen
togidre."

"Right so fortune, that semeth as it fletith
with slakid or ungoverned bridles, it
suffreth bridelis (that is to seyn, to ben
governed), and passeth by thilke lawe
(that is to seyn, by the devyne ordenaunce).

(Boece Bk. V, Pr. 1; Met. 1)

Fortune, in the Boethian view, is one of the ministers of the divine providence. A clear statement of this view is given by Dante in the Inferno, Canto VII (lines 73-96), in which Fortune is conceived of as one of the 'prime creature' who control the heavenly spheres -- one of the celestial Intelligences or ministering angels created, with the heavens

themselves/.....

themselves, directly by God. Her function is to control and distribute impartially wealth, opportunity, and 'luck' upon the earth. Such a concept of Fortune does not deny the existence of free will, or ascribe the course of events to blind and random chance: it affirms that the divine providence is fulfilled in every event of men's lives, and that this divine plan, like God himself, is always 'just and resonable'. Fortune is described by Dante as 'general ministra e duce... questa provvede, giudica, e persegue suo regno come il loro li altri dei.' (52). She is 'beata' -- 'blisful' or blessed, as God is 'blisful... just and trewe', because she is one of God's instruments for the performance of his will, in accordance with his universal plan. Serene in the knowledge that God's will is good, she does not heed the detractions heaped upon her by men, who do not understand her function.

The introduction of chance or Fortune as an agent in the second dream-story in the Tale reinforces the point made by the first about divine justice. The man who sailed in the doomed ship, despite the warning, died because of his preoccupation with his earthly affairs -- because his eyes were 'wont to the derkenesse of erthely thinges', and could not accomodate themselves to 'the light of cleer sothfastnesae'. The sinking of the ship was 'casuel', but chance is the instrument of divine providence, which is seldom, if ever, clear to the imperfect understanding of men. 'Initium sapientiae timor Domini; intellectus bonus omnibus facientibus eum.' (Ps. 110, x.) Because of the limitations of human understanding, wisdom lies in self-knowledge: the knowledge that man cannot contain the divine plan within his restricted ken. The man who died aboard the ill-fated ship acted foolishly in not acknowledging the limitations of his own reason.

(52) "Dei" is used for 'heavenly powers', meaning the other celestial Intelligences. Inferno, Canto VII, 78, 86-87.

Returning to the theme of vigilance, it is constructive to study it in the passage in which Chauntecleer first sets eyes on that 'newe Scariot', the Fox, and its delightful context. After telling his wife about his dream, and debating with her on the subject of whether or not 'dremes been to drede', Chauntecleer allows himself to be won over by his wife's 'beautee' and his own dislike of the 'laxatyves' she would like to prescribe for his disturbed humours. Defying 'bothe sweven and drem', he flies down into the hen-yard to begin the day. Chaucer then, as it were, makes a new *beginning* of the Tale, with a grand rhetorical flourish in exquisite mock-heroic style:

"Whan that the month in which the world bigan,
That highte March, whan God first maked man,
Was compleet, and passed were also,
Syn March bigan, thritty dayes and two,
Bifel that Chauntecleer in al his pryde,
His sevane wyves walkynge by his syde,
Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne..."

(VII 3187-93 (B2 4277-83))

After a brief warning to the reader of the 'sorweful cas' that is about to befall Chauntecleer, Chaucer describes how the Fox broke into the yard on the previous night, and is now lying in ambush. He draws a lightning parallel with the first 'exempium' related earlier:

"Waitynge his tyme on Chauntercleer to falle,
As g'adly doon thise homycides alle
That in await ligen to mordre men."

(VII 3223-25 (B2 4413-15.))

Since the entry of the Fox into the yard was 'by heigh imaginacioun forncast', Chauntecleer's dream was indeed what he said it was -- an 'avisoun', a prophetic dream presaging adversity. The 'heigh imaginacioun' of God foresees what is going to happen because God exists in the dimension of eternity, and sees past, present and future together (in the Boethian view).

The Nun's/.....

The Nun's Priest touches briefly and humorously on the subject of whether we have free will, ostensibly declining to be drawn into the controversy, but in fact coming down on the side of Boethius, who maintained that men do have free will, though God has foreknowledge of their choice:

"I wol nat han to do of swich mateere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
That he hadde met that dreem that I yow tolde."

(VII 3251-55 (B2 4441-45))

It is clear that Chauntecleer was under no compulsion to listen to the 'counsell' of Pertelote --- which, in fact he did not even accept, since she advised him to 'purgen yow binethe, and eek above'; it was entirely of his own free will that he flew down from the beam, for the sake of the 'joye and solas' that she could give him. We catch a glimpse of the Fall of Man --

"Wommennes counsells been ful ofte colde;
Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo,
And made Adam fro Paradys to go,
Ther as he was ful myrie and wel at ese."

(VII 3256-59 (B2 4446-49))

-- and then the Nun's Priest turns back to his Tale and describes the hens wallowing in their dust-bath in the morning sun while their lord and master celebrates the glory of living in his song:

"Faire in the soond, to bathe hire myrily,
Lith Pertelote, and alle hire sustres by,
Agayn the soone, and Chauntecleer so free
Soong murier than the mermayde in the see;
For Physiologus seith sikerly
How that they syngen wel and myrily.
And so bifel that, as he caste his ye
Among the wories on a boterflye,
Es was war of this fox, that lay ful lowe."

(VII 3267-75 (B2 6457-65.))

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Ther as he was ful myrte and wel at ese."
(VII 3256-59 (B2 4446-49))

-- and then the Nun's Priest turns back to his Tale and describes the hens wallowing in their dust-bath in the morning sun while their lord and master celebrates the glory of living in his song:

"Faire in the soond, to bathe hire myrily,
Lith Pertelote, and alle hire sustres by,
Agayn the soone, and Chauntecleer so free
Soong murier than the mermayde in the see;
For Phisilogus seith sikerly
How that they syngen wel and myrily.
And so bife! that, as he caste his ye
Among the wortes on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox, that lay ful lowe."
(VII 3267-75 (B2 6457-65.))

The 'mermayde'.....

The 'mermayde in the see' to whose singing Chauntecleer's is compared is one of the classical Sirens, the three bird-like sisters whose fatal song by its sweetness and promise of pleasure lured mariners to destruction on the rocky shores of their island home. The Physiologus, the mediaeval bestiary to which Chaucer refers, says of the Sirens 'Animalia mortifera sunt in mari, clamitantia vocibus aliis', and identifies them with 'voluptates terrenae' (53). An Old (Norman) French version of the Physiologus (54) describes how the hapless mariner on the ocean of life is beguiled by the sweet song of the sirens and lulled asleep;

"Tant chante dolcement e bel,
Que cil qui vont par mer nagent,
Si tost com il oënt cel chant,
Ne se poënt mie tenir,
Que la nes covenge venir.
Tant lor semble le chant suef,
Que il s'endorment en lor nef,
E quant trestuit sont endormiz,
Donc sont decëuz e traïz:
Car les sereines les occient,
Que il ne braient ne ne crient." (1060-70)

The sleep-inducing property of the 'Sirens' voices is, of course, a metaphor for the lulling to sleep of the 'eye of the soul', which should be ever alert and watchful; vigilant, and praying, 'ut non intretis in tentationem':

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- (53) Physiologus Latinus Versio Y; Edited by Francis J. Carmody; University of California Publications in Classical Philology, Vol. XII, 1933-44; University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1944; p. 113.
- (54) Le Bestiaire de Guillaume Le Clerc; ed. Robert Reinsch; Leipzig, Fues's Verlag, (R. Reisland); 1890.

"La sereine, qui si ben chante,
 Qui par son chant les genz enchante,
 Done assampla a cels chastier
 Qui par cest mont delivent nager,
 Nos qui par cest monde passom,
 Somes deçueuz par tel son,
 Par le gloire, par le delit
 De cest monde, qui nos occit,
 Quant le delit avom amors.....
 Ileques tant nos delitom
Que a force nos endormom.
Idonc nos occit la sereine:
 C'est li malfez, qui nos mal meine,
 Qui tant nos fet plonger es vices,
 Qu'il nos enclot dedenz ses lices.
 Donc nos assalt, donc nos cort sere,
 Donc nos occit, donc nos acore
 Aisi com les sereines font
 Les mariners, qui par mer vont." (1071-79, 1087-96).

The effect of the spiritual lulling to sleep is clear from a similar use of the Siren image in the *Roman de la Rose*, here quoted in the Middle English version (from that part of it which is attributed to Chaucer). The Lover here stands within the gate of the garden planted by 'Mirthe' -- 'Deduit', or carnal pleasure -- and listens to the song of birds whose voices are like those of the Sirens:

"These briddes, that I you devise;
 They songe her song as faire and wel
 As angels don espirituel....
 Sich swete song was hem among
 That me thought it no briddis song,
 But it was wondir lyk to be
 Song of mermaydens of the see,
 That, for her syngyng is so clere,
 Though we mermaydens clepe hem here
 In English, as is oure usaunce,
 Men clepe hem sereyns in Fraunce....
 And certis whan I herde her song....
 ...than wist I, and saw ful well,
 That Ydelnesse me served well,
 That me putte in sich jolite.
 Hir freend wel ought I for to be,
 Sif she the dore of that gardyn
 Hadde opened, and me leten in." (*Romaunt of the Rose*,
 670-72, 677-84, 689,
 695-700.)

The bird-song is like the alluring tones of the Sirens in its persuasive powers, and in its property of lulling the vigilance of the spirit, but like the song of the angels in the sweetness with which it falls on the lover's ear. On hearing it, he becomes convinced that "Ydeinesse", in Christian context the 'yate of alle harmes' and the 'thurrok of alle wikked and vileyns thoghtes' (X(II) 714-15) is a friend to be trusted and a worthy mentor. In effect he is persuaded that the vice of Idleness is a virtue, that the siren-like song which induced this inversion of values in his mind is the 'song espirituel' of the angels praising God, and that the 'paradise erthely' within the garden walls is in fact a 'place espirituel' where the bliss of heaven is to be found in the pursuit of earthly pleasures. Chauntecleer's siren song, thanks to the guileful flattery of the Fox, falls on his own ears with similar effect:

"This Chauntecleer, whan he gan hym espye,
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, 'Gentil sire, allas! wher wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend?
Now, certes, I were worse than a feend,
If I to you wolde harm or vileynye!
I am nat come youre conseil for t'espye,
But trewely, the cause of my comynge
Was only for to herkne how that ye synge.
For trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene
As any aungel hat: that is in hevене..."
(VII 3282-94 (B2 4472-84)).

The 'false dissimilour' begins his persuasion by suggesting that the Cook's own 'blisful stevene' is like heavenly music. At the same time he implies the very opposite of the doctrine that the beginning of wisdom is fear. In the Fox's speech, fear and wisdom are opposed to one another -- 'Be ye affrayed of me that am your freend?' -- and the father of Chauntecleer, who undoubtedly lived only just long enough to regret his indiscretion in 'wynking' with his eyes while he crowed, is lauded as a model of 'wisdom' and 'discrecioun':

"Save/.....

"Save yow, I herde nevere man so synge
 As dide youre fader in the morwenynge.
 Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.
 And for to make his voys the moore strong,
 He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe his
 yep

He moste wynke, so loude he wolde cryen,
 And stonden on his tiptoon therewithal,
 And strecche forth his nekke long and smal.
 And eek he was of swich discrecioun
 That ther nas no man in no regioun
 That hym in song or wisdom myghte passe..."

(VII 3301-06, 3309-11 (B2 4491-96, 4499-501)).

Continuing in the same vein, the Fox draws an 'exemplum' from the Speculum Stultorum --- the Mirror of Fools --- in which a cock who recalled an old injury did not crow to wake the young man who had caused it; the youth overslept when he should have been wakeful, was 'sompno-
 lent' when he should have been vigilant, and thereby lost his benefice.
 The Fox concludes:

"But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun
 Bitwixe the wisdom and discrecioun
 Of youre fader and of his subtiltee."

(VII 3317-19 (B2 4507-09))

There is indeed no comparison between the 'subtiltee' of the cock in this exemplum and the folly of Chauntecleer's father: such analogy as exists is between the foolish cock who 'wynked' in the presence of his natural enemy and the young would-be priest who overslept. The Fox consistently inverts the meaning of the key words he uses in his flattering speech, causing Chauntecleer 'to wene of himself be lyk that he nis nat lyk' (X (I) 615). He holds up a mirror - the 'speculum stultorum' itself -- and invites Chauntecleer to gaze upon the 'enhanced' self reflected in it. He urges him to listen to his own siren song -- Narcissus-like to contemplate his own image in the fools' mirror of flattery -- and out of purest self-love to 'singeth, sire, for seinte Chauntee'. Even more plainly than on the lover in the Roman de la Rose, this 'inversion is pressed upon Chauntecleer: this self-directed love of an illusory image in one's own

mind for which 'starf the faire Narcisus' (55), this 'cupiditas' associated with the yielding of the flesh to its own 'infirmis', its own 'concupis-
cience' for carnal pleasures and earthly goods -- this is not vicious,
but virtuous; it is not 'cupiditas', but holy 'caritas' -- 'seinte Charitee'.
The siren song of fleshly concupiscence has on Chauntecleer the
classical effect that the song of the Sirens is said to have had on the
unfortunate mariner: he closes his eyes, allowing his instinctive
vigilance to be lulled momentarily to sleep. Although the 'kynde'
of cocks instantly identified the Fox as his 'contrarie', his natural foe,
Chauntecleer chooses to stay and hear out the treacherous flatterer
instead of obeying the impulse of 'kynde', which commands him precipi-
tately to flee:

"He was war of this fox, that lay ful lowe,
Nothyng ne lyste hym thanne for to crowe,
But cride anon, 'Cok! cok!' and up he sterte
As man that was affrayed in his herte.
For naturelly a beest desiroth flee
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,
Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his ye."
(VII 3275-81 (82 4465-71))

'Kynde' commands a cock to fear a fox, whether he has previously 'seyn
it with his ye' or not. It provides 'bestes and briddes' with a special
wisdom which enables them to recognise the enemy although they may
never have set eyes on him before. But the fools' mirror held up by the
Fox to Chauntecleer -- his flattery -- persuades the Cock that it is no
act of 'wisdom' to fear his natural enemy, that he is in fact no enemy
at all, but a 'freend' who intends no 'harme of vileinye' towards his
natural prey. To the very end the Fox continues trying to convince
Chauntecleer that fear is not to be equated with wisdom, for when the Cock,
having been thoroughly frightened, is inspired 'in al his drede' by his

(55) Romaunt of the Rose, 1468.

instinct for self-preservation to outwit the foe and free himself;
the Fox makes a last attempt:

"'Allas!' quod he, 'O Chauntecleer, allas!
I have to yow,' quod he, 'ydoon trespas,
In as muche as I makid yow aferd
Whan I yow hente and broghte out of the yerd.
But, sire, I dide it in no wikke entente,
Com down, and I shal telle yow what I mento;
I shal seve sooth to yow, God help me so!'"
(VII 3419-25 (B2 4609-15.))

But by this point Chauntecleer has learned that when a fox swears in
'sooth' that he has 'no wikke entente', he lies. In fact the Fox's
'trespas' in making his intended prey 'aferd' is not a trespass but actually
a good turn, for in restoring the fear he should have had it taught the
Cock that he must keep his eyes open -- that he must be vigilant if he
wants to live, and that he must obey the prompting of 'kynde'.

Chauntecleer's denial of the warning of 'kynde' is related in the
Nun's Priest's Tale to the Fall of Man. 'Kynde' was the mould, so to
speak, in which God created a species: the 'kynde' of a cock was the
eternal essence of its nature as God had decreed it to be. In wilfully
disobeying the behest of his nature, Chauntecleer was going against the
divine ordinance regarding the 'kynde' of cocks. In the implication of
lines (VII 3279-81 (B2 4469-71)) (quoted above), the god-given wisdom of
a Beast's 'kynde' confers on him a form of inner sight which enables him
to recognise an enemy never before seen with the eyes of the body. It
is, in other words, God's commandment to cocks that, for their own safety,
they should be afraid of foxes. The Tale has pointed references to the
Creation and the Fall of Man at two significant junctures: the grand
prelude to the description of the day on which Chauntecleer encountered
the Fox, and the elaborate 'digressio' upon free will which prefaces the
passage in which Chauntecleer, singing 'merrier than the mermayde in the
see' while his hens revel in the dust, catches sight of his natural 'contrarie'.
The serpent's temptation of Eve in the Scriptures links the forbidden
knowledge of good and evil with the imagery of sight and blindness. God
had commanded Adam, the 'mould' from which mankind, and also Eve his

wife, were to be created, that he should not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent assured Eve that if she and Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, 'nequasquam morte moriemini... (sed) aperiuntur oculi vestri...' (Gen. 2. xvii). Just so 'kynde' commands Chauntecleer to fear the Fox and never to relax his vigilance in the presence of his foe. But the fox-tempter himself assures his victim that there is no need for him to be 'affrayed of me that am your freend', and beguiles him into closing his eyes for one fatal instant. As a result Chauntecleer is 'hent', and broghte out of the yerd', as, by analogy, Adam and Eve were 'made... fro paradys to go'. The yielding of Eve, 'that is to seyn the flesh' (X (I) 332), to the serpent's temptation is due to her sensual 'delyt in the beauntee of the fruit defended' (X (I) 330; Chauntecleer succumbs to the blandishments of the Fox because he is urged to take the same pleasure in his own performance. His voice is itself the siren song that lures him to his near-destruction, and to 'improve' its sound he is persuaded to close his eyes -- flatly against the self-protective instinct of his 'kynde', which counsels the greatest vigilance in the presence of his 'contrarie'. The tempter in Genesis conjures up for Eve an 'enchaunced' image of herself and her husband, a state in which 'eritis sicut dii', but what follows, although in one sense an awakening, is in another a darkening of sight; for their eyes are turned away from God, and they see themselves: 'aperti sunt oculi amborum, cumque cognovissent se esse nudos...' (Gen. 3, vii). The 'awakening' promised by the serpent was couched in the terms of 'th'equivocation of the fiend That lies like truth'. It was in fact the darkening of spiritual sight. Through Adam's sin mankind became mortal:

"Of thilke Adam tooke we thilke synne original;
for of hym fleshly descended be we alle...
And therefore be we alle born sones of wrathe
and of dampnacioun perdurable, if it nere
baptisme that we receyven, which bynymeth
us the culpe. Put for sothe, the payne dwelleth
with us, as to temptacioun, which payne
highte concupiscence... whan it is wrongfully
disposed or ordeyned in man, it maketh hym
ovette, by covetise of flesh, fleshly synne,
by sighte of his even as to earthely thynges, and
eek covetise of hynesse by pride of herte." (X(I) 333, 335-36.)

As long as the 'peyne of concupiscence' is in man, 'it is impossible but he be tempted somtyme, and moeved in his flesh to sinne.' (X (I) 339). The Christian redemption is frequently described in the image of light shining where before there was darkness (e.g. II Cor. 4, iii-vi). This darkness is the blinding of the 'inner eye', the eye of the spirit which was turned towards God when he created man, and which accommodated itself to 'the derknesse of erthely thinges' when man fell by his wilful disobedience. Unless the 'caro infirma' be governed by the reason, unless its concupiscence be firmly and constantly controlled and subdued, 'it maketh him to covette, by covettise of flesh, fleshly sinne, by sighte of his eyen as to erthely thinges, and covettise of hynesse by pryde of herte'. (X (I) 336). Hence the warning of Christ to his disciples: 'Vigilate, et orate ut non intretis in tentationem. Spiritus quidem promptus, caro autem infirma.' Thus, in an oblique representation whose changing perspectives are the very source of its beauty, Chaucer gives through the Nun's Priest's Tale the nourishing 'fruyt' of a Christian morality, with its precious life-giving seed of 'doctryne' at the heart. The 'doctryne' is Christ's admonition in the garden of Gethsemane; we are told to 'taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille' in an echoed suggestion of his warning to Peter: 'Ecce, Sathanas expetivit vos ut cribaret sicut triticum'.

Pervading the 'fruyt' of the tale is a doctrine inseparable from the problem of the 'governance' of the rebellious flesh, that wisdom is the fear of God:

"Finem loquendi pariter omnes audiamus.
Deum time, et mandata eius observa;
Hos est enim omnis homo;
Et cuncta quae fiunt adducet Deus in iudicium
Pro omni errato, sive bonum, sive malum illud sit."
(Ecclesiastes 12, xiii-xiv.)

This is the resolution of the question of free will. Chaucer presents the solution to this problem before broaching it in the Tale, by the expedient

of embodying it in his 'povre widwe'. The widow and her godly life surround the events of the Tale as her protective fence of 'stikkes' encloses the hen-yard. We need only to go to the Tale's principal source, the second 'branche' of the Roman de Renart, to appreciate her significance. Chaucer had both a positive and a negative source for his description of the elderly, indigent owner of his splendid cock: the Roman de Renart was the negative source. It attributes the ownership of Chauntecleer to 'Constans des Noës', 'un vilain qui moult ert garnis', who owned, besides Chauntecleer and his wives, 'molt... gelines et cos, anes et malarz, jars et oes.' The Roman devotes a passage (56) to a detailed description of his household, which is as well provided and as prosperous as that of the 'Epicurean' Franklin in whose home 'it snowed... of mete and drinke.' The ménage of Constans des Noës is 'plentive (et) bien garni' with poultry and other meats, with corn and various fruits from his fertile fields and prolific orchards. In deliberate contrast to this prosperity and abundance, Chaucer presents his wif as one who,

"Syn thilke day that she was last a wyf,
 In pacience ladde a ful symple lyf,
 For litel was hir catel and hir rente.
 By housbondrie of swich as God hire sente
 She foond hirself and eek hir doghtren two.
 Thre large sowes hadde she, and namo,
 Three keen, and eek a sheep that highte Malle.
 Ful sooty was hire bour and eek hir halle,
 In which she eet ful many a sklendre meel.
 Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.
 No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte;
 Hir diete was accordant to hir cote.
 Replicoteoun ne made hire nevere sik;
 Attempree diete was al hir phisik,
 And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.
 The goute lette hire nothyng for to daunce,
 N'apoplexie shente nat hir heed.
 No wyn ne drank she, neithur whit ne reed;
 Hir bord was served moost with whit and blak, -
 Milk and broun breed, in which she foond no lak,
 Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye;
 For she was, as it were, a maner deye. (VII 2825-46)
 (B2 4015-36)

(56) Lines 28-43 in the version edited by Ernest Martin (Strasbourg, 1892), reprinted in Bryan and Dempster, op. cit., pp. 646-58. Lines 4069-84 in the version edited by Mario Roques in the Series Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age; Paris, 1951.

The many possessions of Constans des Noës are purposely inverted in this passage: the widow has only three large sows... and namo, three kyn, and eek a sheep... apart from her cock and hens. Where the pantries of Constans are sumptuously lined with 'char sales, bacons et fliches', she ekes out a sparse living on 'milk and broun breed... seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye.' The remainder of the passage draws on what I have termed its positive source: that unlikely mine of leaden morality which Chaucer transmuted piecemeal into gold, the Adversus Jovinianum of St. Jerome. The details of the widow's frugal existence -- her 'sclendre meels', her abstention from delicacies and from wine and the consequent freedom from gout and apoplexy that she enjoys -- all these originate in a section of the Adversus Jovinianum in which St. Jerome counters the Jovinian heresy that there is no moral difference between one who fasts and one who takes food with thanksgiving (57). St. Jerome commends abstemious diet and the sacrifice of material comforts as not only the Christian way of life, but also the healthiest regimen:

"Corpora autem nostra cibo tantum et potu indigere. Ubi aqua et panis sit, et caetera his similia, ibi naturae satisfactum. Quidquid supra fuerit, non ad vitae necessitatem spectare: sed ad vitium voluptatis. Bibere, et comedere, non deliciarum ardorem, sed sitim famemque restinguere. Qui carnibus vescantur, indigere etiam his quae non sunt carni. Qui autem simplici victu abutantur, eos carnes non requirere. Sapientiae quoque operam dare non possumus, si mensae abundantiam cogitemus, quae labore nimio et cura indiget. Cito expletur naturae necessitas: frigus et fames, simplici vestitu et cibo expelli potest. Unde, et Apostulus: Habentes, inquit, victum, et vestitum, his contentissimus. Deliciae et epularum varietates, fomenta avaritiae sunt. Grandis exultatio animae est, cum parvo, contentus fueris, mundum habere sub pedibus, et omnem eius potentiam, epulas, libidines, propter quae divitiae comparantur, vilibus mutare cibus, et crassiore tunica compensare.....

(57) Adversus Jovinianum Lib. II, cap. 5-17; Migne XXIII, 290 et seq.

Qui aegrotat, non aliter recipit sanitatem, nisi tenui cibo et castigato victu, quae lexh Sicut dicitur.... Legimus quosdam morbo articulari et podagrae humoribus laborantes, proscriptioe honorum, ad simplicem mensam et pauperes cibos redactos, convaluisse... Sed et ex vilissimis cibis vitanda satietas est. Nihil enim ita obruit animum, ut plenus venter et exaestuans, et huc illucque se vertens, et in ructus vel in crepitus ventrum efflatus respires... " (Adversus Iovinianum Lib. II, Cap. II, 12.)

The widow's diet, which is accordant to her cote, clearly conforms with the 'simplicem mensam et pauperes cibos' advocated by St. Jerome.

The 'housewifery, of such as God her sente' seems to include, besides her commendable thrift, the widow's chastity 'sin thilke day that she was last a wy', for she fulfils 'the seconde manere of chastitee' by the Parson's definition:

"The seconde manere of chastitee is for to been a cleane widwe, and eschue the embracings of man, and deseyn the embracinge of Jesu Crist.... This manere women that observen chastitee muste be cleane in herte as well as in body and in thight, and mesurable in clothinge and in continence; and been abstinent in etinge and drinkinge in spekinge, and in dede." (X(I) 944, 947.)

In all, the portrait of the 'povre widwe' is an idealised picture of poverty, humility, Christian abstinence and industry -- the 'poverty espirituel', the 'lowenesse', the 'hunger and thirst' and the 'travaille' by which men may purchase the 'endeles blisse of hevne' (X (I) 335-36). The simple and godly life which she leads in 'paciens' and 'hertes suffisaunce' is a living model of how the 'peyne (that) highte concupiscence' should rightfully be 'disposed or ordeyned in man' (X(I) 335-36). However willing the spirit, man must live in perpetual vigilance, continually governing in his flesh the 'concupiscence after the lawe of our membres, that weren lawefullliche y-maked and by rightful jugement of god' (X(I) 323). Because

Adam/.....

Qui aegrotat, non aliter recipit sanitatem, nisi tenui cibo et castigato victu, quae lex et dicta dicitur.... Legimus quosdam morbo articulari et podagrae humoribus laborantes, proscriptioe honorum, ad simplicem mensam et pauperes cibos redactos, convaluisse... Sed et ex vilissimis cibis vitanda satietas est. Nihil enim ita obruit animum, ut plenus venter et exaestuans, et huc illucque se vertens, et in ructus vel in crepitus ventorum efflatione respirans... "Adversus Iovinianum Lib. II, Cap. 11, 12.)

The widow's diet, which is accordant to her cōte', clearly conforms with the 'simplicem mensam et pauperes cibos' advocated by St. Jerome.

The 'housbondrye, of such as God hir sente' seems to include, besides her commendable thrift, the widow's chastity 'sin thilke day that she was last a wyf', for she fulfils 'the seconde manere of chastitee' by the Parson's definition:

"The seconde manere of chastitee is for to be a clene widwe, and eschue the embracings of man, and desyre the embracinge of Jesu Crist.... These manere women that observen chastitee moste be clene in herte as well as in body and in thought, and mesurable in clothinge and in continence; and been abstinent in etinge and drinkinge in spekinge, and in dede." (X(I) 944, 947.)

In all, the portrait of the 'povre widwe' is an idealised picture of poverty, humility, Christian abstinence and industry -- the 'povertie asprituell', the 'lowenesse', the 'hunger and thurst' and the 'travaille' by which man may purchase the 'endeles blisse of hevене' (X(I) 335-36). The simple and godly life which she leads in 'paciēce' and 'hertes suffraunce' is a living model of how the 'synne (that) lighte concupiscence' should rightfully be 'disposed of o... in man' (X(I) 335-36). However willing the spirit, man must live in perpetual vigilance, continually governing in his flesh the 'concupiscence after the lawe of our membres, that weren lawefulliche y-maked and by rightful judgement of god' (X(I) 323). Because

Qui aegrotat, non aliter recipit sanitatem, nisi tenui cibo et castigato victu, quae *λεωτή διαίτα* dicitur..... Legimus quosdam morbo articulari et podagrae humoribus laborantes, proscriptione honorum, ad simplicem mensam et pauperes cibos redactos, convaluisse... Sed et ex vilissimis cibis vitanda satietas est. Nihil enim ita obruit animam, ut plenus venter et exaestuans, et huc illucque se vertens, et in ructus vel in crepitus ventorum efflacione respirans..." (*Adversus Iovinianum* Lib. II, Cap. 11, 12.)

The widow's diet, which is 'accordant to hir co's', clearly conforms with the 'simplicem mensam et pauperes cibos' advocated by St. Jerome. The 'housbondrye, of such as God hir sante' seems to include, besides her commendable thrift, the widow's chastity 'sin thilke day that she was last a wyf', for she fulfils 'the seconde manere of chastitee' by the Parson's definition:

"The seconde manere of chastitee is for to been a clene widwe, and eschue the embracings of man, and desyren the embracinge of Jesu Crist..... These manere women that observen chastitee moste be clene in herte as well as in body and in theght, and 'mesurable in clothyng and in continence; and been abstinent in etinge and drinkinge in spekyng, and in dede." (X(i) 944, 947.)

In all, the portrait of the 'povre widwe' is an idealised picture of poverty, humility, Christian abstinence and industry -- the 'poverte espirituel', the 'lowenesse', the 'hunger and thirst' and the 'travaille' by which men may purchase the 'endeles blisse of hevene' (X (i) 335-36). The simple and godly life which she leads in 'pacienc' and 'hertes suffisaunce' is a living model of how the 'peyne (that) highte concupiscence' should rightfully be 'disposed or ordeyned in man' (X(i) 335-36). However willing the spirit, man must live in perpetual vigilance, continually governing in his flesh the 'concupiscence after the lawe of our membres, that weren lawefulliche y-maked and by rightful jugement of god' (X(i) 323). Because

Adam 'brak the comaundement of god' (X (I) 323) mankind is condemned to suffer the conflict of flesh and spirit of which St. Paul speaks, and which St. Jerome quotes in the passages preceding those from which Chaucer drew the details about his 'povre widwe' (Adv. Jov. Lib. II, cap. 3.) When man wilfully re-enacts Adam's sin of disobedience,

"...forasmuche as man is nat obeisaunt to God, that is his lord, therfore is the flessch to hym disobeisaunt thurgh concupiscence. . . Therfore, al the while that a man hath in hym the payne of concupiscence, it is impossible but he be tempted somtime and moeved in his flessch to synne. And this thyng may nat faille as longe as he lyveth; it may wel wexe fieble and faille by vertu of baptesme, and by the grace of God thurgh penitence; but fully ne shal it nevere quenche, that he ne shal som tyme be moeved in hymself..." (X (I) 338-41)

Chaucer himself, shortly after the passage quoted above from the Person's Tale, quotes from St. Jerome's letter to Eustochium on the same subject. (X (I) 345-46). All men, at all times, are susceptible to temptation: 'And thanne is it good to be war, and kepen him wel, or elles he wol falle anon in-to consentinge of sinne...' (X (I) 354). The watchword is eternal vigilance.

This is the gist of St. Jerome's arguments in the second book of the treatise against Jovinianus, which I offer as one of Chaucer's sources for the nuclear 'doctryne' of the Nun's Priest's Tale. In particular the Tale revolves about Jerome's refutation of the second of the Jovinian heresies:

"Nittitur approbare eos, qui plena fide in baptismate renati sunt, a diabolo non posse subverti." (Adv. Jov. I, 3)

Chaucer's 'nuclear' point in this Tale, as in the Friar's Tale, is

"Waketh/....."

"Waketh, and preyeth Ihesu for his grace
 So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.
 Herketh this word: bath war, as in this cas:
 "The leoun sit in his awayt alway
 To sle the innocent, if that he may."
 Disposeth ay youre hertes to withstonde
 The feend, that yow wolde make thral and bonde."
 (III (D) 1654-60). (58)

The Nun's Priest's Tale is a complete and satisfying reply to St. Jerome's rhetorical question: 'Et existimat aliquis securos, et dormientes nos esse debere post baptismum?' (Adv. Jov. II, 3.) The reply is that we are never secure, that it is never safe to relax our vigilance, to 'wynke whan (we) sholde see, Al wilfully...' For one of St. Jerome's major points, and one of the pivots of the Tale, is that it is of our own free will that we yield to temptation.

"...Apostulus Iacobus sciens baptizatos posse tentari, et propria corrumpere voluntate: 'Beatus', ait, 'vir qui suffert tentationem, quia cum probatus fuerit, accipiet coronam vitae, quam repromisit Deus diligentibus se: Ac ne putaremus... (nos) tentari a Deo, 'Nemo' inquit, 'cum tentatur, dicat, quoniam a Deo tentor. Deus enim inteniator malorum est, ipse autem neminem tentat. Unusquisque vero tentatur a concupiscentia sua abstractus et illectus. Dehinc concupiscentia cum conceperit, parit peccatum: peccatum autem cum consummatum fuerit, generat mortem.' Liberi arbitrii nos condidit Deus, nec ad virtutes, nec ad vitia necessitate trahimur. Alioquin ubi necessitas, nec corona est." (Adv. Jov. II, 3.) (My italics.)

The poor widow who owns Chauntecleer embodies the answer to the question of how man, having free will, may resist temptation when the flesh so strongly strives against the spirit. 'Deum time, et mandata eius observa; hoc est omnis homo.' The man who, fearing God, obeys his commandments, submitting his own will to God's, ruling the rebellious flesh by the government of reason which in turn is ruled by God, is fulfilling the duty of

- (58) Lines 1657-58 of this quotation are a version of St. Jerome's "Sedet quippe leo in insidiis et in occultis, ut interficiat innocentem." (Adv. Jov. II, 3.) Lines 1654-55 and 1659-60 are from Luke 21, xxxi, and Apos. II, 10. Both are quoted in Adv. Jov. II, 3.

mankind. Such a man -- or woman -- is ever vigilant, knowing that at the while that a man hath in him the payne of concupiscence, it is impossible but he be tempted somtyme.... And this thing may nat faile as longe as he liveth... (X (I) 339).

Thus the perspective of the Nun's Priest's Tale whirls about: this lowly widow, living her simple and frugal life in humble poverty, is to be crowned with the 'corona vitae, quam repromisit Deus diligentibus se', while her handsome cock, who struts about the barnyard in his heraldic splendour, 'royal, as a prince is in his halle', is to be reduced to mere dust. And as the fleshly concupiscence to which Chauntecleer fell victim imperils a man's soul, while the curbing of it by godly and abstemious life such as the widow's shields it from temptation, so the widow's protective fence is intended to keep out the fox-fiend. When it fails, and when the Cock disobeys the command of his 'kynde' which would have saved him, then Chauntecleer must save his own skin, as man of his own free will must turn away from temptation. Chauntecleer's prayer 'God... kepe my body out of foul prisoun' reflects St. Jerome's quotation from the Apocalypse: 'Ecce missurus est diabolus aliquos ex vobis in carcerem ut tentemini'. (Adv. Jov. II, 3; Apocal. 2, 10)

Between the 'nuclear' reality presented in the exempla of the dreams, which forms the structural hub of the Tale, and the encompassing 'rim' formed by the widow and her barnyard fence, live the Cock and his seven hens. Bearing in mind the centrality of 'Spiritus quidem promptus, caro autem infirma', it would seem that Pertelote has a role which supplements that of Chauntecleer. If his disobedience to the divine commandment of 'kynde' is analogous to Adam's, Pertelote's part is comparable to that of Eve, 'that is to seyn, the flesh':

"For trust wel, though so were that the feend tempted Eve, that is to seyn, the flesh, and the flesh hadde delit in the beautes of the fruyt defended, yet certes, til that resoun, that is to seyn, Adam, consented to the etynge of the fruyt, yet stood he in th' estate of innocence." (X (I) 332)

Pertelote's attitude to the dream of Chauntecleer is entirely consonant with the allocation of this role to her on the level at present under discussion. Pinte, in the Roman de Renart, correctly interprets her husband's dream, which is not in the literal form given it in Chaucer's version, and warns her husband against the fox hidden in the yard. The Cock rejects her interpretation (59). But in the Nun's Priest's Tale the Cock interprets his own dream as a warning, and his wife rejects it as 'vanitee', ascribing it to a disturbance of the bodily humours. The husband eventually yields, not because her argument has convinced him, but because

"...whan I se the beautes of youre face,
Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre yen,
It maketh al my drede for to dyen;
For al so siker as In principio,
Mulier est hominis coitus, -
Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
'Woman is mannes joye and al his blis.'
For whan I feele a-nyght your softe syde,
Al be it that I may nat on yow ryde,
For thatoure perche is maad so narwe, allas!
I am so ful of joye and of solas,
That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem." (VII 3160-71 (B2 4350-61)).

The 'caro infirma', troubled by 'erthly lust and fals affeccoun' yields to its infirmity, allowing itself to be seduced by the charms of Pertelote and by the blandishments of the wily flatterer, the fox-tempter. Forgetting his God-given warning and his natural 'drede', Chauntecleer both 'fley down fro the beam' and 'heeld his eyen cloos'. When man does not act in the fear of God, he is failing in his duty, and this failure is the sin of 'negligence, or necchelesnesse' with which the Tale d 'Quia qui timet Deum nihil negliget' -- 'He that dredeth god, he shal nat to doon that him oghte doon'.

(59) The line 'A fable est li songes tornez' (line 4315 in the version edited by Mario Roques; see footnote (56) above), equivalent to Pertelote's 'No-thing, god wot, but vanitee, in sweven is', is spoken in the Roman de Renart by Chauntecleer.

"The tale will betray with laughter any too-solemn scrutiny of its naked argument. If it is true that Chauntecleer and Pertelote are rounded characters, it is also true that they are chickens." Muscatine, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

Having in the foregoing pages deliberately 'walked into' the Chaucerian trap for scholars so artfully laid in the Nun's Priest's Tale, I must now to some extent follow Chaucer's own example and retract: for as the same critic has observed, this tale 'does not so much make true and solemn assertions about life as it tests truths and tries out solemnities'. The Nun's Priest is as artful a 'jangler' as any, and he cheerfully admits it. The glimpses of infinity continually presented by the tale's kaleidoscopic perspectives tempt one to go perhaps too far, too earnestly, in pursuit of what may turn out to be fascinating chimaeras. Professor Muscatine describes the doctrinal 'nucleus' of the Tale as 'a nugget of fable morality'; but, with great respect to a critic to whom I owe much, my own feeling is that this 'nucleus' is no dead 'nugget' but the living heart from which the tale derives its being. As Chaucer himself says, echoing the Nun's Priest, "For our boke seith, 'al that is written is written for oure doctrine'; and that is myn entente." The 'mery tale' of the Nun's Priest shares with the Roman de Renart its 'aura at once ... cosmic and ... comic', but it has a touch in it of the tone of the 'Physiologus', from the Norman version of which I quote again:

"Assez avez oï fabler,
Coment Renart soleit embler
Des gelines Coesteins de Noës.
Volenters fist trosser ses joës
Li gopiz en totes saisons
De gelines e de chapons.
Tot ades vit de roberie,
De larrecin, de tricherie;
Tant est malves e deputaire....
Cest gopiz, qui tant set de fart,
Que nos apelom ci Renart,
Signefie le mal gopiz,
Qui le poeple met en eïssil.

C'est/.....

C'est li malfez, qui nos guerreie,
 Chescun jor vent sor nos en preie.
 A cels qui vivent charnelment,
 Se feint tot mort certainement,
 Por ceo que plus pres les atraie. " (Le Bestiare, 1307-15,
 1341-49.)

The Bestiare presents its curious creatures for entertainment and wonder, but each has its serious emblematic purpose, which the learned 'Physiologus' solemnly explains. The Cock and the Fox are animals, but they are also symbols of something else, and 'Physiologus' and his audience were equally interested in the symbolic values of the beasts he describes as in their curious habits and appearances. Chauntecleer is a Golden Spangled Hamburg of exquisitely high breeding, and 'daun Russel the fox' is a 'col-fox', of a particular variety having black-tipped feet, ears and brush; at the same time, both have a deeper significance -- the Cock is the vigilant Christian, the Fox is 'li malfez, qui nos guerreie', the evil tempter, who is our enemy and lies always in ambush for us. Both elements are present in the Nun's Priest's Tale, and much of our enjoyment of it comes of our awareness of the interaction of the two. Chauntecleer is not really a man with a soul to imperil; he is only a conceited cock. This is the point at which an attempt to fit the Tale into any consistent hierarchy must fail, while it slips away like the 'boterflye' that first drew Chauntecleer's attention to the fox. Chauntecleer is continually approaching the human condition, in Chaucer's imagery. He cries out 'as man that in his dreem is drecched sore', starts up 'as man that was affrayed in his herte', and even prepares to crow 'as man that coude his traysoun nat espye'; while his wife taunts him with 'Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?' and he himself exclaims 'I hadde levere than my sherte That ye had rad his legende as have I'. He continually draws near to humanity, but there remains always the final twist -- he is only a chicken. Nevertheless, he is a chicken with a charisma -- an aura of things much greater than his immediate presence, an enhancement more real than that,

shown him in the flatterer's mirror. And this, in the last analysis, is why the Nun's Priest's fable has not fallen with countless other beast-fables into the limbo of forgotten literature, but remains one of the masterpieces of all time.

Professor Muscatine says finally of the Tale that it 'offers no conclusion but that sublunary values are comically unstable'. This view of reality it does indeed offer, but at the same time the Tale has something positive to say about values that are stable. When Chauntecleer says grandly --

"For ai so siker as In principio,
Mulier est hominis confusio, -
 Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
 'Womman is mannes joye and al his blis.'"

(VII 3163-66 (B2 4353-56))

--the 'Chaucerian multiple perspective' concentrates for an instant all the many levels upon which the Tale functions into four lines. 'In principio' are the opening words of the Gospel according to St. John, but they are also the first words of the Book of Genesis. To say 'as sure as "In the beginning (God created the heaven and the earth) woman is man's ruin', thus associating the phrase with the Creation of the world and the Fall of Man, is perfectly valid. But it is equally true to say that 'as sure as "In the beginning (was the Word, and the Word was with God)"... woman is (the source of) man's joy and all his blessedness'. Chauntecleer's mistranslation here implies the birth of Christ, the Saviour of mankind, from woman. These lines epitomise the relationship of the nuclear core of the Tale to its other concentric spheres: of the central 'seed' of Christian doctrine in the admonition of Christ to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane to the scene in that earlier garden from which Adam and Eve were expelled; and of the dream of Chauntecleer to the actuality of his life with Pertelote and his other 'sustres and... paramours' in the barnyard (50)

(50) The description of the hens as 'sustres and paramours' relates the barnyard to the Garden in the Song of Songs. St. Jerome discusses the phrase 'Soror mea, sponsa...' in Adv. Jov. I, 30, and explains that 'Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa' refers to the virgin mother of Christ. (Adv. Jov. I, 31).

III. 1660
The implications of the 'figural' conception of reality seem all to be caught up prismatically in this many-faceted image, as the conception itself is realised in the iridescent perfection of the whole Tale.

CONCLUSION:

"Sicut dicit Philosophus secundo Metaphysicorum:
 'Sicut res se habet ad esse, sic se habet ad
 veritatem': cuius ratio est, quia veritas de re,
 quae in veritate consistit tanquam in subiecto, est
 similitudo perfecta rei sicut est." Dante, Epistola X,
 5. (Domino Kani Grandi de la Scala.) (61).

Reality, as we apprehend it from Chaucer's various representations,
 has the 'simplicitas devyne', the wholeness and majesty of the Boethian
 conception as Boethius rehearses it to the Lady Philosophy:

"...whanne thou bygunne at blisfulnesse, thou
 sedest that it is sovereyn good, and seidest
 that God hymself is sovereyn good, and that
 good is the fulla blisfulnesse; for which thou
 yave me as a covenable yifte, that is to seyn,
 that no wyght is blisful, but yif he be God
 also therwith. And seidest eke that the forme
 of good is the substance of God and of blis-
 fulnesse; and seidest that thilke same oon is
 thilke same good that is required and desired
 of al the kynde of thinges. And thou provedest
 in disputynge that God governeth alle the thinges
 of the world by the governmentis of hountes;
 and seidest that alle thinges wolen obeyen to
 hym; and seidest that the nature of yvel nys no
 thing." (Boece III, prose 12.)

There is no disorder, no confusion; whatever is, 'with-holdeth ordre and
 kepeth nature', and whatever does not submit itself to the laws of 'naturel
 ordre', the 'fayre cheyne of love' that binds the universe, simply does not
 exist. God, who is the 'sovereyn good', is the centre and the goal of
 all that has an existence:

"...thou art cleernesce, thou art pesible
 reste to debonayre folk; thou thilself art
 bygynnyng, beters, leders, path and
 terme; to looke on the, that is our ende." (Boece, III,
 Met. 9)

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- (61) Dante Alighieri: Opere; a cura del Dr. E. Moore. Nuovamente
 Rivedute nel Testo dal Dr. Paget Toynbee. Quarta edizione:
 Oxford, 1963.

All men/.....

All men 'naturally' strive for good, and to reach God. Those who have directed their efforts elsewhere, either misguidedly, like Palamon and Arcite, or wilfully, like the Pardoner, tend more towards non-existence the further they draw away from the divine centre to which their inborn desire for life -- 'this charitee and this love, that every thing hath to him-self' -- directs them. Thus Chaucer depicts the lovers as suffering in a living death -- 'nat fully quike ne fully dede' -- and the Pardoner as being the agent, almost the incarnation, of Death itself. Evil, which is the negation of good, can have no existence in this world-view. Reality is something known; something 'publicly and divinely constituted', the 'commune fyn of alie thinges that ben'; and above all, reality is permanent.

By these criteria, it is possible to define almost categorically the nature of illusion. Illusion is partial and fragmentary, where the reality is a unified whole; it is chaotic and disorderly, resisting such laws as those 'endited' by divine love; it is 'privee', secretive, and dares not expose itself to the public gaze; and most importantly, it is ephemeral. All these are the characteristics of courtly love as Chaucer presents it in the Knight's and the Franklin's Tales, a view which he sums up at the end of Troilus and Criseyde:

"O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
In which that love up groweth with youre age,
Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte,
And of youre herte up casteth the visage
To thilke God that after his ymage
Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
This world, that passeth soone as floures faire."

(Bk. V, 1835-41)

In the Physician's and the Pardoner's Tales, the obverse and the reverse of the same coin, Chaucer has taken up the Boethian concept that all that exists desires

"for to duren, nocht oonly for a tyme, but
ryght as for to dure perdurably by
generacion..." (Boece III, Pr. 11)

The desire/.....

The desire to 'duren... perdurably' comes of 'charitee', divine love directed towards the preservation of life. Since the Pardoner is moved only by 'cupiditas', the function of generation has been withheld from him; he can never be 'fructuous' in any sense except 'pro pecunia multiplicat'. Like his progenitor Faus-Semblant, he is the personification of hypocrisy: totally estranged from the truth, in both word and deed, he is by this token estranged from existence. Pointing the way to spiritual death, he himself lives a perpetual death in the sense quoted by the Parson: 'For hir deeth shal alwey lyven.... They shullen folwe deeth, and they shul nat fynde hym.'

In the Nun's Priest's Tale the representation of reality is many-layered and complex, although the glimpses we catch of the reality itself show the same majestic simplicity that was discernable in the other Tales. Its changing lights swirl about the central 'doctryne', as in El Greco's painting Christ on the Mount of Olives the sleeping Apostles seem to float in a luminous chrysalis of mist, shielded by it from Christ's solitary agony. Though the allegory retains its meaning, there is no pain. The work is lit with laughter as it is suffused with faith.

"Now prey I to hem alle that herkne
this litel tretys or rede, that if ther
be any thyng in it that liketh hem,
that therof they thanken oure Lord
Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al
wit and al goodnesse." (X (I) 1081)

At the end of the Canterbury Tales the 'makere of this book', in frank and reverent awareness of the divine gift that inspired his 'makynge', forges the final link between his representation of reality, and the reality itself. As the earth in its spring beauty reflects the presence and nature of its Creator, so the poet offers the rich harvest of his own 'wit' as one more sign of God's grace. The framework which began with Lenten pilgrimage is completed with the Parson's sermon on Penitence, and as he ends it Chaucer himself kneels to confess his 'wordly vanitees' and to pray for

"grace/....."

"... grace of verray penitence, confessioun
and satisfaccioun to doon in this present
lyf, thurgh the benigne grace of hym that
is kyng of kynges and preest over alle
preestes, that boghte us with the precious
blood of his herte; so that I may been oon
of hem at the day of doom that shulle be
saved. "

Chaucer's retraction and prayer is the ultimate evidence of the view of
reality assumed and discussed in this study. Through it, the poet,
declares with Dante

"Vera illa beatitudo in sentiendo
veritatis principium consistit. " (62)

(62) Dante, Epistola X, 33.

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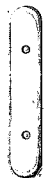
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Figure 10-10-10



Author Amoils Eugenie Rose

Name of thesis The representation of reality in Chaucer's Canterbury tales. 1970

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