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OR TELLE HIS TALE UNTREWE: AN ENQUIRY INTO A NARRATIVE STRATEGY IN THE CANTERBURY TALES.

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A B S T R A C T

In this thesis I discuss aspects of Chaucer's interest in the relation of language to the reality which it attempts to express and the relation of poetic fiction to christian truth, and the type of readerly response invited by this interest. The method employed includes analysis of the structural development of the narrative frame and, to a lesser degree, of the entirety of the poem, as well as discussion of the historical context of the issues under consideration. These issues are raised in the narrative frame of the Canterbury Tales and are explored there and in the individual tales. Their treatment in the narrative frame is seminal and has provided the major focus of discussion in what follows.

The narrative frame structure operates dually. In the diachrony of a first reading of the poem, the frame world provides a correlative to the actual world in which man experiences serial time. The realignments of interpretation necessary because of its changing claims regarding its own nature – and hence its changing demands upon its readers – are constant reminders of the relativity of human judgment and experience in space and time. In the synchrony inevitable in a second or subsequent reading, which comprehends the entirety of the poem at each point in its linear progression, the reader's position outside the poem's time span of past, present and future, is analogous to the poet's in his original conception of the poem and to God's in relation to the actual world, which the poem's world imitates.

After a first reading the reader sees that initially Chaucer's truth claim has enabled him to trust the authenticity of the account and to regard it not as poetic invention but as a report of historical truth,

an account describing part of God's book of history and therefore meriting careful attention. This claim is not literally true since the Canterbury Tales is fiction not historical report. Yet the reader's expectation of 'som vertuous matere' is not violated. The narrative frame develops a series of situations involving ethical choice. The first is the persona's decision to report the pilgrimage in full, the second is the Host's introduction of the concept of tale-telling for sentence and solaas, *the third is the actual tale-telling.*

Underlying all three sets of choices and the figure of pilgrimage itself, ethical principle provides the subject of the first issue of contention. The persona is concerned with the problem of reconciling verisimilitude and decorum given that not all that happened and was said on the pilgrimage was moral. He decides that it is better to remain true to the actualities of the situation which do reflect enduring human truths than provide a decorous but inaccurate version of what happened. In the retraction, Chaucer finally assumes full responsibility as author of his fiction although there have been many earlier indications of the fictiveness of the account, most notable being the gap developed between poetic 'I' and author. The reader, first led to believe that the persona's account is literally true, is invited to see that while this is a lie, the truth of the poet's understanding is still embodied in the text which still truly *reflects the nature of reality.* The ancient argument against poetry — that it deals in lies and is at best only diversionary, at worst immoral — cannot stand to condemn the Canterbury Tales. As St Augustine demonstrates in relation to literature in the Soliloquia some things are only true in so far as they are also false and if this is true there is no need to have 'such a dread of falsities' (2.10).

Within the narrative frame's dramatized justification of the true lie — the fiction in which truth is present — a number of associated topics are raised and explored. The nature of language as moral act is explored throughout the Canterbury Tales. The nature and function of literary language is also explicitly raised. These two areas of interest in language unite the concern with reality suggested by the historical claim and the concern that poetic language should be seen as a worthy reflector of human life. Action in the actual world is multifarious, in the world of the poem, whose realism reflects the actual world, the acts of the pilgrims are primarily speech acts: they choose and tell tales. Yet, in the traditional christian view which Chaucer espouses, all acts, in reality or in the world of the narrative, share their basic wellspring, they are freely determined by their initiators and they reflect their origins. Within the poem, what the pilgrims tell expresses aspects of their own being as well as having intrinsic quality. There is a high degree of consonancy between pilgrim tellers and tales told which the reader is invited to see. The Host's tale-telling game urges literary judgment, overtly from the pilgrim party, implicitly from Chaucer's readers. The poem itself incorporates the Host's concept of literary assessment and expands it, demonstrating how closely literature may be concerned with the exploration of human realities and ideals through the medium of poetic form and language.

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INTRODUCTION

To attempt a discussion of the narrative coherence of the Canterbury Tales is to embark upon a perilous journey; the satisfaction of reading the poem and the difficulties of writing upon it both rest in the complexity with which Chaucer has compouned fals and soth (House of Fame, 2108) in his poem. In 'The Elusion of Clarity,'[1] E. Talbot Donaldson explores 'Chaucer's celebrated stylistic clarity' to demonstrate that 'this clarity, while it is self-evident is often more apparent than real. It is, indeed, frequently an "illusion or deceptive appearance" by which Chaucer "deludes or befools a person" – namely the reader – and it is also a means by which he escapes dexterously from the danger of really being clear and from the pursuit of critics – a means by which he evades, for the sake of poetic complexity, the laws and obligations of logical simplicity' (p. 23). It is the nature of an aspect of this evasion of 'the laws . . . of logical simplicity' 'for the sake of poetic complexity' that I shall explore, since in the conjunction of what is apparently simply offered and what is more complexedly present lies the enigmatic source of the coherence which reading the Canterbury Tales provides.

The narrative structure of the Canterbury Tales is superficially extremely clear. It begins with a General Prologue introducing the characters and the events which the whole is to incorporate, related by the poet who tells us that he participated in the pilgrimage which is to form the substance of his tale, and that he will endeavour to report it as accurately as possible. We are told of the Host's suggestion that the pilgrims should each tell tales to relieve the tedium of the journey, and that he will accompany them as governour, juge and reportour of their tales. The General Prologue ends with the beginning of the journey, and the Knight's telling the first tale.

While the sheer mass of the Canterbury Tales consists of the actual tales told by the pilgrims, the pilgrimage provides the narrative thread of the whole. Every tale is attributed to one of the pilgrims, whose presence is felt throughout the Canterbury Tales not only as tale tellers but also as commentators and critics.[2] What they criticize is frequently one another, and there are occasions when the Host's role as governour is no sinecure. At the very end of the Canterbury Tales — for although the poem is unfinished, beginning and ending are clearly complete — the pilgrims have disappeared from the framework and Chaucer speaks directly, commending his soul to God and whatever is fruitful in his work to his audience.[3]

Nothing, it seems, could be clearer. But the clarity is achieved at the expense of ignoring those facts which collide with the ones sketched above. Faced by the narrative's actual unfolding we are confronted by a number of queries. Is it not fortuitous that together the pilgrims form so representative a social group, incorporating simultaneously object lessons in moral and estates distinctions? What, we may well wonder, has happened to the journey to and from Canterbury, or for that matter to Canterbury itself? Why, if this is a realistic history of actual events — and there have been many indications, suggested mainly by the narrator, that it is — do the pilgrims disappear so unsatisfactorily during the Parson's sermon? And conversely why, since it is clear that whatever pilgrimages Chaucer may have gone upon, this journey was not undertaken in the flesh, does Chaucer go to such pains to claim the historicity of his account?

There are critics, citing the incomplete state of the whole, who have suggested that the problems raised by such questions are those attendant upon *insufficient* revision. This may well explain inconsistencies such as the curious geography revealed in the mention in the Ellesmere order of Sittingbourne [III (D) 847], only *thirty miles away from* Canterbury, before Rochester [(B^2) 3116] some ten miles further off. But no more; the literal inconsistencies of the narrative frame do not radically affect our way of viewing the poem. It is the apparently major incongruities suggested by the questions above that urge attention. Unless Chaucer himself were undecided upon the basic nature of his material – did not know whether it was fact or fiction that he was writing, and to posit such indecision is patently absurd – it is clear that the questions cannot so readily be sidestepped. It is not because of his indecisiveness or limited artistic vision that Chaucer's depiction of the reality of his narrative framework presents his readers with problems of interpretation. It is because what is depicted is complex. While Chaucer's art *mirrors the reality* of the actual world, it also states its own nature as fiction, and *it is the interweaving* of the two strands of naturalistic and fictive truth which both make and *unmake the clarity* depending upon the perspective of our view.

In this thesis I shall discuss aspects of these two strands in order to explore their distinctive natures and to highlight the nature of [illegible] juxtaposition within the Canterbury Tales

1 THE TRUE LIE: HISTORICAL

The role that Chaucer assumes in the poem is that of a scribe conveying in words a picture of the reality experienced not only by himself but also by his fellow pilgrims. It is soon clear when we read that this is not literally true; the carefully established realism of the narrative frame is itself a convention and literal truth is not the only truth with which Chaucer is concerned. Why then claim the historicity of the pilgrimage? At the most basic level because it gives an air of authenticity to the account. Actual experience carries its own authority: the weight of what is real. What someone tells us might be the case is more easily dismissed than what he tells us did happen: the bias of response to hypothesis and reported event differs substantially.

The authority of personal experience is frequently explicitly adduced in the Canterbury Tales.[4] When the Wife of Bath begins her tale — or rather her monologue on the subject closest to her heart which successfully prevents her tale for over eight hundred lines — she prefaces her account of the vagaries of life with her five husbands with a magisterial appeal to the power of experience:

> Experience, though noon auctoritee
> Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
> To speke of wo that is in mariage . . .
> [III (D) 1-3]

No less an authority than the Parson himself reiterates its power when, in describing the need to establish a harmonious relationship between husband and wife, he warns against allowing the wife maistrye:

> For ther as the womman hath the maistrie,
> she maketh to muche desray. Ther neden
> none ensamples of this; the experience
> of day by day oghte suffise.
> [X (I) 927]

That the Wife and the Parson place very different value upon experience is of course made perfectly clear in the poem. For the Parson knowledge is achieved both through personal experience and by studying auctorite; for the Wife of Bath, despite her unwitting dependence for existence upon the book learning she scorns — for her ancestry is undeniably literary — there is only one mode of knowing. However diverse their attitudes to the place of the personal in the realm of human experience, both share knowledge of its importance, and it is a knowledge shared not only by the other pilgrims but also by all men.

It is not only in this general sense that the truth claim operates to authenticate the narrative. Medieval attitudes to the 'truth value' of art and reality were radically distinguished. History being God's work and evincing an inherent image of His truth may always profitably be read: it is true because its Author is Truth itself, and it is written 'pro salute nostra per divinam providentiam.'[5] Attitudes to poetry were more diverse.[6] A characteristic and influential view held poets in low esteem: at best they are entertainers composing fictions, at worst liars distorting reality, deliberately deluding their readers or distracting them from more meaningful pursuits.[7] This view is inherent in Lady Philosophy's hostile attitude to the poetic muses in the first book of the Consolation of Philosophy[8] and, within the Canterbury Tales, in the Man of Law's anxiously expressed desire not to 'be likned . . . to Muses that men clepe Pierides' [II (B[1]) 91-92].

However carefully a poet composes his poem, it is only his invention; the relation it bears to truth is imitative, and a sense of its being spurious, not the real thing, was still very much alive in the fourteenth century.

In his Genealogy of the Gods Boccaccio finds it necessary, in justifying the virtue of writing and reading fiction – and it is significant that his justification is conceived in moral terms – to confront Plato's condemnation of poets in the Republic and attempt its refutation.[9] The history of fiction's low status amongst the liberal arts was long-sustained indeed.[10] In claiming the historical authenticity of his pilgrimage Chaucer is claiming its literal reality and he can sidestep some of the associative pitfalls inherent in openly admitting the fictional nature of his poem. Not indefinitely, but for long enough to suggest that fiction, like history, has its own capacity to reflect truth. In order to see how this conclusion may be reached it is first necessary to discuss briefly what Chaucer is actually asserting when he implies the literal truth of what he tells. What he claims depends upon a specifically christian view of history which illuminates the type of realism that is employed in the Canterbury Tales. In what follows, I have not attempted a comprehensive discussion of medieval christian views of history for to do so would be both unnecessary and out of place.[11] What I have attempted is to sketch those aspects of medieval historical theory which relate to an understanding of Chaucer's treatment of his pilgrimage as though it actually happened.

In the christian view, which draws upon the judaic conception, history is divinely and benevolently ordained and provides a link between the temporal and the eternal. The universe and all God's creatures were

freely created by His ineffable love, and man, placed on earth for 'a litel space,' may choose to live in a way that will enable him to be united with God eternally. Once Adam's fall brought all mankind into a state of disgrace, Christ, the second Adam, became incarnate and assumed the burden of the crucifixion in order to redeem mankind by His loving mercy. God's desire is that all men should ultimately achieve a perpetual resting place with Him in life everlasting[12] and the pattern of history manifests the divine plan whereby this is possible.

Central to this conception of history is the authorship of God and the linear temporality of His earthly creation. The linearity of history may be seen both in its total pattern and in the pattern of each individual's life. The whole pattern of history is not conceived, as the Greeks and Romans perceived it, as consisting of a series of endless cycles, nor does human life admit of the cyclic repetition of reincarnation.[13] Movement through time, whether in the macrocosm of the universe or in the microcosm of every man's life, is one-way. Until God created it, the universe was nonexistent; Adam and Eve lived in Eden when 'natureel lawe was in his right poynt in paradys' [X (I) 921], and when they disobeyed God, they left Eden never to return. Christ's becoming mortal to redeem mankind from the stain of Adam's sin is central to christian history: 'quoniam quidem per hominem mors, et per hominem resurrectio mortuorum' (1 Cor. 15.21). Counterbalancing His first coming as redeemer is the historical event of His second coming in judgment.[14] These major events in the unfolding pattern of history are incontrovertible: they exist, or will exist literally; in their very essence they manifest the nature of God's creation of man to love Him: 'For soothly the lawe of God is the love of God' [X (I) 125]. The pattern of history with its

resolution of the felix culpa is profoundly optimistic; it centres upon and circumscribes a movement towards union with God.[15] This movement is also seen reflected in the very nature of each individual's passage through the world. Life in the world occurs in time and space, and within his earthly life man travels inexorably from physical birth to physical death, even as the larger pattern of history moves from the creation to the second coming. But man not only has a mortal body, he also has an immortal soul. Physical birth is followed by the spiritual rebirth of baptism. Ideally each christian journeys through this life in a way that reflects his desire to partake of the promise of salvation renewed by the second Adam so that when he stands before his Maker at 'the day of doom' [X (I) 158] he may be 'replenysshed with the sighte of the parfit knowynge of God' [X (I) 1079], so that he may, indeed, live. The way in which this may be achieved is in a progression which must take place during 'the pilgrimage of this mortal life' but which primarily involves a spiritual movement not a physical one: man on earth is not only 'a resonable mortel beste' (Boece, l.pr.6.61) he is an immortal wayfarer in exile from his true country which is heaven. The movement through time is parallelled by this movement through no 'space-occupying time'[16] of the growth of understanding of what it means to be God's creature and the acceptance of the responsibility entailed by this knowledge.[17] The natural universe offers itself to man as a mirror in which he can see traces of its Maker. When his vision rests in the literal, it is not because there is no spiritual meaning to which the literal points but because of his selfset limitations. Unlike man who can only write in words God is a Maker who writes both in words and deeds.[18] He has created the book of the universe and the book of history (as revealed in holy writ and in the patterning of all historical events) for man's delectation,

instruction in virtue and ultimately for his justification in history. Writing of God's book of the universe Hugh of St Victor describes the whole visible world as a book written by the finger of God:

> Universus enim mundus iste sensibilis quasi quidam liber est scriptus digito Dei, hoc est virtute divina creatus, et singulae creaturae quasi figurae quaedam sunt non humano placito inventae sed divino arbitrio institutae ad manifestandam invisibilium Dei sapientiam. Quemadmodum autem si illiteratus quis apertum librum videat, figuras aspicit, litteras non cognoscit: ... stultus et animalis homo qui non percipit ea quae Dei sunt (1. Cor. 2.) in visibilibus istis creaturis foris videt speciem sed intus non intelligit rationem. Qui autem spiritualis est ed omnia dijudicare potest, in eo quidem quod foris considerat pulchritudinem operis, intus concipit quam miranda sit sapientia Creatoris.
>
> For this whole visible world is as a book written by the finger of God, that is, created by divine power, and individual creatures are as figures not devised by human will but instituted by divine authority to show forth the wisdom of the invisible things of God. But just as some illiterate man who sees an open book, looks at the figures, but does not recognise the letters: just so the foolish and natural man, who does not perceive the things of God, sees outwardly in these visible creatures the appearance but does not inwardly understand the reason. But he who is spiritual and can judge all things, while he considers outwardly the beauty of the work, inwardly conceives how marvellous is the wisdom of the Creator.[19]

St Bonaventura uses similar imagery to express the concept:

> Primum principium fecit mundum istum sensibilem ad declarandum seipsum, videlicet ut homo per illum tanquam per speculum et vestigium, reduceretur in Deum artificem amandum et laudandum. Et secundum hoc duplex est liber, unus scilicet scriptus intus, qui est Dei aeterna ars et sapientia, et alius scriptus foris, scilicet mundus sensibilis.

> The first source made this visible world to declare himself, namely, so that man, through it as by a mirror and by traces, might be brought to love and praise God the author. And accordingly the book is twofold, one, that is, written within, which is the eternal art and wisdom of God, and the other written without, that is, the visible world.[19]

Similarly, man, in contemplating the book of history, must understand it in more than one way, must comprehend, that is, the literal, and also understand its signification:

> Auctor Sacrae Scripturae est Deus, *in cuius* potestate est ut non solum voces ad significandum accommodet, quod etiam homo facere potest, sed etiam *res ipsas*. Et *ideo* cum in omnibus scientiis voces significent, hoc habet proprium ista scientia, quod ipsae res *significatae per voces*, etiam significant aliquid. Illa ergo prima significatio, qua voces significant res, pertinet ad primum *sensum*, qui est sensus historicus vel litteralis. Illa vero significatio qua res significatae per voces, iterum res alias significant, dicitur sensus spiritualis, qui super litteralem fundatur et eum supponit.
>
> The author of Holy Scripture is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do) but also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science, things are signified by words, *this* science has the property that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. *Therefore*, that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or *literal*. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal and presupposes it.[20]

It is this duality of mode and meaning which St Augustine describes in a comment on the account of the two sons of Abraham: 'where the Apostle speaks of the allegory he

finds it not in words but in the deed; for he pointed out that by the two sons of Abraham, the one by a slave-girl and the other by a free-woman – he was not speaking figuratively but of something that also took place – the two Testaments are to be understood.'[21] The Civitate Dei, whose influence upon medieval historical theory is fundamental, describes in detail the relation of the earthly city of this life to the heavenly city, and stresses the figural interpretation of history whereby events do not only proclaim their own reality but also point beyond themselves toward other, future events which fulfil the promise only inherent in them.[22] The natural universe and the pattern of history are both designed to reflect in their being the Being of their Maker. Man's role is to read these divine books well in order to benefit from them, [illegible] importance of history lies not only in the harmo[illegible] its pattern, or even in the evidence of its Author which may be discerned in it, but also in the lesson which it offers for whoever desires to take it. God's books are figural and exemplary and history's educative value lies in their aspects of relationship, for through them past, present and future are conterminously contained in a whole created by God to affirm the promise of salvation available to all men.

History demonstrates the pattern of love unfolding, and it can – and should – be read as a spur to personal action. If other men were able to withstand temptation, so too may the reader. The moral with which the Friar glibly rounds off his scurrilous attack upon the Summoner (who indeed is well able to repay the insult in kind) had real value for those who would heed it:

Herketh this word! beth 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.
He may nat tempte yow over youre myght,
For Crist wol be youre champion and knyght.
[III (D) 1656-1662]

The possibility of successfully withstanding temptation is proclaimed throughout christian history. In one man's experience lies the hope which sustains his successors. God did not only help those who lived before the present, He also helps those who live now and who will live in the future when we are in their past and our lives provide examples – good or bad – for them to contemplate and imitate or reject. In the letter to Can Grande,[23] Dante exemplifies the fourfold interpretation of reality that is 'theologian's allegory' by citing the description of the exodus from Egypt:

nam primus sensus est qui *habetur per literam*, alius est qui habetur per significata per literam. Et primus dicitur literalis, secundus vero *allegoricus, sive moralis, sive* anagogicus. Qui modus tractandi, ut melius pateat, potest considerari in his versibus: '*In exitu Israel de Aegypto*, domus Iacob de populo barbaro, facta est Iudaea sanctificatio eius, Israel potestas eius'. Nam si ad *literam solam* inspiciamus, significatur nobis exitus filiorum Israel de Aegypto, tempore Moysi; si ad allegoriam, nobis significatur nostra redemptio facta per Christum; si ad moralem sensum, significatur nobis conversio animae de luctu et miseria peccati ad statum gratiae; si ad anagogicum, significatur exitus animae sanctae ab huius corruptionis servitute ad aeternae gloriae libertatem. Et quamquam isti sensus mystici variis appellentur nominibus, generaliter *omnes* dici possunt allegorici, quum sint a literali sive historiali diversi. Nam allegoria dicitur ab alleon graece, quod in *latinum* dicitur alienum, sive diversum.

(Moore, pp.415-416)

> for it is one sense which we get through the letter, and another which we get through the thing the letter signifies; and the first is called literal, but the second allegorical or mystic. And this mode of treatment, for its better manifestation, may be considered in this verse: 'When Israel came out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech, Judaea became his sanctification, Israel his power.' For if we inspect the letter alone the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses is presented to us; if the allegory, our redemption wrought by Christ; if the moral sense, the conversion of the soul from the grief and misery of sin to the state of grace is presented to us; if the anagogical, the departure of the holy soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory is presented to us. And although these mystic senses have each their special denominations, they may all in general be called allegorical, since they differ from the literal and historical; for allegory is derived from alleon, in Greek, which means the same as the Latin alienum or diversum.
>
> (Latin Works, pp.347-348)

I have quoted this passage not to suggest that the Canterbury Tales was intended as a poem which demands fourfold explication,[24] but to convey a sense of the all-encompassing benevolence of the medieval concept of history. In it past present and future are united, and each individual's history is placed within the wholeness of all time: by his acts on earth his eternal fate is resolved, and what he has chosen to make of his life helps illuminate the choices possible to others.[25] Although it is my belief that it is the literal level of historical reality with which Chaucer's truth claim is concerned, both allegorical and figural weight lie beyond it as part of the authenticating device: to claim the historicity of the pilgrimage is to claim its essential seriousness.[26] For if it actually happened then the events described are relevant to Chaucer's auditors and readers — his verbs of address to his audience imply both — in a way that no mere

fictional events, whether evincing their author's concern with moral issues or not, could be. What has actually happened is part of God's plan and may be read not only in its own right as part of the past but also for what it offers regarding present or future possibility. But this is not the only way in which the truth claim operates: it is the foundation upon which associated claims rest. If the pilgrims whom Chaucer describes are to be regarded as actual people, living in fourteenth century England, like Chaucer himself of 'ful devout corage,' or at any rate all evincing, for whatever multitude of reasons, a desire 'to goon on pilgrimage' then they are the contemporaries of Chaucer's audience, their compatriots too, living like them in a christian society in an age of grace, capable of attaining salvation. They are responsible for their actions, their wills are free and the grace to do well and receive eternal reward has been restored to them by Christ whose Passion is celebrated at the time of year at which they are pilgrimaging to Canterbury. Christian history stresses both the literal existence of its protagonists and their figural quality, and since what the pilgrims do and say is freely chosen, it can act as an illuminating mirror for others.

But in fact of the pilgrims only Chaucer is part of God's creation;[27] the remainder are not actual people. Their realism, if stressed to the exclusion of its own conventionality would be deceptive, since they are not God's creatures: they are the verbal creations of Chaucer who is their maker. The naturalism of the account of their pilgrimage serves not only to convey a sense of the actual, it also defines its own limits. While it is not true that the pilgrimage to Canterbury actually took place, the manner in which Chaucer describes it suggests a very close relationship of the fiction to the truth of an actual pilgrimage.

Chaucer's account of the pilgrimage is not an history even though the events described are treated as though it were. For the Canterbury Tales is a poetic fiction, but it does bear an analogous relationship to truth: the narrative frame of the poem embodies a lie that is as true as possible; true in the sense that an actual subject, about which its audience would be perfectly knowledgeable, is treated in a manner which reflects its nature rationally not in the act of translation into words of past experience, which is the real historian's task, but by an act of literary imitation. The poem affirms the dual truth of its fictionality and its capacity to mirror reality faithfully, as fiction can.

From classical times until the fourteenth century a wide range of attitudes to the nature and value of poetic fiction was expressed.[28] If the tension in the 'debate' over the relative values of philosophy and poetry in the middle ages was considerable, it was the philosophers and the theologians who tended to express their irritation (in the main the poets simply went on writing). However, there were men whose attitude to poetry's worth was less uneasy, who saw and stated its own specific potential for expressing reality. St Augustine, writing in the fourth century, was highly influential; Macrobius analysis of the value of one type of fiction in his Commentary on the Somnium Scipionis, although it involves a fairly limited acceptance, was also influential. So too was Boethius's Consolation of *Philosophy* which, with its alternating metra and prosae vindicated true poetry's place in a philosophical treatise even while it drew the internal distinction between poetry which aims at reflecting reality and poetry which denies it.[29] 'Thise poetical muses' whom Lady Philosophy so summarily banishes from

Boethius's bedside are seducers of his reason; the metra that offer lyric statements closely related to the arguments of their surrounding prosae reflect a very different attitude to reality: their poetic beauty enhances and does not deny their truth or the power of reason to operate upon them or any other object. Peter Dronke, in Fabula, traces briefly the involvement of authors from the fourth century until the twelfth century with 'the defence and the use of the realm of the imagination.'[30] In the Genealogy of the Gods, begun some time 'between 1340 and 1350' (Osgood, p.13, n.2), Boccaccio provides perhaps the most comprehensive defence of poetry. He writes to defend his own work and to rout those who say that poets lie irresponsibly, systematically refuting the arguments of ancient philosophers, hostile theologians and modern deriders of his art. Despite its great range – for he summarises most of the arguments vindicating or condemning poetry that were advanced from Plato onwards – Boccaccio's defence of poetry is simply based: there is a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' poets, dependent upon the presence or absence of moral worth in their poems, consequently only incompetent or irresponsible critics would condemn all poets (Genealogy, 14.19, 14.20). In a chapter (14.3) firmly entitled 'Poetas non esse mendaces' (Poets are not liars), Boccaccio makes a clear distinction between a lie, whose intention is to deceive, and a poetic invention, which is a creation designed to incorporate or reflect truths. Boccaccio's justification of the vocation of poet is accomplished by resource to modern as well as ancient authors – he cites Dante and Petrarch as contemporary examples of moral poets, whose lives and works both reflect their concern with the good life (14.19, 14.22). He also points out that since poetry may well be a divinely inspired vocation,

as he feels it was for himself, it would be best for carpers against it to reassess their attitudes (15.10).

My concern in what follows is selective: in a brief discussion of a number of the attitudes to poetry's potential and function held by Plato, St Augustine, Macrobius, William of Conches and Dante, I hope to explore some of the implications of the true lie, generally and in specific relation to Chaucer's treatment of his subject matter in the narrative frame of the Canterbury Tales. When Plato determined that it was best to exclude the poets from his ideal republic, he offered as part of his justification that 'it was reason that led us on. And lest [poetry] condemn us as rather harsh and rough, let us tell her that there is an ancient feud between philosophy and poetry.'[31] The pronouncement was to provide authority for a long series of adverse judgments upon both poets and their fictions. Although the Republic was only translated into Latin in the sixteenth century its reputation preceded its ready accessibility to readers in the west, and parts at least of Plato's discussion were known by their citation in subsequent writers' works.[32] But if Plato provided ammunition for the detractors of poetic worth, he was also cited in poetry's defence. The grounds for this were twofold: that he used myth himself, and that there are passages in his works where he explicitly endorses a role for fiction.[33] Besides the Timaeus, the Meno and the Phaedo were available in Latin translation from 1156; Klibansky (p.27) notes that they were quoted (ca. 1300) by the Franciscan John of Wales at Oxford.

In a discussion of the properties of myth in the Phaedo, Plato makes Socrates proclaim the healing value of the true lie, that is, the myth or art which though it is

literally untrue expresses a truth through its fiction.[34] It is shortly before the death of Socrates, and in declaring his belief in the immortality of the soul, the philosopher describes his concept of the nature of the afterlife. He concludes his account with this comment:

> No sensible man would think it proper to rely on things of this kind being just as I have described; but that, since the soul is clearly immortal, this or something like this at any rate is what happens in regard to our souls and their habitations – that this is so seems to me proper and worthy of the risk of believing; for the risk is noble. Such things he must sing like a healing charm to himse'f, and that is why I have lingered so long over the story.
>
> (Phaedo, 114D, Rouse, p.518)

The story is fiction, but it expresses fundamental human needs and beliefs, and in this lies its power to heal. Socrates continues by preparing for his death with a serenity which those around him cannot emulate. No more dramatic vindication of the positive power of 'good' poetry – poetry whose moral purpose is sound – could be offered.

It is not only in the Phaedo that Plato admits the possibility of morally sound poetry; in the Republic even as Plato banishes the poets, he qualifies his decision:

> but let it be said plainly that if imitation and poetry made to please can give some good reason why she ought to be in a well-ordered city, we should be glad indeed to receive her back home since we are quite conscious of her enchantment for us . . . . And perhaps we may allow those other champions of hers who are not poets but poet-lovers to plead for her in prose, that she is not only delightful but helpful for constitutions and

> human life, and we will hear them with favour. For I suppose it will be just so much gain for us if she is proved to be helpful also as well as delightful . . . . We shall be glad, indeed, that she should be proved good and true in the highest degree, . . . but as long as she cannot make out her case, e will still listen to her, ... knowing that we must not take such poetry seriously . . .
> (Republic, 10, 607C-608B, Rouse, p.408)

Plato establishes a distinction between two broad types of poetry — 'good' and 'bad'; it is because both are conceived as potent tools of persuasion that the type of poetry which Plato believes would influence people adversely is exiled,[35] and that the type of poetry which Plato feels to be beneficial is affirmed as providing man with a 'healing charm'. In the introduction to his translation of Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio W. H. Stahl characterises the work as 'one of the basic source books of the scholastic movement and of medieval science. Next to Chalcidius' Commentary, it was the most important source of Platonism in the Latin West in the Middle Ages . . . . The frequent references throughout the Middle Ages to Macrobius as an authority on Neoplatonism testify to his ability to make the system intelligible to his readers.'[36] Chaucer himself cites Macrobius in the Nun's Priest's Tale (B^2 4313), and the Book of the Duchess (284), as well as in the Parliament of Fowls (111); in the A Fragment of the Romaunt of the Rose, which is generally accepted as having been translated by Chaucer, 'an authour that hight Macrobes' (7) is instanced as the auctorite justifying paying heed to the messages implicit in dreams. From the account of the dream of Scipio in the Parliament of Fowls it is clear that Chaucer had actually read Macrobius' commentary by the time that he wrote the poem, and was not merely referring to his name to add learned ballast to its weight.[37]

It is as an authority on dream lore that Chaucer cites Macrobius, but the portion of the Commentary in which I am presently interested precedes the classification of different types of dreams. It includes the first two chapers of Book One in which Macrobius instances Plato's use of myth as a precedent justifying Cicero's usage.

In Book One Chapter 1, Macrobius relates Cicero's use of a dream as the device whereby he includes 'an interesting description of the spheres and constellations' to Plato's inclusion at the end of his Republic (10,614B-621D) of the myth of Er, 'a man who apparently had died and was restored to life' and revealed what he had seen. Macrobius continues:

> The reason for including such a fiction and dream in books dealing with governmental problems, and the justification for introducing a description of celestial circles, orbits, and spheres, the movements of planets, and the revolutions of the heavens into a discussion of the regulations governing commonwealths seemed to me to be worth investigating: and the reader, too, will perhaps be curious. Otherwise we may be led to believe that men of surpassing wisdom, whose habit it was to regard the search for truth as nothing if not divine, have padded their treatises, nowhere else prolix, with something superfluous.
> (Macrobius, 1.1.3, Stahl, p.81)

He argues that both Plato and Cicero realised that because 'a love of justice' could best be 'instilled in men's minds' by the use of fable which could demonstrate 'the immortality of souls,' they were justified in introducing fiction into philosophical works. Had there been a consensus of opinion regarding the use of fiction in such a context, Macrobius' justification of Plato and Cicero would have been unnecessary. Macrobius continues with an account of the argument of those who insist 'that philosophers

should refrain from using fiction since no kind of fiction has a place with those who profess to tell the truth,' and counters it with the argument offered by the two authors each of whom 'justified his choice of characters as suited to the expression of his doctrines.' It is a justification which recalls Chaucer's own in his account of his motives in the General Prologue [I (A) 725-742]. Macrobius' final argument is that in order to judge rightly in this regard one must remember that 'philosophy does not discountenance all stories, nor does it accept all;' he points out that there are distinctions between different types of fables, and then proceeds to enumerate these. The fundamental distinction which he makes in classifying fable is based upon the intentions of their creators: 'fables – the very word acknowledges their falsity – serve two purposes: either merely to gratify the ear or to encourage the reader to good works' (1.2.7, Stahl p.84). Macrobius' stated concern is the justification of the specific type of fable which Cicero uses in the Somnium, and his method is reductive: he operates by making serial distinctions whereby he can eliminate 'unphilosophical' types of fiction - types, that is, unconcerned with inculcating moral values. In the process of exclusion, however, different types of fiction are defined and described in ways which suggest their potential as much as their limitations. 'The fables of Aesop' are characterised as unphilosophical, having 'both setting and plot . . . fictitious,' but Aesop himself is praised as being 'famous for his exquisite imagination.' His treatment of those categories of fable with which he tells us neither Plato nor Cicero was concerned is sufficiently comprehensive to suggest points beyond his immediate purpose.

For William of Conches, writing in the twelfth century, the implications of Macrobius' categorization of types of fable proved far other than they had to their originator. Using Macrobius' categories as a basis upon which to construct his own more tolerant view of the range of fable that admits philosophically sound handling, William blandly glosses Macrobius' reductivism out of existence.[38] Indeed, Dronke points out that William does far more than merely use traditional arguments to achieve 'a greater latitude;' moving beyond the conventional *arguments that fictions may* either be useful since they provide training 'for more serious philosophical study, or again (that) the philosopher can use them as integumenta,' William

> appeals to new principles. His emphasis is not, like that of the ancient allegorists of Homer, on drawing a veil over what is unseemly: for him the seemliness of the significatio genuinely *eclipses and renders unimportant* the unseemliness of the words. Even if the language or the narrative details of a fictive work seem objectionable, the work can still be beautiful and honourable because of what it means. It is not the philosopher who makes an honest woman out of the wanton fabula: whatever her *appearance* she can have a beauty and dignity that stems from her inherent nature, her meaning . . . . This is a new way of approaching the justification of works that on the surface are 'immoral;' it is an approach independent, at least in principle, of the issue about integumenta. Though the implications of this approach are not developed here, the essential breakthrough has been made.
> (Fabula, p.28)

The movement which William makes towards greater inclusiveness in the categories of acceptable fable is striking when contrasted to the earlier attitude expressed in Macrobius' commentary.

St Augustine, writing at approximately the same time as Macrobius,[39] had already offered a number of statements of the power of fiction which suggest far-reaching possibilities for this art. I have already mentioned his commendation of Plato's stance in the Republic (see n.10), but even there it is clear that St Augustine, like Plato, is thinking of a specific type of poetry. In two later passages in the City of God (11.18 and 11.21), he praises God for the benevolence of His divine will in terms which express concepts of poetic worth:

> Neque enim Deus ullum, non dico angelorum, sed vel hominum crearet, quem malum futurum esse praescisset, nisi pariter nosset quibus eos bonorum usibus commodaret adque ita ordinem saeculorum tamquam pulcherrimum carmen etiam ex quibusdam quasi antithetis honestaret.
>
> God would never have created a single angel — not even a single man — whose future wickedness He forsaw, unless, at the same time, He knew of the good which could come of this evil. It was as though He meant the harmony of history, like the beauty of a poem, to be enriched by antithetical elements.
>
> Nec auctor est excellentior Deo, nec ars efficacior Dei verbo, nec causa melior quam ut bonum crearetur a Deo bono. Hanc etiam Plato causam condendi mundi iustissimam dicit, ut a bono Deo bona opera fierent; sive ista legerit, sive ab his qui legerant forte cognoverit; sive acerrimo ingenio invisibilia Dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspexerit, sive ab his qui ista conspexerant et ipse didicerit.
>
> There is no Creator higher than God, no art more efficacious than the Word of God, no better reason why something good should be created than that the God who creates is good. Even Plato says that the best reason for creating the world is that good things should be made by a good God. It may be that he read this Scriptural passage or learned it from those who had, or, by his own keen insight, he clearly saw that 'the invisible things' of God are 'understood by the things that are made.'

> . or perhaps he learned from others who had clearly seen this.

In both instances Augustine uses poetic or artistic analogues of divine creation; but by their very use he graces human artists with the dignity of imaging their Divine Exemplar, for their literary harmony reflects the innate and substantial harmony of the universe, and when they deliberately choose to reflect this, then they are not abdicating moral responsibility in writing fiction, rather they are assuming a special type of responsibility: the presentation to the imagination of an accurate depiction of reality. God offers reality itself to us in His poem of the universe, and the good poet, aware of the nature of this reality, and of the fact that it is at least partially translatable into words (which can reflect though not directly parallel or become the reality itself), strives to convey an adequate sense of earthly reality in words, and employs 'reasonable fictions' to this end.

It is this view which underlies the recommendation which St Augustine makes to Licentius in De ordine.[40] Licentius had greatly enjoyed composing poetry before St Augustine enabled him to perceive the fundamental concern of philosophy with the orderly understanding of the universe. Once he realised this, Licentius decided to forsake the lesser good of loving poetry for the greater delight of following 'a far different light' – that of philosophy – in his pursuit of truth. But St Augustine explains that while his conversion to christianity is of the utmost importance, to describe his poems as 'these trifles of mine' (1.8.23) and to desire renunciation of the act of composition is foolish, for art, imaging God's art in this, is itself orderly, manifesting its order both in the discipline of writing and in the substance of what is created, in its

significance both for its creator and its auditors:

> Si ordinem . . . curas, redeundum tibi est ad illos versus. Nam eruditio disciplinarum liberalium modesta sane atque succincta, et alacriores et perseverantiores et comptiores exhibit amatores amplectendae veritati, ut et *ardentius appetant*, et *constantius* insequantur, et inhaereant postremo dulcius . . . quae vocatur, Licenti, beata vita . . . . Vade ergo interim ad illas Musas. Verumtamen, scis quid te facere velim? Jube, sit, quod placet. Ubi se, inquam, Pyramus et illa ejus supra seminecem, ut cantaturus es, interemerint, in dolore ipso, quo tuum carmen vehementius inflammari decet, habes commodissimam opportunitatem. Arripe illius foedae libidinis et incendiorum venenatorum exsecrationem, quibus miseranda illa contingunt: deinde totus attollere in laudem puri et sinceri amoris, quo animae dotatae disciplinis et virtute formosae copulantur intellectui per philosophiam, et non solum mortem fugiunt, verum etiam vita beatissima perfruuntur.
>
> (1.8.24, PL 32 988-989)

> 'If you have a care for order . . . . you must return to those verses, for instruction in the liberal arts, if only it is moderate and concise, produces devotees more alert and steadfast and better equipped for embracing truth, Licentius, so that *they more ardently seek and more consistently* pursue and in the end more lovingly cling to that which is called the happy life . . . . For the present, therefore, return to the Muses. And yet, do you know what I would have you do?' 'Ask whatever you like,' he replied. 'At that point where Pyramus destroyed himself, 'I said, 'and she slew herself over his half-dead body — as you were about to relate — there, in that every anguish where it is proper that your poem should reach its highest flight, you have a golden opportunity: satirize the curse of that unclean lust and those burning passions by which those deporable things come to pass. Then soar aloft with all your power in praise of pure and genuine love — love wherein souls endowed with knowledge and adorned with *virtue are, through philosophy,* united to understanding, and whereby they not only escape death, but moreover enjoy a life most happy.'
>
> (Fathers of the Church, 5, pp.261-262)

Later St Augustine draws a further distinction which places his own attitude to human creativity clearly: he distinguishes between 'delight of the sense' and 'delight through the sense.' Just as God's universal harmony can lead those who see its reflection in reality to contemplate the benevolence of its and their Maker, so too can a good artistic creation first delight the *senses* and then move its viewers or auditors to a rational understanding of the place of sense delight:

> aliud . . . sensus, aliud per sensum: nam sensum mulcet pulcher motus; per sensum autem animum solum pulchra in motu significatio. Hoc etiam in auribus facilius advertitur: *nam quidquid* jucunde sonat, illud libet, atque ipsum auditum illicit; quod autem per eundem sonum bene significatur, nuntio quidem aurium, sed ad solam mentem refertur. Itaque cum audimus illos versus:
>
> *Quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles*
> Hiberni, vel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet;
> (Virgil, Georgics, 2.480-481)
>
> aliter metra laudamus, alitergue sententiam . . .
> (2.11.34, PL 32 1011)
>
> *delight of the sense* is one thing, delight through the sense is something else. Graceful movement delights the sense, but the timely import of the movement delights the mind alone through the sense. This is more easily noticed in the case of hearing: whatever has a pleasing sound, that it is which pleases and entices the hearing itself. What is really signified by that sound, that is what is borne to the mind though by the messenger of our hearing. And so, when we hear these lines — Why do the suns in the winter rapidly sink in the ocean? What is the hindrance that holds back latecoming nights in the summer? — our praise of the metre is one thing, but our praise of the meaning is something else.
> (op. cit., pp. 312-313)

St Augustine continues by explaining the orderly nature of musical and poetic harmony:

> Sic ab ea [i.e. ratio] poetae geniti sunt: in quibus cum videret non solum sonorum, sed etiam verborum rerumque magna momenta, plurimum eos honoravit, eisque tribuit quorum vellent rationabilium mendaciorum potestatem. Et quoniam de prima illa disciplina stirpem ducebant, judices in *eos grammaticos esse permisit . . . .* rationabili mendacio jam poetis favente ratione (quaerendumne quid propagini similiter inesset?), *Jovis et Memoriae* filias Musas esse confictum est. Unde ista disciplina sensus intellectusque particeps musicae nomen invenit.
>
> (2.14.40-41, PL 32 1014)

> Thus, poets were begotten of reason. And, when it saw in them great achievements, not in sound alone, but in words also and realities, it honoured them to the utmost, and gave them license for whatever reasonable fictions they might desire. And yet, because they took origin from the first of the liberal disciplines, it permitted grammarians to be their critics . . . . By a reasonable fiction it was fabled that the Muses were the daughters of Jupiter and Memory. Now, with reason bestowing its favour on the poets, need it be asked what the offspring likewise contained? Since this branch of learning partakes as well of sense as of the intellect, it received the name of music.
>
> (op. cit., pp.317-318)

It is not merely that philosophy is a discipline worthy of greater devotion than poetry, it is also that they are different. When Licentius seeks to distinguish between love of philosophy and love of poetry, St Augustine demonstrates that each has its place in the orderly hierarchy of God's created world.

It is true that in his Retractions (1.3.2), St Augustine expresses his reservations at his earlier stance, remarking somewhat dryly that possibly he set too great store by the study of the liberal arts 'quas multi sancti multum nesciunt; quidam etiam, qui sciunt eas, sancti non sunt' (of which many saintly people do not know much; furthermore some who do know them are not saintly [PL 32 588]). However, this reflects more

on his sense of the intractibility of the unsaintly when exposed to the effects of the liberal arts than on the liberal arts themselves. These are not condemned; their limitations as spurs to morality are merely observed.

By its nature a poetic depiction of reality cannot be totally true: its creator is not the Creator, and his tools are words and images not realities. But it is possible for a poet to create a fiction which so closely imitates truth that it is both a reasonable fiction and as true a lie as possible. If he has this talent then it is worth his using it. In De musica, the only completed treatise extant of those St Augustine proposed to write on the liberal arts, there is a detailed (five book) discussion of technicalities relating to rhythm and metre, followed by a last book relating musical and poetic harmony to cosmological harmony. In the introduction to this last book, St Augustine deprecates his devoting so much effort to his subject 'childishly,' a deprecation which nevertheless did not cause him either to jettison or retract his treatise, and he justifies his having spent so long on the work since in it he hopes to enlighten those 'qui litteris saecularibus dediti, magnis implicantur erroribus, et bona ingenia in nugis conterunt, nescientes quid ibi delectet' (who, given up to secular literature, are involved in great errors and waste their natural good qualities in trifles, not knowing what their charm is [6.1.1, PL 32 1163]). Reading De musica it is apparent that St Augustine is not denying the validity of composing song or poetry; he is rather intent upon proclaiming that beauty inheres in such creation as a trace of the true harmony which derives from God.[41]

I wish to discuss one other passage in which St Augustine directly considers the nature of the maker and his creation. It occurs in Soliloquia, 2.10.[42] The titular noun is of St Augustine's coinage: he uses it to characterise the 'dialogue' between himself and his reason, in which the nature and relationship of God and the soul are explored. In the course of the work he fixed upon the resemblances and distinctions between what is true and what is false, and Reason points out a paradoxical anomaly to St Augustine: while a writer of fiction may have no desire to deceive, and therefore not be intentionally false, the nature of his craft is such that by its very mimetic process, it must be false, and yet, despite its being only a representation of reality and not the thing itself, it can, and often does, reflect truth:

> Itaque ipsa opera hominum velut comoedias aut tragoedias, aut mimos, et id genus alia possumus operibus pictorum fictorumque conjungere. Tam enim verus esse pictus homo non potest, quamvis in speciem hominis tendat, quam illa quae scripta sunt in libris comicorum. Neque enim falsa esse volunt, aut ullo appetitu suo falsa sunt; sed quadam necessitate, quantum fingentis arbitrium sequi potuerunt. At vero in scena Roscius voluntate falsa Hecuba erat, natura verus nomo; sed illa voluntate etiam verus tragoedus, eo videlicet quo implebat, institutum: falsus autem Priamus, eo quod Priamum assimilabat, sed ipse non erat. Ex quo jam nascitur quiddam mirabile, quod tamen ita se habere nemo ambigit. A. Quidnam id est? R. Quid putas, nisi haec omnia inde esse in quibusdam vera, unde in quibusdam falsa sunt, et ad suum verum hoc solum eis prodesse, quod ad aliud falsa sunt? Unde ad id quod esse aut volunt aut debent, nullo modo perveniunt, si falsa esse fugiunt. Quo pacto enim iste quem commemoravi, verus tragoedus esset, si nollet esse falsus Hector, falsa Andromache, falsus Hercules, et alia innumera? aut unde vera pictura esset, si falsus equus non esset? unde in speculo vera hominis imago, si non

falsus homo? Quare, si quibusdam, ut verum aliquid sint, prodest ut sint aliquid falsum; cur tantopere *falsitates formidamus, et pro magno bono appetimus* veritatem?

Reason. So, we can group the works of men, like comedies, tragedies, farces, and other things of that type with the works of painters and sculptors. A man in a painting cannot be as true, even though it tends toward the appearance of a man, as those things which are written in the works of the comic authors. Such things do not choose to be false nor are they false, through their own desire to be so, but they are compelled by a kind of necessity to conform as much as they are able to the artist's will. On the other hand, the actor Roscius was by choice a false Hecuba on the stage, though, by nature, a true man; he was by choice a true tragedian in that he fulfilled his purpose, and a false Priam because he played the part of Priam though he was not Priam. From this fact arises something remarkable, which nevertheless nobody denies is a fact.

Augustine. What is that?

Reason. What else do you think but that all these things are in some respect true precisely because they are in other respects false. To establish their truth, the only thing in their favour is that they are false in some other regard. Hence they never succeed in being what they want or ought to be, as long as they refuse to be false. How could that man I just mentioned be a true tragedian, if he were unwilling to be a false Hector, a false Andromache, a false Hercules, and others without number? Or how would it be a true picture, if the horse in it were not false? How could it be a true image of a man in a mirror, if it were not a false man? If, therefore, in order to be something true it is to the advantage of some things that they be something false, why should we have such a dread of falsities and desire truth as if it were a great good?

Roscius acting Priam is true and false simultaneously: he is 'a true tragedian' and 'a false Priam;' without his acting Priam, and the playwright's having preserved Priam's historical memory in his play, and without countless similar acts of recording to aid the book of memory, there would no longer be any knowledge

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of Priam. Actor, author, historian: the gap remains between the reality and its appearances, between the actual event and its record, but the integrity of intention in all three is shared; in each man's act Priam's life is recreated for others to understand. The type of fiction that Macrobius characterises as narratio fabulosa[43] which 'rests on a solid foundation of truth' (Commentary, 1.2.9) is still fabulous, fictive – but its relation to truth is a sympathetic one, and one which closely parallels that of the historian in moral intention if not always in the verisimilitude of its data.[44]

In choosing to authenticate his fiction by claiming its historicity, Chaucer stresses a specific type of relationship to reality, to truth; but any authenticating device, by its very presence in a work which requires its functioning to aid its claim to truthfulness, ultimately works in two directions: Chaucer's claim of historicity is also a token of his poem's fiction,[45] and like the act of Roscius' choosing to play Priam, it suggests the benevolent nature of his true lie, its concern with a morally mimetic relationship to reality.

Poetic allegory provides one means of writing poetry which does not only entertain but also instructs, which though it is fiction is nevertheless reasonable and can embody a 'true lie.'[46] It is a style which Chaucer himself utilized, particularly in the House of Fame and the Parliament of Fowls. But the relationship to truth of the fiction which is the narrative frame of the Canterbury Tales is not allegorical in this sense.[47] The narrative frame of the Canterbury Tales stresses its truth in a different way, by mirroring the manifold diversity of real life, not only in the

range of its subject matter but also in its multiple realism of style. In the Divine Comedy the 'bella menzogna' that Dante creates expresses itself as true: the journey which Dante ventures upon within the poem is not described as imaginary but as actual. Charles Singleton offers an interpretation of the implications of this which indirectly illuminates the realism of Chaucer's narrative frame too:

> St Gregory, in the Proem to his Exposition of the Song of Songs, says: 'Allegoria enim animae longe a Deo positae quasi quamdam machinam facit ut per illam levetur ad Deum' and the Letter to Can Grande declares that the end of the whole Comedy is 'to remove those living in this life from the state of misery and lead them to the state of felicity.' A poet of rectitude is one who is interested in directing the will of men to God. But a disembodied Lady Philosophy is not a machina which can bear the weight of lifting man to God because, in her, man finds no part of his own weight. Lady Philosophy did not, does not, will not, exist in the flesh. As she is constructed in the Convivio, she comes to stand for Sapientia, for created Sapientia standing in analogy to uncreated Sapientia which is the Word. Even so, she is word without flesh. And only the word made flesh can lift man to God. If the allegory of a Christian poet of rectitude is to support any weight, it will be grounded in the flesh, which means grounded in history — and will lift up from there. In short the trouble with Lady Philosophy was the trouble which Augustine found with the Platonists: 'But that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us I did not read there.'
> (Dante Studies One, p.93)

Although the Canterbury Tales is no divine comedy, it demonstrates a concern with reality similar to that evinced in Dante's Comedy. The world which is reflected in the Tales particularly, but not only, in the narrative framework is the real world in which time and space coexist to provide a frame for human action, and in which human action is seen as innately moral or

immoral. The nature of the narrative situation itself, the vividness and naturalism of the descriptions of the pilgrims in the General Prologue and the link passages, the colloquialism of their interchanges, the ease with which immediate exigencies override the prearranged scheme devised by the Host, these and similar details of plot and execution inform the historical authenticity of the pilgrims' situation. Dante's poem is set beyond the normal confines of human experience, Chaucer's well within them, but both poems see reality as God's poem, whose harmony is not only beautiful but also true, and in both poems the existence of man as God's creature, created in His image and capable of achieving eternal salvation by rightful action, is central.

The complex interwoven nature of the structure of the Canterbury Tales has often been noted. What I am interested in discussing is a series of interrelationships which communicate a sense of the poem's plenitude. Within the bounds of the narrative Chaucer's stated role is that of a faithful reporter of past events, beyond its restrictions he is the author of a poem in which fictitious events are actualised by a number of stylistic devices which both vivify them and suggest the nature of their vitality, for Chaucer's art in the Canterbury Tales is self-defining. It sets up expectations, confirms or denies them; it makes, unmakes and reforms our sense of the poem, and in the process increasingly enriches our understanding of what the poem is. If we were to take Chaucer's claim that this is history and he its scribe seriously, our attitude to his artistry would be of a particular sort, for the expectations set up by the claim are specific. When we see that the Canterbury Tales is fiction we do not simply have another attitude: we incorporate into our concept of the poem whatever sense we have

of its squaring fiction and truth; it is Chaucer who has explicitly raised the issue of their relationship for his audience.

To label the most prominent of the stylistic devices utilized realism is legitimate if one informs the protean quality of that term with fairly explicit meaning. The nature of what people value as real varies in different places and at different times, and also obviously, though to a lesser degree, amongst individuals sharing cultural constants which would tend to cause them to have in common a great number of attitudes to experience. The realism of the Canterbury Tales is multifaceted, but all its aspects are related to a single and steady perception of the firmness of christian truth.[48] The social and psychological realism of the frame, the lucidity of its boethian logic of cause and effect are aspects of a whole whose basic assumption is that the universe is the divinely created arena in which man freely chooses the nature of his life's moral quality and in so doing both determines his own eternal fate and illuminates the nature of choice for his fellowmen. The narrator's liberal praise of the pilgrims, often as nonpareils sometimes only as excellent men and women of their estaat, conveys a sense of their (inflated) typicality: it is as though they are being generously ranked upon a scale of their own conventional attributes, but the pilgrims are also each individuated so carefully that the range of their responses to one another and to tale-telling, the two chief touchstones of their characterization after the initial portraits, seem to possess the authority and inevitability of what is. The totality of responses in the frame offers a rich complex of highly individual and typical behaviour, social and anti-social, moral and immoral action; the individual

responses are authenticated by the consonance of the inner logic of the personality in question and the nature of his choice of tale,[49] by similarities and contrast of the various characters whose tales form the body of each group, or by the dramatic situation in which the characters find themselves. The relationship between teller and tale is buttressed by the relationship between the tales in each group and indeed by the extended treatment throughout the poem of topics in which a multitude of differing attitudes is manifested.

2 BEGINNINGS: SPRING, PILGRIMAGE AND THE PERSONA'S *LITERAL DILEMMA*

The ways in which the poem is authenticated include two that are fundamental: first the use of a continous narrative frame, and secondly the articulation as the poem progresses of an unfolding relationship between Chaucer, his poem and its earthly audience, and Chaucer, his poem and God. Reading the Canterbury Tales involves the reader as well as the pilgrims in a journey – one of understanding – whose implication unfolds gradually, and the inner authenticating device – that of the narrative frame – is both established earliest and provides the basis upon which perception of the second depends.

At the most basic level the narrative frame of the Canterbury Tales contains the individual tales within its context; it provides a boundary to the poem, a sense of its finite form, both as a whole object – the poem itself – and as something distinguished from the surrounding reality which it reflects.[50] While each completed tale has, clearly established, its own inner sequentiality, it is the narrative frame which communicates a sense of continuity most comprehensively. Beginning in the General Prologue the narrative frame functions throughout the poem. The device of the journey to Canterbury which provides its plot is sustained throughout the tales, and only disappears at the end of the Parson's Tale (his telling the tale implies the pilgrimage's presence until its completion). Then, in the final lines entitled 'Heere taketh the makere of this book his leve' the poem, as it were, shifts gear or, less anachronistically, changes its imitative level of reality: in their implication the opening lines of the General Prologue extend far beyond the immediate situation which Chaucer goes on to describe, and they act as a link between the world of the Canterbury Tales

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and the world of Chaucer's auditors or readers; in the last lines of the poem what is offered both develops from and extends beyond the immediate implications of the plot of the narrative frame. The pilgrimage may only have been presented as actual, but the author's existence is incontrovertible, and the catalogue of his works includes the title of only one poem, the Book of the Lion, which is not extant -- hardly sufficient in itself to trigger off unease at the possible ambiguity of Chaucer's authorial stance in the retraction. Whatever the force of the passage, whether it is merely a conventionally devout ending or a deeply felt retraction, its speaker is, in a sense which cannot be applied to the persona earlier, undoubtedly the creator of the Canterbury Tales. The leve-taking, by its own closer relation to actuality, moves its readers to contemplate the limits of the realism of the pilgrimage situation, and respond not only to the fiction but also to the fact of its fictiveness and hence of Chaucer's authorial responsibility.

At both the beginning and the ending of the Canterbury Tales links between the poem and the reality which it reflects symbolically are carefully and precisely established. Just as what is described in the first eighteen lines happens each spring, so too what Chaucer is stating at the end of his poem has an authenticity which his pilgrims do not literally share; the assessment of the nature of his offering in the Canterbury Tales is that of the poem's author, reflecting upon his position in relation to his Maker, a position determined in part by his innate nature and in part by his own use of his freedom of will. And we, reading it, exist in actuality too, and in the act of reading and responding to Chaucer's poem are exercising a real freedom of choice even as he did in writing it and considering

what he had written. These two passages, introducing and concluding the Canterbury Tales, provide focal points in the dialogue between author and readers or perhaps more aptly boundaries which demarcate the end of one sort of reality and the entry into another, but their implications are clearest once the inner figure in the narrative frame, that of the pilgrimage, has been explored. Viewing the act of reading the Canterbury Tales as going on a narrative journey[51] – a type of itinerarium mentis not directly ad deum but definitely towards an understanding of the presence and partial significance of His traces and shadows in the world – it is necessary to begin at the beginning with the description of spring.

The opening eighteen lines of the poem locate the action in time and space. They differ from the remainder of the General Prologue in which the persona's presence is almost ubiquitous, implicitly impressing upon us a *sense of the subjectivity of the account given.*[52] Here the description is primarily of an objective reality, and the style of presentation achieves, through its conventionalism, a degree of impersonality that is highlighted by the easy naturalism of what succeeds it. The reality described communicates a sense of the teleological nature of the universe: the description of the renewal of spring, physically regenerative for plant and animal life, spiritually restorative to man, is one of phenomena which affect more people than the pilgrims assembled at the Tabard or within the covers of Chaucer's Book; the universality of the description provides a very broad context for what follows and also tacitly unites all mankind within its scope. Chaucer's pilgrims, impelled by the spiritual yearning that moves men's thoughts to God, are authenticated by the catholic nature of their response.[53] The description itself embodies a coherent sense of the benevolent pattern of duration in the

world: spring implies the whole cycle of the seasons which, unfolding in time, points towards and provides an analogue to the eternal rest beyond time,[54] the cyclic renewal implies the continuity of life and spring, being not only the season of physical resurgence but also of spiritual renewal, is a fitting choice for this pilgrimage which, being fictive, has only symbolically true existence. Chauncey Wood points out that spring was not a particularly popular time for actual pilgrimages.[55] But that spring is a conceptually fitting time for pilgrimage is obvious: it is the season in which 'God first maked man,' in which both the Annunciation of the Second Man and his Passion took place, and it is also the season in which Noah, prefiguring Christ, ensured the salvation of those who voyaged in the Ark built to God's design.

The use of conventional spring imagery in a passage of highly formal verse links Chaucer's depiction to its literary forbears, recalling both classical and earlier medieval natureingänge, even while the specific development of the narrative manifests its singularity.[56] The device of an introductory description of spring is a literary one, and admits equally any directing of the understanding; that it is used to draw attention to a relationship between time and space, the eternal and the infinite and the importance of this union for man is deliberate. By its movement, the description of time's process establishes an innate connection between universals and particulars. It is itself couched in the historical present ('whan [the earth is renewed] . . . thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages'), a present which, used in conjunction with a preterite, expresses both the sense of perpetual possibility — this is what people always feel in the spring, this is how nature responds at that time of year — and of

completed action -- when April has pierced the drought of March the plants can begin and do begin, and have again begun, this year, to flower.[57]

The use of the historical present universalizes the implications of the passage; so too does the manner in which space is described. The time described in the passage is whenever-spring-comes-in-a-christian-universe before it is 'in that seson . . . as I lay . . . redy to wenden on my pilgrymage;' the place is wherever 'the tendre croppes' are renewed in April, in 'straunge strondes', in 'sondry londes' as well as in all England: the lines evoke a sense of all places and all time before they become specifically located in the here and now:

> Bifil that in that seson on a day
> In Southwerk at the Tabard, as I lay . . .
> [I (A) 19-20]

The movement of the verse involves a narrowing of focus which does not deny the universals from which it began; it first expresses their validity by demonstrating them in action and then by the ordering of the verbal pattern suggests how what follows relates to what went before. The ideal nature of the universe is stressed in the formally executed opening lines; the special case of the individual pilgrimage which Chaucer is to describe is placed within its context, even as the earthly real may be seen in the context of the infinite ideal which it attempts to mirror and for which its creatures yearn.

The motive energy which causes the seasonal cycle derives from God, and directly or indirectly, freely or by kynde knowynge, His creatures respond.[58] The introduction to the Canterbury Tales clearly establishes a sense of the universe's being God's creation. Its

idealism is in sharp contrast to the pragmatism of most of the pilgrims to whom the persona is about to introduce us, and its function is not dissimilar to that of Boethius' prayer in metrum nine of book three of the Consolation of Philosophy where lines such as these attest to the basis of belief upon which rests the exploration of earthly reality there:

> O qui perpetua *mundum* ratione gubernas
> Terrarum caelique sator qui tempus ab aeuo
> Ire iubes *stabilisque manens* das cuncta moueri,
> . . . . . .
> . . . Tu namque *serenum*,
> Tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,
> Principium, uector, dux, *semita*, terminus idem.
> (Boethius, 3 m.9 1-3, 26-29)

> O thow Fadir, soowere and creatour of hevene
> and of erthes, that governest this world by
> perdurable resoun, that comaundest the tymes
> to gon from syn that age hadde bygynnynge;
> thow that duellest thiselve ay stedefast and
> stable, and yevest alle othere thynges to
> ben meved . . . . thou art cleernesse, thow
> art pesible reste to debonayre folk; thow
> thiself art bygynnynge, berere, ledere,
> path and terme; to looke on the, that is
> our ende.
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Chaucer's introduction, too, clarifies general issues which human action might be thought to have placed in doubt and which what follows in the poem often seems to ignore.[59] The introduction differs in authority from the often dubious value judgments which the persona makes shortly afterwards; it provides a type of objectivity whose presence conveys a wider view than the shortsighted selfconfidence of most of the pilgrims admits. The utilization of the tale-telling device in itself involves placing a high premium on subjectivity throughout the poem: one of its major values lies in its stress upon the preciousness of human freedom of

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choice; in a poem whose naturalism depends upon both moral and psychological realism, this also involves an exploration of a multitude of subjective freedoms, including the freedom to be wilfully blind in embracing an apparently inexhaustible series of lesser rather than greater goods. In the beginning of the poem as again in its ending Chaucer offers description designed to offset the balance of what intervenes by its own, truer orientation.

The concept of pilgrimage introduced in these lines functions analogously to the description of created nature in the spring. Its latent figural meaning is inherent in Chaucer's use of it and is made explicit in the Parson's Prologue and Tale and in Chaucer's leave-taking, but the overriding impression of the pilgrims' journey to Canterbury is one in which a series of responses to immediate situations rather than any long term goal predominates. The ideal connotations of the pilgrimage communicate one level of the reality which Chaucer presents: the spiritual potential inherent in man (reflected most strikingly amongst the characters in the idealized descriptions of the Knight, the Clerk, the Parson and the Ploughman) and the nature of man's life on earth as a pilgrimage back to God. The range of responses elicited from most of the pilgrims is set in clear contradistinction to this. In the nexus of pilgrims' attitudes sublime indifference to moral issues coexists, with convincing naturalism, side by side with moral scrupulosity, easygoing lack of interest in personal salvation and utter contempt for others' concern with it. The concept of the ideal in human behaviour and the range of the actual are contemporaneously held within the same dramatic device.

The use of the pilgrimage topos provides the frame with a wide christian context and a specific temporal and

spatial focus. The journey to Canterbury incorporates both physical and spiritual movement. Chaucer describes it as an actual event, mapping the pilgrims' advance from Southwark along the Canterbury Way; but it is a pilgrimage not merely a vacation that the 'compaignye of sondry folk' embark upon and Chaucer also demonstrates the nature of the pilgrims' spiritual attitudes to this journey. The movement through time and space to pay tribute to the saint exists in its own right; it also has figural meaning. It connotes the pilgrimage of life itself both compositely and individually: the history of all mankind and of each man's journey through the world; it also symbolizes the inner movement of the affections, a journey neither from place to place nor from past to future, but at least potentially from the state of original sin to a state of grace.[60] In St Augustine's terminology the pilgrimage is both res and signa. When in the prologue to his tale, the Parson says that he will 'shewe . . . the wey, in this viage,/ Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage/ That highte Jerusalem celestial' [X (I) 49-51], he draws together the Canterbury pilgrimage, the concept of life as a pilgrimage and the ideal journey of the mind towards God in this life; for unless the pilgrims understand their nature and the nature of the larger journey upon which they have also embarked, their pilgrimage can only be to them a movement from place to place, its signification being of no more use to them than the radiance of the sun to a blind man.[61] But although his sermon is overtly addressed to the pilgrims its truth transcends the limits of its narrative situation; it is not the Parson's nor any other of the pilgrims' voices which is heard at the end of his sermon on 'a ful noble wey and a ful convenable, which may nat fayle to man ne to womman that thurgh synne hath mysgoon fro the righte wey of Jerusalem celestial (which wey is cleped Penitence)' [X (I) 79-80]. Ultimately Chaucer's

pilgrims are as little able to use the words which he gives to the Parson as a blind man to perceive the sunlight, for they, like the priest, are fictions: they reflect but do not possess human reality. But the words are Chaucer's and they speak directly to Chaucer's audience not only, as the fiction claims, as part of a report of things past but in the poet's present affirmation of an eternal truth.

The pilgrimage to Canterbury is only a fiction, the pilgrims the figments of Chaucer's imagination, and the voice which closes the Canterbury Tales is the persona-poet's. The journey inside the frame is complete, even though the poem is, in parts, unfinished; but poet and reader too have been on a journey of insight — through the poem and into a sense of its implications. I would like to leave discussion of the implications of the fictionality of the pilgrimage until later, merely remarking here that Chaucer does stress this aspect of its constituent makeup overtly at the end of the poem. No reader is likely to take entirely seriously Chaucer's claim of the historicity of his account for long, but once made, the claim is present in the readers' or listeners' minds as a part of what is offered, and it is only explicitly counterbalanced at the end of the tales when the history claim is firmly rescinded and the fiction claim placed in its stead in Chaucer's acceptance of responsibility for his act of making in the Canterbury Tales. At the beginning of the poem the only acts for which Chaucer accepts responsibility are those associated with his role as pilgrim and reliable reporter: he attests the accuracy of what is to follow and discusses the ethical problems raised by reporting precisely the speech and actions of the entire company, not all of whom were moral exemplars.

While the persona mulls over the problem of 'spekynge ful brode' if he is to incorporate a full account of the pilgrimage, we are made to accept without comment the actual presence of the 'ful nyne and twenty' pilgrims: the dilemma presumes their substantiality. The large, and varied group of pilgrims is first characterized by what each of its members shares: the common desire to go on pilgrimage; it is only after this claim, which not only levels their intentions but also quite literally realizes the pilgrims, is made that Chaucer first suggests and then demonstrates the variety of individual responses to the common situation. And of course the immediate situation in which the pilgrims find themselves is really twofold, for not only do they share their objective, visiting the shrine of St Thomas, but they also share acquiescence to the leadership of the Host in the tale-telling game. 'Oure Lord Jhesu Crist seith thus: "By the fruyt of hem shul ye knowen hem"' [X (I) 116]; the fruits of the pilgrims are manifest both in words and deeds, their choice of tales and their actions along the way. The journeying together and the agreement to tell whatever tales of 'sentence and solaas' they choose provide opportunities for diverse ramification. The pilgrims, grouped together by their common intentions, are particularized by their responses to their situation. The plurality of responses described in the Canterbury Tales is of wide range, mirroring in its diversity the spectrum of possibilities open to mankind even as in their number and variety of attitudes, vocations and status the pilgrims reflect the multiplicity of men. The pilgrimage topos must incorporate description of an event, the journey itself; for the event to occur there must also be an agent. One way of employing the topos is to follow the progress of a representative man as Bunyan does Christian's in Pilgrim's Progress; another way is to include a group of pilgrims who jointly

represent human potential and its realization. In the Divine Comedy Dante uses both the individual pilgrim, 'himself,' and a group, all those who together demonstrate 'status animarum post mortem;' in the Canterbury Tales Chaucer's persona, unlike Dante's, becomes one of the same group as the other characters, apparently differing from them only in that he is the one who has decided to recount their experiences.

In the Summa contra gentiles (2.44-48)[62] St Thomas discusses aspects of the relation of the many and the One. God is the One from whom all creation proceeds and with whom it strives to be reunited, and this is true of creation in its totality, of whole species and of individuals within each species. God has created an hierarchical universe and man's position within it is intermediate between the lesser animals, which like man possess bodies but which have no intellectual souls, and the angels which are pure intelligences. It is his possession of a free and rational soul which distinguishes man from lesser creatures for through it man can both know and love the true and the good and in so doing he most fully realizes his humanity. Within the human species there is further ordering. For since men are not God's equals no adequate likeness to God is found in them singly; jointly and in relation to one another they can better reflect God's unity and simplicity 'since a plurality of goods is better than a single finite good' (2.45.5).

Drawing upon traditional theology, 'the grete poete of Ytaille/ that highte Dant' [II (B^2) 3650-51] also discusses the relationship of the many and the One and of universals and particulars in relation to the multiplicity of the human race in De monarchia:

Nunc autem videndum est, quid sit finis totius humanae civilitatis . . . . Et ad evidentiam eius quod quaeritur, advertendum, quod quemadmodum est finis aliquis ad quem natura producit pollicem, et alius ab hoc . . . ad quem totum hominem; sic alius est finis ad quem singularem hominem, alius ad quem ordinat domesticam communitatem, alius ad quem vicinam, et alius ad quem civitatem, et alius ad quem regnum, et denique ultimus ad quem universaliter genus humanum Deus aeternus arte sua, quae natura est, in esse producit . . . . Est . . . aliqua propria operatio humanae universitatis, ad quam ipsa universitas hominum in tanta multitudine ordinatur, ad quam quidem operationem nec homo unus domus una, nec una vicinia, nec una ci[illegible] regnum particulare pertingere potest. Qua[illegible]t illa, manifestum fiet, si ultimum de [illegible] totius humanitatis appareat . . . . Patet . , quod ultimum de potentia ipsius humanitatis, est potentia sive virtus intellectiva.

Et quia potentia ista per unum hominem, seu per aliquam particularium communitatum superius distinctarum, tota simul in actum reduci non potest; necesse est multitudinem esse in humano genere, per quam quidem tota potentia haec actuetur; sicut necesse est multitudinem rerum generabilium, ut potentia tota materiae primae semper sub actu sit; . . . . Potentia etiam intellectiva, de qua loquor, non solum est ad formas universales, sive species, sed etiam per quandam extensionem ad particulares. Unde solet dici, quod intellectus speculativus extensione fit practicus, cuius finis est agere atque facere. Quod dico propter agibilia, quae politica prudentia regulantur, et propter factibilia, quae regulantur arte; quae omnia speculationi ancillantur tanquam optimo, ad quod humanum genus prima bonitas in esse produxit.
(1.3, Moore, pp. 342-343)

So now we must consider what is the goal of human civilization as a whole . . . . And to understand the point in question we must note that like as there is an end for which nature produces the thumb, and another than this . . . for which the whole man, so there is one end for which she produces the individual man, another for which the domestic group, another for which the district, another for which the city-state, and another for which the kingdom; and lastly there is an ultimate goal for which the eternal God, by his art, which is nature, brings into being the human race in its universality. There *is . . . some function proper*

> to humanity as a whole for which that same totality of men is ordained in so great multitude, to which function neither one man nor one family, nor one district nor one city-state, nor any individual kingdom may attain. And what this function is will be obvious if the specific potentiality of mankind generally be made clear . . . . It is plain . . . that the specific potentiality of humanity as such is a potentiality or capacity of intellect.
>
> And since that same potentiality cannot all be reduced to actuality at the same time by one man, or by any of the limited associations distinguished above, there must needs be multiplicity in the human race, in order for the whole of this potentiality to be actualized thereby. Like as there must be a multiplicity of things generable in order that the whole potentiality of first matter may always be in act; . . . . Moreover, the intellectual faculty of which I am speaking deals not only with universal forms or species, but also, by a kind of extension, with particular ones. Whence it is commonly said that the speculative intellect by extension becomes the practical intellect, the end of which is doing and making. And I draw this distinction because there are things to be done which are regulated by political wisdom, and things to be made, which are regulated by art. But they are all alike handmaids of speculation, as the supreme function for which the Prime Excellence brought the human race into being.
>
> (Wicksteed, pp. 131-133)

The order of the universe is found not in individual parts but in its totality as Dante explains (De Mon., 1.6) and it proclaims itself to those who seek to perceive it.

In the Genealogy of the Gods (15.10, Romano, 2, pp. 775-776) Boccaccio offers an engaging defence of his own choice of vocation by asserting that nature our mother assures the preservation of mankind by creating people with different aptitudes since a multitude of occupations is necessary to ensure man's continuance. Man is a social creature: alone no one can survive; even the sublime theologian needs the farmer to provide him with food, the

mason and carpenter to give him shelter, the weaver and shoemaker to provide his clothes and shoes. It is as part of a group of people of diverse skills (including that of poetry-making) that man has his being and continuance. In regard to this justification it is interesting to reflect how representative Chaucer's vocational depiction within the social range from knight to landed peasant is in the narrative frame and also to remember that excepting the ghostly preestes thre each character's vocation is uniquely allocated which makes the depiction of rank and occupation as wide as possible within the scope of the given number of pilgrims.[63]

The group of Canterbury pilgrims together manifest a type of part of the universal order, a sense of the manifold nature of choice and the underlying realities upon which it is based and by which it may be understood. Chaucer's company of 'sondry folk' whose avocation of pilgrimage is an acceptance of spiritual responsibility in 'doing' and whose consent to the Host's secular leadership involves acceptance of responsibility in 'making', together communicate a far fuller picture of humanity than any of them could possibly do alone, and in their corporate diversity they proclaim both the freedom man enjoys to choose a particular way for himself and the types and implications of the choices that people do make. In creating so diverse a cast of pilgrims within his poem, Chaucer imitates in small the plenitude of the human race and in so doing places his poem in relation to God's poem of the world, and himself in relation to its Maker, his own act of imitation being in this both full and true.[64]

Freedom of will and choice, if it involved only the freedom to choose amongst random possibilities, would be a very limited instrument of human potency, but it is associated with the concept that man's natural *desire is to enjoy*, as fully as *he may, both in* this life and the next, union with the good; it is the instrument whereby man, whose reason enables him to distinguish between good and evil, may choose to embrace what is good and reject what is evil. In essence the *freedom is a moral one, and* those who prefer *not to perceive* and act upon this delude themselves concerning its nature. Freedom to choose the moral pattern of one's life is fundamental to man, who possesses both the knowledge and capacity to choose well; *if he cares* to abuse *this* gift, *which is* the gift of his own rightful *nature*, he may: for where were the freedom or the good if man were obliged to select a particular pattern? The lives of all other worldly creatures are ordered by the kynde knowynge implanted *within them;* what they do is *good, but* it is not praiseworthy since it involves no choice. To man alone on earth is given the dignity of being able to choose the good, and men who prefer to deny their essential morality by *blindly pursuing* false goods, *are both self-defeating* (since ultimately they destroy themselves) and blameworthy. This is the reply which Lady Philosophy gives to Boethius when he asks why alone of all earthly creatures men include amongst their number those who *choose to lead the* life of shrewes. Boethius had been troubled by the apparent contradiction between the concept of a good universe created by a good God and the abundance of wicked men in positions which enable them not only, apparently, *to prosper* but also to harm others.

The pilgrims in the narrative frame represent a wide range of moral attitudes. If the frame is to mirror the actual world, of which it purports *to be a* record, it would be

highly implausible if all its members were uniformly virtuous. The freedom of will and of choice which the Canterbury pilgrims possess is depicted in a way which not only authenticates their individual freedoms but also places each man's choice within the context established by those of the other members of the group: each of the pilgrims acts freely, but each choice is not seen in isolation, its nature is increasingly sharply defined by its juxtaposition to similar acts of choice attesting the possibility of other responses.

Throughout the Canterbury Tales there is a series of interrelated activities whose implications amplify and resonate in relation to one another. The narrator, charting the journey, provides the temporal orientation of the account; the Host, inviting and accepting nomination by the others as their governour in this caas, orders — or attempts to order — the form and content of the tale-telling game. Each pilgrim who tells a tale orders the inner logic of its universe, and Chaucer, creating all the characters, devising their freedoms and necessities, offers his evocation of their reality in the poem to his readers, whose act of reading involves another act of organization in their mental reconstruction of the poem. Within the poem the diversity of reactions in what is really a very simple narrative situation and the interplay it affords contribute to the sense of abundant life in the frame.

The person whose actions provide a focal point at the beginning of the frame is the narrator whose decision to go on pilgrimage though influenced by the season is freely made as is his decision to tell of the way which he and his fellow pilgrims took; together they provide a broad paradigm of the types of choices — verbal and actual — which the other pilgrims also make. His

preparing to journey to Canterbury 'with ful devout corage' is parallelled by the seriousness with which he takes his role of chronicler of the events of the pilgrimage. That his own judgments of the pilgrims in the General Prologue are unlikely does not belie his desire to report what they did accurately. Chaucer does not sustain the narrator's idiosyncratic vision throughout the Canterbury Tales: although the narrator reports what happens his judgments become less unlikely and less prevalent. In most of the narrative it is not simply that the narrator's judgment proves inadequate but that it is not apparent.[65] But here, at the beginning of the Canterbury Tales, it is his sense of purpose which predominates. The inclusion of the descriptive clause in which he introduces his fellow pilgrims to his audience is prefaced with the justification that it is 'accordaunt to resoun' and at its conclusion he comments with satisfaction upon the orderliness of his organization so far and explains in greater detail its rationale:

> . . . whil I have tyme and space,
> Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
> Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
> To telle yow al the condicioun
> of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
> And which they weren, and of what degree,
> And eek in what array that they were inne . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> Now have I toold you soothly, in a clause,
> Th'estaat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause
> Why that assembled was this compaignye
> In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrye
> That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
> But now is tyme to yow for to telle
> How that we baren us that ilke nyght,
> Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;
> And after wol I telle of our viage
> And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.
> But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,
> That ye n'arette it nat my vileynye,
> Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere,
> To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,
> Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.

For this ye knowen al so wel as I,
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, although he were his brother;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
Eek Plato seith, whoso that kan hym rede,
The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.
Also I prey yow to forgeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.
[I (A) 35-41, 715-746]

The persona tells us how he intends organizing his material. It is an history of events that he is recording for his audience and the chronological sequence of the original events of the pilgrimage will dictate the form of his account. The authenticity of his account is emphasized by its being presented as personal experience and by its reflecting temporal experience in its patterning.[66] To justify his inclusion of cherles tales the persona reminds his audience that 'the wordes moote be cosyn to the dede' but the concept also vindicates his choice of structure. Before embarking on his verbal journey through the events, however, the persona states his intention of including a preliminary description of the pilgrims. The principle of organization of the General Prologue portraits differs from that of the remainder of the account which unfolds in a simple linear sequence. The portraits reflect a different type of order: that whereby man can escape what would otherwise be the tyranny of time's one-way flux by using memory and understanding to inform perception. It is 'resonable' that he chooses to follow the original order of events for most of his account and to waive that order in one part of it, for the choice in each instance is based upon his attempt to

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communicate his knowledge of the experience to his audience as best he can and whatever means he utilizes to that end are *legitimate*.

In the actual descriptions of the pilgrims the limitations of the persona's judgments are abundantly clear: although what he says about them makes coherent sense, his own responses often seem breathtakingly inappropriate. The contradiction is irreconcilable within the logic of 'his' account, for if the judgments based upon the facts in the description are his, the descriptions have escaped his total control for they proclaim other and more than he sees; they point beyond the narrator's control to Chaucer's.

Earthly experience is time-and spacebound and while man is free to range in whatever spatial direction he chooses, his liberty in time is more circumscribed. The longest temporal journey, that from birth to death, extends in a single direction. All journeys in space occupy time, converting time present into time past and time future *first into time present and* then too into time past. But even while this is undeniable, man's other experience of time, in thought, bears analogy to God's conterminous knowledge of all time: of Him it can truly be said that there is no past or future only an omnipresent eternal day in which things past, present and future are contained; in man's memory past events remain present sharing coexistence with present experience *and, once this* has changed its status, with what was previously the future and has become present or past time.[67]

In relating his account the persona speaks in a present which he shares with his audience whom he addresses directly in the second person. His 'now' occurs whenever persona and audience interact, the pilgrimage is in the

past as are the narrator's once present relationships with his fellow journeyers to Canterbury. But in memory man can revisit the past and in the words which communicate memory he can recreate it for others, transforming its temporal status and increasing its value by renewing its accessibility. The persona's choice of technique – linear narrative – is eminently reasonable given this aim, for imitating the chronological sequence he offers his audience an experience analogous to that which he and his fellow pilgrims originally had. Primarily the persona's claims and concerns are not those of maker of fiction but of chronicler of events.[68] It is not his own art that he is defending from adverse criticism but the rightful charge of the historian to tell the truth, to express what actually happened regardless of its nature.[69] The defence of his intention of suiting 'the wordes . . . to the dede' provides the preface to the body of his account in which he will recount cherles tales as well as storial thynge of gentilesse, moralitee and hoolynesse. His reasons for doing so do not stem from any form of vileyne, they are associated with his concern to reflect as closely as words and not overnice morality will allow the actuality of the pilgrimage.

The argument which the persona offers in selfjustification [I (A) 725-746] repays attention since it clarifies the distinction between his task and Chaucer's and in doing so raises issues about the nature of the poem which though unresolved here, once introduced, remain as part of our sense of it. Chaucer establishes three major foci in these lines. In the first, the persona addresses his audience, gratifyingly assuming their susceptibility to his reasoning, thus placing its members, together with himself, apart from those whose

vileyne has caused his predicament. In the second he elaborates his charge and the obligation to report accurately and in the third he explores the alternatives, either to falsify or to fictionalize, concluding that neither suits his purposes, nor is what he is doing immoral. The grounds on which the narrator appeals to his audience unite its members with him as right-thinking people. His appeal is to their understanding: cherles may speak rudeliche and large; his audience, like himself, knows the duties of an accurate reporter. This assumption of shared attitudes widens the gap between the unsalacious intentions of the persona in relating that part of his account which might seem vileynous and the thoughtlessness of the churlish characters: his scruples in reporting their words and actions implicitly contrast with their original disregard of such niceties. Union with the audience, however, like so much else in the Canterbury Tales, involves sleight-of-word: it is an hypothetical audience whose total consensus Chaucer can rely upon. An actual audience's reactions might well be less uniform. In what follows the address to that omnibus 'ye' that implicitly endorses so many of the persona's attitudes, Chaucer allows a more detailed development of the rationale of the persona's stance. Characteristically, the language in which it is couched admits ambiguity.

When the persona hopes that his audience understands that although he speaks 'pleynly in this mateere' his motives are not suspect, he lays claim to reporting fully as well as clearly. A further meaning of plainly, whose earliest use is attributed by the OED to Chaucer (adv. 1.5), is 'without concealment, disguise or reserve; openly, candidly, frankly.' The implication that the persona's narration is guileless reinforces

the benevolence of his candour and also points to one of its virtues: an unreserved report of actual events, being unadulterated, is likely to repay scrutiny. 'Speaking plainly,' the persona must needs 'speke hir wordes proprely,' that is, relate them truly, literally, and accurately (OED adv. 2); he will also needs communicate a sense of their intrinsic nature (OED adv. 1) - both senses whose meanings reinforce the persona's good intentions while implying that those who would cavil at his narration because of what it includes would themselves be guilty of the impropriety of preferring the covert falsity of omission to the truth of a completely accurate account. 'Telling a tale after a man' involves a very different activity either from relating a story oneself or creating a tale in which others tell tales: what is stressed regarding the persona's claim of activity is his involvement as a participant-auditor in the past and a narrator of the past activities in the present. The tale need not only refer to the generic man's 'pilgrimage story' but may also refer to whatever he said to the others or whatever was told about him. And this is the persona's task: to 'reherce as ny as evere he kan/ Everich a word,' which is his charge, that is, the responsibility or office entrusted to him (OED sb. II.12). If charge adds a distinct aura of reliability, to rehersen is a somewhat chameleonlike term. Its prime sense in the passage seems clear: it means to repeat, to recount that which has previously been said or heard (OED v. 1.b.) It also reinforces the concept of orderliness emerging through the persona's speech, stressing the accuracy of the account; one of its meanings is 'to recount in order' (OED v. 3) The first meaning listed in the OED, however, points to a different set of connotations, those associated not with 'a strict regard for truth' but with artistry and oratory: 'to recite or repeat aloud in a

formal manner;' telling tales was obviously an ambiguous concept so also is rehersyng.

The ambiguity which begins to emerge in the passage increases in the reflection on possible alternatives where the terms which Chaucer uses compound their meanings. If it is possible to tell the truth it is necessary to tell as much of it as is known -- anything less would involve falsifying or fictionalizing. The language which Chaucer uses places these alternatives in juxtaposition: 'or ellis . . . telle his tale untrewe' in the context seems primarily to mean falsify his account either by omission or commission, but it may also mean make an opposed choice, that of telling something fictitious; in which case the focus admits shift from the abuse of the literal to the possession through creation of one's own fiction. Again 'feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe' expresses the dualism of deception and artistic invention: ultimately feign derives from the Latin fingere and the meanings of fashioning either fictitiously or deceptively were both current in the fourteenth century (OED v. II;II.2). Also current were the senses 'to assert or maintain fictitiously; to allege, make out, pretend' (OED v. II.5) with their stress upon the attitude rather than the craft involved which is even more apparent in the sense 'to put a false appearance on; to disguise, dissemble, conceal.' (OED v. II.6), and 'to pass off for something else' (OED v. II.10. c.) Were the persona 'to feyne thyng' he would not only invent it he would also offer false coinage, passing off as history what was mere illusion (see also senses II.3.b. and 4). Fynde has similar connotation, implying simultaneously 'to contrive, devise, invent, discover' (OED v. II.15). Whether the persona were to direct his efforts to the discovery of less indelicate language or to its invention or even

simply to the creation in words of different situations, he would still be faced with the same essential dilemma: how well would this serve truth? The last instance, of re-forming anew in part, would – because of his general desire to chronicle events not sophisticate them in any way – involve a violation of his principles; in the first and second instances he would admit to a different type of distorting inaccuracy. Whether he were to substitute acceptable words for those he fears unacceptable or coin new ones, he would still be recounting the same incidents and concepts which though no longer nakedly apparent would not have changed in essence – they would merely be wearing their new linguistic dress. What he, and indeed his maker too, is faced with is the problem of becoming aware and desiring to make others aware that even the less attractive aspects of reality demand confrontation for the simple reason that they exist.[70] By the use of these words we are given a type of bifocal vision: in the foreground we see the persona's dilemma and respond to his argument that since the value of his account lies in its verisimilitude he must use language suited to its realities or fail entirely; in a wider perspective the proximity of fiction to deception is conveyed and because it is its nearness rather than its total congruity that is suggested boundaries between them are set. Just as the persona stresses the importance of motive in the justification of his own inclusion of ongentil tales – his motives being quite unlike those of the Miller or Reeve since he is neither impulsive nor divisive in intention, his reasons being carefully formulated and thought through – so Chaucer admits the implic[illegible] that fiction can be meretricious and implies, [illegible]ure of the persona's concerns, and the lang[illegible]ich he couches them that his own fiction, being [illegible]ncerned with its reflection of moral reality, is certainly not of a type without value.

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The persona's arguments predominate since his predicament is in the foreground but behind it lies the analogous dilemma of his maker. The narrator's conclusion that he cannot choose to subvert the meaning of his experiences either by censoring them or replacing them with others, whose accounts would be less problematic, points through all its ironies to the seriousness of Chaucer's approach. Truth to the author of the Canterbury Tales is not always to be found in the literal but it is no less sought by the poet than by his earnestly literal-minded other self.

The relationship between text and audience set up by the narrator's preoccupations involves the poem's readers immediately and actively in assessing what type of work they are reading and in what its value lies. The persona's speaking directly to his audience in the present which they share and in which he appeals to them to understand his motives in choosing the particular way of reporting that he intends using, implies the readers' critical presence, his selfjustification suggests, if not the practical impossibility of narrator-audience dialogue, at least its ideality, and indeed in a situation of oral delivery the sense of dialogue would be strengthened: interchange between narrator and audience might occur and its possibility would be inbuilt in the situation of public reading whether or not it did. In silent reading of the poem the invitation to assessment remains, internalized but still essentially a challenge to think about the issues related to reporting well. To substantiate the soundness of his intentions, the persona cites the example of Christ (whose merits are beyond reproach, and who himself 'spak ful brode in hooly writ') and the authority of Plato's explication of the cousinage of words and deeds in the Timaeus. Plato, explaining the analogous relation of the model and its copy at the beginning of the Timaeus, says that in so

far as the copy of a truth is an accurate image of its model it too will tend towards being absolutely true, for 'an account is of the same order as the thing it expounds – an account of what is abiding and stable and discoverable by reason will itself be abiding and unchangeable in so far as it is possible for an account to be incontrovertible and irrefutable' (29 B).[71] The persona's credentials could hardly be more impeccable. His concern with the accuracy of his account bespeaks his concern with its truth. He defines the way in which his copy is to imitate its model. He will describe the pilgrims and their tales as punctiliously as he is able and will do so in a way that parallells in his verbal depiction the original flux of unfolding events. He will not reshape the events or their sequence, refine the language used by any of the pilgrims nor alter in report any aspect of their behaviour. Their autonomy must be honoured even where the narrator – or audience – might prefer what happened to have been different.

The narrator reaches out to his audience and back to the pilgrims: his sense of responsibility to the past is counterbalanced by his desire to have his motives understood in the present. He is serious to the point of earnestness about his task and the discrepancy between the high theory justifying his technique and standards and the extreme ingenuousness of his informing voice again points beyond his control towards the poet's. We may not be able to define precisely how ironically Chaucer is treating his persona – it is in the nature of irony to evade schematic categorization – but it is clear that the persona's voice does not inform the whole nor does he provide a sufficient model to account for the richness of the Canterbury Tales. His plan is unicursal, the poem is not.[72] The persona introduces the poem – and the theme of freedom and responsibility –

but he does not create it. His freedom stands between us and the pilgrims': we see it first, and it is by his active choice that we see theirs at all. It also stands between us and Chaucer. For his control, absolute within the fiction of his report, proclaims itself in other terms than those of the poem and is at odds with them. Chaucer gives his persona the fictitious task of telling the truth, his own task is creating fiction; the apparent dissonance between these two sets up resonances that amplify throughout the Canterbury Tales.

The interrelation between truth and fiction in the Canterbury Tales, the areas of blurring distinction, are made possible by the poem's self-refractiveness, and they (like the emphasis on choice) invite an active response from the poem's readers, a continuous testing of the nature of what is offered. The concern with truth which the persona evinces in the passages in which he discusses his intentions is not entirely dissimilar from that of the Parson in his prologue. Both men make categorical stands which are undercut by their situation, whose logic – and reality – is well beyond their control. Neither wishes to offer less than he considers truly valuable and each realises this aim: the persona in his account, the Parson in his sermon on penitence. Between them is the account of the pilgrimage and of the pilgrims' fictions, each the fruits of its own maker, all of Chaucer's making. And both the persona affirming the historicity of his narrative and the Parson showing the way which 'may nat fayle' are themselves literary characters whose prime literal reality is verbal not actual. Chaucer does not conceal this from us, rather he directs our attention to it. Not to do so would be to deny his own responsibility in making, doing so proclaims the creativity of the true lie in which fiction serves the interest of the poet's concept of truth.

3 COMPOUNDING COMPLEXITY: LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND THE PILGRIMS

> Thanne seide I thus: "I delite me," quod I, "nat oonly in the eendes or in the somme of resouns that thou hast concluded and proved, but thilke woordes that thou usest deliten me moche more." ". . . thise thinges ne schewedest thou naught with noone resouns ytaken fro withouten, but by proeves in cercles and homliche knowen, the whiche proeves drawen to hemself heer feyth and here accord everich of hem of othir." Thanne seide sche thus: ". . . . yif I have styred resouns that ne ben nat taken from withouten the compas of the thing of which we treten, but resouns that ben bystowyd withinne that compas, ther nys nat why that thou schuldest merveillen, sith thow has lernyd by the sentence of Plato that nedes the wordis moot be cosynes to the thinges of whiche thei speken."
>
> (Boece, 3 pr. 12, 119-123, 180-185, 200-207)

Chaucer's acts of choice are implicit throughout the Canterbury Tales; those of his creatures are revealed in a diversity of attitudes and situations.[73] The action of the narrative frame may be viewed in relation to four sets of activities, Chaucer's in writing the poem, the persona's in recording past events, the Host's in proposing and implementing the tale-telling game and the pilgrims' in responding to the Host and to one another. In writing the Canterbury Tales Chaucer creates freely, inventing character and incident at will; his liberation in his art is in part analogous to God's total freedom in creation. The persona's freedom is far more restricted in range and so in implication. He propounds his initial choice of accuracy or decorum, and once he has made this choice its nature dictates the form of his account. His task is far more limited than the poet's since the persona recording events cannot change them and theoretically Chaucer can include what he will, although practically he too is partly constrained — for example, by exigencies of style or of his plan. Nevertheless, the

persona's act of choice remains free and in this it parallells the poet's for both persona and poet freely choose not only their initial stances but also their continuance in them. The freedom which Chaucer elaborates in the persona's situation is primarily the universal human freedom – that of choice itself; it is also the particular freedom to decide whether or not to use his perception and judgment to marshall experience into as truthful a verbal order as he may. It is the basic choice which has significance in the narration: Chaucer does not return to the problems of reporting after the Knight-Miller link nor do the persona's problems change to provide a developing strand throughout the poem. The Host's ordinance, however, does remain throughout as an elaborated thematic strand. The Host's proposal provides a device whereby the narrative can plausibly incorporate a series of inner narrative units whose impact is increased substantially by their placing in the complex context provided by teller, situation, thematic, structural and generic relation. It also enables the inclusion as part of its own sustained development of a series of incidents highlighting differences as well as correspondences of response amongst the pilgrims. It provides a parallel between the activity within the poem and Chaucer's making. In a poem about a pilgrimage the tale-telling game is eminently suited to linking issues of literary and moral value, since in it language, reality and the 'craft [that] countrefeteth kynde' are seen to be poised in synthesis.[74]

The pilgrims may tell whatever tales they choose but their tales are to be judged, and the Host's criteria of judgment are articulated solely in terms of content: the pilgrim he adjudges teller of the 'tales of best sentence and most solaas' will win a supper paid for by the others on their return to the Tabard. What

precisely the Host intends is left ambiguous. Sentence provides little room for uncertainty but solaas is not a simple term.[75] Solaas is commonly used in romances where it connotes the solace of love, variously interpreted; it also has extraliterary connotations. Chaucer uses it in the Miller's Tale to characterize an area of Nicholas's expertise that is hardly boethian in its ascesis or chivalric in its idealism: 'of deerne love he koude and of solas' [I (A) 3200]; but there its meaning parodically counterbalances the romanticism of Palamon's and Arcite's concept of love service and is found beyond the norm of such connotations as 'comfort, consolation; alleviation of sorrow, distress, or discomfort' (OED sb. 1) and 'pleasure, enjoyment, delight; entertainment, recreation, amusement' (OED sb. 2) or 'that which gives comfort or consolation, brings pleasure or enjoyment, etc.' (OED sb. 3). Whether solaas is coupled with or in opposition to sentence is equivocal and in the same way that 'divers folk diversely seyde' in reaction to the Miller's Tale, so too the pilgrims' responses to the Host's terms vary considerably.

In the frame as it stands the Host's proposal is not fully adhered to and while it is possible that Chaucer intended at some stage to allocate four tales to each pilgrim it is clear from the Parson's Prologue that certainly at the time that Chaucer wrote it he had no intention of describing a second set of rekenynges at the Tabard. When the Host sees the scales of Libra in the sky and says 'almoost fulfild is al myn ordinaunce' it is the heavenly city which the Parson reminds the pilgrims is their ultimate goal which predominates. A 'thropes ende' is hardly a precise topographic description of their location; wherever it is, the type of ending that the Host's plan suggested does not

occur. Like the discrepancies between persona and poet[76] those between the Host's organizational plan and Chaucer's point beyond the naturalistic narrative web to the illusion that it is reality itself but before the Parson's Prologue the Host's ordinaunce has a different dominant function: it provides a mapping of the events of the frame which authenticates them and renders them broadly predictable. His exercising control in the game, like the persona's concern that truth be in the field, helps vivify what is described since its necessity presupposes the existence of the pilgrims and the variety of their responses. The Host's plan also enables ramification of the exploration of types of choices.

The persona's are the [illegible] individual attitudes presented in the Canterbury Tales, and they are emphasized as much by [illegible] position as by his authority as 'reportour as in this cas.' The persona's present task,[77] reporting the pilgrimage, is largely linguistic although his concept of language's province is laudably broad. The Host's task is different — he must administer the successful functioning of the game, which although it includes defining the literary bounds within which the tales must remain, is a task pre-eminently demanding skilful group leadership. As befits a successful innkeeper, the Host is fully aware of the social niceties of his role — his language varies considerably depending upon the status of the person whom he is addressing:[78] from the relatively understated respectfulness of his addressing the Knight as 'my mayster and my lord' — effusion would hardly go down well there — through the convoluted courtesy of

> "My lady Prioresse, by youre leve,
> So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,
> I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde
> A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.
> Now wol ye vouche sauf, my lady deere?"
> [(B^2) 1637-1641]

whose element of self-parody is heightened by the pleased brevity of response of the lady in question: '"gladly," quod she, and seyde as ye shal heere' to the role reversal of

> He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng.
> He seide, "What amounteth al this wit?
> What shul we speke alday of hooly writ?
> The devel made a reve for to preche,
> Or of a soutere a shipman or a leche.
> Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme
> Lo Depeford! and it is half-wey pryme.
> [I (A) 3900-3906]

Harry Bailly's ability to gauge whom he is dealing with is indisputable.

Arguing sequential developments in the Canterbury Tales must be moderated by a sense of the problems attendant upon the unfinished nature of the poem, manuscript variation and internal inconsistencies. But the beginning and ending of the poem are complete and since they were indisputably arranged in this sequence the General Prologue and the first three tales of the A Group admit discussion of aspects of their linear unfolding as does the relation of the Manciple's Tale to the Parson's Tale and the leve-taking. Within the individual groups of tales and in those groups which are linked together exploration of concept or development of theme often utilizes the forward movement of the narrative both to climax points and modify conclusions. That climax implies some form, however temporary or limited, of stasis in the poetic argument is clear; modification

implies another: it depends upon the existence of a series of at least two concepts or views in which the introduction of the second and any subsequent members invites the reassessment of what went before in the context of a new perspective which limits the degree of the original's total acceptability. It is a powerful tool in the service of relativism since it not only makes us pause when confronted by apparent contradiction or clear need for reviewing but engenders in the poem's readers a tendency towards comparative assessment, a tendency enhanced once the entire poem (or such of it as we have) has been read, by the correspondences which become visible only when hindsight and conterminous sight are possible.

With the introduction of the Host as a dominant figure, our attention is redirected: the persona's dilemmas have hinged upon the relation of words and realities, the ambivalent presentation of the pilgrims has pointed towards the relation of subjective viewer and object viewed, but both of these centres of interest have been described in relation to the writing and the evaluation of report. The Host's governance moves us into closer relation with the pilgrims themselves since it is they (including the persona) who have accepted his plan and who implement it throughout the Canterbury Tales. The tale-telling game still involves issues of perception and language but it provides a different and far more extensively treated area for their development. A report is usually a report[79] but tales of 'sentence and solas' are almost as various in conception and style of execution as the pilgrims who tell them. Chaucer utilizes the pilgrimage topos as one means of communicating a sense of plenitude in his poem; the Host's game that 'shal coste noghte' offers another. Like the pilgrimage which is both literal and figural,

the game communicates its own actuality and points towards wider implication. The ways in which a man chooses to play a game are likely to reflect some of his attitudes to action generally[80] and a game requiring free play subject to the exigencies of a finite span and a pre-ordained set of rules, provides a satisfying symbol of more general human activity. The pilgrims all consent to the Host's plan but the ways in which they interpret it and react to it vary considerably.

The Host's control is not dictatorially assumed. He proceeds in a most democratic manner to have himself elected to the position of authority which he wants. Initially he asks the pilgrims' permission before revealing his proposal to them, and after he has received it he explains carefully the procedure which he envisages, then asks whether they will consent to his control. The pilgrims' agreement is unanimously and cordially celebrated:

> This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore
> With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also
> That he wolde vouche sauf for to do so,
> And that he wolde been oure governour,
> And of oure tales juge and reportour,
> And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,
> And we wol reuled been at his devys
> In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent
> We been acorded to his juggement.
> And therupon the wyn was fet anon;
> We dronken, and to reste wente echon,
> Withouten any lenger taryynge.
>
> [I (A) 810-821]

The proposition is clearly explained and the pilgrims' free consent to the Host's conditions is emphasized. It is not only the Host's control which is stressed but also the pilgrims' acquiescence – the plan is rational, their behaviour, the passage implies, as much by the judicious formality of its language as by its prose

sense, will also be. Any doubts about this triggered off by the Host's faint reservation that possibly even-song (after the pleasures of the Host's strong wyn) and morwe-song may not accord are swiftly dispelled by the Knight's response to beginning the game. Besides broadly describing the type of tale he wanted, the Host had provided for threats to his authority. The Knight's response is that of a man of whom the compiler of a feast of tales need have no fears.

The lines at the end of the General Prologue which provide the introduction to his tale corroborate the sense of his worth communicated earlier in the Knight's portrait:

> Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
> The sothe is this, the cut fil to the Knyght,
> Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght,
> And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
> By forewarde and by composicioun,
> As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
> And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,
> As he that wys was and obedient
> To kepe his forewarde by his free assent,
> He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,
> What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
> Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."
> And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,
> And he bigan with right a myrie cheere
> His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere.
> [I (A) 844-858]

The manner in which his worthiness is stressed repays attention. The passage is one in which both the Host's desires and the persona's attitudes are clearly articulated. The Host has just summarized the terms of their agreement, stressing their consent to his own leadership. And yet, although he claims the role of judge and ordainer of action, the initial choice of taleteller is only indirectly his; he chooses the system of choice but he has no control over the person chosen:

'Wel. .c by aventure, or sort, or cas,/ The sothe is this, the cut fil to the Knyght,/ Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght.' It is true that the Host has just explained that they will draw lots to decide who will tell the first tale, but since he chooses the Monk to be the second taleteller directly after the Knight's tale is completed, it is clear that realism need not be the only reason that Chaucer introduces the game in this way. There is more than one realistic way of furthering the game. The cut's falling to the Knight is not arbitrary: it may appear mere chance or luck, in fact it is part of a providential pattern whether this be visible or not. The Host governs the game, but divine providence governs the ordering of the draw. Or would in an actual situation. Here Chaucer is the providential agent whose sort ensures that the Knight is the first taleteller. Our -- and the pilgrims' — expectations of virtuous matter from this 'parfit gentil knyght' are borne out both by the tale he tells and by the manner in which he prefaces his story which expresses his own sense of responsibility, one which deepens the implications of the Host's strictures reminding the pilgrims of their contract and its terms [I (A) 828-834]. The Host only spoke of human obligations, the Knight welcomes the cut in God's name. The persona's sense of the Knight's worthiness is clearly communicated in his narration. Every one was glad when the cut fell to the Knight and he was obliged to tell his tale then 'as was resoun,/ By foreward and by composicioun,/ As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?' [I (A) 847-849]. With the Knight there is no need for 'wordes mo,' a fact stressed by the repetitive pattern of lines 850-858, which assert and reassert consonancy. To any right thinking man it is apparent that the Knight, having given his word must tell his tale — 'what nedeth wordes mo?' To the Knight himself it is also clear that if the cut must be welcomed in God's name since he has given it free assent, his tale must be

worth listening to or his welcome be only a sham. The persona, too, offering the tale to his auditors endorses its value as an object worthy of attention. The Host's game has begun well, the microcosmic society is functioning amiably and the Knight's Tale so richly fulfils anyone's expectations of a virtuous tale that the Miller's reaction inevitably comes as a rude and deflating shock: with it the blissful first age of the pilgrimage is over.

In the poem stress upon man's freedom in action is counterbalanced by a parallel stress upon his limitations: if the freedom is Godlike man's knowledge is not and his use of both may or may not be good. The perpetual qualification of stances in the poem reminds us of the limits of man's understanding as well as its aspirations. When the Miller interrupts the Host's invitation to the Monk to tell the second tale, announcing his intention of 'quiting' the *Knight's tale, his action disrupts the* urbane surface of organization not implausibly (since there is no objective reason for expecting all to go according to plan simply because all the pilgrims agreed to the plan the previous night) but irrevocably. One effect is the forwarding of the narrative, another is that the contrast which the Miller's attitudes afford causes us not only to look back to the Knight's response again but also illuminates the manner in which Chaucer has synthesized earnest in game so far. The Miller's rejection of the rules invites their reviewing, and in the repetition the act of insight itself is renewed: what is communicated during an earliest reading of the Host's proposal is not identical to what is communicated after the Knight's Tale and during the Miller's Prologue. Our sense of the potentialities of the action described expands in response to the situation engendered by the Miller.

Man is a social creature. His individual choices are uniquely his, as is his resultant fate, but he exists, in this world and the next, in social contexts. It is a blissful company which rejoices 'everich of otheres joye' in heaven and in it 'every soule [is] replenyssed with the sighte of the parfit knowynge of God' [X (I) 1077, 1079]. To know himself, as he journeys along the 'weye espirituel' that leads to Jerusalem celestial, each man must look in se, circa se and supra se, for it is only by knowing what God is, what his fellowmen are and what relation with them demands, and what his own inner nature is that man can have some sense of the order of the universe and his own place in it.[81] In describing the pilgrimage to Canterbury, Chaucer begins with the persona's expressing his desire to go on pilgrimage and his introducing himself into the company of 'sondry folk' all journeying to the shrine of St Thomas. The Host's governance of the tale-telling game binds them in another order. The Knight's affirmation of his obligation to honour his word, the type of tale he chooses to tell (which itself extols, as well as explores with the objectifying dist[illegible] of his faith, a particular type of order, that when death reigned, between Adam and Moses), as well as the response of the other pilgrims to his tale make clear that the Knight fully understands the nature of responsible fellowship which membership of the pilgrimage company and the game-players implies. In the General Prologue portrait the Knight was described as a type of virtuous man and his character is confirmed by the consonance of understanding, ideals and behaviour which he exhibits.

'By the fruyt of hem shul ye knowen hem' [X (I) 116]: the Knight's are the first fruits of the Canterbury Tales and they derive from a man whose own goodness is felt throughout his tale in the harmony and order of his vision and

his tale's form. In De vulgari eloquentia, Dante speaks of the subjects fitting for treatment in vernacular poetry: 'armorum probitas, amoris accensio, et directio voluntatis' (prowess in arms, the fire of love and the direction of the will, 2.2. 75-77). Citing poets who have written on these in the vernacular Dante observes: 'arma vero nullum Latium adhuc invenio poetasse.' (But I do not find any italian who has written on arms, 2.2. 95-96). Vittore Branca in 'The Myth of the Hero in Boccaccio' (Concepts of the Hero, p. 270) says of the Teseida that it was 'a reply to a complaint expressed by Dante in his De vulgari eloquentia. Boccaccio replied by asserting that he was the "primo a cantare di Marte nel volgar lazio" (the first to sing of Mars in the vulgar tongue of Latium).' The stanza from which Branca quotes also recalls Dante's other possible subjects:

> Poi che le Muse nude cominciaro
> nel cospetto degli uomini ad andare,
> già fur di quelli i quai l'esercitaro
> con bello stilo in onesto parlare,
> e altri in amoroso l'operaro;
> ma tu, o libro, primo a lor cantare
> di Marte fai gli affanni sostenuti,
> nel volgar lazio più mai non veduti.
>
> Since the Muses began to walk unclothed
> before men's eyes, there have been those who
> employed them with graceful style in virtuous
> discourse, while others used them for the
> language of love. But you, my book, are the
> first to bid them sing in the vernacular of
> Latium what has never been seen thus before:
> the toils endured for Mars.
> (12.84)[82]

Boccaccio includes each and lays claim to primacy in *singing of* war. The Knight's Tale intricates all three topics without comment. Boccaccio ends his poem with a summary of its deserving (12.85-86). The Knight, for this reticence is his as well as Chaucer's, makes no equivalent comment upon his achievement. Rather the reverse: early in his tale he explains why he is

condensing his source in a characteristically Chaucerian modesty disclaimer. It is partly because he is no great poet: 'wayke been the oxen in my plough./ The remenant of the tale is long ynough' and partly that if he takes overlong to tell his tale it may prevent another's telling: 'I wol nat letten eek noon of this route;/ Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,/ And lat se now who shal the soper wynne' [I (A) 887-892]. It is the matter rather than the artistry necessary to communicate it which most nearly engages the Knight's interest. Unlike the Man of Law who expounds his concern with aspects of style and literary reputation, the Knight simply tells his tale, permitting his words to proclaim their meaning without intermediary explication.

The Knight's Tale is a much condensed translation into another mode of the Teseida. Whole sequences in the original are omitted and overall length has been reduced to approximately one seventh of the Italian poem. Emphasis is differently placed in the two poems, the Teseida is far lighter in predominant tone than the Knight's Tele and it lacks the English poem's holistic preoccupation with order. In it the affairs of Palemone and Arcita are given far greater stress than those of their counterparts in the Knight's Tale. Although the love triangle of Palamon, Arcita and Emelye provides the narrative core of the Knight's Tale it is itself contained within the ambit of Duke Theseus' governance, a controlling force within the poem which is analogous in operation to the Knight's organization of the entirety of his tale.

The changes in Theseus' role are particularly interesting since they effect a far nearer correspondence between his protagonist and the pilgrim than would have existed had Chaucer's act of translation been more faithful to the spirit of his original. Teseo is far less just a figure

than Theseus: he is described as being inflamed by Mars before leaving to fight against the Amazons, as having 'nel cor quella saetta/ la qual Cupido suole aver più cara' (l. 131) when he sees Ipolita. After his marriage to her, he remains in Scythia 'in lieta vita e dolce' for over a year before he receives a vision reminding him of his obligation to return to Athens (2. 1-7). Chaucer summarises the events extended throughout Boccaccio's first book, in twentyfour lines [I (A) 859-883] in a passage centering upon Theseus' virtuous prowess. His social roles are described as a series of sources of order: he is 'a noble duc,' a great 'lord and governour,' a famous 'conquerour,' and the husband — not merely vanquisher — of Ypolita. His behaviour throughout the poem manifests his goodness and its effect upon the society which he rules forms a major strand in the tale.

Neither Chaucer nor the Knight ascribes the tale to Boccaccio; its sources are ancient — 'olde stories' — and in recounting the tale the Knight explores the nature of a society in which faith in the true God was unknown. In an age before Christ came in justification, the nature of the divine and its interaction with the human could not clearly be understood; but perceived or not, all history, whose end is man's salvation, is part of God's teleological plan and pagan history merits scrutiny since the christian may find much of value in it.[83] Since the view of history which he was influential in propounding saw all that occurs in time as part of the book of universal history written by God Himself, what St Augustine says of the ancient philosophers — particularly the Platonists — in De doctrina christiana[84] may be applied to all records of pagan knowledge which can further understanding:

Philosophi autem qui vocantur, si qua forte vera et fidei nostrae accommodata dixerunt, maxime Platonici, non solum formidanda non sunt, sed ab eis etiam tanquam iniustis possessoribus in usum nostrum vindicanda. Sicut enim Aegyptii non solum idola habebant et onera gravia, quae populus Israel detestaretur et fugeret, sed etiam vasa atque ornamenta de auro et argento, et vestem, quae ille populus exiens de Aegypto, sibi potius tanquam ad usum meliorem clanculo vindicavit; *non auctoritate propria, sed praecepto Dei, ipsis* Aegyptiis nescienter commodantibus ea, quibus non bene utebantur: sic doctrinae omnes Gentilium non solum simulata et superstitiosa figmenta gravesque sarcinas supervacanei labcris habent, quae unusquisque nostrum, duce Christo, de societate Gentilium exiens, debet abominari atque devitare; sed etiam liberales disciplinas usui veritatis aptiores, et quaedam morum praecepta utilissima continent, deque ipso uno Deo colendo nonnulla vera inveniuntur apud eos, quod eorum tanquam aurum et argentum, quod non ipsi instituerunt, sed de quibusdam quasi metallis divinae providentiae, quae ubique infusa est, eruerunt . . . . debet ab eis auferre christianus ad usum iustum praedicandi Evangelii. Vestem quoque illorum, id est, hominum quidem instituta, sed tamen accommodata humanae societati qua in hac vita carere non possumus, accipere atque habere licuerit in usum convertenda christianum.

Nam quid aliud fecerunt multi boni fideles nostri? Nonne aspicimus quanto auro et argento et veste suffarcinatus exierit de Aegypto Cyprianus doctor suavissimus et martyr beatissimus? quanto Lactantius? quanto Victorinus, Optatus, Hilarius, ut de vivis taceam? quanto innumerabiles Graeci? . . . sed dederunt aurum, et argentum, et vestem suam exeunti populo Dei de Aegypto, nescientes quemadmodum illa quae dabant, in Christi obsequium cederent. Illud enim in Exodo factum, sine dubio figuratum est, ut hoc praesignaret . . .

(De doctrina christiana, 2.40. 60-61, B.A.C., 168, pp. 186-188)

If those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, have said things which are indeed true and are well accommodated to our faith, they should not be feared; rather, what they have said should be taken from them as from unjust possessors and converted to our use. Just as the Egyptians

> had not only idols and grave burdens which the people of Israel detested and avoided, *so also* they had vases *and ornaments* of gold and silver *and* clothing which the Israelites took with them secretly when they fled, as if to put them to a better use. They *did not do* this on their own *authority* but at God's commandment, while the Egyptians unwittingly supplied them with things which they themselves did not *use* well. In the same way *all* the teachings of the pagans contain not only simulated and superstitious imaginings and grave burdens of unnecessary *labor*, which each one of us leaving the *society* of pagans under the leadership of Christ ought to abominate and avoid, but also liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and *most* useful precepts concerning *morals*. Even some truths concerning the worship of one God are discovered among them. *These are*, as it were, their gold and *silver*, which they did not *institute* themselves but dug up from certain mines of divine Providence, which is everywhere infused . . . . the Christian . . . *should* take this treasure *with him* for the just use of teaching the gospel. And their clothing, which is made up of those human *institutions which are* accommodated to *human society* and necessary to *the conduct* of life, should be seized and held to be converted to Christian uses.
>
> For what else have many of our good and faithful done? May we not see with how much gold and silver and clothing bundled up the *most* sweet teacher and *most* blessed martyr Cyprian fled from Egypt? Or how much Lactantius took with him? Or how much Victorinus, Optatus, Hilary carried *with* them, *not* to speak of those still living? Or how much innumerable Greeks have taken? . . . But they gave their *gold, silver*, and clothing to the *people* of God fleeing from *Egypt* not knowing that they yielded those things which they gave 'unto the obedience of Christ.'
>
> (*Robertson*, pp. 75-76)

The Knight's tale looks backward to pagan times but it is described with the insight of a *christian's* vision.[85] Underlying the empathy of its dramatic explication of the greatness of reason is a clear sense of the limitation of human scope which reason without faith implies.[86] The ending enforces this with its explicit distinction

not only between levels of reality but also between potential fates:

> And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,
> Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght;
> For now is Palamon in alle wele,
> Lyvynge in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,
> And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
> And he hire serveth al so gentilly,
> That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene
> Of jalousie or any oother teene.
> Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye;
> And God save al this faire compaignye! Amen.
> [I (A) 3099-3108]; my italics)

By the end of the tale Arcita is dead; he and Palamon have both suffered greatly for their love, and although the marriage of Palamon and Emelye is celebrated 'with alle blisse and melodye,' it is hardly 'O parfit joye, lastynge everemo.' In the sight of eternity their lives are short indeed. And here, so soon after the Host's halting them at the 'wateryng of Seint Thomas,' the pilgrimage and its figural meaning give force to the Knight's ending his account with a prayer to God 'that al this wyde world hath wroght,' for the salvation of the company. Palamon and Emelye's passing through what Egeus, who knew 'thys worldes transmutacion,' perceived as 'a thurghfare ful of wo' has long since ended; the Knight's pilgrim audience is on a journey which has no *finite spiritual termination and each is free to make* of it what he – or she – wills.

Palamon and Arcita themselves circumscribe their freedoms by choosing so limited an object of their desire for fulfilment.[87] While 'Emelye the shene' is undoubtedly beautiful she is hardly an absolute, and yet Palamon and Arcita serve her as steadfastly as though she were a godhead herself. If their love is treated with dispassion in the Knight's Tale, Theseus' attempts to

embody his boethian principles in an age without grace are treated with respect and ultimately, compassion. Theseus does govern as best he may and his best is heroically conceived, but it is still a human value: it is despite his gods that Theseus achieves the orderly equilibrium that he may. The gap between himself and the Knight is not so much one of character, for they are both excellent men, but of opportunity. Like Dante's beloved Virgil who, for all his goodness will never see God face to face, Theseus remains isolated from the Knight not only in time present but also in the promise of time to come.

Although far less richly complicated than the King Lear universe,[88] the world of the Knight's Tale resembles that of Shakespeare's play in its concomitant presentation of a wide range of concepts of reality. Those expressed by Theseus, Egeus, and Palamon and Arcita form important parts of the poem's meaning. While Palamon and Arcita's love of Emelye provides the poem with its central narrative situation, there is a series of interacting situations concentric with it: the innermost circle of the lovers is contained within that of the governance of Athens by Duke Theseus, which in turn is also subject to the will of the gods. Together these are ordered by the Knight who tells the tale and the final control, beyond the limits of the fiction of teller and tale, is Chaucer's. The hierarchical nature of the spreading of control provides a correlative to the coherence of Chaucer's own view of the reality he so consummately evokes and explores within the tale. Like the persona before him, the Knight's concern is with the truth to be mined in history, and with the nature of free will -- both in act and in object.[89]

When he has completed it, all the pilgrims feel that the Knight's Tale is 'worthy for to drawen to memorie,' wherein lie records of the greatness of man.[90] The gentils particularly feel this, says Chaucer, in a typically throw-away line which realigns our perspective and prepares us for the far from adultatory response of the Miller. The Host's pleasure at the way the game has begun is expressed not only in his explicit approbation of the Knight's tale but also in his desire to further the ordering impulse of that tale in a fitting manner. The Monk, nearest class equal of the Knight, provides an obvious religious counterpart of the miles christianus: it is he who is invited to tell the second tale in quittance. The pilgrims are all indebted to the Knight and the Monk has been selected to make some return to him in his own tale: 'now telleth ye, sir Monk, if that ye konne/ Somwhat to quite with the Knyghtes tale' [I (A) 3118-3119]. How suitable the Host's choice of the Monk as the person who will give in return is we will only learn later in the B^2 Group,[91] for the Miller, interpreting 'quite' in a more aggressive sense, intrudes his desire to retaliate and rid them of the Knight's Tale.[92] Clearly the Miller is not prompted by the ordering impulses inherent in the Knight's Tale and in his determination to have his will whatever the Host wants, there is a very different balance in attitudes established from the one which the Host was attempting to achieve.

The Knight's Tale is eminently reasonable: it is an exploration of the extent and meaning of order in a society operating in an age which did not know the Word made flesh. 'Dronkenesse' pronounces the Parson is a 'horrible sepulture of mannes resoun; and . . . whan a man is dronken, he hath lost his resoun' [X (I) 822]. The Miller's reason seems less entombed than descended below the belt, for his tale certainly exhibits

consistency within its own logical frame, but it is obvious that he is singularly unimpressed by the Host's argument that he should restrain himself in the interests of the company's working 'thriftily.' The company is only of secondary importance to the Miller; his own desires are primary, and the Host, recognising his obduracy with an exasperated 'Tel on, a devel wey!/ Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome' [I (A) 3134-3135], accepts the inevitable. The Miller's need to tell his tale immediately is not so imperative that it does not admit his offering an introductory sophism in support of his own irresponsibility, whereby he can deny culpability and embark on the pleasures of propagating whatever he chooses in his tale secure in the knowledge that he has already declared his moral bankruptcy and should not thus be taxed further in virtue.

Central to the Knight's Tale and the manner of its narration is its teller's concept of volition: he chooses the tale he tells deliberately; his motives for telling it require no explicit justification since it is clearly a 'moral tale vertuous,' a tale whose morality is intrinsic to its meaning. The Miller, quite reasonably in the event, feels differently from the Knight: he needs to offer an explanation of what he intends telling since without it he might draw fire from the other pilgrims or at least from those who most enjoyed the Knight's Tale. The Miller's insistence that his tale is largely the product of the ale of Southwark (a somewhat more homely source of inspiration than poets usually praise), to whom any blame should accrue, liberates him from all responsibility for its contents and thus it appears gives him carte blanche to say precisely what he chooses. Charles Muscatine has written an account of the Miller's Tale which must still, more than twenty years later, provide the starting point for its discussion.[93]

In it he describes the manner in which 'the pragmatic prosaically solid imagery of fabliau is here built into an unbroken, unbreakable wall of accepted fact.' The surface naturalism of the Miller's Tale is most striking. Morton Bloomfield, in 'The Miller's Tale – An UnBoethian Interpretation,'[94] elucidates a central issue relating to it: while the world of the Miller's Tale has all the appearance of authentic physicality, it is a-logical, faulty in its underlying premises and therefore incapable of tending closely towards existence:

> John comes crashing into the story at the end to bring matters to a close. The narrative is knit up, and the anecdote is properly ended. But the morality of it all is most unsatisfactory and must seem even more so when we regard its narrative context a story of an irrational, unjust world set between two stories of a just and ordered world. In fact what we have here is a very unBoethian universe, a world which seems rational but is not really so. We are far away from a world which seems irrational but is really rational. It is no doubt with good reason that we are twice warned in the prologue and tale (I, 3163-3164 and I, 3454) of the dangers of attempting to probe Goddes pryvetee, God's secrets. We had better not, for we are apt to be made unhappy.
>
> (206-207)

In the letter to Can Grande introducing his poem Dante quotes Aristotle's dictum 'as a thing is related to reality so is it related to truth.' It is likely that neither Dante nor the concept would interest the Miller overmuch; his interest in speculative thought as reflected in his own attitudes in the Knight-Miller link and in those of his protagonist, hende Nicholas, seems limited to its short-term usefulness. Both the Miller and his 'clerke of Oxenford' operate by what Bruno Bettelheim has termed 'the pleasure principle' rather than 'the reality principle,' giving predominance to immediate over long-term satisfaction.[95]

The Miller cannot countenance the idea of waiting for 'som bettre man' to tell his tale while he sobers up; hende Nicholas's fantastical plan to recreate Noah's flood verbally in the imagination of John the carpenter in order to enjoy the favours of his wife Alisoun, requires a great deal of effort and is hardly a plan to secure a domestic adulterous relationship for a lengthy period. In the event, Nicholas is unlikely to feel particularly amorous for a while, but he was hardly planning for that result. The Knight, like one of Donne's travellers permitted to have gone to new worlds, may have chosen his field of exploration in his tale, the Miller's Tale is to tell itself. If there is a culpable antecedent agent, and it is as difficult to imagine there not being an agent responsible for a tale's existence as it would be for Chaucer – or Boethius – to imagine a universe without a Creator, it is not the Miller but the ale of Southwark. Given that it is the ale speaking, it is perfectly reasonable (see [X (I) 836]) that the legend and life of a carpenter and his wife should offer itself as a counterpart to the Knight's pagan tale not as a religious poem but as a lecherous lay.

The events of the Knight's Tale occur before the Incarnation and the poem's characters are implicitly distanced from the pilgrims by the very different potential inherent in their situations. When the Miller speaks, another type of distance becomes apparent – that engendered by the diversity of choices free-willed christians may make. The Miller, claiming that he can tell that he is drunk from his manner of speech and telling his audience that the ale not himself is speaking, has very different attitudes to tale-telling from the Knight's. A clear link between the Knight and his tale was the parallellism of moral attitudes of the Knight organizing the world of his tale and Theseus ordering

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Athens and such of the world as impinged upon it. In the Miller's Tale there is a similar link, that between the Miller, determined to tell his tale come what may and attempting to avoid criticism by humorously denying his role as taleteller entirely, and Nicholas creating a pattern of 'history' that could not possibly be true. The real author of the history which Nicholas reinvents is God and His book of history unlike Nicholas's admits of no repetitions. John who congratulates himself on avoiding the contagion of a little too much learning ('Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man/ That noght but oonly his bileve kan!' [I (A) 3455-3456]) could have saved himself from the trials which follow had he applied the tenets of his bileve slightly more stringently: God promised Noah that there would be no second flood and while Homer and Nicholas may nod, God is infallible. Had John lived in a universe such as that created by the Knight in his tale comfort rather than Nicholas might have been at hand. The Knight's compassion is reflected in the action of Egeus in consoling Theseus after the death of Arcita [I (A) 2842-2849] and of Theseus in urging Palamon and Emelye to accept that no further purpose is served by their continuing to mourn his death and their not marrying [I (A) 2897ff.]. In the Miller's Tale world no seriously meant advice is forthcoming from any of the characters: Nicholas's advice to John is part of his elaborate ruse bearing neither resemblance to reality nor relation to John's needs; the main characters work upon rather than with one another, and the Miller himself attempts to appear a maker absconditus. The Miller's Tale reflects a different type of perception from that informing the Knight's Tale and we are overtly prepared for this in the Miller's Prologue where the implications of the tale-telling game are also extended.

While no response could be more worthy than the Knight's, his is undoubtedly not the only type possible and the episode at the head of the Miller's Tale provides a graphic example of an extreme type of polar opposition. The Knight's acceptance of the cut was cordial and his acceptance of the Host's right to impose its ordering unqualified; as his tale he chose to recount a philosophical romance set in pagan times and told in high style. It reflects the principles of a boethian universe and places its account of the strife between Athens and Thebes in terms consistent with an Augustinian view of history. Although fictionalized in its details, its basic elements are treated as literally true: Theseus did rule in Athens and the events are described as historical. In so far as it is fiction the Knight's Tale is illustrative fiction illuminating the nature of human choice by the presentation of its own specific choices within an ordered and ordering context. The Knight says little about his use of words but in his tale language serves to contain and communicate a sense of reality. Implicit in the tale is the belief in literature's capacity to reflect reality and the Knight's Tale offers much earnest within its game.[96]

Displacing the order which the Host sought to impose, the Miller announces his subject matter and his drunkenness before beginning his 'legend.' His fabliau is set in christian time: he introduces the tale in terms that parodically recall the Annunciation and the Immaculate Conception[97] and recounts a situation occurring in the house of John the carpenter in contemporary Oxford which by no stretch of any but a fevered imagination could offer itself as a postfiguration of the events leading to the birth of Christ (prefiguration being impossible because of the temporal setting as well as the content). In fact the Miller's Tale, unlike the Knight's Tale in

which the period provides an important basis of understanding, is a-historical, its circumstantiality serving primarily short-term logical ends; this circumscription of meaning is echoed within the tale by Nicholas's account of the impending flood whereby the figural connotations of the actual flood are crammed into the confines of the Miller's physical parody of spiritual events. The Miller's Tale is only fiction, and the Miller, after all, is drunk; taking it overseriously, the Miller implies in his apology [I (A) 3137-3140], would be reacting inappropriately.

When the Miller first speaks it is in 'Pilate's voys' and like Pilate, figure of a false judge, the Miller washes his hands of responsibility - in this case responsibility for his tale. In the process he denies his freedom of will: he is compelled by his circumstances to tell the tale, he claims. The tale is fiction, and the Miller may imply that it is therefore not serious, its words (spoken or misspoken, said or missaid) unimportant, mere non-realities, but it appears that the Reeve holds another view for he is clearly unimpressed by this argument coupled as it is with the Miller's stated intention of describing the humiliation of a carpenter (whose craft the Reeve shares). The Miller has implicitly distinguished between earnest and game: his tale is game, let it not be treated as earnest. To the Reeve the issue is not quite so clear cut. For him it appears words, or at least the words in which the Miller has described his subject matter, relate to realities and their potency is not vitiated by the presence of alcohol. Perhaps he does not subscribe to the Miller's theory that his tale is produced by near-spontaneous generation; certainly when he responds to the Miller's Tale in his own tale its butt is not ale but a miller.

The distinction the Miller draws between earnest and game attempts prescription of his tale and is parallelled within the tale by Nicholas's equally purposefully limited attitude to realities and his own expression of them. Both the Miller and his protagonist use words as screens rather than mirrors. Nicholas conjures up the panorama of the second Noah's flood for John who together with himself and Alisoun alone will be saved: salvation of this sort is neither necessary nor forthcoming; the only flood which deserves credence in the tale is appointed to occur 'ther as the carpenter is wont to lye' and John is conspicuously absent when it occurs. The logic of the Miller's reply to the Reeve is similarly opaque. In his earlier stance the Miller denied responsibility for his tale, now he accepts it implying that the Reeve has no cause for anger because:

1. Only he who has no wife is not, or may be sure that he is not, a cuckold.
2. But nevertheless he is not implying that the Reeve is a cuckold (one wonders what category of married men the Miller has in mind for the Reeve).
3. There are one thousand good wives (no definition of the meaning of 'good' made explicit, though the implication is clearly 'chaste') to every bad – which the Reeve himself must know unless he's mad.
4. In addition, the Reeve has no cause for anger at the Miller's tale since the Miller himself has a wife (whether one of the one thousand to one good wives or universal cuckold-makers is unstated, but presumably the former is implied).
5. The Miller would never imagine himself a cuckold; he prefers to believe that he is not one.

6.. A husband should not be inquisitive of either Goddes privetee or his wife's 'so he may fynde Goddes foyson there' (precisely what it is, where and in what manner it subsists is left ambiguous).

By the end of this we have come a long way from the Reeve's original objection to the Miller's Tale, and the Reeve's reply (if any) is not recorded. He is probably as dazed by the Miller's argument as the rest of us. The persona's tone echoes the resignation of the Host earlier: 'what sholde I more seyn' he asks. What indeed.

Since his first claim that his tale subsists in itself seems to have found no favour 'this dronke Millere' offers the Reeve the opposite extreme possibility: reality is in the eye of the beholder: if the Reeve chooses to see himself in the role of cuckold in the Miller's Tale that is no affair of the Miller's.[98] The Reeve and the Miller and their exchange are, however, all part of the persona's concern and in the final lines of the Miller's Prologue it is his voice which reasserts itself. Unlike the Miller, the persona is clear about the nature of his own intentions and their morality — he wishes to preserve accuracy above decorum as is fitting in an historical account. It is easy to argue the intention's aptness in regard to a tale as virtuous as the Knight's which is selfvindicating but the inclusion of the Miller's and the Reeve's tales might give rise to objections on the grounds of their subject matter. The persona's justification is a model of lucidity after the Miller's exercise in logic. Underlying his explanation is a traditional argument: it is used in the Roman de la Rose to justify Raison's use of the word 'coillons' (and by implication, the poem's subject matter), it is used by St Augustine in De civitate Dei (14.23) in a discussion of human sexuality.[99]

In giving man freedom of will God has granted him the ability to choose between good and evil and this act of choice and its gift are intrinsically good. Not all the particular acts chosen are good, but even those which in themselves are immoral provide valuable object lessons for whoever will learn from them the differences between good and evil so that they may more easily embrace virtue and avoid immorality. The persona's concern with language here is quite distinct from either the Miller's or the Reeve's: it is a concern that the balance of his account should reflect the balance of the original, for unless it were to do so, it would offer a distorting mirror of the events it purports to reflect. The function of his account defines the persona's task but it does not necessarily define the audience's response: the persona has chosen to write his account; each individual in Chaucer's audience must choose his own path through the Canterbury Tales. If anyone finds the Miller's or the Reeve's tales unacceptable (and the persona has offered ample warning to alert those who might) he is at liberty to 'turne over the leef and cheese another tale.' None of the tales is forced upon its readers; the choice is theirs. But as the persona found it necessary to relate all the tales 'be they bettre or werse' since to do otherwise would be to find wanting what God in his omniscience saw fit to permit mankind, so the reader who censors for himself the persona's account casts doubt upon the benevolence of the universe which it reflects. But this too is only a qualified truth for the Canterbury Tales only claims to be an history and the events that the persona describes as having happened are in fact fictitious. Yet the fiction is a true lie closely modelled upon the realities it mirrors and the reasons which would make people avoid the bawdy tales are short-sighted whether the tales be part of an historical account or not. When Chaucer's

persona ends his address to the audience, what he says — 'avyseth yow, and put me out of blame;/ And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.' [I (A) 3185-3186] — holds true for both historian and poet: the intentions are sound; they are reflected in what he writes, and therefore may be communicated to whoever reads the Canterbury Tales, and, typical Chaucerian warning, one should not anyhow be overserious, making difficulties where nothing but delight and instruction coexist.

Of the A Group tales the Knight's Tale views life and death more soberly — and judiciously — than either the Miller's or the Reeve's tales although in the prologue to his tale the Reeve himself takes a sombre and one-sided look at the aging process. Of the three only the Knight's Tale is set in an age before Christ redeemed mankind from the stain of Adam's sin; in each, aspects of its historical setting inform its subject matter. The Miller's Tale contains a complicated plan for the plausible annunciation of a second flood. The salvation achieved for Noah and his family, themselves to regenerate mankind, has in the Miller's Tale been stripped of all its resonating connotation. Where the dangers of the flood which Nicholas declares imminent are of actual importance only to the four protagonists, the macrocosm has dwindled in physical and moral scope. The Miller is not concerned to extend implication in his tale: his concern with the literal is end-stopped at a concern with the immediate and the accidental. What Alisoun, Nicholas, John and Absolon do is what he describes, and the tension between the detailed circumstantiality of the account and the figural meaning implicit in it yet overtly ignored is considerable. The journey of Noah in the ark prefiguring the incarnation of Christ and his redemption of mankind lies behind hende Nicholas's busynesse and speaks through

the surface moral silence of the tale. The characters of the Miller's Tale live in an age of grace but their preoccupations, like those of their creator, are with the law of the flesh.

For all his sermonyng the Reeve supports his tale with an equally ungracious argument; living under the historical dispensation of the new man and the new law of love he prefaces his tale with a series of reflections upon time's erosion of man's bodily prowesse which treats the physical deterioration as though it were of absolute importance: 'with olde folk, save dotage, is namoore!' Self-righteously recalling the Sermon on the Mount [I (A) 3919-3920] he uses his text to 'justify' the old law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If there be justice in the Reeve's rational 'quiting' of the Miller's tale of an irrational universe and in the events of the Reeve's Tale itself, it is the justice of the old law not the new: justice without mercy and without grace. Of the three tales it is the first, which treats a pagan universe without denigrating or sentimentalizing it, which provides the broadest sense of the christian view of history. In their different ways the Miller's Tale and the Reeve's Tale both deny aspects of their being: the Miller's Tale by ignoring the affirmative implications of the events of the flood, the Reeve's Tale by its parodic denial of the renewal through love which the Sermon on the Mount proclaims.[100]

Discussing theories of metaphor in the middle ages, Margaret F. Nims[101] explores the effect of context upon single words in poetry:

> The single word, to recall Geoffrey of Vinsauf's terms, sonat or verberat, but it may also re-sound, re-verberate with some of its unactualized semantic potential. The context may stabilize its meaning completely and totally exclude the unused residue of its potential, but it will not always do so. However disturbing this may be to philosopher or scientist, it is, as Gervais of Melkley specifically states, a subject of rejoicing to poets, who delight in exploiting the ghostly presences evoked by audial and semantic resonances. (p. 216)

Multiple contexts may provide sources of multiplicity of connotation and metaphors are not only single words but may also be clusters of images. Chaucer employs a technique in the Canterbury Tales whereby this verbal resonance — Sister Nims cites 'Chaucer's famous line "Pitee renneth soone in gentil herte,"' as a typical illustration — is parallelled by that achieved in the far larger semantic units of tale, group and the whole poem.

In the Canterbury Tales Chaucer compounds contexts. The relation of teller and tale provides one basis for interrelation whereby each constituent is enriched: a part of the teller's character is revealed in his choice of tale and in the nature of its execution, the tales gain added depth from being yoked to specific tellers. Sir Thopas without Chaucer, the Pardoner's tale of the three rioters without its pilgrim teller, or the Monk's de casibus tragedies without the Monk are extreme cases that point the loss that would be experienced without such a relation, but even in far less pilgrim-dependent tales such as the Nun's Priest's a significant dimension of meaning would disappear were the tale separated from its teller. Placing within a specific group contributes to the total effect: the Knight's Tale is hardly diminished by the Miller's or Reeve's tales, but the sense of the coexistence of such

diverse attitudes as the three tales exhibit contributes effectively both to the Canterbury Tales close-up focus on the issues raised by these tales and to the wider perspective of the poem's sum in which such diversity of attitude abounds, directing attention to the poem's plenitude as well as to its parts and their interrelations. In the I Group the Parson, telling the last tale, fittingly reminds the pilgrims – and Chaucer's audience – of a fundamental reality: 'oure sweete Lord God of hevene, that no man wole perisse, but wole that we comen alle to the knoweleche of hym, and to the blissful lif that is perdurable' [X (I) 75]. Man is God's creature and God desires his salvation through love of Him. This is the rock upon which the Canterbury Tales is established but although everywhere providing the foundation it is not the only reality which men avow in the poem or in the actual fourteenth century world which it reflects. The Parson, scornfully rejecting the idea of telling a verse tale, preaches his sermon within the poem – a fiction speaking the truth to other fictions. This too communicates effect of context: the sermon which he preaches has an impeccable extra-literary theological ancestry[102] but Chaucer saw fit to place it within not without his poem.

The reading of the Canterbury Tales involves the poem's readers or auditors in continual acts of accommodation. Perspectives widen or change radically, characters whose stances are highly individuated are placed within common contexts by the contrasts and comparisons of situation, personality, attitude and action which Chaucer engineers. Man's perception of time, itself necessarily conditioned by the age in which a man lives, provides a major developing substructure to the narrative of the A Group tales. The Knight's Augustinian view of history and his unstated conviction that this can be profitably

conveyed in his tale gives way to the a-historical parody of reality of the Miller's Tale and the fabliau incorporation of the Reeve's limited perception of the nature and function of earthly justice. Each tale is enriched by its context and the context of each widens as the next is read. The relation of time to history and to justice which links the first three tales of the A Group gives way in the B^1 Group (whose position after the A Group has overwhelming manuscript authority) to another series of relations involving time which though not central to the presentation of the first tales once raised invites their review. For the Man of Law's concern with time is linked both to the idea of fame and to the knowledge of art's capacity to defy or transcend time and once the Man of Law has raised the issue of time and literature we see that none of the A Group pilgrims saw their tasks as related to literature and the possible reputations that they might gain. Their concerns however various were all with the immediate tale-telling situation. It is the Man of Law who is the first to explore the possibility of literary recognition.

The B^1 Group consists of the Man of Law's headlink, tale and epilogue. The headlink in which the Man of Law makes his literary pronouncements, comprises a narrative introduction ('The wordes of the Hoost to the compaignye') and a prologue linked prosodically to the tale. These two parts are unlikely to have been written at the same time and lack narrative and prosodic continuity. The epilogue, while it is undoubtedly authentic, only appears in about thirty-four of the fifty-seven extant manuscripts examined by Manly and Rickert and does not appear in those following the Ellesmere order. The B^1 Group has attracted much critical attention due in part to its undoubtedly problematic character.[103] One difficulty, the juxtaposition of the Man of Law's assertion that he will tell

a tale 'in prose' with the actuality of his choice – the tale and its prologue are written in rhyme royal stanzas – has prompted discussion of the degree of Chaucer's revision of the fragment, of other possible contenders for the position of Man of Law's Tale and of the meaning of 'in prose.' The tale itself has been subject to much scrutiny. Its sources, genre and themes have been discussed and the possibility that part at least of its presentation is ironic has been examined. In what follows I shall not provide another overview of the fragment or direct myself specifically to these issues. I shall discuss the observations on time, law and literature in the introduction, the remarks on poverty, riches and merchants in the prologue to the tale and shall also explore a possible link between all these and the narrative stance in the Man of Law's Tale although it is clear that any interpretation of the fragment rests rather uneasily upon its accepted problems of inner logic.

When we first read the B^1 Group we can see that it points back to the General Prologue, but its relation to the B^2 Group in which the persona tells his two tales and to the leve-takynge in which the 'makere of this book' takes his leave necessarily eludes us. The relation is there waiting to be discovered but at that point we cannot perceive it because we are within the linear time flow of the narrative very much as the pilgrims to Canterbury are within their time continuum, that of the journey itself. They cannot draw inferences about the Man of Law from the persona's speech as they have not yet heard it, we cannot because we have not yet read it. The two experiences are different but both occur within unicursally experienced time. When we have read the entire Canterbury Tales our situation is different again. What was still future experience

in our first reading of the B^1 Group has become through the agency of memory, part of a co-present reality in which the linear progression of time past, present and future is now only one way of perceiving the whole. We see the poem in its totality as well as in its narrative unfolding and connections that were not accessible to us earlier are now apparent.

Medieval enquiry into the nature of time and its relation to eternity is closely associated with moral concern about the nature of knowledge. For if man is to know God as well as to love Him and must achieve at least that part of this knowledge which enables salvation in time then the nature of knowledge and of experience in time becomes very important. Chaucer's poem is an imitation of reality, a work of art which attempts to appear a history of actual events. But as it progresses it *also demonstrates its own nature as fiction.* Initially we may take the narrator's truth claim seriously: he makes it and nothing prevents us. After a while it is not possible to do so: the evidence unfolding in time throughout our reading of the Tales, does not permit such a stance.[104] Because its implications are far-reaching the Man of Law's headlink is one of the places in the Canterbury Tales where our knowledge and hence our response necessarily differ during a first and second reading for what we understand of the same action changes radically during a reading of the B^2 Group, in which the distance between persona and poet is stressed, and after we have completed our first reading of the entire Canterbury Tales.

The headlink is broadly divided into three thematic units. The first is the Host's disquisition on time, moving from a general statement of time's nature to an application of its lesson to the pilgrims and his request to the Man of Law to use the time profitably by telling

them a good tale. The second is the Man of Law's reply to the Host in which he acquiesces to the Host's request but laments that because of Chaucer's prodigious literary output he is left with only one tale which he can tell, a tale which he learnt from a merchant who is now dead. The third unit is the Man of Law's denigration of poverty, praise of riches and particular praise of rich merchants.

Even during a first reading of the headlink when our knowledge is analogous in its limitations to that of the pilgrims who first heard the Man of Law speak it is clear that there is a diminution in scope of subject matter through the three parts. The Host's speech is unusually capacious in implication even for Chaucer: it expresses a complex of attitudes to time and to man's responsibility to use his time virtuously, and relates both of these to the specific task in hand — tale-telling. The Man of Law's response offers no comparable breadth: he would like to tell a tale that would enhance his reputation but feels frustrated in his attempt by Chaucer's prolific output. He does introduce the subject of literature, and once introduced it has its own autonomy, begging questions that the Man of Law has not necessarily raised, but his discussion of literature is limited and self-centred. To the Man of Law literature is a means of establishing or maintaining a reputation. His objection to Chaucer's ample output is that it prevents his receiving credit for originality: 'What sholde I tellen hem syn they been tolde,' [(B^2) 56]. Chaucer has already told the tales and there is no purpose in the Man of Law's rehashing them.[105] The Man of Law points out that Chaucer has told them in poor verse, a fact which he clearly sees solely as Chaucer's concern. Certainly it does not prompt him to reconsider the validity of his premise that once told all is said.

The prologue to the Man of Law's Tale, with its far from impartial treatment of wealth and poverty, links fairly tenuously to the subject matter of the tale although its relation to the Man of Law's own character as depicted in the General Prologue and headlink is clear.[106] We move in the headlink from the discussion of time through one of literature to one of poverty and riches before the Man of Law's Tale begins, the issues narrowing down to a specific focus chosen by the Man of law.

But if this is so within the terms of the truth claim of the narrative frame, ultimately the choice of topics is not the Host's or the Man of Law's but Chaucer's. There is an underlying logic of parts in the local presentation which explication of background ideas in the Man of Law's headlink clarifies. Once we have read further, there are also a number of areas in the Canterbury Tales that enable us to return to the B^1 Group and renew our perception of it. Amongst these are the B^2 Group in which the persona tells the tales of Sir Thopas and Melibee, and the leve-takynge of 'the makere of this book' as well as the Clerk's Prologue and Tale where similar issues are raised but treated differently and more satisfactorily. There are structural pointers established within the Canterbury Tales to the importance of the issues of language, literature and morality which they incorporate. The questions raised by the Man of Law's headlink and tale are not adequately resolved in situ and so they remain, urging our reflection as we move on or rather urging that they remain present in our minds even as other issues, with which they are placed in dialogue, are developed. The physically discrete narrative links are themselves interrelated by their content. The partial tension between form and content (for the implications of the content spills beyond its local or immediate container) points towards the larger

form of the whole poem, thus suggesting a mode of reader response which both focuses upon the link and sees the link as a part of a whole series.

When the Man of Law launches into his disparaging review of Chaucer's literary output the fact of his assessment implies that he and the poet inhabit the same real space. A man offering his views of actual poetry is clearly also real himself. Or so we assume initially for Chaucer's poems are certainly real and how else may the Man of Law know them but by inhabiting the same world as they do? That the persona and Man of Law do share one reality is certain – they went on pilgrimage together – but the narrative does not imply that the persona and poet are identical.[107] Disjunction between persona and poet is made particularly clear in the B^2 joke in which the persona, like the Man of Law, but unlike the poet, knows only one rhymed tale and, once the Host has rejected that, must turn to prose to honour his obligation to tell a tale.[108] Here too, in the B^1 headlink, distance between persona and poet is clear. One of the devices used to vivify dramatic situations and plausibly engender sequences of tales in the Canterbury Tales is personal confrontation. It operates in the A Group Miller-Reeve rivalry and again in the outbreak of hostilities between Friar and Summoner in the D Group. Within the confines of the narrative situation there is no similar dialogue involving Chaucer and the Man of Law. When the poet does speak in his own person, in the leve-takynge, the pilgrim frame has vanished and Chaucer's auditors are his actual fellow men and God. Ultimately the Man of Law can only behave as if he were a living person: his freedom of speech is itself the product of his maker, the poet Chaucer. What then is achieved by the Man of Law's reference to Chaucer? To those who may feel that the joke concerning Chaucer here as in the B^2 Group is

being unduly laboured and that its humour is its sole point I would suggest that jokes, like all other verbal units, are formal structures which admit examination of their parts and mechanics. If this denies their apparent spontaneity it may nevertheless lead to insight into their functioning and purpose. At the simplest level the Man of Law's allusion to Chaucer authenticates the realism of the narrative frame, even if only briefly. But the reference also has significance in its own right as a judgment which, like any act of evaluation, invites rational scrutiny.

That Chaucer's verse is poor is an assessment that his auditors or readers need scarcely take on trust. Even if they do not know the prologue to the Legend of Good Women from which most of the Man of Law's examples come or any of Chaucer's earlier verse, the Man of Law's detraction is itself cast in Chaucer's far from inexpert verse. The injudicious judgment is tested against the hearer's or reader's own present experience which includes that of hearing and seeing the poet reading to him or knowing the authorship of the Canterbury Tales.[109] The Man of Law's assessment of Chaucer's inexpertise leads us in two directions. Within the truth claim of the narrative frame it leads to the envy implied and so to the questions why does Chaucer attribute envy of his craft to the lawyer amongst the Canterbury pilgrims and why does he yoke together the figures of poet and lawyer? Beyond the truth claim it leads to the point of the inbuilt illogicality of the character's unwittingly berating his creator for inadequate poetic performance.[110] In order to explore these more fully it is necessary to look at the related topoi in the Man of Law's headlink: the reference to time, its use and abuse, the allusions to literature, poverty and wealth.

The Host's introductory lines conflate a series of traditional medieval and contemporary renaissance ideas about time. In the traditional medieval concept time may first be defined by its relation to what it is not – eternity.[111] Where eternity is endless, all-encompassing, perfectly stable, time is a successive procession of moments in unicursal flux. But time is not only a physical phenomenon, it is also a moral reality which man inhabits and which he must use to his own good ends. For every individual his time is doubly precious: first because of the goodness of the divinely created universe which man occupies during his life on earth and secondly because time is the medium in which man may shape his acts so that he may experience the endless good of eternity. Time is the medium in which man exerts his freedom of will. This aspect of time's being recurs continually in the Host's speech and provides its climax when the Host asks the Man of Law to tell them a tale and free them from the dangers of too intimate an association with idleness: 'Lat us *nat mowlen* thus in ydelnesse' [(B^1) 32] is the preface to his request for a tale from the Man of Law.

The antithesis between moral bisynesse and idleness implied here is recalled later in the Second Nun's interpretacio nominis Cecilie where St Cecilia is praised for her lastynge bisynesse and her union of faith and works [see VIII (G) 85-119]. There is however another kind of bisynesse which is far more materialist in its impetus. It is this type of bisynesse for which the Man of Law praises riche marchauntz in his Prologue [(B^1) 122-132] and by which he was categorized in the *General Prologue*. Wordly bisynesse, concern to amass treasure here on earth, involves a misapprehension of man's need to use his time in the world. It is selfish in orientation and short term in its rewards. It negates

the community of mankind and the source and end of all good in God. What riche marchauntz achieve is material largesse, their wisdom is that of this world. Similar concerns and worldly wisdom operate in the General Prologue portrait of the Man of Law. He is we are told in great demand: 'Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas/ And yet he semed bisier than he was' [I (A) 321-322]. He is so effective in engineering land transfers that even leasehold land becomes 'fee symple to hym in effect.' In Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire Jill Mann discusses 'the omission of the victim' in the General Prologue. In the Man of Law's portrait it functions specifically in that the people duped in his land negotiations are not even mentioned; it functions generally in that his practice would obviously include no equivalents of the 'povre parrishens' whose welfare so concerns the Parson. No mention is made of his relation to the poor who could hardly provide him with 'fees and robes . . . many oon' [I (A) 317]. The references to his legal practice imply that his clients are men of material substance.

The earliest part of the Host's discussion of time [(B^1) 1-14] uses a varied set of expressions drawing upon observation of nature, the seasonal and daily cycle, calculation of the position of the sun during the artificial day (that is, during the hours when the sun is above the horizon) and clock time. In The Renaissance Discovery of Time Ricardo Quinones observes that the desire for an accurate mechanical measurement of time which resulted in the fourteenth century flourishing of clock-making in 'the urban commercial centers' of Italy, Germany, France and England was closely related to the rise of commercial interests in these countries.[112] Although fourteenth century clocks did not possess minute hands division into hourly units demonstrated a

more pressing sense of time's fleeting quality than the leisurely divisions into canonical hours in the earlier medieval period. In a society increasingly preoccupied with mercantile concerns the immediate worldly importance of the moment was repeatedly stressed. Whether for the heaping up of material wealth or earthly renown the *desire to seize the time became pressing.*

Yet although he expresses the time of day in clock terms, the Host's concern is with the moral not the economic implications of time and his disquiet is expressed in language from vertuous matere of both lerned and lewed proverbial wisdom, poetic and philosophical statement.[3] Behind the Host's speech lies an age-old tradition of moral concern with the way man uses his time. Time is seen as a precious possession ensuring man's salvation if only it is well used, a force which helps man. But time is also seen as potentially destructive, as man's antagonist, a privy thief who steals his life away, a destroyer who devastates him all too soon if he does not seize the time and make it his own through his own bisynesse. Even here there is still choice for man may use his time for ends that point towards eternity (even as time itself does) or for those purely mortal. At the boundary of time and *eternity is earthly fame* to which the Man of Law directs himself in his review of Chaucer's output and his expression of his own fears [(B^1) 46-92]. It is not the Host but the Man of Law whose understanding of time is firmly materialist even as his concern with *literature is* earthbound. The Man of Law's praise of riches balancing his denigration of poverty places him in relation to worldly bisynesse. His understanding of the usefulness of time would be termed immoral by St Augustine or the Clerk's sweet rhetorician, Petrarch, whose own preoccupation with time led him to write even more profusely

than Chaucer.[114] The Man of Law's praise of rich merchants' use of their time would hardly have endeared him to Pope Innocent III whose De miseria condicionis humane is, as is now well known, the source of the Man of Law's description of poverty.[115] In the second book of De miseria there is an extensive analysis of the poverty of material wealth and a lengthy description *of the miseries* attendant upon riches which Chaucer does not include in the B^1 Group but which inevitably provides a gloss upon the Man of Law's own attitudes to poverty and riches.[116]

The Man of Law's attitude to poverty and riches is related to his attitude to tale-telling. The tale-telling contract to which the Host refers in turning to the lawyer involves only a limited obligation: he is asked to tell a tale that is not idle. The Clerk, in similar circumstances, defines the limit of the contract lest it conflict with the exercise of right reason:

> 'Hooste,' quod he, 'I am under youre yerde;
> Ye han of us as now the governance,
> And therefore wol I do yow obeisance,
> As fer as resoun axeth, hardily.'
> [IV (E) 22-25]

The Man of Law, unlike the Clerk, accepts the obligation simply but transforms the significance of the task. For him telling a tale relates not only to the enjoyment of his present time but also to his enduring reputation as a literary figure. The deflection from his own present task to Chaucer's past achievements sets up a tension totally uncalled for by the Host's request. What does dictate it is the Man of Law's measuring himself by different standards from the Host's. To Chaucer the court poet has come some fame and the success of his poetry detracts in some way from the

Man of Law. What emerges in the Man of Law's remarks about Chaucer's poetry is not objective judiciousness but *his envy of Chaucer's fame*. Chaucer's achievement is irrelevant in the Host's terms but the Man of Law's materialism extends to immaterial things and his own need to compare himself to Chaucer climaxes his account of Chaucer's achievement. Here, in the world of tales, claims the Man of Law, he has been left *almost empty*-handed by Chaucer's pre-empting all the thrifty love *tales*. Chaucer has told so many, and in poor verse at that, that the Man of Law is hard put to it to find a tale worth telling. His condemnation of Chaucer's craft in the context of his own search for a tale would imply that he could tell those that Chaucer has told better. But no one *save himself stops him from* telling a tale that Chaucer has told elsewhere. It is his own concept of tales as private possessions that makes him move to another genre. The Lawyer, to whom 'al was fee symple . . . in effect' [I (A) 319] sees himself outwitted by a tale-propertied Chaucer who has staked prior claims to great tracts of a *common heritage of tales*.[117] 'What sholde I tellen hem, syn they been tolde?' [(B^1) 56] asks the Man of Law. If Chaucer has told more love tales than Ovid himself, as the Man of Law claims, in the tale of Constance the Man of Law has chosen a subject whose christian piety cannot but eclipse Chaucer's *tales* of cupidinous love. If he may not be ranked with the Muses, he must at least be sure that he cannot be classed with the Pierides. But things are not known according to their proper nature, as Lady Philosophy explained to Boethius, rather are they known according to the nature of their beholder, and the morality of a tale (even a *tale of incest such as those* moral Gower tells in the far from licentious Confessio Amantis) inheres not in its subject matter as the Man

of Law implies but in the use to which that subject matter is put. Here again contrast is provided by the Clerk's relation to his tale. He attributes his tale explicitly to Petrarch, whom he praises most generously before embarking upon his version. He explains too that this will differ in parts from his source: for one thing he intends omitting Petrarch's long prohemye as impertinent to his own matter though it was pertinent to Petrarch's. That the Clerk understands the relation of teller and tale in a way that is entirely different from that of the Man of Law is clear. So too is the difference of emphasis: the Clerk rejoices in Petrarch's well-deserved fame, the Man of Law begrudges Chaucer his right to any fame.

Love of wealth is traditionally associated with lawyers who, in Boccaccio's words, are 'marked, *almost to a* man, with one taint, the love of money.'[118] The remarks of the Man of Law in his prologue clearly place him *within this tradition. His interest in literature,* although it has no place in traditional descriptions, does have an analogue in Boccaccio's Genealogy of the Gods. In book fourteen Boccaccio lists a series of objectors to poetry and amongst them he places lawyers who, he says, 'condemn poets themselves, together with their works and their poverty' (14.4). Against the lawyers' criticism of poetry as a worthless art, which leaves its practitioners penniless, Boccaccio argues that poetry is a speculative not applied science and unlike law, whose aim for most of its practitioners is the aggregation of money but like theology and philosophy, it is concerned with eternal things not things that perish. Lawyers, Boccaccio continues, are skilled merely in memory while poets are divinely inspired, and while lawyers amass money and avoid poverty, poets deliberately avoid *earthly riches*

living simply and tranquilly but achieving reknown through their verse. Real poverty, Boccaccio observes, is poverty of the imagination and this is a kind that lawyers not poets possess. He concludes his analysis with a comparison of poets and lawyers:

> Preterea homines virtutibus ornari non palliis. Queso igitur hos morum humanorum frenatores egregios, poetas in pace sinant; nil enim eis cum poetis comune est, quo eorum possit occupari ius. Poete in secessu carmina sua canunt, iuriste turbelis inmixti et frequentia fori apud rostra litigia clamant; illi gloriam et inclitam famam, aurum isti desiderant; illos taciturnitas atque ruris solitudo delectat, hos pretorium, tribunalia, et litigantium strepitus; illorum pax amica est, horum questiones et litigium. Et si *precibus meis* acquiescere nolint, acquiescant saltem autoritati Solonis, amplissimi legum latoris, qui, decem perfectis tabulis, secessit, omissis legibus, in poesim, alter profecto futurus, si longior vita fuisset, Omerus.
>
> (Romano, pp. 693-694)

> Besides, virtue, not robes, is man's natural ornament. I therefore beseech these egregious tamers of human nature, to leave poets in peace. For properly and essentially they have no business with poets - nor poets with them. Poets sing their songs in retirement; lawyers wrangle noisily in the courts amid the crowd and bustle of the market. Poets long for glory and high fame; lawyers for gold. Poets delight in the stillness and solitude of the country; lawyers in office buildings, courts, and the clamour of litigants. Poets are friends of peace; lawyers of cases and trials. But if they will not listen to my plea, let them at any rate give ear to the authority of Solon, himself a most learned lawyer, who, when he had finished his tables, forsook the law for poetry, and who would have proved another Homer, if he had lived.
>
> (Osgood, p. 32)

This opposition of lawyers and poets may well have suggested the basis of Chaucer's narrative here for the attitudes of his lawyer are closely parallelled by Boccaccio's anti-poetic jurists. Whether Chaucer was directly influenced by Boccaccio's account or not he could have reached similar conclusions, working on a traditional stereotype of a money-loving lawyer whose concern for the things of the spirit is largely conventional. The superficiality of his Man of Law's arguments either suggests his intellectual dishonesty or underlines his inexpertise in the speculative arts. Either would suggest a falling off from an ideal of law in which positive law, enacted and interpreted by lawyers, and natural law, implanted in the hearts of all men, together derive their strength and harmony from divine law whose orderly pattern they should reflect. The Man of Law's interest in law in the General Prologue had nothing to do with this ideal; his interest in poetry is similarly short-sighted. Personal fame rather than exercise of virtue interests him and rivalry rather than pleasure stirs him at the thought of Chaucer's contribution to English poetry. Where the cult of the self is paramount, the order inherent in whole patterns, artistic, natural or divine, is ignored.

The Man of Law does tell a tale of a virtuous woman but he tells it in a way that wearisomely intrudes a sense of his presence throughout. He congratulates his heroine on her good fortune, laments her ill fortune so indefatigably that the listener or reader alternates between realizing that the Man of Law leaves no room for any response distinct from his own and the awareness that the tale is hardly about what the Man of Law keeps emphasizing in his interpolations: the blessings of good fortune, the hardship of bad

fortune. The tale though not the teller (if his interjections are a guide) explores the nature of constancy of faith in adversity. It is a virtuous tale and the Host is right to commend its thriftiness at the end, but the Man of Law's thrift is not spiritual as his heroine's is, it is the thrift of the worldly wise lawyers playing at poet and trading in virtue.

Most of the pilgrims' tales have written sources yet only two of the pilgrims, the Man of Law and the Clerk, preface their tales with comment on literary precursors. The Man of Law's attitude to twice-told tales differs from that of the poet whom he berates. The tale which he tells provides a case in point. Chaucer's translation of the story of Constance is approximately parallelled in time by a translation in his friend John Gower's Confessio amantis. Neither version is diminished by the other's existence. Each poet put to specific use the common material he found in Trivet's anglo-norman account. In this Chaucer and Gower show themselves to be typically eclectic and incorporative of the literary wealth of their culture. The Clerk, who attributes his tale to Petrarch, shares the same cultural stance as Chaucer and Gower: he too draws upon the wealth of the past, renewing it in his homage and his recreation. To the less lettered amongst Chaucer's audience the Clerk's english version may easily be the only version of 'Petrarch's tale' they may ever know; to those who have read the latin, divergencies as well as equivalences would be clear and would provide part of the interest in Chaucer's retelling. Such readers would know that many versions of the tale were extant and that Petrarch's was itself a translation from Boccaccio's italian.[119]

Multiple reworkings of a tale are commonplace in the middle ages. The Man of Law is unusual in his desire not to retell what has been told before – what has been well-told merits retelling, what has been ill-told may be restored anew. The Man of Law's objection to retelling tales is associated explicitly with Chaucer and only through him with a written tradition. The tale taught the Man of Law by a merchant is acceptable – presumably not only because of its commercial pedigree but also because it has not been written down and to the Man of Law the pilgrims' tale-telling contest (oral and therefore ephemeral to him if not to the poet and the readers of his Book of the Tales of Canterbury) has become dwarfed by another literary contest, that of the Pierides and the Muses. In Ovid's account is recorded what Caliope and the Pierides sang: their tales have become part of an ever-present written tradition.[120] Chaucer too has written his tales of love – 'mo than Ovide made of mencioun' [(B^1) 54] – and whoever reads his works sees his authorship. For the Man of Law to compete with the indefatigable Chaucer – and his headlink sets up a competitive stance – a tale from an oral source, a source untapped by Chaucer is apt.

Yet ultimately as we all know the Man of Law's escape from Chaucer's domain is no more possible than Chaucer's or any living man's from God's. There is no escape for the lawyer since Chaucer has created him and his tale; all his choices occur within Chaucer's determined artistic universe. In real terms whatever tale the Man of Law chose would also be told by Chaucer, but within the narrative frame's truth claim the Man of Law does divorce himself successfully from the poet. The tension between the success achieved within the narrative frame and

the inevitable failure beyond its bounds points towards the fictionality of the Canterbury Tales for it is only in terms of the fictional universe that the Man of Law has any autonomy while Chaucer has autonomy in the actual world in which he really lives and in which he creates his mirror of human existence. The Man of Law's castigation of Chaucer turns our attention to the poet, maker of the Canterbury Tales as well as the earlier love poetry. Through questions of literary choice, issues about the nature of being and of the relation of artifice and reality are raised though not fully explored within the fragment.

The Clerk's Prologue raises and resolves local issues which invite comparison to those of the B^1 literary passage. Chaucer's persona in the B^2 frame sections is a poet absconditus but here his Clerk says much that the poet endorses in his own writing methods and attitudes. In the headlink to the Clerk's Tale the balance between the present tale-teller and the poet whom he mentions is different from that established in the Man of Law's headlink. Asked by the Host to tell 'som myrie tale' the Clerk replies that he will tell a tale which he learnt in Padua from Petrarch, 'a worthy clerk,/ As preved by his wordes and his werk' [IV (E) 27-28].

The Man of Law's concern with fame is inappropriate to his situation. His qualms at the possibility of being compared to the Pierides rather than the Muses are gratuitous: the allusion and the preoccupation with fame underlying it express self-interest and self-evaluation only. The Clerk touches upon fame too but his interest is related to his mentor's reputation not his own. Petrarch achieved fame as a worthy man and the writer who 'enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie'

[IV (E) 33]. His awareness of time's inexorable passage, the pressing need for man to express his individualism creatively and to achieve an earthly glory which is both the flower of his creativity and a fitting crown of his virtue is expressed throughout his work. In his poetic concept moral and aesthetic are interwoven; the poet must shape both his life and his art as models for his own and all time. The good life and good works endure where frail mortality inevitably withers like grass. Petrarch, says the Clerk, is now dead yet his faith in his glory was well-founded for what he sought and achieved was not the foolish fame of the Pierides but the glory accorded to the man of good works whose name lives on in his creations and their rightful reputation. The Clerk not only learns from Petrarch and through him may offer his insight to others he also helps ensure and enlarge the scope of Petrarch's lasting reputation by translating the older man's latin into english. Paradoxically, too, by the Clerk's acknowledging Petrarch's eloquence and virtue (twin poles of his fame) in his praise of the poet and choice of his tale, the Clerk's own creativity is enriched for he not only takes from but also remakes Petrarch's tale. The Clerk's tale is and is not Petrarch's tale, even as Petrarch's was and was not solely his own.

The self-absorption of the Man of Law's individualism is counterbalanced by the reflective generosity of the Clerk's humanism. Both men lay some claims to learning but their attitudes to knowledge and the quality of their learning differ fundamentally. The Clerk's unostentatious celebration of the stream of literary generation and his sense that poetry may illuminate reality and reflect philosophical truth are expressed in a tribute to a man whose influence on the development of fourteenth century humanism was seminal.[121]

Not I but he merits your consideration declares the Clerk in his tale. Not he but I is the message of the Man of Law.

In the A Group the predominant concern is with history, past and present. In the B^1 Group the focus of the narrative frame shifts to literature itself and this preoccupation is sustained in the B^2 Group which Alan Gaylord has termed 'the Literature Group.'[122] This is no misnomer: the number of tales in this group and their generic range are greater than in any other. The group is crowned by the Nun's Priest's Tale, itself a compact compendious and gloriously humorous synthesis of styles, subjects and themes presented elsewhere in the Canterbury Tales. At its centre the group contains the two tales of the persona.

In the B^1 Group the Man of Law decries the poet Chaucer; in the B^2 Group the persona tells his two tales and we are given the opportunity of judging the relation of poet and persona. What congruencies or discrepancies between Chaucer's personality and that of his persona (who, in a most unreporterlike manner, has his eyes fixed modestly upon the ground when the Host addresses him) would be self-evident to a contemporary audience contemplating the poet and listening to his words we cannot know, but we are given the opportunity of assessing how closely persona and poet are united by their literary abilities. Rather tenuously it would appear. In contrast to the poet of whom the Man of Law complained, the persona knows only one rhymed tale and it is a masterly reductio ad absurdam of poetry's ability to illuminate human reality by verbal dramatization.[123] In a soporific rocking rhythm the persona, himself 'a popet in an arm t'embrace' [(B^2) 891], describes Sir Thopas, a hero

entitled only by the genre of his surrounding tale to the adjective romantic. Both woodenly mechanistic and insubstantial he is a parody of a shadow: his origins lie only indirectly in the aristocratic french chivalric romances, directly amongst the heroes of their english bourgeois redactions.[124] Underlying the sprightly turgidity of the narrative is the sophisticated achievement of the poet, but neither the Host who interrupts his seemingly endless flow nor any other of the pilgrims suggests appreciation of the literary sophistication of the parody. That is offered to Chaucer's actual not hypothetical audience.

If there were ever an opportunity for overt self-advertisement in the Canterbury Tales the B^2 Group offers it. But the persona, unlike the Man of Law, has no aesthetic problems in selecting his tale since he only knows one rhymed tale. This is the public mask with which Chaucer furnishes himself in the Canterbury Tales. Why? Alan Gaylord observes that the joke would be heightened for an audience who heard and saw Chaucer read his poem to them, but for an audience of readers too the distance between persona and poet would be clear. For while the Man of Law's criticism of Chaucer would still remain, the quality of Chaucer's verse throughout the Canterbury Tales as well as in his earlier works belies both the lawyer's claim and the literal truth of the persona's statement — if the persona is adjudged an alter ego of Chaucer's. It is simply untrue to say that Chaucer knows only rhymed tale: every tale freely chosen by the pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales is Chaucer's and was ultimately freely chosen by himself. While the persona is the first person narrator, he is distinct from Chaucer in literary prowess at least. But his claim in the General Prologue was not that of a poet but of an historian and his first tale would suggest

that poetry is certainly not his strong point. If Sir Thopas is hardly an ideal tale, the second tale which Chaucer allocates to his persona, while its morality is impeccable, is hardly a striking example of surpassing eloquence. The prose tale of Melibee and his wife Dame Patience is full of sound matter expressed with a rather graceless earnestness heightened by the coexistence within the Canterbury Tales of tales such as the Knight's, Clerk's, and the Nun's Priest's. It is possible to tell a moral tale in a variety of ways that are resounding literary as well as ethical successes. Chaucer does not choose to have his persona exemplify this truth. While the pilgrims are satisfied with Melibee's virtuous matter, the roles of persona and poet are hardly fully identified in it. If it is true that Chaucer invests an aspect of himself in the persona, it is also true that this investment is partial, and that even looking for his investment in the sum of the pilgrims and their contributions is hazardous. We shall only finally be in a position to assess Chaucer's presence in the Canterbury Tales when we add to all these the words of the maker of this book which close the poem. Once again the logical thrust of the narrative is forward: as readers we are not yet at rest. Donald Howard has suggested that the Melibee could be accorded the same careful attention from Chaucer's readers as the Parson's Tale has reluctantly won, arguing that it presents a secular moral equivalent to the Parson's Tale.[125] The Nun's Priest's Tale, which is the summa amongst the verse tales, uniting within its jest and earnest almost all the major issues raised throughout the Canterbury Tales,[126] has suffered no similar dearth of attention, confirming the medieval moralists' sense of the siren-seductiveness of excellent poetry. The great diversity of genre in the tales of the B^2 Group is internalized in the Nun's Priest's Tale. In any

discussion of Chaucer's exploration of the true lie in the Canterbury Tales the Nun's Priest's Tale has an important place since its superb achievement is to use language to create a world which reflects and denies realities simultaneously, which explores human truths yet places them in contexts which occur in no real place save on the poet's page and in the imagination of poet and readers. It is its own argument for and against fictive truth, for like the ironia upon which its style depends it simultaneously confirms and denies whatever it offers. Anyone seeking to expound the evils of fiction would as readily find argument in the Nun's Priest's Tale as someone seeking to justify true fiction. For in its poetic excellence it vivifies the word's power: to reflect the Word in its words and to create antiworlds of words, worlds that never were nor could be.

One instance of this is found in the treatment of the fable's central event, Chantecleer's capture by and escape from the colfox. It is described partly as a natural encounter between animal predator and prey in which Chantecleer's original instinct is to flee [(B^2) 4469-73]. It is also described in terms that recall Adam's fall in Paradise and Christ's redressing of that fall on the tree of the cross.[127] Just before the encounter of the rooster and the fox is the dream debate which Chantecleer terminates with his firm 'Now let us speke of myrthe, and stynte al this' [(B^2) 4347]. He continues:

> rtelote, so have I blis,
> ıg God hath sent me large grace;
> I se the beautee of youre face,
> so scarlet reed aboute youre yen,
> It maketh al my drede for to dyen;
> For al so siker as In principio,
> Mulier est hominis confusio, —

> Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
> 'Womman 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 that oure perche is maad so narwe, allas!
> I am so ful of joye and of solas,
> That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem.
> And with that word he fley doun fro the beem,
> For it was day . . .
>
> [(B^2) 4348-4363]

On that 'accursed . . . morwe' reason, variously perceived and wielded by the two debaters, gives way to sensuality and Chantecleer flies down from the beams — an action perfectly reasonable in a cock if not in the debator upon free will and divine providence. In the midst of the sonorous description of his descent is embedded Chantecleer's credo:

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

The mistranslation has been seen as evidence of Chantecleer's poor scholarship, of his oneupmanship, or of the Nun's Priest's or Chaucer's joke at Chantecleer's nonsense. But whether Chantecleer believes that he has translated the latin accurately for Pertelote or not, he is offering his creed: his actions make clear that he does believe in both statements and both are true for him. That both are relative truths is clear to us — far clearer than the relativity of a great number of other truths. It is easier to be objective about another's assumptions than one's own as both Chantecleer and Pertelote demonstrate in the discussion on dreams. While the absurdity here is clear, similar absurdities in our own lives escape us even as just before the Nun's Priest began his tale, they escaped the affronted Monk when he was interrupted in his almost

endless narration. Chaucer's humour highlights problems of language that are also problems of human nature and choice.

Also webbed in Chaucer's language in these lines is the absolute truth upon which the christian faith rests:

> In principio erat Verbum. Et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum . . . . Et Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis: et vidimus gloriam eius, gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre plenum gratiae et veritatis.
>
> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
>
> (John, 1.1.14)

The fall of Adam happened in the beginning of history, but before that, not only in time but in reality, in principio erat Verbum. In this tale above all others Chaucer shows the complexity of the relation of human word to the Word, human language to reality and human reality to divine. It is typical of Chaucer that he should do this in a tale which consistently deflates its own pretensions. While Chantecleer's fall may gladden the fox, dismay the poor widow and horrify Pertelote, it effects no more than these directly, but Adam's felix culpa brought the Word made flesh to dwell among us.

The Nun's Priest's Tale explores man's potential as a verbal fabricator and interpreter, it suggests some of the scope and limitation of verbal creation and focuses upon the distortions verbal mirrors may possess. The tale raises and explores major issues but does not resolve them: no true resolution is possible since the issues are fundamental to human life of whose complexities man has no

single rational map.[128] What the poem at large and the Nun's Priest's Tale in particular do is invite deliberation. The tales that explore love and marriage, free will and divine providence or material and spiritual welfare could never exhaust or definitively circumscribe their topics. Paradoxically tightly organised treatment moving to literary resolution of carefully defined aspects of the issues would leave us with a sense of less rather than more, for fundamental issues of human existence defy simple explanation. Each individual and each generation must explore them again, which Chaucer knows. Such freedom is parallelled within the Canterbury Tales by Chaucer's use of the pilgrim tale tellers each of whom, within the tale's universe, freely chooses his tale's nature and range.

The roles which Chaucer assumes and calls to our attention in the Canterbury Tales are multifaceted. Of these reporter of events and poet have already been discussed at some length. They inhere subjectively in the dualism of Chaucer's task of describing the Canterbury pilgrimage and making the Book of the Canterbury Tales and are reflected objectively, outside the persona and poet, in the realities of the Knight's augustinian view of history and the many overt comments upon poetic practice and acts of poetic making in the poem. Also associated directly with Chaucer are the roles of believer and user of language. His belief is in the doctrine of the incarnation – that the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us – and in the promise of salvation wrought by that event in history. His use of language in verse and prose reflects that belief whether it explores the language of those who share it or those who deny it. Chaucer lived in a politically as well as spiritually powerful christian society and few amongst its members who did not believe in the ever-living God expressed their scepticism publically. Such use of language was perilous indeed.

There are many pilgrims in Chaucer's narrative whose faith is hardly of paramount importance to them and of these two, the Pardoner and the Manciple, tell tales where attention is focused not only on belief of one kind or another but also on the relation of language and belief.[129]

The moral of the Manciple's Tale is that language itself is dangerous: true or false, criticism may redound upon the critic so it is wiser to keep silent. To this and to the Pardoner's proclamation of the power of the hypocritical word the Parson's Tale affords an antidote. For the Parson stands at the end of the Canterbury Tales as the true priest, constant in his faith in God, his love of his fellow men and the wisdom and goodness of what he preaches. Where the Manciple is expedient and time-serving in all things, the Parson serves God and his fellow men in word and deed. Where the Pardoner boasts of his ability to use language to coin material wealth for himself, the Parson offers the genuine coinage of spiritual regeneration making the use to which the Pardoner has put his verbal talent look petty and tawdry.[130]

The Pardoner's headlink and tale raise interesting questions about the nature and function of language. In the Roman de la Rose Reason tells the lover, in a dialogue to which I shall return shortly, that God gave her the right to name all created beings 'proprement e comunement.'[131] According to Genesis Adam was given this task in Paradise. The gift of language is a precious one, helping man to order his universe faithfully and rationally and enabling him to communicate his insights to others. Speech says St Augustine is for teaching and learning; it consists of series of articulated words expressive of the inner words housed in the souls of men which are themselves reflections of the divine Word by whose agency heaven and earth came into being.[132]

Like all the pilgrims' tales the Pardoner's Tale is a verbal act, but unlike the other pilgrims the Pardoner offers what he says as typical of his regular verbal practice for his work is 'a labour of words' and this pleases him far more than manual labour would.[133] The Pardoner's distaste for manual labour is linked with his disclaimer of the apostles as behavioural exemplars. At some cost to others his powers of speech redeem the Pardoner from the fate of the apostles:

> What, trowe ye, that whiles I may preche,
> And wynne gold and silver for I teche,
> That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?
> Nay, nay, I thoghte it nevere, trewely!
> For I wol preche and begge in sondry landes;
> 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;
> I wol have moneie, wolle, chese and whete,
> Al were it yeven of the povereste page,
> Or of the povereste wydwe in a village,
> Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.
> [VI (C) 439-451]

Because he is able to preach eloquently the Pardoner need do no other work. Indeed his rhetorical ability does more than save him from the life of a labourer, it enables him to collect large quantities of money for himself in every village he visits.[134]

If we look at what St Augustine says about eloquence in De doctrina christiana we find that he treats it in relation to another attribute, wisdom. Ideally, he says, 'the defender of truth' should combine wisdom and eloquence. However good the content of his discourse a man whose style is poor will be hampered in communicating his message. But this is a far lesser evil than its opposite, where eloquence is united with folly:

> Qui vero affluit insipienti eloquentia, tanto magis cavendus est, quanto magis ab eo in iis quae audire inutile est, delectatur auditor, et eum quoniam diserte dicere audit, etiam vere dicere existimat. Haec autem sententia nec illos fugit, qui artem rhetoricam docendam putarunt: fassi sunt enim sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus; eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse nunquam.
> (De doctrina christiana, 4.5.7, B.A.C.,168, p. 268)

> But he who is foolish and abounds in eloquence is the more to be avoided the more he delights his auditor with those things to which it is useless to listen so that he thinks that because he hears a thing said eloquently it is true. This lesson, moreover, did not escape those who thought to teach the art of rhetoric. They granted that "wisdom without eloquence is of small benefit to states; but eloquence without wisdom is often extremely injurious and profits no one."
> (Robertson, p. 121)

The Pardoner's folly is of a particular sort: it is that of the wordly wise. He is not *intellectually foolish:* his speech is excellently designed to realize the goal which he has set himself and what he says, although it is not said in truth, is not that is a true reflector of the Pardoner's belief, is nevertheless often true in itself.[135] The moral logic of the Pardoner's tale of the thre riotoures is rigorous. It functions as a bleak reminder of the divisive destructiveness of the cupidity which provides the Pardoner with his text and is, as he points out, central to his own life. But the moral scope of his tale of spiritual death includes the person of the Pardoner too. He himself observes before he begins the tale:

> But shortly myn entente I wol devyse:
> I preche of no thyng but for coveityse.
> Therefore my theme is yet, and evere was,
> Radix malorum est Cupiditas.
> Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice
> Which that I use, and that is avarice.

. But though myself be gilty in that synne,
Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne
From avarice, and soore to repente.
But that is nat my principal entente;
I preche nothyng but for coveitise.
[VI (C) 423-433]

Here Chaucer gives us insight into the manner in which the Pardoner operates not only as a confidence man but also as a man endowed with freedom of will. Outwardly he knows the doctrine which should be part of his innermost being, whose inner knowledge could ensure his salvation. Yet his knowledge is sterile, mere mouthing, since he does not chose to internalize it and act upon it; knowing a truth he benefits only others.[136] The Pardoner compliments himself upon his ability to make others abandon the vice which he embraces. It is yet another instance of his self-acclaimed unusual ability. Yet the pertinent discernment is not his but that of his listeners.

This anomalous situation is one which St Augustine treats in De magistro (13.41-42) where he cites the instance of an epicurean philosopher who believes in the mortality of the soul expounding the doctrine of immortality in which he does not believe:

> Quamobrem in iis etiam quae mente cernuntur, frustra cernentis loquelas audit quisquis ea cernere non potest, nisi quia talia quamdiu ignorantur utile est credere: quisquis autem cernere potest, intus est discipulus veritatis, foris judex loquentis, vel potius ipsius locutionis. Nam plerumque scit illa quae dicta sunt, eo ipso nesciente quae dixit; veluti si quisquam Epicureis credens at mortalem animam putans, eas rationes quae de immortalitate ejus a prudentioribus tractatae sunt, eloquatur, illo audiente qui spiritualia contueri potest; judicat iste eum vera dicere: at ille qui dicit, utrum vera dicat ignorat, imo etiam falsissima existimat: num igitur putandus est ea docere quae nescit? Atqui iisdem verbis utitur, quibus uti etiam sciens posset.

> Quare jam ne hoc quidem relinquitur verbis, ut his saltem loquentis animus indicetur; si quidem incertum est utrum ea quae loquitur, sciat. Adde memtientes atque fallentes, per quos facile intelligas non modo non aperiri, verum etiam occultari animum verbis.
>
> (PL 32 1218)

> It further follows that where realities discerned by the mind are concerned, it is of no avail for one who does not perceive them to hear the words of one who does, except when it is useful to believe them so long as he lacks knowledge of them. But anyone who is able to perceive them is an inward disciple of the truth and an outward judge of the speaker, or better, a judge of what he is saying. For he very often understands what was said even when the speaker himself does not. Let us suppose, for example, that someone who takes the word of the Scriptures and judges that the soul is mortal should expound arguments which have been refuted by the wiser philosophers in favor of its immortality. If someone capable of spiritual discernment happens to hear him, he will judge that what this man says is true, whereas the speaker does not know whether such arguments are true; in fact, he even thinks they are completely false. Are we, then, to think of him as teaching what he does not know? Yet he uses the same words which could also be used by one who understood them.
>
> Hence, not even the role of expressing what the speaker has in mind is any longer left to words, since it is not certain that he knows what he is saying. There are, in addition, those who lie and deceive, so that you can readily see from them how words not only do not reval their thoughts, but even conceal them.
>
> (Fathers of the Church, 59, p. 56)

To the Pardoner the truths that he preaches have the same value as the frauds in which he deals, for he judges them in accordance with his objective, the satisfying of his coveteise, and in terms of this his tales and his relices are both effective instruments. The Pardoner's language does communicate truths but his intentions to do so are not because of any belief

in the value of those truths as spiritual realities but because they provide him with the best available means of satisfying his cupidity. Ignorant people, confused by his verbal legerdemain into believing that they may use his relics to increase their material good or frightened into recognition of their own possible damnation by his preaching, are easily persuaded to offer to his relics. But the audiences of lewed peple whom the Pardoner regularly dupes are not his present audience on pilgrimage and Chaucer's actual audience of auditors or readers is even further removed from the simple credulity of the villagers whom the Pardoner customarily bemuses. What is being offered to these two audiences, the pilgrims and Chaucer's readers in this tale and how does the complexity of linguistic use in the Pardoner's Prologue and Tale help illuminate the nature of what is offered? What the Pardoner tells the pilgrim audience is not only what he says to the country villagers but also his rationale for doing so, and they in turn understand even more than he tells. For the audience of Chaucer's poem the words of the Pardoner's Tale include the reactions of the Host and the Knight who represent the pilgrim group (not necessarily by expressing the universally held views of the pilgrims but simply by being of their number and responding); the words of the Pardoner's Tale also convey a sense of the literate patterning of the tale which is part of Chaucer's not the Pardoner's conception. Such echoes as those of the Roman de la Rose and De planctu naturae or of stock criticism of pardoners help place the Pardoner and his tale in a further perspective. For Chaucer's readers what is offered is a complex design where foregrounds and backgrounds of actuality, book learning and earlier literature interact to produce a complex dynamic whole.

When the Pardoner is asked to tell 'som moral thyng' rather than a tale of ribaudye he sets out, after the pause for refreshment at the alestake, to demonstrate his considerable talents in a display which he is at pains to point out is customary.[137] The 'honest thyng' – it is significant that he moves the adjective from the sphere of the will to that of the intellect – which he tells is the tale of himself, of what he does and what he is or has become; it is both a history of the events which he either sets in motion or exploits and a statement of his spiritual state. But the application of his sermon has validity for others as well as himself, and his tale is not only about his own spiritual condition but also that of whoever chooses to live by similar standards. He offers the pilgrim audience a view of his own practices as a pardoner and while the practices are dishonest, he clearly implies that his vivid description of them is accurate, so that what he offers to the pilgrims is a truth, an 'honest thyng.' When the Pardoner pretends to the ignorant people that his relics and their miraculous powers are genuine or that he has the power to absolve them a poena et a culpa he lies to them, but in describing his activities to the pilgrims he tells the truth.

In De trinitate (15.15.24) St Augustine explores the situation of someone who lies, who uses a false word:

> Quid, quod etiam mentiri possumus? Quod cum facimus, utique volentes et scientes falsum verbum habemus: ubi verum verbum est mentiri nos; hoc enim scimus. Et cum mentitos nos esse confitemur, verum dicimus: quod scimus enim dicimus; scimus namque nos esse mentitos. (PL 42 1077)

> What then, about the possibility of also telling a lie? When we do this, then indeed we willingly and knowingly have a false word, and in this case the true word is that we lie, for we know this. And when we confess that we have lied, we speak the truth, for we are saying what we know, and we know that we have lied.
> (Fathers of the Church, 45, p. 488)

The Pardoner describes his actions in church with perfect clarity; he is not confused about their moral implications, simply uninterested in them. Now it is in the nature of a truth that its application is dictated by its own quality, not simply by the quality of its ennunciator, and when the Pardoner describes his habit of preaching on the text Radix malorum est cupiditas what is conveyed is a truth with far wider implications than those for which he selects his text. The relation of the Pardoner's spiritual predicament to that of the characters of his tale has often been noted, and at the end of the tale, when the Pardoner asks the Host to offer to his relics [VI (C) 941 ff.], the Host makes clear his perception of this relation.

In the Roman de la Rose, in a passage which is recalled here, and to which I have previously referred (see p. 56 and nn. 70, 71; p. 117) Reason justifies her use of the word coillons by pointing out to the verbally squeamish Lover (who has objected to her pronouncing it) that after God created all that exists he gave her the task of naming all the parts of his creation. Both the parts and the words which describe them are good. Without words to describe realities man can neither know adequately nor communicate his knowledge. God, says Reason, wanted her to name whatever exists:

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 tres precieus don a.
(RR 7091-7096, Langlois 3, pp. 29-30)

he wanted me to find names at my
pleasure and to name things
individually and collectively, in
order to increase our understanding.
He gave me speech, in which there
lies a very precious gift.
(Dahlberg, p. 135)

In his analysis of this passage John Fleming cites the City of God (14.23) in which St Augustine discusses the subjection of the sexual organs to the rational will in Paradise before the fall.[138] St Augustine writes not only about the prelapsarian reality and the changes wrought by Adam's fall but he also surmises that while now he is somewhat abashed at writing upon this subject, had there been no fall his own and other people's attitudes to the language of sexuality would have been different. He concludes by hoping that the devout will understand the purpose of his frankness and reminds his readers that he is writing as delicately as he can:

et quod modo de hac re nobis uolentibus
diligentius disputare uerecundia resistit
et conpellit ueniam honore praefato a
pudicis auribus poscere, quur id fieret
nulla causa esset, sed in omnia, quae de
huius modi membris sensum cogitantis
adtingerent, sine ullo timore obscenitatis
liber sermo ferretur, nec ipsa uerba
essent, quae uocarentur obscena, sed quid-
quid inde diceretur, tam honestum esset,
quam de aliis cum loquimur corporis
partibus. Quisquis ergo ad has litteras
inpudicus accedit, culpam refugiat, non
naturam; facta denotet suae turpitudinis,
non uerba nostrae necessitatis; in quibus

mihi facillime pudicus et religiosus lector uel auditor ignoscit, donec infidelitatem refellam, non de fide rerum inexpertarum, sed de sensu expertarum argumentantem. Legit enim haec sine offensione, qui non exhorret apostolum horrenda feminarum flagitia reprehendentem, qua inmutauerunt naturalem usum in eum usum, qui est contra naturam, praecipue quia nos non damnabilem obsenitatem nunc, sicut ille, commemoramus adque reprehendimus, sed in explicandis, quantum possumus, humanae generationis effectibus uerba tamen, sicut ille, obscena uitamus.

(Welldon, pp. 121-122)

Finally, had there been no fall, there would have been none of the embarrassment I now feel in pursuing this matter further, and no need to apologize for possible offense to chaste ears. On the contrary, one could feel free to discuss every detail connected with sex without the least fear of indelicacy. There would, in fact, be no such thing as an unbecoming word and no reference to one part of the body could be any more improper than reference to the other parts. Therefore, if some of my readers have been shocked, let them put this down to their fallen nature, not to their nature as such; let them blame the indecency of their own curiosity rather than the expressions I was compelled to use. I know that every decent-minded and devout person who reads this book or hears it will readily forgive my frankness and applaud its purpose, namely, to help unbelievers, who argue solely from the data of personal experience, to grasp the unexperienced realities of faith. Any reader who is not shocked by the Apostle's plain talk in reference to the 'shameful lusts' of pagan women who 'have exchanged the natural use for that which is against nature,' will certainly not be scandalized by any expressions of mine. After all, I have not called to mind any concrete obscenities even to condemn them, as the Apostle does. I am merely analysing a certain element involved in human procreation and, like the Apostle in this, I am trying to avoid every word that might give offense.

(Fathers of the Church, 14, pp. 401-402)

In order to communicate his understanding of his faith St Augustine has to use language that leaves him and may leave others somewhat uneasy although, he observes, this disquiet should be attributed to his and his audience's 'fallen nature, not . . . their nature as such.'

That language can be extremely powerful in its imaging reality and can evoke intense responses is clear. When the Pardoner invites the Host to come and offer to his relics at the end of his tale, the Host's response is couched in the very language of Reason's debate with the Lover. Where Reason scorned the Lover's over-fastidiousness, pointing out that if relics were the word she had chosen for testicles and testicles the word to express relics the Lover would be unmoved by the one which presently disgusts him and revulsed by the other, the Host crudely and devastatingly curses the Pardoner:

> Thou woldest make me kisse thyn olde breech,
> And swere it were a relyk of a seint,
> Though it were with thy fundement depeint!
> But, by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond,
> I wolde I hadde thy coillons 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) 948-955]

The Pardoner, physically impotent and spiritually sterile, deceives the lewed peple with his fraudulent relics and moral-sounding speech. What the Host wishes upon him is a reversal not simply of language but of realities: enshrining the Pardoner's testicles in a hog's turd would exemplify his sterile meretriciousness, providing him with a genuine relic of his spiritual and physical un generacy rather than a spurious relic falsely associated with spiritual regeneration. The Pardoner's

reaction to this is complete silence. For the first time since he began speaking his eloquence does not serve him:

> This pardoner answerde nat a word;
> So wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye.
> [VI (C) 956-957]

The speech whose use he has perverted fails him in the face of the Host's own brutally apt use of language. Whatever the problems of interpretation in this episode, and they undoubtedly exist, it is evidence that the message about the Pardoner's own spiritual quality has been received.[139] There is no ambiguity in the Host's response: in his curse he cuts himself off from the Pardoner's spiritual malaise.

But although the Pardoner puts language to a morally perverted use he cannot destroy its intrinsic truth, and the messages of his tale and of his life, as he relates it, are distinctly presented. He has preached in contempt of the Word made flesh, but his words still eleva[illegible]he Word. The way in which man may avoid the spiritual death which the Pardoner describes in his tale and exemplifies in his account of his own living death is by asking in contrition for the grace which Christ's incarnation renewed. And it is towards contrition that the Pardoner's preaching moves. When he ends his tale it is the Pardoner himself who observes this:

> . . . And lo, sires, thus I preche.
> And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche,
> So graunte yow his pardoun to receyve,
> For that is best; I wol yow nat deceyve,
> [VI (C) 915-918]

Immediately afterwards he remembers what he has temporarily forgotten, the powers of his own relics to coin more tangible goods than eternal salvation and he is locked back in his own state of impenitence. It is the Parson who will return to the theme of penitence and offer it clearly and without reservation in the last of the Canterbury Tales. The Pardoner is a richly individualized figure of an hypocrite.[140] In the unfolding of events within his tale and in the Pardoner's eloquent but unbelieving preaching Chaucer explores the power of the true word to reveal itself truly whatever violator attempts to appropriate it to a false use.[141] Discussing the way in which a false preacher may offer truths, St Augustine reminds us of the act of discrimination necessary on the part of the preacher's auditors:

> qui sapienter et eloquenter dicit, vivit autem nequiter, erudit quidem multos discendi studiosos, quamvis animae suae sit inutilis, sicut scriptum est. Unde ait et Apostolus: Sive occasione, sive veritate, Christus annuntietur. Christus autem veritas est, et tamen etiam non veritate annuntiari veritas potest; id est, ut pravo et fallaci corde, quae recta et vera sunt praedicentur. Sic quippe annuntiatur Jesus Christus ab eis qui sua quaerunt, non quae Jesu Christi. Sed quoniam boni fideles non quemlibet hominum, sed ipsum Dominum obedienter audiunt, qui ait, Quae dicunt, facite; quae autem faciunt, facere nolite: dicunt enim, et non faciunt; ideo audiuntur utiliter, qui etiam utiliter non agunt . . . . Multis itaque prosunt dicendo quae non faciunt; sed longe pluribus prodessent faciendo quae dicunt . . . . Denique Apostolus scribens ad Timotheum, cum dixisset, Nemo adolescentiam tuam contemnat; subiecit unde non contemneretur, atque ait: Sed forma esto fidelium in sermone, in conversatione, in dilectione, in fide, in castitate.
>
> (De doctrina christiana, 4.27.59-60, B.A.C., 168, pp. 340-342)

> he who speaks wisely and eloquently, but lives wickedly, may benefit many students, although, as it is written, he 'is unprofitable to his own soul.' Whence the Apostle also said, 'Whether

> as a pretext, or in truth [let] Christ be preached.' For Christ is the Truth, and, moreover, the truth may be announced but not in truth, that is, evil and fallacious hearts may preach what is right and true. Thus indeed is Jesus Christ announced by those who 'seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's.' But since the good faithful do not obey any man, but obediently hear that Lord who said 'All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not; for they say, and do not,' thus they may hear usefully those who do not act usefully. . . . . And thus they benefit many by preaching what they do not practice; but many more would be benefited if they were to do what they say. . . . . Hence, when the Apostle, writing to Timothy, said, 'Let no man despise thy youth,' he added the reason why he was not to be despised and said, 'but be thou an example of the faithful in word, in conduct, in charity, in faith, in chastity.'
>
> (Robertson, pp. 164-165)

Yet while St Augustine warns the faithful to reject bad examples, to observe what they say not what they do, he obviously intends this advice in regard to action not contemplation. What such a man as the Pardoner does is important too, both because he is part of God's creation and because in his habituation in sin he provides an illustration of a choice which others may avoid. Chaucer has been at pains to parallel the Pardoner and the Parson to the evident detriment of the Pardoner.[142] The comparison brings into sharper focus the sterility of what the Pardoner is and what he desires.

The complicity which the Pardoner — insultingly, jestingly or hopefully (who can know what is in his mind) — demands of the Host when he asks him to donate to his relics is one which implies a union with scandal which the Host will not countenance. Yet the vehemence of the Host's reaction is checked by the action of a wiser man. The Knight is the man of whom the persona

told us 'he nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde/ In al his lyf unto no manere wight' [I (A) 70-71]. The Pardoner, one might think, would provide a test case for tolerance. But the Knight's caritas knows no alloy; to hate the sin is legitimate, to judge the man is God's task, and the Knight's drawing the Pardoner and the Host together provides a fitting ending to the Pardoner's Tale:

> But right anon the worthy Knyght bigan,
> Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough,
> 'Namoore of this, for it is right ynough!
> Sire Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere;
> And ye, sire Hoost, that been to me so deere,
> I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner.
> And Pardoner, I prey thee, drawe thee neer,
> And, as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye.'
> Anon they kiste, and ryden forth hir weye.
> [VI (C) 960-968]

No man is wholly evil and no man's actions need be totally incomprehensible. All men are created in the divine image and partake of God's goodness. By including the Pardoner in his Canterbury Tales and describing him in self-revealing if not self-revelatory close focus Chaucer enables his audience to look long and carefully at the implications of choosing to live in God's despite. For all his brash self-commendation the Pardoner is a man whom few others will feel moved to praise. His hollowness finds a fitting correlative in his angry silence at the Host's words. But the last word is not his silence but the Knight's speech, enabling the kiss of reconciliation and the mending of the rift in the company's harmony. Within the pilgrim group that contains men such as the Knight, the Pardoner's destructiveness is containable, and within Chaucer's language his silence and the Knight's voice both speak of the possibilities of human choice.

The Pardoner exploits the language of faith in an attempt to satisfy his cupidity. However contemptuous he is of people he rates eloquence, or at least his own eloquence, highly. His language is a type of magic that does work, using it effectively is his bisynesse and it is clear that there are times when he finds a destructive joy in it. The joyless Manciple is a man of other interests and his secular situation demands different talents from him. There is no mention of his speech in his General Prologue portrait although the portrait affirms his competence as a manciple: he is a paragon amongst achatours of vitaille. His portrait hints that he earns more than he receives as wages, certainly he is described as deceiving the heep of lerned men who employ him. The Manciple handles the affairs of his learned masters with dexterity and he is obviously too prudent to gainsay his own interests where these conflict with those of his employers. For such a man language is likely to resonate differently from the way it does for the flamboyant Pardoner. They share a common self-absorption, but the ways each expresses and satisfies it differ. While the Pardoner is at pains to brazen out his life as well as his sermons the Manciple's activities require discretion in speech and in overt action in order to keep his covert gains unremarked. There is a stylistic correlative of the Manciple's inconspicuousness in his General Prologue portrait. Although it begins by describing him it keeps slipping off from direct to related focus -- upon other achatours who could learn from him in lines 568-569, upon his success at outwitting his masters as an instance of God's grace in lines 573-575, upon the lawyers whom he serves in lines 576-585. Only five of the twenty lines of his portrait are squarely focused upon himself.

It comes as somewhat of a surprise that the Manciple should turn conspicuously vocal in the episode in which the Host accosts the Cook, but traditional rivalry underlies his initial remarks.[143] When the Host demands a tale as penance from the drunken Cook the Manciple interposes. He excuses the Cook a poena in a speech [IX (H) 25-45] which makes perfectly clear his contempt for the Cook. If the Cook provides an object lesson on the text 'dronkenesse . . . is the horrible sepulture of mannes resoun' [X (I) 822] the Manciple is nothing if not sober, rational and malicious. When the Host jestingly points out to him that the Cook may attempt to avenge himself one day by disclosing the Manciple's dishonest practices, the Manciple listens in earnest. Self-interest is a serious matter. The Manciple immediately embarks upon his plan to ingratiate himself with the wine-besotted Cook lest sobriety should prove even less attractive to him. The gift of a bottle of wine amply redresses the grievance and the Manciple is free to tell his tale in support of his belief that while it is possible to extricate oneself from the results of unpremeditated speech, language is perilous and it is safer to choose silence.[144]

The tale which he tells, the Ovidian legend of Phoebus, Coronis and the raven (Meta. 2, 531-562), has numerous homiletic digressions which enrich its narrative content and suggest how the tale lends itself to diverse directing.[145] One of the points which it could illustrate quite simply, which is not made by the Manciple, is that of 'un serviteur fidèle mal récompensé.'[146] His final summing up of 'this ensaumple' is a mélange of moral and expedient advice expressing only the disadvantages of speaking out without exploring any of the questions raised by the problem of knowing an important truth unknown to someone whom it affects

closely. Unlike Dame Prudence in Melibee or the Parson who define clearly how and what anyone should and should not say in given circumstances,[147] the Manciple finds it best finally to advise silence:

> My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe
> Of tidynges, wheither they been false or trewe.
> [IX (H) 359-361]

Obviously the Manciple is correct in perceiving that language is powerful, that its honest and open use may expose the user to danger and that the man who does not commit himself at all in speech can neither be judged nor blamed. But such a man denies an essential part of his humanity. Language was given to man to aid his understanding and to enable communication. To reject any language that may win disapproval is to abandon a precious part of man's humanity, it is to choose to be less than a man. For the Manciple, prosperous petty official, apt in dishonest practice, this is acceptable. But the Manciple's Tale is placed directly before the Parson's Tale [see X (I) 1] and in the person of the Parson, Chaucer lets a truer valuer of the moral potential of language speak.

The Knight is the first pilgrim described in the General Prologue and the first character to tell his tale. The Parson who tells the last tale is positioned at the centre of the General Prologue, where together with the Physician, he flanks the redoubtable Wife of Bath. Last of the pilgrims in the General Prologue is the Pardoner. Parson and Pardoner, as remarked earlier, both choose to preach but while the Pardoner's constancy in preaching the word in season and out of season arises from his cupidity (it pays to do so) the Parson's constancy expresses genuine conviction: 'Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest,/ Whan I may sowen whete, if

that me leste?' [X (I) 35-36]. Both men acknowledge and use the power of words but are contrasted in their means and ends. The Pardoner is dominated by his ravenous cupidity:

> I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,
> Al were it yeven of the povereste page,
> Or of the povereste wydwe in a village,
> Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.
> Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne,
> And have a joly wenche in every toun.
> [VI (C) 448-453]

The Parson preaches in love of his fellowmen and faith in 'the endeles blisse of hevene.' At the core of the Pardoner's sermon is an old story 'for lewed people loven tales olde' [VI (C) 437]. The Parson, asked by the Host to 'telle us a fable anon' [X (I) 29], firmly refuses to tell any fable, adducing 'Paul that writeth unto Tymothee' as authority for his attitude. The Pardoner also cites St Paul's writing to Timothy but puts his authority to more mundane use. If the Host had momentarily hoped for a second Nun's Priest's Tale his hopes are not to be realized. Yet the Parson's offering is well suited to its place at the end of the Canterbury Tales. The sermon on penance, the seven deadly sins and their remedia does 'shewe . . . the wey, in this viage,/ Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage/ That highte Jerusalem celestial' [X (I) 49-51] and it transfers our attention from the abundant pleasures of the journey through the Canterbury Tales (in which the pilgrims certainly did not ride 'doumb as a stoon' [I (A) 774]) to the blisse that is perdurable.

4 THE TRUE LIE: A RETURN TO SIMPLICITY, THE PARSON AND THE POET

Throughout the Canterbury Tales Chaucer has shown the range of literature, its multiplex capacity for exploring and revealing (as well as concealing) truths. In the Parson's Tale he uses language which no longer dramatizes human choices but analyses their religious and moral implications.[148] The abstraction of the language distances the Parson's Tale from the vitality of the actualization of living situations in the earlier tales and aligns the tale in direct address to ourselves as Chaucer's audience. The pilgrim audience to whom the Parson speaks in his prologue is replaced in the retraction by Chaucer's own audience even as the Parson (whose tale has no epilogue or connecting end-link) is replaced by Chaucer speaking in his own person. Both Parson and Chaucer speak of 'moralitee and hoolynesse' but one speaks from within the fiction one simultaneously within and without. With the Parson's Tale the Canterbury Tales looks directly at its audience whose members are no longer responding to an imaging of reality vivified in words but to a religious exhortation which only indirectly provides commentary on the moral choices of the pilgrims but directly addresses itself to the audience's lives: its truth is also the audience's.

The Parson's sermon is encyclopaedic in its subject matter and comprehensive in its treatment. It has none of the blandishments of 'thise poetical muses' but its unadorned prose offers truths central to christian doctrine: the nature of fallen man's relation to God and the means whereby man may avail himself of God's grace and use the pilgrimage of this life to achieve salvation.

The Canterbury Tales' varied range of subject matter and genres gives way in the Parson's Tale to a tale which answers to its generic title largely in that it is a telling, an act of communication in words. It is no fiction. Yet despite his expressed contempt for fable the Parson is himself a fiction: the idealized religious man exists only verbally and notionally. His sermon would still have retained its morality had Chaucer translated and condensed its sources without introducing his work into the Canterbury Tales. Yet outside the Canterbury Tales the work would only manifest its own innate worth and Chaucer's act of devotion in translating it. Within the poem it is also the Parson's fruyt, the verbal deed which reveals the pilgrim's character and so confirms the persona's judgment of him in the General Prologue. Its inclusion has another effect, it not only incorporates its vertuous mateere but also the expression of an attitude to the scope of fiction. The true lie which may faithfully reflect the human condition in whatever mode seems suitable to its author is capacious enough to include multiple perception of value, including the perception of its own value as worthless. While Chaucer's morality is unlikely to underlie the Miller's or Reeve's values it underlies their inclusion. Since such men exist in the world literature which explores the pilgrimage of this life legitimately includes them: God's 'compaignye of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle in felaweshipe,' is far more diverse than Chaucer's. Like the Parson Chaucer believes in the grace of God which enables salvation but the Parson's uncompromising attitude to fable is clearly not shared by Chaucer. The Parson seems to imply that *all fable is worthless.* Certainly he refuses to tell any fable preferring to offer the wheat he does have in his hand, the bread of religion. Preaching not tale-telling is his vocation and he preaches well. But one

of Chaucer's vocations, perhaps the only work he did which he did feel as vocation, was making and his understanding of fiction is different from that of the Parson. After telling a tale whose fabulous quality is consistently highlighted the Nun's Priest proclaims what Chaucer repeats in his retraction:

> For seint Paul seith that al that writen is,
> To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis;
> Taketh the fruyt, and let the chaf be stille.
> [(B^2) 4631-4633]

Both the Nun's Priest and the Parson associates happiness with their tales although the types of tales they tell are so different.[149]

All learning does not focus upon the same lessons nor are last things the only things. In the Parson's disparagement of fable Chaucer demonstrates another extreme from that which he raised in the debate on the inclusion or exclusion of cherles tales. The inclusion of the Parson's argument against fable within the poem places it, like the argument for including ribaudye, in a meaningful literary and moral context. While some tales are morally mere draf this is true of none of the Canterbury Tales, all of which express the imprint of Chaucer, whatever the limitations of their apparent authors, and the Tales itself is sufficiently capacious and generous in spirit to include within its ambit a wide variety of attitudes as well as to give pride of place to the tale of the pilgrim to whom literature is most suspect.

Broadly speaking there are two schools of thought regarding Chaucer's retractions. There are those critics who believe either that they are merely conventional, a perfunctory expression of appropriately religious

sentiments at the end of a secular festschrift or that they satirize denials of the value of such tales as Chaucer has told. Opposed to this school of thought, which seeks to reduce the significance of the leve-takynge, are those critics who judge that in it Chaucer expresses an attitude to which he actually subscribed, that unlike much of the Canterbury Tales it is not built upon ironies and is written in earnest.[150] That the first person narrator and the poet are not identical has long been accepted both on the grounds of characterization which E. Talbot Donaldson raised in 'Chaucer the Pilgrim' and because of an awareness that the use of the first person narrator in the middle ages was no necessary sign of close identification with the author.[151] But to use the first person singular was obviously not to deny the possibility that the sentiments expressed were those of the author. The voice which speaks in the leve-takynge echoes the rubric's stress on makynge: 'Heere taketh the makere of this book his leve.' Whether the rubric is Chaucer's or merely a scribal addition we cannot know, but what succeeds it is Chaucer's. In a highly informative article on the conventional background to Chaucer's retraction, Olive Sayce argues that the latter represents a merely conventional exercise and that we should look to the retraction not to understand how Chaucer felt about his art near the end of his life but to see him explore tensions between traditional ecclesiastical attitudes to literature and more modern secular literary aspirations. She writes:

> Structurally the passage [i.e. the retraction] can be shown to be entirely in keeping with the general pattern of medieval prologues and epilogues, and in particular to be an instance of the well-attested topos of regret for worldly works. All its formulations can be closely parallelled elsewhere. Thematically, however, it reflects the tension between traditional

> ecclesiastical teaching and the growing autonomy of secular literature. Far from being a personal confession of literary sin, it is a conventional structural motif which is used as the vehicle for the expression of opposing aesthetic standpoints. (pp. 245-246)

She suggests that there is a logical inconsistency in critics' recognizing the discrepancy between the persona within the poem and Chaucer the poet beyond it and their not perceiving that the retraction, which is also placed within the poem is associated with the first person narrator not Chaucer himself.

While it is clear that Chaucer uses conventional motifs in the retraction, what is not clear is that by doing so he moves away from expressing his own views. Chaucer lived within a specific social context by which his subject matter and style were both influenced. That many people wrote conventional prologues and epilogues to their poems, some in good faith some doubtless in relatively unreflecting imitation of a current mode, tells us little about Chaucer's motives in adopting time-honoured conventions. It is the way that Chaucer uses them, not the fact that he uses them that may indicate his purpose.

In Group I the pilgrimage to Canterbury, itself a figure of the journey though life to God, gives way to the Parson's attempt 'To shewe . . . the wey in this viage/ Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage/ That highte Jerusalem celestial' [X (I) 49-51]. After the Parson's Tale there is no further reference to any of the pilgrim company. The narrative frame disappears and only the words of the maker of this book are left. In the Ieve-takynge Chaucer describes a different reality from that expressed within the narrative frame. It is as an author

that he speaks not as a pilgrim, and in his plea to his audience he accepts responsibility for the writing of the Canterbury Tales not simply for reporting the events of the journey. The fiction that the pilgrimage actually occurred is no longer protected and Chaucer addresses himself directly to his actual audience and to his God. He addresses his audience first, commending his litel tretys to it, and asking its members to thank 'Lord Jhesu Crist of whom procedith al wit and al goodnesse' [X (I) 1081] for whatever they like in it, and to attribute its weaknesses to 'the defaute of [his] unkonnynge and nat [his] wyl, that wolde ful fayn have seyd bettre if [he] hadde had konnynge' [X (I) 1082]. In this he expresses the gap between God and man: God in whose perfect being there is no falling off and from whom all goodness derives and man in his imperfection time bound and fallible attempting to perceive the good and do well which he does not always achieve, for while in God intention and execution are one in man there is a large gap between them. His wyl was good, he tells us, but his konnynge was not perfect. Recalling the end of the Nun's Priest's Tale he cites St Paul's words again — 'For oure book seith, "Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine," and that is myn entente' [X (I) 1083] — and applies them now to his own writing in the Canterbury Tales. His intention was to present a worthy mirror of the world, where his art has failed his image is marred, and others may not clearly perceive what he intended clearly but executed only in part. The frustrations as well as the delights of human creativity underlie the formal topoi in the retraction yet also present in Chaucer's citation of this text is a sense of the gap between the type of writing which is solely 'writen for oure doctrine' and the type which Chaucer has created in the Canterbury Tales.

When Chaucer talks in the following section of the retraction of revoking 'the tales of Canterbury, thilke that sownen into synne' the clause admits of multiple interpretation. He does not say whether he means specific tales or parts of tales or large parts of the entire poem or even in what way they 'sownen into synne.' Is he considering his own purely human pride in creating such works of art, mere 'worldly vantitees,' is he considering their subject matter or the fact that they may cause others to sin in thought or act? We cannot know although it does seem to me that at the time of writing this section, which was probably close to his death, Chaucer had simply changed his mind about his secular art. This surmise seems strengthened by the wholesale nature of Chaucer's retractions, which include almost his entire secular canon. In such an attitude he had many predecessors. One thinks of Boccaccio in his later years and of St Augustine's retraction of his enthusiastic acclaim of poetry in De ordine.[152]

The vigour with which the Canterbury Tales defends literature's capacity to illustrate and mirror human truths has given way in the retraction to its maker's contemplation of last — and prime — things. Yet even this is not wholly true. The retraction of his earlier works is unequivocally expressed but the qualification in the revocation of the Canterbury Tales sets up ambiguities which are not contained by speculation regarding his criteria of selection there but which spread to the entire revocation. As Olive Sayce has pointed out in the act of revoking he names his canon and thus ensures that its name will live, associated with his own in the manuscripts that bespeak his literary works.[153] Communicated is the pull between his love of his literary creations and the knowledge that in absolute terms, if no the relative terms of man living in the

world, the fascination with the world and the things of the world which they express must finally be left behind.

When Chaucer writes that '"al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine," and that is myn entente' and then continues to revoke much that he wrote, there is not necessarily a contradiction. One distinction, that between intention and execution has already been discussed; another, that between Chaucer's position at the end of his life and his readers' in their own lives, may be mentioned. For the poet it is particularly necessary to take final spiritual stock of his writing since he is near to death; for his readers the type of stocktaking is different. For people still 'nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita' what the Canterbury Tales has to offer, albeit imperfectly expressed, is still valid: it reflects their world in a way which not only gives pleasure but also aids insight into the nature of the worldly reality which they inhabit and into art's capacity to do this. But to the poet that part of his life is past and this poem as well as his earlier secular poems are too equivocal, balance too adeptly secular and religious impulses to be part of what he wishes to place before God. At the day of judgment 'nat oonly . . . our defautes shullen be jugged, but eek . . . alle oure werkes shullen openly be knowe. And, as seith St Bernard, "Ther ne shal no pledynge availle, ne no sleighte; we shullen yeven rekenynge of everich ydel word." . . . . For certes ther availleth noon essoyne ne excusacioun' [X (I) 165-166, 164].

After reclaiming his explicitly pious works, Chaucer prays for the grace that will enable him to achieve the salvation of his soul. The three parts of his leve-takynge all stress aspects of his own agency and their implications. First Chaucer describes his agency in relation to the writing of the Canterbury Tales and the gap between will and execution exhibited there, secondly in relation to his desire for salvation and his revocation of almost all his poetic works as 'worldly vanitees' and finally in his submitting himself to the grace of God. Throughout he stresses his relation to God (which is paramount) and to his audience who are both directed towards God 'of whom procedeth al . . . goodnesse' and petitioned to pray for the poet. In the naming of the canon in the retractions and endorsements and in the plea to the audience of his poem to pray for his soul Chaucer stresses the actual relations of poet, poem and audience to the God who is 'kynge of kynges.' Whatever we may feel about the judgments Chaucer passes upon his works we do not doubt his right to pass them. The poems are his, he has made them and it is his judgment that must decide their present value to him. Although not to us: for the way in which we read the Canterbury Tales depends upon our choice; once Chaucer has created the poem our use of the poem is our responsibility. Throughout the Canterbury Tales Chaucer has described the pilgrims as though they truly live and freely make their choices. Here at the end of the poem he accepts responsibility for his fiction openly. There is a logical consistency in this, one which Chaucer does not dilate upon in the retraction but which is nevertheless there 'mplicit in the work which was 'writen for oure doctrine.' In giving free will to his pilgrims Chaucer creates the illusion that they live, and at the end of the

Canterbury Tales in the leve-takynge Chaucer takes leave and makes us take leave also of his pilgrims as people. In the ending of the fiction is a return to truth. This underlies all the explicit functions of the passage. Here the illusion of life which is all that any human artist may create is highlighted in the stress which is given to the only actual beings whose wills operate in relation to Chaucer's poem: the poet, his audience and his God.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Essays and Studies, 25 (1972), pp. 23-44.

2. Although there are tales whose attribution varies amongst the manuscripts, and some pilgrims who tell no tales; none tells the four proposed by the Host, but then the actual narrative development differs from that suggested by the Host's proposal in the General Prologue: no return journey from Canterbury is described, nor is arrival at Canterbury.

3. See E. Talbot Donaldson, 'The Ordering of the Canterbury Tales,' Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 193-204 for discussion of editorial problems attendant upon incompletion, inconsistencies within and discrepancies between manuscripts.

4. Passages include: I (A) 2995-3001; (B^2) 2359; (B^2) 4164-4168; III (D) 1513-1520; IV (E) 2237-2239. The edition used throughout is the second edition of F. N. Robinson, Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (London: Oxford University Press, and Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957).

5. St Augustine, De doctrina christiana, ed. Fr. Balbino Martín, in Obras de San Augustín, 15, B.A.C., 168 (Madrid: La Editorial Catolica, 1957), p. 104; 1.35.39.

6. Discussions of the various attitudes are cited below in n. 28.

7. For a convenient fourteenth century summary of the alleged iniquities of poets, see Boccaccio, Genealogie deorum gentilium libri, ed. Vincenzo Romano, 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza and sons, 1951), 2, p. 696 (14.5). The preface, books fourteen and fifteen are translated by Charles G. Osgood in Boccaccio on Poetry (1930, rpt. New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1956). The translation of the passage cited is on pp. 35-36.

. . . aiunt, poesim omnino nullam aut futilem facultatem atque ridiculam, poetas homines esse fabulosos, [illegible] illos, ut despectiori utantur vocabulo, non nunquam fabulones appellant, rura silvas et

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montana colentes, eo quod moribus nec urbanitate valeant. Preterea eorum poemata esse dicunt obscura nimis atque mendacia lasciviis plena et deorum gentilium nugis atque ineptiis referta, asserentia Iovem, quendam aldulterum et spurcidum hominem, nunc deorum patrem, nunc celorum regem, nunc ignem, nunc aerem, nunc hominem, nunc taurum, nunc aquilam, et huiusmodi inconvenientia: sic et Iunonem et alios infinitos, eos multorum nominum celebres facientia. Mentium insuper seductores clamitant esse poetas ac suasores criminum, et, ut turpiori, si possint, conmaculent nota, predicant eos phylosophorum symias esse; firmantes inde, poetarum libros legisse aut tenere, pregrande piaculum, ac, nulla facta distinctione, autoritate, ut aiunt, fulciti Platonis, eos nedum e domibus, sed ex urbibus esse pellendos, et eorum scenicas meretriculas, Boetio approbante in exitium usque dulces, detestabiles fore atque eiciendas et renuendas omnino!

They say poetry is absolutely of no account, and the making of poetry a useless and absurd craft; that poets are tale-mongers, or, in lower terms, liars; that they live in the country among the woods and mountains because they lack manners and polish. They say, besides, that their poems are false, obscure, lewd and replete with absurd and silly tales of pagan gods, and that they make Jove, who was, in point of fact, an obscene and adulterous man, now the father of gods, now king of heaven, now fire, or air, or man, or bull, or eagle, or similar irrelevant things; in like manner poets exalt to fame Juno and infinite others under various names. Again and again they cry out that poets are seducers of the mind, prompters of crime, and to make their foul charge, fouler, if possible, they say they are philosophers' apes, that it is a heinous crime to read or possess the books of poets; and then, without making any distinction, they prop themselves up, as they say, with Plato's authority to the effect that poets ought to be turned out-of-doors – nay, out of town, and that the Muses, their mumming mistresses, as Boethius says, being sweet with deadly sweetness, are detestable, and should be driven out with them and utterly rejected.

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8. In citing Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy I have used the Robinson edition of Chaucer's translation throughout. The edition of the original used is that of the Loeb Classical Library, ed. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (London: Heinemann and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, [1962]).

9. Genealogie deorum gentilium, 14.19. See also 14.5 and 14.14.

10. Plato's strictures were approvingly summarised by St Augustine in De civitate Dei, 2.14:

An forte Graeco Platoni potius palma danda est, qui cum ratione formaret, qualis esse civitas debeat, tamquam adversarios veritatis poetas censuit urbe pellendos? Iste vero et deorum iniurias indigne tulit et fucari corrumpique figmentis animos civium noluit.

Perhaps the palm should be given to the Greek Plato. In conceiving the constitution of the ideal State, he thought it proper to exclude from the city the poets, as enemies of the truth. He would tolerate no insults to the gods, nor permit the minds of the people to be misled and perverted by fictions.

St Augustine: De civitate Dei, ed. J. E. C. Welldon, 2 vols. (London: S.P.C.K., 1924), 1, p. 72. The translation is that of D. B. Zema and G. G. Walsh, Fathers of the Church (3 vols.: 8,14,24 [Washington: C.U.A., 1950, 1952, 1954]), 8, p. 93. This is not the only attitude to the worth of the fictional arts expressed by St Augustine. The attitudes expressed in De ordine (1.8.24; 2.4.13; 2.11.32-34; 2.14.39-41), Soliloquia (2.10) and De musica (6.1.1.) provide interesting contrasts. See below, pp. 23-30.

11. Primary sources are cited where relevant in the text and are included in the bibliography. Of the secondary literature I have consulted C. A. Patrides, The Phoenix and the Ladder: The Rise and Decline of the Christian View of History, UCES, 29 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1964) and the enlarged version published as The Grand Design of God: The Literary Form of the Christian View of History (London: Routledge, 1972); of the works cited this contains the most comprehensive bibliography. I have also consulted Erich Auerbach, Dante: Poet of the Secular World, trans. Ralph Mannheim (1929; trans. Chicago:

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Chicago Univ. Press, 1961); 'Figura,' Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (1944; New York: Meridian, 1959), pp.11-76; Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (1946; Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953); C. David Benson, 'The Knight's Tale as History,' Chaucer Review, 3 (1968), pp. 107-123; M. W. Bloomfield, 'Chaucer's Sense of History,' JEGP, 51 (1952), pp. 301-313, reprinted in Essays and Explorations (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 13-26; Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time (London: SCM, 1962); Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955); The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, trans. A. H. C. Downes (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936), especially 'The Middle Ages and History,' pp. 383-402; Louis Green, Chronicle into History: An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth Century Chronicles (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972); Charles Homer Haskins, 'Historical Writing,' The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (1927; rpt. New York: Meridian, 1960); Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History: A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History (New York: Scribner's, 1949); Charles S. Singleton, Dante Studies One: Commedia Elements of Structure (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1954); Dante Studies Two: Journey to Beatrice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958); An Essay on the Vita Nuova (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958).

12. The Parson, whom the Host asks to knitte up al this feeste, opens his sermon with a statement of God's desire to ensure man's salvation, and concludes it with a description of the endelees blisse of hevene which is the reward of living morally [X (I) 75-80, 1076-1080].

13. See Patrides, The Grand Design of God, pp. 1-12. See also St Augustine, Civitate Dei 12.10, 12.12, 12.14, 12.18, 12.20, 12.21.

14. See Civ. Dei, 7.31, 14.11, 20.6.

15. The Parson's conclusion to the first part of his sermon sums this up succintly:

> For soothly oure sweete Lord Jhesu Crist hath spared us so debonairly in oure folies, that if he ne hadde pitee of mannes soule, a sory song we myghten alle synge.
> [X (I) 315]

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16. I have used this phrase which recalls St Augustine's description of the 'place' which exists within the soul even though it has no extension in space, to suggest the interaction of the transcendent and the immanent. See Confessions (13.7) and De doctrina christiana (1.17.16-22.21).

17. This is of course fundamental to the Parson's choice of tale, for the vertuous mateere that the Parson elects to tell the pilgrims demonstrates clearly and comprehensively the nature of the knowledge which it is vital that christian man should understand, and the use to which it should be put — conversion from sin to a state of grace through penitence not once or sporadically but throughout huius mortalitatis vita.

18. See Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series, 36 (original Bern: A. Francke A. G. Verlag, 1948: trans. New York: Pantheon, 1953), pp. 310ff. for the book topos. It was used in the Old Testament as well as the New, and it stresses both God's authorship of his creation and the literal-historical linearity of its development. Both the jewish and the western European christian traditions held firm at all times to the concept of the literal historicity of the events at the centre of their religious doctrines and by doing so imbued history with great moral significance. See further Patrides, op. cit. n. 11. See also St Augustine De trinitate, 15.9.15, PL 42, 1068-1069, quotrd below, pp. 10-11.

19. Hugh of St Victor, Eruditionis didascalicae liber septimus, PL 176, 814; St Bonaventure, Breviloquium 2.11, both quoted by Charles S. Singleton, An Essay on the Vita Nuova, pp. 38-39.

20. St Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologica, 1.1.10., resp. 1, 617, trans. C. S. Singleton, Dante Studies One, p. 88.

21. St Augustine, De trinitate, 15.9.15, PL 42, 1068-1069, trans. Stephen McKenna, Fathers of the Church (Washington: CUA, 1963), 45, p. 471.

22. See, for example, Civ. Dei 7.32.

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23. Whether or not the letter is authentic is irrelevant to my purpose in quoting from it here. The text which I have used is Paget Toynbee's revised edition of E. Moore's Le Opere di Dante Alighieri (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963). The translation is by Phillip H. Wicksteed in The Latin Works of Dante Alighieri (London: Dent, 1934).

24. Contrast, e.g., D. W. Robertson jnr's explication in A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962).

25. On the literary implications of the christianizing of Europe, see Auerbach, Dante: Poet of the Secular World, pp. 10-14.

26. But not to deny its humour. Compare E. Talbot Donaldson's comment that to insist 'that Chaucer was not a moralist, but a comic writer [is to make] a distinction without a difference' ('Chaucer the Pilgrim,' PMLA, 69 1954 , 928-936; reprinted in Speaking of Chaucer [London: Athlone Press, 1970], p. 10).

27. For discussion of the relation of poet and persona see pp. 54-62, 63-64, 66, 143 below and nn. 69, 76.

28. For a detailed discussion of changing and maintained attitudes see E. R. Curtius, 'Poetry and Philosophy' and 'Poetry and Theology,' European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, pp. 203-227. See also Edgar de Bruyne, The Esthetics of the Middle Ages, trans. Eileen B. Henessy (1946; New York: Ungar, 1963), Alice S. Miskimin, The Renaissance Chaucer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), especially 'Apologies for Poetry: Originality and Counterfeit Art,' pp. 132-155; I have found Charles G. Osgood's introduction and notes in Boccaccio on Poetry particularly illuminating. For a discussion of the allegorical synthesis of philosophy, theology and poetry effected by the Chartrians, see Winthrop Wetherbee, Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972). See also the excellent 'Dante's "Allegory of Poets" and the Medieval Theory of Poetic Fiction,' by R. H. Green, Comparative Literature, 9 (1957), 118-128 and the convincing reply by C. S. Singleton, loc. cit., 129-135.

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29. Chaucer's indebtedness to Boethius 'nedeth noon auctorite to preve;' his translating the Consolation of Philosophy is perhaps the loving counterpart of Dante's placing Boethius, l'anima santa, in the Heaven of the Sun (Paradiso 10.121-129). On the influential position Boethius held in medieval thought see Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy: Medieval Philosophy: Augustine to Bonaventure (New York: Doubleday [1950] 1962), pp. 116-119; Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, pp. 97-106; David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (London: Longman, 1962), pp. 51-55; Gordon Leff, Medieval Thought: St Augustine to Ockham (Hammondsworth: Penguin, [1958] 1962), pp. 47-50; see also the introduction to Chaucer's translation of the Consolation in Robinson, pp. 319-320. For a brief account of the genre of prosimetricum, see Curtius, p. 151.

30. Fabula: Explorations in the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism (Leyden and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1974), p. 4.

31. See Republic, Books 2, 3 and 10, translated by W. H. D. Rouse, Great Dialogues of Plato (New York: The New American Library, 1956). The quotation is from 10.607B.

32. See R. Klibansky, The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages: Outlines of a Corpus Platonicum (London: Warburg Institute, 1939); for the role that St Augustine played in transmitting Platonic ideas in Western Europe, see R. R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p. 175. Osgood offers an extensive line of descent for this specific attitude to poetry from St Augustine to Boccaccio, p. 179, n. 1.

33. On the implications of Plato's endorsement and use of fictitious situation see Ludwig Edelstein, 'The Function of the Myth in Plato's Philosophy,' Journal of the History of Ideas, 10 (1949), 463-481, and Drew Hyland, 'Why Plato Wrote Dialogues,' Philosophy and Rhetoric, 1 (1968), 38-50.

34. Other passages, cited by Edelstein, 466, in which Plato affirms the true lie include Republic 2, 377A and Timaeus 29D; see also Republic 10, 614A.

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35. Republic, 10 passim, esp. 600-607.

36. Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. with an introduction and notes by W. H. Stahl, Records of Civilization, Sources & Studies, 48 (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press [1952], 1966), p. 10.

37. For Chaucer's knowledge and use of Macrobius' Commentary see J. A. W. Bennett, The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), pp. 31-33.

38. I have not read William's Commentary on the Commentary of Macrobius and am relying on Dronke's account of it in Fabula pp. 13-78.

39. St Augustine (354-430); Macrobius (fl. ca. 400). Neither the exact identity nor the precise dates of the author of the Commentary on the Somnium Scipionis are known. Stahl states that 'Macrobius was probably born in the third quarter of the fourth century' and cites two opinions on the dating of the commentary — Georgii: after 395 and 'some time before 410;' Wissowa: somewhat earlier (Stahl, p.5).

40. St Augustine, De ordine, PL 32, translated by R. P. Russell as Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil, Fathers of the Church, 5 (New York: CIMA, 1948).

41. See also Robert C. Taliaferro's introduction, Fathers of the Church, 2 (New York: CIMA, 1947), especially pp. 163-164.

42. (2.10.18, PL 32 893), trans. T. F. Gilligan, Fathers of the Church, 5 (New York: CIMA, 1948), pp. 401-402.

43. Compare Boccaccio, Genealogy, 14.9 and 14.13.

44. *I am assuming historical records'* 'truth;' because it is not directly relevant to my point here I omit discussion of the area of blurring between literal histories and histories which contain a fair proportion of fable themselves.

45. See M. W. Bloomfield, 'Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer,' Thought, 39 (1964), 335-358; reprinted in the author's Essays and Explorations (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 175-198.

46. See Wetherbee, Platonism and Poetry, cited in n. 28.

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47. See pp. 6-15 above. For an account of the distinction between poetic allegory (the allegory of a = b) and theologian's allegory (the allegory of a + b + c . . .) see Dante's definition in the Convivio (2.1.2-4), in the Letter to Can Grande (quoted on pp. 12-13), and Charles S. Singleton, 'Appendix: the Two Kinds of Allegory,' Dante Studies One, pp. 84-94, from which the quotation above is taken. See also M. W. Bloomfield, 'Allegory as Interpretation,' NLH, 3 (1971-1972), 301-312.

48. I am using realism to express a different concept and in relation to different expectations from Donald Howard in The Idea of the Canterbury Tales (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 160-164. Howard stresses the limitations of the realism in the narrative frame, pointing out that a number of necessary activities -- lodging overnight, stopping for food and drink -- and likely sights -- the pilgrimage shrines along the Canterbury Way, the actual towns, rather than the shorthand mention of a few of their names -- are not incorporated into the description of the pilgrimage. His model of realistic writing primarily implies accurate imitation of the physical world; mine is focused upon Chaucer's representation, in literal rather than allegorical terms, of what was a medieval reality, the world's being seen as God's good creation, possessing an ideal realism in that it proclaims its Maker in its act of being (see Civ. Dei, 11.21).

49. Not in every instance nor to a constant degree, but congruency of tale and teller is far more common than its absence and because it predominates in the tales is far more powerful stylistically than the presence of the few tales which seem to bear little or no relation to what we are told of their tellers.

CHAPTER TWO

50. In calling the poem 'whole' I am not intending to deny its incomplete state; what an hypothetical totality of the Canterbury Tales would have included is obviously a matter of pure speculation; but in the poem as we have it, the narrative frame's structure offers a consistency which is not merely dependent upon the presence of an undoubted beginning in the General Prologue and conclusion in

the Parson's Prologue and leve-taking, but also upon the clarity with which certain issues related to the nature of the poem have been raised, explored and resolved. See also Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales, pp. 27-29, 162-173, whose sense of the poem as 'unfinished but complete' is most persuasively argued.

51. See below n. 60.

52. This is not predominantly true of the entire narration. While the presence of the persona is again felt in the Prologue to the Miller's Tale, once the question of inclusion or exclusion of cherles tales has been raised and resolved, Chaucer does not find it necessary to sustain the device of first person narration systematically throughout the Tales. The subjectivity of the account is established in relation to the narrator, but its relative objectivity is also stressed, as indeed it must be if the readers are to respond to the narration as they would to an actual historical account. The pilgrims' own individual responses to their common situation are largely presented without the diffuse view of a fairly unreliable narrator, whose own characterization has in any case indicated the reader's need to be aware of potential bias long before the pilgrims speak in their own voices. It is only in the General Prologue portraits that a clearly articulated sense of the persona's value judgments is sustained almost invariably. The persona's overt presence is again manifest in the B^2 Group where 'Chaucer' tells the only verse tale he knows, Sir Thopas, and once he has been cut short, launches into that 'litel thyng in prose,' the Tale of Melibee. In the opening lines of the leve-taking, the persona and poet are not readily extricable: whose voice predominates depends upon the claim being made about what has been read or heard – is it rehersing or making that is being commended to the poem's audience? By X (I) 1084ff. it is clear, even if there be difficulties of tone, that Chaucer is speaking in his own person and the act of making is at issue. For most of the poem, once the fiction of personal historical authentication is stated, its implications briefly and richly suggested in lines I (A) 716-746 and 3168-3186, it is left to subsist in such manifestations as regular usage of first person possessive and personal pronouns,

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particularly in the plural. The Host is almost invariably termed 'our Host,' and the pilgrims' unanimous responses are always described in the first not third person plural, although all other, individual, responses are reported in the third person. In most of the links it is the use of the possessive 'our' applied to the Host rather than the explicit presence of a first person narrator which establishes the persona's presence as relater of the action; 'our' here being a designation whose major stress is upon the concept of community in the company of sondry folk which the persona joined rather than upon the individual himself. The occurrences of 'oure Hoost(e)' are legion; in pervasiveness they far outweigh the other devices regularly used – the use of first person singular and plural nominative pronouns, and direct second person addressing of the audience by the persona.

53. Or would be in an ideal world. In fact relatively few of the Canterbury pilgrims journey with the 'ful devout corage' that the persona tells us was his when he prepared to go on pilgrimage, but their enjoyment of the journey, if not their concern to arrive, establishes their plausibility as 'the experience of day by day' should prove.

54. On the relation of time and eternity see St Augustine, City of God, 11.6 and Confessions, 11, passim.

55. In Chaucer and the Country of the Stars: Poetic Uses of Astrological Imagery (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), p. 166, pp. 166-167, n. 8.

56. On the occurrence and function of descriptions of spring in classical and medieval poetry, see Curtius, pp. 120ff., 185ff., and James J. Wilhelm, The Cruelest Month: Spring, Nature, and Love in Classical and Medieval Lyrics (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965). Wilhelm's reading in classical and troubadour poetry led him to conclusions differing in their level of generality from Curtius's; he questions Curtius's assumptions that descriptions of spring in classical literature were almost invariably idealized. In Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), Peter Dronke, like Wilhelm, takes Curtius's study as his starting-point, here in order to express the limitations of his

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method in establishing a sense of the uniqueness of individual poets' attempts to express reality both by using established forms directed to specific ends and by departing from them. See also Donald Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales, pp. 92-93. Howard's reading of the Canterbury Tales is the most far-reaching recent one that I have encountered, inviting reassessment of many aspects of the poem.

57. On Chaucer's use of the historical present see Larry Benson, 'Chaucer's Historical Present: Its Meaning and Uses,' English Studies, 42 (1961), 65-75. My interpretation of the usage here is influenced by his article, although the implications with which I am concerned differ slightly from those which he treats. Analysing the function of the historical present (in conjunction with a preterite), he shows that 'these present verbs are used in a manner which demonstrates the historical present's durative implication, its connotation of continuing action' (p. 67).

58. The movement of the passage from elemental matter, through animate plant life to animal life, and thence to man follows a traditional pattern of ascending hierarchies in created nature; the development is from that which has mere essence, through that which also has animation and the powers of generation, to that which has motion and sense perception too, and then to man who alone of corporal beings has an immortal soul and can freely choose to journey in virtue towards God. For a similar procession, see St Augustine, De quantitate animae, ch. 35.

59. The discrepancy between the implicit demands of the nature of moral reality and man's responses is almost inevitably a subject of concern to any christian thinker attempting to explore man's place and role in the universe. Etienne Gilson describes St Bonaventure's grappling with this:

In relation to [God] man can see both his origin and his goal, and so arrives at the recognition that he has a history. He sees his life as a passage between a beginning and a conclusion; and this certitude is capital -- its effects upon his other certitudes is such that it completely transforms them. Not only has the life of man a history; the universe as a whole has a history . . . . And . . .

the history of the universe is seen by us as a drama in which we have a part, a drama whose conclusion, after all digressions and divagations, must be our beatitude or misery for all eternity . . . . [St Bonaventure] thinks precisely because it is for him a problem of eternal life or death to know what one must think; he trembles at the mere imagined possibility that he might, in a moment of distraction, lose sight of [the truth]. It is his agony to see that practically no one is thinking about it; and that man made by a God, remade by the blood of a God, is ever busy at his own unmaking -- as if all that can choose between nothingness and being did, in blind folly, choose nothingness. (The Philosophy of St Bonaventure, trans. Dom Illtyd Trethowan and F. J. Sheed [London: Sheed and Ward, 1938], pp. 473-474). The form of St Bonaventure's speculations, their immediate purpose and level of intensity all differ from Chaucer's poetic realization, but both saint and poet share concern to communicate understanding of the same fundamental human and divine reality.

60. An excellent overview, extensively annotated, of the topos homo viator in the medieval period may be found in Gerhart B. Ladner, 'Homo Viator: Medieval Ideas on Alienation and Order,' Speculum, 42 (1967), 233-259. See also Samuel C. Chew, The Pilgrimage of Life (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1962), esp. 'Strangers and Pilgrims,' pp. 174-225, which, though primarily concerned with discussion of english literature of the renaissance, traces the historical development of the ideas and images discussed. There is discussion of St Bonaventure's treatment of the concept of the journey to God in Etienne Gilson, Christian Philosophy of St Bonaventure, in Anthony Nemetz, 'The Itinerarium Mentis in Deum: the Human Condition,' in S. Bonaventura 1274-1974, ed. Guy Bougerol et al. (Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1973), 2, pp. 345-359, and in Bernard Mc Ginn, 'Ascension and Introversion in the Itinerarium Mentis in Deum,' Op. cit., 3, pp. 535-552. Charles S. Singleton, 'The Allegorical Journey,' Dante Studies Two, pp. 3-14, explores Dante's use of the topos of the journey in the Divine Comedy; see also Lydgate's english version of Guillame's Pilgrimage of the Life

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of Man, EETS, 3 vols., 77 (1889), 83 (1901), 92 (1904), and Rosemond Tuve, 'Guillame's Pilgrimage,' Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 145-218. On actual medieval pilgrimage see Jonathan Sumption, Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Perfection (London: Faber, 1975). On Chaucer's use of the topos, see Ralph Baldwin, The Unity of the Canterbury Tales, Anglistica, 5 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955); W. H. Clawson, 'The Framework of the Canterbury Tales,' UTQ, 20 (1950-1951), 137-154, esp. 145-146, 154; Arthur W. Hoffman, 'Chaucer's Prologue to Pilgrimage: The Two Voices,' MLN, 21 (1954), 1-16; Donald R. Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales, pp. 28-30, 159-164, 196-199 and passim; Esther C. Quinn, 'Religion in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales,' in Geoffrey Chaucer: A Collection of Original Articles, ed. George D. Economou (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), pp. 55-71.

61. St Augustine uses the image in De doctrina christiana to characterise one who does not prefer an immutable wise life to a mutable one:

Et hoc qui non videt (i.e. which is better), ita est quasi caecus in sole, cui nihil prodest ipsis locis oculorum eius tam clarae ac praesentis lucis fulgor infusus. Qui autem videt et refugit, consuetudine umbrarum carnalium invalidam mentis aciem gerit. Pravorum igitur morum quasi contrariis flatibus ab ipsa patria repercutiuntur homines; posteriora atque inferiora sectantes, quam illud quod esse melius atque praestantius confitentur. Quapropter, cum illa veritate perfruendum sit, quae incommutabiliter vivit, et in ea Trinitas Deus, auctor et conditor universitatis, rebus quas condidit consulat; purgandus est animus, ut et perspicere illam lucem valeat, et inhaerere perspectae. Quam purgationem quasi ambulationem quamdam, et quasi navigationem and patriam esse arbitremur. Non enim ad eum qui ubique praesans est, locis movemur, sed bono studio bonisque moribus. (1.9.9 - 1.10.10, B.A.C.,168,p.72.)

And he who does not see it is like a blind man in the sun who profits nothing when his eyesockets are infused with the brilliance of the clear and immediate light. But he who sees the truth and flees has

weakened the acuteness of his mind through the habit of carnal shadows. For men are driven back from their country by evil habits as by contrary breezes, seeking things farther back from and inferior to that which they confess to be better and more worthy.

Therefore, since that truth is to be enjoyed which lives immutably, and since God the Trinity, the Author and Founder of the universe, cares for His creatures through that truth, the mind should be cleansed so that it is able to see that light and to cling to it once it is seen. Let us consider this cleansing to be as a journey or voyage home. But we do not come to Him who is everywhere present by moving from place to place, but by good endeavour and good habits. (Robertson, pp. 12-13).

62. St Thomas Aquinas, On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Summa Contra Gentiles, Book Two: Creation, trans. . . F. Anderson (New York: Doubleday, 1956).

63. See also Jill Mann, Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973).

64. On the artist as creator, on God as an artist and on the analogous relation of man as maker to God as Creator of the universe see E. R. Curtius, 'God as Maker,' European Literature, pp. 544-546, Milton C. Nahm, 'The Theological Background of the Theory of the Artist as Creator,' JHI, 8 (1947), 363-372 and Margaret F. Nims, 'Translatio: "Difficult Statement" in Medieval Poetic Theory,' UTQ, 43 (1974), 215-230. The ideas are commonplaces and examples abound throughout the middle ages; on their use during the renaissance see Alastair Fowler, Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 15-17. See also below pp. 23 ff.

65. See above n. 52.

66. That this is a literary stylistic device rather than a mark of the actual points beyond the narrator's claim to Chaucer's creation of plausible fiction. On the convention of the first person narrator see n. 76 below.

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67. Compare St Augustine's discussion of time in Confessions, 11, passim, especially 11.13 and 11.20, which are quoted below:

Nec tu tempore tempora praecedis: alioquin non omnia tempora praecederes. sed praecedis omnia praeterita celsitudine semper praesentis aeternitatis, et superas omnia futura, quia illa futura sunt et cum venerint, praeterita erunt; tu autem idem ipse es et anni tui non deficient . . . . anni tui omnes simul stant, quoniam stant . . . . anni tui dies unus, et dies tuus non cotidie, sed hodie, quia hodiernus tuus non cedit crastino; neque enim succedit hesterno. hodiernus tuus aeternitas . . . (Loeb, p. 234, p. 236.)

Furthermore, although you are before time, it is not in time that you proceed it. If this were so, you would not be before all time. It is in eternity, which is supreme over time because it is a never-ending present, that you are at once before all past time and after all future time . . . . Your years are completely present to you all at once, because they are at a permanent standstill . . . . Your years are one day, yet your day does not come daily but is always today, because your today does not give place to any tomorrow nor does it take the place of any yesterday. Your today is eternity. (Pine-Coffin, p. 263.)

Quod autem nunc liquet et claret, nec futura sunt nec praeterita, nec proprie dicitur: tempora sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens et futurum, sed fortasse proprie diceretur: tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris. sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam, et alibi ea non video: praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio. si haec permittimur dicere, tria tempora video fateorque tria sunt. (Loeb, p. 252.)

From what we have said it is abundantly clear that neither the future nor the past exist, and therefore it is not strictly correct to say that there are three times, past, present, and future. It might be correct to say that there are three times, a present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things. Some such different times do exist in

the mind, but nowhere else that I can see. The present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is direct perception; and the present of future things is expectation. If we may speak in these terms, I can see three times and I admit that they do exist. (Pine-Coffin, p. 269.)

68. I have discussed the attitudes and expectations associated with historical and literary accounts earlier (see above, ch. 1, passim).

69. Just how far the persona's artistry differs from the poet's, Chaucer makes clear later in the allocation of literary talent to his alter ego witnessed by Sir Thopas whose rocking-horse rhythm and string of clichéd absurdities makes it achieve the strange alchemy of seeming interminable in two hundred and five and a half lines.

70. In the dialogue of Raison and Amant in the Roman de la Rose (RR 6928-7229) a closely related issue is explored; whereas Chaucer treats his persona's scruples with respect for they relate to a genuine problem, Jean de Meun depicts Amant's squeamishness as mere fatuity, it reflects no genuine concern but merely a mindlessly stereotyped conventionality automatically emerging in response not to what Raison means but to her pronouncing coillons. In the Roman Amant whose ardent desire is to possess the Rose (a 'lady' and object of desire which by the end of the poem has become concretized as female genitalia) objects to Raison's use of the word coillons as unseemly for one of her sex and status. It is certainly true that he remains constant to his sense of verbal propriety till the end, for although he violates the Rose he does so in the highly refined language of euphemism: he is the devout pilgrim, the Rose the shrine which he wishes to enter and at which, by his own strenuous efforts, he arrives. Remarkable in the travesty both of religious devotion and sexual desire is the degree of coyness generated by so portentously handled a transposition of situation.

71. Ed. and trans. John Warrington (London: Dent and New York: Dutton, 1965), p. 15. Chaucer alludes to the idea again at IX (H) 207-210; he translated this reference to Plato in the Consolation

of Philosophy (3 pr. 12. 205-207) and would have known the similar justification by Raison in the Roman de la Rose, ll. 7099ff. (see previous note); the same concept is introduced in ll. 15177-15194 where the authority cited is not Plato but Sallust. See also City of God, 14.23, cited by John V. Fleming, The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 134.

72. For a discussion of the complex structure of the Canterbury Tales see John Leyerle, 'Thematic Interlace in "The Canterbury Tales",' Essays and Studies, 29 (1976), 107-121. Leyerle argues most persuasively for viewing the Canterbury Tales 'as a poem, even in its unfinished state, [which knits up] a number of threads in complex patterns, a design which may be called thematic interlace' (108-109).

CHAPTER THREE

73. See above pp. 33-35, 37-38.

74. See the discussion of the relation of art and nature in RR 16005-16072 (Langlois 4, pp. 129-131). Chaucer draws explicitly upon aspects of this relation in the Physician's Tale [VI (C) 5-40], itself derived from the retelling of Livy's history of Virginia in the Roman.

75. In an illuminating article on 'the literature group' ('Sentence and Solaas in Fragment VII of the Canterbury Tales: Harry Bailly as Horseback Editor,' PMLA, 82 [1967], 226-235), Alan Gaylord discusses the Host's criteria. He does, however, simplify the implications of solaas by stressing one set of connotations at the expense of another in a manner which is not wholly borne out by Chaucer's use of the term in the poem. He says 'If "sentence" belongs to the Latin world of preaching and teaching, "solaas," despite its ultimate source in the Latin solatium, belongs to the Romance. We find it, with its aristocratic French relatives "solas" and "solacier," in courtly literature as a development from a traditional minstrel term. In its most innocent use, it means simply "comfort" or "relief," but it always has attached to it the sense of (physical) pleasure and the joys of court; in Medieval romance, in fact, it is often a euphemism for sexual dalliance' (p. 230; my italics). The Knight,

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interrupting the Monk's catalogue of disasters [(B^2) 3957-3969], uses the sense of solas related to spiritual comfort as does the Parson, who describes its absence in hell [X (I) 206] and the folly of seeking 'an ydel solas of worldly thynges' when 'the soule hath lost the comfort of God' [X (I) 740]. Like ironia, whereby one can affirm and deny simultaneously, the Host's categories may admit simultaneously a sense of union and opposition depending upon the perception of the auditor.

76. There is always some discrepancy between a man and his public self even if it be only that between the whole and a part. Even in an hypothetical culture in which verisimilitude in art were extolled above all other formal stylistic considerations, literary translation of actuality would still involve the irreducible gap between the experience itself and the words designed to express it. When a poet creates a literary self there is, as well as the distance between the actual and its translation into words, the gap between his own sense of himself and whatever he intends communicating: none of Chaucer's poetic personae serve the sole function of realistic self-portraiture. All in varying degrees are intermediaries between their author his narrative and his audience. *The distinction with which I* am concerned here is specific: that based upon the differences between the claim of task that the persona makes and the actual task of writing implicit in the poem's existence, and between the persona's bumbling personality and indifferent literary accomplishments, lovingly depicted in the poem, and 'Chaucer . . . that had suche a name/ Of fayre makyng that [was] withouten wene/ Fayrest in our tong.' (Lydgate, The Floure of Curtesye, 34, Spurgeon, 1, p. 15). Leo Spitzer in 'Notes on the Poetic and the Empirical "I" in Medieval Authors,' Traditio, 4 (1946), 414-422 demonstrates that the gap between the presented and the actual self may widen sufficiently to permit the unblinking incorporation of details of another author's biography along with his arguments. See also M. W. Bloomfield, cited above, n. 45, on the use of a first person narrator as an authenticating device. The locus classicus in Chaucer's use of the persona is E. Talbot Donaldson's 'Chaucer the Pilgrim,' cited in n. 26. There is an

excellent discussion in Miskimin, cited in n. 28, pp. 81-95, which gives much needed stress to the complexity of Chaucer's usage and the limitations of generalizations about it that over-simplify in the interests of clarity. Ben Kimpel, in 'The Narrator of the Canterbury Tales,' MLH, 20 (1953), 77-86, offers a brief review of earlier critics' attitudes to the persona, himself concluding that Chaucer underplays his role and certainly was not 'trying to express through him his own personality' (86). ... 'Chaucer's Self-Portrait and Dante's,' Medium Aevum, 29 (1960), 119-120, A. L. Kellogg relates the Host's comment on the persona at (B^2) 695-697 to Purgatorio 19, 40-53, concluding that 'in choosing a model for his final self-portrait [Chaucer] chose that figure of Dante which most fully suggested to him the distancing and objectification great art requires' -- a correspondence that seems far more closely confirmed by the text than John M. Major's thesis that the narrator 'reveals himself to be, like his creator, perceptive, witty, sophisticated, playful, tolerant, detached, and, above all, ironic' ('The Personality of Chaucer the Pilgrim,' PMLA, 75 [1960], 160) -- a catalogue which might well have amused as well as gratified the author of 'O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn.'

77. In reality the present in which the persona resolves to record experiences of the pilgrimage could not be conterminous, except by artifice, with the present of his actual record which would succeed it; the synchrony keeps both the decision and the record in close focus: we see the persona's intentions and their realization simultaneously.

78. On Chaucer's 'class libel' of allocation of virtuous tales to gentil folk and vileynous ones to cherles, see Derek Brewer, 'Class Distinction in Chaucer,' Speculum, 43 (1968), 290-305.

79. I am assuming the integrity of intentions of the reporter, but even then reports may be untrue, the shifting sands of subjectivity making perception as dependent upon the beholder as the beheld (see Boece, 4 pr.4 176-218; 5 pr.4 133-143, 211-219). A report, however, does recount actualities unlike a literary tale which may be pure fiction.

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80. A most stimulating article on literary games is John Leyerle, 'The Game and Play of Hero,' Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. Norman T. Burns and Christopher J. Reagan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), pp. 83-100; for the seriousness of man at play see Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). See also Gerhard Joseph, 'Chaucerian "Game" — "Earnest" and the "Argument of Herbergage" in the Canterbury Tales,' Chaucer Review, 5 (1970), 83-96; the article focuses upon 'the crucial relatic ship of jest and seriousness . . . in Chaucer's art' — that is the playfulness rather than play-element of game.

81. St Augustine describes the complex interaction of parts in the harmonious order of existence in Civ. Dei, 19.13:

Pax itaque corporis est ordinata temperatura partium, pax animae inrationalis ordinata requies adpetitionum, pax animae rationalis ordinata cognitionis actionisque consensio, pax corporis et animae ordinata vita et salus animantis, pax hominis mortalis et Dei ordinata in fide sub aeterna lege oboedientia, pax hominum ordinata concordia, pax domus ordinata imperandi oboediendique concordia cohabitantium, pax civitatis ordinata imperandi adque oboediendi concordia civium, pax caelestis civitatis ordinatissima et concordissima societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo, pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis. Ordo est parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens dispositio.

(Welldon, 2, p. 424.)

The peace, then, of the body lies in the ordered equilibrium of all its parts; the peace of the irrational soul, in the balanced adjustment of its appetites; the peace of the reasoning soul, in the harmonious correspondence of conduct and conviction; the peace of body and soul taken together, in the well-ordered life and health of the living whole. Peace between a mortal man and his Maker consists in ordered obedience, guided by faith, under God's eternal law; peace between man and man consists in regulated fellowship. The peace of a home lies in the ordered harmony of authority and obedience between the members of a family living

together. The peace of the political community is an ordered harmony of authority and obedience between citizens. The peace of the heavenly City lies in a perfectly ordered and harmonious communion of those who find their joy in God and in one another in God. Peace, in its final sense, is the calm that comes of order. Order is an arrangement of like and unlike things whereby each of them is disposed in its proper place.

(Fathers of the Church, 24, pp. 217-218)

82. The edition of the Teseida which I have used is that of Salvatore Battaglia, Teseida (Florence: Sansoni, 1938). The translation is that of Bernadette Marie McCoy, The Book of Theseus: Teseida delle Nozze d'Emilia (New York: Medieval Text Association, 1974).

83. See above pp. 6-9, 13-14.

84. See also Civ. Dei, 8.5, 10.1 and Conf., 7.9.

85. See M. W. Bloomfield's 'Chaucer's Sense of History,' cited in n. 11 above. The christian narrative vantage point need not and does not in the Canterbury Tales negate attempts to delineate faithfully what 'was tho the gyse,' indeed its presence enables a juxtaposition of past and present, whereby both their equivalences and disparities are highlighted.

86. Compare St Augustine's comments in the City of God, where after discussing the diversity of views possible regarding what is supremely good and what is supremely evil, he says:

Si ergo quaeratur a nobis, quid civitas Dei de his singulis interrogata respondeat ac primum de finibus bonorum malorumque quid sentiat; respondebit aeternam vitam esse summum bonum, aeternam vero mortem summum malum; propter illam proinde adipiscendam istamque vitandam recte nobis esse vivendum. Propter quod scriptum est: Iustus ex fide vivit; quoniam neque bonum nostrum iam videmus, unde oportet ut credendo quaeramus, neque ipsum recte vivere nobis ex nobis est, nisi credentes adiuvet et orantes qui et ipsam fidem dedit, qua nos ab illo adiuvandos esse credamus.

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Illi autem, qui in ista vita fines bonorum et malorum esse putaverunt, sive in corpore sive in animo sive in utroque ponentes summum bonum, adque, ut id explicatius eloquar, sive in voluptate sive in virtute sive in utraque; sive in quiete sive in virtute sive in utraque; sive in voluptate simul et quiete sive in virtute sive in utrisque, sive in primis naturae sive in virtute sive in utrisque; hic beati esse et a se ipsis beati fieri mira vanitate voluerunt. Inrisit hos Veritas per prophetam dicentem: Dominus novit cogitationes hominum vanas, sicut hoc testimonium posuit apostolus Paulus: Dominus novit cogitationes sapientium, quoniam vanae sunt.
(19.4., Welldon, 2, pp. 406-407)

If I am asked what stand the City of God would take on the issues raised and, first, what this City thinks of the supreme good and ultimate evil, the answer would be: She holds that eternal life is the supreme good and eternal death the supreme evil, and that we should live rightly in order to obtain the one and avoid the other. Hence the Scriptural expression, 'the just man lives by faith' — by faith, for the fact is that we do not now behold our good and, therefore, must seek it by faith; nor can we of ourselves even live rightly, unless He who gives us faith helps us to believe and pray, for it takes faith to believe that we need His help.

Those who think that the supreme good and evil are to be found in this life are mistaken. It makes no difference whether it is in the body or in the soul or in both — or, specifically, in pleasure or virtue or in both — that they seek the supreme good. They seek in vain whether they look to serenity, to virtue, or to both; whether to pleasure plus serenity, or to virtue, or to all three; or to the satisfaction of our innate exigencies, or to virtue, or to both. It is in vain that men look for beatitude on earth or in human nature. Divine Truth as expressed in the Prophet's words, makes them look foolish: 'The Lord knows the thoughts of men' or, as the text is quoted by St Paul: 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are vain.'

(Fathers of the Church, 24, pp. 194-195)

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87. Perhaps 'choice' is itself a deceptive term here since, at least initially, the two knights are described as acted upon by love [I (A) 1077-1079, 1095-1097, 1112-1122]; whether their subjection to Cupid's will is voluntary or not is, however, not really in issue here – except, naturally, in so far as it concerns themselves; what is, is the nature of such service, its process and rewards. Palamon and Arcita live by their love ethic whose limitations are exemplified throughout the narrative.

88. For an explication of this see William R. Elton, King Lear and the Gods (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1968).

89. See Charles Muscatine's discussion of formal elements in the Canterbury Tales in Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 175-190, for an analysis of a different structural principle, the tension between order and chaos. See also Dale Underwood, 'The First of the Canterbury Tales,' ELH, 26 (1959), 455-469; Richard Neuse, 'The Knight: The First Mover in Chaucer's Human Comedy,' University of Toronto Quarterly, 31 (1961-1962), 299-315; W. F. Bolton, 'The Topic of the Knight's Tale,' Chaucer Review, 1 (1966-1967), 217-227; Robert S. Haller, 'The Knight's Tale and the Epic Tradition,' Chaucer Review, 1 (1966-1967), 67-84; David Benson, 'The Knight's Tale as History,' cited in n. 11; Douglas Brooks and Alastair Fowler, 'The Meaning of Chaucer's Knight's Tale,' Medium Aevum, 39 (1970), 123-146.

90. See St Augustine, De quantitate animae, 33.72 (PL 32 1074-1075; Fathers of the Church, 2, p. 139) on memory as the power of the soul which is 'the recorder and compiler' of great achievements; Frances A. Yates, The Art of Memory (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) on classical memory systems and their history in the middle ages; Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 63-72, on Chaucer's awareness of the role of books as a key of remembrance. Donald Howard treats extensively Chaucer's use of concepts of memory in The Idea of the Canterbury Tales, see especially pp. 134-209.

91. There the Knight assumes the authority to Stynte 'the Monk of his tale' and the Host heartily endorses the Knight's interruption, commenting 'pardee, no remedie/ It is for to biwaille ne compleyne/ That that is doone' [(B^2) 2784-2786]. The Monk's limited understanding of fortune and of tragedy underlie the rejection of his tale.

92. The senses of 'quite' are found in OED, quit, v. III, 12; 11.11; III. 13; and I.1.b. respectively.

93. In Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning, pp. 223-230.

94. In Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honour of Francis Lee Utley, edited by Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 205-211.

95. See 'Moral Education,' Moral Education: Five Lectures, edited by Nancy F. and Theodore R. Sizer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 85-107.

96. What Beryl Smalley quotes from Henry from Huntingdon's Historia Anglorum 'praising Homer, whom he counts as an historian and exalts above all "philosophers"' could readily be said of the gentil Knight's vertuous tale: 'Homer and his like present virtues and vices more vividly in their exempla than do philosophers in their sententiae. They benefit not only spiritual men, but even seculars, attracting them to good and dissuading them from evil.' From 'Sallust in the Middle Ages,' in Classical Influences on European Culture AD 500-1500, edited by R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 165-175; the quotation is from p. 166. See also Boccaccio, De gen. deor, 14.17.

97. On the Miller's blasphemy see Beryl B. Rowland, 'Chaucer's Blasphemous Churl: A New Interpretation of the Miller's Tale,' Chaucer and Middle English Studies: In Honour of Russell Hope Robbins, ed. Beryl Rowland (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 43-55; see also the same author's 'The Play of the Miller's Tale: A Game Within a Game,' Chaucer Review, 5 (1970), 140-146. On the irrationality of the Miller's Tale universe see Morton W. Bloomfield, 'The Miller's Tale — An Unboethian Interpretation,' cited in n. 93. On the symbolism of the flood and its functioning in the tale, see Chauncey Wood, Chaucer and the Country of the Stars, pp. 167-171.

See also Gardiner Stillwell, 'The Language of Love in Chaucer's Miller's and Reeve's Tales and in the Old French Fabliaux,' Journal of English and German Philology, 54 (1955), 693-699.

98. For a more balanced view of the relationship between objective reality and subjective viewing, compare Boece, 5. pr. 3.

99. See above pp. 58-60 and n. 71. See also De civitate Dei, 14.11.

100. On the Reeve's Tale see particularly Paul A. Olson, 'The Reeve's Tale: Chaucer's Measure for Measure,' Studies in Philology, 59 (1962), 1-17. See also M. Copland, 'The Reeve's Tale: Harlotrie or Sermonyng?' Medium Aevum, 31 (1962), 14-32; Donald R. Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales, pp. 239-247; R. E. Kaske, 'An Aube in the Reeve's Tale,' ELH, 26 (1959), 295-310; A. H. MacLaine, 'Chaucer's Wine-Cask Image: Word Play in the Reeve's Prologue,' Medium Aevum, 31 (1962), 129-131.

101. In 'Translatio: "Difficult Statement" in Medieval Poetic Theory.' See above n. 64.

102. See the pioneering work of Kate Oelzner Petersen, The Sources of the Parson's Tale, Radcliffe College Monographs, 12 (Boston: Atheneum Press, 1901), and the later analysis and corrective of Germaine Dempster, 'The Parson's Tale,' Sources and Analogues, pp. 723-760.

103. See Paul E. Beichner, 'Chaucer's Man of Law and Disparitas Cultus,' Speculum, 23 (1948), 70-75; Edward A. Block, 'Originality, Controlling Purpose and Craftsmanship in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale,' PMLA, 68 (1953), 572-616; Morton W. Bloomfield, 'The Man of Law's Tale: A Tragedy of Victimisation and a Christian Comedy,' PMLA, 87 (1972), 384-390. See also Alfred David, 'The Man of Law Against Chaucer: A Case in Poetics,' PMLA, 82 (1967), 217-225 and his reworking of this article in The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976). See also Rodney Delasanta's discussion of Chaucer's use of irony in relation to the Man of Law in 'And of Great Reverence: Chaucer's Man of Law,' Chaucer Review, 5 (1970-1971), 280-310. John H. Fisher discusses the relationship of Chaucer to Gower in chapter five of his John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of

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Chaucer (London: Methuen, 1965), pp. 286-292 in particular; Robert Enzer Lewis, 'Chaucer's Artistic Use of Pope Innocent III's De miseria humane conditionis in the Man of Law's Prologue and Tale,' PMLA, 81 (1966), 485-492 together with pages 32-39 of the introduction to his edition of De miseria condicionis humane (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1978) are indispensable to an understanding of Chaucer's use of Pope Innocent in the Man of Law's Tale. Martin Stevens, 'The Royal Stanza in Early English Literature,' PMLA, 94 (1979), 62-76 is an interesting article offering a possible explanation for the apparent anomoly of the Man of Law's statement that he will tell a tale in prose and the rhyme royal stanzas of his actual tale. William L. Sullivan, 'Chaucer's Man of Law as a Literary Critic,' MLN, 68 (1953), 1-8 is an early article discussing the Man of Law's poor literary judgment. Chauncey Wood, Chaucer and the Country of the Stars, pp. 192-244 argues convincingly that the Man of Law is best approached 'through a study of his interpretations' of 'his story and of the world around him' which, 'by mediaeval standards, are mainly misinterpretations' (p. 194).

104. See pp. 53-62 above.

105. Just how unusual an attitude this is for a fourteenth century man may easily escape us, conditioned as we are by our historical position as post romantics.

106. In his prologue the Man of Law enthusiastically praises material wealth and condemns material poverty, his pious tale rejoices in Constance's abundant spiritual resources which are subject neither to good nor ill fortune but there is, as Chauncey Wood and Rodney Dalasanta have shown (see n. 103 for references), considerable ironic tension between the tenor of the tale's narrative and the comments of its narrator.

107. See above pp. 53-64 for general discussion of the role of the first person narrator and the nature of Chaucer's truth claim in the Canterbury Tales.

108. Although Martin Stevens's article (see n. 103) suggests that 'in prose' has a different meaning from its modern one, his findings do not alter the parallel situations of Man of Law and persona.

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109. While the Man of Law in his role as literary critic provides a false detraction of Chaucer's work, Chaucer provides another assessment based on different criteria in the retraction. Here the Man of Law condemns Chaucer's lack of skill in execution; there Chaucer judges his work in relation to its morality.

110. On the effect of breaking boundaries of realism see M.W. Bloomfield, 'The Merchant's Tale: A Tragicomedy of the Neglect of Counsel — The Limits of Art,' Medieval and Renaissance Studies, ed. S. Wentzel (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1978) pp. 37-50, especially pp. 44-48.

11. See, for example, Boece, 5 pr. 6, 13-26 for a definition of the physical nature of time and eternity and 5 pr. 6 passim for the moral obligation attendant upon man living in the world.

112. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972, pp. 4-5.

113. See Robinson, Explanatory Notes, p. 690.

114. See Quinones, pp. 106-171 passim.

115. See Robert Enzer Lewis's article and the introduction to his edition of the work for the Chaucer Library, both cited above in n. 103.

116. See 2.3-2.14; 2.16; 2.26-2.28; 2.3-2.4 also raises the role of those concerned with law and the administration of justice and includes stock criticism which may have influenced Chaucer's depiction of the Man of Law.

117. From the drift of the headlink it is clear that for the Man of Law a thrifty tale is one which has conventionally acceptable *subject matter rather than one which is informed by* its teller's virtue. That one may use the potential for well-doing or saying inherent in any subject matter apparently does not strike the Man of Law. In this too he is at odds with the poet Chaucer who stands behind the persona in his justification of the inclusion of cherles tales in the Canterbury Tales. Chaucer raises a related issue in the Pardoner's Prologue where the Pardoner himself observes the gap between his own immorality and the ethical quality of his tale [VI (C) 400-411, 456-462]. The discussion of the relation of speaker and spoken in St Augustine's De doctrina christiana, 4.27-29

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illuminates the attitudes of the Man of Law, the Clerk and the Pardoner. See below pp. 132-134 and 122-132 passim.

118. De gen. deor. 14.4, Osgood's translation, from which the english version of the comparison of lawyers and poets is also taken. Osgood provides a series of references in his note to this passage (p. 148, n. 3). Many other references are cited in Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 338-349 and Mann, Estates Satire, pp. 86-91. Primary sources include Innocent III, De miseria, 2.4; Roman de la Rose, 5091-5100; Boccaccio, De gen. deor. 14.4 and 15.10; de Bury, Philobiblon, ch. 11.

119. In a letter to Boccaccio (Epistolae seniles, 17.3, quoted in part by R. D. French, A Chaucer Handbook, second edition [New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955], p. 312), Petrarch writes that he first learnt Boccaccio's tale by heart so that he could recite it to others, and then wished to translate it into latin for those who know no italian; it 'always pleased me when I heard it years ago, and I should judge that it pleased you to such an extent that you deemed it not unworthy of your italian prose, and of the end of your book, where the teaching of the rhetoricians requires that matter of greater import should be placed.'

120. Ovid, Metamorphoses, 5. 294-678.

121. On Petrarch's influence in and after the fourteenth century see Bolgar, The Classical Heritage, pp. 246-264.

122. See 'Sentence and Solaas in Fragment VII of the Canterbury Tales: Harry Bailly as Horseback Editor,' PMLA, 82 (1967), 226-235. While I disagree with aspects of Gaylord's interpretation, particularly with his definition of solaas, his sense of the fragment as exploring literary quality seems to be indisputable.

123. I am not implying that all tales are or should be mimetic, although some liveliness of idea, verbal style or imitative quality is necessary to retain an audience's interest. Certainly Chaucer's choice of Sir Thopas as the tale which purportedly introduces his own talents would hardly occasion a ripple of unease amongst those moralists who fear the dangers of art's imitation of reality: no english Pygmalion the persona and no Galatea Sir Thopas.

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124. See E. Talbot Donaldson, Chaucer's Poetry, pp. 934-937. Donaldson makes clear the subtlety of Chaucer's parodic achievement in Sir Thopas, but my point, which is not contradicted by Donaldson's remarks, is simply that on the level that the pilgrims react to the tale Sir Thopas is anticlimactic.

125. The Idea of the Canterbury Tales, pp. 309-315.

126. See Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 242: 'Through tragedy, eloquence, heroics, science, court flattery, courtly love, domesticity, dreams, scholarship, authority, antifeminism, patient humility and rural hullabaloo, there is scarcely a Chaucerian topic that is excluded from its purview and its criticism.' Pamela Kean, Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry, 2, pp. 133-139, discusses the relation of the Nun's Priest's Tale to the Monk's Tale. Alfred David, Strumpet Muse, pp. 223-231, makes some excellent points about the tale's complexity.

127. See John Speirs, Chaucer the Maker, pp. 187-193; Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 242; Bernard S. Levy and George R. Adams, 'Chaucer's Paradise Lost and Regained,' Medieval Studies, 29 (1967), 178-192.

128. This does not imply that the tale does not resolve its narrative complication, simply that the issues raised within it are open-ended.

129. The Manciple's Tale does not treat christian faith but it is about belief in the truth of an account and its consequences.

130. Criticism on the Pardoner's Tale is particularly abundant. Two useful articles on the state of play until 1970 are G. G. Sedgewick, 'The Progress of Chaucer's Pardoner, 1880-1940,' MLQ, 1 (1940), 431-458 and John Halverson, 'Chaucer's Pardoner and the Progress of Criticism,' Chaucer Review, 4 (1970), 184-202. Robert P. Miller's 'Chaucer's Pardoner, the Scriptural Eunuch and the Pardoner's Tale,' Speculum, 30 (1955), 180-199, is a major analysis offering data relating the presentation of the Pardoner to patristic writing. An excellent related article is Lee W. Patterson, 'Chaucerian Confession: Penitential Literature and

the Pardoner,' Medievalia et Humanistica, n.s. 7: Medieval Poetics (1976), 153-174. E. R. Amoils relates 'Fruitfulness and Sterility in the Physician's and Pardoner's Tales,' English Studies in Africa, 17 (1974), 17-37, to an immediate source in the Roman de la Rose. Nancy Owen describes the sermon structure of the Pardoner's Tale in 'The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue and Tale: Sermon and Fabliau,' JEGP, 66 (1967), 543-547. Alfred David discusses the Pardoner and his tale in The Strumpet Muse, pp. 193-206. Donald Howard devotes the last chapter of The Idea of the Canterbury Tales to a careful discussion of the relation of 'The Pardoner and the Parson,' pp. 333-387. Further works are cited in subsequent footnotes.

131. See below pp. 127-132.

132. See St Augustine's discussion of inner words and their outward expression, their relation to the Word, speech and the manner in which a christian teacher should use language in De trinitate, 9.6-9.12 and chapter 15 passim, in De magistro, passim, and De doctrina christiana, book four passim. His various analyses make clear the religious significance of language and the christocentricity of his own treatment of language. The Pardoner's use of language, like that of the Parson after him, may fruitfully be discussed in terms drawn broadly from this view.

133. St Augustine describes the task of the interpreter of christian faith as a labour of words in De doctrina christiana, 4.4.6. What this labour entails is explored in I & II Timothy, see below n. 136.

134. The corruption of pardoners was notorious and has been frequently discussed by critics. See, e.g., Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 372-374 and A. L. Kellogg and L. A. Haselmayer 'Chaucer's Satire of the Pardoner,' PMLA, 66 (1951), 251-277.

135. See below pp. 133-134.

136. In his first epistle to Timothy St Paul describes good christians and good churchmen, in his second he describes and warns against the activities of bad christians and impious churchmen. The following verses are particularly pertinent to the Pardoner's

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Tale: I Tim. 3, passim, 4.16, 5.1, 6.10 (which provides the text, 'Radix . . . malorum est cupiditas'), 6.17-18; II Tim. 2.4, 3.5, 4.2. The allusion to St Paul's letters relates Timothy and the Pardoner and provides a subtextual comment on the vapidity of the Pardoner's assumption of the role of preacher. For him it is only an act. He does not put on the garments of light he masks himself in them or as he puts it 'Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe/ Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe' [VI (C) 421-422].

137. In The Strumpet Muse Alfred David writes 'I said above that the Clerk's was the best of the tales of "moralitee and hoolynesse," yet an excellent case could be made that the Pardoner's Tale deserves that honor,' and there is validity in his judgment. For all the Pardoner's depravity, the Pardoner's Tale is morally sound and superbly executed. On the psychology of the Pardoner's behaviour, see A. L. Kellogg, 'An Augustinian Interpretation of Chaucer's Pardoner,' Speculum, 26 (1951), 465-481.

138. See n. 71.

139. It is not only the Host whose reaction is intense. The many critical attempts to offer what Chaucer withholds, the precise motivation of the Pardoner in lines 919-945, testify to the difficulties raised by this action and to the fact that people tend to feel strongly about it. The action seems to make no ready sense, and the lack of clarity after so much has been revealed sets up powerful uncertainties. Even whether the Pardoner's account of his practice in church is true is not totally certain. When a man tells what he knows or desires we have to take the fidelity of his report on trust since no one save he can see into his mind. It is only when he tells of general human truths that we can refer them to our own judgment since we too know these. See De trinitate, 9.6.9.

140. 'Ypocrite,' says the Parson, 'is he that hideth to shewe hym swich as he is, and sheweth hym swich as he noght is' [X (I) 394]. Although there are elements of the characters of Genius in both the Roman de la Rose and De planctu naturae in the Pardoner, he is far closer to Faux Semblant in the Roman than to either of these.

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141. The village audiences are vulnerable to the Pardoner's manipulation of language but Chaucer is writing about them not for them. His own audience is very different from that of the Pardoner. On the audience's need to be alert, see De doctrina christiana, 4.17.34 as well as 4.27.59-60 which is partially quoted below, pp. 133-34.

142. See Donald Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales, pp. 333-387.

143. On the traditional rivalry of manciples and cooks see Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 258.

144. Just how precious language is and how perilous it may prove is seen in a different light in the Second Nun's Tale of St Cecilia who preaches her faith and is finally condemned to death for her refusal to recant and save her life at the cost of her integrity. The use of language in the Second Nun's Tale is particularly interesting. The events occur before christianity was an established state religion and a substantial part of the text consists of glosses explicating the meaning of aspects of reality seen in the new perspective of christianity by the people whom St Cecilia and Pope Urban influence. Miraculous intervention in the mundane world is discussed as well as described. There is explication of the mysterious nature of the triune God and the image of this mystery in man's tripartite soul. St Cecilia's encounter with Almachius, the wicked judge, is described as a battle of wits in which two types of power, spiritual and political, are verbally opposed.

145. There is no single narrative source or source of the digressions in the Manciple's Tale. See James A. Work, Bryan and Dempster, pp. 699-700. Work prints a number of possible sources and analogues (Bryan and Dempster, pp. 701-722). Gower has an abbreviated version of the tale in Confessio Amantis, 3, 768-835 (Macaulay 2, pp. 246-248), where the actual tale occupies only lines 783-817 and the introductory and concluding lines relate the tale to the dangers of unpremeditated speech, cheste and janglynge.

The lengthy retelling in Ovide Moralisé, 2, 2121-2622 (de Boer 1, pp. 217-228), includes the inset story of the crow who warns the raven against speaking out and the account of Coronis' pregnancy and the posthumous birth of Phoebus' son, neither of which Chaucer or Gower uses. While the crow's story largely repeats the implications of the raven's, the introduction of the birth of Asclepius, reknowned healer, would give the tale a benevolence it lacks.

146. Ed. C. de Boer, Ovide Moralisé, 5 vols. (Wiesbaden: Martin Sändig, 1966); the quotation is from de Boer's summary of lines 2455-2622, vol. 1, p. 168.

147. Dame Prudence discusses this with her customary thoroughness in her account of true and false counselling, (B^2) 2191-2650. The entire Melibee may be viewed as an extended plea for the use of reasoned and judicious thinking and discussion to replace hasty and warlike action. The Parson treats the 'sins of the tongue' in [X (I) 582-653]. Both evidently believe in the efficacy of their own powers of speech and make their points unambiguously and constructively.

148. The only tale which used a similar discursive mode earlier was the Melibee, whose range of subject matter is far more localized than that of the Parson's Tale.

149. See (B^2) 4007, 4639 and X (I) 46-51, 75, 1076-1080 for explicit references.

150. See James D. Gordon, 'Chaucer's Retraction: A Review of Opinion,' in Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor Albert Croll Baugh, ed. MacEdward Leach (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), pp. 81-96. For later references see also p. 231 of the excellent article by Olive Sayce, 'Chaucer's "Retractions": The Conclusion of the Canterbury Tales and its Place in Literary Tradition,' Medium Aevum, 40 (1971), 230-248.

151. Leo Spitzer, 'Notes on the Poetic and the Empirical "I" in Medieval Authors,' cited in n. 76 above.

152. See above, pp. 27-28.

NOTE to page 146.

153. The indefatigable Manciple had an appropriate text to offer on the intractability of expressed words: 'Thyng that is seyd is seyd, and forth it gooth,/ Though hym repente, or be hym nevere so looth' [IX (H) 355-356]. One can repent of the activity but its results remain, and the statement which they make is their own, and may well be very different from the one the aging poet saw fit to make.

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