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FESTIVE LIMINALITY IN CHAUCERIAN COMEDY

James R. Andreas

Chaucer's genius is perhaps most conspicuously evident in his conscious attempt to fashion a comic frame or context for his work, a focus festivum within which he could sing the changes on traditional literary and social structure or ideology. He concludes his "intel tragedy," Troilus and Criseyde, as is well known, by promising to abandon the tragic frost to "make ye som comyse." He is speaking presumably about his work in progress on the Canterbury Tales. Much of his early poetry, in extenso, can be seen as a series of experiments, some more successful than others, in the elicitation of the essentially amoral zone of "pleye" and "game" (two of Chaucer's favorite words) characteristic of medieval carnivalesque or grotesque humor. The conventions of the dream vision permitted a certain amount of comic intrusion and intrusion; the enmangement of the narrator from a scenario of his own "making" or dreaming, the parody of the conventions of chivalric romance in the abortive hunt of the Book of the Duchess; the accelerating cacophony of the noisy parliament of fowls and the rickety House of Rumour, and above all, the inevitable progress, or rather regress in the poems from the given structure of the "olde bokes" the narrator is continually perusing to the essentially amoral, unstructured world of "gelfrey's" confounding encounters. Even in the tragic Troilus Chaucer playfully mitigates the severity of his "auctor's" text. In the midst of the invocation of Clio, the muse of dread necessity, Chaucer modulates to a breezy allegro on the relativities of the spoken language (as opposed to the fixity of a text) and on the varieties of custom and "game" around the world.

Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chauce
Withinne a thousand ye, &c.
Eke for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
In sondry loundes, sondry ben usages, &c.
For ev ry wyght whiche that to Rome went
Halt nat o path, or alwey o maner, &c.
For thine men seyn, ech couer hath his lawes.
(2.22-23, 27-28, 35-37, 42)

The purpose of this paper will be to sketch in some of the lineaments of festive framework and liminal impetus in Chaucerian comedy, particularly in terms of the encapsulating narrative of the Canterbury Tales.

Thomas Pisan has recently published a study describing the period of the Canterbury pilgrimage as a "liminal" structure. The term liminal may be briefly defined as "marginal," that is, on the boundary or threshold (from the Latin, limen) of normative social behavior. It is drawn from the anthropological writings of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. Turner describes the period of estrangement and renewed communitas in religious rites of passage as "root paradigm" which can structure other cultural phenomena. Charles Read Baskervill some time ago formulated an evolutionary theory concerning the translation of festive folk pastimes into formal dramatic structures during the Middle Ages. His theory, undoubtedly useful to C. L. Barber in his study of folk background to Shakespeare's plays, has been most recently corroborated by the folklorist, Roger Abrahams.

At least three stages can be readily distinguished: first, that of pagan ritual, still preserved in certain folk customs; second, that in which festival customs, sophisticated as a result of advancing culture and the modification of pagan festivities by the Church, developed among the folk as social pastimes; third, a stage in which the diversions of the festival celebration became professionalized through passing into the hands of village performers.

Chaucer's major work, of course, coincides roughly with the production of the fines of the medieval cycle plays. He was unmistakably influenced by their festive flavor and folk appeal, for his Miller's Tale is a compendium of allusion to the most conspicuously comic of the plays. Moreover, the movement from festive parody to solemnity in, say, "The Second Shepherd's Play" (composed about 1385), finds a certain parallel in the Parson's allegorization of pilgrimage at the end of the Canterbury Tales.

In fact, a good deal of Turner's evidence for liminal passage is drawn from late medieval literary sources including Chaucer, the Scotch Chaucerians, and Rabelais. He cites medieval religious pilgrimage as a conspicuous example of the liminal suspension of hierarchal distinctions in the interest of a temporary communitas; the spontaneously tetch but true "fellowship" of the Canterbury company might well be his example.

Well aynye and twenty in a companye
Of sondry folk, by aventur yfalle
In felaweship, and pilgrimis were they alle.
(GP 24-25)

Significantly, Chaucer singles out his Mother Folly, the Wife of Bath, as his most representative reveler.
In felaweship we koude she laughe and caeste.
Of remedies of love we know per chance.
For she koude of that set the olde dunece.

(GP 474-76)

Turner summarizes the three phases of ritual passage as follows:

Van Gennep has shown that all rites of passage or "transition" are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen, signifying "threshold" in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both. During the intervening "liminal" period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the "passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the elements of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a more clearly defined "structural" type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and standards.

Neither Turner nor Pocci discuss the relationship between liminality and the amoral tone of comedy, particularly the satirical comedy of the Canterbury Tales, where a narrative competition functions as a species of playful combat and abuse. During the liminal interval of pilgrimage (passage through "strange and wondrous"), professional, social, and educational distinctions, according to the rules of the game, are not allowed to intrude for long, thus allowing a period of "fantasy triumph" for the participants, that is, all who are willing to "play" in the comic competition such as the Pardoner, Summoner, Reeve, Drunken Miller, and the little "poet," "Geoffrey" himself. Actually, only the Alchemist, fearing as he does the ultimate "exposure" essential to liminality and comedy, wants out, or rather, back in the social system where he is able to exploit the naiveté of those who subscribe to the system’s "magic."

There are a number of liminal elements common to both rites de passage and the antistructural interval of festive comedy. These elements may be grouped into three categories, social, sexual, and religious. Turner tells us that liminal moments are prominent during periods of historical "crisis," a term Charles Muscianie, among others, has found characteristic of life in Chaucer’s era. Such social breakdown is given ritual "form" in liminal passage through the imposition of a "limbo of statuslessness" on the participants. There is perhaps a medieval analogue in the literary penchant for a grotesque yoking of opposites in a dialectical tension between sacred and obscene, male and female, young and old, and high and low, polarities which are allowed in the Canterbury Tales "as it were, [to] constitute another and are mutually indispensable." The homogenization of social rank and suspension of distinction between "greater" and "lesser" participant in liminal passage finds a most festive-comic expression in the joint decision by the Canterbury pilgrims to "elevate" the fallen, drunken Cook to a sitting position on his horse just before arrival at the shrine. So too the arbitrary submission of the liminal "commoner" to the whimsical dictates of an appointed elder and the crying of this "chief elect" in a series of humorous harangues can be seen as analogous to the crowning of the Boy Bishop, the dominus juri, or reigning Lord of Misrule in medieval carnival. Such a role is played most conspicuously by the Host in the Canterbury Tales, although the Miller, Pardoner, and Wife of Bath are permitted several rude interruptions. Turner discusses the "harangues" in ritual passage as varieties of the medieval flying. The tales are saturated with a number of such explosive exchanges; in fact, the narratives, insofar as each is delivered to "quite" one pilgrim or another, are themselves extended flytings. The Chaucerian flytings, moreover, like the links between the tales, are couched in what must be considered a deliberately vulgar diction, and such earthy, folk expressions are prevalent in ritual passage. Chaucer, of course, defended the right of speaking "louderly to a lowed man" throughout his career, a defense echoed some four hundred years later by William Wordsworth.

Turner describes a number of sexual practices characteristic of liminal passage: both festivity and comedy have, of course, been associated with sexual freedoms and abuse throughout western history. During the liminal interval the "very forces of disorder that inhabit man’s starnatian constitution" are put ultimately at the service of the social order. Bergson and Freud, of course, long ago defined the comic enterprise in terms of the dialectic between mechanistic-social and biological demands. Similarly, medieval festival represented not so much an extended subversion of traditionally repressive ideology as an indulged interval of relief from such ideological pressures. The intentional blurring of sexual distinctions during passage has as its analogue the emphasis on effeminate men and aggressive "masculine" women in comedy and is perhaps most vividly revealed in the searing interchange between the "gelding" Pardoner and the overbearing Wife of Bath. Sexual ambiguity as a target for comic abuse has a long and distinguished tradition tracing back perhaps to the Aristophanic tale of man’s bisexual heritage in the Symposium. The prominence of women in medieval comic narrative high and low needs little comment. Dame
Allison, both in and out of the tales, is the motive force behind much of the comic action and the inevitable victor in the comic agon. Curiously, however, Chaucer’s heroines are often presented as manifestations of medieval misogynyny. Turner, on the other hand, discusses the liminal substitution of “matrilaterality” for patriarchy where “the individual, in his integral character is emancipated from the segmental statuses incumbencies determined by patriarchy into the wider life of the community.” Such a description recalls Kenneth Burke’s characterization of comic resolution as a “framework of acceptance” where exclusivity of any kind has no place.

And finally, the emphasis on language (“opheus, for instance, are granted license for playfully antagonistic sexual abuse”) and “felawship” or camaraderie during the liminal interval has festive-literary analogues in the “ungodly” conduct of the “Godly Feast” which traces back through Fielding, Rabelais, Eccles and Chaucer to Macrobius, Ovid and ultimately to the licentia and libertas of the Socratic Symposium. Turner expounds a good deal of energy documenting the religious overtones in liminal passage for which he finds a paradigm in the medieval peregrinatio where “the Christian is a stranger to the world, a pilgrim, a traveller with no place to rest his head.” Duane, Chaucer, and the Gawain poet all exploit the religious implications of festive comedy which translates theological inversion and paradox (such as we find in the Beowulf) into comic structural conventions.

Such overtones are explicitly called into play by Chaucer during the epilogue to Troilus and Criside and in the Parson’s sermon and the Retraction all of which set the sacred side by side with the “obscene” not so much to “glance” at ascendent material allegorically as to contrast the vacillating moments of structure and anti-structure present in human existence. Nowhere, in short, is Chaucer’s genius more brilliantly illustrated than in his choice of the medieval peregrinatio as vehicle for both comic effect and religious insinuando.

Again, lest we become uneasy in the presence of so much explicitly “anthropological” evidence, we should emphasize that much of Turner’s illustration in support of his model for ritual liminality is drawn from medieval festive sources such as the perpetuation of Saturnalian revelry in the Feast of Fools and the licensed frivolity of the court jesters. Turner considers Saint Francis an archetypal liminous figure whose interest in the scholarly regurgitant and the goliardic movement places him squarely within the medieval comic tradition.

There is, moreover, abundant additional evidence that such an “anthropological” approach to medieval comedy is not at all anachronistic. Aristotle tells us that comedy, like tragedy, is an outgrowth of religious ritual and traces its origin to the recitation of phallic songs in early festival.

This sentiment was echoed and amplified in late antiquity by Macrobius, Donatus, and Evans, among others, all commentators whose theory was available throughout the Middle Ages and interpreted as applicable to both narrative and dramatic comedy. Evans, whose commentary on comedy was included as an introduction to the “medieval Terence,” is representative. In the following quotation he traces the roots of comedy, interestingly enough, to Apollonian ritual.

Tragedy and comedy began in religious ceremonies which the ancients held to give thanks for a good harvest... But while the Athenians were not yet confined to the city and Apollo was called “nemeus” (shepherd) and “agusieus” (guardian)—that is, guardian of shepherds and villages—they erected altars for divine worship around the hamlets, farms, villages, and crossroads of Attica and solemnly chanted a festival song to him. It was called comedy...—the name composed, as I think, from “villages” (ximae) and “song” (oide). Or it was composed among them at their altars—going to a revel singing. This is not unlikely since the comic chorus was drunk or engaged in love making on the sacred day.

There is, of course, much that Chaucer could have found useful here: the precedent for processionals forms and its occasion for contest and debate, the linkage of comedy with rustic-bulk pastorals, intoxication and erotic “adventure,” and the focus on Apollo who plays important roles in two crucial Canterbury narratives, the Franklin’s Tale which resolves the marriage debate and the Manciple’s Tale which quietly concludes the festive phase of the poem.

University of Tennessee/Martin

NOTES


4. There are numerous exceptions, but the following is typical. The narrator prefers not to discuss the intricate implications of the relationship between Pandora and Ceramic.

With that she gat her face bare to weye
With that she las, and for shame she red;
And Pandora gat her face bare to weye;
And sayde, "Verily, that shal be done;
Have a sword and smouthe of men becon;
With that his arm si sundryly he throw;
Under her snerke, and at the last her kyte.
I passe al that which charches ought to weye."


12. The phrase "fantasy triumph" was suggested to me by Edwin Kern during a seminar offered by the National Endowment for the Humanities (1977-78). The "fantasy triumph" implicit in liminal moments is the temporary freedom from the usual restraint of everyday ideological structures.


15. On Chaucer's capacity for recording colloquial and "vulgar" speech see Hildes Brady, "Chaucer's Rude Tongue," *Southern Folklore Quarterly,* 30 (1964), 214-23; Thomas Rin, *Chaucer's Rudey* (New York: Daven, 1972); Dorothy Everett, "Chaucer's 'Good Ear,'


18. For instance, D. W. Robertson discusses the function of the Wife of Bath as follows: "She is dominated by the sense of the flesh rather than by the understanding or the spirit, by oldness rather than by youth; in short, the Wife of Bath is a literary personification of rampant 'benevolence' or carnality, and her excesses in, in consequence, rigidly carnal and secular."


NATURAL SUPERNATURALISM IN THE PROLOGUE TO THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

Thomas Hahn

Many critics have lamented the lack of commentary on the poetry in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women. Yet, in spite of this awareness, no one has examined the way in which Chaucer here develops his subject through careful use of words and images. The subject is poetry, as Robert O. Payne indicated in The Key of Remembrance (1963), but a close reading of the Prologue suggests a different conclusion from that in Professor Payne’s more recent article (Chaucer Rev. 1975); the Prologue is in fact an art poética of sorts.

The Prologue works through a series of contrasts. These begin with the broad opposition of life and death—the joy of heaven and the pain of hell—but for the most part the initial images concern the relation between the artifice of fiction and man’s more direct “natural” feelings, or, in other terms, the demands for belief made by human stories, and the more profound stirrings of belief connected with religious impulses. Chaucer ultimately hints that these polarities are not as far apart as might at first be thought.

The Prologue makes clear at the start that not all our understandings are susceptible to proof, and indeed it suggests that most of our lives are spent within imaginative constructions of natural events. The problem is how to determine which are the approved stories; those that are true because they are grounded in “reality”. Chaucer highlights the ambiguity of reality by having his persona leave his books behind for the natural attractions of May and the daisy. The problem then becomes: is there any direct access to nature? Do not we always see phenomena in conventional (in this case, literary) terms?

In his description of the worship of the daisy, Chaucer deliberately chooses images that contrast natural, seasonal renewal with supernatural, eternal regeneration. He declares the need for evidence in books, for reverence towards the daisy on the Spring holyday, his devotion on eves before an earthly god, and the daisy’s affinity with light—with the day’s eye, the sun—against darkness. One of the most striking of these images is that of resurrection; this word, not used again in a non-sacred context before the mid-seventeenth century, is the most pointed example of double-edged meaning in the Prologue.

Chaucer further complicates matters by connecting renewal with love: here the ambiguity arises from the interchange between the natural and moral meanings of eros and caritas. The contrast is clearest in the description of the birds’ celebration of new life. They have, by chance or providence, escaped from the killing winter and the devil-like fowler and his master. They exchange vows and perform here other observances (moral or natural?); they repeat for their trepangnore, and are glad that Mercy pau[s]e[s] Right. Chaucer amplifies the tension here, as in the Nun’s Priest’s Tale, by placing moral categories in the mouths of birds.

The moral ambiguity deepens through the contrast of St. Valentine—whom the birds invoke—and St. Venus. The contrast continues in the opposition of flour and leaf: the implied courtly factionalism (described by G. L. Marsh) reinforces the sense of division. Moreover, the traditional spiritual symbols associated with flower and leaf—natural and supernatural, as traced by D. A. Peart in his introduction to the Flower and Leaf—also have their part in the Prologue. Not only do they work as literary symbols, they in addition enforce the contrast of surface reality—the courtly game—with a more enduring sense of spiritual division. This imagery, taken in large part from French Marguerite poems (as J. L. Lowes showed), culminates in the marguerita imagery of Alcestis.

The contending images and impulses of the Prologue, then, are summed up in the several promises of renewal: on a daily basis, as in the daisy; on a seasonal basis, as in the birds; and on a lifetime, or, more accurately, an eternal basis, as in the case of the persona. For when he sees the daisy grow “to rest / For darkness of night he too goes Home . . . to rest, and only for to rise. He returns to his lord’s house, to see his fresh yves grown, strewn with flowers. These ambiguous images of the garden and the flower, signifying death and burial as well as promise of life, highlight the persona’s need for supernatural, permanent renewal.

Chaucer chooses, as his “natural” symbol for the promise of such renewal, the non-Christian queen Alcestis. She is the unifying symbol—the marguerita—of present reality, the marguerita-pearl of eternal hope. Her mythological history makes her most appropriate for this role: she so loved her husband that she laid down her life for him; yet, in effect she has narrowed hell, been resurrected from death to life. Her stature as a non-Christian figura of Christ is self-evident, but it is also suggested in Hymenius, and explicitly stated by Peter Berchorius in Book XV of his Redactionerius; quod.

Towards the end of the Prologue, we return to the problem of the beginning—that poetry, as a source of intellectual authority, interferes with life (in this case, the activities sanctioned by the God of Love). As Professor
Payne suggests, the entire Prologue is in a sense an answer to this problem. Chaucer has connected poetry with "natural" acts—reaping and gleaning, for example—but much more importantly, he has indicated that it is a means through which thought and act, the supernatual and natural, can be mediated. Chaucer presents himself as an instrument through which the meaning of the daisy—Alcestis is transmitted: My word, my werk ye haue as in youre band. Later he presents himself as an uncomprehending translator (recalling the function of work and translation in the Second Nun's Tale). All this demonstrates that the words and images once created have a life of their own: the record of experience may renew experience, and thus become self-authorizing. Poetry, like Alcestis, serves as a guide to true love, and it unifies fiction and life, natural and supernatural. As Chaucer says, it combines innocence and ruled courtesy.

This reading of the Prologue in many ways supports other recent interpretations of Chaucer that have emphasized his deliberate use of ambiguity (for example, the recent books by Peter Elbow and Donald W. Rowe). But in order to see precisely what Chaucer is up to, it may be useful to compare the Prologue to works by two post-romantic writers: in particular, G. M. Hopkins, in "Spring and Fall" has written another Margaret-poem (hitherto unnoticed), which is directly comparable to Chaucer's; and W. B. Yeats often takes up Chaucer's themes of artifice and eternity in revealing ways, as in this attempt to see oneness in "the leaf, the blossom, or the hole" of the cherry tree ("Among School Children"). Such comparisons clarify the broad significance and appeal of the themes, and they show, by contrast, the special and characteristically medieval treatment that Chaucer develops. The Prologue describes openly the subtle achievement of all Chaucer's poetry—the attempt to give us a means between innocence and ruled courtesy.

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OF CHAUCER'S ABC

Georgia Romani Crampton

From its first line to its last, Chaucer's ABC voices an anxious politics of appeal. The first line addresses the Blessed Virgin as the "Almighty and all merciable queene"; the last repeats a "merci able" with a shift that by means of the word itself allows us to see that there is no assurance that the queen will be merciful to all. The last line thus discloses the quickening reality of the whole, uncertainty within the soul about its status and fate. His source provided Chaucer with neither line, and while his translation works within the given, decorative, and inevitable abecedarian order, his translation sharpens and reshapes the original. The soul in De Gysville's ABC has been led astray; the soul in Chaucer's feels itself to be hunted down. Keeping the flight and making it also a hunt is characteristic of Chaucer's tightening touch. The English poem's informal figure is this chase, with a desperate prey fleeing to cover, to Mary. She is imagined as gazing with clear eyes from rounded, emblatic architraves and curving spaces, enclosures offering comfort, shelter, and sanctification—havens, harbor, rest, temple, palace, and paradisal tower. Her space is sacred—she is the temple (145), but the important thing about it is that she will venture from it to our own crooked streets and haul us in, as line 68 puts it.

The characters are two: the sinner and the queenly mother of mercy of his imagination. He has not been handed a completed prayer on a "bille" as in De Gysville, nor is he the poised-sinner-before-devotional image as the fixed tableau of many medieval lyrics. Chaucer stages an action: the penitent does flee. Through three-fourths of the poem and over a vague, contradictory landscape, he runs as we read. At exhaustion, when he can fly no further (147), he begs the Virgin to convey him the rest of the way. Thus the poem traces a reciprocal choreography of two movements—the long flight to exhaustion, and a more uncertain one, sketched only in desire, when the "Queen of comfort" (122) is to come and lead the sinner to the high tower of Paradise. Though the poem offers only scant detail for the seeker of comic Chaucer, his mark, the tricky close, shows Chaucer already expert in doubling. The shaped choreography shows that as a beginning poet Chaucer knew what he wanted his poems as a whole to be, however closely he might follow a model in segments. The poem is not barren of interest for an assessment of
young Chaucer's talent, but it also offers particular interests as an item of cultural archaeology. As a translation it necessarily shows what one writer thought valuable in the work of another—or what their patrons found congenial. The number of manuscripts in which it exists indicates its contemporary acceptability. Further, early translators of De Guicheville's _Pilgrimage_ appropriated Chaucer's version rather than making their own. As an early work it is possibly mere indebted than a mature work would be to the staples of its milieu. In fact, Chaucer and De Guicheville had renowned pupils for the chief figures, the assumptions, and the play of relationship in their poems. The soul in flight to a mother of mercy, the soul conscious of guilt as filth, wounding, and illness, the soul as a defendant in court had for long been commonplaces; they are found, for instance, two centuries before in the Marian prayers of St. Anselm. We might suppose that St. Bernard's Marian sermons would be important to the Costerian De Guicheville, and in an earlier passage in the _Pilgrimage_ he quotes another mode of such Marian figures, Bernard's famous "Respice stellam, ecce Marianum" 'Look to the star, call upon Mary' passage in an Annunciation homily. These considerations assure us that the poem was of its time, that it was not eccentric.

In its specifics, the _ABC_ offers clues to or confirmations of what we have thought about fourteenth-century intellectual style. Among them, it shows a straightforward, not at all allusive style, popular, traditional, and explicit (91, 94, 109). It takes care about doctrine; despite his lavish praise of the Virgin and his professed reliance upon her, the inner eschews anything beyond a proper _hymnica_, pointing out that her power is delegated. The _ABC_ supports our impression that logic remained a persistently seductive attraction, at the least. The close imports from theological discourse the formulation _pete, veni, facit, "he could do it, he wanted to do it, he did it."_ The argument furthered Mary's privileges. It would be argued that Christ had the power to assume Mary's body into heaven or to preserve her soul from original sin, that as a good son he surely wanted to do these things, and that, therefore, he had done them. The gist of Chaucer's last half-stanza is "pete, veni, facit," since "those cause and will" save me, "do it." This recapitulates an argument latent in the whole and adumbrated in the "almighty and al merciful" pairing. A sinuous syntax softens the blunt indicative-hortative pattern, and of course the imperative substitute for _facit_ is prayerful. The poem also provides an example of the late medieval tendency to epitomize complexes of thought or experiences of time by coupling extremes. Its selective concentration on the Annunciation and the Crucifixion is a violent abridgment of the life of Christ. He comes into the world with the message of Gabriel in Mary's ear (115); he slights upon the Cross where Longinus "his here pigbie" (163). The piercing, saving essentials are all.

Most interesting in assessing the poem as a product of its time, however, is the penitent speaker. He is self-described as quarry, lamed fugitive, invalid, guilty defendant, and child—stark faces of dependence. He in a pertinacious, grasping creature whom few modern readers find sympathetic. He prevents the _ABC_ from being a charming tribute to the Virgin. We prefer poems in which the speaker's need is more tactfully stated, where the devotion seems more celebratory or disinterested. We find it easier to deal with poems with a greater range of religious feeling or poems where we are free to take the prayer for salvation as a closing formula. But here exactly that prayer is pervasive; every consideration introduced in the poem's 184 lines comes back to the cry, help, _help me!_ Clearly there has been a change between the fourteenth century and our own in what Foucault would call _dumping_ having to do with love and with salvation. We give intellectual understanding where our ancestors gave imaginative realization. The text of the pull is passed on different issues. We think that love is to realize that the other has a self to be considered without regard for the other's use to oneself. Much of the strain of conscientious loving arises from applying this notion in concrete choices. Though we owe this idea of love to the Middle Ages, our imaginative realization of it now nevertheless interferes with a properly "period" response to this poem. We somehow feel that even a divine being should not be subjected to so grasping an amour.

But Chaucer's pleader does not have to keep reminding himself that the other has a separate being. The Virgin's separate existence and superior status are not an achievement of the reflection and "making" of the penitent but a part of a public reality that he shares with his world. An audience would understand his effort, which is entirely bent on claiming, not on freeing her. As to salvation, perhaps now only the dreams of children reared in orthodox families approach the intensity of moments in every normal fourteenth-century adult's life when he contemplated the prospect of hellfire. Saint Anselm's _Fifth and Sixth Omission_ to the Blessed Virgin, mentioned above, are therapies, labeled as self-helps to be said "cum mens gravatur cursum__" when the mind is weighed down with sins (Or. 5) and "cum mentis est inspexit sine cursum__" when the mind is disturbed by fear (Or. 6). St. Paul, explaining Christ's sacrifice, says that it is conceivable, though it would be rare, for someone to be willing to die for a just man, but that Christ died for sinners. But even Christ did not offer to be damned in place of sinners. No fourteenth-century audience would expect anyone to prefer any thing or being at all before his own salvation. The overriding importance of salvation, more vital than love, more vital than life—that is the assumption of this poem which makes
it more than polite verse. It issues from the same mentality that instructs us that although the Holy Eucharist is the most magnificent sacrament, Baptism is the most necessary one.

Consequently, where we notice the sympathies of a deceived child, instance of reassurance, self-despairing, crafty, locked in his need and greed, Chaucer's audience would appreciate the world-conscious Christian believer at his most realistic, following Christ's directions to ask, to knock, to seek. The period also offered many lyrics in which the devotion to Mary was more gently amorous or more amply filial. But it had a place for this flight in panic, this neatly cry. Our contemporary psychological reaction shows us how impressively Chaucer could make the public account of the way last things might be live as a private reality.

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NOTES


THE PARDONER'S VERNICLE

AND THE IMAGE OF MAN IN THE PARDONER'S TALE

Theresa Coletti

In his provocative study, "Chaucer and the Visual Arts," V. A. Kolve describes Chaucer's manipulation of "the visual imaginings of his audience in the larger enterprise of his art." This manipulation, according to Kolve, is evident in Chaucer's use of key images that function as "centers of . . . meditative suggestion" that "comprise . . . the essential 'meaning' of a Chaucerian narrative poem." Although Kolve speaks primarily of organizing icons within the individual units of the Canterbury Tales, his categories also illuminate Chaucer's use of images in the General Prologue, where the poet provides certain pilgrimage with iconic tags that embody the underlying thematic concerns of their tales. These icons act as bright stars in the center of major constellations of images and ideas; they are emblems that govern the progressive unfolding of their respective pilgrims' characters and tales. One of these icons is the vernicle that the Pardoner sports on his cap (GP 685). Although the vernicle can be easily explained as an authenticating sign that the Pardoner "straitly was come to the court of Rome" (671), Chaucer uses this detail from fourteenth-century life with an eye to its place in a larger symbolic and thematic design. Arresting in its own right, the vernicle's appearance in the Pardoner's portrait raises some important questions: why did Chaucer adorn the Pardoner with this image? What relationships exist between the image, the man who wears it, and the tale he tells?

The Pardoner's vernicle is richly suggestive. It is an image of Christ—the God-made man—conspicuously worn by a man. In this respect it calls to mind a central axiom of Christian doctrine: that man is made in God's image. But the incongruity of its presence is immediately evident, for the portrait also hints that the Pardoner is a "gelding or a mare," a detail that not only implies his physical deficiency but also points to the deformity of the image of God in him, as Robert P. Miller has ably demonstrated in his analysis of the Pardoner, the evangeten non Deus, and the evanget homo of scriptural tradition. Rather than conform to the image of Christ, the evanget homo created in God's image (Eph. 4:24), the Pardoner instead figures forth the image of the evanget homo, the "sinful body" of the flesh and its deeds (Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:5-9). Although he has observed the letter of St. Paul's injunction to "put on" the New Man—he has sewed the vernicle to his cap—the Pardoner grossly rejects the spirit of the law which would also have him lay aside the Old Man. The inclusion of the vernicle in the Pardoner's portrait thus sets up his tale's crucial thematic juxtaposition of Old Man and New Man and introduces a series of associations that pertain to the image of man, his relationship to God, and the nature of flesh and spirit.

By virtue of its location the Pardoner's vernicle at once gives testimony to man's image-likeness to God and to the need for man to conform in flesh and spirit to the image
of Christ; the perfect union of flesh and spirit, Christ dignifies the flesh and spirit in man. But the Pardoner, a sullied and distorted reflection of that likeness, exhibits an obsessive preoccupation with fallen human nature—the deformed image of especially in terms of the flesh. His catalog of sins (Par. T. 463-666) repeatedly asserts the perversion and desecration of man's body. Gluttony, for example, fills the body with "dunge" and "corruptuous," disfigures the face, and befouls the breath; "hazardrye" and "eal sweryng" inevitably lead to "manslaughter" and homicide. A perverse projection of his own lack of physical and spiritual vitality, the Pardoner's image of man emphasizes the basest matter of dirty, lifeless flesh and thus directly contradicts the promise of spiritual renewal through conformity to the image of the New Man enshrined in the vericle.

The Pardoner's selective scavenging from St. Paul further indicates his thoroughly debased image of man. He uses Paul (1 Cor. 6:3; Phil. 3:18-19) to support his reviling of man's body: "Mete unto worwe, and worwe eek unto mete, / Shal God destroyen bothe?" (522-23); "Ther walken manye of whiche yow toold have I . . . Of whiche the ende is death; worwe is he god?" (530-33). But the Pardoner's borrowings from Paul significantly stop short of the saint's more hopeful pronouncements in the same passages: Paul also states that the bodies of men are members of the body of Christ, that they are temples of the Holy Spirit in which man should glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19), and that Christ will redeem the body of man by remaking it after his own body (Phil. 3:21). The Pardoner clearly focuses on the disease rather than the cure.

Linking the body of man with the body of Christ, the Pardoner's allusions to Paul take us back once again to the vericle. For in addition to evoking the image of the senaste born, the vericle also symbolizes the Passion, the suffering of Christ's human body in order to redeem man in flesh and spirit. The Pardoner punctuates his rehearsal of the tavern sins with references to Christ's sacrificial death: "sweaters are damnable because they send "sowen blessed Lorde's body" (474); gluttons are "enemies of Cristes croys" (532). According to the Pardoner, then, man's relationship to the body of Christ is analogous to his treatment of his own body; he defiles and dismembers the body of Christ just as he corrupts his own.

This analogy is aptly conveyed in the exemplars of the three rioters, which dramatically weave together the various strands of meaning that the Pardoner's vericle implies. Despite their youth, the rioters behave very much like "old men"—slaves to the flesh and its lusts, they are as much prisoners of their bodies as the old man they meet, who is literally trapped in his always decaying but never dying flesh. The rioters' pollution of their bodies brings with it a like perversion of the body of Christ: "al drooken," they cruelly "Cristes blessed body" (503) with their oaths, swearing by "Goddes armes" and "Goddes dine bothes." It is ironically fitting that they also swear "by the holy sacrament" (534). For their parody of the Eucharistic meal becomes the occasion for a double annihilation, as the sacrament of Christ's body is perversely "transubstantiated" into the poisoned wine that eventually brings death to all three.

Throughout his tale, then, the Pardoner's message consistently undermines the positive associations inherent in the image of the vericle, highlighting instead man's distance from rather than his conformity to that image. The Pardoner drains the flesh of spirit, obscures man's image-likeness to God, and defines man as a slayer, not a member, of the body of Christ. But unlike his stance in his prologue, where he does not hesitate to proclaim his own self-absorbed greed and predilection for the "ate-stake," the third-person narrative of the bulk of his tale curiously distances the Pardoner from his own condemnation of human kind. Although his portrait alludes to and his tale adumbrates his personal rejection of the meaning of the vericle, the Pardoner's direct identity with all that he pillages in his tale awaits the outburst of Harry Bailly. The host responds to the invitation to "kisse the reliken" by vehemently attacking the Pardoner's physical and spiritual nature, not, as the Pardoner would have it, in the scriptural language of St. Paul, but in the gross idiom of scatology. Harry signals the final degradation of flesh and spirit and the last crude dismembering with his reference to the Pardoner's "fandemem" and his "towtens"; his vulgar insult reduces the Pardoner to the base matters of which he says men are composed. The holy image that adorns the Pardoner's head gives way to the "relyk of a saint" emblazoned on his ass. Figuratively stripped of the vericle, the Pardoner is more appropriately "shrynyn in an hogges tood."
CHAUCEL'S VIEW OF ROBIN HOOD
W. Ken Zellefrow

It seems most probable that the tales and ballads of Robin Hood began circulating in earnest in England during the latter half of the fourteenth century. The chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun (c. 1420) indicates that Robin has begun to gather an aura that still exists:

‘Then first Iohane and Robynre rude
Waichmen were commenda gud
In Ynglewod and Bernysdale,
And visit pis tymne par travele.’

To illustrate this assumption of popularity further, we have the emergence of the earliest Robin Hood ballad, “Robin Hood and the Monk,” about 1450 and most scholars of the ballad hold the opinion that oral versions exist some time before the actual poems are recorded. Then we have Robin’s name inserted by a scribe in the Sir Thope’s of a single and not particularly sound Chaucerian manuscript dated between 1440 and 1460:

‘Men spoken of romances of prynt
Of Horn child and Ypotys
Of Robynshode and goode sir Gf.’

Child feels that fifteenth-century references, such as that of Wyntoun as well as those of Bower and Major, two other historians of the period,

show the popularity of Robin Hood ballads for a century or more before the time when the Geste was printed, a popularity which was fully established at the beginning of this period and unquestionably extended back to a much earlier day.

Since two versions of the Geste were printed about 1500, Child’s comment allows for Robin’s popularity in Chaucer’s time. Then as solid support of Child’s contention we have Parson Sloth’s mention of Robin in Pieris Plaese, dated at 1377 by Skeat, and pointed out not so long ago by Bishop Percy as the earliest literary allusion to Robin Hood:

‘I can Nomre perfetly my gater-noster as pe prent is swynth,
But I can synne of Robyn hood and Randall erle of Chestre,
As neither of our lorde ne of our lade ye leste par excre was made.’

These references combined suggest very strongly that Robin Hood was developing a stature with the English folk during the fourteenth century. Given Chaucer’s wide acquaintances and avid interest in literature of all sorts, it seems equally probable that he would be as much aware

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2. ibid., pp. 318, 329.
of the growing ballad material concerned with Robin as he was of the bulk of the Middle English metrical romance which he satirises in Sir Thopas, and it seems somewhat odd that he does not openly respond to the rhymes of the folk hero.

In support of the idea of Chaucer's awareness of Robin, one can consider the description of the Yeoman in the General Prologue. He has parallels with members of Robin's band; his green, his long bow, his arrows with peacock feathers, all have their ties with the bands of men in the ballads and the Lyste Genere, but perhaps a further and even better indication of Chaucer's knowledge of the hero of greenwood can be found in the Friar's Tale.

The tale, a fabliau of sorts directed at the Sommeour, deals with a frequent concern of the Robin Hood ballads, the Church's tendency to "pry" upon rather than for the poor and unfortunate common folk. We find early in the tale that the archdeacon has two particular woes: lechery in the people of his parish and the failure of the poorer people to support the church. The problem of lechery and its handling by the sommeour is disposed of quickly, and we enter the tale proper. Once the narrative itself begins, we are in the landscape and the atmosphere of the early poems of Robin Hood.

The opening lines picture a churchman journeying through the wood and his meeting with a yeoman dressed in green and wielding a bow:

And so bief that cates on a day
This sommeour, evere waiting on his pray,  
Rood for to sunse an old wydowe, a ribbe,  
Feynynge a cause, for he wolde bryde.
And happe that he saugh before hym syde  
A gay yeoman, under a forest syde.  
A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and keen;  
He hadde upon a courtey of grene,  
An hat upon his heed with frenges blake.  

(FrT 1.35-83)

These lines from the Friar's Tale suggest the beginnings of some early Robin Hood ballads. The following openings come from Robin Hood ballads, collected in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but believed by Child and other scholars of the ballad such as Rimmon, Percy, and Bryant, to be much earlier.

And as he went forth, in a summer's morning  
Into the forest of merry Sherwood,  
To view the red deer, that range here and there,  
There met he with bold Robin Hood.

As soon as bold Robin Hood did him spy,  
He thought some sport he would make;  
Therefore out of hand he bid him to stand,  
And thus to him he spake.

"Bot as the god yeoman rode on a day,  
Among his merry men,  
He was ware of a proud porter,  
Cawdryng owyr the ley."

"Yonder comset a prod porter," seyden Robin,  
"This long hary hastysd his way;  
He was never so cortees a man  
On pense of passagage to pay."  

As it fell out on a sun-shining day,  
When Phebus was in his prime,  
Then Robin Hood, that arche good,  
In mirth would spend some time.

And as he walked the forest along,  
Some pastime for to spy,  
There was he aware of a proudish bishop  
And all his company."

In these openings we have in common the idea of Robin's casual movement in his woods and the entrance of other figures, often seen as proud as in the sommeour in the Friar's Tale, and then the idea of some sort of sport, some game that usually leads to Robin's winning out over any others involved. Robin is usually pictured as a congenial and well-mannered young man and the yeoman of the Friar's Tale is also gay and congenial and questions the sommeour to determine whether he is a bally, the traditional enemy of the folk hero. The yeoman then poses as a bally himself (1396) in keeping with Robin's tendency to disguise himself. As the conversation progresses, we discover that the yeoman is from the north country, a favorite locale for robbers, strange folk such as the students in the Reeve's Tale, and also the locale of Robin Hood in many of the ballads. Also the yeoman is wealthy with "gold and silver in my cheste" (1400) and traditionally Robin has great stores of cloth, horses, food, goods which he can draw upon to help those in need such as Richard at Lee whom he helps in the Geare.  

The decision of the yeoman to accompany the sommeour to town is also in keeping with many of the ballads, for the town often affords Robin an opportunity to have a go at his favorite enemy, the evil sheriff of Nottingham. On the journey we then learn that the yeoman is one of Satan's men. In answer to the sommeour's asking his name, the yeoman readily smiles and calls himself a feverd (1446-1448), indicating a wit at work. He is pushed as Robin is by his circumstances into living by any means open to him:

My lord is hard to me and danseruous,  
And myn office is ful labourous . . . . 

(FrT 1.427-1438)
The *yeman* is capable of assuming any form and capable too of carrying out any action needed, even capable of becoming one of "Goddess instrument." It is true that this figure may well represent the devil in the tale and the Friar (and Chaucer) means just that, and we then have a rather interesting and yet traditional view of the devil performing God's work. The green of the *yeman*’s coat is readily associated with the Celtic underworld and Garrett may be correct in his comment that "Chaucer's Friar's Somnus should have taken warning at the color of the devil's clothes, but pride closed his eyes." But in an answer to Garrett, Robertson finds green the expected color of hunters because it is attractive to animals that the hunter seeks. In this tale, Robertson sees that the green is used by the devil "to attract his fellow worker, the *somnus*." However, green is the color of Robin's dress and he too can be seen to represent a sort of natural underworld figure or natural religion opposed to the corrupt church. This opposition is most evident in "The Death of Robin Hood" where Robin falls victim to church figures and is bled to death. And one need not read many Robin Hood ballads before he becomes aware of a capacity in Robin to assume disguises of all sorts. In his many roles he is often a devil to the higher estates, but he does the work of God toward these estates by exposing their pride, avarice, and hypocrisy, just as the devil-*yeman* in the Friar's Tale does with the *somnus*. And Robin is famous for his wit and his ability to beguile the members of the clergy. He even gets the *somnus* to suggest that they should be partners and share their winnings (1535). In light of what occurs later in the tale, it may not be too speculative to suggest that Robin is acting as character, playing along with the gullibility and greed of the *somnus* in order to play some grand trick upon him.

The *yeman*’s concern for the common man, one of the more expected traits of the Robin Hood figure, comes forth in two instances. First the carters is in much difficulty with his cart and horses and takes a natural means to free them. The *somnus* is quick to call the *yeman*’s attention to the wishes and curses of the cart, but the *yeman* is just as definite in explaining the position of the man who would send his horses all to the devil. Here the *yeman* sees the true nature of the carters feelings and has sympathy for his predicament, a sympathy one would not necessarily associate with a minor devil, a representative of "Sartanas," but a sympathy much in line with the Robin Hood of legend. Also the *yeman* has more of a game in mind, a greater trick yet to play.

It is later when the *somnus* attacks the poor widow that this greater trick is played. In response to the *somnus*’s attempt to extort twelve pence from the poor widow, the *yeman* seizes upon the *somnus* and takes him to his land, perhaps hell. The devil appearing to exact his due is common to ballads as noted by Child, but those he mentions are later in time and are mostly of continental origin. Hatten sees this moment as ironic—the demon, "a force obviously outside of the jurisdiction of the Church, acts as an ironic 'civil authority.'" But Robin too might act in the same way and he could just as easily be carrying the *somnus* to the greenwood where he would be relieved of any spoils he may have and sent, a poorer if not a wiser man, upon his way, in keeping with the typical Robin Hood ballad ending.

The Friar's Tale ends abruptly as do most of the Robin Hood ballads and then the Friar feels obligated to add his final touches and also the touches shown in most of the other tales of Canterbury. What we have here is definitively a *fabliau* and one that calls forth some answer from the *somnus*. But we may also have a typically ambiguous Chaucerian statement concerning the relative importance of the Robin Hood figure. Many of the references to Robin in the late medieval and Renaissance periods are of a derogatory nature, partly because of Robin's opposition to the Church and partly because the hero is becoming a folk hero, celebrated in folk ballads and tales and therefore inferior literature. Since Chaucer is so ready to ridicule the Middle English metrical romances, many of which were also popular literature, it seems likely that he could also be stating his opinion of another popular trend, the Robin Hood legend as it was operating in the ballads or oral poems of his time. And who of the pilgrims but the Friar who knows the tavern well in every town is better equipped to sing the songs of Robin? Here is the man who would hear them and being a member of the Church and perhaps an acquaintance of Sloth too, he might well scorn the treatment of the cloth common in the ballads and thus desire to require the Robin figure by coupling him with the devil. His tale has several suggestions of a Robin Hood ballad. Its opening is in the tradition of the poems. The *yeman* has surface ties with Robin in his dress and armor; he is congenial and likes tricks; he has sympathy for the common people; and he has an antipathy for clerics. Also the tale ends abruptly with the church figure ridiculed, an ending paralleled in many ballads. By linking this Robin Hood figure with the devil, Chaucer has a subtle and playful thrust at a popular hero. Speaking through the Friar, Chaucer establishes the contempt felt for this ballad figure by both the clergy and literary men. But we need to remember too that the devil figure accomplishes a good end and in seeing the devil of the Friar's Tale as a Robin Hood figure we have Chaucer's balanced judgment of a folk hero, destined to become quite famous and just as lasting as many of his own creations, including the Friar and the *somnus* who bring this particular tale about.

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NOTES

3. John M. Manly & Edith Roberts, ed., The Tale of the Cantebury Tales. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), VII, 137. It is interesting to note that the phrase "good sir Guy" has been used here. Usually this allusion is taken to refer to Guy of Warwick, but the ballad of Robin and Sir Guy of Gisbourne employs this very phrase and it seems likely that the scribe is relating here to the ballad here and not the popular romance here.

NOTES

CHAUCER AND THE POPE
OF DOUBLE WORSTEDE
Lawrence Beeseman

When Chaucer wrote the General Prologue there were rival claimants to the see of St. Peter: Urban VI in Rome, and Clement VII in Avignon. Chaucer's pointed antipapal satire in the GP, aimed specifically at this Great Schism, has been overlooked. Here is how Chaucer describes the Friar's opulent dress:

...he was nat lyk a choyseman
With a threthore cope, as is a pope sceler,
But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
Of double worsteed was his semicope...1

(GP 259-63)

The movement in the simile in line 261 from Friar to master 'master of arts' to Pope is comic; the last step should be, at least theoretically, a giant one. The fact that there were two popes makes lines 261-68 (ignoring the editorial full stop between them) an extension of the anti-papal joke: for an instant we take double worsteed with pope, and get good, comic anti-papal sense—something roughly equal to 'two Popes are worse than one.' And the line pope / semicope reinforces the point.

The likelihood of this sort of joke is strong. As Kokeritz, Baus, and others have shown, wordplay in Chaucer is pervasive, a natural device for a natural ironist reading his poetry aloud at court.8 Another possible hit at the Great Schism comes in the portrait of the Summoner:

And eek ye knouwen wel howe that a jay
Can elpen "Wate" as wel as kan the pope.

(GP 642-43)

On one level the humor here is in the three-way comparison of Summoner, to jay ('Jaye were twaught to cry Wate / Walet as orates now cry Poll '; Robinson, Works, p. 667), to Pope—but the jaye simile has an added resonance in light of the Great Schism. The comparison of the Pope to a popinjay would very likely bring to mind for Chaucer's audience the two papal voices.

The writing of Chaucer's Troilus and Cresside also falls within the period of the Great Schism. It is commonly remarked that Chaucer made over the Pope's title, servus servorum Dei, to define his role as narrator of the poem: "... I, that God of Loves seruense serve" (TC 1.13). In addition there is, I think, a comic allusion in Troilus to the Great Schism that has not been noticed:

For every wight which that to Rome went
Halt sat o path, or alwey o maner.

(TC 2.36-37)

This is usually taken to mean, in short: "Many roads lead to Rome"—if Troilus' wooing of Cresside seems strange to us we should remember that there are lots of ways to get...
It is especially important to note that the verbs went and bade are contracted presents: weneth and badeth. For Chaucer and his contemporaries, the road to "Rome" could just as well lead to Avignon.

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NOTES
3. Robinson, note 6, p. 814, that the title occurs in Para 721, and in Donne's Sat., xxii, 112.

THE PARDONER'S "CONFESSION" AND ST. AUGUSTINE'S DE DOCTRINA CHRISTIANA

Robert E. Jungman

Certainly one of the most striking incongruities in the Canterbury Tales is the discrepancy between the content of the Pardoner's Tale and the character of the Pardoner as revealed in his "Confession":

For myn extrame is nat but for to wynne,
And noting for correction of syrme.
I sikeke never, whan that they been beryed,
Though that he solez goon a-blakeherfled.
For cerite, many a predicacion
Cometh oft syrme of yvel entencion . . .

(Pard P 403-8)

I priche of no thyng but for courte.
Therfore my theme is yet, and evere was,
Radice malorum et Cupiditatis.
The eke I priche agayn that same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be gylly in that syrme,
Yet haue I maken oother folk to twyntyn
From avarice, and sovre to repente.

(Pard P 424-32)

For though myself be a folo vicios un man,
A moral tale yet I you telle hym.3

(Pard P 499-60; my italics, except for 496)

On the one hand, most readers agree that the Pardoner has serious moral flaws. On the other hand, almost everyone admits that the Pardoner's Tale is highly moral and effectively presented.

The hypocritical preacher is, of course, a late medieval commonplace. For example, F. N. Robinson, in his notes to the Pardoner's Tale, cites the obvious parallel of Faux Semblant from the Roman de la Rose. It is interesting to note, however, that St. Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana discusses in some detail the problem of an immoral man preaching morality. In Book IV, xxvii, 99, St. Augustine writes:

Nam qui sapienter et eloquenter dicit, vivat autem requies, erudit quidem multis discendis studiorum, quamvis animae tuae sit insipient (Rer. xxvii, 22), sed scripturn est. Unde sit et Apostolus; Sive occasione, sive veritate, Christus annuntietur (Philipp. 1, 59). Christus autem veritas est, et tamen eam non veritate annuntiatur veritas prorsus: id est, ut praevo et fallaci credo, quae secta et vera sunt, praedicatur. Sic quippe annuntiatur Jesus Christus ab eis qui suas quaeque non\n


St. Augustine writes:

For 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."

That Chaucer knew this passage is quite probable, given the immense popularity of the De Doctrina Christiana all through the medieval period. Nor should we forget that Alfred Kellogg and Robert P. Miller have shown the Pardoner's Tale to be strongly influenced in other ways by Augustineian doctrine. Clearly, then, the passage from St. Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana, if not an outright source for the Prologue of the Pardoner, at the very least provides a significant "glose" on his "Confession."

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NOTES
LANDSCAPES OF LOVE AND POETRY: CHAUCERIAN DREAM ALLEGORY IN ENGLAND THROUGH THE RENAISSANCE

Alice Loftin

It has long been recognized that Chaucer’s reputation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries stemmed less from the Canterbury Tales than from his chronicles of the courts of love and fame, from his poems of vision and debate. In fact, however, the evidence offered by the first editions of Chaucer and by the countless poems written in imitation of him suggests that the interest of succeeding ages was focused in an area more circumscribed still: in Chaucer’s status as a dreamer of dreams and in the particular kind of dream landscape and dream allegory characteristic of his work. If Thomas Speght found it desirable, in 1598, to establish not a, but the, canonical dream of Chaucer—denoting the “death of Blanche, misterned beretlore Chaucer’s Dreme” to The Boke of the Duchesse and granting the coveted title to the work we know as The Tale of Ladies—then it is surely necessary that we consider the Chaucerian tradition in England as essentially a visionary tradition. Only thus can we understand its truly astounding power and longevity. From Chaucer forward, the visionary world became not merely a landscape of the lover’s mind, but of the poet’s; as such, it developed into a kind of living fiction, a world created and maintained—for recreation, for inspiration, for the debate of great matters—by a community of dreamers who were also, and primarily, poets.

Chaucer’s own dream poems constitute a series of experiments with the structural and conceptual possibilities inherent in the love vision as he inherited it from the French school. His narrators are never lovers merely; often they are poets, and always they have some specialized function to fulfill in the visionary landscape. From the young man who serves as aman to the Black Knight in the Book of the Duchess, offering the grieving lover a channel for the sorrows which threaten the balance of the dream world, to the poet called to account, in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, for works against love and ladies, the Chaucerian pattern is clear. Solace does not come cheaply. Those who dream dreams and record them have a duty to the worlds their minds create or recreate: to celebrate, to maintain, and to protect them. It is a duty embraced eagerly by Chaucer’s followers in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.

Viewed in these terms, the well-documented Chaucerian echoes in Lydgate’s Temple of Glass become not slavish imitation, but a very functional kind of dream allegory. His visionary world, Lydgate tells us, is a landscape which other poets have visited before, for other reasons; indeed it is a world which poets have created. John Skelton, in his Garland of Laurel, creates a dream paradise for poets dead or much maligned—a theme echoed (though far more seriously) by Abraham Cowley in his Dream of Elysium, first published in 1636. So too do Douglas, Dunbar, Greene, Burton, poets and dreamers all, transmute their Chaucerian heritage into works that are highly traditional and original at once. Indeed, what is most remarkable about the love vision after Chaucer is that, for so conventional a form, its manifestations should have been so various. But Chaucer had placed the making of poetry squarely at the conceptual center of the love vision, creating a form, and a literary tradition, that were to endure for more than two centuries after his death.

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A NOTE ON CHAUCER’S MANCIPLE’S TALE 105–10

David F. Marshall

An important allusion has been previously overlooked in the opening lines of Chaucer’s Manciple’s Tale:

When Phebus dwelled here in this esthe adoun,
As olde bookes maken mencion,
He was the mooste lusty bacher
In al this world, and eek the beste archer.
He dow Phebus, the serpente, as he lay
Slepyng as any soone upon a day....

(Mant 105–10)
Although Chaucer's source for the story of the tell-tale crow is Ovid's Metamorphoses (2. 531-632), the python reference comes from another section (1. 433-4). It is important that the serpent is sleeping against the sun.

In alchemical texts, a serpent (usually serpents) superimposed upon the sun illustrates the Mercurius movens, the prima materia of the alchemic process. It can also represent the spiritus mercariandi necessary for transmutation. The term "python" (M.E. phisoun) has been used to designate these symbols in some alchemical texts.\(^6\)

When Chaucer places this allusion at the beginning of the Manuscript of the Tale, his readers that were alchemically literate would interpret the tale as thematically and textually related to its immediate predecessor, the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, which questions the validity of alchemy.\(^3\)

Just as the Canon's Yeoman regrets wasting his life pursuing the pipe-dreams of alchemy, so Pheban's pet crow regrets its tattling, which leads to his transformation, a transmutation from good to bad. Because of this initial allusion and its significance, the Manuscript of the Tale should be read as conceptually and thematically continuing the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, and not as some have previously done, as concerned with different and unrelated themes.\(^9\)

Atlantic Christian College

NOTES


2. Apparently only Robert Donald Spence in his "Chaucer's The Manuscript of the Tale." (University of Toronto, 1913) (1957), 26) has advanced a reading on the context of "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale."

3. Research support for this finding was provided by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and Duke University under the Lilly Visiting Scholars in the Humanities Program, George Williams, Director; Edmund Reis, Advisor.

TROILUS AND A CLASSICAL PANDER:
TC 3.729-30
Michael Olmert

While a number of critics have commented on mythography in Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer's reference to the story of Mercury and Herse in Book III (729-739) has been overlooked. This is surprising because Ovid's tale has a number of the same elements as Chaucer's at this point in Book III. It involves an attempt to sneak into a lover's bedroom (Herse's), a pandar (Aglauros, Herse's sister), and another sister, named Pandrosos, who refrains from participating in Aglauros's illicit trade.

According to Ovid, Mercury fell in love with Herse after catching only a single glimpse of her at a religious festival.\(^1\) Foremost in a procession of noble gift-bearers, the young Herse is described in terms of the same shining star and moon images that we have come to associate with Chaucer's Criseyde.

Although Mercury is smitten, he displays some very uncharacteristic diffidence before flying down to meet her love: "Smoothing his hair, making the robes fall even, / The Golden border showing" (731-732). In Chaucer's poem, this is reflected in Troilus's own uneasiness with his mode of entry. It should be remembered that Troilus, at the time of this prayer to Mercury for courage, is tremulous and about to sneak "spereely" into Criseyde's bedroom—chiefly through the agency of Pandrosos's moral (so to speak) support and knowledge of fourteenth-century plumbing conduits.

At least Mercury comes to his lover's front door. And in Ovid, Mercury's access was much more encompassed. Herse and her two sisters slept in three bedrooms: Herse in the middle chamber; Aglauros on the left; and their sister Pandrosos in the right-hand room.

Aglauros, the first to see Mercury's arrival, refuses to let the god pass: "She demanded / Gold, a great weight of it, for any service / She would perform, and made him leave the dwelling" (748-750). Aglauros's demands are in the finest tradition of the pandar; by contrast, Pandrosos, still sleeping in the farthest room, takes no part in the transaction. Minerva, angered by Aglauros's betrayal, bids Easy to punish the girl. When Aglauros tries to block Mercury's entrance again, she is turned into cold, black stone. Ovid then tells us that "Mercury, this punishment inflicted / For the girl's wickedness of word and feeling, / Left Athens and went sorrowing back to Heaven" (834-836). There is no record that the love-match was consummated.

Against this classical back-lighting, how then are we to interpret Troilus's complaint? "Mercurie, for love of Herse eke / For which Pallas was with Aglauros wroth, / Now help!" (729-731).

Troilus is putting himself squarely in Pandrosos's hands, even though Aglauros's punishment does not speak well for the go-between's services. Her demand for money made her betray both Love itself and the gods; but even had she admitted Mercury to Herse's room gratis, she would have been guilty of betraying her own sister. In fact, the admitted that Mercury's intentions were criminal.
and that “she ought to tell her father” (8r3). Unfortunately, she did not act on those feelings—just as Troilus is incapable of acting to the point of Ovid’s story. And surely the contrast between Pandarus and the silent Pandrosus is too great: res ipsa loquitur.

Troilus himself has learned nothing from this particular classical episode, which is why he adds it so blindly. Mercury flies away from both his lover and the scene of Aglauros’s violent transfiguration—a tacit acknowledgment of the folly of the go-between in a cosmos controlled by the gods. Although Troilus alludes to the tale, he then acts in a way inappropriate to its conclusion—another element in his tragic fall.

University of Maryland

NOTES

NEW LIGHT ON JUDOC THE OBSCURE

M. E. Reisner

Critics on Chaucer have pointed out the peculiar relevance of several hagiographic allusions in the Canterbury Tales, but little has been made of the Wife of Bath’s swearing “by Saint Jocel” (WBP 483) beyond identifying Jocel, or Judoc, as a Breton saint. Skert mentions that the monastery built on the site of Saint Jocel’s hermitage, at Saint-Jose-sur-Mer, lay in the diocese of Amiens, a part of France familiar to Englishmen in the course of the wars of Edward III, but his identification of a passage in Le Testament de Jean de Meung as the likeliest source of Chaucer’s lines encompassing the oath has probably focused attention away from the saint and his possible persistence to Dame Alison or her narrative. Gordon Hall Gerald, in “Chaucer’s Calendar of Saints,” mentions that St. Jocel appears in the Westminster Calendar, and theorizes that Chaucer may have heard of the saint either through a service-book or from experience as a traveller, as to the relevance of the Wife’s invocation he observes: “It is difficult to see why the name of this seventh-century hermit was introduced . . .”

Chaucerians, it would seem, are unaware of an English dimension of the saint’s history likely to have been known to Chaucer. Alban Butler’s Lives of the Saints states that, “according to the tradition of the New Minster (Hyde) at Winchester, St. Judoc’s relics were brought there, about the year 901, and this translation was commemorated on January 9.” The Benedictines’ Vies des saints et des bienheureux furnishes further detail:

Les invasions normandes amenèrent la ruine du monastère. Les reliques furent portées en Angleterre, à Hyde, près de Winchester. La translation est indiquée dans les calendriers de Winchester au 9 janvier dès le XIIe siècle. Les lettres du breviare de Hyde Abbey au XIIIe siècle nous apprennent que c’était en 903 que des clercs fuyant les Normands s’étaient réfugiés en Angleterre avec les reliques de saint Josse et qu’ils y avaient été accueillis par Grimaud, ancien moine de Saint-Bertuin et prieur de l’abbaye de Hyde.8

When the monastery of Saint-Jose-sur-Mer was restored, the monks were unwilling to admit that they had been dispossessed of St. Jocel’s bones. As the Bollandists record: “Verum continuerunt aliis integrum corpus reperirem esse, ubi primum sepulchrum erat, in Sancti Judoci monasterio, die 25 iulii 977.” It is clear from the dates of the Winchester Calendar and the Hyde Abbey breviary that Saint-Jose-sur-Mer’s counter-claim did not interfere with the English tradition that the New Minster housed St. Jocel’s bones.

How much Chaucer knew about St. Jocel is a matter of speculation. If he did in fact associate the saint’s name with Winchester, the Wife of Bath would be the most appropriate pilgrim to swear by St. Jocel, for Winchester is inseparably connected with King Arthur and his knights. The Wife’s tale, of course, is set “In th’olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour, / Of which that Britons spoken grete honour” (WBT 9–10). Chaucer’s borrowing from Jean de Meung, with its reference to sir, not sas, Jocel could thus be transformed, with some point, in its new context. As a final touch, it is worth noting that the Tabard Inn, in its character of actual hostility well known to Chaucer, was part of the property of the Abbot of Hyde and was adjoined by the Abbot’s own house. Might Chaucer have inspired some of the traditions of his host’s landlord while he enjoyed his cheer? Whatever the source of the poet’s knowledge of Saint Jocel, however, an English dimension to the story of the Breton saint should be of interest to annotators of the Canterbury Tales.

Université Laval, Quebec

NOTES
2. Robert A. Pratt, “Chaucer and the Holy Cross of Branchoidea,” MVL,
ASTROLOGY AS A BONE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE MAN OF LAW AND THE FRANKLIN

Charles R. Sleeth

In the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, the portrait of the Franklin follows immediately upon that of the Man of Law, and begins with the line (The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. P. N. Robinson, ad ed., CT. I, 331) "A frankleyn was in his compaignye," i.e. the Man of Law’s company. This means that they undertook the pilgrimage together, which implies that they had been friends for some time. As it is often observed in life that two friends of long standing may have an irreconcilable disagreement on one matter of opinion, each holding strong convictions in polar opposition to the other, so it seems to be with this pair of friends on the Canterbury pilgrimage.

The topic of their disagreement is astrology. In their respective tales each expresses himself about it, digestively and with a passionate emphasis which nothing in the tale quite accounts for. First the Man of Law, foreshadowing the fatal outcome of the Sultan’s desire to marry Constance, explains (MLT 190-203) that his death, like that of many heroes of antiquity, was written in the stars when he was born; "but mennes wittens ben so dulle / That no wight kan wel rede it atte fulle" (MLT 202-3). Later we shall have reason to suspect that he may have been looking earnestly at the Franklin when he said "mennes wittens ben so dulle." A few stanzas later, at the reluctant departure of Constance from Rome (MLT 205-315), he interrupts the narrative to lament the catastrophic position of the stars at the time of her journey, and to reproach her father the Emperor for imprudently paying no heed to such a vital circumstance. The terms of his reproach, moreover, clearly include not only the Emperor but anyone who is well enough placed socially to have access to astrological knowledge, so that only ignorance or sloth can account for his failure to use it:

In no tymte bet than oother in swiche cas? Of viage is ther noo electio, namely to folke of heigh condicion? Nought whan a route is of a burthe ynowe? Allas, we ben to lewed or to slowe!

(MLT 311-15)

The Franklin, for his part, is even more exasperated with his old friend’s refusal to recognize that he is saying with the raw materials of damnation. At his first mention of the supposed influence of the stars on human lives, he calls it:

swiche falsye
As in ooure dypeys is nat worth a flyte. For heightly churche in ooure blythe
Ne suffreth noon illustiaus us to grive.

(Prose T 1134-4)

The same implication is clear in his references to swiche illustiaus and swiche meschaunces As hevene folk usoden in shikhe dypeys.

(Prose T 1292-3)

and in his characterization of the Orleans clerk’s astrological magic as:

his japes and his wreccheness Of swich a supersticious cursedness.

(Prose T 1278-9)

It almost goes without saying that none of these passages is found in a recognized source or analogue of either tale.
We might suppose that in letting the Man of Law characterize the Sultan's mother so emphatically as a veritable she-devil, not likely to be diverted from her hellish course, as "wolle of vices" (MLT 323), "mote of inquyte" (MLT 353), and "nest of every vice" (MLT 364), Chaucer is giving us the opportunity to conclude that the Man of Law is unwittingly undermining his own case for the importance of choosing one time rather than another for Constance's departure from Rome. If we do suppose this, there is a chance that we are right, for when Chaucer speaks in his own voice (A Treatise on the Astrolabe, 2.457-60), he ranges himself mildly but firmly on the Franklin's side of the controversy: "Nathles these ben observances of judicial matere and ryes of payts, in whiche my spirit hath no faith, ne knowing of her horoscope."

Brooklyn College of CUNY
SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chaucer Library recently announced the release of its first publication, *De Miseria Condicionis Humane*, edited by Robert E. Lewis, professor of English at Indiana University and General Editor of the Chaucer Library. With this first of a series of texts which will be published over the course of several years, the Chaucer Library will eventually present to the scholarly community texts of classical and medieval works which were available to Chaucer and his contemporaries.

Although its usefulness to Chaucerian scholars can hardly be overestimated, the publication of the Chaucer Library represents a major event for all medievalists. The volumes in the series will provide important new sources for understanding the social, political, literary, religious, artistic, and psychological forces that shaped the medieval world. Because this understanding will undoubtedly form the basis of many new studies of Chaucer and the medieval world, the Chaucer Library's significance extends far beyond its primary purpose of making important texts available to all scholars.

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