

A CLERKLY READING OF CHAUCER'S FRANKLIN'S TALE

By Robert P. Miller

## I

Students of Chaucer have become accustomed to certain critical predispositions concerning the Franklin and his tale. The Franklin, an amiable and generous man, tells a tale which optimistically radiates sentiments and ideals of the sort cherished by Chaucer himself--the gentle values of truth and honor, freedom and courtesy. He proposes as well, in the humble wise accord of Arveragus and Dorigen, a genial program for avoiding wo that is in marriage "which we are to accept as a perfect rule of faith and practice."<sup>1</sup> According to its latest editor, the Franklin's Tale can be considered "the most gracious of The Canterbury Tales with its glowing illustration of the virtues of generosity and of fidelity to the plighted word and its complete freedom from any rascality."<sup>2</sup> One critic has recently given the modern reader even a theological depth to this view by relating the mature idealism of Arveragus to medieval Christian ideals which seek to fulfill the Old Law with the New: Arveragus fulfills "the Old Testament contractual law of trouthe (the covenant)" by applying "the Christian virtue of freedom (generosity)."<sup>3</sup> In short, the Franklin's personal good nature has inevitably inspired a good-natured response in his critics. Our natural impulse to share his hospitable board has been justified by the feeling that he "clothed his plea for tolerance and good faith in human relationships in a tale generous and sensible like himself, without a knave or fool, in which men of different ranks, a Knight, a Squire, and a Clerk, vied with each other in magnanimity."<sup>4</sup> Few voices since Kittredge and Root have seriously dissented from this judgment;

none has really questioned the wisdom of the Franklin's "triumphant conclusion" to the debate on marriage and maistrie; almost all implicitly--and some, indeed, explicitly--envision Chaucer as a sympathetic signatory to the articles of faith expressed in the tale.

To perpetuate this pleasant view, however, we have had to ignore, or to rationalize, certain fundamental tenets of medieval thought. In particular, the accepted reading tacitly assumes that in the Franklin's Tale Chaucer inconsistently sanctions principles directly opposed to those affirmed in texts which he elsewhere treats with honor and approval. A serious application of the principles expressed in the Parson's Tale or in Boethius' de consolacione Philosophiae, for example,--to cite two obvious instances--is ruinous to the view that the characters illustrate medieval ideals, at least as they were conceived in the argumentz of clerkes. Yet these texts represent medieval authority of the greatest respectability. The same might be said of other examples of standard auctoritee: the Bible, familiar rituals such as the marriage ceremony or the confessional, medieval encyclopedias, treatises on magic, the ordinary principles governing the fulfillment of rash oaths. It must at once be granted that, taken together, these sources represent the rigorous authority preserved by the clerkly element within medieval society, as it must be granted that this traditional scheme frequently did not coincide with the demands of what the Wife of Bath calls experience. The terms of this scheme can, nevertheless, be seen to operate in detail and with complete consistency in the Franklin's Tale, with the result that the tale takes its place in the Chaucer canon as a

brilliantly comic treatment of its subject, and secondly, that it can be seen to correspond more closely, in both meaning and technique, to its original in Boccaccio's Filocolo.

For the clerkly reader of the Canterbury Tales Chaucer's portrait of the Franklin was designed to suggest the Epicure, an exponent of the "worldly wisdom" which the Bible described as "foolishness with God": a wisdom opposed to the "wisdom of God" or to Truth itself.<sup>5</sup> In the Bible this wisdom is sometimes specifically associated with the "wisdom of the Greeks,"<sup>6</sup> by which the medieval commentator understood a vaguely-defined version of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy; but the Scriptural context more generally envisions this "worldliness" as a broad attitude or disposition of mind opposed to the way of salvation, a reflection of the self-oriented "love" (cupiditas) which St. Augustine contrasted to the love of God (caritas). "Omne quod est in mundo," Bede declared in his explication of 1 John ii, 16, "dicit omnes qui mente inhabitant mundum, qui amore incolunt mundum; sicut coelum inhabitant, qui conversionem habent in coelis."<sup>7</sup> The text of 1 John ii, 15-16 makes it clear that ideally this worldliness is to be rejected absolutely:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.  
If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of this life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world.

John's tripartite definition of "all that is in the world" was the subject of traditional elaboration in the commentaries which accom-

panied the Biblical text. The extended implications of the terms concupiscentia carnis, concupiscentia <sup>oculorum</sup> oculorum, and superbia vitae which appeared therein are especially appropriate to the internal structure of the Franklin's Tale as well as to the version of the story in Boccaccio's Filocolo. The Ordinary Gloss (PL CXIV, 696) cites the exposition of Bede, who summarized the standard exegetical points:

Omne ergo quod in mundo est, id est, omnes mundi dilectores non habent, nisi concupiscentiam carnis, et concupiscentiam oculorum, et superbiam vitae. His quippe vitiorum vocabulis omnia vitiorum genera comprehendit.

Concupiscentia carnis est omne quod ad voluptatem et ~~et~~ delicias corporis pertinet, in quibus maxima sunt, cibus, potus, et concubitus . . . .

Concupiscentia oculorum est omnis curiositas quae fit in discendis artibus nefariis, in contemplandis spectaculis turpibus vel supervacuis, in acquirendis rebus temporalibus, in dignoscendis etiam carpendisque vitiis proximorum.

Superbia vitae est, cum se quisque jactat in honoribus.<sup>8</sup>

Bede's gloss is directly in the powerful tradition affirmed by St Augustine. Augustine introduced his discussion of the passage in John with a clear statement of the "two loves" which he envisioned as the polar possibilities within human nature: "Duo sunt amores, mundi et Dei: si mundi amor habitet, non est qua intret amor Dei: recedat amor

mundi, et habitet Dei; melior accipiat locum."<sup>9</sup> He continued with points very similar to those Bede contributed to the Gloss:

. . . omnes ergo dilectores mundi mundus vocantur. Ipsi non habent nisi ista tria, desiderium carnis, desiderium oculorum, et ambitionem saeculi . . . .

Hoc ergo, ait nobis, desiderium carnis est, id est, desiderium earum rerum quae pertinent ad carnem, sicut cibus et concubitus, et caetera hujusmodi.<sup>10</sup>

Et desiderium oculorum: desiderium oculorum dicit omnem curiositatem. Jam quam late patet curiositas? Ipsa in spectaculis, in theatris, in sacramentis diaboli, in magicis artibus, in maleficiis ipsa est curiositas. Aliquando tentat etiam servos Dei, ut velint quasi miraculum facere, tentare utrum exaudiat illos Deus in miraculis; curiositas est, hoc est desiderium oculorum; non est a Patre . . . .

Ambitio saeculi superbia est. Jactare se vult in honoribus; magnus sibi videtur homo, sive de divitiis, sive de aliqua potentia.<sup>11</sup>

This triple distinction concerning all that is in the world provides the pattern upon which the main characters in the Franklin's Tale are modeled. The Knight, the Squire, and the Clerk of Orliens are deliberately developed as representatives of these three facets of human error. That Boccaccio saw the tale in this way in the

Filocolo appears almost immediately in the discussion which follows Menedon's question. There the argument runs, in effect, that to determine who was the most generous we must determine who gave up the most. The lover gave up sensual pleasure, the magician gave up a fortune, the husband gave up his honor. Boccaccio's analysis will be discussed in detail below. I wish to indicate here only that Boccaccio's method of arriving at a decision in the question of love proposed by Menedon is a means of isolating the dominant motive of each of the characters involved. The lover has devoted himself to the pursuit of sensual gratification; the magician has used his arcane knowledge of nefarious arts to gain a fortune; because the husband has been concerned mainly to preserve his honor, he has lost it. Chaucer's equivalents reflect these patterned motives even more obviously, partially as a result of the fact that, in the absence of an explanatory discussion such as Boccaccio appended to his tale, their characteristics must be even more self-evident. Chaucer is consequently at pains to present in Arveragus a type of the man utterly dominated by superbia vitae, the vainglorious man who jactare se vult in honoribus; in Aurelius a type of the luxurious man motivated by concupiscentia carnis, who posits his very salvation in sensual gratification, the embraces of Dorigen; and in the Clerk of Orliens a type of the "curious" man, an illustration of concupiscentia oculorum, who has devoted himself in descendis artibus nefariis (that is, in magicis artibus), and who puts his clerkly training to use in acquirendis rebus temporalibus. In a sense, then, the Franklin's three contestants, <sup>among</sup> ~~between~~ whom we are to judge whiche was

the moste fre, together form a triumvirate, "men of different ranks," in whom is embodied "all that is in the world." The Franklin's world of gentillesse is compounded of these three actors, as a fitting formal reflection of the values of the "man of the world."

Each of the characters, however, disguises the truth of his nature with a pleasant social illusion: the "humane" <sup>rationalization</sup> reationalization for his particular folly or vice. Arveragus consistently maintains the worldly version of gentillesse--a "good name"--which obscures his real negation of inner honor or honesty. Aurelius makes his adulterous pursuit of Dorigen socially acceptable by means of the rhetoric of "Courtly Love." The clerk who panders to the lover's will for his own gain disguises his deviltry under the color of friendly service. Each thus engages in an activity whose central symbol is the magical praestigium by which the Clerk of Orliens makes it seem that the grisly black rocks of endelong Britayne have disappeared. Each is a magician in his own right, who hides "the rocks of truth."

The rocks in the tale are presented as an aspect of primal creation, a hard and enduring reality built into the very fabric of the world, which become threatening only to those pursuing their individual wills at the expense of truth. Dorigen suggests this in the Boethian plaint which introduces the rocks to the reader:

. . . Lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake,  
That semen rather a foul confusion

870 Of werk than any fair creacion

Of swich a parfit wys God and a stable,  
~~870~~ Why han ye wroght this werk unresonable?<sup>12</sup>

We need not concern ourselves with the confusion of thought and terminology in her argument to see that they are imagined as part of the providential order of God's creation. They have been there all along, and, as a commentary on Dorigen's wifely concern for her husband, semen black and fiendly only now that they threaten her personal comfort and security. Furthermore, they can never be really removed. The Clerk does not actually void the rocks, but only makes it appear that they have disappeared for a time:

1295 . . . thurgh his magik, for a wyke or tweye,

~~1295~~ It semed that alle the rokkes were awaye.

His performance is thus a deception by which a painful reality is temporarily concealed.

In similar fashion each of the characters in the tale, and the narrator himself, produces a pleasant deception which conceals the actual truth of his nature and activities. That they appear to have acted gentilly is a measure of the success with which their magic has deceived us. The illusion performed by the Clerk, by overtly symbolizing these individual deceptions, paradoxically clarifies and reveals the principle by which the simple truth is hidden; by a broad comic stroke he releases us from their spell. As in the case of the disappearing rocks, there is more here than meets the eye. We are therefore justified in taking a new look at each of the characters in turn, to see

what lies beneath their enchanting appearances.

## II

Though it is conventional to admire the Knight Arveragus as a model of knightly gentillesse, "the typical man of action, wise, sane, mature,"<sup>13</sup> Chaucer (as distinct from his teller) carefully presents in him the medieval stereotype of the vainglorious man, concerned with the social appearance of "honor," or reputation, without respect to true worth. Very much a reflection of the Franklin himself, he is consistently motivated by shame of his degree. His respect for Dorigen's heigh kynrede, an early suggestion of this concern, does not prevent him, once he has captured his prize (once she is wonne), from leaving her to seek to add luster to a name which has now become known in knightly circles (That of Kayrrud was cleped Arveragus). Arveragus of Kayrrud goes to England (that cleped was eek Briteyne).

To seke in armes worshipe and honour;

812 For al his lust he sette in swiche labour.

The context <sup>implies</sup> that he seeks this <sup>worship</sup> ~~workship~~ and honor in arms in the jousts and tournaments of the gentlefolk, the polite equivalent of the truly virtuous chivalrye followed by Chaucer's worthy Knight. Crusades did not occur in England; Dorigen never worries that her husband will be killed or wounded in battle: only that he might be shipwrecked in returning to her.

Chaucer's Parson describes this sort of vain glory as a species

of pride: "Veyneglorie is for to have pompe and delit in his temporeel hynesse, and glorifie hym in this worldly estaat."<sup>14</sup> In the case of Arveragus it takes the obvious form of the substitution of the name of honour and worship, a gentillesse that nys but renomee, for the gentillesse that cometh <sup>fro</sup> from God allone.<sup>15</sup> that is, he substitutes "virtue and good works" in the eyes of men for the truth as it appears before the eyes of God. The Parson directly connects this principle with the medieval idea of gentillesse when he adds elsewhere that it is a greet folie for a man to pride himself only in his worldly reputation,

. . . for ofte tyme the gentrie of the body binymeth the gentrie of the soule; and eek we ben alle of o fader and of o mooder; and alle we been of o nature, roten and corrupt, bothe riche and povre. For sothe, o maner gentrie is for to preise, that appareilleth mannes corage with vertues and moralitees, and maketh hym Crystes child. For truste wel that over what man that synne hath maistrie, he is verray cherl to synne.<sup>16</sup>

This commonplace distinction between "humane" and divine values makes it clear that fair honors in this worldly estaat may conceal what is in reality a most vile thraldom, and that the vainglorious man is one who prides himself in fraudulent externals without reference to the spiritual values which the externals should ideally reflect.<sup>17</sup>

Nowhere is this trick of substituting the name for the thing more evident than in the terms of the humble wys accord arranged be-

tween Arveragus and Dorigen for to lede the moore in blisse hir lyves.  
 Much in the manner recommended by the wise Wife of Bath he buys ese by  
 granting the maistrie to his wife.<sup>18</sup> He will obeye her, and

. . . folwe hir wil in al,

750 As any loveere to his lady shal.

The terms of this agreement provide an immediate comical overturning  
 of the marriage troth<sup>19</sup> which defines swich lordshipe as men han over  
hir wyves.<sup>20</sup> But there is also a proviso which is frequently passed  
 over, perhaps because the Franklin deprives it of emphasis in his  
 account:

Save that the name of soveraynetee,

752 That wolde he have for shame of his degree.

It is a practical afterthought, as the Franklin sees it, in comparison to the great matter of granting Dorigen the marital mastery; but this discrepancy between the reality of the relationship he proposes to his wife and the appearance he will present to the eyes of the world is a perfect reflection of the man concerned only with empty honors. Although he will retain the name of soveraynetee, his first act as a husband is to abdicate his marital responsibilities and obligations. He symbolically recapitulates this abdication when he leaves his wife for the tourney in England; and it is significant that Dorigen is tempted and makes her "rash promise" whil he was oute. His first act is to swear, of his own free will as a knyght, an oath which derogates

the sacramental troth he has just plighted in the marriage ceremony. We do not see Arveragus performing many a labour, many a greet emprise to win Dorigen, nor do we see his feats of arms in Britain: these in the tale appear only as names. But we do see him exercising his role as husband, in which he abandons for reasons of personal ease the maistrise he has sworn to uphold. If the role of the husband can be thought of as a knightly service, Arveragus has fled the field before the first battle.

This contract reveals Arveragus at work with his special kind of "magic." God forbid that it should appear to mannes sighte what price he has paid for the joye, the ese, and the prosperitee that he enjoys. To achieve these in wedded life the "wise" man secretly corrupts his "office"; his particular magic hides the truth of his "thraldom." His insistence on the name of lordshipe parallels his substitution of superficial "wisdom" and "love" (which provide for his own comfort, without regard for the cost to Dorigen) for what responsible medieval authorities thought of as true wisdom and love (which express themselves in a real concern for the welfare of others, though this may involve personal suffering). He is interested only in a public belief in his manliness, not in the actual exercise of it. The "black rocks" in this instance are the truth of his failure to fulfill his marriage troth: a failure upon which, incidentally, his marriage will nearly shipwreck, but worse, rocks upon which he willingly shipwrecks his own soul.

The tale itself, we should observe, provides a commentary on

the inadequacy of his principles. The magic formula that seeing is believing, that whatever one believes is so, plays Arveragus false in a series of increasingly mordant ironies. Chaucer sets his return from the wars with heele and greet honour/ As he that was of chivalrye the flour significantly after Dorigen has made her pledge to Aurelius but before he has been able to effect a magical fulfillment of its "impossible" conditions. This fresshe knyght, this worthy man of armes is not tortured by jealousy; doubts can only cause discomfort:

No thyng list hym to been ymaginatyf,  
 1095 If any wight hadde spoke, whil he was oute,  
 To hire of love; he hadde of it no doute.  
 He noght entendeth to no swich mateere,  
 But daunceth, justeth, maketh hir good cheere;  
 And thus in joye and blisse I lete hem dwelle . . . .

But beneath the carefree lilt of these lines the irony is apparent. She has been spoken to of love, she has pledged her love to another, albeit on seemingly impossible conditions, and he is unaware that his apparent heele is in reality already infected with an illness which will soon cause him great dis-ese. Chaucer could hardly make it clearer that Arveragus' worldly joye and blisse is predicated upon a deception, here reflected in his self-satisfying blindness as to what might happen whil he was oute.<sup>21</sup> Even while he lets Arveragus dwell in this joy and bliss Chaucer turns in his rhyme-line to Aurelius, and the forces which will upset this delusive prosperity are set in action.

It is even more ironic, though a revealing piece of "poetic

justice," that Arveragus' confidence is itself shattered by an illusion. Aurelius' "fulfillment" of Dorigen's rash promise brings on a day of reckoning for the man who was oute when he, wife was tempted. Adultery is an appropriate consequence of his abdication of husbandly maistrie: a symbol of the state which he originally established for himself in order to lyve in ese. Now by his own superficial principles he is bound, in order to preserve what he calls her trouthe, to commit his wife to adultery--a cursed sin, if we are to believe the Parson, which "anoyeth grevousliche hem that it haunten," especially the soul "for he obligeth it to synne and to payne of deeth that is perdurable."<sup>22</sup> An excruciating irony informs his earnest lines:

~~1476~~ "For God so wisly have mercy upon me,  
 1476 I hadde levere ystiked for to be  
 For verray love which that I to yow have,  
 But if ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save":<sup>23</sup>

which is really as much as to say: "I love you so truly that, no matter how much it hurts me, I insist that you commit a damning sin." The Franklin's interjected comment by emphasizing his own ignorance of the issues involved calls attention to the issues themselves.

Paraventure an heep of yow, ywis,  
 Wol holden hym a lewed man in this  
 1495 That he wol putte his wyf in jupartie.

What jupartie has Dorigen been put in? To the narrator it would seem to be only a social equivalent of spiritual perdition, since he implies

she will be saved and Arveragus will be seen to be wise, not lewed. But by objective standards there is no question but that Arveragus is indeed a lewed man in this, regardless of the practical consequences.

Yet even the irony of Arveragus' decision is capped by the brilliant and much admired line,

Trouthe is the highest thyng a man may kepe,  
uttered at the very moment when, in total abrogation of his marriage troth, he gives his wife over to sin. And lest we should miss the parallel to his earlier wys permission in the marriage compact which he now disastrously recapitulates, the man devoted to appearance is made to stress his principles to the very last. His dis-ese now manifest, with that very word (trouthe)

1480 . . . he brast anon to wepe,  
And seyde, "I yow forbede, up peyne of deeth,  
That nevere, whil thee lasteth lyf ne breeth,  
To no wight telle thou of this aventure,--  
As I may best, I wol my wo endure,--

1485 Ne make no contenance of hevynesse,  
That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse."

Here is indeed a triumphant conclusion to the marriage problem, a fulfillment of the Old Law with the New! In these lines Arveragus exerts his maistrie with a vengeance, but there could hardly be a more powerful exposure of vain and empty values than this ultimate pretense: his final assertion of the old formula, the magic of appearance, to hide from the world the sordid and sinful reality to which his literalism has brought him.

[Extra space for division]

Dorigen is the unfortunate victim of Arveragus' maistrie, for even his decision not to exercise husbandly maistrie is itself ironically an exercise of it. She suffers as a result of his dereliction of duty. The fact that she was tempted whil he was oute simply underlines the fact that she was tempted because he "was out." She touchingly fulfills the medieval notion of mulier; in her helpless suffering she foreshadows a number of innocent Shakespearean heroines. Her desire for the removal of the rocks is the expression of a natural (though "womanly") desire to avoid the tribulations of life in a naive pursuit of comfort: she relates the "rocks" directly to her personal wellbeing, and has no one to explain the causes to her. She is, in short, a well-meaning but naturally limited Eve, betrayed by her Adam. The condition she sets for adultery, unlike that set by Boccaccio's <sup>donna</sup> ~~donne~~, is based on a genuine concern for the safety of her husband which is not reciprocated by Arveragus, as well as on a more personal desir of his presence: i.e., the more tangible physical "consolations" of his love. Her vanity is flattered by the attentions of Aurelius, and her "impossible" condition is a means of avoiding the necessity of saying either yes or no. She reacts to Aurelius' proposition with proper pique, like the stereotype of the good "housewife":

"By thiilke God that yaf me soule and lyf,

Ne shal I nevere been untrewed wyf

985

In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit;

I wol been his to whom that I am knyght.

Taak this for fynal answer as of me."

Insofar as she has wit she means what she says; yet she appends the qualifying but (lines 988 ff.) to her "final answer." She is consistent throughout the tale in her inability to maintain a firm stand in fulfillment of her ideals.

Her two long complaints are extended revelations of this intellectual vacillation. The Boethian prayer, Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveiaunce (lines 865-893), begins significantly in the well-known context of philosophical consolation, but though she finds herself in the same position as Boethius in I met. v of the de consolacione Philosophiae, she lacks a Philosophia to guide her beyond her present anxiety, and she fails of Boethius' "clerkly" conclusioun. In this passage the Boethian line of argument is set in motion by direct, recognizable allusion. What follows is an adaptation of I met. v (and, towards its end, IV pros. vi) using the special terms required by the story. Thus the figure of Dorigen sitting on the green and looking pitously into the see is a calculated echo of Boethius complaining, like Hamlet, against the see of fortune in which God's rational order seems not to operate. The rocks are philosophically located as emblems for adversity or apparent evil, in Dorigen's mind. We men, Boethius prayed,

that be noght a foul partie, but a fair partie of so  
greet a werk, we ben turmented in this see of fortune.  
Thow governour, withdraugh and restreyne the ravyschyng  
flodes, and fastne and ferme thise erthes stable with  
thilke boond by which thou governest the hevne that is  
so large.<sup>24</sup>

It may be significant that Dorigen prays to eterne God, rather than to Apollo or the moon;<sup>25</sup> there can be no doubt that her vision is intended to correspond to that of Boethius early in his dialogue with Philosophia.

For by this werk, south, north, ne west, ne eest,  
 Ther nys yfostred man, ne bryd, ne beest;  
 875 It dooth no good, to my wit, but anyeth.  
 Se ye nat, Lord, how mankynde it destroyeth?  
 An hundred thousand bodyes of mankynde  
 Han rokkes slayn, al be they nat in mynde,  
 Which mankynde is so fair part of thy werk  
 880 That thou it madest lyk to thyn owene merk.  
 Thanne semed it ye hadde a greet chiertee  
 Toward mankynde; but how thanne may it bee  
 That ye swiche meenes make it to destroyen,  
 Whiche meenes do no good, but evere anoyen?

Dorigen's plight is pitous, not simply pathetic. She glimpses the truth but cannot grasp it. Her wit is, by itself, just incapable of perceiving the principles embedded in her own argument as they were in Boethius': that is, that adversity is only a distortion of God's unchanging causes, invented by the self-pitying point of view--in fact, a measure of mankind's failure to live up to the image of God (His merk)<sup>26</sup> in chiertee (caritas), and justly annoying only to those who subject themselves to "fortune." In the de consolatione Philosophiae Philosophia steps in to clear away the dark mists of error which obscure the clear truth

in Boethius' mind; into Dorigen's life steps only the company of hire freendes who seek to drive away hire derke fantasye by leading her to a "garden of consolation," a standard medieval figure for epicurean pleasures available as an easy substitute for the more lasting felicity based upon difficult recognitions. Their garden party is intended to divert her, to help her avoid, rather than to understand, the issues. They are thus also "magicians" in the tale; their artificial garden (a man-made substitute for God's truth)<sup>27</sup> is another attempt to make the rocks disappear. Needless to say, their "friendship" merely puts Dorigen in the false paradys wherein she is "spoken to of love."

Her second <sup>Complaynte</sup>~~complaynte~~ similarly illustrates her right impulses and her inability to pursue them to their logical conclusions. Again she is alone, For out of towne was <sup>geen</sup> Arveragus, so to hirself she spak. In this case, faced with the shameful consequences of her rash promise, she lists off twenty-two exempla of womanly chastity drawn from Jerome's famous treatise adversus Jovinianum. The speech involves frankly comic exaggeration in her multiplying of instances, a fact to which undue sentimentality has blinded some critics.<sup>28</sup> The point is that while she turns to the most respectable authority (quite unlike Arveragus when it becomes his turn to find a solution), she "reasons" so long that she does not have to carry out her "resolve." She is released from extending her list at line 1459:

Thus pleynd Dorigen a day or tweye,  
 Purposynge evere that she wolde deye.  
 But~~h~~ nathelees, upon the thridde nyght,

1460 Hoom cam Arveragus, this worthy knyght . . . .

Arveragus now occupies the position her "friends" had filled, and is of even less help in her distress. One can only marvel at the disparity between his conclusion and the innate honesty of her womanly groping for treuthe:

I wol conclude that it is bet for me  
 To sleen myself than been defouled thus.  
 I wol be trewe unto Arveragus . . . .

Both complaints dramatize Dorigen's search for intellectual maistrise, and are shaped by her wavering will. They pointedly emphasize her need for the moral authority of which Arveragus has deprived her. With his return upon the thridde nyght she can seek in him her salvation;<sup>29</sup> in fact, she turns to him in <sup>despair</sup> ~~despiar~~ for this very authority. The episode that follows is essentially a comic parody of the sacrament of penance. The meeting between Dorigen and Arveragus reflects the ritual of confession in an easily recognizable but comically ironic form: Arveragus plays the role of Ami, the good confessor; Dorigen's contrition of heart is followed by confession of mouth:

And she gan wepen ever lenger the moore.  
 "Allas," quod she, "that evere was I born!  
 Thus have I seyde," quod she, "thus have I sworn"--  
 1465 And toold hym al as ye han herd bifore;  
 It nedeth nat reherce it yow namoore.  
 This <sup>housbonde</sup> housebonde, with glad chiere, in freendly wyse  
 Answerde and seyde as I shal yow devyse:  
 "Is ther oght elles, Dorigen, but this?"<sup>30</sup>

And Arveragus assigns satisfaction of works. At this moment a responsible decision by Arveragus would alter the entire course of action in the story. Just to explain that her oath is, for a number of basic reasons, invalid--that it need not, and in fact ought not be fulfilled<sup>31</sup>--would make her problem (and his own) melt into thin air. But the literalistic eyes of the husband cannot see beyond "the Old Testament contractual law of trouthe"; he gives his wife short shrift, and she is betrayed a second time, and more cruelly, by the vainglorious man.

### III

If Arveragus represents the vainglorious man dominated by superbia vitae, Aurelius is the libidinous man motivated by concupiscentia carnis. His equivalent to the nominal gentillesse with which Arveragus conceals his real negation of ideal gentillesse, is the convenient disguise provided by the system of "Courtly Love." This is his magic formula, which he uses to void the rocks of truth as they respect his pursuit of sensual satisfaction <sup>and</sup> ~~of~~ its spiritual consequences. Should this romantic illusion be stripped away, his proposition to Dorigen would not stand scrutiny. However, as Andreas Capellanus abundantly illustrated, the "lover" can give his invitations to adultery attractive names which make them socially acceptable and even desirable.<sup>32</sup> The bare fact of the matter is that he lusts after another man's wife, attempts to entice her into adultery, and failing his object suffers from sexual frustration as it is described in medieval encyclopedias among the incommunities of luxuria. "Unto the body anyeth it [luxuria]

grevously also, for it dreyeth hym, and wasteth him, and shent hym, and of his blood he maketh sacrifice to the feend of helle."<sup>33</sup>

Chaucer structurally contrasts Arveragus' apparent heelee with the "disease" which puts Aurelius In langour and in torment furyus (lines 1099-1100), for the worldly husband at the moment clasps the delights which the worldly lover lacks. Aurelius' pursuit of his own fleshly satisfaction blinds him to the great injustice he proposes to do to Dorigen and to her husband, a knight in whose "shire"--if not in whose actual household--he lives as a Squire. Yet so carefully does the Franklin phrase this romantic activity that it does not appear that what the Parson more directly calls "thilke stynkyng<sup>synne</sup> ~~sin~~ of Lecherie that men clepe avowtrie of wedded folk"<sup>34</sup> is at issue.

The Parson, nevertheless, is a character who ideally reflects the Franklin's aphorism: Hooly chirches feith in oure bileve/ Ne suf-  
fretth noon illusioun us to greve, and if we turn to his view of such courtship we see it in a less subjective light. He lists three harmes that follow adultery, the "approchyng of other mannes bed."

First, brekyng of feith; and certes, in feith  
is the key of Cristendom. And whan that feith  
is broken and lorn, soothly Cristendom stant veyn  
and withouten fruyt.<sup>35</sup>

This trouthe, as expressed in the sacrament of marriage, in other words, is the highest thing a man may keep. The other "harms" are classed as theft and an offense against God:

This synne is eek a thefte; for thefts generally is for to reve a wight his thyng agayns his wille. Certes, this is the fouleste thefte that may be, whan a womman steleth hir body from hire housbonde, and yeveth it to hire holour to defoulen hire; and steleth hire soule fro Crist, and yeveth it to the devel. This is a fouler thefte than for to breke a chirche and stele the chalice; for these avowtiers breken the temple of God spiritually, and stelen the vessel of grace, that is the body and the soule, for which Crist shal destroyen hem, as seith Saint Paul.<sup>36</sup>

The thridde harme is the filthe thurgh which they breken the comandement of God, and defoulen the auctor of matrimoyne, that is, Crist.<sup>37</sup>

In terms of these principles Aurelius, in addition to courting personal damnation in luxuria by obliging his own soul "to synne and to peyne of deeth that is perdurable," entices Dorigen herself to commit an act which would involve her in the most serious spiritual consequences.<sup>38</sup>

Like Arveragus, though for different motives, he "loves" her so much that he insists upon her damnation.

1320 Avyseth yow er that ye breke youre trouthe.

Repenteth yow, for thilke God above,

Er ye me sleen by cause that I yow love.

1331 Madame, I speke it for the honour of yow

Moore than to save myn hertes lyf right now,--

I have do so as ye comanded me. . . .<sup>39</sup>

Spaces

If we do not permit the lover's illusions to grieve us, Aurelius' pursuit of Dorigen appears as a comically inverted version of the Christian pursuit of perfection--a parody which takes its structure from the ritual experience of Chaucer's audience. When he posits his vision of felicity in the flesh of the lady, he substitutes, in effect, a "heaven on earth" for the traditional Christian concept of the state of blessedness. The terms of these two pursuits correspond exactly, but those of Aurelius are filtered through the sensual rather than the spiritual mind. The result is a special kind of literalization appropriate to the libidinous man, and Aurelius' experience, like Arveragus' pursuit of "honor," comically overturns well-known ideals by virtue of the "end" he desires. The "lady" becomes the dispenser of grace; he prays to her for mercy with religious humility:

Madame, reweth upon my peynes smerte;

975        For with a word ye may me sleen or save.

His very life (he leads her to believe) is in her power. The impossible condition she sets for his "salvation" corresponds to the divine demand for perfection as a condition for eternal felicity, a demand "impossible" in view of human frailty.

"Madame," quod he, "this were an impossible!

1010        Than moot I dye of sodeyn deth horrible."

But though he seeth he may nat fro his deeth asterte, he comically anticipates Dorigen's extended deliberations on suicide by lying in despair for two year and moore awaiting sodeyn deeth. His prayer to Apollo, structurally an ironic parallel to Dorigen's Boethian prayer,

is figuratively an appeal to the light of reason, ironic<sup>also</sup> because he makes an unreasonable request. Reason reveals, it does not conceal, the rocks of truth. Aurelius even implies that in reason may lie his salvation:

1041 For wel I woot, lord Phebus, if you lest,  
Ye may me helpen, save my lady, best.

But what he really wants, besides his lady, is a corrupt light which will obscure the obstacles that stand between him and the accomplishment of his desire, and for this he must turn elsewhere.

In his bargain with the Clerk of Orliens the implied parallel between Aurelius' pursuit of sensual gratification and the Christian pursuit of perfection is most clearly emphasized. The real price of accomplishing Dorigen's "impossibility" becomes evident when Aurelius faces his day of reckoning. But in the early stages of the contract the lover's values which set possession of the lady above mere mundane treasure are charmingly captured in the very terms of his reckless pledge:

. . . Fy on a thousand pound!

This wyde world, which that men seye is round,  
I wolde it yeve, if I were lord of it.

1230 This bargayn is ful dryve, for we been knyht.

Ye shal be payed trewely, by my trouthe!

In conjunction with Chaucer's handling of the "cost" actually exacted, Aurelius' bold offer is really a perverse echo of the terms of Christ's second temptation, the rejection of the "kingdoms of the world" for the

world of the spirit;<sup>40</sup> the lover, that is to say, echoes the contemptus mundi ideally enjoined upon Christians who wish to enjoy the next world, though in his case the "paradise" he seeks is located in Dorigen. The world as a measure of "cost" is actually related to the purchase of heavenly felicity in Matthew xvi, 24-26 (Mark viii, 36; Luke ix, 25):

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life will lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?

Aurelius, ironically, would give the wyde world to gain the salvation he envisions. This inverted version of the "purchase" of the kingdom of heaven is reemphasized by a conflation of a number of common scriptural terms when the time for payment arrives. Then we learn the full "cost" (al forlorn) which he has pledged to attain his bliss.

. . . How shal I do?

I se namoore but that "I am fordo.

Myn heritage moot I nedes selle,

And been a beggere; heere I may nat dwelle,

1565     And shamen al my kynrede in this place . . . .

His loss can be read in two ways. Superficially, he illustrates the medieval principle that lechery literally involves undue expense and waste both of goods ("It wasteth eek his catel and his substaunce")

and of honor (it "bereveth man and womman hir goode fame and al hire honour").<sup>41</sup> As Arveragus' vainglory brought him, so Aurelius' lechery has brought him to the brink of shame, the loss of worldly gentillesse. But the terms suggest much more. His expense carries a deeper meaning if we remember the young man with "great possessions" who to gain the kingdom of heaven was enjoined by Christ:

If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me,

in poverty and "folly" as one in "exile," not of this world.<sup>42</sup> Like that young man, Aurelius is less enthusiastic when he calculates the cost. What he must sell amounts to no less than his heritage, a term colored by the scriptural idea of the "eternal inheritance" to which the sons of God are heir by virtue of His "testaments."<sup>43</sup> The conflation of images--rejection of the world, selling all he has, the inheritance, shame, beggary, exile--sets Aurelius' purchase in a context which emphasizes its comic inversions of the "price" of eternal felicity. In this spiritual sense too Aurelius is al fordo, although he does not know it. The Squire is, in short, delightfully presented pursuing what appears to him to be a salvation from temporal misery, but which is in reality damnation in luxuria by obliging his soul to sin and to perdurable death. He has pledged his soul for temporal enjoyment, in an exact reversal of Christian principles.

But the magical vocabulary of "Courtly Love" conceals the true nature of his intentions. The efficacy of his formula is shown when

he remains in his own eyes giltless even as he practices against Dorigen, against Arveragus, against the author of the sacrament of marriage, and against his own soul. The lover's rhetoric gloses his real rascality, so that even he is unaware that he commits a social offense against husband and wife, a political offense against a knight, and a spiritual offense by attempting to trap others in dishonor and damnation.

## IV

That a "clerk" should persuade the soul-sick Christian to pay such a price for spiritual salvation is perfectly consistent with the operation of the Christian world. The Clerk of Orliens, however, in contrast to the objective ideal, for money fraudulently conceals the truth to make possible the fulfillment of Aurelius' corrupt will. He uses his knowledge to work a deception, and in his refusal of a fortune earned in this enterprise becomes an example of freedom. As the third of the Franklin's noble triumvirate he illustrates concupiscentia oculorum--curiosity or avarice--completing the pattern of "all that is in the world." His clerkly efforts to relieve the sickness and misery of Aurelius provide the vocabulary of his rhetoric, the particular magic which conceals his rascality.

We can best appreciate this clerk's astounding corruption of his "office" by referring to the standard officium clericorum described by medieval authorities. Isidore of Seville, for example, states that clerks are expected to abstain from such pleasures of the world

as are gathered under the term curiositas in the glosses to 1 John ii, 16--that is, to avoid spectacula, pompae, and public convivia. Further,

Usuris nequaquam incumbant, neque turpium occupationes  
lucrorum fraudisque cujusquam studium appetant, amorem  
pecuniae, quasi materiam cunctorum criminum, fugiant,  
 saecularia officia negotiaque abjiciant. . . . Pro benefi-  
ciis medicinae Dei munera non accipiant, dolos et  
 conjurationes caveant . . . .<sup>44</sup>

The double concentration upon the ideal rejection of amor pecuniae and any association with deception (fraus or dolos) reflects the belief that attachment to riches and the practice of fraud are inconsistent with a pure devotion to the truth of philosophia. A clerk, as the passage suggests, was thought of ideally as one of God's "physicians" whose office it was to apply the "medicine" of philosophy against the spiritual disease of sin; his business was to contribute to the health of the community through the discovery and the dissemination of truth: to learn and teach.

This clerical function is stated in principle by the Franklin when, as the Clerk begins his curious astrological ritual, he somewhat pretentiously announces that

1133 . . . hooly chirches feith in oure bileve

Ne suffreth noon illusioun us to greve.

But it is related directly to the symbol of the rocks in Dorigen's first complaint:

885 I woot wel clerkes wol seyn as hem leste,  
 By argumentz, that al is for the beste,  
 Though I ne kan the causes nat yknowe. . . .<sup>45</sup>

She registers, of course, her special attitude toward the consolations of philosophy, but the point is that she establishes the philosophical context against which the Clerk's machinations are to be seen. Clerkes strive to remove the annoying rocks of adversity by providing a "Boethian" awareness of final causes (to do so is, so to speak, an act of legitimate "magic"), but she is reduced by her "wit" to the pragmatic view that argumentz cannot really take the place of more tangible evidence of their removal. She sees philosophy as sophistry, will leave al disputison to clerks, and simply wishes the rocks were gone. When Aurelius' "brother"--ironically himself a clerk--diagnoses the lover's illness and decides that he should see a master clerk who can provide the conditions for his felicity, he merely shifts Dorigen's point into the sphere of magical delusion by stating:

For with an apparence a clerk may make,  
 To mannes sight, that alle the rokkes blake  
 1159 Of Britaigne weren yvoided everichon.

What the Clerk of Orliens actually does is to provide a kind of literal parody of the consolation offered by the true philosopre.

His practice of magic is in itself sufficient to betray the deviltry in which he engages. That magicae artes ("artes that been curious") are a standard example of unlawful curiosity or concupiscentia oculorum reflects the unalterable opposition of the medieval Church to

the practice of nigromancy. The perversion of the clerkly office represented by such practices was regarded as particularly serious in that the magician through deception turned the minds of others from God to error and damnation. The "vanity" of magic arts was, in fact, attributed to the devil: "hæc vanitas magicarum artium," said Rabanus Maurus, "ex traditione angelorum malorum in toto terrarum orbe plurimis saeculis valuit"<sup>46</sup>--that is, flourished during the ages before Revelation. Those Magi who, having seen the Christ child, went home "another way" symbolize the conversion from swich superstitious cursednesse. The magician was thought able to delude others by virtue of demonic assistance, gained by making a compact with the devil: "ars daemonum est ex quadam pestifera societate hominum et angelorum malorum extorta."<sup>47</sup> Medieval discussions of magic tend to adduce long lists of scriptural citations proving that God in both Testaments utterly condemns "omnes errores et divinationes atque artes noxias":

. . . nec ab aliò quam a se vult requiri veritatem  
aut sanitatem, quia ipse cum Patre et Spiritu sancto  
unus verus atque omnipotens est Deus, faciens mira-  
bilia solus.<sup>48</sup>

The magician thus diabolically usurps God's province when he seeks to confirm false veritas and sanitas, through false mirabilia. To do so was to engage in a specific corruption of the ideal function of clerks, since those to whom was entrusted the gift of knowledge were expected to use it in the service of "truth" and "health" as the medicina Dei. It is this context which gives point to the efforts of the Clerk of

Orliens to "cure" the "sick" Aurelius. The fact that such efforts were a conventional subject of discussion along with the authoritative view of them, can be seen in the de magicis artibus of the encyclopedist Rabanus Maurus:

Quid ergo necesse est salutem ab alio, quam a medico omnipotente quaerere? Aut quae ratio est, scientiam aut sapientiam ab alio quolibet discere velle, quam ab omni sapientiae et scientiae fonte? . . . Qui enim sine Salvatore salutem vult habere, et sine vera sapientia aestimat se prudentem fieri posse, non salvus sed aeger, non prudens sed stultus, in aegritudine assidua laborabit: et in caecitate noxia stultus et demens permanebit: ac proinde omnis inquisitio et omnis curatio, quae a divinis et magis, vel ab ipsis daemoneis in idolorum cultura expetitur, mors potius dicenda est, quam vita: et qui ea sectantur, si se non correxerint, ad aeternam perditionem tendunt: quoniam Psalmista dicente: Omnes dii gentium Sunt daemonia (Psal. xcvi), qui per deceptos homines alios decipere quotidie gestiunt, ut perditionis suae faciant eos esse participes.<sup>49</sup>

The tautly antithetical phrasing of this passage reflects the standard Christian opposition between true and delusive veritas and sanitas. In view of such attitudes toward the practice of magic it would be most unusual indeed for an informed medieval reader to regard the activities of the Clerk in the Franklin's Tale as anything but a grimly comic in-

version of ideal clericality which passes off japes and . . . wrecched-  
nesse as curative sapience, offers Aurelius sickness for health, folly  
 for <sup>wisdom</sup>~~wisdom~~, blindness for sight, death for life, perdition for salva-  
 tion--and all, appropriately, for the price of his heritage.

As just such a recognizable inversion of the ideal this phil-  
osopre plays his part in the Franklin's world, and in Aurelius'  
up-so-down pursuit of felicity. We need only imagine the conventional  
 course which the search for sanity took in the Christian Middle Ages  
 to recognize the deliberately inverted pattern which Chaucer has woven  
 into his narrative. Three basic elements may be abstracted from this  
 structure: the entertainment at the magician's house, the price exacted  
 from Aurelius, and the performance of the praestigium itself. These  
 correspond to the vision of eternal rewards, "the endeless blisse of  
 hevене, ther joye hath no contrarioustee of wo ne grevaunce,"<sup>50</sup> for  
 which the Christian is stimulated to renounce the world and his "worldly  
 inheritance," and to the spiritual "magic" of regeneration which removes  
 the impediments to attaining eternal felicity.

The spectacula offered by the magician in his wel arrayed hous  
 are a worldly version of the vision of final blessedness such as the  
 Parson (like a good clerk) evokes in the peroration to his own tale:

. . . ther alle harmes been passed of this present  
 lyf; ther as is the sikernesse fro the peyne of helle;  
 ther as is the blisful compaignye that rejoysen hem  
 everemo, everich of otheres joye; ther as the body of  
 man, that whilom was foul and derk, is moore cleer

than the sonne; ther as the body, that whilom was syk,  
 freele and fieble, and mortal, is inmortal, and so  
 strong and so hool that ther may no thyng apeyren it;  
 ther as ne is neither hunger, thurst, ne coold, but  
 every soule replenyssed with the sighte of the parfit  
 knowynge of God.<sup>51</sup>

If the Parson's picture presents the desired fruition of spiritual  
gentillesse the Clerk of Orliens conjures for Aurelius, in exact imi-  
 tation, a visio pacis composed ~~for~~<sup>of</sup> the desports of the blisful compaignye  
 of worldly gentils: hunting scenes, a joust, a vision of his lady on a  
daunce. The Clerk is a consummate salesman and these are, crudely  
 speaking, incentives to buy what the Squire is already intent upon hav-  
 ing. But even here Chaucer's texture is so subtly knit that the thematic  
 opposition between the apparent and the real is reflected on many levels.

First, the figures themselves may be "read" in more than one  
 way; they are created as enigmas superficially deceiving but inwardly  
 revealing. Aurelius looks "as in a glass" in enigmate at that which  
 he desires to see facie ad facies,<sup>52</sup> but fails to read the enigma. The  
 "healthy outdoor scenes" of hawk and hound are, could he but see,  
 foreshadowings or premonitions of the spiritual "trap" into which he  
 is about to fall, for each technically symbolizes, under the guise of  
 courtly "sport," the overthrow of the just soul by devil-"hunters."  
 Thus, in the terms established by medieval symbolic bestiaries, the  
heron slain in the illusion by the "falconer" represents the soul of  
 the just, the fowlers devils.<sup>53</sup> The harts pursued and slain in the

"forest of the world" imply a similar overthrow.<sup>54</sup> The knyghtes justyng in a playn figure the eternal combat (the ideal chivalrye or "Christian warfare") between the "Christian knight" and his adversaries, seen however as the pleasant tourneying of the gentle set. Though these are general premonitions, the final conjuration pertains to Aurelius most personally:

And after this he dide hym swich plesaunce  
 1200      That he hym shewed his lady on a daunce,  
             On which himself he daunced, as hym thoughte.

As this heavenly vision is an objective realization of that which his "herte dremeth," it is no wonder that the Squire fails to recognize in it another image of his potential damnation.<sup>55</sup> It does, however, add to an already ironic situation when we realize that these premonitions of spiritual disaster are so appealing to Aurelius that he will put himself in the power of the illusionist and "pay" him anything in order to achieve the plesaunce they portend.

Secondly, and perhaps more obviously, the entire scene comments upon the illusory nature of the temporal ends Aurelius seeks and the magician offers. We are forced to realize that even the picture of gentil sports and pleasures proposed in the magician's "study" are, after all, only shadows and illusions.<sup>56</sup> Aurelius touchingly dramatizes his confusion of reality and the insubstantial pageant thrown up before his eyes when he "thinks" he actually "dances" with Dorigen in that blissful company. Yet very much as <sup>another</sup> ~~nothor~~ "magician" (though one who used his magic to inform rather than delude) would later

observe of the ephemeral shadows of the world and all which it inherit,

. . . whan this maister that this magyk wroughte

Saugh it was tyme, he clapte his handes two,

1204 And farewell! all oure revel was ago.

The rhetorical movement of the scene interrupts Aurelius in his daunce, to enforce the suggestion of its transience. Worldly delight, we realize, regardless of its superficial similarity to heavenly bliss, ends when it is tyme; sensual revel is momentary as a dream, hardly here before it is ago.

To these fearful implications Aurelius is pathetically insensitive. He is not disillusioned, but confirmed in his illusions: not discouraged, but encouraged to accomplish the fulfilment of his will; and for this fulfilment the Clerk, in a clear perversion of office, simoniacally sells his knowledge. Together they take the righte way west to Brittainy to work out Aurelius' salvation. The season symbolically reflects the import of their journey, for <sup>Christmas</sup> ~~Christ~~ is the time of personal rebirth, a release from the colde, frosty seson of Decembre, from the "old life," spiritually cold and sterile. The attitude symbolized by the Christian calendar coincides with Aurelius' despair and anxiety; both are captured in the lines:

1250 The bittre frostes, with the sleet and reyn,

Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.

Now Janus bifrons sits by the fire; the New Year approaches; Christmas comes, with its promise of redemption,

1255 And "Nowel" crieth every lusty man.

Against this seasonal backdrop we see Aurelius in ironic worship of the "maister" of fraus, to whom he has been knyt,<sup>57</sup> "praying" him  
 . . . to doon his diligence

1259 To bryngen hym out of his peynes smerte.

More extraordinary yet is the timing of the Clerk's miraculous praestigium, for as a literary event it is most probably to be associated with the date of Epiphany -- the showing-forth of Truth, upon which Christian salvation is predicated.<sup>58</sup> Epiphany, furthermore, is significantly associated with the journeying "astrologers"--the Magi ab Oriente (Matthew ii, 1). The time-scheme further emphasizes the inversion of the action underway, for the Franklin's magician works to delude and conceal, not to reveal the "rocks of truth": to maken illusioun as the condition for the state of sin, not, like the Magi who went home "another way," to provide by argumentz a proper basis for salvation. This corruption of office simply climaxes the consistent role the Clerk has been made to play. Yet such is his personal "magic" that, like Arveragus and Aurelius, he convinces others of his "noble" intentions. This subtil clerk swich routhe had of this man, that is to say, that he "generously" provides him with the conditions of damnation.

## V

If we use medieval "authority" seriously as a standard for judgment, it is clear that the sentimentally approbatory

view of the Franklin's Tale bears little relation to the underlying import of the action and effectually obscures the comic wit with which the tale is conducted. This view fails to pierce the "letter" because it presupposes the very values under comic attack. Yet that a reading which views the three contestants as rascals, fools and knaves magically rationalizing their evil pursuits with fictitious "colors" is in fact the normative medieval reading, and one more probably consistent with Chaucer's actual intention, can be seen if we turn to the source of the tale in Boccaccio's Filocolo.<sup>59</sup>

Though every Chaucerian knows that the story is told by a character named Menedon in Book IV of the Filocolo, and appears again, somewhat altered, as the fifth novel of the tenth Day in Boccaccio's Decamerone, it is more difficult to discover in the scholarship concerning the relationship between these texts that the narrative embedded in the Filocolo occurs in a context which puts it in an entirely different light from that suggested when it is read in isolation. A notable feature of this context is Boccaccio's authoritative solution to the demande damours proposed by Menedon, which corresponds to that finally asked by Chaucer's Franklin. But, more significant, Boccaccio's philosophical evaluation of the issues raised by the story coincides almost exactly with that we have seen developed by Chaucer in his redaction, and thus provides extraordinary corroboration for this reading.

Boccaccio tells the story of the knight, the lover, and the magician in the fourth of thirteen questioni, in a unified episode of such independent interest that it was later excerpted and separately

printed in several translations. The questioni are "cases" put to a Court of Love over which Fiammetta (generally taken to represent Boccaccio's "little flame," Maria d'Aquino) presides as Queen, or justicer, crowned with laurel. She has proposed the Court, as a pleasant sport to pass the time before supper, a game whose ground-rules are simple enough. Each member of an assembly of polite ladies and gentlemen must propose a questione damore to be resolved by the Queen. The proposer is permitted a contraddizione in which he presents an alternative solution; but the Queen always reaffirms her original judgment in a final rebuttal. Some problems are presented with the help of a narrative, but others, such as that of Galeone (usually identified as Boccaccio himself) who introduces the central problem, are simply straightforward questions. Here Boccaccio has adapted the device of the debat to argue what become philosophical issues related to the larger "question of love." The point of the Court of Love is to offer proper scope to dramatize Fiammetta's idealized wisdom, and so the dominant interest of the episode, taken as a whole, lies in the working out of the solutions and contradictions. It is primarily logical or intellectual in character. Some consequences of this format are immediately apparent. In the first place, no matter how intrinsically interesting they may be in their own right, stories such as Men-  
edon's are artistically functional only as providing matter for debate to which there is one proper solution. They are captives of their context in a second way as well, for these stories "absorb" the values revealed in the "decisions of the Court," and are illuminated by them

in unexpected ways. Boccaccio's method is to tell a tale in a deliberately obscure manner, and to expose its true implications by degrees through the agency of Fiammetta. To judge any tale in the group, then, apart from its artistic environment, is to remove it artificially from the very source of its full significance.

The narrative portion of Menedon's Question can be read in SA, where the bare plot will be seen to differ fundamentally only in the impossible request of the wife and, by consequence, in the miracle performed by the magician. In Boccaccio's version Chaucer's Arveragus appears as a nameless cavaliere, Dorigen as a bellissima donna; the lover Tarolfo corresponds to Aurelius, and the magician Tebano to the Clerk of Orliens. Menedon's questione corresponds to the Franklin's

Lordynges, this question, thanne, wol I aske now,  
1622 Which was the moste fre, as thynketh yow?

Dubitasi ora quale di costoro fosse maggiore liberalità,  
o quella del cavaliere, che concedette alla donna l'andare  
a Tarolfo, o quella di Tarolfo, il quale quella donna cui  
egli avea sempre disiata, e per cui egli avea tanto fatto  
per venire a quel punto a che venuto era, quando la donna venne  
a lui, rimandò la sopraddetta libera al suo marito; o quella di  
Tebano, il quale, abbandonate le sue contrade, oramai vecchio,  
e venuto quivi per guadagnare i promessi doni, e affannatosi  
per recare a fine ciò che promesso avea, avendoli guadagnati,  
ogni cosa rimise, rimanendosi povero come prima.<sup>60</sup>

Fiammetta's initial solution, as was indicated earlier, premises the same medieval distinction concerning "all that is in the world" as is more fully developed in Chaucer's version:

. . . in verità ciascuno fu assai liberale, e, ben considerando, il primo del suo onore, il secondo del libidinoso volere, e 'l terzo dell' acquistato avere fu cortese.<sup>61</sup>

As each is assai liberale, it is the one who gives the most who is the most "liberal": manifestamente conosceremo il più liberale, perciò che chi più dona più liberale è da tenere.<sup>62</sup> And so she concludes, with sweetly ironic deference to the terms of Menedon's demand:

Delle quali tre cose l'una è cara, cioè l'onore. . . . Il secondo è da fuggire, cioè il libidinoso conguignimento. . . . La terza non è da desiderare, ciò sono le ricchezze, con ciò sia cosa che esse siano le più volte a virtuosa vita noiose, e possasi con moderata povertà vivere virtuosamente . . . . Adunque, se solo l'onore è in queste tre cose caro, e l'altre no, dunque quegli maggiore liberalità fece che la donna donava, avvegna ch'è meno che saviamente facesse. Egli fu ancora nella liberalità principale, per la cui l'altre seguirono: però, secondo il nostro parere, chi diè la donna, in cui il suo onore consisteva, più che gli altri fu liberale.<sup>63</sup>

The full impact of Fiammetta's decision in favor of the husband is not immediately apparent, so delicate is the fact with which it is

put. It is part of Boccaccio's game to reveal by degrees. For the moment, however, observe that the initial premise involves a succinct analysis of each of the three characters to be judged. A bit of the romantic shine is removed from the courtly lover Tarolfo, whom we now see more simply as a man motivated by his libidinoso volere in pursuit of il libidinoso conguignimento; Tebano now appears as a man motivated by desire for reward--acquistato avere. At first sight the husband seems to have escaped censure: he is neither avaricious nor libidinous; he merely gave up his honor. But that is just the point: he gave it up; and if Fiammetta's signal, avvegna ch'è meno che saviamente facesse, suggests at the moment that he was less than wise to do so, before she has finished we will learn the full implications of that act. It would not be unfair to say that at this stage of affairs Fiammetta, applying authoritative medieval moral criteria, sees Menedon's three apparently noble characters as foolish, if not downright dishonorable. Her own point of view delicately deals a severe blow to gentil values as they are conventionally conceived, more so considering the respectability of the critic. The Queen of Love has made issues deliberately obscured in the original narration the very basis for <sup>judgment</sup> judgment, and forced us to review the story with new eyes.

That Menedon himself had thought differently is evident from the terms of his telling, and again from the emphasis in his dubbio. A glance back at his question will show immediately that the husband's claims to liberalità suffer in comparison to those put forward for Tarolfo, and the even more moving description of the case for Tebano.

He is thus obliged to demur in a contraddizione which, in its application of alternative values, involves opinions strikingly similar to those conventionally assumed in critical discussions of the Franklin's Tale. Because the wife was obligated to honor her guiramento, the husband showed little if any liberality, for he could not justly withhold what he had no right to:

. . . chi dona ciò che non può negare ben fa, in quanto  
 se ne fa liberale, ma poco dona, ~~però~~ <sup>E però,</sup> . . . ciascuno  
 degli altri più fu cortese. <sup>64</sup>

It would, in fact, in these terms, have been dishonorable to deny his wife to Tarolfo. To Tarolfo, on the other hand, were due the rights of the dedicated servant of love. He preserved his love for the lady faithfully già lungo tempo; he loved her sopra tutte le cose; for her he suffered great trials (avea lungamente tribolato); for her love he accomplished cose quasi impossibili. Having fulfilled her demand he deserved to obtain her (avute merito d'ottenere lei per la promessa fede). Now both the honor of the husband and the embraces of the wife were in his power:

. . . dunque dell' onore del marito, del saramento di lei,  
 e del suo lungo disio fu liberale. Gran cosa è l'avere  
 lunga sete sostenuta, e poi pervenire alla fontana e non  
 bere per lasciare bere altrui. <sup>65</sup>

Menedon's case for Tebano is elaborated in even greater detail. Tebano (here quite unlike Chaucer's young and economically successful Clerk of Orliens) was poor and old. Povertà, all men are agreed,

. . . sia una delle moleste cose del mondo a sostenere, con ciò sia cosa ch'ella sia cacciatrice d'allegrezza e di riposo, fugatrice d'onori, occupatrice di virtù, adducitrice d'amare sollecitudini, . . .<sup>66</sup>

As a critic of his own narrative Menedon details the poverty of Tebano, who appears first in the story clothed in "vile vestments," grubbing roots and herbs to sustain a poor life (che questa povertà occupasse le sua virtù, he comments); emphasizes the hazards and troubles undergone by the magician, in his long journey, to escape that misery (di quella miseria uscire e divenire ricco); and concludes that the man who has experienced poverty and become rich does an assai grandissime e liberali cose to give up his acquired wealth and return to his original miserable state. And because Tebano was old his liberality was even greater, since the power of avarice is known to be strongest in old men:

. . . considerando ancora l'età del donatore che era vecchio, con ciò sia cosa che ne' vecchi soglia continuamente avarizia molto più che ne' giovani avere potere.<sup>67</sup>

The lover and the magician were both more liberal than the husband, but the magician was most liberal of all.

Menedon has apparently not realized that Fiammetta, in her opening premise, in one stroke brilliantly exposed the fallacy of a sentimentally romantic or materialistic evaluation of the events; and by clinging stubbornly to his original viewpoint he is only further comically dramatizing his own moral blindness, his resistance to the

medieval "right reason" voiced by Fiammetta. Yet insofar as the reader shares his opinions, it seems as though Menedon has raised a number of valid points. These Fiammetta now undertakes to refute. Menedon has ignored several elementary truths in justifying his opinion. The first concerns the validity of the rash promise of the wife; the second, the nature of "honor" involved in the state of marriage; the third, the true nature of riches and poverty. As each of these truths is a fundamental commonplace of medieval thought which applies as well to the problem proposed by Chaucer's Franklin, they should be carefully considered individually.

It is true, states Fiammetta, that if the saramento fatto della donna were valid, Tarolfo's claim would have been just and the husband's permission would have shown little liberalità, or freedom. But such is not the case, if we examine the problem objectively, by virtue of the principle which holds that no oath can derogate a lawful oath previously made.

. . . ma la donna, con ciò sia cosa ch' ella sia membro del marito, o più tosto un corpo con lui, non poteva fare quel saramento senza volontà del marito, e se 'l fece, fu nullo; però ch'è al primo saramento lecitamente fatto niuno susseguente puote di ragione derogare, e massimamente quelli che per non dovuta cagione non debitamente si fanno; e ne' matrimoniali conguignimenti è usanza di guirare d'essere sempre contento l'uomo della donna, e la donna dell' uomo, né di mai l'uno

l'altro per altra cambiare; dunque la donna non poté giurare, e se giurò, come già detto avemo, per 'non dovuta cosa giurò, e contraria al primo giuramento, e non deve valere, e non valendo, oltre al suo piacere non si dovea commettere a Tarolfo, . . .

68

Tarolfo had no hold upon the lady, because, as he well knew, she was married. Hence he cannot be considered liberal in releasing her from her saramento (Ne del saramento non pote liberale essere rimettendolo, con ciò sia cosa che generosissimocosa che il saramento niente fosse . . .). There was, in effect, never an oath at all, since the lady's rash promise was, from the very start, null and void. What Fiammetta refers to, of course, as the primary, reasonable and binding saramento, is the marriage "troth," the sacramental oath before God sworn between husband and wife at the heart of the matrimonial ritual. The point is also implicit in the ironies generated in the Franklin's dealings with the term trouthe. If their actions are judged in this "customary" light, both husband and wife are seen to fail in essential loyalty. The wife had no right to make the promise she did without consulting her husband, and even under the moving circumstances of the story we now see her-- as it is probable Chaucer saw <sup>her</sup> her--unwilling to lose the attentions of Tarolfo but also unwilling to report them to her husband. Since she is not obliged to make any concessions at all--in fact, required not to do so--her impossible condition is not only an implicit derogation of her marriage vows but a clever means of preserving a lover and "propriety" at the same time. Like Dorigen, she simply sets an exorbitantly high price for her favors. The husband fails in his obligation to care for the integrity of his wife--to love her "as Christ loved His Church"--in a comically perverse act of "generosity," failing in the

process to recognize the force of the sacred marital saramento to which he is a party. To preserve what Menedon calls "honor" he sends her off to an adulterous tryst. Tarolfo, furthermore, now emerges as a troth-breaker who uses fraudulent means to corrupt a "lawful" marriage, to force a wife into adultery and a husband into dishonor. Tebano, finally, for ricchezza applies his wisdom and unnatural powers to produce the miraculous circumstances upon which Tarolfo's fraud is based.

Even before Fiammetta explicates her concept of marital "honor" it is reasonably evident that, as she says, Tarolfo ne Tebano . . . niuna liberalità facessero a rispetto del cavaliere. Yet she suggests that Menedon may not sufficiently respect the value of marital chastity, and hence not clearly realize the enormity of their crime--or the full cost of the husband's "liberality":

. . . voi forse nella vostra mente tacito ragionate  
che onore può essere quello della casta donna al  
marito che tanto debba esser caro. . . .<sup>69</sup>

The honor she speaks of bears no immediate relation to the system of temporal pleasures and rewards upon which Menedon has based his judgment. This honor, she points out, is the only reward for virtue, including the virtue of castità; and this honor is the source of all true excellence. Her version of honor is very like the idea of "true gentillesse" in the Chaucerian context: the Augustinian idea of gloria, good name before God, as distinguished from good name only in the opinions of men (inanis gloria, or vainglory). She presents it, in fact, as the condition of eternal salvation:

Questo onore, se con umiltà gli uomini, il sostengono,  
gli fa amici di Dio, e per conseguente felicemente  
vivere e morire, e poi possedere gli eterni beni.<sup>70</sup>

In the state of marriage the condition for this honor is "marital chastity!"  
The husband whose wife is chaste and faithful lives happily (vive lieto)  
through this "grace": Egli per questa grazia ne' mondani beni e ne'  
spirituali si vede continuo multiplicare.<sup>71</sup> The idealized marriage is  
thus an emblem of a state of temporal beatitude preceding eternal beat-  
itude, a sacramental mystery which gross minds such as the Franklin's  
see only in terms of a mundane blisful lyf as

The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee

805 That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf.

Fiammetta adds that the contrary follows when the wife is lacking in  
such virtue. She describes each state briefly, and concludes that the  
honor which the chaste wife renders to her husband is grandissimò, and  
is to be held molto caro.

Beato si può chiamare colui a cui per grazia cotal dono  
è concesso: avvegna che noi crediamo che pochi siano  
coloro a' quali di tal bene sia portato invidia.<sup>72</sup>

We may now see that Fiammetta exercised considerable restraint in her  
original statement that the Knight "did less than wisely," for she has  
now made clear how much he actually gave (vedete quanto il cavaliere  
dava) when he suffered his wife to go to Tarolfo: that is, no less  
than his eternal salvation. His act is an absolute rejection of the  
"honor" she commends. And she leaves us with this final thought: che  
l'onore che colui donava è irrecuperabile--a fact which now suggests

consequences--a partie--more serious than those attending simply a tarnished reputation.

Fiammetta's third point is directed at the basis of Menedon's judgment for Tebano. It is evident, she says, that he knows nothing of true poverty or riches, and she goes on to enumerate with proper authorities, the standard moral arguments respecting the incommunities of possessioun and the advantages of "voluntary poverty." In view of such authority, she argues, Tebano cannot be called "liberal," though he may be called "wise."

## VI

Fiammetta's clerkly reading of Menedon's tale suggests a method which may be fruitfully applied to Chaucer's Franklin's Tale. If as a consequence we have to modify our view of the Franklin and the world of "gentle" values he proposes, we should not be surprised. It is with direction allusion to the Boethian context that Chaucer describes the narrator, in the General Prologue, as Epicurus owene sone,

337       The heeld opinioun that pleyn delit  
          Was verrey felicitee parfit.

The tale simply abides by the values inherent in this system of "worldly" wisdom as Boethius, in his "clerkly argument," described their limitations.

A reading of the Franklin's Tale in the light provided by clerkly standards involves, if not an abandonment, at least a major qualification of the accepted reading. Seriously viewed in these terms,

the tale offers not a glowing illustration, but a comic parody, of medieval ideals. In detail that can only be artistically deliberate, each statement of principle, virtually every act of every character, can be understood as an element in a consistent inversion of the world of noble virtue we have been predisposed to find, with the result that we discover a world of fools and knaves pretending to magnanimity, and in the narrator one who really advocates ideals directly contrary to those he appears to recommend, a spokesman for vice--omnia vitiorum genera--masquerading as virtue. Viewed in these terms, that is to say, the Franklin's Tale can be read as an extended exercise in dramatic irony, fundamentally comic in nature: like many other Canterbury Tales a carefully controlled piece of self-revelation in which the world--even Truth itself--is "made over" to reflect the values of the speaker. The persona thus revealed is not Chaucer, but Chaucer's creature--an easily recognized version of a well-defined medieval stereotype, the Epicure or Worldly Wiseman; and this figure is the object not of admiration, but of subtle ridicule. Chaucer's approach is witty, not earnest or sentimental. The tale does not present us with "the final Chaucerian English wisdom on marriage,"<sup>73</sup>; rather it dramatizes a way of thinking, undoubtedly as prevalent in the fourteenth century as it is now, which Chaucer sees, in the light of eternal Trouthe, to be absurd.

QUEENS COLLEGE, City University of New York

## FOOTNOTES

1. G. L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), p. 210.
2. Phyllis Hodgson, ed., Chaucer: "The Franklin's Tale" (London, 1960), p. 7.
3. E. T. Donaldson, Chaucer's Poetry (New York, 1958), p. 926.
4. Hodgson, pp. 12-13.
5. See, e.g., 1 Cor. i, ii, and iii, 18-19--to cite a context which the Franklin is made to parody <sup>directly</sup> ~~directly~~ in his disclaimer of clerkly eloquence. The concept is a fundamental Scriptural commonplace, however.
6. 1 Cor. i, 22 and context.
7. Expositio super epistolas catholicas (PL XCIII, 92).
8. Ibid. The points are separated here for clarity. Bede goes on to say that these are the three elements in the "triple temptation" of Adam and of Christ, hence the pattern of all temptation to sin: "Per haec tria tantum cupiditas humana tentatur. Per haec Adam tentatus est et victus. Per concupiscentiam, scilicet, carnis, cum hostis cibum ligni vetitum ostendit, eumque ad comedendum suasit. Per concupiscentiam oculorum, cum diceret: Scientes bonum et malum, et aperietur oculi vestri (Gen. iii). Per superbiam

vitae, cum diceret: Eritis sicut dii (Ibid.). Per haec tentatus est Christus, et vicit. Per concupiscentiam carnis, id est, cibum, ubi suggeritur: Dic ut lapides isti panes fiant (Matth. iv). Per concupiscentiam oculorum, id est, curiositatem, ubi de pinna templi admonetur, ut se deorsum mittat, tentandi gratia, utrum ab angelis suscipiatur. Per superbiam vitae, id est, inanem jactantiam, ubi in monte constituto ostenduntur omnia regna terrae hujus, et promittuntur, si adoraverit." (Ibid., 92-93). It follows that submission to these three components of "the world" constitutes the state of sin into which Adam fell, and that rejection of them constitutes the state of grace.

9. In Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos, tract. II (PL XXXV, 1993).
10. Augustine specifies here the misuse of the necessities of life-- e.g., food, drink, procreation. Man should beware "ne ad fruendum hoc ametis, quod ad utendum habere debetis." (Ibid., 1996)
11. Ibid. He proceeds to relate the three aspects of the world to the three temptations of Christ. In the second temptation Christ refused to perform a miracle at the Devil's bidding. This would have been an act of curiositas. He did, however, perform miracles, but in the healing of the sick. Augustine analyses the same text extensively in Book X of his Confessions. See also Parst., 335.
12. References to Chaucer's text are all made to The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (2nd edn., Boston, 1957).

13. Walter M. Hart, "The Franklin's Tale," in Haverford Essays (Haverford, 1909), p. 190.
14. ParsT, 404.
15. WBT, 1159, 1162: the Boethian distinction of the Loathly Lady.
16. ParsT, 460-462.
17. See Boece III, pros. ii, 95-101; pros. iv, 37 ff.
18. In doing so he illustrates the epicurean principle that pleyn delit is true and perfect felicity. It is hard to see this arrangement as an "answer" to the Wife of Bath, as is commonly assumed.
19. Arveragus' contract is a medieval joke, more comic because the teller treats it seriously. The term obeye signals the comic inversion; in the marriage troth it is of course the wife who promises to obey the husband. See Eph. v, 22-33. The Knight here inverts the Scriptural ordination, Deus caput hominis, mulieris caput homo (1 Cor. xi, 3), by making mulier his head. This transfer of allegiance is a troth-breaking "treason" to the divine King; it reflects the up-so-down order of the state of sin described by the Parson (ParsT, 259 ff.); it amounts as well to an act of spiritual "adultery," a common metaphor for sin (see D. W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer [Princeton, 1962], pp. <sup>71 ff.</sup> ~~222~~, 374-5). None of these activities is especially chivalrous or promises to promote (even marital) peace.

20. Line 743. What the lordshipe is is defined in Eph. v, 22-24; what the Franklin, in his practical and experienced "wisdom," thinks it is; and the ideal of the "romantic" code--these are distinctly different. The line introduces a rhetorical shift from the curtailed record of Arveragus' wooing to the almost technically businesslike contract reported in lines 744 ff. The Franklin admires Arveragus, who is seen as a practical man, unlike Aurelius, not as a "courtly lover." His contract is a businesslike means of assuring marital comfort, not the expression of humble romantic devotion or aesthetic idolatry one expects of any lovere to his lady.
21. Note how the rhetoric of the lines calls attention to the irony, by interrupting the statement hadde spoke . . . to hire of love with the crucial phrase.
22. ParsT, 846.
23. The statement parodies the ideal in terms of which the husband loves his wife "as Christ loved His Church": here, to be crucified for her sake. Line 1475 comments ironically on Arveragus' perversion of this ideal.
24. Boece I, met. v, 52 ff.
25. J. S. P. Tatlock's view ("Astrology and Magic in Chaucer's Franklin's Tale," Kittredge Anniversary Papers /Boston, 1913/,

p. 350) that the tale is deliberately set in heathen times--a view necessitated in order to justify the diabolical magic of the Clerk of Orliens--endows Chaucer with an unusual historical sense for his day. This historical sense did not, apparently, prevent Dorigen from appropriating Boethius and Jerome, nor the community at large (at least every lusty man in it) from crying "Nowel" at Christmas. The University at Orléans was never pre-Christian, despite what appears to be a familiar inter-campus slur that its students studied black magic on the sly (see James F. Royster, "Chaucer's 'Colle Tregetour'," SP XXIII [1926], 380-384). It is doubtful that Chaucer as a practical artist intended any such historical point. His narrator, it is true, is deliberately given a pagan "voice," but this voice is merely a measure of his folly.

26. Which is not, incidentally, man's body. To be "slain by rocks" is, coincidentally, the Old Testament punishment for adultery.
27. The artifice of the garden emphasizes its man-constructed or "humane" (as opposed to its natural or "divine") quality. It is the conventional "false paradise" of epicures, a symbol for man-made, as opposed to divinely-ordained, values. It is an illusion of reality. The garden party is modeled on the text of 1 Cor. x, 7 (Exod. xxxvi, 6): "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

28. As a formal complaint (see lines 920, 1354), Dorigen's lament has been unjustly criticized on grounds of narrative realism alien to medieval literature and to Chaucer's artistic methods. The charges are neatly summarized by James Sledd, "Dorigen's Complaint," MP XLV (1947), 36 ff., who makes the case against a demand for naive pathos in our reading of the speech. Her "tragicomic roll call" is, as Sledd remarks (pp. 42-43), "a deliberate bit of rhetorical extravagance"; it is essentially comic in intent. Dorigen's exaggerated recitation of faithful women throws Jerome's text into an incongruous setting which highlights her womanly confusion and indecision. She cannot see that the very principle Jerome illustrates in his examples of female honestas (though Dorigen, perhaps significantly, draws exclusively from his exempla e saeculi historiis--i.e., examples of "ethnic virtue" [PL XXIII, 270]) provides the uncomplicated solution to the dilemma she laments, and does not force upon her the single alternatives of dishonor or suicide. Simply preserving her honestas will suffice. These cases in Jerome appeal to mundi sapientia, unlike the cases of Christian honor cited earlier; he had grave reservations concerning the commission of one sin (self-murder) to avoid a lesser. But Dorigen is exaggerating the seriousness of her position, too--it bears only the faintest resemblance to the dire plights of the pagan heroines she brings to mind.

The second complaint has been studied in detail by Germaine

Dempster, "Chaucer at Work on the Complaint in the Franklin's Tale," MLN LII (1937), 16-23. Her conclusions, which see in the speech a "perfunctoriness . . . lack of interest . . . a degree of negligence and rape, not to say boredom, of which we find very few other instances in his works" (p. 22), appear to be founded more on statistics than on any appreciation of literary effects. The Franklin's Tale can hardly be called a "hasty" piece of writing in other respects. Dorigen's complaint is better seen as a polished comic monologue reflecting her wavering intent. She would like to extend the list indefinitely, so as not to have to be "noble." Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse, / Koude I nowtelle as touchynge this mateere, she says, and we should feel sure she would have told them all if Arveragus had not come home upon the <sup>thridde</sup> ~~thridde~~ nyght. This is a kind of inverse of the joke on female argumentation involved when she earlier uses as evidence the hundred thousand bodyes of mankynde which she does not have in mynde. Here she begins with tales she can recall in some detail (1367-1418); pauses to take stock (1419-1425), concluding:

I wol be trewe unto Arveragus,  
Or rather sleen myself in som manere,  
As did Demociones doghter deere. . . .

And, since she cannot rest with the resolve to slay herself, she is off again on a frantic catalogue of heroines she does not know so well, ending with a bare list of names. The pace of the speech

reflects her distraction. Note should be made of the dramatic reading of the complaint by Sledd (esp. p. 43); in that I feel that the conduct of the complaint is a frankly comic exposure of Dorigen's womanly wit I depart, however, at least in emphasis, from his view of its place in the scheme of the Franklin's Tale (Sledd, p. 41). Manly complained that Chaucer here lacked "psychological insight," thus failing to cause "his distressed and desperate heroine to express the real feelings appropriate to her character and situation" (Chaucer and the Rhetoricians [London, 1926], p. 20)--but he was sentimentally predisposed as to just what feelings she should express, and did not want to accept the "feelings" she does express.

Chaucer, finally, does not make use of casual allusion here; he depended upon the literate members of his audience <sup>to recognize</sup> recognizing the original authority, as he did in the Wife of Bath's Jeromiad, drawn from material immediately preceding in the adversus Jovinianum. Here as there he uses the comic device of mismanaging the matter of a standard auctoritee. Dorigen's management of the order of heroines in Jerome is possibly more suitable as a dramatic expression of her state of mind than as any indication of Chaucer's method of composition: a mark not of Chaucer's "perfunctory" thinking, but of Dorigen's.

29. Arveragus' "return" underlines his continuing perversion of the Christlike office of the husband: Christ returned <sup>to his "Spouse"</sup> from the dead upon the third day.

30. The phrasing imitates that of the Confessional. The good confessor, who acts in perfect amicitia, seems to have been conventionally given the name "Friend." Arveragus here greets Dorigen with glad chiere, in freendly wyse. Ami, in the Roman de la Rose, who contributes not a little to the portrait of the Franklin, is identified in the <sup>inverse</sup> commentary of Jean Molinet as the good confessor. (Ami's advice, like that of the Franklin, and of Arveragus in this scene, is clearly that of the "false friend.")
31. On any one of at least three elementary grounds Dorigen's oath is obviously not binding: 1) No oath is binding which derogates a lawful oath previously made (in this case the marriage troth). 2) No one can bind himself by an oath to sin. 3) No one is obliged to honor an oath whose conditions are fulfilled by fraud. The first two principles are emphasized by Boccaccio in his analysis of the tale (discussed below). The views proposed by R. Blennerhasset, "Autobiographical Aspects of Chaucer's Franklin," Speculum XXVIII (1953), 791-800, bear no relation to the self-evident facts of the case. *This view has recently been elaborately confirmed by Alan T. Gaylord, "The Promises in The Franklin's Tale," ELH XXXI (1964) 331-365.*
32. See Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, pp. 393 ff.
33. ParsT, 847. That Chaucer had the standards of the Parson's context in mind when he created this "romantic" situation in the FrankT even verbal correspondences indicate. See also Boece II, pros. vii for another conventional description of the anguish accompanying the pursuit of delyces of body.

34. Parst, 839.
35. Parst, 874-875.
36. Parst, 876-878. See 1 Cor. iii, 17. The Parson uses the example of Joseph, who, tempted by Potiphar's wife (Gen. xxxix, 8-9), resisted on these grounds. "Alas," he adds, "al to litel is swich trouthe now yfounde." It is an ironic commentary on the perverse values of Arveragus that, at the moment of theft, Dorigen is not stolen agayns his wille.
37. Parst, 881.
38. On May 6, the Feast of the Martyrdom of St John, who defined "all that is in the world." John is a martyr who did not die. Boiled in oil before the Latin Gates, he may offer an ironic prototype for Aurelius' agonies. His martyrdom is mentioned by Jerome in the adversus Jovinianum in a passage commemorated in the Roman ritual for May 6.
39. Aurelius' plea for "justice," like Shylock's, not only is based on a violation of intent (or spirit), hence of truth, but is like the request of the soul only apparently regenerate for salvation at the Bar of Justice, since the rock-moving is a fraud, an apparence.
40. Luke iv, 5-8; in Matth. iv, 8-10 the temptation is the third and last. The "lord of this world" is, in the language of the

Bible, the devil (see, e.g., John xii, 31; xiv, 30; xvi, 11; etc.) Aurelius' profession of love is delicately foreshadowed in Dorigen's first compleynte:

Desir of his presence hir so distreyneth

That al this wyde world she sette at noght.

The echo suggests an underlying equation. But what is natural in mulier is not excusable in vir. Aurelius, in other words, is dramatizing his "womanly" nature (in medieval terms, the maistrie of his "manly" lust for Dorigen). A renaissance version of the same paradox is discussed in "The Myth of Mars's Hot Minion in Venus and Adonis," ELH XXVI (1959), 470-481.

41. Parst, 847, 849.
42. Matth. xix, 21-22. The idea of selling all he has to purchase the kingdom of heaven is of course commonplace. Two examples are set side by side in Matth. xiii, 44-46. The images in the tale are emphasized by repetition (see lines 1580, 1583-4).
43. In this sense, too, Aurelius is al fordo, although he does not know it. The context is clearest in Heb. ix, 15-16; but see also Ezek. xxxvi, 12; xliv, 28; Eph. i, 11-14; Col. i, 12; iii, 24; i Pet. i, 4; etc. This is a very popular figure, used, for example, in the encyclopedists' definition of a clerk as haeres Dei. The concept underlies the definition of true gentillesse, the "gentry of the soule" which "maketh hym Crystes child." Aurelius comically bewails his loss only of

worldly gentillesse based on property.

44. De ecclesiasticis officiis II, ii: de regulis clericorum (PL LXXXIII, 778). My italics.
45. The causes of which Dorigen speaks are fully discussed in the de consolatione IV, pros. v - pros. vi. It is the activity of "<sup>to unwrappen the hidde causes of thinges, and to discovere ... the Philosophia</sup> resouns covered with derknes": i.e., to make clear the causes of seeming confusion in the divine order (IV, pros. iv, 27). An ignorance of causes leads to the equation of God's providence and fortune. In his ignorance Boethius asks "what difference thanne may ther be bytwixen that that God doth and the hap of fortune, yif men ne knowe nat the cause why that it is?" (ibid., 36-39). Philosophia responds that it is no merveille "that men wenen that ther be somewhat foolissh and confus, whan the <sup>resoun</sup> ~~reason~~ of the ordre is unknowe," and concludes with the statement Dorigen echoes here:

But although that thou ne knowe nat the causes of so gret a disposicioun, natheles for as moche as God, the gode governour, attempreth and governeth the world, ne doute the nat that alle thinges ne ben don aryght. (ibid., 43-48)

Line 886 echoes the phrase in Rom. iii, 28: "Scimus autem quoniam diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum." This text is interpreted in the Ordinary Gloss to <sup>imply</sup> the Boethian formula: ". . . facit omnia diligentibus se provenire in bonum, prospera vel adversa; talis enim Deus consolatur prosperis,

exercet adversis. Prosunt ergo mala quae fideles pie perferunt, vel ad emendanda sive demenda peccata, vel ad exercendam probandamque justitiam, vel ad demonstrandam hujus vitae miseriam. Ideoque . . . omnia saeculi mala remissis peccatis remanere debuerunt, ut haberet homo cum quibus pro veritate certaret, et unde exercitaret virtus fidelium." (PL CXIV, 498). The insistence that adversa provide a useful test of "truth" and "faith" makes the text most appropriate to the terms of the Franklin's Tale.

46. De universo (PL CXI, 422). Ecclesiastical condemnation of magic is summarized by Tatlock, Scene of Chaucer's Franklin's Tale Visited (London, 1941), p. 35, and by T. O. Wedel, The Mediaeval Attitude Toward Astrology, Yale Studies in English LX (New Haven, 1920). The Parson says of "fals enchantours or nigromanciens" that "they doon cursedly and dampnably agayns Crist and al the feith of hooly chirche" (Parst, 603).
47. De universo (PL CXI, 424).
48. Ibid., 425.
49. PL CX, 1096-7.
50. Parst, 1076-7.
51. Parst, 1077-9.
52. The scene suggests the text of 1 Cor. xiii, 12: Videmus nunc

per speculum in enigmate, tunc autem facie ad facies.

53. Under the title de natura ardeae Hugh of St Victor describes the heron as an emblem for animae electorum in some detail (de bestiis et aliis rebus, PL CLXXVII, 47). The text is drawn from Rabanus Maurus, de universo (PL CXI, 246); but Hugh expands the "moralization" upon the heron's "nature." Petrus Berchorius uses Pliny, Aristotle, Ambrose's Hexaameron, to confirm the same interpretation (Redactorum Morale VII, x, in Opera Omnia Moguntiae, 1609<sup>7</sup>, I, 184), and adds that hawks which pursue the heron represent the devil. In short, this element of the Clerk's enigmatic vision is authoritatively traditional. Add to this that the falcon, according to Berchorius, is especially a hunter of herons. Among several possible moralizations, we read the following concerning this "hunt":

Ad capiendum ardeam sunt duo falcones necessarij. . . .  
Sic duo tentatores capiunt homines, scilicet diabolus,  
qui suggerendo ad peccatum impellit, caro vel mundus  
qui per malas complacentices, ne resurgit, impedit.  
(VIII, xxx: ed. cit., I, 198).

The image of the "fowler" is detailed by B. G. Koonce, "Satan the Fowler," Mediaeval Studies XXI (1959), 176-184.

54. In the tradition of the encyclopedists the hart or stag enigmatically emblemizes the good Christian, pursued in "the forest of this world" by the devil and his accomplices. Thus Berchor-

ius interprets the stag wounded by arrows as the bonus Christianus . . . vulneratus . . . per peccatum (op. cit., X, xxvi: De Ceruo: ed. cit., I, 358). The hounds persecuting the stags represent canes, id est, mundus, caro, daemonia per tentationes, & tribulationes varias (ibid., p. 359); the chase occurs in silua mundi huius (ibid., p. 360). In particular,

Ceruus est bonus christianus, qui . . . quando à venatore diabolo, & canibus suis, id est, tentationibus insequitur, & fugatur, vt scilicet per peccata mortalia capiatur, tunc dico, quod debet currere vsque ad fluuium deuotionis. . . . (ibid., p. 360; the reference is to Psalm xli).

Sometimes the hart does not escape:

. . . à canibus capitur, & necatur. Sic homo calefactus tentationibus, quandoque currit ad fluuium deliciarum mundi, & ibi intantum frigescit per indeuotionem, & rigescit per obstinationem, quod non potest currere vel fugere, vel per bona opera amplius ~~sempius~~ ambulare, sed adueniente venatore, id est, à demonibus occiditur, & necatur. (ibid.)

55. The daunce itself is a familiar euphemism for sensual gratification, closely related to the olde daunce at which the Wife of Bath is so expert in her age. Here it is reminiscent of the dance in the garden earlier.

56. In the de consolacione III, pr. i, Philosophia makes a promise to Boethius similar to that reflected in the Clerk's visions, in such a way as to clarify the principle behind the inversion at hand. She says she will lead Boethius "To thilke verray welefulnesse /true prosperity or felicity/. . . of which thyn herte dremeth," but adds, "but forasmoche as thi syghte is occupyed and destourbed by imagynacioun of erthly thynges, thow mayst nat yit seen thilke selve welefulnesse." Boethius, with the same anxious anticipation as that exhibited by Aurelius, demands that she show him thilke verray welefulnesse, . . . withoute taryinge. (~~pr. 313~~) Aurelius demands:

But looketh now, for no necligence or slouthe

1233 Ye tarie us heere no lenger than to-morwe,  
and having been promised the fulfillment of his heart's dreams, goes to bedde to pleasant dreams, since this hope of blisse brings comfort to his woful herte (lines 1235-1238).

The principle upon which the Clerk's illusions are constructed is the distinction between the objects of true and false welefulnesse explicated in detail throughout the de consolacione. The Clerk is a promulgator of the kind of vision described as the imagynacioun of erthly thynges; but it should also be clear that the same principle explains the imaginary views promoted by all of the characters in the tale.

57. Line 1230. In the de magicis artibus Rabanus Maurus says that Satan, as a magician, appears as an angel of light--i.e., in

the appearance of a wise and just man--and deludes people by showing them what they want, ut adoretur quasi Deus. (PL CX, 1100). The phrase knyt, earlier used by Dorigen (line 986), suggests that Aurelius may be "married" to the diabolic clerk.

58. By recourse to astronomical treatises of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, J. S. P. Tatlock inferred a technical dating of the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of January for the accomplishment of this miracle ("Astrology and Magic in Chaucer's Franklin's Tale," p. 344, n. 1). This mathematical calculation is, however, artistically purposeless; it is unlikely that the audience carried in their heads the tables Tolletanes and other abstruse data from which this conclusion is obtained. The more natural association with Epiphany is probably intended, especially in view of its artistic propriety and the association with the Magi ab Oriente. The date would then be January 6. Chaucer's audience was certainly far better acquainted with the order of the Christian calendar, to which the context calls attention, than with the complexities of astrological ephemeris. Epiphany is referred to by the Church Fathers as the Manifestatio Christi. It is perhaps needless to add that the birth of Christ (the Rock?) was agayns nature (it is one of the articles of Christian faith described as unacceptable to the sapientia mundi, the "wisdom of the Greeks," in glosses to 1 Cor. i, 22). Finally, this manifestation changed the basis of the lives of all to whom it was revealed.

59. This is not the place to examine the possible relationship between the Filocolo version of the story and Chaucer's. Cummings, Hart, and Schofield reject Filocolo as Chaucer's source, as against the view of Raajna and Tatlock. The more meticulous *Lowes makes direct affiliation appear probable, on the basis of study of parallels in narrative detail and phraseology; his view is accepted in most recent criticism of the tale and by SA.* It will appear that similarities of technique and content considerably strengthen the case for direct filiation.
60. Giovanni Boccaccio, Filocolo, a cura di Enrico Bianchi, Carlo Salinari, Natalino Sapegno, La Letteratura Italiana, Storia e Testi VIII (Milano, 1952), pp. 854-5. For each quotation I provide the pleasant translation by H. G. [Henry Grantham? ], published under the title A pleasaunt disport of diuers Noble Personages (London, 1567). "It is now doubted, in whether of these was the greatest liberalitie, either in the knight that had giuen libertie to his wife to go to Tarolfo, either in Tarolfo, who sent the lady (whom he had always desired, and for whose sake he had done so much, to come to that iumpe, whervnto he was comen, when as she came vnto him) backe to hir husband free: or in Thebane, who hauing abandoned his countrey (being now olde) for to gaine the promised rewardes, and being come thether, toiled him selfe to bring that to an ende, which he had promised, wherby he iustly deserued the same, did now remit the whole to Tarolfo, and remained poore as he was of the first." (p. 21<sup>v</sup>).

61. Ed. cit., p. 855. "Of trowth eache one was very liberall, considering the first of his honour, the second of his lasciuious desire, and the third that of his rewarded riches, was very curteous." (p. 21<sup>V</sup>).
62. Ibid. " . . . We shall manifestly know the most liberall, by-cause who most giueth, is to be helde most liberall." (p. 21<sup>V</sup>).
63. Ibid. ". . . of the which three, the one is deare, that is Honour, . . . The second is to be fled, that is, the wanton delights of Venus, . . . The third is not to be desired, that is Riches: forsomuch as the most times they are noisome to a vertuous life. . . . If then of these three, only Honour is to be helde deare, and the others not, he vsed the greatest liberalitie that gaue his wife to another, although he did lesse than wisely therein. He was also the chiefest in liberalitie, wherein the others folowed him: therefore according to our iudgement he that gaue his wife in whome consisted his honour, was aboue the rest, the most liberall." (pp. 21<sup>V</sup>-22<sup>R</sup>).
64. Ibid., p. 856. ". . . who giueth that he may not denie, doth but well in making himselfe liberall thereof, and it was but a trifle he gaue: and <sup>therefore</sup> ~~therefore~~ . . . eche one of the other was more curteous." (p. 22<sup>R</sup>).
65. Ibid. "Then was he, to conclude, liberall both of the honor of the husband, and of the othe of his lady, and of his owne

long desire. It is a greate matter to haue endured long thirst, and to come to a pleasant fountaine, and not to drinke, but suffer others to drinke." (p. 22<sup>V</sup>).

66. Ibid. ". . . pouertie is one of the most lothsome thinges of the world to bear, for so much as it is the chaser away both of mirth and rest, a flier of honours, a frequenter of vertue, and the inducer of crabbed care. . . ." (p. 22<sup>V</sup>).
67. Ibid., p. 857. ". . . considering also of the age of the giuer, that was now olde: forasmuch as auarice was wont to be continually of greater force in old men than in yong. . . ." (p. 23<sup>F</sup>). It should be apparent from this premise that Menedon's argument is another extended medieval joke.
68. Ibid. "But the wife forasmuch as she is a membre of hir husband, or rather one body with him, could not iustly make such an othe without the will of hir husbände: and yet if she did make such an othe, it was nothing, because the first othe lawfully made, could notwith reason be derogate by any following, chiefly not by those that are not duly made for a reasonable cause. And the maner is in matrimoniall vnitings the man to sweare to be contente with the woman, and the woman with the man, and neuer to change the one the other for an other. Now then, the woman can not sweare, and if she do sweare (as we haue sayde) she sweareth for a thing vnlawful, and so contrary to the former othe it ought not to preuaile, and not preuailing otherwise

- than for his pleasure, he ought not to commit his wife to Tarolfo. . . ." (p. 23<sup>v</sup>).
69. Ibid., p. 858. ". . . you peradventure with silence argue in your minde, what honour may that be of a chaste woman to hir husbände, which ought to be so deare. . . ." (p. 23<sup>v</sup>).
70. Ibid. "This honour if men with humilitie seeke to support it, it maketh them friendes to God, and so by consequent to liue, and after death, to possesse the goodes efernal. . . ." (p. 24<sup>r</sup>).
71. Ibid. "He thorow this obtained fauour is seene continually to increase, both in spirituall and worldly wealth." (p. 24<sup>r</sup>).
72. Ibid. "Blessed may he be called to whom thorowe grace is graunted such a gifte, although we beleue they are but few, towards whome is borne enuy for so gret a benefite." (p. 24<sup>v</sup>).
73. John Spiers, Chaucer the Maker (2nd. edn., rev., London, 1960), p. 164.