

CHAUCER'S "AUCTORITEE," "MAYSTRYE," AND "SOVERAYNETEE":

RHETORICAL CONTROL AS UNIFYING ELEMENT IN

THE CANTERBURY TALES

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Chaucer's "Auctoritee," "Maystrye," and "Soveraynetee":  
Rhetorical Control as Unifying Element in  
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This paper evaluates the rhetorical stance of Geoffrey Chaucer in his mature masterpiece The Canterbury Tales. Chaucer attained a unity not only through characterizations but also through a patterned use of various rhetorical devices; this unity results from the poet's ability to create freely within a prescribed form.

In "The General Prologue" of The Canterbury Tales Chaucer prefigures his intention for the remainder of his masterpiece. To arrive at this premise, I researched sources which indicate the probability of Chaucer's knowledge of rhetoric. I charted a detailed study of Chaucer's dispositio: prologue, body, and epilogue. I traced Chaucer's use of and intent for Herry Bailly, the Host of the pilgrims, as a unifying rhetorical vehicle. I considered three characteristics of the Middle Ages: "auctoritee," "maystrye," and "soveraynetee," especially in

relation to rhetoric. The topic of authority in the Marriage Group and the genre of romance are two significant elements of "The General Prologue" prefiguring these specific elements throughout The Canterbury Tales. To support my theory, I cited significant data concerning my stance that rhetorically-minded Chaucer encompassed in his "General Prologue" his intent for the entire masterpiece.

My conclusions, then, are that Chaucer recognized the importance of genre; that his excellence emerged and remained constant because he exercised freedom within a defined framework; that in "The General Prologue" Chaucer prefigured his intent for the remainder of his masterpiece; that he developed Herry Bailly as an authoritative figure capable of imposing a measure of control on The Tales; that between "The General Prologue" and "Chaucer's Retraction," for continuity, the author interspersed individual romances throughout the pilgrimage and highlighted them with specific rhetorical elements; and that he placed significant statements on "auctoritee," "maystrye," and "soveraynetee" in repeated frame structures, each of which contains a prologue, a body, and an epilogue. Such arrangement and organization are indeed indicators of Chaucer's mastery of rhetoric. Therefore, Chaucer applied his knowledge of ancient and medieval rhetoric. He remained original and creative in his

composition despite the restrictions that his milieu imposed upon him. He united his masterpiece with various rhetorical devices that he applied intentionally and skillfully in The Canterbury Tales.

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## Chapter I

### Chaucer's Knowledge of Rhetoric

Geoffrey Chaucer is a master of his art who is in control of his material at all times. In "The General Prologue" of The Canterbury Tales Chaucer prefigures his intent for the remainder of his masterpiece. The artist unifies his work by interweaving the role of Herry Bailly through the tapestry of the pilgrimage. Between "The General Prologue" and "Chaucer's Retraction," the author intersperses individual romances throughout the pilgrimage for continuity and highlights them with specific rhetorical elements. The poet places significant statements on auctoritee, maystrye, and soveraynetee in repeated frame structures, each of which contains a prologue, a body, and an epilgoue. Such arrangement and organization are indeed indicators of Chaucer's mastery of rhetoric.

My theory is encompassed, to some degree, in the critical comments that Chaucer's "originality marks a new beginning" and that

his genius owes more perhaps to the English language of which he is a master, the English that was spoken around him, than to the French

and Italian poets from whom he consciously borrowed and to whom he certainly owes much.<sup>1</sup>

I agree with Albert C. Baugh that

It is only relatively late--in certain aspects of the Troilus and chiefly in the Canterbury Tales--that having learned all he could from his teachers and having won the complete mastery of his art, he dares to strike out on his own with confidence and ease. This phase of his career can only be described as his English period.<sup>2</sup>

In his mature work The Canterbury Tales Chaucer assumes a rhetorical stance and attains unity through a patterned use of various rhetorical devices; this unity results from the poet's ability to create freely within a prescribed form. Chaucer recognized the importance of genre; in fact, it is possible that his excellence emerged and remained constant because he exercised freedom within a defined framework.

Furthermore, Chaucer maintained rhetorical and authorial control by suggesting the meaning of rhetoric, by

<sup>1</sup> John Speirs, "A Survey of Medieval Verse," in The Age of Chaucer, Volume I of The Pelican Guide to English Literature, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> "The Middle English Period (1100-1500)," in A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 262.

presenting evidence of his rhetorical knowledge, and by giving examples of his ability to incorporate rhetorical references to this knowledge in his work to create in his mature years a masterpiece that remains today--almost six centuries later--one of delightful creativity.

Chaucer was a recognized artist by the time he began to develop his dream of the Canterbury pilgrimage. The tales that the author amalgamated and presented to the delight of the royal court were tales with which Chaucer's audiences were familiar. The popular demand was, certainly, for the tale, for the joy of hearing once again a variety of known stories; however, the continual demand from the royal court was to hear the uniquely narrated stories of a creative genius.

Chaucer was born into a cosmopolitan London. Although the exact date of his birth is unknown, scholarly conjectures document 1340, 1343, and 1344 as possible years. He was born into a well-to-do family of vintners "with rising fortunes and some standing at court."<sup>3</sup> Chaucer was commissioned to the King's service, at times traveling out of his native country on secret missions. Specific details

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. xx. All further reference to this work will appear in the text.



about Chaucer the man are scarce; general details about Chaucer the writer are virtually non-existent. However, this is a point of small significance in this paper. I shall follow the lead of F. N. Robinson concerning the facts, or lack thereof, surrounding Chaucer's life and times. Robinson suggests that one should "let Chaucer's works speak for themselves, rather interpreting him by them than interpreting the writings by the personal experiences of the author."<sup>4</sup>

Despite the void left by unknown details of the milieu of Chaucer, there are several verifiable bits of evidence upon which historians agree--facts which are significant to this paper. The Black Plague left its devastating mark by destroying perhaps one-half the population; the common masses were asking for and receiving paying positions and living wages; England in the period encompassing the life of Chaucer was reigned over by three volatile kings. As a result of this diversity of circumstances, the Church, which had held supreme power for many years, began to crumble from within. Authority, mastery, and sovereignty were questioned literally from every facet of life.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, p. xix.

As a result of Chaucer's service to the Royal Court, he traveled to France and Italy. By the time we are considering Chaucer the mature, observant artist, the poet had written his scholastic exercises in Latin, his romances influenced by the French language, and his Italian-influenced poetry. It is fortunate, indeed, for us that Chaucer--in his later years, with experiences of a busy life, with an astute observational ability, with a memory of uncanny quality, and with an innovative, creative artistry--turned to weave the tapestry of life in his native language, the vernacular of the period. The Canterbury Tales remains, then, a most important classic because embodied in it are the beginnings of such magnitude that later writers and artists dipped their pens into Chaucer's artistic ink before creating their own works.

A superficial search for a definition of rhetoric of the Middle Ages leads one too often to a source which simply states that there was a decline of rhetoric during this period. A more serious search leads us to a variety of statements. In a bibliographical essay Robert O. Payne recognizes that "the first problem with medieval rhetoric is to discover what it was--or how many different things it

was."<sup>5</sup> Before developing the theory which I plan to follow, I will consider several views such as that "during the Middle Ages rhetoric was continued as a serious study . . . in the trivium, and the intricate rhetorical systems kept alive an interest in the forms of expression."<sup>6</sup> In his discussion of rhetoric during the Middle Ages, Edward P. J. Corbett states that

Scholastic logic held a decidedly superior position in the trivium. The province of rhetoric became principally a study of the art of letter writing (ars dictaminis) and of preparing and delivering sermons (artes praedicandi).<sup>7</sup>

John Matthews Manly contends that it may be this very emphasis that created a vacuum and thus a need for the thirteenth-century treatise Ars Versificandi of Matthew of Vendome and the treatises Documentum de Arte Versificandi

<sup>5</sup> "Chaucer and the Art of Rhetoric," in Companion to Chaucer Studies, rev. ed., ed. Beryl Rowland (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature, 3rd ed. (New York: The Odyssey Press, A Division of Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1960), p. 380.

<sup>7</sup> Edward P. J. Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 603.

and Nova Poetria of Geoffrey of Vinsauf.<sup>8</sup>

With further reference to the treatises of Matthew of Vendome and Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Manly begins to detail medieval rhetorical practices--practices which will be of concern to the approach to this paper:

The doctrine taught by these two authorities, the common medieval doctrine, falls logically and naturally into three main divisions or heads: (1) arrangement or organization; (2) amplification and abbreviation; (3) style and its ornaments.<sup>9</sup>

Richard A. Lanham defines rhetoric by recognizing the overlapping of early oral persuasion with later written persuasion. He suggests that the fact that Cicero stressed the main functions of the discipline to be "to teach, to please, and to move" may explain "why rhetorical theory has so often, in its history, overlapped poetics."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," Warton Lecture on English Poetry, reprinted from The Proceedings of the British Academy, 12 (1926), 95-113. In Chaucer Criticism, Volume I: The Canterbury Tales, eds. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), p. 272.

<sup>9</sup> Manly, p. 274.

<sup>10</sup> Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms: A Guide for Students of English Literature (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 89.

Readings in Medieval Rhetoric presents a variety of medieval doctrines which obviously influenced the writers of the age, especially Chaucer. According to the scholars editing these doctrines, there was a concentration "on demonstrating the permanent values of [certain] principles to a civilization operating from a quite different set of presuppositions."<sup>11</sup>

Miller and his colleagues define medieval rhetoric by pointing to three main conditions. First, the Christian scholars relied upon four main classics: Augustine's De doctrina christiana, Cicero's De inventione and De oratore, and, finally, the Rhetorica ad Herennium formerly attributed to Cicero. These specific classics "became the bases for all rhetorical theory . . . to transcend pagan oratorical goals and to offer some valuable suggestions to the Christian writer and preacher."<sup>12</sup> Second, universities expanding from various small existing schools became the learning centers, carrying with them the attitude of the contemplative monk. Thus the individual spiritual growth of the student became a significant part of the trivium. "One studied in order to find God, the goal of every individual's

<sup>11</sup> Joseph M. Miller, Michael H. Prosser, and Thomas W. Benson, Readings in Medieval Rhetoric (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. xi.

<sup>12</sup> Miller, Prosser, and Benson, p. xiii.

earthly pilgrimage."<sup>13</sup> Miller includes the definition of medieval rhetoric as "the art of speaking well in secular matters."<sup>14</sup> Third, recurring during this period is "an ever increasing tendency to view rhetoric as a tool of administrative procedure rather than a means of persuasion."<sup>15</sup>

Miller, Prosser, and Benson present fully or in summary a variety of rhetorical treatises or doctrines covering a period of many years. The selections are arranged in chronological order dating from the sixth century inclusively through the early fifteenth century. Names such as Martianus Capella, D. Chirus Fortunatianus, Priscian the Grammarian, Alan of the Isles, and Brunetto Latini remind the reader that documents such as "The Book of Rhetoric" and Artis rhetoricae libri tres are indeed significant training in the trivium.

The treatise Fundamentals Adapted from Hermogenes devotes major divisions to the fable, narration, the anecdote, and the sententia. One feels that Chaucer must have been acquainted with this work in its entirety. The Anticlaudianus and Li Livres dou Tresor clearly fortell

<sup>13</sup> Miller, Prosser, and Benson, p. xiii.

<sup>14</sup> Miller, Prosser, and Benson, p. xiv.

<sup>15</sup> Miller, Prosser, and Benson, p. xiv.

certain methods of Chaucer through the significance and power of proper words and an elaborate discussion on refutation, an effective action in The Tales and also among various members on the pilgrimage. By virtue of these treatises, probably available to him, as well as those still to be mentioned Chaucer not only knew the rhetoric preceding his writing but also practiced rhetoric in his writings, especially in the numerous genres he employed in his mature work The Canterbury Tales. The editors suggest, however, that for such major treatises as Alcuin's Dialogue, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova and Harry Caplan's translation of the Pseudo-Aquinas De arte praedicandi, one "needs to locate the selection in its entirety."<sup>16</sup>

In a significant article entitled "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," Manly poses rhetorical questions such as "What, then, was medieval rhetoric? Who were its principal authorities in Chaucer's time? And what use did Chaucer make of methods and doctrines unmistakably due to the rhetoricians?"<sup>17</sup> Manly suggests that the answer to his question is embodied in the authoritative publication of

<sup>16</sup> Miller, Prosser, and Benson, p. xvi.

<sup>17</sup> Manly, p. 272.





known among his own contemporaries."<sup>21</sup>

These two works, Manly's "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians" and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova, are very significant to the purpose of this paper; therefore, I shall consider the main points of Manly's lecture and highlights of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova to support the theory that Chaucer was familiar with and put into practice significant rhetorical principles of this thirteenth-century document which Geoffrey of Vinsauf wrote "to replace the 'Old Poetics,' the Ars poetica of Horace."<sup>22</sup>

First, to support this theory, I should like to review the Poetria Nova, or The New Art of Poetry. In the beginning of the treatise under the heading of "The Divisions of the Art of Rhetoric," one can readily link Chaucer's approach with the following material:

Let not your hand be too swift to grasp the  
pen, nor your tongue too eager . . . to utter the  
word. Allow neither to be ruled by the hands of  
fortune, but in order that the work have better  
fortune, let a discreet mind, walking before the  
deed, suspend the offices of both hand and tongue  
and ponder the theme for a while. Let the inner  
compasses of the mind lay out the entire range of  
material. Let a certain order predetermine from

<sup>21</sup> Manly, p. 269.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, Prosser, Benson, p. 244.

what point the pen should start on its course, and where the outermost limits shall be fixed. Prudently ponder the entire work within the breast, and let it be in the breast before it is in the mouth.<sup>23</sup>

Various passages from The Canterbury Tales support further Chaucer's knowledge of rhetoric. Arguments have emerged throughout the years as to whether or not Chaucer was familiar with rhetorical treatises. As Manly suggests, regardless of the lack of facts concerning Chaucer's knowledge of rhetorical treatises, it seems obvious that Chaucer "was a man of scholarly tastes and of considerable erudition."<sup>24</sup> And as Payne states, there is still more to be done in the area of investigating and "examination of everything Chaucer says and does in his works from which we might infer his own theory of poetry."<sup>25</sup>

If, then, we assume Chaucer's schooling, his association with the court, and his literary influences both classical and medieval, it would seem plausible also to assume that Chaucer knew rhetorical theory and that he practiced what he knew. In Chapter II I shall develop the

<sup>23</sup> Faral, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Manly, p. 272.

<sup>25</sup> Payne, pp. 52-53.

latter point. As for the former reference to Chaucer's knowledge of rhetoric, I turn to the text of The Canterbury Tales to select passages that illustrate the author's awareness of the subject.

From the beginning of my study I have sensed Chaucer's astute ability to incorporate into his artistic work specific allusions to or methods of rhetorical and poetical devices. Realistically, through his portrayal of various pilgrims Chaucer has displayed knowledge of classical rhetoric, sermon delivery, letter writing, and effective poetic practices.

Manly devised a method of percentages to demonstrate the rhetorical content of the various tales. Interestingly, he places "The Monk's Tale" at the top of the list with one hundred per cent rhetorical content. Laying proof of statement aside, one needs only to turn to Chaucer's description of the Monk in "The General Prologue" to see that the author has told his audience what to expect of the monk, thus prefiguring the plan he hopes to follow to completion. In introducing the Monk the author tells us that "A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie" (I, 165). In "The Prologue of The Monk's Tale," Herry Bailly, the Host, alludes to the Monk's being a maister, certainly "No povre cloysterer, ne no novys" (VI, 1938). Manly accounts

for the Monk's high percentage of rhetoric by suggesting that he delivers a definition of tragedy as he views it. The Monk then proceeds to relate a collection of tragedies.

Manly shows that "The Manciple's Tale" has sixty-one per cent rhetorical content. In "The General Prologue" Chaucer says of the Manciple:

Now is nat that of God a full fair grace  
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace  
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?  
Of maistres hadde mo than thries ten.  
(I, 573-76)

Chaucer concludes the passage on the Manciple in "The General Prologue" with the statement that "this Manciple sette his aller cappe" (I, 586). Robinson interprets these words to mean that the Manciple would "make fools of them all."<sup>26</sup> This interpretation leads one directly to the picture of the Greek philosopher Socrates during his first appearance in the courtroom. In fact, the entire passage of Chaucer's description of the Manciple is applicable to Socrates, especially as he is portrayed by Plato in his Apology. Also in "The General Prologue" Chaucer reveals more rhetorical knowledge through the Pilgrim Chaucer's couplet "Eek Plato seith, who so that kan rede, / The wordes

<sup>26</sup> "Explanatory Notes," p. 665.

moote be cosyn to the dede" (I, 741-42). The Pilgrim Chaucer reveals a respect for rhetoric in his description of the Clerk of Oxford:

For hym was levere have at his beddes heed  
 Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,  
 Of Aristotle and his philosophie,  
 Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.  
(I, 293-96)

Chaucer mentions Cato, also. Richard A. Lanham refers to "Cato's definition of an orator as vir bonus dicendi peritus (a good man skilled in speaking)."<sup>27</sup> Lanham further suggests that this definition "would seem to bring almost all humane learning into the domain of rhetoric (as, indeed, seems to happen in De Oratore)."<sup>28</sup>

This material has not included every reference which Chaucer made to rhetoricians--certainly not when one views the mass of Chaucer's literature. There are indeed numerous references elsewhere. Here I have selected only a specific few rhetorical references from Chaucer's later work The Canterbury Tales. I believe also with Manly that Chaucer in his mature work is expressing a "growing conviction that narration and description, instead of being mere exercises

<sup>27</sup> Lanham, p. 87.

<sup>28</sup> Lanham, p. 87.

in clever phrasing, depend upon the use of the visualizing imagination."<sup>29</sup>

It is my intention, then, to show that Chaucer, the rhetor, is expressive and persuasive as he delivers his narrative. This narrative embodies references to ancient rhetoricians and uses rhetorical methods, those which are suggested by the author's contemporaries. In addition, it is presented vividly through his imagination and creativity to weave a tapestry which I believe can be fascinating and picturesque to the modern student of the works of Chaucer.

<sup>29</sup> Manly, p. 288.

## Chapter II

### Chaucer's Dispositio: Prologue, Body, and Epilogue

Chaucer uses numerous devices to unify The Canterbury Tales. First within "The General Prologue," Chaucer intricately weaves a literary fabric by using significant rhetorical devices: dispositio, an outer frame containing a prologue; and descriptio, an artful portrayal of the various pilgrims; and an epilogue, a conclusive statement which completes each portrayal. Another applicable term is energia--a word synonymous with descriptio and a term used rhetorically for "vigor of style."<sup>1</sup> Another device, elocutio, involves a careful use of rhymed couplets and an artistic placement of direct statements in the introduction of each pilgrim, specifically coupling him with the portrait of the preceding pilgrim. Chaucer employs, also, rhetorical devices set forth by Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his Poetria Nova; these devices represent the three major concerns of medieval rhetoricians: arrangement and organization,

<sup>1</sup> Richard A. Lanham, Handlist of Rhetorical Terms: A Guide for Students of English Literature (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 40.

amplification and abbreviation, and style and its ornaments.<sup>2</sup>

Often literary laymen speak authoritatively on the method, or lack thereof, of Chaucer's achievement of unity in his mature masterpiece The Canterbury Tales. Ralph Baldwin premises that the threads of unification are within "The General Prologue" and in the final sermon of The Canterbury Tales, which he believes to be an appropriate ending to the artistic pilgrimage.<sup>3</sup> I believe that Chaucer prefigures the entire work in his "General Prologue," a carefully developed and finished piece of art. He omitted nothing; he added nothing that was superfluous.

Chaucer establishes his organizational plan appropriately at the beginning of "The General Prologue":<sup>4</sup>

But natheless, 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 it semed me,

<sup>2</sup> John Matthews Manly, "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," in Chaucer Criticism, Volume I of The Canterbury Tales, eds. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), p. 274.

<sup>3</sup> See Ralph Baldwin, "The Unity of The Canterbury Tales," Anqlistica, 5 (1955), 1-112.

<sup>4</sup> The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957). All further references to this work will appear in the text.



And whiche they weren, and of what degree,  
And eek in what array that they were inne.  
(The Canterbury Tales, I, 35-41)

In accordance with his intent Chaucer concludes "The General Prologue" with the following words:

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.  
(I, 715-18)

Between these two passages Chaucer fulfills his organizational promise to present vividly and effectively the pilgrims who have gathered to join in the pilgrimage to Canterbury to pay homage to the martyred Thomas à Becket.

In the organization of "The General Prologue" as well as The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer is true to his knowledge of the work of Geoffrey of Vinsauf, who advised:

Let the beginning of the poem, like a pleasant servant, introduce the matter. Let the middle, like a diligent host, prepare dignified entertainment. Let the end, like a herald of the completed course, send it away with honor. Let each part in its own way adorn the poem . . . lest it fail anywhere or

suffer any eclipse.<sup>5</sup>

The introduction, the dignified entertainment, and a sermon complete the course of The Canterbury Tales. Within the larger outer frame of "The General Prologue" Chaucer introduces numerous inner frames of descriptio or energia. In various passages of "The General Prologue" the author gives evidence of the Chaucerian style and originality that have remained significant to the student of literature. Chaucer's organization and style in his masterpiece provide evidence that he knew the Poetria Nova of Geoffrey of Vinsauf; in addition, as I have stated in Chapter I, Chaucer refers to Geoffrey of Vinsauf in a passage in "The Nun's Priest's Tale":

O Gaufred, deere maister soveraayn,  
That whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn  
With shot, compleynedest his death so soore,  
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy loore,  
The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?  
For on a Friday, soothly, slayn was he.  
(VII, 3347-52).

<sup>5</sup> The Poetria Nova and Its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine, trans. Ernest Gallo (The Hague: Mouton & Co. N.V., Publishers, 1971). The Latin text based on MS. 15150 Bibl. National, ed. Edmond Faral, Les artes poetiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, Editeur, 1923), p. 19.

The introduction, the dignified entertainment, and the conclusion herald the completed course.

In the first eighteen lines of "The General Prologue" Chaucer foreshadows much of his intent for the remainder of his masterpiece by creating movement from language of elevated style to that of low style, by moving from the universe to a specific place on earth, and by setting the religious pilgrimage of his story in the spring of the year. Furthermore, Chaucer invites the reader to participate in the adventure when he provides a setting with which we are all familiar--the beginning of a new season in the openness of the universe: the sky with its heavenly bodies and the earth with its natural phenomena. Chaucer concludes the first inner frame and begins the second within the same passage:

Bifil that in that seson on a day,  
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay  
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage  
To Canterbury with ful devout corage,  
At nyght was come into that hostelrye  
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye.  
(I, 19-24)

Chaucer has moved from the outside to the inside, from the universe to the poet persona, who states his intention to describe each pilgrim specifically. The author introduces his overall plan when he begins with a dignified style,

describes the dignified Knight first, and allows the cut to fall to the Knight to tell the first tale, which is a chivalric romance of the highest order.

In "The General Prologue" Chaucer started with the Knight and allowed him the first story probably because the Knight was the highest-ranking member of the pilgrimage party. He chose to describe the Knight first also because he regarded the Knight highly, as is shown especially in his statement that "he was a verray, parfit gentil knyght" (I, 72); and, finally, the Knight's presence in "The General Prologue" foreshadows for audience acceptance the Knight's elaborate tale of Arcite, Palamon, and Emily which captures the age of chivalry in all its glory. Also in this respect Chaucer makes another significant move spatially--he literally depicts various figures of his own age as well as delightful types of the past.

Another point for the Knight's being first is that Chaucer interlaced the group of pilgrims with at least five travelers who are going on the trip mainly for a religious purpose. Chaucer artfully places the five--the Knight, the Clerk, the Parson, the Plowman, and the Pilgrim Chaucer--throughout "The General Prologue." The above pilgrims appear in the aforementioned order. Although the Pilgrim Chaucer refers to himself near the beginning of "The General Prologue," the poet Chaucer actually describes the Knight

first. Subsequently, approximately one-fourth of the way through "The General Prologue," he presents the Clerk. About midway he introduces the Parson and the Plowman. And three-fourths of the way through, he lists the Pilgrim Chaucer as a final member of the group. I have chosen the following passages from "The General Prologue" to support my choice of these specific pilgrims who had religious reasons for taking the journey. The moral and religious inclinations of the Knight are numerous:

A KNYGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,  
 That fro the tyme that he first bigan  
 To riden out, he loved chivalrie,  
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.  
 . . . . .  
 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,  
 And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.  
 He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde  
 In al his lyf unto no maner wight.  
 He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.  
 . . . . .  
 . . . He was late ycome from his viage,  
 And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.  
 (I, 43-6; I, 68-72; I, 77-8)

His religious purpose in going on the pilgrimage following his travels abroad underscores the fact that he is indeed a "Cristen man."

The Clerk, who was not "so worldly for to have office," is also of high moral character:

Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,  
 And that was seyde in forme and reverence,  
 And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence;  
 Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,  
 And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.  
 (I, 304-08)

The majority of the lines of description of the Parson portray a Christ figure. Chaucer presents three examples that develop this imagery. In his first portrayal of the Christ figure, Chaucer develops the Parson's religious sincerity:

Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,  
 But he ne lefte nat, for reyn ne thonder,  
 In siknesse nor in meschief to visite  
 The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,  
 Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.  
 This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,  
 That first he wroghte, and afterward he  
   taughte.  
 (I, 491-97)

In a following passage of the Parson, Chaucer echoes the image of Christ's anger in the temple with the money changers:

To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,  
 By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.  
 But it were any persone obstinat,  
 What so he were, of heigh or laugh estat,  
 Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.  
 (I, 519-23)

Also, Chaucer develops an image of the Parson as a good shepherd:

He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarie.  
 And though he hooly were and vertuouse  
 He was to synful men nat despitous,  
 Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,  
 But in his techyng discreet and benygne.  
 (I, 514-18)

Chaucer continues the portrait of the Christlike Parson by reminding his audience that he taught the lore of Christ, "but first he folwed it hymselfe" (I, 528).

The Parson's brother, the Plowman, is another pilgrim who is traveling to Canterbury for religious reasons. Chaucer describes the pilgrim as

A trewe swynkere and a good was he,  
 Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.  
 God loved he best with al his hoolle herte  
 At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,  
 And thanne his neighebor right as hymselfe.  
 He wolde thresshe, and thereto dyke and delve,  
 For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,  
 Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.  
 His tithes payde he ful faire and wel.  
 (I, 531-39)

From the beginning of "The General Prologue" Chaucer establishes his intention for the Pilgrim Chaucer, who states that he was at the Tabard "redy to wenden on my

pilgrimage / To Caunterbury with ful devout corage" (I, 19-22). Chaucer is wise in choosing a poet persona who is humble, friendly, and observant. Thus references to the five characters whose religious purposes are specifically noted provide a structural thread running throughout the series of portraits.

Chaucer's descriptions of the various pilgrims become inner frames within the larger frame of "The General Prologue." In most instances Chaucer uses a one-line opening statement to introduce each pilgrim. Also in most instances he makes a conclusive statement somewhere in the portrait to develop a compact, descriptive line that sums up the pilgrim in the poet person's view. Several passages support this point. The observant Pilgrim Chaucer comments:

A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war and wys,  
That often hadde been at the Parvys,  
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.  
.....  
Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,  
And yet he semed bisier than he was.  
(I, 309-11, I, 321-22)

The statement "Ther was . . ." offers the introduction to the Sergeant. The most effective two lines that sum up the pilgrim in the eyes of the poet persona reveal that the Sergeant of the Law is a busy man "and yet he semed bisier than he was" (I, 32). Of the Knight's son the Pilgrim





to support Chaucer's organizational plan. I feel, however, that the ones described above are particularly illustrative of his plan. One point needs to be added, however, concerning the introduction of the pilgrims. In presenting the pilgrims in "The General Prologue" Chaucer utilizes one of the more effective rhetorical devices. He is unifying his masterpiece by foreshadowing the pilgrims' behavior when they reappear after the pilgrimage gets under way. Chaucer is also preparing his audience for the tales which are to be told along the way. One idea that I wish to introduce here will be discussed in detail in a later section of this paper. Chaucer, the creative artist, incorporates specific elements to prepare the audience for his treatment of the Pilgrim Chaucer, who first appears near the beginning of "The General Prologue"; the poet links this pilgrim with several of his fellow travelers. And, finally, after introducing the characters in the first lines of frames, Chaucer includes the Pilgrim Chaucer at the last of a group listing:

Ther was also a REVE, and a MILLERE,  
 A SOMNOUR, and a PARDONER also,  
 A MAUNCIPLE, and myself--ther were namo.  
(I, 541-43)

In this particular presentation of various pilgrims

Chaucer adds himself or the poet persona. The distinction between poet and poet character is one which the reader must keep in mind in working with this masterpiece. I believe that in this passage Chaucer uses a practice of the Middle Ages as well as a practice of the Modern Age--the signature portrait.<sup>6</sup> Just as a painter allows himself the privilege of projecting himself into his work of art as long as the addition is in a subordinate position, Chaucer writes himself into the masterpiece as the last pilgrim.

These presentations of the last pilgrims fulfill the artist's promise at the beginning of "The General Prologue":

To telle yow al the condicioun  
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,  
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,  
And eek in what array that they were inne.  
(I, 38-40)

Another type of foreshadowing appears in "The General

<sup>6</sup> The World of Giotto (c. 1267-1337), Sarel Eimerel and the Editors of Time-Life Books (New York: Time Inc., 1967), pp. 9, 129. Giotto de Bondone portrayed himself in The Last Judgment, a fresco in the Arena Chapel in Padua, Italy. Chaucer and Giotto use similar approaches to their subjects. It is said of Giotto de Bondone that "he is the supreme dramatist of human life in all its diversity. His range extends from the Chaucerian scene . . . to . . . lyrical beauty . . . and tenderness . . . ." In fact, "he [Giotto] is the greatest when the human drama is the greatest . . . ." See Kenneth Clark, Civilisation: A Personal View (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969), pp. 82, 84.

Prologue." Chaucer prepares us naturally and subtly in "The General Prologue" passage devoted to the Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-maker, and their wives concerning the offering processional order:

Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,  
 Was shaply for to been an alderman.  
 For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,  
 And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;  
 And elles certeyn were they to blame.  
 It is ful fair to been ycleped "madame,"  
 And goon to vigilies al bifore,  
 And have a mantel roialliche ybore.  
 (I, 371-78)

In this passage Chaucer notes the wives' determination to appear first in the offering procession. In a later passage in "The General Prologue" Chaucer notes a similar characteristic about the Wife of Bath:

In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon  
 That to the offrynge before hire sholde goon,  
 And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she,  
 That she was out of alle charitee.  
 (I, 449-52)

The Wife of Bath is both a product of the age and a woman proud and protective of her station in the community.

In an overall view of Chaucer's presentation of the travelers, the author uses interesting rhetorical devices to

link his descriptions of almost all the pilgrims in "The General Prologue." The poet figuratively knits together the traveling pilgrims. To introduce the small groups arriving together, Chaucer uses reflective words and phrases. To introduce the pilgrims arriving individually at the Tabard, he employs rhymed couplets to connect passages describing different characters. For the remaining pilgrims Chaucer uses neither of the above methods. These pilgrims stand alone; by so presenting them the poet emphasizes specific pilgrims who appear to bear special significance for Chaucer. The few isolated instances are not oversights of the author. The choice of literary isolation of a few of the pilgrims becomes an intentional rhetorical act. I believe that the isolation of particular pilgrims is Chaucer's method of suggesting to his audience that these pilgrims will return with special significance in the body of The Canterbury Tales, an enhancement for the audience when these pilgrims appear again to interact with other pilgrims, to relate their tales, or to do both.

To observe Chaucer's employment of this technique, we shall consider the pilgrims as groups linked by direct statement. Then we shall consider several pilgrims that Chaucer introduces and weaves into the text with rhymed couplets. Finally, we shall look at the pilgrims that Chaucer presents as entities--not specifically linked in the

above devices but standing alone. This isolation is no accident; it is rather Chaucer's carefully developed technique of interlacing "The General Prologue" rhetorically.

The first group Chaucer presents consists of three pilgrims riding together: the Knight, the Squire, and the Yeoman. Chaucer links the portraits of these three with connecting words and phrases. The last lines concerning the first pilgrim and the first lines concerning the next one illustrate the mode of linkage. Between the ending of the description of the Knight and the beginning of the description of the Squire Chaucer notes (*italics are mine*),

. . . He [the Knight] was late ycome from his  
viage,  
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.  
With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER.  
(I, 77-79)

And in the same manner of linkage as defined above the last two lines of description of the Squire and the first line introducing the Yeoman provide evidence that the two are riding together (*italics are mine*):

Curteis he [the Squire] was, lowely, and  
servysable,  
And carf beforn his fader at the table.  
A YEMAN hadde he and servantz namo.  
(I, 99-101)

Again by use of a direct statement the poet connects the  
 Prioress with her group. In the last few lines describing  
 the Prioress he observes (second italics are mine):

Ful fetys was hir [the Prioress'] cloke, as I  
was war.  
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar  
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,  
And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,  
On which ther was first write a crowned A,  
And after Amor vincit omnia.  
Another NONNE with hire hadde she  
That was hir chapeleyne, and preestes thre.  
(I, 157-64)

Chaucer continues this mode of linkage with the Sergeant of the Law and the Franklin by using a direct statement that they were together (*italics are mine*):

A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war and wys,  
That often hadde been at the Parvys,  
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.  
Discreet he was and of greet reverence--  
. . . . .  
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.  
A FRANKLEYN was in his compaignye.  
(I, 309-12, I, 330-31)

The Parson and the Plowman are traveling together. In the same manner which I have discussed above, Chaucer connects these two with a direct statement (*italics are mine*):

A good man was ther of religioun,  
 And was a povre PERSON OF A TOWN,  
 But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.  
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;  
 His parisshe devoutly wolde he teche.

. . . . .  
 A better preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.  
 He waited after no pompe and reverence,  
 Ne maked him a spiced conscience,  
 But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve  
 He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselfe.

With hym ther was a PLOWMAN, was his  
 brother,  
 That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother.  
 (I, 477-82; I, 524-30)

Chaucer concludes this mode of linkage with the presentation of the Summoner and the Pardoner. In addition, the poet uses the same words--with hym--to link these two pilgrims as he uses with the Parson and his brother, the Plowman (italics are mine):

A SOMONOUR was ther with us in that place,  
 That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,  
 For saucefleem he was, with eyen narwe.  
 As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,  
 With scalled browes blake and piled berd.  
 Of his visage children were aferd.

. . . . .  
With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER  
 Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,  
 That streight was comen fro the court of  
 Rome.  
 Ful loude he soong "Com hider, love, to me!"  
 (I, 623-27; I, 669-72)



Linking the groups traveling together is certainly one of the poet's effective rhetorical methods--linkage by direct statement. One such group is that traveling with the Knight; examples of direct statement within this group are (italics are mine): "With hym [the Knight] ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER" (I, 79), and "A YEMAN hadde he [the Knight] and servantz namo" (I, 101). Not only has Chaucer linked specific pilgrims together, but also he has woven this mode of linkage throughout "The General Prologue." Chaucer sets this pattern at the beginning of this section and moves effectively from the Knight and his group of pilgrims and the Prioress and her group of pilgrims before skipping about half-way through "The General Prologue" to link the Sergeant of the Law and the Franklin. Spacing his work effectively, Chaucer then concludes this method of linkage with the Parson and the Plowman and, finally, with the Summoner and the Pardoner, the two pilgrims immediately before the last two whom Chaucer presents. Assuredly, Chaucer is threading his material together with color and art.

There are still three more instances in "The General Prologue" in which Chaucer uniquely connects the pilgrim and the description of him with the entire group of pilgrims. The first time Chaucer uses this linkage is with the Doctor of Physic (italics are mine):





Chaucer continues the linkage by rhymed couplets involving the Monk, the Friar, and the Merchant (*italics are mine*):

A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,  
An outridere, that lovede venerie.

.....  
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

A FRERE ther was, a wantowne and a merve,  
A lymytour, a ful solempne man.

.....  
This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.

A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd,  
In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat.

(I, 165-66; I, 207-09; I, 269-71)

Chaucer continues his design by linking the Cook with the Shipman by rhymed couplets (*italics are mine*):

He [the Cook] koude rooste, and sethe, and  
broille, and frye,  
Maken martreux, and wel bake a pye.  
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he.  
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

A SHIPMAN was ther, wonynge fer by weste;  
For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.  
He rood upon a rouncey, as he kouthe.

(I, 383-90)

Chaucer concludes his rhymed pattern of linkage by joining the Plowman with the last group of pilgrims (*italics are mine*):



of significance for the pilgrims themselves, or it may be the intention of the author to use this method of foreshadowing by emphasizing the roles and stories that these pilgrims will reveal in their reappearance and performance in The Canterbury Tales. Also, Chaucer may have isolated these two pilgrims because of his admiration for both of them. A look at Chaucer's portraits of these specific pilgrims will remind one of this admiration. In "The General Prologue" Chaucer presents the Clerk first:

A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,  
 That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.  
 As leene was his hors as is a rake,  
 And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,  
 But looked holwe, and therto sobrelly.  
 Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;  
 For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,  
 Ne was so worldly for to have office.  
 For hym was levere have at his beddes heed  
 Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,  
 Of Aristotle and his philosophie,  
 Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.  
 But al be that he was a philosophre,  
 Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;  
 But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,  
 On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,  
 And bisily gan for the soules preye  
 Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.  
 Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.  
 Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,  
 And that was seyde in forme and reverence,  
 And short and quyke and ful of hy sentence;  
 Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,  
 And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.  
(I, 285-308)

And continuing in the same manner, Chaucer portrays the appearance and characteristics of the delightful Wife of Bath:

A good WIF was ther of biside BATHE,  
 But she was somdel deaf, and that was scathe.  
 Of Clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt,  
 She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.  
 In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon  
 That to the offrynge before hire sholde goon;  
 And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she,  
 That she was out of alle charitee.  
 Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;  
 I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound  
 That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.  
 Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,  
 Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and  
 newe.  
 Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of  
 hewe.  
 She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:  
 Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,  
 Withouten oother compaignye in youthe,--  
 But therof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.  
 And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;  
 She hadde passed many a straunge strem;  
 At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,  
 In Galice at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne.  
 She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.  
 Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.  
 Upon an amblere esily she sat,  
 Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat  
 As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;  
 A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,  
 And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.  
 In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and  
 carpe.  
 Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,  
 For she koude of that art the olde daunce.  
 (I, 445-76)

In assessing Chaucer's portraits of the Clerk and the Wife, one finds that the Clerk of Oxford is a young single, celibate student while the Wife of Bath is a mature woman married five times. The Clerk is on this particular pilgrimage for religious purposes; the jolly, gregarious Wife mingles with the travelers while looking for her sixth husband. The Clerk is a philosopher who speaks of Aristotle and Petrarch while the Wife has learned of her interests experientially and speaks of marriage with much knowledge, citing passages from the Bible to support her ideas. Of the Clerk, the Pilgrim Chaucer notes that

As leene was his horse as is a rake,  
 And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,  
 But looked holwe, and therto sobrelly.  
 Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy.  
 (I, 469-73)

Of the Wife and her appearance the Pilgrim Chaucer notes:

Upon an amblere esily she sat,  
 Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat  
 As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;  
 A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,  
 And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.  
 (I, 469-73)

The Clerk tells a tale of male dominance in marriage; the Wife tells a tale of female authority in marriage. Although



the Wife tells her tale first and the Clerk reacts in his tale shortly afterward, these two pilgrims begin an ongoing discussion by several of the pilgrims known as the Marriage Group.<sup>7</sup>

When these two individuals are viewed together along with their participation in storytelling, we see a composite of two exempla with characteristics that touch and unite almost all of the entire group. Chaucer individualizes, by setting them apart, two pilgrims who, when viewed together, portray certain characteristics of the universal man.

Chaucer completes his description of the pilgrims with the presentation of the last six of the travelers. The presentation of this particular group of pilgrims is significant in that Chaucer successfully describes characters as he continues to present the description of each of these pilgrims. To evaluate further the poet's method, we need to begin with the grouping of the pilgrims

<sup>7</sup> George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 188-215. Although Hinckley disagrees somewhat with Kittredge's article devoted mainly to the Wife of Bath and the Clerk of Oxford, I feel that Kittredge is working closer with Chaucer's intent for these two pilgrims. See Henry Barrett Hinckley, "The Debate on Marriage in The Canterbury Tales," in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 216-225.

as Chaucer presents them near the end of "The General Prologue":

Ther was also a REVE, and a MILLERE,  
A SOMNOUR, and a PARDONER also,  
A MAUNCIPLE, and myself--ther were namo.  
(I, 541-44)

Chaucer exercises his variety of form when he does not describe these pilgrims in the same order in which he has introduced them. Chaucer's artful interweaving begins with his description of the Miller first and follows with the description of the Manciple. The next pilgrims that Chaucer describes are the Reeve and then the Summoner. The last two pilgrims that Chaucer develops are the Pardoner and the Pilgrim Chaucer. The poet remains consistent as he moves from the description of the Pardoner to the Pilgrim Chaucer's appropriate epilogue (*italics are mine*):

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 tele of our viage  
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.  
(I, 715-24)

The passage displays the rhetor's art by concluding one body of material and introducing the next one to be discussed. The second sentence of the passage is linked with the first sentence in that a rhymed couplet is constituted of parts of both statements.

Next in "The General Prologue" Chaucer elaborates in twenty-two lines (I, 725-46) his philosophy about telling a tale, about the proper choice of words and the proper delivery of those words, and about the the relationship of the words to the deeds. In this passage Chaucer foreshadows only a few of the rhetorical devices which are to come in the body of The Canterbury Tales: apologia, proverb, technique of storytelling, exemplum, and a reference to Greek rhetoricians. He writes:

But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,  
 That ye n'arrette it nat my vileynye,  
 Thogh that I pleyedly 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 well 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, althogh 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.



as he presented the inner frames near the beginning. Following this passage of summation and conclusion, Chaucer introduces his audience to the Host, in whose care we will be placed for the remainder of the pilgrimage. Chaucer fulfills his rhetorical plan with the Host as he did with the previous pilgrims. The author introduces the Host and supplies an adequate description of him in moving toward the conclusion of "The General Prologue":

Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,  
And to the soper sette he us anon.

. . . . .  
A semely man OURE HOOSTE was withalle  
For to han been a marchal in an halle.  
A large man he was with eyen stepe--  
A fairer burgeys is ther noon in Chepe--  
Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,  
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.

(I, 747-48; I, 751-56)

For his conclusion, Chaucer carefully uses rhymed couplets to link the various sections. The last line of the Host's welcoming speech and proposal is linked with the voice of the poet persona by rhymed couplets, and Chaucer controls the unity with a response from the Host in the same passage (*italics are mine*):

To-morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,  
Now, by my fader soule that is deed,  
But ye be myrie, I wol yeve you myn heed!



"And for to make yow the moore mury,  
 I wol myselven goodly with you ryde,  
 Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;  
 And whoso wole my juggement withseye  
 Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.  
 And if ye vouche sauf that it be so,  
 Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,  
 And I wol erly shape me therfore."

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.  
 (I, 802-14)

The conclusion of this passage is linked with the activities  
 of the next day in the following lines (*italics are mine*):

And therupon the wyn was fet anon;  
 We dronken, and to reste wente echon,  
 Withouten any lenger taryynge.  
 Amorwe, when that day bigan to sprynge,  
 Up roos oure Hoost, and was oure aller cok,  
 And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok.  
 (I, 819-24)

No other specific link is made in the text until the Host  
 calls the Knight forward to draw and later when the Knight  
 begins his story. However, Chaucer moves from the  
 observation of the Pilgrim Chaucer to the directions of the  
 Host back to the Pilgrim Chaucer and then to the voice of  
 the Knight before concluding "The General Prologue" with  
 voice of reflections of the Pilgrim Chaucer (*italics are*  
*mine*):

. . . forth we riden a litel moore than paas  
 Unto the wateryng of Seint Thomas;  
 And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste  
 And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if you  
leste."

. . . . .  
 "Whoso be rebel to my juggement  
 Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent.  
 Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;  
 He which that hath the shorteste shal  
bigynne.

"Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my  
lord."

. . . . .  
 Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man!"  
 Anon to drawen every wight bigan.

. . . . .  
 And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,  
 As he that wys was and obedient  
 To kepe his foreward 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, 825-28; I, 833-37; I, 841-42; I, 850-58)

The two variances of the rhyming pattern appear in lines 836 and 837 and in lines 852 and 853. Both of these instances occur in lines concerning the Knight. The first is in the direct address from the Host to the Knight. The second variation in rhyme occurs in the last line of the Pilgrim Chaucer and the beginning of the Knight's statement about being first to tell a story. The lack of a rhymed couplet to link the Knight with the previous text makes these lines especially effective in the author's consistency of



retaining the individuality of the Knight. The remainder of the passage above completes Chaucer's development of linkage between units with "The General Prologue."

Since Chaucer began "The General Prologue" with the voice of the poet persona, he concludes the section by foreshadowing the action of the pilgrims and the tales which they relate during the remainder of The Canterbury Tales.

As I have suggested above, Chaucer prefigures his entire plan for The Canterbury Tales in "The General Prologue." It would seem plausible, then, to focus on the pilgrims whom Chaucer presents as individuals, those who are linked by rhymed couplets, and also those who are introduced into "The General Prologue" by direct statement. Chaucer isolates the characters in that each portrait is complete within itself. Chaucer does not link certain pilgrims to the others by direct statement or by linked couplets. These pilgrims are the Clerk and the Wife of Bath. I believe that the rhetorical isolation is not only Chaucer's artistic decision but also, more specifically, Chaucer's artistic foreshadowing to direct the attention of the audience later to action of each of these pilgrims through their prologues, tales, and epilogues, or to their interaction with the other pilgrims of the traveling party.

Near the end of "The General Prologue" Chaucer

elaborates in twenty-two lines (ll. 725-46) his philosophy about telling a tale, about the proper choice of words and the proper delivery of those words, and about the relationship of the words to the deeds. Chaucer foreshadows in this short passage a suggestion of the many rhetorical devices which are to come in the body of The Canterbury Tales. But first, he reiterates what he has told his audience and announces the subjects of his last inner frame within "The General Prologue." Through the voice of the poet persona, Chaucer announces that he will relate the activities of the group that evening and then he will narrate the events of the trip as the pilgrims travel to Canterbury (italics are mine):

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 you 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.  
(I, 715-24)

Chaucer weaves his material effectively in this passage by looking back to what has been said and then looking forward

to future events.

Chaucer closes "The General Prologue" just as carefully as he presented the inner frames near the beginning. Following this passage of summation and conclusion, Chaucer introduces his audience to the Host, who will be in charge for the remainder of the pilgrimage.

In this, the last frame of "The General Prologue," Chaucer foreshadows the significance of the Knight, the Prioress, and the Clerk when the Host calls upon these three to begin the activity by coming forward to draw so that the tales and pilgrimage may get under way. Still in the trend of foreshadowing, Chaucer has made his choice of these three pilgrims for several reasons. One of the reasons is apparently to aid in Chaucer's elaboration upon "soveraynetee," "auctoritee," and "maystrye" in "The Clerk's Tale." Also Chaucer is emphasizing for the second and third times his partiality for the Knight and "The Knight's Tale." Chaucer's choice of the Prioress foreshadows "The Prioress's Tale" and its artistic perfection in the prologue of a poem in rhyme royal. The choice of each of these pilgrims displays, also, Chaucer's selection of a variety of rank. Each of these pilgrims--the Knight, the Clerk, and the Prioress--represents a facet of the Middle Ages. The Knight reflects the medieval kingdom; the Clerk is representative

of the educational institutions; and the prioress is an example of the Roman Catholic Church.

Many of the statements that I have made concerning frame and link patterns may be visualized in the form of charts. I have devised two charts. One is the order of the pilgrims in "The General Prologue." The second chart displays Chaucer's style and arrangement by the placement of the personal pronoun "I" of the Pilgrim Chaucer. By providing these charts, I hope to open the possibilities to suggest other elements of Chaucer's uniquely woven tapestry. The first chart suggests Chaucer's arrangement of material, or ordo, in "The General Prologue." I have chosen the form of pyramids to show the linkage or lack of linkage within the text. When the top asterisk of the pyramid is visible, I am showing the first of a group of pilgrims or an individual traveling alone. When the top asterisk of the pyramid is missing, I am indicating a linkage of rhymed couplets or connecting words to unite the pilgrims.

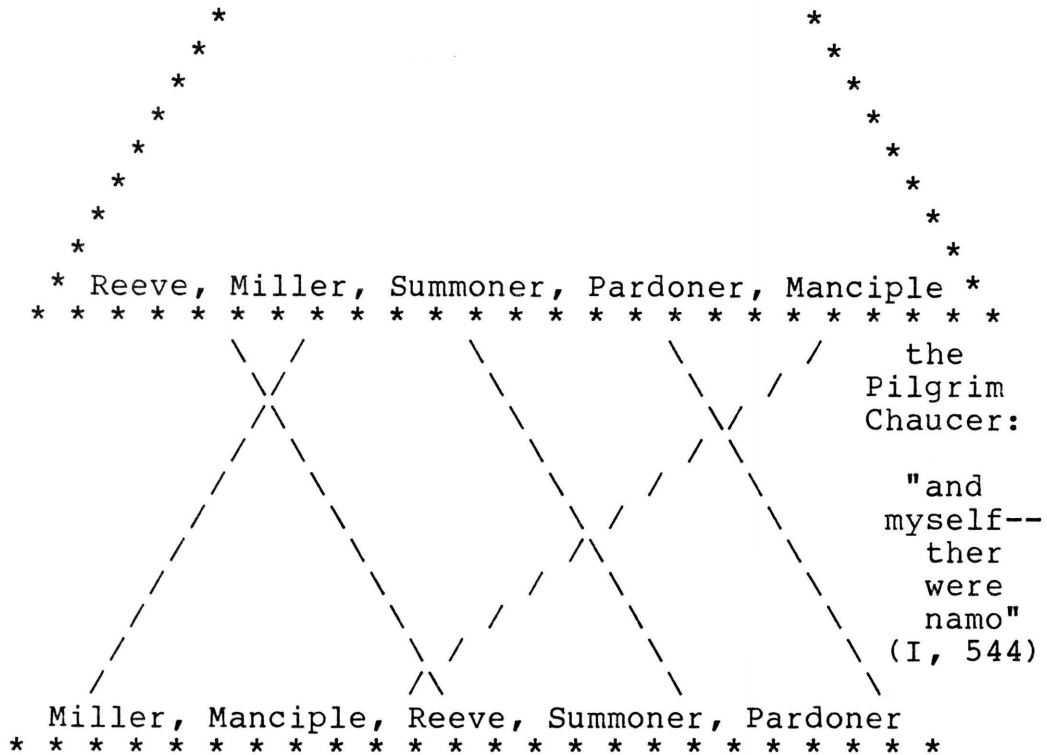




## Chaucer's Order of Pilgrims . . . (continued)

* *	Link: "with us"
* *	
* *	
* *	
* Doctor *	
* of *	
* Physic *	
* * * * *	
* *	No Link
* *	
* *	
* Wife *	
* of *	
* Bath *	
* * * * *	
* *	No Link
* *	
* *	
* *	
* Parson *	
* * * * *	
* *	Link: "with hym"
* *	
* *	
* *	
* *	
* Plowman *	
* * * * *	
* *	Link: rhymed
* *	couplet
* *	
* *	
* *	
* *	Links within
* *	groups:
* *	"with us"
* *	Summoner
* *	
* *	"with hym"
* *	Pardoner
* *	
* *	

## Chaucer's Order of Pilgrims . . . (continued)



Chaucer concludes his linkage masterfully. After introducing the last group of pilgrims, including himself, he weaves his tapestry of the pilgrims by altering the order as he gives his full portrayal of each pilgrim. In the chart above, I indicate the order Chaucer uses--a planned elegance of the artist. The first line of names given in the chart indicates the order Chaucer used to introduce the group. The second line of repeated names indicates the order Chaucer uses to portray fully each of the pilgrims. Looking at them in chart form, one sees Chaucer's artistic



presentation. The poet lists the Pilgrim Chaucer last, as I have indicated above.

Order of Chaucer's Pilgrims . . . (continued)

Pilgrim Chaucer	
*	No Link
* *	
* *	
* *	
* *	
* *	
* Epilogue *	
* * * * *	
*	No link
* *	
* *	
* *	
* *	
* *	
* *	
* Passage on *	
* Rhetoric *	
* * * * *	
*	No Link
* *	
* *	
* *	
* Host *	
* * * * *	
* *	Link: Rhymed
* *	couplet
* *	
* *	
* Pilgrim *	
* Chaucer *	
* * * * *	
* *	Link: Rhymed
* *	couplet
* *	
* *	
* Host *	
* * * * *	

## Chaucer's Order of Pilgrims . . . (continued)

```

      * *
    *   *
  *     *
*       *
*   Pilgrim   *
*   Chaucer   *
* * * * * * *

```

Link: Rhymed  
couplet

```

      * *
    *   *
  *     *
*       *
*   Host      *
* * * * * * *

```

Link: Rhymed  
couplet

```

      * *
    *   *
  *     *
*       *
*   Pilgrim   *
*   Chaucer   *
* * * * * * *

```

Link: Rhymed  
couplet

```

      *
    * *
  *   *
*     *
*   Knight   *
* * * * * * *

```

No Link

```

      * *
    *   *
  *     *
*       *
*   Knight   *
* * * * * * *

```

Link: Rhymed  
couplet

```

      *
    * *
  *   *
*     *
*   "The     *
*   Knight's *
*   Tale"    *
* * * * * * *

```

No Link

In summary, I have stressed Chaucer's prefiguring of, foreshadowing in, unity in, and completeness throughout "The General Prologue." I have applied the metaphor of an elegantly woven tapestry. I have pointed out Chaucer's preference for the Knight, the significance of the Clerk and the Wife of Bath, the intentions for the Prioress in drawing for the order to tell the tales, and the importance of Chaucer's foreshadowing in "The General Prologue" the rhetorical devices he will use in "The Franklin's Prologue and Tale." I have suggested the significance of links between characters and elaborated on the beauty of weaving in Chaucer's presentation of the last five pilgrims; and finally, I have outlined Chaucer's control in linking the observations of the Pilgrim Chaucer alternately with the words of the Host, and I have mentioned the importance of the individuality of the Knight's leading into the first tale in The Canterbury Tales. All these matters are related to the rhetorical consideration of structure.

In addition, Chaucer structures "The General Prologue" of The Canterbury Tales in order to begin with an elevated style of language, in order to describe the Knight first, and in order to allow the cut to fall to the Knight so that this admirable pilgrim is the one to set the tone of the entire pilgrimage by being the first to tell his story. The entire masterpiece is testimony of Chaucer's knowledge of

rhetoricians and rhetorical theory; and some of the passages of the masterpiece are more illustrative of rhetorical devices than others are. In addition, in "The Knight's Tale" Chaucer employs much rhetoric and gives at least as much exposure of his knowledge of rhetoric as in any other tale in The Canterbury Tales. Before "The Knight's Tale" the poet controls his language in order to underscore activity in the universe: the raging waters and winds of earth, the silent and peaceful skies, the rhythms of life itself with its highs and lows, and the moods of the pilgrims with their high moments as well as their contemplative periods.

One of the methods Chaucer uses to express his knowledge of rhetoric is repetitio. Chaucer places elevated passages effectively at the beginning of several of the first inner frames within "The General Prologue": the opening passage of "The General Prologue," the description of a chivalric Knight, the drawing which allowed the cut to fall to the Knight, and the beginning tale which sets the tone of the pilgrimage with the Knight's dignified, elaborate romance interwoven with numerous rhetorical devices, many of which are found in the teachings of medieval rhetoricians,

especially Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his Poetria Nova.<sup>8</sup>

From the beginning of "The Canterbury Tales" there is a diminuendo occurring in language, in distribution of various pilgrims in the social order, and in the tapering of the number of lines designated for the presentation of each pilgrim in "The General Prologue." Chaucer moves from elevated language to low, from the presentation of highly admirable persons in the middle class to persons in a lower position socially, and from the high genre of romance to the chatty style of the sometimes gracious, usually hospitable Host. Chaucer's arrangement is effective in his ordering the arrival of the pilgrims at the Tabard, in showing the active poet persona as he visits with each of the pilgrims in the Tabard at Southwark, and, finally, in underscoring the rhythm of the pilgrimage on its way to the shrine of Thomas à Becket. Chaucer's order comes as no surprise since he tells us at the beginning of "The General Prologue" that he thinks it "acordaunt to resoun" to describe each of the pilgrimage party, including his trade, rank, and clothing. The narrator's use of the word "resoun" in this manner has prompted varied critical commentary.<sup>9</sup> I agree with R. C.

<sup>8</sup> See Marie Padgett Hamilton, "Notes on Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," PMLA, 47 (June, 1932), 403-09.

<sup>9</sup> R. C. Goffin, "Chaucer and 'Reason,'" Modern Language Review, 21 (January, 1926) 13-18.

Goffin that the word in this passage (I, 37-41) is to be translated as ordo in its old rhetorical sense of decorum or design.<sup>10</sup>

I have suggested above that Chaucer in his "General Prologue" projects elements which we may expect to find in The Canterbury Tales. To support this suggestion I am including a brief summary of the beginning of "The Knight's Tale," a romantic review of our Grecian literary heritage in all of its broad scope. The Knight sets the tone of the pilgrimage in a dignified, elegant, elevated style. The rhetorical devices of arrangement, amplification and abbreviation, and style are numerous throughout the tale. The arrangement is that of frames within frames. The story begins with Theseus and Hippolyta reigning in Athens and quickly moves to the love triangle of Emily, Palamon, and Arcite. The reader senses the newness of spring again as the two young men vie for the right to Emily's love.

Chaucer exhibits his knowledge of the rhetorical device of descriptio in his presentation of Emily as a picture of nature--true to the teachings of Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his suggestions for describing the beauty of a woman:

Let Nature's compass draw the outline of the  
head; let the color of gold gleam in the hair;

<sup>10</sup> Goffin, p. 15.

Let lilies grow . . . on the lofty  
forehead.<sup>11</sup>

Chaucer, obedient to his experience as well as to his knowledge of rhetorical methodology, describes Emily as she strolls in the garden in the early hours of the morning as the imprisoned Palamon and Arcite look at her daily:

This passeth yeer by yeer and day by day,  
Til it fil ones, in a morwe of May,  
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene  
Than is the lylie upon his stalke of grene,  
And fressher than the May with floures newe--  
For with the rose colour stroof hire hewe,  
I noot which was the fyner of hem two.

. . . . .  
This maked Emelye have remembraunce  
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.  
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse.  
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse  
Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.  
(I, 1033-39; I, 1046-50)

Just as in a tapestry, the threads of the poetry intertwine to weave a timeless artistic masterpiece in yet another way. Chaucer weaves the Pilgrim Chaucer throughout "The General Prologue" by using the poet persona's

<sup>11</sup> The Poetria Nova and Its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine, trans. Ernest Gallo (The Hague: Mouton Co. N.V., Publishers, 1971). The Latin text based on MS. 15150 Bibl. National, ed. Edmond Faral, Les artes poetiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, Editeur, 1923), p. 45.

reflections and observations and by using the words I and us. A chart of the chronological appearance of the various pilgrims in "The General Prologue" with notations of the artist's arrangement of the presence of the poet persona illustrates Chaucer's use of the Pilgrim Chaucer as a vital connecting link. Chaucer establishes his pattern at the beginning of "The General Prologue." He artfully reminds the reader of the ever-present Pilgrim Chaucer by having him appear with every other pilgrim presented. When about half the pilgrims have been presented, the artist intensifies the presence of the poet persona by sustaining his presence in the descriptions of three consecutive pilgrims in the party. Not by duplicating but by alternating his pattern, Chaucer continues to introduce the pilgrims with the help of his Pilgrim Chaucer. True to the pattern of a good rhetorician, Chaucer moves out of "The General Prologue" in the same artistic manner by which he enters it--with strong focus on the Pilgrim Chaucer. The plus sign (+) on the following chart signifies the presence of the poet persona:



Chart of the Presence of the Pilgrim Chaucer  
throughout "The General Prologue"

(+) = Pilgrim Chaucer

(+) Introduction in "The General Prologue"

Knight

(+) Squire

Yeoman

(+) Prioress

(+) Nun, Chaplain, three Priests

(+) Monk

(+) Friar

(+) Merchant

(+) Clerk

(+) Sergeant of Law

Franklin

Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Tapestry-maker, Cook

(+) Shipman

(+) Doctor of Physic

(+) Wife of Bath

(+) Parson

Plowman

Reeve, Miller, (+) Sommoner, Pardoner, Manciple, (+)

(+) Epilogue

(+) Rhetorical Passage

Chart of Presence of the Pilgrim Chaucer  
(continued)

- (+) Alternately with the Host
- (+) Knight
- (+) Conclusion of "The General Prologue"

The chart above, then, shows the Pilgrim Chaucer to enter through the prologue, to weave in and out with his companion travelers in the body of "The General Prologue," and to exit through an appropriate ending--the epilogue.

Chaucer more than once shows his medieval rhetorical concerns for appropriate beginnings and endings, amplification and abbreviation, and various ornaments of style. It seems apparent that the author of The Canterbury Tales and more specifically "The General Prologue" was aware of the words of the medieval rhetorician Geoffrey of Vinsauf when he advises the writer to "let the beginning of the poem, like a pleasant servant, introduce the matter."<sup>12</sup>

At the beginning of "The General Prologue" Chaucer provides a setting for the pilgrimage by elaborating upon the beauty of a new year--a universal springtime. Chaucer refers to the world's experiencing re-creation; he

<sup>12</sup> Poetria Nova, p. 19.

introduces characters on a pilgrimage in hope of a re-birth by traveling "the hooly blisful martir for to seke" (I, 17). Chaucer then announces his intent to his audience about each of the pilgrims arriving at the Tabard for the pilgrimage. Near the end of "The General Prologue" Chaucer, true to one of the teachings of the medieval rhetorician, "Gaufred," through the poet persona reminds his audience that this is exactly what he accomplishes:

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.  
(I, 715-19)

Also in "The General Prologue" Chaucer establishes several concerns of medieval rhetoric: amplificatio, abbreviatio, and various ornaments of style. Several examples of each of these devices recommended by Geoffrey of Vinsauf will provide some evidence that Chaucer is foreshadowing his intent to continue with this methodology in the body of The Canterbury Tales.

Chaucer uses the rhetorical device of amplificatio throughout "The General Prologue" since the term amplificatio includes descriptio, and the poet persona in



The second rhetorical device is that of abbreviatio, one form of which is occupatio. Chaucer uses this device in his presentation of the Wife of Bath:

She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:  
Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,  
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe, --  
But therof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.  
(I, 459-62)

In the last line of the passage above this refusal to tell is specifically occupatio. And again in the portrait of the Sergeant of the Law Chaucer applies occupatio in order to cut short the detailing the attire of the pilgrim:

There koude no wight pynche at his writyng;  
And every statut koude he pleyne by rote.  
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote  
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;  
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.  
(I, 326-30)

In "The General Prologue" Chaucer deals also with other rhetorical concerns of medieval rhetoricians--ornaments of style. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, in particular, in his section of the Poetria Nova concerning invention of matter and of expression, suggests to the writer, "when, in the recesses of the mind, order has arranged the matter . . . let the art of poetry come to clothe the matter with



(So priketh hem nature in hir corages).  
 Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.  
 (I, 1-12)

Chaucer is following the advice of the medieval rhetorician and using the eloquent opening instead of saying, "It was spring of the year." The explanation of synecdoche according to the medieval rhetorician is that

"If you wish to say, I have studied for three years, decorate these words more beautifully, for their present form is crude and trite. Let your polishing renew this unpolished and trite expression:

In study the third summer found me . . . ; the third autumn plunged me; the third winter entangled me in cares; in study I passed through three springs. I more subtly express what I have to say when, by using this manner of speaking, I suppress the whole and merely hint at its parts."<sup>16</sup>

The word Zephirus in the above passage is a rhetorical metaphor for "the west wind."

Chaucer is aware of the medieval rhetorical device of downward progression for describing a woman's face. The poet introduces the Prioress in the following fashion:

<sup>16</sup> Poetria Nova, p. 69.

Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,  
 Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,  
 Hir mouth ful smal, and thereto softe and  
reed;  
 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;  
 It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;  
 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.  
(I, 151-56)

It is important to note that Chaucer understood restriction and authority. The creative poet describes the nose, eyes, and mouth before he returns to conclude his description with the forehead.

Although Chaucer uses numerous rhetorical devices in his "General Prologue," only one more term is to be included at this time. That rhetorical term is the apostrophe, one of the tropes of which Chaucer appears to be very fond.<sup>17</sup> An example of the apostrophe is used by the Knight in the conclusion of "The General Prologue" when he speaks for the first time after several positive references to this particular pilgrim. The Knight accepts happily the cut to tell the first tale--"Syn I shal begynne the game, / What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!" (I, 853-54). The last three words in the passage constitute the apostrophe.

In conclusion, Chaucer allows the Pilgrim Chaucer to

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin S. Harrison, "The Rhetorical Inconsistency of Chaucer's Franklin," Studies in Philology, 32, No. 1 (1935), 57.



deliver an appropriate epilogue, to elaborate rhetorical knowledge, and to return to narrate the events which bring "The General Prologue" to an appropriate ending. In doing so he foreshadows maturely and completely a practice which he intends to follow throughout the remainder of The Canterbury Tales.

### Chapter III

#### The "Juge and Reportour" as Rhetorical Vehicle

Chaucer wisely places the Host of the Tabard Inn in authority to lead the pilgrimage to Canterbury. Herry Bailly is the member of the party who to some degree will control and govern The Tales. The Host, in fact, is a significant unifying thread throughout the body of the work.<sup>1</sup> The bantering between Bailly and the pilgrims and among the pilgrims themselves serves as a vehicle to move the procession toward Canterbury. By this same token Chaucer wisely elects to remove himself from the actual reporting and judgmental commentary. Being three times removed from the voices of the characters in the stories allows Chaucer the freedom not only to express ideas and opinions openly but also to retain jurisdiction over the group through his authorial aesthetic distance.

Although the character Herry Bailly is referred to many

<sup>1</sup> R. M. Lumiansky, Of Sondry Folk: The Dramatic Principle in the Canterbury Tales (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955), p. 26. In his second chapter, "The Movable Stage," Lumiansky states a similar idea; however, he develops the dramatic approach and not the intricate structural and rhetorical interplay.

times, only in "The Cook's Prologue" does Roger, or Hodge, of Ware call the Host by name.<sup>2</sup> This is the only reference to Bailly's name throughout the entire work. This delightful verbal exchange is an excellent example of two rhetorical devices: occupatio and requital--two effective methods of advancing the story and the journey while suspending the reader's attention for a future event. This effectiveness is best seen in Chaucer's own words:

"Thou seist ful sooth," quod Roger, "by my  
fey!  
But 'sooth pley, quaad pley,' as the Flemyng  
seith.  
And therefore, Herry Bailly, by thy feith,  
Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,  
Though that my tale be of an hostileer.  
But nathelees I wol nat telle it yit;  
But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit."  
(I, 4356-62)

The requital appears in the Cook's comment "be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer, / Though that my tale be of an hostileer." The occupatio and requital both occur within the next two lines when the Cook continues his speech to Bailly and states that he will tell the tale--only later.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. 60. All further references to this work appear in the text.

Chaucer uses the titles "oure Hoost" and "the Hoost" throughout The Tales to emphasize his role as leader of the group. He may, as Robinson suggests, be using the word baillye to refer to a "castle wall" or an "enclosure."<sup>3</sup> Robinson also suggests that the name Bailly is interchangeable with the word baillif.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps Chaucer has chosen a name to fit the role which he assigns to the Host in order to integrate the framework he has established. The fact that a friendly bailiff keeps the group contained within an enclosure reflective of the wall of a garden can be only a creation of the most carefully rhetorical literary genius.

It is conceivable that Herry Bailly is in some degree Chaucer's alter ego. Juxtaposed against the poet persona's literary apology is a passage introducing "oure Hoost":

Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,  
And to the soper sette he us anon.  
He served us with vitaille at the beste;  
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us  
  leste.  
  (I, 743-50)

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, p. 934.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, p. 997.

Chaucer is explicit in developing the type person who will best meet the author's idea of a man who can mix and mingle with a group of diverse characters over a period of several days. The foremost characteristic of the Host appears to be an honestly cheerful, hospitable, and merry personality:

. . . he was right a myrie man,  
 And after soper pleyen he bigan,  
 And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges.  
 . . . . .  
 "For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,  
 I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye  
 Atones in this herberwe as is now.  
 Fayn wolde I doon you myrthe, wiste I how.  
 And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,  
 To doon you ese, and it shal coste noght."  
 (I, 757-59; I, 763-68)

Chaucer uses words that reflect myrie and myrthe in his description of the Host. The Host uses the same words or derivations thereof in his compliments to the group of pilgrims who have gathered at the Tabard Inn. Chaucer uses these words and their derivatives almost a dozen times in a passage of less than sixty lines in "The General Prologue" devoted to the Host, his opinions about the group he is to accompany, and his expectations of them.

A digression seems necessary to make meaningful Chaucer's introduction of the Host. In the beginning of "The General Prologue" the author establishes his method to tell several facts about each pilgrim. Along with the other

elements, Chaucer specifies at the beginning that he will record "in what array that they were inne" (I, 41). Near the conclusion of "The General Prologue" he restates his purpose: he has "toold you soothly, in a clause, / th'estaat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause" for the assembling of the group at the Tabard Inn. Following this order for each pilgrim, Chaucer introduces the Host. Among other methods of stratification, each pilgrim is placed into a social class mainly by what he wears. Chaucer keeps his Host universally accepted by the group, the listening audience, and the reader by exercising his poetic license and not detailing what the Host is wearing--another stroke of literary genius.

Chaucer paints the picture of a man capable of meeting his tasks on the ensuing journey:

A semely man OURE HOOSTE was withalle  
For to han been a marchal in an halle.  
A large man he was with eyen stepe--  
A fairer burgeys is ther noon in Chepe--  
Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel  
ytaught,  
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.  
(I, 751-56)

Bailly, then, is a man who serves the best of food and strong wine. Physically, he is a commanding figure. He is a large man--a man's man. He speaks boldly, wisely, and

cheerfully. Chaucer portrays Bailly as a man whom the pilgrims and the audience can perceive as believable.

In the Host's plans of activities for the group he wants the pilgrims to take turns in telling stories to help pass the time:

"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkeneth for the  
 beste;  
 But taak it nought, I prey you, in desdeyn.  
 This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,  
 That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,  
 In this viage shal telle tales tweye  
 To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,  
 And homward he shal tellen othere two,  
 Of adventures that whilom han bifalle."  
 (I, 788-95)

passages. In Herry Bailly's opening speech, Chaucer presents one such passage. The prologue is Bailly's pronouncement that his group is a merry company. The body is the plan for the entertainment--two stories from each pilgrim to Canterbury and two stories from each pilgrim during the return to the Tabard Inn. The epilogue of this passage is Bailly's offer to be the judge and reporter of the group. Looking spatially at the various moves of Herry Bailly, one sees Chaucer's interweaving at its best. Following his introduction of the Host, Chaucer fulfills his promise to "Telle . . . yow al the condicioun / Of ech of hem, so as it semed me" (I, 38-39). The Pilgrim Chaucer assures the reader that the Host is "a myrie man" (I, 757). Bailly gets the entertainment started by calling forward the Knight, the Prioress, and the Clerk. These pilgrims, I believe, represent facets of the key descriptive characteristics of Chaucer's medieval world: sovereignty, authority, and mastery. Chaucer does not allow the Host to pick at random; instead, he prefigures the arrangement of The Tales. Furthermore, these three pilgrims are among the most sincere of the entire company to go to Canterbury to worship at the shrine of Thomas à Becket. The tales of the Knight (a chivalric romance), the Clerk (a moral tale of patience), and the Prioress (the miracle of the Virgin) are spaced equally throughout the text of The Canterbury Tales;



the tale of the Parson (a sermon) completes the spatial arrangement at the end. The order in which the tales are told is still left to conjecture; Robinson bases his order on the Ellesmere Manuscript, as indeed many other scholars do. In this order, the Prioress's story is followed by the stories of the Pilgrim Chaucer. The Pilgrim Chaucer's second tale, a lengthy moral tale in prose, appears to foreshadow the sermon of the seven deadly sins told by the Parson--an excellent choice for a conclusion to this pilgrimage. The sequence supports reasoning for the prefigured order of the unfinished manuscript. With approximately half of the company presenting tales, we find a microcosmic view of the macrocosm of the Middle Ages as Chaucer viewed it.

Another significant thread of unification is that the Knight, the Clerk, and the Prioress are all in agreement with Bailly's directions to narrate stories. Participating willingly in Bailly's drawing, the three pilgrims soon learn that "the cut fil to the Knyght" (I, 845). The obedient Knight replies, "syn I shal begynne the game, / What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!" (I, 853-54). When the Clerk is called upon to tell a tale, he replies:

"Hooste," quod he, "I am under youre yerde;  
Ye han of us as now the governance,

And therefore will I do you obeisance,  
 As fer as resoun axeth, hardily.  
 (IV, 21-25)

The Prioress replies simply, "Gladly" to Herry Bailly's excessively polite request for a tale (VII, 435-51).

The tales which are told reflect the diversity of interests in the group. One would be remiss, however, in not pointing out another unifying thread concerning these three tales--the Host is pleased with each one of them. To the Knight's tale Herry Bailly responds, "So moot I gon, / This gooth aright; unboked is the male" (I, 3115). When the Clerk finishes his story about Griselda and her patience, we are allowed an insight into more of Herry Bailly's thoughts as well as a hint from the Host about conditions which exist in his home life concerning feelings about his wife:

. . . "By Goddes bones,  
 Me were levere than a barel ale  
 My wyf at hoom had herd this legende ones!  
 This is a gentil tale for the nones,  
 As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille;  
 But thyng that wol nat be, lat it be stille."  
 (IV, 1213<sup>a</sup>-18<sup>a</sup>)

The miracle the Prioress tells is met at first with complete silence "Til that oure Hooste jape the bigan" (VII, 693).

Chaucer seems to be linking these three pilgrims and their stories by foreshadowing in the headlink following the Knight's performance and preceding that of the Miller. The poet in his literary apology is preparing his audience for the fabliaux which are to follow:

And therefore, whoso list it nat yheere,  
 Turne over the leef and chese another tale;  
 For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,  
 Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,  
 And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.  
 (I, 3176-80)

The "gentillesse" describes the Knight and his tale; the "moralitee" suggests the Clerk and his story; and the "hoolynesse" is applicable to the Prioress and her Christian miracle.

In many of the links including this structure which I have suggested, Chaucer has given the reader action in the movement and reporting of the Host and in the bantering among the members of the party. Bailly's compliance in the order of the tales and the bantering of the pilgrims among themselves create a moving panorama within the pilgrimage. Chaucer subtly keeps his audience aware of movement throughout The Canterbury Tales.

About three-fourths of the way through the text of The Tales several pilgrims appear again that reflect

characteristics of the Middle Ages. For example, the Knight sustains his representation of sovereignty; the Monk has just told a tale of biblical masters, Roman leaders, and rhetoricians; and "The Nun's Priest's Tale" is the story of Chauntecleer and Pertelote, a beast epic or fable concerning authority in marriage. This spatiality is indicative of the overall plan which Chaucer could have had in mind had he been able to complete his work. Chaucer's Host is a multi-faceted personality. The Host is not only a jovial, hospitable host, but also an arbiter, a clock, a calendar, a map, a philosopher, and a commentator--"juge" and "reportour." The Host approves certain tales which are told, and he disapproves various other tales.

In tracing the text for Bailly's words and actions I shall consider first the Host's role as an arbiter and commentator. Blended with this role are the reactions of approval and disapproval. This attitude applies to the order as well as the subject matter of the tales. The Host calls the pilgrims to come forward to draw for turns, and "the cut fil to the Knyght" (I, 845).

When the Knyght finishes his chivalric romance, the Pilgrim Chaucer notes that

Oure Hooste lough and swoor, "So moot I gon,  
This gooth aright; unboked is the male.

Lat se now who shal telle another tale;  
 For trewely the game is wel bigonne."  
 (I, 3114-17)

Bailly becomes a compliant host in "The Miller's Prologue." After the Knight finishes his tale, the Host calls upon the Monk: "telleth ye, sir Monk, if that ye konne / Somwhat to quite with the Knyghtes tale" (I, 3118-19). However, in "The Miller's Prologue" the drunken Miller begins to swear, "by armes and by blood and bones, / I kan a noble tale for the nones / With which I wol now quite the Knyghtes tale" (I, 3125-27). Bailly is quick to apply his diplomacy by speaking directly to the Miller: "Abyd, Robin, my leeve brother; / Som bettre man shal telle us first another. / Abyd, and lat us werken thriftily" (I, 3129-31). The Miller insists, and Bailly reflects the Miller's hostile nature in his reply to Robin, "Tel on, a devel wey! / Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcom" (I, 3135-36). The Reeve attempts to stop the Miller from telling his tale; however, his efforts are hopeless. The Pilgrim Chaucer softens the scene by replacing the somewhat abrupt Bailly with the calm poet persona:

What sholde I moore seyn, but this Miller  
 He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,  
 But tole his cherles tale in his manere.

M'athynketh that I shal reherce it heere.  
 . . . . .  
 And therefore, whoso list it nat yheere,  
 Turne over the leef and chese another tale;  
 For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,  
 Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,  
 And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.  
 Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys.  
 The Millere is a cherl, ye knowe wel this;  
 So was the Reve eek and othere mo,  
 And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.  
 Avyseth you, and put me out of blame;  
 And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.  
 (I, 3165-67; I, 3176-86)

Seeing that the pilgrims enjoyed the Miller's tale, Bailly said to the Reeve, "Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme" (I, 3905). The Reeve complies with a story of a miller.

The Cook in his prologue is duly excited, also, about the Reeve's story and offers to tell one. The Cook qualifies his offer with

" . . . if ye vouche-sauf to heere  
 A tale of me, that am a povre man,  
 I wol yow telle, as well as evere I kan,  
 A litel jape that fil in oure citee."  
 (I, 4340-43)

The Host grants permission to the Cook with this request: "Now telle on, Roger, looke that it be good" (I, 4346). The Cook spars verbally with Bailly and warns him to

"Be . . . nat wrooth, er we departen heer,  
 Though that my tale be of an hostileer.  
 But nathelees I wol nat telle it yit,  
 But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit."  
 (I, 4359-64)

Following the fragmentary "Cook's Tale," an apparent fabliau, the Host calls upon the Man of Law:

Telle us a tale anon, as forward is.  
 Ye been submytted, thurgh youre free assent,  
 To standen in this cas at my juggement.  
 Acquitteth yow now of youre biheeste;  
 Thanne have ye do youre devoir atte leeste,  
 (II, 34-38)

The Man of Law in the "Introduction to The Man of Law's Tale" replies:

"Hooste," quod he, "depardieux, ich assente;  
 To breke forward is nat myn entente.  
 Biheste is dette, and I wole holde fayn  
 Al my biheste, I kan no better sayn."  
 (II, 39-42)

In "The Epilogue of The Man of Law's Tale" Herry Bailly calls upon the Parson for the next tale; however, the Shipman interrupts to say:

"My joly body schal a tale telle,  
 And I schal clynken you so mery a belle,  
 That I schal waken al this compaignie.

But it schal not ben of philosophie,  
 Ne phislyas, ne termes queinte of lawe.  
 Ther is but litel Latyn in my mawe!"  
 (II, 1185-90)

In the order of the Ellesmere Manuscript, the Shipman does not tell a tale at this point. Without any further commentary from the Host or any of the pilgrims, the Wife of Bath follows with her prologue. The Summoner and the Friar begin to argue over the lengthy prologue of the Wife of Bath. Bailly speaks up in the role of a referee:

"Pees! and that anon!  
 Lat the womman telle hire tale.  
 Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.  
 Do, dame, telle forth youre tale, and that is  
 best."  
 "Al redy, sire," quod she, "right as yow  
 lest,  
 If I have licence of this worthy Frere."  
 "Yis, dame," quod he, "tel forth, and I wol  
 heere."  
 (III, 850-56)

Following "The Wife of Bath's Tale," the Friar offers to tell a tale:

" . . . if it lyke to this compaigne,  
 I wol yow of a somonour telle a game.  
 Pardee, ye may wel knowe by the name  
 That of a somonour may no good be sayd;  
 I praye that noon of you be yvele apayd.  
 A Somonour is a rennere up and doun



And is ybet at every townes ende."  
(III, 1278-85)

The Host redresses the attitude of the Friar:

. . . "A! sire, ye sholde by hende  
And curteys, as a man of youre estaat;  
In compaignye we wol have no debaat.  
Telleth youre tale, and lat the Somonour be."  
(III, 1286-89)

The Somonour, however, responds to the Host, "Lat hym seye to me / What so hym list; when it cometh to my lot, / By God! I shal him quiten every grot" (III, 290-92). Bailly demands, "Pees, namoore of this!" (III, 1298). The Host then condescends to the Friar's telling his tale.

In the beginning of "The Friar's Tale," the Summoner's ire rises because the Friar, speaking of a specific Summoner, is surely attacking all of those who carry the title. The Friar says of that one Summoner that

"He koude spare of lecchours oon or two,  
To techen hym to four and twenty mo.  
For though this Somonour wood were as an  
hare,  
To telle his harlotrye I wol nat spare;  
For we been out of his correccioun.  
They han of us no jurisdiccoun,  
Ne nevere shullen, terme of alle hir lyves."  
(III, 1325-31)

The Summoner interrupts the Friar's comments with a sharp retort, "Peter! so been the wommen of the styves," / . . . "yput out of oure cour!" (III, 1332-33). The Host, as an arbiter, speaks up:

"Pees! with myschance and with  
  mysaventure!"  
. . . and lat hym telle his tale.  
Now telleth forth, thogh that the Somonour  
Ne spareth nat, myn owene maister deere."  
                                    (III, 1334-37)

Following the Friar's attack upon a summoner, the pilgrim Summoner becomes so indignant that he counterattacks the Friar in "The Summoner's Prologue." Chaucer, through the eyes of the poet persona is vividly descriptive of the Summoner's reaction:

This Somonour in his styropes hye stood;  
Upon the Frere his herte was so wood  
That lyk an aspen leef he quook for ire.  
(III, 1665-67)

The Summoner concludes his counterattack by addressing his fellow pilgrims with the blessing "God save yow alle, save this cursed Frere! / My prologue wol I ende this manere." Following the Friar's attack upon a Summoner, the Summoner responds immediately with an attack upon a Friar. The Friar is quiet until the Summoner is well into his story. But the

Friar interrupts angrily when the Summoner accuses a friar of erasing the names of the believers after leaving their presence when they have paid heavily to be forgiven. In fact, the Summoner adds the insult that "he [the Friar] served hem with nyfles and with fables" (III, 1760). Bailly enters again as an arbiter following the interruption of the Friar:

"Nay, ther thou lixt, thou Somonour !" quod  
the Frere.  
"Pees," quod oure Hoost, "for Cristes mooder  
deere!  
Tel forth thy tale, and spare it nat at al."  
"So thryve I," quod this Somonour, "so I  
shal!"  
(III, 1761-64)

In "The Clerk's Prologue" Bailly notes that the Clerk has been riding quietly along with the group:

"Sire Clerk of Oxenford," oure Hooste sayde,  
 "Ye ryde as coy and stille as dooth a mayde  
 Were newe spoused, sittynge at the bord;  
 This day ne herde I of youre tonge a word."  
 (IV, 1-4)

The Host continues to encourage the Clerk by setting several guidelines:

"Telle us some myrie tale, by youre fey!  
For what man that is entered in a pley,

He nedes moot unto the pley assente.  
 But precheth nat, as freres doon in Lente,  
 To make us for oure olde synnes weye,  
 Ne that thy tale make us nat to slepe.

Telle us some murie thyng of adventures.

. . . . .  
 Speketh so pleyne at this tyme, we yow preye,  
 That we may understonde what ye seye."

(IV, 9-15; IV, 19-20)

Agreeing to tell to tell a tale, the Clerk reminds the Host,

". . . I am under youre yerd;  
 Ye han of us now the governance,  
 And therefore wol I do yow obeisance,  
 As far as resoun axeth, hardily."

(IV, 22-25)

The Clerk ends his story of Griselda and her patience with a statement about such women as the one he has portrayed:

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:  
 It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes  
 In al a town Grisildis thre or two;  
 For if that they were put to swiche assayes,  
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes  
 With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at  
 ye,

It wolde rather breste a-two than plye.

(IV, 1163-69)

Finally, the Clerk concludes with a blessing for the  
 Wife of Bath:

" . . . for the Wyves love of Bathe--  
 Whos lyf and al hire secte God mayntene  
 In heigh maistrie, and elles were it scathe--  
 I wol with lusty herte, fressh and grene,  
 Seyn yow a song to glade yow, I wene;  
 And lat us stynte of earnestful matere."  
 (IV, 1169-75)

When the Clerk finishes his tale, a discussion concerning  
 wives begins and the Pilgrim Chaucer notes that

[Oure Hooste seyde, and swoor, "By Goddes  
 bones,  
 Me were levere than a barel ale  
 My wyf at hoom had herd this legende ones!  
 This is a gentil tale for the nones,  
 As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille;  
 But thyng that wol nat be, lat it be  
 stille."]  
 (IV, 1213<sup>a</sup>-18<sup>a</sup>)

The Clerk's story and his commentary about wives in general  
 and the Wife of Bath in particular produce from the Merchant  
 and Bailly delightful reactions which are found in "The  
 Merchant's Prologue." The Merchant regrets his brief  
 marriage with "the worste that may be" (IV, 1219). In fact,  
 after only two months of marriage, the Merchant declares  
 that

"Were I unbounden, also moot I thee!  
 I wolde nevere eft comen in the snare.  
 We wedded men lyven in sorwe and care.

Assaye whoso wole, and he shal fynde  
 That I seye sooth, by Seint Thomas of Ynde,  
 As for the moore part, I sey nat alle.  
 God shilde that it sholde so bifalle!"  
 (IV, 1226-32)

Since the Merchant is readily elaborating upon his unhappiness, the understanding Host suggests, "Marchant, so God yow blesse. / Syn ye so muchel knowen of that art / Ful hertely I pray yow telle us part" (IV, 1240-43). The Merchant retains his mood as he tells a fabliau about January, an old man, and May, his young wife--a tale centered on the misbehavior of the wife. In the "Epilogue to the the Merchant's Tale" the Host's comments vacillate between the good and bad characteristics of his own wife:

"Ey! Goddes mercy!" seyde oure Hoost tho,  
 "Now swich a wyf I pray God kepe me fro!  
 Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees  
 In wommen been! for ay as bisy as bees  
 Been they, us sely men for to deceyve,  
 And from the soothe evere wol they weyve;  
 By this Marchauntes tale is preveth weel.  
 But doutelees, as trewe as any steel  
 I have a wyf, though that she povre be,  
 But of hir tonge, a labbyng shrewe is she,  
 And yet she hath an heep of vices mo;  
 Thereof no fors! lat alle swiche thynges go.  
 But wyte ye what? In conseil be it seyde,  
 Me reweth soore I am unto hire teyd.  
 For, and I sholde rekenen every vice  
 Which that she hath, ywis I were to nyce;  
 And cause why, it sholde reported be  
 And toold to hire of somme of this meynee,--  
 Of whom, it nedeth nat for to declare,  
 Syn wommen konnen outhen swich chaffare;

And eek my wit suffiseth nat therto,  
 To tellen al, wherfore my tale is do."  
 (IV, 2419-40)

At the beginning of Fragment V the Host turns to the Squire and requests a tale of love: " . . . for certes ye/ konnen theron as muche as any man" (V 2-3). The Squire will tell a story "with hertly wyl; for I wol nat rebelle / Agayn youre lust; a tale wol I telle" (V, 5-6). The Squire's story, though incomplete, belongs to the romance genre. Such a genre is appropriate for the Knight's young son to tell. Its subject matter is also appropriate to the trend that the tales are taking at the point.

Immediately following the Squire's incomplete story, the Franklin is generous with his praise for the young lad:

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

. . . . .  
 I have a sone, and by the Trinitee,  
 I hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond,  
 Though it right now were fallen in myn hond,  
 He were a man of swich discrecioun  
 As that ye been! Fy on possessioun,  
 But if a man be vertuous withal!"

(V, 673-78, V, 682-87)

The Franklin disparages his son for his loose behavior and habits. The Franklin relates that his son had rather "pleye at dees, . . . than to commune with any gentil wight / Where he myghte lerne gentillesse aright" (V, 690, V, 693-94).

The Host, still exercising his control over the group, hastens the game by calling on the Franklin to tell his story next, according to the rules that have been laid out at the beginning of the pilgrimage. The Franklin replies,

"Gladly, sire Hoost, . . . I wole obeye  
Unto your wyl; now herkenh what I seye.  
I wol yow nat contrarien in no wyse  
As fer as that my wittes wol suffyse.  
I prey to God that it may plesen yow;  
Thanne woot I wel that it is good ynow."  
(V, 702-08)

After "The Franklin's Tale" the Physician tells his story. In the "Introduction to The Pardoner's Tale" the Host responds harshly to the result of the Physician's story. The sorrowful ending of "The Physicians's Tale" arouses the ire of the Host to the point that

Oure Hoost gan to swere as he were wood;  
"Harrow!" quod he, "by nayles and by blood!"  
. . . . .  
"By corpus bones! but I have triacle,  
Or elles a draughte of moyste and corny ale,  
Or but I heere anon a myrie tale,  
Myn herte is lost for pitee of this mayde.





afterthought; however, it appears that the Pardoner is concluding his opportunity to hold the attention of the group by "quitting" the Host. As an afterthought, the Pardoner holds his audience by stating,

"But, sires, o word forgot I in my tale:  
 I have relikes and pardoun in my male,  
 As faire as any man in Engelond,  
 Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond.  
 If any of yow wole, of devocion,  
 Offren, and han myn absolucion,  
 Com forth anon, and kneleth heere adoun,  
 And mekely receyveth my pardoun."  
 (VI, 919-25)

The Pardoner provides the reader, as well as the pilgrims, an insight into a scoundrel who is willing to offer his services and make money while he is on the pilgrimage. In his prologue the Pardoner has already initiated his plan:

"Goode men and wommen, o thyng warne I yow:  
 If any wight be in this chirche now  
 That hath doon synne horrible, that he  
 Dar nat, for shame, of it yshryven be,  
 Or any womman, be she yong or old,  
 That hath ymaad hir housbonde cokewold,  
 Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace  
 To offren to my relikes in this place.  
 And whoso fyndeth hym out of swich blame,  
 He wol come up and offre in Goddes name,  
 And I assoille him by the auctoritee  
 Which that by bulle ygraunted was to me."  
 (VI, 377-88)

At the end of his story the Pardoner speaks egotistically and tauntingly as he suggests:

"I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne,  
 For he is moost enveloped in synne.  
 Com forth, sire Hoost, and offre first anon,  
 And thou shalt kisse the relikes everychon."  
 (VI, 941-44)

The angry Host assures the Pardoner that he will not adhere to the Pardoner's insolent request and is quite explicit about what he will do if the Pardoner does not stop this nonsense at once. One of the pilgrims must step in to separate the Host from the Pardoner. In this instance, as the Pilgrim Chaucer notes, the peacemaker is the Knight:

But right anon the worthy Knyght bigan,  
 Whan that he saugh that al the peple loght,  
 "Namooore 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, 960-69)

The Shipman is the next to tell a tale. When he finishes his story, the Host acknowledges the Shipman's participation and looks around to decide

"Who shal now telle first of al this route  
 Another tale;" and with that word he sayde,  
 As curteisly as it had been a mayde,  
 "My lady Prioress, 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?"

"Gladly," quod she, and seyde as ye shal  
 heere.

(VII, 443-51)

By the time the Prioress has related her miracle of the Virgin, the pilgrims are quiet and rather meditative. The Host, remembering that his role is to keep the group "myrie," begins to joke; and he looks around for someone to brighten the mood of the group when his eyes fall upon the Pilgrim Chaucer. In this portrayal of the Pilgrim Chaucer, the reader is exposed to a shy, reticent personality as opposed to the friendly outgoing pilgrim at the Tabard Inn who states that "shortly, whan the sonne was to reste, / So hadde I spoken with hem everichon / That I was of hir felawshipe anon" (I, 30-32). The words of the Host testify to this shyness in the "Prologue to The Tale of Sir Thopas" when Bailly observes that

"Thou lookest as thow woldest fynde an  
 hare,  
 For evere upon the ground I se thee stare.

"Approche neer, and looke up murily.  
 Now war yow, sires, and lat this man have  
 place!

He in the waast is shape as wel as I;  
 This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace  
 For any womman, smal and fair of face.  
 He semeth elvyssh by his contenance,  
 For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.

"Sey now somewhat, syn oother folk han sayd;  
 Telle us a tale of myrthe, and that anon."  
 (VII, 696-706)

In the words of a modest traveler, the Pilgrim Chaucer responds,

"Hooste," quod I, "ne beth nat yvele apayd,  
 For oother tale certes kan I noon,  
 But of a rym I lerned longe agoon."  
 (VII, 707-09)

The Host advises the pilgrims to expect "Som deyntee thyng."  
 However, the Pilgrim Chaucer has spoken only briefly when  
 the Host stops the tale of Sir Thopas:

"Namooore of this, for Goddes dignitee,"  
 Quod oure Hoost, "for thow makes me  
 So wery of thy verray lewednesse  
 That, also wisly God my soul blesse,  
 Myne eres aken of thy drasty speche.  
 Now swich a rym the devil I biteche!  
 This may wel be rym dogerel," quod he.  
 (VII 919-925)

The Pilgrim Chaucer asks the Host why he should stop "syn  
 that it is the beste rym I kan?" (VII, 928). The Host  
 replies,





Herry Bailly agrees with the Knight and adds that

"Swich talkyng is nat worth a boterflye,  
For ther inne is ther no desport ne game.  
Wherefore, sire Monk, or daun Piers by youre  
name,  
I pray yow hertely telle us somewhat elles."  
(VII, 2790-93)

The Host suggests that the Monk "sey somwhat of huntyng," (VII, 2805). The Monk replies, "I have no lust to pleye. / Now lat another telle, as I have toold" (VII, 2806-07). Bailly calls for the Nun's Priest to come forward and "telle us swich thyng as may our hertes glade" (VII, 2811). The Nun's Priest remains true to his agreement to keep the spirits merry and tells the delightful beast fable of Chauntecleer and Pertelote.

In the epilogue to "The Nun's Priest's Tale" the Host's spirits have been lifted as one notes in his statement that "this was a myrie tale of Chauntecleer" (VII, 3449). The Host does not call the name of the next pilgrim to tell a tale; however, the text clarifies that it is one of the women travelers. "The Second Nun's Prologue" follows with no further introduction; the fragmentary state of the work accounts for this sequence.

As the Second Nun concludes her story, the poet persona notes that two travelers have caught up with the pilgrims.





And ye hym knewe as wel as do I,  
 Ye wolde wondre how wel and craftily  
 He koude werke, and that in sondry wise."  
 (VIII, 600-04)

In his infinite variety, Chaucer assigns the Host the responsibility of describing the Canon's appearance and his attire. This description is accomplished for the benefit of the audience through a series of questions by the Host. In one revealing passage the Host replies,

"This thyng is wonder merveillous to me,  
 Syn that thy lord is of so heigh prudence,  
 By cause of which men sholde hym reverence,  
 That of his worshipec rekketh he so lite.  
 His overslope nys nat worth a myte,  
 As in effect, to hym, so moot I go!  
 It is al bawdy and tofore also.  
 Why is thy lord so sluttish, I the prey  
 And is of power bettre clooth to beye,  
 If that his dede accorde with thy speche?  
 Telle me that, and that I thee beseche."  
 (VIII, 629-39)

The Host, ever in charge, continues his questioning of the Yeoman until it is fully apparent that the Canon is in the business of alchemy. The Canon moves in closely enough to overhear the conversation between his Yeoman and the Host:

"Hoold thou thy pees, and spek no wordes mo,  
 For if thou do, thou shalt it deere abyen.  
 Thou sclaundrest me heere in his compaignye,  
 And eek discoverest that thou sholdest hyde."  
 (VIII, 693-96)

The Host delights in the information he is hearing, and the Yeoman is ready to reveal any information asked of him; therefore,

. . .whan this Chanon saugh it wolde nat bee,  
 But his Yeman wolde telle his pryvetee,  
 He fledde away for verray sorwe and shame.  
 (VIII, 698-72)

The Yeoman is now free to tell of his trade. When he finishes, the merry Host notices that the Cook is riding in sluggish manner behind the rest of the pilgrims. Jokingly, the Host turns the attention of the pilgrims to the Cook: "See how he nappeth! see, for cokkes bones, / That he will falle fro his hors atones!" (IX, 9-10). The Host enjoys the opportunity to awaken the Cook. Also he enjoys being in control and directing the scenario by turning the attention to the Cook:

"Awake, thou Cook . . .God yeve the sorwe!  
 What eyleth thee to slepe by the morwe?  
 Hastow had fleen al nyght, or artow dronke?  
 Or hastow with som quene al nyght yswonke,  
 So that thow mayst nat holden up thyn heed?"  
 (IX, 14-18)

The Cook replies,

" . . .ther is falle on me swich hevynesse,  
 Noot I nat why, that me were levere slepe  
 Than the beste galon wyn in Chepe."  
 (IX, 22-24)

Observing the scene, the Manciple offers to tell a tale:

" . . . if it may doon ese  
 To thee, sire Cook, and to no wight displese,  
 Which that heere rideth in this compaingye,  
 And that oure Hoost wole, of his curteisye,  
 I wol as now excuse thee of thy tale.  
 For, in good feith, thy visage is ful pale."  
 (IX, 24-29)

The Cook and the Manciple toast with wine the suggestion  
 that the Manciple tell the next tale. The Host enjoys  
 thoroughly the scene:

Thanne gan oure Hoost to laughen wonder  
 loude,  
 And seyde, "I se wel it is necessarie,  
 Where that we goon, good drynke with us  
 carie;  
 For that wol turne rancour and disese  
 T'acord and love, and many a wrong apese.  
 O thou Bacus, yblessed be thy name,  
 That so kanst turnen earnest into game!  
 Worshipe and thank be to thy deitee!"  
 (IX, 94-101)

Still enjoying his role as "juge and reportour," the Host  
 requests the Manciple to tell the next tale.

There is no extant link between "The Manciple's Tale"



the reaction of the pilgrims:

Upon this word we han assented soone,  
 For, as it seemed, it was for to doone,  
 To enden in som vertuous sentence,  
 And for to yeve hym space and audience;  
 And bade oure Hoost he sholde to hym seye  
 That alle we to telle his tale hym preye.  
 (X, 61-66)

The Host conveys the wishes of the pilgrims to the Parson, telling him to "sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere" (X, 73). The Parson does not adhere to the request for brevity. Instead he delivers a lengthy sermon--a fitting ending to a pilgrimage as well as to a masterpiece of numerous genres.

Yet another significant thread throughout The Canterbury Tales is Herry Bailly's varied roles as a clock, a map, a calendar, and a philosopher. These roles are spaced throughout the work serving as a vehicle to emphasize to the reader not only the adeptness of the Host but also the sense of the movement of the group as the pilgrims make their way toward the shrine of Thomas à Becket.

The poet persona recounts the activities of the beginning of the pilgrimage. Early the next morning, after the journey begins, the poet persona metaphorically refers to the Host as a clock in "The General Prologue":







The ferthe part, and half an houre and moore,  
And though he were nat depe ystert in loore,  
He wiste it was the eightetethe day  
Of Aprill, that is messager to May.  
(II, 1-6)

After listening to the Reeve, the Host suggests to the pilgrim,

"Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme.  
Lo Depeford! and it is half-wey pryme.  
Lo Grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne!  
It were al tyme thy tale to bigynne."  
(I, 3905-08)

Again in the "Introduction to The Man of Law's Tale" the Host, elaborating on time and place, develops his thoughts into a reflective, knowledgeable monologue of philosophy when he includes a Senecan quotation:

"Now, for the love of God and of Seint John,  
Leseth no tyme, as ferforth as ye may.  
Lordynges, the tyme wasteth nyght and day,  
And steleth from us, what pryvely slepynge,  
And what thurgh necligence in oure wakyng,  
As dooth the streem that turneth nevere  
  agayn,  
Descendynge fro the montaigne into playn.  
Wel kan Senec and many a philosophre  
Biwaillen tyme moore than gold in cofre;  
For 'los of tyme shendeth us,' quod he.  
It wol nat come agayn, withouten drede,  
Namoores than wold Malkynes maydenhede  
Whan she hath lost it in hir wantownesse.  
Lat us nat mowlen thus in ydelnesse."  
                                    (II, 18-32)

To reflect and re-emphasize the role of the Host, I choose to summarize concisely the detailed activity that has been covered. The Host leads the company out as far as the Well of St. Thomas before he stops the pilgrims to hold the drawing to begin the tales. The Host pulls his horse about when he wants to stop the group. He stands high in his stirrups; he laughs; he swears; and he speaks "as lordly as a kyng" (I, 3900). The term "Lordynges" is synonymous with the picture the reader retains of the Host's congenial call to order. Bailly is a referee when the pilgrims argue among themselves. He calls for a tale or allows one of the pilgrims to call for a tale to clear the atmosphere. He jests with the Cook. The Host speaks sharply to the Parson when the Parson reprimands him for cursing. He accepts the Shipman's offer to keep the tales jolly. He compliments heartily the tales he likes; he expresses dislike or stops a story which does not fit into his description of joviality. And he pauses to ponder and to philosophize when a tale strikes too closely to his own life.

Bailly is in charge during the majority of the tales. Chaucer exercises his literary prerogative when he allows another pilgrim to stop a story or call for a different performer than the one intended originally. Chaucer seems to relieve Bailly from making a decision when he allows another character to stop a story or call for a different

than the one intended originally. He seems to relieve Bailly from making a decision when a dispute arises among argumentative persons on the pilgrimage. But he returns Bailly to his lead position when the Host calls upon the Parson "to knytte up al this feeste, and make an ende" (X, 47). Herry Bailly is, indeed, a golden, multi-faceted thread that weaves throughout the entire work to hold The Canterbury Tales together.

Chapter IV  
Maystrye, Soveraynetee, and Auctoritee  
in  
Relation to Rhetoric

Chaucer introduces commentary concerning the topics of maystrye, soveraynetee, and auctoritee throughout "The General Prologue" and The Canterbury Tales through the Knight, the Squire, the Wife of Bath, the Franklin, and the poet himself represented as one of the pilgrims. The two strongest statements on rhetoric in The Canterbury Tales appear in the "Introduction to the Squire's Tale" and "The Franklin's Prologue" and "Tale."

In addition, Chaucer alludes to artistic masters and mastery throughout "The General Prologue" and The Canterbury Tales. In fact, Chaucer uses both words in his "General Prologue" and in almost every extant tale of The Canterbury Tales. He uses the word mastery in the sense of "control, dominance, rulership, preeminence, stature, prestige, authority, warrant, the upper hand, of victory in a contest"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mastery," Middle English Dictionary, 1976 ed.

Throughout the Chaucer canon the word master is used in the sense of "a high official, civil or military, a governor, ruler, leader," is "applied to God, Christ" or "one in charge of a guild, college; a master or officer of a ship; applied to a woman; a conqueror, victor," or designates an "official appointed to be in charge of a place, a department of household, government, etc.; also the principal civil officer of a district not important enough to warrant a mayor."<sup>2</sup>

As a master of his own craft, Chaucer recognized and alluded to some of the most prominent masters before and during his own lifetime. In fact, the poet, with his own masterful stroke of genius, prefigures in his complete, unified "General Prologue" specific artists who are indeed designated professionals in their positions in life. For example, it is in "The General Prologue" that Chaucer introduces Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Hippocrates, and the Host, Herry Bailly. Each of these historical figures is considered an authority or a master of his subject or his position in life.

Also in "The General Prologue" Chaucer prepares the listening audience for characteristics of the

<sup>2</sup> "Master," Oxford English Dictionary, 1933 ed.

personalities in The Canterbury Tales. Through the Knight, Chaucer prepares us to travel with the pilgrims to many areas of the world as it was known in the Middle Ages. Through the Knight and his son, the Squire, Chaucer introduces concepts of knightly behavior and courtly love. The poet introduces a variety of views of the Roman Catholic Church through the portrayals of the Prioress, the Monk, and the Friar. He develops a view of the religion as Christ taught it in the portrayal of the Parson and his brother, the Plowman. He presents the sincerity of a young student in his commentary of the Clerk of Oxford. He further presents various levels of the medieval middle class through the Lawyer, the Merchant, the Miller, and the Reeve. He prepares the listening audience for a unique view of women of the Middle Ages in the portrayal of the Wife of Bath. Finally, he prepares his audience for the significance of rhetoricians and rhetorical concern in "The General Prologue" in an entire passage that includes a variety of effective rhetorical techniques (I, 725-46).<sup>3</sup>

In "The General Prologue" Chaucer brings together a variety of pilgrims who are planning a journey to the

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957). All further references to this work will appear in the text.

shrine of the martyred Thomas à Becket, "the hooly blisful martir" (I, 17). Through his poet persona, Chaucer presents a literary apologia asking for the courtesy of the audience to accept his real intent and to view it not as any sort of villainy upon his part that he "pleynly speke in this mateere, / To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere" (I, 727-28). To support his approach, the Pilgrim Chaucer reminds his audience that "Crist spak hymself ful brode in holy writ, / And wel ye woot no vileyneye is it" (I, 739-40). In the same passage Chaucer alludes to the Greek rhetoricians to support his literary stance by stating that "Plato seith, who so that kan hym rede, / The wordes moot be cosyn to the dede" (I, 741-42).

Also, Chaucer uses foreshadowing masterfully in "The General Prologue" by including names of historical, literary, and rhetorical masters from the past as well as those known to Chaucer in the Middle Ages. He alludes to Christ's Gospel, Aristotle, Plato, Cato, and St. Augustine. One authority upon the subject records an excellent metaphor in the figure of St. Augustine in that this great historical figure represents a pivotal composite for the early Christian, Greek, and Roman worlds in the Middle Ages because he "had the intellectual honesty and curiosity of the Greek at his best, the social seriousness and sense of

order of the Roman, and the Hebrew's feeling of man's inadequacy and God's omnipotent justice."<sup>4</sup> Chaucer's sagacious awareness of the significance of prefiguration is an underlying concept presented as foreshadowing in "The General Prologue" to prepare for the personalities in the body of The Canterbury Tales, either in one of the links or within one of the tales.

In "The General Prologue" the Pilgrim Chaucer describes the Monk as "fair for the maistrie" (I, 165). In this portrayal of the Monk the Pilgrim Chaucer evaluates the Monk's powerful position and lack of reverence in a series of rhetorical questions. One of these questions includes an allusion to St. Augustine (*italics are mine*):

What sholde he studie and make hymselfen  
wood,  
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,  
Or swynken with his handes, and laboure,  
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?  
Lat Austyn have his swynk to hym reserved!  
(I, 184-88)

Thus, it is in "The General Prologue" that Chaucer develops his schemata to foreshadow events that he plans to develop

4 Bernard M. W. Knox, ed., "Masterpieces of the Ancient World," in The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces, Volume I (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), p. 1.



in the text of The Canterbury Tales. To do so the poet singles out specific pilgrims, terms, and words that will highlight the body of the narrative that is being introduced--The Canterbury Tales. As an example of Chaucer's plan, the poet persona continues to focus on the Monk. The poet has described the Monk as an outstanding one who has the responsibility of looking after the estates of the monastery. Later, in "The Prologue of the Monk's Tale," the Host suggests that the Monk is a master of some consequence (*italics are mine*):

"Upon my feith, thow art som officer,  
 Som worthy sexteyn, or som celerer,  
 For by my fader soule, as to my doom,  
 Thou art a maister when thou art at hoom;  
 No povre cloysterer, ne no novys,  
 But a governour, wily and wys."  
 (VII, 1935-40)

Continuing the focus on the Monk, Chaucer allows the Monk to give his definition of a tragedy and concludes "The Prologue of the Monk's Tale" with a rhetorical apologia. Chaucer concludes his focus on the Monk in "The Monk's Tale" by allowing him to reemphasize Chaucer's knowledge of biblical figures such as Samson, mythological figures such as Hercules, and literary figures such as Petrarch. At the

same time Chaucer weaves in the words maister and sovereyn. It is possible that through the intertwining of significant words and phrases in "The General Prologue" and elsewhere in The Canterbury Tales Chaucer has completed his purpose for the Monk. By tracing the description of the Monk in "The General Prologue" and his activities in The Canterbury Tales, one will discover a finished thread in the tapestry paralleling that of the completed "General Prologue."

Other references may remain unfinished in the extant tales; however, Chaucer refers to Aristotle in the poet persona's description of the Clerk of Oxford. The Pilgrim Chaucer observes of the Clerk (*italics are mine*):

For hym was levere have at his beddes heed  
 Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,  
 Of Aristotle and his philosophie,  
 Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.  
 But al be that he was a philosopre,  
 Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;  
 But al that myghte of his freendes hente,  
 On bookes and on lernynge he it spente.  
 (I, 293-300)

Therefore, thoroughly and convincingly, Chaucer is preparing his audience for various literary allusions as well as characteristics of the pilgrims who are yet to interact in the main body of The Canterbury Tales. Although Chaucer's work is unfinished, the poet appears to have

developed fully his intent for the Monk. In summation, I agree with the poet persona as he is developing the portrayal of the Monk in "The General Prologue": "And I seyde his opinion was good" (I, 183).

Chaucer unites his work in various ways, one of which is through characteristics of the period in which he lived: mastery, sovereignty, and authority. Following an overview of the contents of this chapter, it seems feasible to look into the text of The Canterbury Tales first for Chaucer's usage of the words master and maistrye. As indicated in the definition of the word master taken from the Oxford English Dictionary, the term had a broader scope of meaning in the Middle Ages than the word mastery.

Chaucer uses the word master as one would expect a writer of the medieval feudalistic period to do for respect or courtesy to a superior. This usage, however, has pertinent significance several times concerning its relevance to this paper. The first significant and relevant use of the word master appears in "The General Prologue" when Chaucer allows Herry Bailly, the Host, to address the Knight as "my mayster and my Lord" (I, 837). Chaucer's intention, I believe, is consistent with his admiration of this specific pilgrim, an admiration which is repeated throughout the text of The Canterbury Tales.

Another significant use by Chaucer of the word master occurs in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" when the Wife gives advice on how to rule husbands. The advice to which I refer touches one of the main concerns of this paper (italics are mine):

But tel me this: why hydestow, with sorwe,  
The keyes of thy cheste away fro me?  
It is my good as wel as thyn, pardee!  
What, wenestow make an ydiot of oure dame?  
Now by that lord that called is Seint Jame,  
Thou shalt nat bothe, thogh that thou were  
wood,  
Be maister of my body and my good;  
That oon thou shalt forgo, maugree thyne yen.  
(III, 308-15)

significance here is the reference to a master of his craft as well as a person of authority--Seneca. It is said of this Roman philosopher that, rhetorically, the "paratactic style of the Latin moralist Lucius Annaeus Seneca" is often contrasted with the style of Cicero.<sup>5</sup>

The Monk refers to another significant master in the literary milieu. In speaking of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, the Monk alludes to her being defeated by Odenake and then the Monk suggests that for more detail one should "unto my maister Petrak go, / That writ ynough of this, I undertake" (VII, 2323-26). Chaucer's knowledge of and admiration for fellow literary figures are well-known and accepted.

Finally, in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" the Nun's Priest refers to the medieval rhetorician Geoffrey of Vinsauf (*italics are mine*):

O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn  
That when thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn  
With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore,  
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy  
loore,  
The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?  
For on a Friday, soothly, slayn was he.  
(VII, 3347-52)

<sup>5</sup> Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 91.

Although the word master is used almost fifty times in The Canterbury Tales, only a few of the references appear to indicate the relevance to the theme of rhetorical significance; therefore, even though the pertinent examples of the word master are few, they are highly significant within Chaucer's selective passages.

Consideration of the word mastery and of Chaucer's use of the term is applicable and appropriate at this point. As I suggest above, Chaucer does not use the word mastery as frequently as he uses the word master.<sup>6</sup> However, his use of the word mastery is important because of the manner in which he applies the term. Chaucer states in "The General Prologue" that "a monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie" (I, 165). Later, with the appearance of the Monk in The Canterbury Tales, before presenting seventeen examples of tragedy Chaucer varies the rhetorical definition of the Aristotelian tragedy in "The Prologue of the Monk's Tale":

Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,  
As olde bookes maken us memorie,  
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,  
And is yfallen out of heigh degree  
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.

<sup>6</sup> John S. P. Tatlock and Arthur G. Kennedy, Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), pp. 577-78.

And they ben versified communely  
 Of six feet, which men clepen exametron.  
 In prose eek been endited many oon,  
 And eek in meetre, in many a sondry wyse.  
 Lo, this declaryng oghte ynogh suffise.  
 (VII, 1973-82)

Thus Chaucer is exercising his rhetorical expertise. His only use of the word mastery in "The General Prologue" is in the passage that refers to the Monk. I suggested earlier in this chapter that it is possible that Chaucer has been able to fulfill his purpose for this pilgrim. A brief repetitive summary of these passages serves as a reemphasis of Chaucer's rhetorical ability. At this point, in a review of the role of the Monk, one should place the stress on the words master and mastery--two words that Chaucer unites with the Monk. The Pilgrim Chaucer describes the Monk as "fair for the maistrie" (I, 165). At the beginning of the work Chaucer suggests that there will be significant information to note when the Monk tells his tale. In "The Prologue of the Monk's Tale" Herry Bailly assesses the Monk to be "a maister whan thou are at hoom" (VII, 1938). The Monk steps into the role of a master rhetorician since he has preceded his various tales with his own definition of tragedy.

After defining tragedy, the Monk states that he will relate the stories out of chronological order and will tell

them "some before and some bihynde, / As it now comth into my remembraunce" (VII, 1988-89). Chaucer ends his explanation and concludes "The Prologue of the Monk's Tale" with a rhetorical apologia, "Have me excused of myn ignoraunce" (VII, 1990).

Chaucer uses the word maistrie to elaborate upon the relationship between men and women. He allows the Miller to say of the Clerk (*italics are mine*):

Somtyme, to shewe his lightnesse and  
maistrye,  
 He pleyeth Herodes upon a scaffold hye.  
 But what availleth hym as in this cas?  
 She loveth so this hende Nicholas  
 That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn.  
 (I, 3383-87)



does not exactly repeat an event of "The Franklin's Tale" or "The Wife of Bath's Tale," it does image the interplay between a man and a woman involving the question of mastery.

Chaucer's main discussion of mastery begins with the Wife of Bath. In "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" Chaucer offers a lengthy literary apologia by the Wife concerning who should maintain the mastery in marriage. The Wife relies upon her own experiences to assure the pilgrims that the wife should have mastery in marriage. After discussing details of her five marriages, the Wife concludes her presentation with a declaration (*italics are mine*):

And whan that I hadde geten unto me,  
 By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,  
 And that he seyde, "myn owene trewe wyf,  
 Do as thee lust the terme of thy lyf;  
 Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat"--  
 After that day we hadden never debaat.  
 (III, 817-22)

In her story the Wife continues the theme she has convincingly established in her confession. "The Wife of Bath's Tale" is a romance that mirrors somewhat the image of the dance of Salomé for Herod and Dorigen's love plot in "The Franklin's Tale." In a sense all three women play tricks to gain mastery. And the knight in "The Wife of

Bath's Tale" and Herod become victims of the rash promise.

In the conclusion of "The Clerk's Tale" of patient Griselda, the Clerk admits that Griseldas are few, and then pays an apparently mocking tribute to the Wife of Bath (italics are mine):

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:  
 It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes  
 In al a toun Grisildis thre or two;  
 For if that they were put to swich assayes,  
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes  
 With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at  
ye,  
 It wolde rather breste a-two than plye.

For which heere, for the Wyves love of  
Bathe--  
 Whos lyf and al hire secte God mayntene  
 In heigh maistrie, and elles were it scathe--  
 I wol with lusty herte, fressh and grene,  
 Seyn yow a song to glade yow, I wene.  
(IV, 1163-74)

The Host, Herry Bailly, appears extremely pleased with the Clerk's story of the Marquis' mastery and Griselda's patience, for the Pilgrim Chaucer relates,

Oure Hooste seyde, and swoor, "By Goddes  
bones,  
 Me were levere than a barel ale  
 My wyf at hoom had herd this legende ones!  
 This is a gentil tale for the nones,  
 As to my purpos, wiste ye my will;  
 But thyng that wol nat be, lat it be stille."  
(IV, 1213<sup>a</sup>-18<sup>a</sup>)

Another location of the word mastery is found in "The Franklin's Tale." The knight in the story loves a fair lady. He is put through several trials before winning the maiden, who comes from a noble family. The Franklin relates (*italics are mine*):

That pryvely she fil of his accord  
To take hym for hir housbonde and hir lord,  
Of swich lordshipe as men han over hir wyves.  
And for to lede the moore in blisse hir  
lyves,  
Of his free wyl he swoor hire as a knyght  
That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,  
Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie  
Again hir wyl, ne kithe hir jalousie,  
But hire obeye, and folowe hir wyl in al,  
As any love to his lady shal.  
(V, 741-50)

The fair young lady is delighted to hear the words of the knight and assures him, "Sire I wol be youre humble trewe wyf" (V, 758).

The Franklin discusses the relationship between husband and wife specifically. The Franklin comments (*italics are mine*):

For o thyng, sires, sauflly dar I seye,  
That freendes everych oother moot obeye,  
If they wol longe holden compaignye.  
Love wol nat been constreyened by maistrye.  
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon  
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!  
(V, 761-66)

In the Pilgrim Chaucer's lengthy "Tale of Melibee" the word mastery is applied once again to the relationship between husband and wife. The entire story is an immense collection of the comprehensive knowledge of the author Chaucer as the story unfolds a panorama of exempla concerning the subject of mastery and the varied results of events according to the party in control in many situations. One passage from "The Tale of Melibee" sums up the discussion of Melibeus and his wife, Prudence (*italics are mine*):

"Certes," quod Prudence, "it is an hard  
thyng and right perilous / that a man putte  
hym al outrely in the arbitracioun and  
juggement, and in the myght and power of his  
enemys. / For Salomon seith, 'Leeveth me, and  
yeveth credence to that I shal seyn: I seye,  
quod he, 'ye peple, folk and governours of  
hooly chirche, / to thy sone, to thy wyf, to  
thy freend, ne to thy broother, / ne yeve  
thou never myght ne maistrie of thy body whil  
thow lyvest.'"

(VII, 1752-56)

When the Pilgrim Chaucer finishes his lengthy discussion of Melibee and his wife, the audience receives an interesting insight into the Host's family relationship:

Oure Hoost seyde, "As I am feithful man,  
And by that precious corpus Madrian,  
I hadde levere than a barel ale

That Goodelief, my wyf, hadde herd this tale!  
 For she nys no thyng of swich pacience  
 As was this Melibeus wyf Prudence."  
 (VII, 1891-96)

In "The Parson's Tale" the word mastery is used as Herry Bailly suggested during the preparation of the pilgrims for the pilgrimage when he called for tales of "sentence" and "solaas."

The first use of "mastery" in "The Parson's Tale" occurs in a passage concerning the power of the flesh over the soul. After a lengthy discussion of the subject, the Parson summarizes his text in the form of an adage or maxim--"sentence" (italics are mine): "For truste wel that over what man that synne hath maistrie, he is a verray cherl to synne" (X, 463). The Parson, then, is warning the people of the dangers and the sin of glorifying the body over the soul; it is the Parson's belief that the body and the soul are natural enemies; therefore, man must work constantly to uphold the mastery of his soul to keep the sins of the flesh from taking control. The Parson believes that if sin has control over the soul of man, then man will become a slave to his own habits and beliefs and, in turn, become weak and vulnerable in all areas.

The second use of the word mastery in the lengthy sermon of the parson is surely classified as "solaas"--

"comfort, consolation; amusement, entertainment; pleasure; rest" (*italics are mine*):<sup>8</sup>

Now comth how that a man sholde bere hym  
with his wif, and namely in two thynges, that  
is to seyn, in suffraunce and reverence, as  
shewed Crist when he made first womman. / For  
he ne made hire nat of the heved of Adam, for  
she ne sholde nat clayme to greet lordshipe.  
/ For ther as the womman hath the maistrie,  
she maketh to muche desray. Ther neden non  
ensamples of this; the experience of day by  
day oghte suffise. / Also, certes, God ne  
made nat womman of the foot of Adam, for she  
ne sholde nat been holden to lowe; for she  
kan nat paciently suffre. But God made  
womman of the ryb of Adam, for womman sholde  
be felawe unto man.

(X, 925-928)

The Parson suggests a compromise in the relationship between husband and wife--a relationship of equality in his suggestion that woman should be by the man's side as a partner in fellowship with him. The Parson continues the discussion above with debate-oriented opinions of "Seint Peter," "Seint Jerome," and "Seint Gregorie." The Parson, then, ends the discussion with a well-organized rhetorically-oriented summary reiterating the subject matter in four specific points for a "parfit mariage."

Through his references to mastery, and even through

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, p. 978.

his facetious allusion to Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Chaucer effectively shows his knowledge of rhetoric. He brings together a variety of people, places them in believable situations, creates a colorful description of each, and assigns the pilgrims stories of various genres. Chaucer does so in such a way that the pilgrims become living, breathing, memorable forces for the audiences to enjoy.

The word sovereign, like the word master, had varied meanings before and during the life of Chaucer. The word sovereign is used for "one who has supremacy or rank above, or authority over, others; a superior; a ruler, governor, lord, or master."<sup>9</sup> Sovereign is also "applied to the Deity in relation to created things, a husband in relation to his wife, a monarch, supreme, paramount; principal, greatest, or most notable." Chaucer uses the word sovereign as he does the word master in nearly every extant tale. An evaluation of the word will support the suggestion that Chaucer uses the word purposefully and significantly in several situations. The poet uses the word one time in "The General Prologue." This usage is in keeping with the idea of Chaucer's meticulous foreshadowing in his completed portion of the work. Chaucer uses the word in his

<sup>9</sup> "Sovereign," The Oxford English Dictionary, 1933 reissue of the 1928 first edition.

description of the Knight and his war experiences: "And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys; / And though that he were worthy, he was wys, / And of his port as meek as is a mayde" (I, 67-69). Chaucer uses the words sovereyn prys to define the knight's superior skill and prudence.<sup>10</sup> Chaucer establishes his admiration for the Knight in "The General Prologue." Chaucer indicates this admiration in several events in The Canterbury Tales. One of the events is presented at the end of "The General Prologue" when Chaucer works through the Host, Herry Bailly, to have the Knight singled out with the Prioress and the Clerk to draw for the order of telling the tales. Through this drawing, the Knight becomes the narrator of the first tale. Later, Chaucer removes Herry Bailly from the scene and allows the Knight to stop the Monk from his tiresome sketches of tragic figures. The Pilgrim Chaucer uses the word sovereign several times in "The Tale of Melibee." The most significant use of the word is in the passage about "Seint Jame" and the subjects of peace, unity, and riches. Complying with Herry Bailly's wish for "sentence" and "solaas," the Pilgrim Chaucer causes Dame Prudence to state "sentence": "And ye knowen wel that oon of the gretteste

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, p. 652.



and moost sovereyn thyng that in this world is unytee and pees" (VII, 1678). Dame Prudence continues this counsel with Melibee by presenting several exempla to aid him in dealing with his enemies, who have acted cruelly.

Chaucer's most meaningful use of the word sovereign appears in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" in an apostrophe to Geoffrey of Vinsauf (*italics are mine*):

O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,  
 That whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn  
 With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore,  
 Why he hadde I now thy sentence and thy  
loore,  
 The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?  
 For on a Friday, soothly, slayn was he.  
(VII, 3347-52)

Chaucer acknowledges some degree of indebtedness to Geoffrey in the passage above by using two of the three words under consideration--maister and soverayn. This is the only time Chaucer uses these two words together throughout the entire work. Because Chaucer uses the word sovereign in almost all of the tales, it seems logical to say that the topic of sovereignty is significant and important throughout the work.

Chaucer uses the word sovereignty as he did the word mastery--sparingly. In fact, the poet restricts its use to the Wife of Bath, the Clerk, the Franklin, and the Parson.

The meaning of the word sovereignty is "supremacy or pre-eminence in respect of excellence or efficacy; supremacy in respect of power, domination, or rank; supreme dominion, authority, or rule."<sup>11</sup> Three of Chaucer's five uses of the word occur in a passage which also includes the word mastery.

Near the end of "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" the Wife says that (*italics are mine*):

". . . whan that I hadde gotten unto me,  
By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,  
And that he seyde, 'Myn owene trewe wyf,  
Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;  
Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat'--  
After that day we hadden never debaat."  
(III, 817-22)

The second time Chaucer uses the two words mastery and sovereignty in the same passage is in "The Wife of Bath's Tale." A queen sends a knight on a quest to find out "what thyng is it that wommen moost desiren" (III, 905). The knight returns with the answer that "Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee / As wel over hir housbond as hir love, / And for to been in maistrie hym above" (III, 1038-40). The revelation of the knight is suitable in a story told by the

<sup>11</sup> "Sovereignty," The Oxford English Dictionary, 1933 reissue of the 1928 first edition.



That for to been a wedded man yow leste;  
 Thanne were youre peple in sovereyn hertes  
 reste.

"Boweth your nekke under that blisful yok  
 Of soveraynetee, noght of servyse,  
 Which that men clepe spousaille or wedlok;  
 And thenketh, lord, among youre thoghtes wyse  
 How thatoure dayes passe in sondry wyse;  
 For thogh we sleep, or wake, or rome, or  
 ryde,  
 Ay fleeth the tyme; it nyl no man abyde."  
 (IV, 106-19)

In two stanzas of rime royal verse Chaucer combines the people's view of marriage with a proverb about fleeting time and so suggests that sovereignty may be short-lived. In the final use of the word sovereignty Chaucer fittingly turns to prose form in the Parson's statement of the feudal system (*italics are mine*):

. . . certes, sith the time of grace cam, God ordeyned that some folk sholde be moore heigh in estaat and in degree, and som folk moore lough, and that everich sholde be served in his estaat and in his degree. / . . . but if God hadde ordeyned that some men hadde hyer degree and some men lower, / therfore was sovereyntee ordeyned, to kepe and mayntene and deffenden hire underlynges or hire subjetz in resoun, as ferforth as it lith in hire power, and nat to destroyen hem ne confounde.

(X, 771; X, 773-74)

Through the Parson, Chaucer explains that even though there

is a feudal system, and even though God may have ordained such, it is important to remember that men should treat their workers humanely and with reason, for "they shul receyven, by the same mesure that they han mesured" (X, 776). Chaucer uses the word sovereignty as he uses the word mastery--sparingly but effectively. In four of the five uses of the word sovereignty Chaucer discusses the relationship between men and women. In the fifth usage Chaucer works with the ideas of the relationship of a lord and his vassals in the feudal system of the Middle Ages.

Chaucer uses the word authority similarly to the manner that he uses mastery and sovereignty. The author uses the word beginning with "The Knight's Tale" and closing with "The Parson's Tale." He spaces the word rather evenly throughout The Canterbury Tales and increases his usage in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" and again in "The Wife of Bath's Tale," in "The Merchant's Tale," in "The Tale of Melibee," and in "The Parson's Tale." Chaucer's ability to place his words accurately and effectively becomes apparent through that placement.

The word authority has a variety of meanings, and Chaucer uses the word in various ways. One meaning of the word is "the right to rule or command, legal power; position of authority, official position." The word is

also used in association with "an authoritative passage or statement, a passage quoted to prove or support a proposition, a text of Scripture." The word is used also to indicate "an authoritative book or writing; authoritative doctrine (as opposed to reason or experience)." Finally, the word authority is applied to "an author whose opinions or statements are regarded as correct."<sup>12</sup>

Some thirteen times Chaucer uses the word authority; often he uses it in the same passage concerning some recognized authority of the Middle Ages. I shall consider first the passages in which Chaucer uses the word in connection with another meaningful term which I emphasize in this paper.

Twice Chaucer reflects a former passage. In doing so, he creates a textual, spatial reference, one of several techniques which he uses to create the illusion of movement of the pilgrimage. Theseus, the Duke of Athens, is sharing his wisdom about the creation with Palamon and Emily in "The Knight's Tale" (*italics are mine*):

<sup>12</sup> "Authority," Middle English Dictionary, 1956 edition.

"The Firste Moevere of the cause above,  
 Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,  
 Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his  
 entente.

Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente;  
 For with that faire cheyne of love he bond  
 The Fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond  
 In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee.  
 That same Prince and that Moevere," quod he,  
 "Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun  
 Certeyene dayes and duracioun  
 To al that is engendred in this place,  
 Over the whiche day they may nat pace,  
 Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge.  
 Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t'allegge,  
 For it is preeved by experience,  
 But that me list declaren my sentence.  
 Thanne may men by this ordre wel discerne  
 That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne,  
 Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,  
 That every part dirryveth from his hool;  
 For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng  
 Of no partie or cantel or a thyng,  
 But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,  
 Descendynge so til it be corrupable.  
 And therfore, of his wise purveiaunce,  
 He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,  
 That spes of thynges and progressiouns  
 Shullen enduren by successiouns,  
 And nat eterne, withouten any lye.  
 This maystow understonde and seen at ye."  
 (I, 2987-3017)

The Knight ends his story with the elaborate commentary about life including his statement that "ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t'allegge, / For it is preved by experience, / But that me list declaren my sentence" (I, 2999-3001). Chaucer allows the Wife of Bath to begin her prologue with the same thought; however, the poet interestingly interchanges the words: "Experience, though

noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynogh for me  
 / To speke of wo that is in marriage" (III, 1-3). With  
 similar statements about authority and experience, Chaucer  
 unites effectively the Wife of Bath, the Knight, and  
 Theseus, the Duke of Athens in "The Knight's Tale." In  
 "The Squire's Tale" Chaucer uses the word authority in a  
 similar expression. After the falcon swoons and regains  
 consciousness through the gentle care of Canace, Chaucer  
 associates the word authority with work (italics are mine):

"That pitee renneth soone in gentil herte,  
 Feelynge his similitude in peynes smerte,  
 Is preved alday, as men may it see,  
 As wel by werk as by auctoritee;  
 For gentil herte kitheth gentillesse.  
 I se wel that ye han of my distresse  
 Compassion, my faire Canacee,  
 Of verray wommanly benignytee  
 That Nature in youre principles hath set."  
 (V, 480-487)

In "The Nun's Priest's Tale" Chaucer compounds topics  
 of concern in this paper. In a short passage the author  
 makes reference to authority, to Cato (an authoritative  
 voice), to the word sentence (a term introduced into The  
Canterbury Tales by Herry Bailly, the Host), and to  
experience (the word that Chaucer uses in the three  
 quotations cited above). Chauntecleer and Pertelote are in  
 a rather heated argument about dreams and dreaming (italics



are mine):

"Madam," quod he, "graunt mercy of youre  
 But nathelees, as touchyng daun Catoun,  
 That hath of wysdom swich a greet renoun,  
 Though that he bad no dreames for to drede,  
 By God, men may in olde bookes rede  
 Of many a man moore of auctorite  
 Than evere Caton was, so moot I thee,  
 That al the revers seyn of this sentence,  
 And han wel founden by experience  
 That dremes been significaciouns  
 As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns  
 That folk enduren in this life present.  
 Ther nedeth make of this noon argument."  
 (VII, 2970-82) loore

Hence meaning and experience lend authority to the words of a great thinker.

In "The Tale of Melibee" Chaucer uses the word authority in connection with another philosopher, Roman statesman, and rhetorician, Marcus Tullius Cicero. The Pilgrim Chaucer is talking about the importance of one's counsel (italics are mine):

"For the book seith that 'in olde men is the sapience, and in longe tyme the prudence.' / And Tullius seith that 'grete thynges ne been nat ay accompliced by strengthe, ne by deliverence of body, but by good conseil, by auctoritee of persones, and by science; whiche thre thynges ne been nat fieble by age, but certes they enforcen and encreenscen day by day.'"

(VII, 1164-65)

The Pilgrim Chaucer elaborates extensively on the topic of counsel and counseling. After quoting several qualified sources, he allows Prudence to allude again to Cicero: "For sikerly, as for to speke proprely, we may do no thyng, but oonly swich thyng as we may doon rightfully. / And certes rightfully ne mowe ye take no vengeance, as of youre propre auctoritee" (VII, 1383-84). Thus authority is related to the righteous.

Chaucer uses the word authority in "The Parson's Tale" in a discussion of marriage, and he uses Saint Peter for his source (*italics are mine*):

Now how that a womman sholde be subget to  
 hire housbonde, that telleth Seint Peter.  
 First, in obedience. / And eek, as seith the  
 decree, a womman that is wyf, as longe as she  
 is wyf, she hath noon auctoritee to swere ne  
 to bere witnesse without leve of hir  
 housbonde, that is hire lord; algate, he  
 sholde be so by resoun.

(X, 929-30)

In several passages in The Canterbury Tales Chaucer allows his pilgrims to use the word authority and to allude to various authoritative sources. In "The Pardoner's Prologue" the Pardoner speaks of a supreme position granted him by a superior when he extends his invitation to the sinful members of a group who wish to be pardoned (*italics*

are mine):

"Goode men and wommen, o thyng warne I yow:  
 If any wight be in this chirche now  
 That hath doon synne horrible, that he  
 Dar nat, for shame, of it yshryven be,  
 Or any womman, be she yong or old,  
 That hath ymaad hir housbonde cokewold,  
 Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace  
 To offren to my relikes to this place.  
 And whoso fyndeth hym out of swich blame,  
 He wol come up and offre in Goddes name,  
 And I assoille him by the auctoritee  
 Which that by bulle ygraunted was to me."  
 (VI, 377-88)

In "The Second Nun's Tale" the judge Almachius questions the faith of Cecelia. When she does not cower before him, he angrily reminds her, ". . . Ne woostow nat how fer my myght may strecche? / "Han noght oure myghty princes to me yiven, / Ye, bothe power and auctoritee / To maken folk to dyen or to lyven?" (VIII, 469-72). The judge reminds Cecelia with threats of life or death--threats of power that he has through the graces of the country's mighty princes.

Chaucer uses the word authority in several passages of The Canterbury Tales and so allows the pilgrim the right to be his own authority or to state that no authority exists on a particular subject. First in "The Wife of Bath's Tale" the old hag is pleading her case with the young

knight (*italics are mine*):

"Now, sire, of elde ye repreve me;  
 And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee  
 Were in no book, ye gentils of honour  
 Seyn that men sholde an oold wight doon  
 And clepe hym fader, for youre gentillesse;  
 And auctours shal I fynden, as I gesse."  
 (III, 1207-1212)

In "The Merchant's Tale," following quotations from several authorities, Chaucer places the authority with January, a sixty-year-old knight from Lombardy, to choose his own wife (*italics are mine*):

. . . bitwixe ernest and game,  
 He atte laste apoynted hym on oon,  
 And leet alle othere from his herte goon,  
 And chees hire of his owene auctoritee;  
 For love is blynd alday, and may nat see.  
 (IV, 1594-98)

Later in "The Merchant's Tale" Chaucer uses the word authority in describing the feelings of Justinus, the friend of the knight, January, who is choosing his own wife rather than having someone do it for him. Justinus sees the entire planning as a foolish waste of time (*italics are mine*):

Justinus, which that hated his folye,  
 Answerde anon right in his japerye;  
 And for he wolde his longe tale abregge,  
 He wolde noon auctoritee allegge,  
 But seyde, "Sire, so ther be noon obstacle  
 Oother than this, God of his hygh myracle  
 And of his mercy may so for yow wirche  
 That, er ye have youre right of hooly chirche,  
 Ye may repente of wedded mannes lyf,  
 In which ye seyn ther is no wo ne stryf.  
 (IV, 1655-64)

Finally, in "The Parson's Tale," which concludes the text of The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer weaves the three words or their variations into a short passage (italics are mine with the exception of Contumax):

Elacioun is whan he ne may neither suffre to have  
maister ne felawe. / Inpacient is he that wol nat  
 been ytaught ne undernome of his vice, and by  
 strif werreieth trouthe wityngly, and deffendeth  
 his folye. / Contumax is he that thurgh his  
 indignacioun is agayns everich auctoritee or  
 power of hem that been his sovereyns.  
 (X, 400-02)

Chaucer, in his sense of balance and rhetorical endings, employs the three words mastery, sovereigns, (of which sovereignty is a derivative), and authority. At times the author introduces one word at a time; in some passages he links a combination of two of them; however, only near the end of The Canterbury Tales does he draw all three

words together to weave his commentary to a masterful conclusion. Upon his completion of the tapestry, as we know it, Chaucer pulls the three threads together and ties the knot, an art that is foreshadowed for us in "The General Prologue" at the conclusion of the naming of a final group of pilgrims: ". . . a Reve. and a Miller, / A Somnour, and a Pardoner also, / A Maunciple and myself, ther were namo" (I, 542-44).

Chaucer makes only three references to the word authorities in The Canterbury Tales. All three references are in situations in which one of the persons involved in the dialogue is denying the authorities quoted by the other person in the dialogue. The first such situation is in "The Friar's Prologue." The Friar addresses the Wife of Bath when she finishes her story (*italics are mine*):

"Dame," quod he, "God yeve yow right good  
lyf!  
Ye han heer touched, also moot I thee,  
In scole-matere greet difficultee.  
Ye han seyð muche thyng right wel, I seye;  
But, dame heere as we ryde by the weye,  
Us nedeth nat to speken but of game,  
And lete auctoritees on Goddes name,  
To prechyng and to scole eek of clergie."  
(III, 1270-78)

The Friar, believing that the topic of marriage should be dealt with in the church, denounces the authorities

referred to by the Wife of Bath.

The second instance of the use of the word authority is in "The Merchant's Tale." Disregarding good advice, January takes the young May to be his wife. As one might expect of a marriage of two people with such differing ages, problems arise--January is now blind, and May is attracted to young Damian as he is attracted to her. Through trickery the young couple plan to be together. In one passage the Franklin tells about the King of Fairyland, Pluto, and his wife, Queen Proserpina, both of whom seek authority. As they witness the activities of January, May, and Damian, Pluto and Proserpina take sides. Pluto plans to help January, and Proserpina vows to assist May. In the ensuing discussion Proserpina is speaking about Pluto's references to authorities (*italics are mine*):

"What rekketh me of youre auctoritees?  
 I woot wel that the Jew, this Salomon,  
 Foond of us wommen fooles many oon.  
 But though that he ne foond no good womman,  
 Yet hath ther founde many another man  
 Wommen ful trewe, ful goode, and vertuous.  
 Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous;  
 With martirdom they preved hire constance."  
(IV, 2276-83)

In the form of a rhetorical debate Proserpina denounces Pluto's references to Solomon's comments about women and

suggests that although he never found a good woman, other men have found good women. Prosperina suggests further to Pluto that he look at the women of Christ's house--women that have proved their constancy in martyrdom.

The third and last instance of debate on authority is united with the subject of survival. The Pilgrim Chaucer relates the concern of vengeance in "The Tale of Melibee." Melibee is the first to speak (*italics are mine*):

" . . . if I ne venge me nat of the vileyne  
that men han doon to me, / I sompne or warne  
hem that han doon to me that vileynye, and  
alle othere, to do me another vileyne. / For  
it is writen, 'If thou take no vengeance of  
an oold vileyne, thou sompnest thyne  
adversaries to do thee a newe vileyne,' / And  
also for my suffrance men wolden do me so  
muchel vileynye that I myghte neither bere it  
ne susteene, / and so sholde I been put and  
holden overlowe. / For men seyn, 'In muchel  
suffrynge shul many thynges falle unto thee  
which thou shalt nat mowe suffre.'"

"Certes," quod Prudence, "I graunte yow  
that over-muchel suffraunce is nat good. /  
But yet ne folweth it nat therof that every  
persone to whom men doon vileynye take of it  
vengeance; / for that aperteneth and longeth  
al oonly to the juges, for they shul venge  
the vileynyes and injuries. / And therefore  
tho two auctoritees that ye han seyde above  
been oonly understonden in the juges."

(VII, 1461-69)

The two authorities to whom Melibee is referring and whom Prudence is discounting are Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus and



Seneca. Prudence suggests that these two authorities "been  
oonly understonden in the juges" (VII, 1469).

Chaucer limits his use of the words rhetor and rhetoric; however, he applies the word to highly significant pilgrims: the Nun's Priest, the Squire, the Clerk, and the Franklin. In the first instance in a digression the Nun's Priest reflects upon a fact of life as he perceives it (*italics are mine*):

But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas,  
For evere the latter ende of joye is wo.  
God woot that worldly joye is soone ago;  
And if a rethor koude faire endite,  
He in a cronycle sauflly myghte it write  
As for a sovereyn notabilitee.  
Now every wys man, lat him herkne me;  
This storie is also trewe, I undertake,  
As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,  
That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.  
Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence.  
(VII, 3204-14)

In this one passage Chaucer compounds references which are meaningful to this paper: the word rhetor, the word sovereyn, an authoritative reference to Launcelot de Lake, and, finally, the word sentence.

Chaucer uses the word rhetor a second time in "The Squire's Tale." The young Squire admits that he is unable to do justice to the beauty of Canace, the heroine in the Squire's fragmentary tale (*italics are mine*):

But for to telle yow al hir beautee,  
 It lyth nat in my tonge, n'yn my konnyng;  
 I dar nat undertake so heigh a thyng.  
 Myn Englissh eek is insufficient.  
 It moste been a rethor excellent,  
 That koude his colours longynge for that art,  
 If he sholde hire discryven every part.  
 I am noon swich, I moot speke as I kan.  
 (V, 34-41)

Chaucer states through the Squire several rhetorical concerns. First the Squire admits that his English is not adequate to describe the beauty of Canace; in fact, he states that we would not even undertake such a task as this. Indeed, only a rhetorician with his rhetorical colors can do justice to the beauty of Canace. The Squire completes the passage with a rhetorical apologia because he feels his inadequacy of expression.

In "The Clerk's Prologue" the Clerk of Oxford complies with the Host's request to tell a tale. The Clerk also replies, "I wol telle a tale which that I / Lerne at Padowe of a worthy clerk, / As preved by his wordes and his werk" (IV, 26-8). The Clerk's mentor is Francis Petrarch, the Italian poet "whos rethorike sweete / Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie, / As Synyan dide of philosophie, / Or lawe, or oother art particuler" (IV, 32-5).

Chaucer implies authority as a subject as he discusses the activities of the Franklin. In "The Franklin's

Prologue" the Franklin requests that his audience "have me excused of my rude speche. / I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn" (V, 718-19). As we find in "The Franklin's Tale," the Franklin is speaking modestly of his knowledge of rhetoric. Chaucer appears to be using the Franklin as a mirror image of Socrates as he walked into court for the first time in his seventy years in "The Apology of Socrates."<sup>13</sup> Socrates and the Franklin make similar statements of apologia and then reveal their brilliant knowledge of the rhetorical method of persuasion and various other rhetorical devices, Socrates through his Socratic method of questioning in his defense and the Franklin through his rhetorical methodology in "The Franklin's Tale." The Franklin continues with his rhetorical apologia:

Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and  
pleyn.  
I sleep nevere on the Mount of Pernaso,  
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Scithero.  
Colours ne knowe I none, withouten drede,  
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,  
Or elles swiche as men dye or peynte.  
Colours of rethoryk been to me queynte;

<sup>13</sup> Plato, "Apology," in Great Dialogues of Plato, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, ed. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse (New York: The New American Library, 1956), pp. 423-46.

My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere.  
 But if yow list, my tale shul ye heere.  
 (V, 720-28)

In summary, then, the Nun's Priest and the Squire suggest that only rhetoricians can describe or express adequately their feelings about their subjects. The Nun's Priest's subject is a response to Chantecleer's joy of the spring when he states to Madam Pertelote that "Ful is my herte of revel and solas!" (VII, 3203). The Nun's Priest observes that "sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas, / For evere the latter ende of joye is wo" (VII, 3204-05). The Nun's Priest wishes for a talented rhetor to elaborate upon the subject. The young Squire feels inadequate to describe the beauty of the lady Canace. The Squire defers to Petrarch, "whos rhetorike sweete / Enlymyned al Ytaille of poetrie" (IV, 32). With Chaucerian expertise, the Franklin explains that the "thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn" (V, 720). The Franklin explains further that the reason for this plainness is that he never learned the rhetorical colors, which are as quaint to him as the teachings of Cicero.

Chaucer mentions rhetoricians generally in a complimentary manner. He speaks specifically of and recalls with favor the Greek rhetoricians Aristotle and

Plato. He pays respect to the Roman rhetorician Cicero. And finally, he mentions and uses some methods of the French rhetorician Geoffrey of Vinsauf.

In addition, Chaucer was aware of the Venerable Bede, historian and theologian of the eighth century. Chaucer knew the works of the rhetoricians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Besides Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Chaucer was aware of Matthew of Vendome, John of Garland, and John of Salisbury. "Manuals of these writers have come down to us. They harked back to Cicero; they harked back to Aristotle."<sup>14</sup>

There are several examples of Chaucer's rhetorical emphasis. In the "Introduction to the Squire's Tale," the young Squire adheres to Herry Bailly's request to tell the next tale. Bailly's request is "Squier, com neer, / if it youre will be, / And sey somewhat of love; for certes ye / Konnen theron as muche as any man." The modest young Squire replies that although he is not knowledgeable of love,

" . . . I wol seye as I kan  
With hertly wyl; for I wol nat rebelle  
Agayn youre lust; a tale wol I telle.

<sup>14</sup> Lavon B. Fulwiler, lecture on "The Milieu of Geoffrey Chaucer," Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, Summer I, 1979.

Have me excused if I speke amys;  
 My wyl is good, and lo, my tale is this."  
 (V, 4-8)

The Squire's request to "have me excused if I speke amys" is reflective of Socrates' apology in court when he explains that "this is the first time I ever came up before a court, although I am seventy years old; so I am simply quite strange to the style of this place."<sup>15</sup>

Subsequently in Socratean fashion the Squire begins to tell a tale in the genre of a medieval romance that reflects the beginning of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The Squire uses the rhetorical occupatio when he begins to set the scene with the king who "in roial vestiment sit on his deys" (V, 59). The Squire does not detail the scene because

" . . . if I shal tellen al th'array,  
 Thanne wolde it occupie a someres day;  
 And eek it nedeth nat for to devyse  
 At every cours the ordre of hire servyse.  
 I wol nat tellen of hir strange sewes,  
 Ne of hir swannes, ne of hire heronsewes."  
 (V, 63-68)

Although the Squire does not detail the setting, he is

<sup>15</sup> Plato, p. 424.

very explicit in his description of the following event:

In at the halle dore al sodeynly  
 Ther cam a knyght upon a steede of bras,  
 And in his hand a brood mirour of glas.  
 Upon his thombe he hadde of gold a ryng,  
 And by his syde a naked swerd hangyng;  
 And up he rideth to the heighe bord.  
 In al the halle ne was ther spoken a word  
 For merveille of this knyght; hym to biholde  
 Ful busily they wayten, yonge and olde.  
 (V, 80-8)

Unfortunately, the tale is not finished. However, the extant portion is a beautifully related romance told by the modest Squire with accuracy and humility.

Following "The Squire's Tale" are "The Franklin's Prologue" and "The Franklin's Tale." Critics have shown varied interests in the Franklin.<sup>16</sup> As I have stated above, the interest in the Franklin to this paper is that "The Franklin's Prologue" and "The Franklin's Tale" contain the most rhetorical concerns of the entire text of The Canterbury Tales.

The Franklin's comment in "The Franklin's Prologue" reflects Plato's record of the literary apology of Socrates in "The Apology of Socrates." The Franklin accepts the

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin S. Harrison, "The Rhetorical Inconsistency of Chaucer's Franklin," Studies in Philology, 32 (1935), 55-61.

Host's request to tell the next tale. The Franklin qualifies his ability to do so by warning the pilgrims that he is "a burel man." (V, 716). He continues,

At my bigynnyng first I yow beseche,  
Have me excused of my rude speche.  
I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn;  
Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and  
pleyn.  
(V, 716-20)

Plato records that Socrates defends his appearance in court by stating,

" . . . you shall hear from me the whole truth; not eloquence, gentlemen, like their [Socrates' accusers] own, decked out in fine words and phrases, not covered with ornaments; not at all--you shall hear things spoken anyhow in the words that first come. For I believe justice is in what I say, and let none of you expect anything else; indeed it would not be proper, gentlemen, for an old man like me to come before you like a boy moulding his words in pretty patterns.<sup>17</sup>

A rhetorical parallel, then, appears to exist between Chaucer's Franklin and Plato's Socrates.

An examination of "The Franklin's Prologue" and "The Franklin's Tale" will support the theory that in this

<sup>17</sup> Plato, pp. 423-24.



section of The Canterbury Tales Chaucer concentrates his knowledge and application of rhetorical concerns. In "The Franklin's Prologue" the Franklin has stated that he is "a burel man," a coarse or unlearned person.<sup>18</sup> Within the twenty lines of the prologue in which the Franklin makes this statement, he touches on the literary genre of the Breton lay and offers a literary apology stating that "I shal seyn with good wyl as I kan" (V, 715). The Franklin explains that he never learned rhetoric or Cicero and that he does not know about rhetorical colors. He states that he is aware only of the colors of the meadow and the colors men use to dye or paint. Regardless of the Franklin's denial of knowledge of the proper way to tell a story, he agrees humbly, "but if yow list, my tale shul ye heere" (V, 725). This denial of knowledge takes on a new dimension in the light of the Pilgrim Chaucer's description of the Franklin in "The General Prologue." The Pilgrim Chaucer records that the Franklin and the Sergeant of the Law are riding together on the pilgrimage. The Pilgrim Chaucer describes the Franklin as an epicurean who enjoys his wine, for "to lyven in delit was evere his wone" (I, 335). The narrator then sums up the Franklin's love for living and

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, p. 936.

good food with the words that "his table dormant in his halle alway / Stood redy covered al the longe day" (I, 333-34). In addition, the Franklin has lived an active life; he has served as a sheriff and a member of Parliament, has been an auditor, and is a substantial landholder. The Pilgrim Chaucer tells us metaphorically that the Franklin is known as St. Julian in his country.<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to believe that the Franklin is ignorant of all that he claims not to know after one considers the picture of the experienced man-of-the-world pilgrim described in "The General Prologue."

At the conclusion of the Squire's performance the Franklin commends the young man for his wit and eloquence. Chaucer allows his audience an insight to the Franklin's personal desire that his own son might emulate the Squire. The Franklin's desire is so intent that he "hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond, / Though it right now were fallen in myn hond, / He were a man of swich discrecioun / As that ye been!" (V, 683-86). The Host jogs the Franklin from his reverie by calling upon him for the next tale. To the Host's request that the Franklin tell a tale, the Franklin replies,

<sup>19</sup> Patron saint of hospitality. See Robinson, p. 997.

"Gladly, . . . I wole obeye  
 Unto your wyl; now herkneth what I seye.  
 I wol yow nat contrarien in no wyse  
 As fer as that my wittes wol suffyse.  
 I prey to God that it may plesen yow;  
 Thanne woot I wel that it is good ynow."  
 (V, 703-08)

It is in "The Franklin's Prologue" that the country gentleman delivers his apologia. In the first four lines the Franklin defines a literary genre--Breton lay--and replies that "oon of hem [Breton lays] have I in remembraunce" (V, 714):

Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes  
 Of diverse aventures maden layes,  
 Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge;  
 Which layes with hir instrumentz they songe,  
 Or elles reddeden hem for hir plesaunce.  
 (V, 709-13)

Then, after an ample description of a Breton lay, the Franklin delivers one. "The Franklin's Tale" is unique in that it is the only one of its genre in The Canterbury Tales. Robinson concludes that "it fulfills a dramatic purpose, and considered by itself, it is an example of an interesting literary type, which it at once reproduces and transcends."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, p. 10.

The Franklin amalgamates with the Breton lay--in iambic pentameter verse with rhymed couplets--the subject of courtly love (enhanced with a garden) and numerous maxims. In a concise prologue and a relatively short tale, the Franklin uses the words mastery and sovereignty and alludes to the subject of authority. To note further this "burel" man's competency in rhetorical expression, one critic has recorded approximately thirteen rhetorical colors--the literary devices for which the Franklin has asked the indulgence of his audience because of his lack of knowledge on the subject.<sup>21</sup>

It is evidently necessary to reconsider the summary above in order to place emphasis upon Chaucer's knowledge and mastery. Chaucer was aware of the Breton lay genre, which is a "relatively brief form of the medieval French romances."<sup>22</sup> Marie de France wrote narrative lays "at the court of King Henry II about 1175."<sup>23</sup> The lay includes the subject of courtly love. Chaucer includes in his lay one of his beautiful gardens for the meeting of Dorigen and

<sup>21</sup> Harrison, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> A Handbook to Literature, ed. C. Hugh Holman (Indianapolis: ITT Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing Company, Inc., 1985), p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Holman, p. 243.

Aurelius in the spring of the year when nature in all her beauty provides a setting for the natural blending of hearts in the uncontrollable fervor of love. The Franklin describes the setting:

. . .this was on the sixte morwe of May,  
Which May hadde peynted with his softe  
shoures  
This gardyn ful of leues and of floures;  
And craft of mannes hand so curiously  
Arrayed hadde this gardyn, trewely,  
That nevere was ther gardyn of swich prys,  
But if it were the verray paradys.  
The odour of floures and the fresshe sighte  
Wolde han maked any herte lighte  
That evere was born, but if to greet siknesse,  
Or to greet sorwe, helde it in distresse;  
So ful it was of beautee with plesaunce.  
(V, 906-17)

Chaucer's garden enhances the theme of courtly love in "The Franklin's Tale." Basically, courtly love is defined as "a philosophy of love and a code of lovemaking which flourished in chivalric times."<sup>24</sup> The expected reaction to the code of love includes

great emotional disturbances; the lover is bewildered, helpless, tortured by mental and physical pain, and exhibits certain "symptoms," such a pallor, trembling, loss of

24 Holman, p. 104.

appetite, sleeplessness, sighing, weeping,  
etc.<sup>25</sup>

In "The Franklin's Tale" Aurelius is behaving in a similar fashion to the characteristics that I identify. Arveragus and Dorigen, although husband and wife, perform in the manner of courtly lovers. The lover "agonizes over his condition and indulges in endless self-questioning and reflections on the nature of love and his own wretched state."<sup>26</sup>

Early in "The Franklin's Tale" Chaucer suggests that his story is a story of courtly love including a rash promise. At the beginning of the tale, Arveragus, the knight, fulfills qualities of courtly love:

In Armorik, that called is Britayne,  
Ther was a knyght that loved and dide his  
payne  
To serve a lady in his beste wise;  
And many a labour, many a greet emprise  
He for his lady wroghte, er she were wonne.  
(V, 729-33)

After Arveragus and Dorigen are married, Chaucer develops the role of the distressed lady uniquely when Arveragus

<sup>25</sup> Holman, p. 105.

<sup>26</sup> Holman, p. 104.



"Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveiaunce  
 Ledest the world by certein governaunce,  
 In ydel, as men seyn, ye no thyng make.  
 But, Lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake,  
 That semen rather a foul confusion  
 Of werk than any fair creacion  
 Of swich a parfit wys God and a stable,  
 Why han ye wrought this werk unresonable?  
 For by this werk, south, north, ne west, ne  
eest,  
 Ther nys yfostred man, ne bryd, ne beest;  
 It dooth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.  
 Se ye nat, Lord, how mankynde it destroyeth?"  
(V, 865-76)

Chaucer develops effectively the characteristic of courtly love in the genre of the Breton lay.

Chaucer develops his Breton lay also with the rhetorical figure of exempla and maxims. One critic notes that there is a "certain clean charm and freshness in the depiction of likable agents, in the wedding of philosophical statement with situation and character."<sup>27</sup> Chaucer develops this blending following Dorigen's rash promise to Aurelius that only if the rocks along the shoreline were removed would she be unfaithful to her husband. When Aurelius with the help of a magician accomplishes this feat, Dorigen is overcome with wonder and fear. When Dorigen realizes what is happening, she begins

<sup>27</sup> Paul G. Ruggiers, "The Franklin's Tale," in The Art of the Canterbury Tales (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 229.





With these words Dorigen makes a decision with which she can live.

In "The Franklin's Tale," then, Chaucer develops the theme of authority in marriage. Although the word auctoritee is not used in the entire story, the Franklin begins the tale with the words maistrie and soveraynetee. One of the reasons Dorigen agrees to marry Arveragus is that (*italics are mine*):

Of his free wyl he swoor hire as a knyght  
That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,  
Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie  
Agayn hir wyl, ne kithe hire jalousie,  
But hire obeye, and folwe hir wyl in al,  
As any love to his lady shal,  
Save that the name of soveraynetee,  
That wolde he have for shame of his degree.  
(V, 745-52)

Dorigen consents to the agreement and the proposal to be the knight's wife. The Franklin elaborates upon the subject of love and concludes with a maxim (*italics are mine*):

For o thyng, sires, saufly dar I seye,  
That freendes everych oother moot obeye,  
If they wol longe holden compaignye.  
Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.  
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon  
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!  
(V, 761-66)

Chaucer's maxim is universal. In the passage above, Chaucer concludes that when mastery comes, the God of Love flies away.

Chaucer uses the words maystrye, soverayntee, and auctoritee effectively in "The General Prologue" and throughout the tales. In addition, the poet uses the words in passages related to rhetoric and rhetoricians. Chaucer refers to biblical figures, the Greek rhetoricians Plato and Aristotle, and the Roman rhetorician Cicero. Chaucer includes St. Augustine, who carried the heritage of early rhetoricians to the Middle Ages. He shows knowledge of the rhetorician Geoffrey of Vinsauf of the twelfth century. He also shows awareness of continental figures of his own era, one of whom is Francis Petrarch of Italy.

In addition to his knowledge of preceding and contemporary rhetoricians, Chaucer remained creative in his composition within the restrictions that the Middle Ages imposed upon him. Chaucer caused Herry Bailly, the Host, to call for tales of solaas and sentence. Evidently, then, Chaucer studied rhetoric; and he applied his knowledge in The Canterbury Tales.

## Chapter V

### Authority As Unifying Theme in The Tales

Commentary on the topics of authority and control appears in various passages throughout The Tales as well as in passages concerning Herry Bailly, the pilgrimage host. For continuity Chaucer intersperses individual romances throughout the pilgrimage and highlights them with specific rhetorical elements. Chaucer interlaces his masterpiece with specific pilgrims who tell tales in the genre of romance and employs compactly the most significant rhetorical devices of the entire work.

Chaucer employs the word authority throughout The Canterbury Tales. Spatially throughout the text, the word appears in the first line of "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" and two times in "The Wife of Bath's Tale." Immediately following in "The Friar's Prologue," the Friar uses the word authority in a remark that he makes directly to the Wife of Bath. The Merchant uses the word authority several times in his tale. And the Pilgrim Chaucer uses it several times in "The Tale of Melibee." Chaucer continues to use the word authority in "The Nun's Priest's Tale," "The

Second Nun's Tale," and "The Parson's Tale." Thus, Chaucer specifically unifies his masterpiece with the word authority. In fact, he uses the word or implies the idea in at least eleven headlinks, endlinks, pilgrims' prologues, or pilgrims' tales.

Chaucer uses the word auctoritee with several different subjects. He divides his use of authority into authority assumed, taken by, or given to one of the pilgrims; authority associated with another quality; and authority concerning the position of women in marriage.

Regarding the first category, authority assumed, taken by, or given to one of the pilgrims, the Friar in "The Friar's Prologue" suggests to the Wife of Bath that she "lete auctoritees on Goddes name, / To prechyng and to schole eek of clergye" (III, 1276-77). The Friar believes, then, that auctoritee should be left to the schools and to those who preach. In "The Pardoner's Prologue" the Pardoner speaks to the pilgrims (*italics are mine*):

"Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace  
To offren to my relikes in this place.  
And who so fyndeth hym out of swich blame,  
He wol come up and offre in Goddes name,

And I assoille him by the auctoritee  
 Which that by bulle ygraunted was to me."<sup>1</sup>  
 (VI, 383-88)

The Pardoner is ready to act in accordance with his own ethics as he justifies his actions by alluding to the authority of the papal bull which he has been granted. In "The Second Nun's Tale" Almachius, sparring orally, reminds Cecelia, "Han noght oure myghty princes to me yiven, / Ye, bothe power and auctoritee / To maken folk to dyen or to lyven?" (VIII, 470-72). Of course, Cecelia is aware that Almachius possesses this authority, through his princes, to decide one's life or death. In "The Parson's Tale" in a discussion of the seven deadly sins, the reader is reminded that "Contumax is that thurgh he indignacioun is agayns everich auctoritee or power of hem that been his soverayns" (X, 402). Thus we are warned against an air of haughtiness or arrogance against the authority or power of those who hold authority over us.

Concerning the second category in the division of Chaucer's discussion of authority, the poet unites the word auctoritee with one other quality. In "The Tale of

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. xx. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

Melibee" the Pilgrim Chaucer associates authority with vengeance when Dame Prudence is talking to Melibeus about his actions against his enemies. Prudence recalls that Cicero says (*italics are mine*):

"'grete thynges ne been nat ay accompliced by delivernesse of body, but by good conseil, by auctoritee of persones, and by science; the whiche thre thynges ne been nat fieble by age, but certes they enforcen and encreescen day by day.'"

(VII, 1164)

Thus Chaucer says that vengeance is accomplished not by strength but by good counsel or authority and by science. In "The Squire's Tale" the falcon expresses her feelings to Canace as she (the fainting falcon) realizes that the two are experiencing a universal truth (*italics are mine*):

". . . pitee renneth soone in gentil herte,  
Feelynge his similitude in peynes smerte,  
Is preved alday, as men may see,  
As wel by werk as by auctoritee;  
For gentil herte kitheth gentillesse.  
I se wel that ye han of my distresse  
Compassion, my faire Canacee,  
Of verray wommanly benignytee  
That Nature in youre principles hath set."

(V, 479-87)

Thus Chaucer unites the concept of authority with the action of work. In a similar concept, the Pilgrim Chaucer

in "The Tale of Melibee" relates through Dame Prudence  
(italics are mine):

For sikerly, as for to speke proprely, we may  
do no thyng, but oonly swich thyng as we may  
doon rightfully. And certes rightfully ne  
mowe ye take no vengeance, as of youre  
propre auctoritee.

(VII, 1384-85)

Therefore, Chaucer advises that one does not have authority  
to use vengeance against one's enemies.

In the third category, Chaucer uses the word  
auctoritee concerning marriage. In several of the  
passages, he negates authority and names an alternative to  
answer a particular concern. In the first line of "The  
Wife of Bath's Tale," the Wife clearly states that she  
speaks through experience not by authority: "Experience,  
though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynogh  
for me / To speke of wo that is in mariage" (III, 1-3).  
Justinus makes a similar statement in "The Merchant's  
Tale." To shorten his story about the problems in the  
marriage of January and May, Justinus (italics are mine)

. . . wolde noon auctoritee allege,  
But seyde, "Sire, so ther be noon obstacle  
Oother than this, God of his hygh myracle



And of his mercy may so for you wirche  
 That, er ye have youre right of hooly chirche,  
 Ye may repente of wedded mannes lyf,  
 In which ye seyn ther is no wo ne stryf."  
 (IV, 1658-64)

Justinus chooses not to quote an authority, for, at this point, he does not want to lengthen the discussion. Finally, after meditation and consideration, January decides to take upon himself the choice of a wife; we are told that half jokingly and half earnestly (*italics are mine*):

He atte laste apoynted hym on oon,  
 And leet alle othere from his herte goon,  
 And chees hire of his owene auctoritee;  
 For love is blynd alday, and may nat see.  
 And whan that he was in his bed ybrought,  
 He purtreied in his herte and in his thoght  
 Hir fresshe beautee and hir age tendre,  
 Hir myddel smal, hire armes longe and  
 sklendre,  
 Hir wise governaunce, hir gentellesse,  
 Hir wommanly berynge, and hire sadnesse.  
 (IV, 1594-1604)

January chooses a young beauty who, he thinks, is courteous and steady and carries herself like a woman. Later in the story, January's wife May meets young Damian, a long-standing carver at the table of January. Damian and May plan to meet in January's special garden, where Pluto and Proserpina, the King and Queen of Fairyland, also reside.

In a conversation between the two, Pluto discusses the many men who have spoken of unfaithful women. Proserpina replies (*italics are mine*):

"What rekketh me of youre auctoritees?  
 I woot wel that this Jew, this Salomon,  
 Foond of us wommen fooles many oon.  
 But though that he ne foond no good womman,  
 Yet hath ther founde many another man  
 Wommen ful trewe, ful goode, and vertuous.  
 Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous;  
 With martirdom they preved hire constance."  
 (IV, 2276-84)

Standing by womanhood, Proserpina argues that she knows many true and virtuous women. In "The Nun's Priest's Tale," Chaucer's beast fable Chauntecleer and Pertelote, in the roles of husband and wife, discuss Chauntecleer's concern about the dreams he has been experiencing. The authority to whom Pertelote refers is Cato. In the debate between the two personalities, Chauntecleer replies (*italics are mine*):

"Madame," quod he, "graunt mercy of youre  
 loore.  
 But nathelees, as touchyng daun Catoun,  
 That hath of wysdom swich a greet renoun,  
 Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,  
 By God, men may in olde bookes rede  
 Of many a man moore of auctorite  
 Than evere Caton was, so moot I thee,  
 That al the revers seyn of this sentence,  
 And han wel founden by experience

That dremes been significaciouns  
 As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns  
 That folk enduren in this life present.  
 (VII, 2970-81)

Although Chauntecleer and Pertelote are debating in the framework of a marriage, authority is significant in solving the problem. Chanteceer concludes the immediate debate with the statement that "Ther nedeth make of this noon argument; / The verray preeve sheweth it in dede" (VII, 2982-83). Therefore, Chanteceer is ready to conclude the discussion, because, according to him, there is no point in quoting authorities since the proof shows itself in the deed.

Although the word authority is traced in the examples above, Chaucer also uses the words mastery, sovereignty, and control to unite a group of pilgrims drawn together by the topic of marriage. In several stories these words are used; however, in other significant stories the concepts are merely implied. In fact, Chaucer suggests authority and control without actually mentioning the word in one of the more significant stories. An example of this suggestion involves the Franklin, "The Franklin's Prologue," and "The Franklin's Tale."

Critics have shown interest in the concept of the

Marriage Group. Various approaches to the discussion are rather easily located. Three opinions which merit consideration are those of Kittredge, Hinckley, and Olson.<sup>2</sup> Kittredge's plan involves a subtle interplay between the pilgrims' stories and links. Hinckley's article challenges Kittredge's because, according to Hinckley, Chaucer is too excellent an artist to allow the subtle, planned interlinking of tales and links through direct statements, similar phrasing, and nuances--a plan which Kittredge works out more meticulously than Chaucer would ever have allowed. Olson's view of the Marriage Group is similar to that of Kittredge with the exception that Olson places emphasis on the interludes which he believes to be more significant than other critics have considered. Hinckley and Olson theorize that "The Knight's Tale" and "Sir Thopas" may be

<sup>2</sup> George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," in Chaucer Criticism, ed. Richard Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), pp. 130-59. This article is considered a definitive one on the topic. Henry Barrett Hinckley, "The Debate on Marriage" in The Canterbury Tales, in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (London, 1959; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 216-25. This article challenges Kittredge's. Clair C. Olson, "The Interludes of the Marriage Group in the Canterbury Tales," in Chaucer and Middle English Studies, in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins, ed. Beryl Rowland (Chatham, England: W & J Mackay Limited, 1974), pp. 164-72. This article stresses the significance of the interludes to the individual members of the Marriage Group.

viewed reasonable as extensions of the Marriage Group. Therefore I include two tales with the other Marriage Group tales: "The Wife of Bath's Tale," "The Clerk's Tale," "The Merchant's Tale," and "The Franklin's Tale."

In varying ways the tales which constitute the Marriage Group belong to a significant genre in literature, the romance. I believe that Chaucer is using certain pilgrims, the narrators of the Marriage Group tales, not only to discuss authority in marriage but also to relate romances, one of the author's favorite literary genres.

In these tales Chaucer discusses various views on marriage in three major areas of his dispositio: the prologue, the body, and the epilogue. The Wife of Bath begins the discussion of theories of marriage in her rather lengthy prologue--the first form of Chaucer's dispositio. Rhetorically "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" is a confession. Unhesitatingly, the Wife begins her prologue by stating that "Experience, though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynogh for me / To speke of wo that is in mariage" (III, 1-3). The Wife explains that she does not need to turn to any authority to make her decision about the subject of marriage because she has had enough experience to qualify her to talk authoritatively on the subject of matrimony. She speaks in detail about each of

her five marriages to support her belief that the woman should rule.

Interestingly, Chaucer creates an interplay between his pilgrims. One method of this interplay is seen in the conclusion of "The Wife of Bath's Prologue." The Wife's fifth husband is a young clerk, a fact that foreshadows the inclusion of the Clerk of Oxford and his story of the patience of Griselda in the Marriage Group. The Wife, however, is not patient with her husband, especially when he reads aloud from a book about the wicked women in the world. Finally, the wife, Alisoun, is so angry that she rips a page from the book from which Jankin is reading. Alisoun and Jankin are names that Chaucer uses elsewhere in The Canterbury Tales, another method to lead the audience into a feeling of interplay and unity among the pilgrims. It is with a feeling of satisfaction that the wife states,

"But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,  
 We fille acorded by us selven two.  
 He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,  
 To han the governance of hous and lond,  
 And of his tonge, and of his hond also;  
 And made hym breene his book anon right tho.  
 And whan that I hadde geten unto me,  
 By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,  
 And that he seyde, 'Myn owene trewe wyf,  
 Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;  
 Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat'--  
 After that day we hadden never debaat."  
 (III, 811-22)

And whan that I hadde gotten unto me,  
 By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,  
 And that he seyde, 'Myn owene trewe wyf,  
 Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;  
 Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat'--  
 After that day we hadden never debaat."  
 (III, 811-22)

The Wife of Bath continues to explain that after this episode she was kind and true to her husband, as he was to her.

Chaucer does not allow the Clerk of Oxford to respond immediately. I agree with Kittredge that a response by the Clerk at this time would be too ordered for Chaucer and his creativity.<sup>3</sup> The poet allows the Friar and the Summoner to tell their fabliaux before the Host calls upon the Clerk to tell his tale:

"Telle us some murie thyng of adventures.  
 Youre termes, youre colours, and youre  
 figures,  
 Keep hem in stoor til so be that ye endite  
 Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges  
 write."  
 (IV, 15-18)

The Clerk's reply to the Host does not indicate that he will reply in any way to the Wife of Bath. The Clerk

<sup>3</sup> Kittredge, p. 135.

agrees that he will tell a tale that he

"Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,  
 As preved by his wordes and his werk.  
 He is now deed and nayled in his cheste,  
 I prey to God so yeve his soule reste!  
 Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete,  
 Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete  
 Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie."  
 (IV, 27-33)

The Clerk continues to discuss the style of Francis Petrarch: "I seye that first with heigh stile he enditeth, / Er he the body of his tale writeth, / A prohemye, / in the which discryveth he . . ." (IV, 40-43). The Clerk is impressed with Petrarch's style of writing because before Petrarch writes the body of his tale in high style, he begins with an appropriate beginning--a proem. The Clerk alters his course abruptly, however, with the comment, "And trewely, as to my juggement, / Me thynketh it a thyng impertinent, / Save that he wole conveyen his mateere" (IV, 53-55).

In the endlink the Clerk turns for the first time to the Wife of Bath. Since the subject of his story is the enduring patience of a woman, it would seem that the Clerk has been waiting patiently, himself, to tell a story that allows the man to rule in a marriage. There can be little doubt that it is Chaucer's intention for the Clerk to



oppose the marital attitude of the Wife of Bath, for the Clerk concludes with a warning:

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:  
 It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes  
 In al a toun Grisildis thre or two;  
 For if that they were put to swiche assayes,  
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes  
 With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at  
 It wolde rather breste a-two than plye. ye,

For which heere, for the Wyves love of  
 Bathes--  
 Whos lyf and al hire secte God mayntene  
 In heigh maistrie, and elles were it scathe--  
 I wol with lusty herte, fressh and grene,  
 Seyn yow a song to glade yow, I wene;  
 And lat us stynte of earnestful matere.  
 Herkneth my song that seith in this manere.  
 (IV, 1163-76)

In the song "Lenvoy de Chaucer" the Clerk sings, ironically, that no man should be as harsh as the Marquis has been to Griselda, for now "Grisilda is deed, and eek hire pacience" (IV, 1177). The Clerk continues to advise the wives to "Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille, / Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence / To write of yow a storie of swich mervaille / As of Griseldis pacient and kynde" (IV, 1184-88). With still further advice to the wives the Clerk continues his song:

/ And lat hym care, and wepe, and wrynge, and waille!" (IV, 1211-12).

In the endlink, the Host, in a merry voice, responds,

"By Goddes bones,  
 Me were levere than a barel ale  
 My wyf at hoom had herd this legende ones!  
 This is a gentil tale for the nones,  
 As to my purpose, wiste ye my wille;  
 But thyng that wol not be, lat it be stille."  
 (IV, 1213<sup>a</sup>-18<sup>a</sup>)

The Host regrets that his wife can not hear this story of Griselda's patience; he dismisses his wish because he realizes that what can not be should be left alone. Thus Chaucer expresses again in a link a view of marriage related to mastery and sovereignty.

The Merchant, bewailing his own brief, unhappy marriage of two months, is not willing just yet to leave the subject of authority in marriage. The Merchant, then, chooses to tell a tale about January and May, a union doomed to failure because of the difference of ages and because May chooses to accept a young lover. Using the Merchant as a vehicle for his message, Chaucer develops an episode to allow the King and Queen of Fairyland to comment between themselves upon the situation of January, May, and Damian. At one point May is allowed to speak out upon the

subject of her own rights within a marriage:

"I have, . . . a soule for to kepe  
 As wel as ye, and also myn honour,  
 And of my wyfhod thilke tendre flour,  
 Which that I have assured in youre hond,  
 Whan that the preest to yow my body bond.  
 . . . . .  
 I am a gentil womman and no wenche."  
 (IV, 2188-92; 2202)

Through the Merchant and his marriage, the marriage of January and May, and the discussion between Pluto and Prosperina, Chaucer is apparently attempting to show that the responsibility of a happy union lies with the parties concerned.<sup>4</sup>

Again, in the "Epilogue to the Merchant's Tale," the Host remarks, "Now swich a wyf I pray God kepe me fro!" (IV, 2420). The Host reveals characteristics of his own wife when he continues to tell that he has a wife,

<sup>4</sup> See Kittredge's article "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage" for a detailed interplay between various allusions in "The Merchant's Tale" to several other pilgrims in the Marriage Group. Kittredge believes that the interaction among "this particular group of pilgrims" is a finished portion by Chaucer. The critic concludes that the interplay within the group "certainly is a solution and does him [Chaucer] infinite credit. A better has never been devised or imagined." Kittredge views Chaucer's ability to involve the pilgrims with each other as an excellent rhetorical move by a meticulous recorder.

"As trewe as any steel . . . though that she  
 But of hir tonge, a labbying shrewe <sup>povre be,</sup> is she,  
 And yet she hath an heep of vices mo;  
 . . . . .

But wyte ye what? In conseil be it seyde,  
 For, and I sholde rekenen every vice  
 Which that she hath, ywis I were to nyce;  
 And cause why, it sholde reported by  
 And toold to hire of somme of this meynee,--  
 Of whom, it nedeth nat for to declare,  
 Syn wommen konnen outen swich chaffare;  
 And eek my wit suffiseth nat therto,  
 To tellen al, wherfore my tale is do."  
 (IV, 2426-28; 2431-40)

Thus Herry Bailly, the Host, tells his own story of marriage and discloses problems that he experiences with his wife. He does not pass up the opportunity to cast a remark toward the Wife of Bath--another interplay between the pilgrims which Chaucer uses to keep them human in their overt commentary and covert gestures and glances among themselves. In an attempt to change the subject, the Host turns to the Squire and asks him "to sey somewhat of love; for certes ye / Konnen theron as much as any man" (V, 2-3). The Squire is included in the Marriage Group, because he adds the element of love, an aspect that has so far been omitted in the discussion of the pilgrims who are linked under the heading of the Marriage Group. Again, Chaucer's order of introducing pilgrims as narrators is highly significant. The Squire, "a lovyere and a lusty bachelor"

(I, 80), is the appropriate pilgrim to introduce the element of love to the on-going debate concerning matrimony.

The Franklin enters the picture naturally when he speaks up to admire the young Squire and to make the comparison between his own son and the Squire. It is a natural transition, then, for the Host to call upon the Franklin to tell the next tale. In the genre of a Breton lay, the Franklin tells of a knight's love for the fairest lady in the land. Following the agonizing of courtly love, the young couple become husband and wife. After a period of separation lasting two years, the husband and wife are together again. Although the temptation to be unfaithful has entered the picture to weaken the young couple's love, the story has a mutually happy conclusion. Apparently, Chaucer intended "The Franklin's Tale" to conclude the debate of the Marriage Group. The Franklin's story is the epitome of love and equality. Both the knight, Arveragus, and the fair young lady, Dorigen, want to do right in the state of matrimony.

Chaucer uses one of his favorite rhetorical devices--the apostrophe--many times in "The Franklin's Tale." The sorrow which accompanies courtly love lends itself to an ample application of the rhetorical apostrophe. In one

particular passage, Chaucer cites several exempla of the faithful wife beginning with a rhetorical question and concluding with an apostrophe. Dorigen is speaking:

"What seith Omer of goode Penelopee?  
 Al Grece knoweth of hire chastitee.  
 Pardee, of Laodomya is writen thus,  
 That whan at Troie was slayn Protheselaus,  
 Ne lenger wolde she lyve after his day.  
 The same of noble Porcia telle I may;  
 Withoute Brutus koude she nat lyve,  
 To whom she hadde al hool hir herte yive.  
 The parfit wyfhod of Arthemesie  
 Honured is thurgh al the Barbarie.  
 O Teuta, queene! thy wyfly chastitee  
 To alle wyves may a mirour bee.  
 The same thyng I seye of Bilyea,  
 Of Rodogone, and eek Valeria."  
 (V, 1443-56)

The first line of the quotation is the rhetorical question. The body of the passage is one example after another of faithful women of the literary world. The last four lines constitute the rhetorical apostrophe.

The Franklin combines several of the many examples of sententia or maxims in one passage:

For o thyng, sires, saufly dar I seye,  
 That freendes everych oother moot obeye,  
 If they wol longe holden compaingye.  
 Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.  
 Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon  
 Beteth his wynges, and farewell, he is gon!  
 Love is a thyng as any spirit free.

Wommen, of kynde, desiren libertee,  
 And nat to been constreyned as a thral;  
 And so doon men, if I sooth seyen shal.  
 Looke who that is moost pacient in love,  
 He is at his advantage al above.  
 Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn,  
 For it venquysseth, as thise clerkes seyn,  
 Thynges that rigour sholde nevere atteyne.  
 For every word men may nat chide or pleyne.  
 Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot I goon,  
 Ye shul it lerne, wher so ye wole or noon;  
 For in this world, certein, ther no wight is  
 That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys.  
 Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,  
 Wyn, wo, or chaungynge of complexioun  
 Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or speken,  
 On every wrong a man may nat be wreken.  
 After the tyme moste be temperaunce  
 To every wight that kan on governaunce.  
 And therefore hath this wise, worthy knyght,  
 To lyve in ese, suffrance hire bihight,  
 And she to to hym ful wisly gan to swere  
 That nevere sholde ther be defaute in here.  
(V, 761-90)

The Franklin has shown conclusively that a happy marriage may be attained if both the husband and wife work equally and diligently to accomplish such a state.

Thus, Chaucer begins the discussion of the Marriage Group in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue"; he continues the subject of the mastery of women in marriage in "The Wife of Bath's Tale"; and he concludes "The Clerk's Tale" with a reversal in the last stanza in "Lenvoy de Chaucer." In this lyric the Clerk warns that "No wedded man so hardy be t'assaille / His wyves pacience in trust to fynde / Grisildis, for in certein he shal faille" (IV, 1180-82).

The Clerk advises women in several ways to be aggressive in their actions and behavior. The Host approves heartily of the Clerk's story and wishes that his wife "at hoom had heard this legende ones!" (IV, 1215<sup>a</sup>). The Merchant believes that the responsibilities of marriage should lie equally with the husband and the wife, and the Squire adds the necessary ingredient of love to the marriage. The Franklin, in his story, indicates clearly that both Arveragus and Dorigen want to do the right thing. The discussion of the Marriage Group, then, has evolved from the Wife's determination to dominate in marriage, through the Clerk's story of patient Griselda and the many trials her husband has pushed upon her, to the Franklin's conclusion of the discussion of marriage with the emphasis on equality for living with the husband and the wife.

Chaucer binds The Canterbury Tales in yet another manner. Although his work is incomplete, the author shows a desire to blend into his art the literary genre of the romance. Chaucer uses various types of the romance. A look at several critics' definitions of the medieval romance is helpful in relating to Chaucer's variety of the genre. Baugh suggests of the medieval romance that the "basic material is knightly activity and adventure." He also suggests that the "adventure" should be considered



"fictitious and frequently marvelous or supernatural--in verse or prose."<sup>5</sup> Severs adds that the background of the Middle Ages "reflects the ideals of chivalry, of knights dedicated to lord, to lady, and to Church--hence the emphasis upon bravery and honor, or themes of love, or religious faith."<sup>6</sup>

Chaucer shows favor for and significance of the romance by beginning the tales with the Knight, who, in turn, relates a chivalric romance. The Wife of Bath and the Squire tell tales of Arthurian romances. The Pilgrim Chaucer begins a tale of knightly life and love. The Franklin delivers a Breton lay with one of its main ingredients, courtly love.

Chaucer places the word authority spatially throughout the text of The Canterbury Tales. Significantly, he uses the word frequently in passages on marriage. He also unites his work by using the word in three main parts of his dispositio: in the prologue, in the body or story, and in an epilogue or endlink. Chaucer introduces the subject through pilgrims whom he seems to favor: the Knight, the

<sup>5</sup> Albert C. Baugh, ed., A Literary History of England (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 173.

<sup>6</sup> J. Burke Severs, "The Tales of Romance" in Companion to Chaucer Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 271.

Wife of Bath, the Squire, the Clerk, the Pilgrim Chaucer, and the Host, Herry Bailly. Chaucer uses the word to allow the pilgrims to banter among themselves. He also uses the idea of the word to unite the pilgrims who play significant roles in a scenario of opinions in the Marriage Group. Chaucer includes the ideas of authority or control in one of his favorite genres of literature--the romance. Reviewing the areas in which the idea of authority or control is used or implied, one may observe that Chaucer is developing a specific theme to run through The Canterbury Tales.

## Chapter VI

### Rhetorical Mastery in The Canterbury Tales

From the beginning of this study I have sensed Chaucer's astute ability to incorporate into his artistic work specific allusions to or methods of using rhetorical and poetical devices. Realistically, through his portrayal of various pilgrims Chaucer has displayed knowledge of classical rhetoric, of sermon composition and delivery, and of effective poetic practices.

As I collected data for the study, I developed the concept that in his mature work The Canterbury Tales Chaucer assumes a rhetorical stance and attains a unity not only through characterizations but also through a patterned use of various rhetorical devices; this unity results from the poet's ability to create freely within a prescribed form. Chaucer recognized the importance of genre; in fact, it is possible that his excellence emerged and remained constant because he exercised freedom within the defined framework of each of various genres.

Chaucer is a master of his material at all times. In "The General Prologue" of The Canterbury Tales he prefigures his intention for the remainder of his

masterpiece. He unifies his work by interweaving the role of Herry Bailly through the tapestry of the pilgrimage. Between "The General Prologue" and "Chaucer's Retraction" the author intersperses individual romances throughout the pilgrimage for continuity and highlights them with specific rhetorical elements. The poet places significant statements on auctoritee, maystrye, and soveraynetee in repeated frame structures, each of which contains a prologue, a body and an epilogue. Such arrangement and organization are indeed indications of Chaucer's mastery of rhetoric.

In a commentary by Robinson concerning the facts, or lack thereof, surrounding Chaucer's life and times, the scholar suggests that one should "let Chaucer's works speak for themselves, rather interpreting him by them than interpreting the writings by the personal experiences of the author."<sup>1</sup> Still one senses that Chaucer not only knew the rhetoricians preceding his time but also was a rhetorician in his writings, especially in The Canterbury Tales. Chaucer, the rhetor, is expressive and persuasive as he delivers his travelogue, which embodies references to

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. xx. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

ancient rhetoricians and uses rhetorical methods, those which are suggested by the author's contemporaries, to weave a tapestry which I believe is fascinating to the modern student of the works of the early English artist. It seems apparent, then, that Chaucer prefigures the entire work in his "General Prologue," a carefully developed and finished piece of art. He omitted nothing; he added nothing that was superfluous. Indeed, the carefully woven "General Prologue" projects Chaucer's intent for the entire masterpiece had he been allowed the time to finish his plan for The Canterbury Tales.

To develop the concept of the finished "General Prologue," one may view Chaucer's presentation of the travelers. The author uses interesting rhetorical devices to link his descriptions of almost all the pilgrims in "The General Prologue." The poet figuratively knits together the traveling pilgrims. To introduce the small groups arriving together, Chaucer uses reflective words and phrases. To introduce the pilgrims arriving individually at the Tabard, he employs the device of rhymed couplets. For the remaining pilgrims Chaucer uses neither of the above methods. These pilgrims stand alone; by presenting them individually the poet emphasizes specific pilgrims who appear to bear special significance for him. The few

isolated instances are not oversights of the author. The choice of literary isolation of a few of the pilgrims becomes an intentional rhetorical act. Indeed, this isolation of particular pilgrims is Chaucer's method of suggesting to his audience that these pilgrims will return with special significance to the audience when these pilgrims appear again to interact with other pilgrims, to relate their tales, or to do both.

One example of Chaucer's prefiguring of the entire masterpiece is developed near the end of "The General Prologue." Chaucer allows the Pilgrim Chaucer to deliver an appropriate epilogue, to elaborate rhetorical knowledge, and to return to narrate the events which bring "The General Prologue" to an appropriate ending. In doing so the poet foreshadows naturally and completely a practice which he evidently had intended to follow throughout the remainder of The Canterbury Tales.

Chaucer unifies his masterpiece in yet another way. He places Herry Bailly, the Host, in charge during the majority of the tales. Chaucer exercises his literary prerogative when he allows another pilgrim to stop a story; he may call for a different performer than the one intended originally. Chaucer appears to relieve Bailly from making a decision when a dispute arises among argumentative

persons on the pilgrimage. But Chaucer returns Bailly to his lead position when the Host calls upon the Parson "to knytte up al this feeste, and make an ende" (X, 47). Herry Bailly is indeed a golden, multi-faceted thread that weaves throughout the entire work to hold The Canterbury Tales together.

Also, Chaucer uses the words maystrye, soverayntee, and auctoritee effectively in "The General Prologue" and in The Canterbury Tales. In addition, he uses the words in passages related to rhetoric, the Greek rhetoricians Plato and Aristotle; and the Roman rhetorician Cicero. He includes St. Augustine, who carried the heritage of early rhetoricians to the Middle Ages. Chaucer shows knowledge of the French rhetorician Geoffrey of Vinsauf of the twelfth century. In his own era, Chaucer shows awareness of continental figures, one of whom is Francis Petrarch of Italy.

Chaucer frequently applied his knowledge of ancient and medieval rhetoric. He remained original and creative in his composition despite the restrictions that rhetoric imposed upon him.

One of the controlling qualities of Chaucer's age was respect for authority. Chaucer is aware of this respect. He effectively uses the word authority and links it with

concepts of mastery and sovereignty throughout The Canterbury Tales. Probably one of the most significant unions is found in commentary and in tales concerned with the subject of matrimony. The question arises among the pilgrims regarding authority in marriage. More specifically, the discussion hinges upon which party of the marriage should retain the authority. In the Marriage Group the argument of control passes from the wife to the husband and, finally, rests with the suggestion that the responsibility in marriage should be balanced between the wife and the husband. Several of the pilgrims, including Herry Bailly, the Host, participate in one of the more lively interchanges of the entire pilgrimage. Reviewing the passages in which the idea of authority or control is used or implied, one may observe that Chaucer is developing a specific theme to unite the individual tales of The Canterbury Tales.

In conclusion, Chaucer unites his masterpiece with various rhetorical devices that are applied intentionally and skillfully by an artist who began in his later years one of the masterpieces of his life. It is regrettable, indeed, that Chaucer did not live to complete The Canterbury Tales, thus laying our questions and suppositions to rest.



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