"SO CHARITABLE AND SO PITOUS": POSSIBLE SOURCES OF THE OBJECTS OF MADAME EGLENTYNE'S CHARITY AND PITY

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PREFACE

In this paper I advance the thesis that the "mous/Kaught in a trappe" and the "smale houndes," two details of Chaucer's portrait of the Prioress in "The General Prologue" of <u>The Canterbury Tales</u>, may have their source in the sermon literature and proverbial sayings of the period. Although Bartlett Jere Whiting has published an extensive treatment of proverbs in Chaucer's work and although Muriel Bowden and G. R. Owst have hinted at the possible influence of sermon literature on Chaucer's portrait of the Prioress, I know of no work which offers an extended analysis in terms of sermon literature and proverbs of the two details which I discuss. My demonstration proceeds from the assumption that Chaucer's Prioress is an individual within a class rather than a character typical of a class; and it proceeds from the assumption that Chaucer's ability to communicate ideas effectively to his medieval audience was contingent upon his willingness to draw upon images familiar to that audience. Since Chaucer, of course, wrote prior to the invention of the printing press, he must have drawn upon the forms of expression most readily available to his audience, namely sermon literature and proverbial sayings. My analysis of the two details supports those critics who have argued that Chaucer's Prioress is very much an individual and that she is an object of Chaucer's stern, yet uncondemning satire.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Jane Marie Luecke for inspiring my interest in Chaucer, for allowing me the latitude and giving me the

encouragement to continue my research when early efforts proved futile, and for giving me much advice and many helpful suggestions. I am equally appreciative of Dr. David S. Berkeley's sound instruction in research methods and his helpful suggestions for revision of the original draft of this paper. Also, Dr. William R. Wray, Dr. Samuel H. Woods, Jr., Dr. Clinton C. Keeler, Mr. Roland Sodowsky, Mrs. Jennifer Horinek and Mr. Andrew Harnack have offered useful suggestions at various stages in the preparation of this paper. Last, but certainly not least, I am grateful to my wife, Jane, for her encouragement, patience, and help in seeing this study through to completion.

"SO CHARITABLE AND SO PITOUS": POSSIBLE SOURCES OF THE OBJECTS OF MADAME EGLENTYNE'S CHARITY AND PITY

From the vast quantity of scholarship devoted to Chaucer's portrait of Madame Eglentyne, two schools of thought clearly emerge, one urging the tenuous position that as a typical fourteenth-century Benedictine nun the Prioress is not subject to Chaucer's satire and a second urging that she is very much an individual and the object of his satire.

Most important of those critics who have treated the Prioress as a typical nun is Sister M. Madeleva, who charges opposing critics with following "methods of microscopic analysis of . . . [Chaucer's nuns] out of their habitual environment rather than telescopic synthesis of them in their environment."[1] But Sister M. Madeleva's "telescopic synthesis" cannot explain why Chaucer chose to include certain specific details in his portrait of Madame Eglentyne. Sister M. Madeleva, for example, fails to account adequately for Chaucer's borrowing the description of the Prioress' table manners from the advice of La Vieille in the well known _Roman de la Rose_ on how a worldly woman might win and hold her lover;[2] neither can she explain why a Benedictine nun would choose a name common for romance heroines;[3] nor can she offer textual evidence to support her contention that the food the Prioress gives to her "smale houndes" was, as she asserts, "gathered from the table when the meal was over" (p. 15); and she refuses, in spite of her insistence that the

Prioress be interpreted according to the "Rule" (p. 5), to consider the fact that fourteenth-century bishops frequently tried to dissuade nuns from keeping pets and the fact that the Church expressly forbade nuns to go on pilgrimages.[4] What Sister M. Madeleva's Procrustean synthesis does is shape Madame Eglentyne into so much of a religious that she, to paraphrase Benjamin B. Wainwright, loses her humanity and becomes prematurely canonized.[5] But Madame Eglentyne is neigher saint nor type; she is, like all the other Canterbury pilgrims enroute to the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket, _sui generis_; and the poet-Chaucer's portrait of her includes those details appropriate to the pilgrim-Chaucer's impression of her as an individual in her class and not as an idealized type.

By viewing the Prioress as an individual in her class, critics of the second school have consistently tried to understand Madame Eglentyne in terms not only of the details Chaucer includes in her portrait but also in terms of the probable reasons Chaucer had for including the details he did include. Thus John Livingston Lowes correctly points to Chaucer's satiric genius by remarking that "every detail . . . [of Chaucer's description of the Prioress] might have come from any fourteenth-century lover's description of his mistress" (p. 440) and that in his "choice of words and phrases, Chaucer suggests the delightfully imperfect submergence of the woman in the nun" (p. 442). Although Lowes too hastily identifies a possible source for "every detail" in the portrait, there can be no mistaking the soundness of his approach since he attempts to understand Madame Eglentyne as Chaucer's audience would have understood her. But Lowes does not treat two of the most interesting details in the portrait, the "mous/Kaught in a trappe" (A 144-145) and the "smale houndes" (A 146).[6]

Critics respond variously to the appearance of these two details in Chaucer's portrait of Madame Eglentyne; most interpret the two details in terms of the Prioress' charity (A 143), "conscience" (A 142 and 150), and "tendre herte" (A 150). Miss Power, however, can see no relation between the details and the Prioress' charity, "conscience," and "tendre herte" (p. 83); and John Matthews Manly's suggestion that the dogs are objects of the Prioress' maternal instincts[7] is a misinterpretation of the animal-imagery in the portrait. Citing passages from The Book of the Duchess, "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," and "The Summoner's Tale" as evidence of Chaucer's love of animals, Florence H. Ridley offers the tenuous conclusion that Chaucer "would not have considered such love [the Prioress' love of animals] a particularly effective device for the creation of satire" (p. 23). By reasoning thus, Miss Ridley accuses Chaucer of being unable to keep the love of pets in proper perspective. Miss Ridley argues further that since Chaucer meant "conscience" to refer to the Prioress' sensibility rather than to her moral faculty, the Prioress' "weeping when her pets are kicked or beaten or killed . . . can scarcely be seen as harsh mockery" (p. 24). However, writing three years earlier than Miss Ridley, D. W. Robertson, Jr. showed that such a meaning of "conscience" was extremely rare during the fourteenth century (p. 245). R. J. Schoeck, on the other hand, grants the two possible meanings for the word "conscience" during the fourteenth century but is eager to point out that the object of Madame Eglentyne's "tenderness" or sensibility "is not the neighbor but pets" (p. 248). "The point is not," Schoeck continues "that this is 'the sort of woman who would weep even over a dead mouse or a whipped dog'; it is that she weeps only over such sentimentalized" objects (p. 249). Miss Bowden lends support to Schoeck's

position by citing a fourteenth-century sermon preached by John Bromyard against the wealthy who pay more to feed their dogs than they do the poor. In arguing that the "mouse allusion" offers stern criticism of the Prioress, Miss Bowden writes, "It is only thus far, Chaucer implies, that the Prioress's charity and pity are aroused: it is the suffering of a mouse which calls forth her sympathy" (p. 98). If Miss Bowden is correct, as I think she is, Robertson says a good deal when he urges that "The nun's conscience is . . . consistent with the iconography of her table manners" (p. 246). Supporting the ideas of both Miss Bowden and Robertson, J. M. Steadman lays the groundwork for the present study. Steadman contends that

> Chaucer studiedly omits any real instance of charity or pity and substitutes instead examples which any fourteenth-century reader familiar with medieval doctrine concerning the theological virtues should easily have recognized as false.[8]

Steadman finds support for his thesis in Aquinas' _Summa Theologica_ as well as in _The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English_. He argues, on the basis of Aquinas' view of charity, that "Mme Eglentyne's charity could not . . . be true charity, for it was directed toward irrational objects rather than toward God or man" (p. 3). For Steadman, the Prioress' charity does not conform to the virtue of mercy, or pity, but rather stands as a parody of that virtue (p. 5).

This paper will lend support to Steadman's thesis by advancing the idea that Chaucer, in having his Prioress weep at the sight of a mouse caught in a trap, draws upon the pejorative connotations associated with mice during the Middle Ages and alludes to the mousetrap metaphor used in the sermons of St. Augustine; this paper will also support Steadman's thesis by urging that Chaucer, in associating the Prioress with dogs,

probably borrows from the familiar sermon literature of the fourteenth century which consistently links the ownership of dogs with a decadent clergy and false charity.

The details from Chaucer's portrait of Madame Eglentyne appear within the space of six lines; but to appreciate them fully, one must see them in the context of three additional lines.

> But, for to speken of hire conscience,
> She was so charitable and so pitous
> She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous
> Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
> Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde
> With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed.
> But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
> Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
> And al was conscience and tendre herte. (A 142-150)

Chaucer's arrangement of the details in this passage follows the same general arrangement of the entire portrait: both the portrait and the nine lines under review begin and end on a religious note: the portrait begins with "Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse" (A 118) and ends with the "brooch" (A 160) on which was written, "*Amor vincit omnia*" (A 162); and the passage in which appear the "mous" and "smale houndes" begins and ends with the word "conscience." That Chaucer's audience would have identified a concept of divine love with a prioress is, I think, beyond question; what can be questioned is why Chaucer delayed until after he had pointed to the Prioress' individual traits to make the identification explicit. Apparently, Chaucer wanted his audience to see the modification of the religious ideal when applied to so individual an ecclesiastic as a prioress whose name, Eglentyne, had both religious and secular connotations;[9] thus, by presenting first the Prioress' individual character traits, Chaucer defines the individual of a particular class in terms of the ideal peculiar to that class, "*Amor vincit omnia*." Just as divine

love functions as the ideal against which Chaucer's audience could judge Madame Eglentyne, it qualifies the concept of "conscience" in the nine lines quoted above. On this point, Chaucer is also explicit. He sees Madame Eglentyne's "conscience" in terms of the adjectives "charitable" and "pitous" or in terms of the ideals of charity and mercy, both of which are manifestations of divine love in the sublunary world. In the passage, as in the portrait as a whole, Chaucer exposes certain of Madame Eglentyne's character traits in order to establish a contrast between the individual and the ideal. Thus Chaucer very pointedly says that the objects of Madame Eglentyne's "charity" are mice and dogs.

But for Chaucer the objects of "parfit charitee," the charity most consonant with divine love, are God and neighbor as he makes clear in his portrait of the Plowman:

> A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
> Lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee.
> God loved he best with al his hoole herte
> At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
> And thanne his neighebore right as hymselve.
> He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
> For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
> Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
> His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,
> Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel. (A 531-540)

In spite of the ambiguity which marks the combination of a somewhat romantic lady and the motto, Chaucer does not intend for his audience to question that charity and pity derive from divine love; what he wants his audience to question are the objects of Madame Eglentyne's pity and charity--mice and dogs. Appreciation of the passage, then, is contingent upon the connotations "mous" and "smale houndes" had for Chaucer's medieval audience.

Chaucer's audience may have seen a good deal of irony in the portrait of a prioress who wept over the sight of a mouse caught in a trap.

For as Chaucer read his description of Madame Eglentyne to his audience, this particular detail may have called to mind the many proverbial associations of mice with drunkenness.[10] Chaucer himself uses these same associations elsewhere in The Canterbury Tales. For example, in "The Knight's Tale" Arcite, commenting on the fickleness of Fortune, says to Palamon,

> We witen nat what thing we preyen heere:
> We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.
> A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,
> But he noot which the righte wey is thider,
> And to a dronke man the wey is slider. (A 1260-1264)

And the Wife of Bath relates how she won dominance over one of her husbands by accusing him, in part, of coming "hoom as dronken as a mous" (D 246).

The association of drunkenness and mice might seem a trivial matter to speak of here; but if one remembers that Chaucer's time saw drunkenness as a form of gluttony and that gluttony, as it is treated in "The Parson's Tale," was something of an antithesis of charity and itself a mortal sin,[11] one gets some idea of what these combinations probably meant to Chaucer's audience. Moreover, the passage wherein Chaucer links mice and charity follows immediately the rather lengthy Roman de la Rose passage describing Madame Eglentyne's table manners. Something of what Chaucer intended by so arranging his portrait of Madame Eglentyne can be gathered from the pejorative references in "The Parson's Tale" to members of the clergy who utterly neglect the needs of the poor and from the many references in fourteenth-century sermon literature to the rich who had no inclination for sharing their wealth with the poor. Chaucer apparently wanted his audience to associate mice, which were emblematic of

gluttony, with the table manners of the court, a community which sermon writers thought notable for its lack of charity.[12]

Meyer Schapiro, in a very interesting article on the mousetrap symbolism in the Merode Altarpiece, presents an illuminating summary of the connotations of *mous* during the *Middle Ages*. Schapiro writes,

> In popular magic and folklore, the mouse is a creature of most concentrated erotic and diabolical meaning. It is the womb, the unchaste female, the prostitute, the devil; it is believed to arise by spontaneous generation from excrement or whirlwind; its liver grows and wanes with the moon; it is important for human pregnancy; it is a love instrument; its feces are an aphrodisiac.[13]

While one cannot prove that Chaucer had these connotations in mind when he created his picture of Madame Eglentyne, one can assume that at least some of these connotations were familiar to Chaucer and his audience. If one remembers that the Prioress' name was a common name for romance heroines, if he remembers that Chaucer took the description of Madame Eglentyne's table manners from the *Roman de la Rose*, and if he admits the possibility suggested by Richard L. Hoffman that the Prioress' motive for following the advice of La Vieille "is identical with . . . [her] reason for giving it" (p. 27), then endless possibilities for Chaucerian irony arise.

Another possibility for Chaucerian irony must be admitted if Chaucer was familiar with St. Augustine's use of the mousetrap metaphor. Meyer Schapiro (p. 182) cites Augustine's use of the metaphor in *Sermo CCLXIII* ("*De ascensione Domini*"), *Sermo CXXX* (on John 5:5-14), and *Sermo CXXXIV* (on John 8:31-34). In *Sermo CCLXIII* Augustine writes that at Christ's death Satan took, as it were, the bait from the mousetrap ("*tanquam in muscipula escam accepit*") and that by that action the cross

of the Lord ("crux Domini") became the Devil's mousetrap ("muscipula diaboli"):

> Exsultavit diabolus quando mortuus est Christus, et ipsa morte Christi est diabolus victus, tanquam in muscipula escam accepit. Gaudebat ad mortem, quasi praepositus mortis. Ad quod gaudebat, inde illi tensum est. Muscipula diaboli, crux Domini: esca qua caperetur, mors Domini.[14]

Similarly, in Sermo CXXX Augustine speaks of Christ holding out His cross as though it were a mousetrap:

> Sed venit Remptor, et victus est deceptor. Et quid fecit Redemptor noster captivatori? Ad pretium nostrum tetendit muscipulam crucem suan: posuit ibi quasi escam sanquinem suum. (Pat. Lat., 38, col. 726)

"St. Augustine," Schapiro writes of Sermo CCLXIII, "considering the redemption of man by Christ's sacrifice employs the metaphor of the mousetrap to explain the necessity of the incarnation" (p. 182). Margaret B. Freeman, writing of one of the other Augustinian sermons, adds the following:

> The human flesh of Christ was the bait in the mousetrap which finally caught the devil. As Saint Augustine writes: "The devil exulted when Christ died, but by this very death of Christ the devil is vanquished, as if he had swallowed the bait in the mousetrap. . . . What he rejoiced in was then his own undoing. The cross of the Lord was the devil's mousetrap; the bait by which he was caught was the Lord's death."[15]

Gustaf Aulén, a Danish theologian, augments the interpretations of Schapiro and Freeman. Aulén writes that

> Augustine uses the simile of a mouse-trap; as the mice are enticed into the trap by the bait, so Christ is the bait by which the devil is caught. Gregory the Great frequently enlarges on this theme, and his imagery leaves nothing to be desired in the way of grotesque realism.
>
> . . . .
>
> However crude the form, the endeavor is to show that God does not stand, as it were, outside the drama that is being played out, but Himself takes part in it, and attains His purpose by

> internal, not by external, means; He overcomes evil, not by an almighty <u>fiat</u>, but by putting in something of his own, through a Divine self-oblation.[16]

Aulén further insists that Gregory's drawing on the meaning of the mousetrap metaphor in Augustine is "remarkable" because of Gregory's "share in moulding the later mediaeval idea of the sacrifice of the Mass" (p. 41).

Whether or not Chaucer was familiar with Augustine's use of the mousetrap image is difficult to ascertain, but certainly enough evidence exists to illustrate that the idea behind the image, if not current, was at least not unknown; and enough circumstantial evidence exists to suggest the possibility that Chaucer was familiar with image itself.

For example, Robert Campin, in the Merode Altarpiece (ca. 1425), makes explicit use of the image from Augustine's sermons. This triptych presents two scenes of special interest. In the central panel the artist depicts the Annunciation; and in the right-hand panel he pictures Joseph constructing a third mousetrap, two having been completed (one rests on his workbench and another on the windowsill). The influence of Augustine's metaphor on this painting has been admirably demonstrated by both Schapiro and Miss Freeman (see the citations of their works above) and is widely accepted by art scholars.[17] Of Campin's use of mousetraps in the Merode Altarpiece, Miss Freeman comments thus:

> [they] are placed in the picture . . . because he [Robert Campin] intended to convey . . . a theological concept under the guise of familiar, everyday things. . . . It was firmly believed by the people of the late Middle Ages that the knowledge of the divinity of Christ must be kept from the devil, who was responsible for man's original sin, who made necessary the coming of God to earth in human form to suffer and die by way of atonement. The devil was never to know that Christ was more than man. Only thus could the archenemy be fooled and the original sin of Adam and Eve wiped out.[18]

Campin's use of mousetraps, then, in the right-hand panel of the Altarpiece illustrates not only the fact that Satan could not unravel the mystery of the Incarnation but also that for Christ to have gained victory in death over Satan, Satan had to have been deceived into thinking he had won victory over Christ through Christ's death. Thus the appearance of mousetraps in the triptych gathers up many of the diabolical meanings which Schapiro finds associated with mice during the Middle Ages; and Campin's use of mousetraps also fits with the proverbial identification of mice with gluttony since it is Satan's extreme desire for the bait, Christ, that ultimately causes his defeat. In light of Schapiro's and Freeman's demonstrations of the source and meaning of the mousetraps in Campin's triptych, in light of the medieval association of mice with gluttony, and in light of my suggestion that Chaucer intended a link between the mouse and the court in his portrait of the Prioress, one can speculate that Chaucer, by having his Prioress weep over the sight of a mouse caught in a trap, intended his audience to see Madame Eglentyne as sympathetic with the Devil.

But would Chaucer have read enough of Augustine to have borrowed the image directly from him? Perhaps not, but I suspect that Chaucer was rather well acquainted with the works of Augustine in some form or another because in The Canterbury Tales alone, he makes thirty-one direct references to Augustine.[19] Moreover, Kevin Guinagh, Alfred L. Kellogg, and Charles L. Regan point out that certain passages in "The Parson's Tale" have as their sources various writings of St. Augustine;[20] and Kellogg points out that during the Middle Ages "St. Augustine . . . [became] the standard material for the theological writer" (p. 427). In

addition, Schapiro notes that the mousetrap image appears "almost word for word" in Peter Lombard's The Four Books of Sentences.[21]

In his Sentences (ca. 1250), Peter Lombard, like Augustine in Sermo CXXX, compares the cross of Christ to a mousetrap and the blood of Christ ("sanguinem") to the bait ("escam") in the trap: "Et quid fecit Redemptor captivatori nostro? Tetendit ei muscipulam crucem suam; posuit ibi quasi escam, sanguinem suum" (Pat. Lat., 192, col. 796). Lombard's Sentences is "a compendium of the opinions of the Church Fathers on a wide range of theological subjects"[22] and is the work upon which Duns Scotus wrote his Oxford Commentary on the Sentences, a fact which testifies to the theological importance attributed to Lombard's work during the Middle Ages in England. But the Sentences was read by many who were not theologians. This point finds illustration in an etching entitled "The Tower of Knowledge" (reproduced in Plimpton, p. 94) which was originally printed in the Margarita Philosophica in 1504. This etching depicts the hierarchy of medieval education in terms of the ascending levels of a tower and shows "Petrus Lombardus" at the very top of the tower as the teacher of the highest discipline, theology. In addition, The British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books in devoting more than eight pages to the various editions of and commentaries on the Sentences that appeared after 1475 bears witness to the widespread use of the work.

That Chaucer probably would have been familiar with the mousetrap metaphor as it appeared in Augustine's sermons and Peter Lombard's Sentences is further suggested by the connection of that metaphor to another theological metaphor, the fishhook. The fishhook, like the mousetrap, symbolizes the cross of Christ; and the bait on the hook

symbolizes Christ. Just as the bait (Christ) in the mousetrap lures the mouse (Satan) to his destruction through death, so does the bait on the fishhook lure the monster of the deep (Leviathan or Satan).[23] Carl Schmitt discusses this metaphor's meaning and illustrates its currency during the Middle Ages:

> Die Leviathan-Deutung des christlichen Mittelalters ist bis zur Scholastik ganz von der theologischen Auffassung beherrscht, daß der Teufel durch den Tod Christi am Kreuze den Kampf um die Menschheit verloren hat, indem er, durch die Knechtsgestalt des im Fleische verborgenen Gottes getäuscht, den Gottmenschen am Kreuze verschlingen wollte, dabei aber durch das Kreuz wie durch einen Angelhaken gefangen wurde. Der Teufel wird hier als der Leviathan, d. h. als ein grosser Fisch dargestellt, der von Gott geködert und gefangen wird. Als theologische Lehre geht diese Auffassung auf Gregor den Grossen (Moralia in Job), Leo den Grossen und Gregor von Nyssa zurück. Durch die Glosse des Walafrid Strabo (9. Jahrhundert) wird sie den folgenden Jahrhundertan weitergegeben. Die Buchillustrationen des Mittelalters sehen den Leviathan, den "michele walvisch", nur im Zusammenhang dieser patristischen Deutung.[24]

Fourteenth-century sermon literature probably also influenced Chaucer's decision to include dogs in his portrait of Madame Eglentyne. A brief survey of the sermon literature quoted by G. R. Owst in Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England reveals that fourteenth-century preachers frequently treated dogs as emblematic of a decadent clergy and false charity.[25]

Interestingly, most of the sermons Owst quotes are found in a work written by one of Chaucer's contemporaries, John Bromyard. Owst demonstrates that this "faithful friar evangelist" was present "at the Second Session of the famous London Council at the Blackfriars in 1382," that he served at Cambridge University "about the year 1383," and that he was appointed vicar of the "Fifth Visitation" in 1397. The passages from Bromyard which Owst quotes all come from the Summa Predicantium, a work

which Owst calls "a veritable speculum vitae" of "the gathered fruits of mendicant preaching in England throughout the fourteenth century."[26] Although scholars cannot agree as to the exact date of Bromyard's Summa Predicantium, most agree that it was written earlier than 1410; and Owst demonstrates that by 1401 the work must have been an established authority in religious and theological matters.[27] Whether Chaucer knew the Summa Predicantium cannot at the present time be proved, but the social status of Bromyard and the dates of his various activities suggest that Chaucer probably knew the man; and Chaucer's use of religious doctrine in "The Parson's Tale" and other tales suggests that he might have known the work itself.

The writer of one passage from the Summa Predicantium hypothesizes that if a man "in a position of authority" comes to a "monastery gate," the monks

> will go forth to wait upon him with beaming countenances and fair speeches . . . , and will procure for him dainty meats and drinks and beds and everything else in superfluity, along with his horses and dogs and his huge retinue of servants. But indeed if . . . another man comes on foot, without horses and dogs and with the appearance of poverty, even to the very gate of those who have been founded for the express purpose of giving hospitality . . . and asks in the name of Christ . . . , yet he will find the gate shut.[28]

The writer here clearly associates dogs with the rich; and by taking care to point out that the man "with the appearance of poverty" had no dogs, he casts the dogs as emblems of wealth. Moreover, the writer points out that the monastery is to operate as a center for the charitable activities which benefit the poor. But, the passage relates, the charity of the monks is directed toward the rich man's dogs instead of toward the poor man.

From the "Custodio" section of Summa Predicantium, Owst quotes a passage consisting of "a long indictment of the sins of greater clergy" (Literature and Pulpit, p. 262). Part of the passage closely associates dogs with a decadent clergy: "men of this kind protect those who bring them dogs and falcons, rich gifts and fruits; but the poor, who bring only their souls, they love not" (Literature and Pulpit, p. 264). Here, as in the previous passage, the clergy are said to neglect the poor, who should be the objects of the clergy's charitable acts, in favor of those who would give them gifts such as dogs. In the "Furtum" section appears the sermon writer's conception of the poor's indictment of the uncharitable rich, a passage which echoes parts of the description found in Matthew 25:31-46 of the Last Judgment:

> "We hungered and thirsted and were afflicted with cold and nakedness. And those robbers yonder gave not our own goods to us when we were in want, neither did they feed or clothe us out of them. But their hounds and horses and apes, the rich, the powerful, the abounding, the gluttons, the drunkards and their prostitutes they fed and clothed with them and allowed us to languish in want." (Literature and Pulpit, p. 301)

Again, dogs are the objects of the charity which should have been focused on the poor. From Bromyard's "Servire," Owst quotes a passage which reminds him of Chaucer's portrait of Madame Eglentyne:

> The wealthy . . . provide for their dogs more readily than for the poor, more abundantly and more delicately too; so that, where the poor are so famished that they would greedily devour bran-bread, dogs are squeamish at the sight of wafer-bread, and spurn what is offered them, trampling it under their feet. They must be offered the daintiest flesh, the firstling and choicest produce of every dish. (Literature and Pulpit, p. 327)

Here the writer makes the identification of dogs and the false charity of the wealthy explicit. Elsewhere, Bromyard points to the false charity of the rich who offer bread to their "hounds" and "permit the fragments

left over to be given to the poor."[29] And in the same work Bromyard argues that when the rich

> . . . cherish the dog, they despise their own flesh. For, their acts prove this. For, where many deaths of men have been seen or heard to occur from starvation, who has seen dogs dead from starvation in any number, ---- or even a very few of them? (Literature and Pulpit, p. 328)

Thus Bromyard treats the charity lavished on dogs as a sin against not only the poor but also oneself.

According to the Oculus Sacerdotis of William de Pagula, "a Berkshire vicar" who wrote "in the first half of the fourteenth century" (Literature and Pulpit, p. 279), the rich were not the only ones who lavished charity on dogs at the expense of the poor. De Pagula writes of the "priests" who

> in these days . . . neither know the law of God nor teach others. But giving themselves up to sloth, they spend their time upon banqueting and carousels, they covet earthly things, they grow wise in earthly things, constantly in the streets, rarely in the church . . . , swifter to collect dogs than to summon the poor. More freely do they offer food to a dog than to a poor man. (Literature and Pulpit, p. 279)

Many of the points in de Pagula's criticism of priests seem to be implied in Chaucer's description of Madame Eglentyne, a prioress. For example, de Pagula's emphasis on "banquetings and carousels" can be seen as paralleling the Prioress' table manners and her attempts "to countrefete cheere/Of court." If other critics correctly interpret the portrait of Madame Eglentyne by pointing to the many affinities she has with the courtly romance tradition, Chaucer would have intended that his audience should see the Prioress as having grown "wise in earthly things" at the expense of "things" more celestial and more becoming a Prioress. If taken in context with the rest of the passage, de Pagula's charge that priests are "constantly in the streets" amounts to an accusation of

neglect of duty and recalls the Church's insistence that nuns not go on pilgrimages.[30] And, finally, de Pagula's use of dogs is identical to Bromyard's: they are explicitly paralleled to false charity and a decadent clergy.

In the _Summa Predicantium_ of John Bromyard and the _Oculus Sacerdotis_ of William de Pagula one can find enough examples of these emblematic uses of dogs to imply the currency of such usage in the England of Chaucer's time. This, seen in connection with the fact that Madame Eglentyne feeds her "smale houndes" "wastel-breed" (A 147), a "Bread made of the finest flour" (_OED_, s.v.), strongly suggests that Chaucer's association of the Prioress with dogs was intended as a pejorative comment on her; for since the association appears frequently in fourteenth-century sermon literature, Chaucer would likely have been familiar with it and, probably, his audience would have been also.

The many references in medieval sermon literature to dogs as emblems both of a decadent clergy and false charity, the use of pejorative connotations of mice in medieval English proverbs and literature, and the appearance of St. Augustine's mousetrap metaphor in Robert Campin's Merode Altarpiece indicate that Chaucer probably intended the association of Madame Eglentyne with dogs and mice as ironical. Moreover, Chaucer provided a structure appropriate for such irony in the parallel symmetry of the entire portrait and the passage which associates the two animals with the Prioress. But Chaucer's irony is not of the condemning sort. Chaucer condemns no pilgrim. Rather, Chaucer sees each pilgrim as a human being interacting with and reacting to his society's conception of him and his own desire for autonomy. If Madame Eglentyne's "conscience" and actions are incompatible with the religious ideal, "_Amor vincit_

omnia," then Chaucer is a great poet for he has been able to use what on the surface appears as contradiction between the individual and the ideal to suggest something far more important, the fragmentation of the ideal in conjunction with the emergence of the individual. Thus in the portrait the student of The Canterbury Tales sees irony in the opposition between the human and the ideal, in the contrast between the Plowman's "parfit charitee" and the Prioress' charity; but the student never sees a condemning kind of irony if, perhaps, the individual of a class is a little too much of the world for exact conformity with the ideal.

END NOTES

[1]"Chaucer's Nuns," Chaucer's Nuns and Other Essays (1925; rpt. Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1965), p. 3. See also Dom Maynard J. Brennan, O.S.B., "Speaking of the Prioress," MLQ, 10 (1949), 451-457, who expands the work of Sister Madeleva; Eileen Power, "Madame Eglentyne, Chaucer's Prioress in Real Life," Medieval People (1924; rpt. London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1946), whom Raymond Preston, Chaucer (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952), pp. 157-158, too eagerly charges with applying a type conception to a "very particular lady"; and Florence H. Ridley, The Prioress and the Critics, Univ. of California English Studies, No. 30 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1965), whose scholarship far exceeds Sister Madeleva's and whose conclusions are far better drawn.

[2]The source of the Prioress' manners is sufficiently documented by Walter W. Skeat, "Notes," Chaucer: The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1903), p. 56, who refers to Professor Tyrwhitt's earlier demonstration; by John Livingston Lowes, "Simple and Coy: A Note on Fourteenth Century Poetic Diction," Anglia, 33 (1910), 441; by Robert Dudley French, A Chaucer Handbook (New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1927), p. 205; by Marchette Chute, Geoffrey Chaucer of England (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1946) p. 250; by Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), p. 96; by D. W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), p. 245; and by Richard L. Hoffman, Ovid and the Canterbury Tales (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), p. 27, who traces the passage from the Roman de la Rose back to Ovid's Ars Amatoria.

[3]Both Lowes, 440, and Bowden, p. 94, treat the name Eglentyne in terms of its appearance in medieval romances.

[4]Power, pp. 75-79 and 80-82. These points are also made by R. J. Schoeck, "Chaucer's Prioress: Mercy and Tender Heart," Chaucer Criticism I: The Canterbury Tales, ed. Richard Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1960), p. 248.

[5]"Chaucer's Prioress Again: An Interpretive Note," MLN, 48 (1933), 34-35.

[6]All quotations in this paper from The Canterbury Tales are taken from Chaucer's Major Poetry, ed. with introductory material and notes by Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1963). The Fragment letter and line numbers of each quotation are included parenthetically in the text of the paper.

[7]Some New Light on Chaucer: Lectures Delivered at the Lowell Institute (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1926), pp. 215-216. Manly says the dogs fulfill the "feminine need" for "some object upon which to lavish a natural human affection."

[8]"The Prioress' Dogs and Benedictine Discipline," MP, 54 (1956-57), 3.

[9]The name Eglentyne, in addition to referring to the Prioress, also refers to the sweetbriar, a kind of wild rose. Both George Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art (New York: Hesperides Books, 1961), pp. 37-38, and J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1961), p. 263, note the essential ambiguity of the symbol. As Ferguson writes, "the rose was the symbol of victory, pride, and triumphant love. . . . Before it became one of the flowers of the earth, the rose grew in Paradise without thorns. Only after the fall of man did the rose take on its thorns to remind man of the sins he had committed . . .; whereas its fragrance and beauty continued to remind him of the splendor of Paradise." Chaucer's use of the name Eglentyne, then, is a further extension of the ambiguity of the portrait as a whole.

[10]For representative examples of this and other pejorative references to mice in proverbial sayings, see Bartlett Jere Whiting in collaboration with Helen Westcott Whiting, Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500 (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1968), pp. 416-417; Walter W. Skeat, Early English Proverbs Chiefly of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), pp. 214, 244; Bartlett Jere Whiting, Proverbs in the Earlier English Drama, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, Vol. 14 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1938), pp. 41, 164; Bartlett Jere Whiting, Chaucer's Use of Proverbs, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, Vol. 11 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1934), p. 169; William George Smith, The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs, with Intro. and Index by Janet E. Heseltine (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), passim; John Heywood's A Dialogue of Proverbs, ed. with Introduction, Commentary, and Indexes by Rudolph E. Habenickt, Univ. of California English Studies, No. 25 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1963), p. 273. Whiting, Chaucer's Use of Proverbs, pp. 5-20, carefully distinguishes between proverbs, proverbial phrases, and sententious remarks in Chaucer's work; for the purpose of this paper, such fine dictinctions are not necessary.

[11]Several of the sermons contained in Medieval English Sermons, ed. Woodburn O. Ross, E.E.T.S., 209 (1940), carefully link gluttony and drunkenness. See also Geoffrey de la Tour-Landry, The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry (ca. 1371), ed. Thomas Weight, E.E.T.S., 33 (1878), pp. 115-117, who treats gluttony and, specifically, drunkenness as the causes of many other sins.

[12]I treat the medieval sermons in connection with this matter in my discussion of the Prioress' dogs; but see G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), pp. 262, 279, 301, 327, and 328; and G. R. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of The Period c. 1350-1450 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1926), p. 67.

[13]"Muscipula Diaboli, the Symbolism of the Merode Altarpiece," Art Bulletin, 27 (1945), 186. Schapiro's summary is of the article "Maus" by R. Riegler, Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens, ed. Bächtold-Staubli. The work was not available for my own reading.

[14]J. P. Migne, Patrologiae Latinae, 38, col. 1210.

[15]"The Iconography of the Merode Altarpiece," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, 16 (1957), 138.

[16]Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 53. Mr. Andrew Harnack insists that Iranaeus employs the same metaphor, but I have been unable to document this point.

[17]See, for example, H. W. Janson, History of Art: A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), pp. 287-288. For a complete history of the painting, which is now owned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, see Theodore Rousseau, Jr., "The Merode Altarpiece," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, 16 (1957), 117-129.

[18]Freeman, 137. Miss Freeman notes the appearance of the same symbol in Martin Torner's The House of Mary and Joseph in Nazareth (ca. 1480), but this particular painting is too far removed from Chaucer's time to warrant discussion here. Also too far removed in time is the play within the play in Hamlet, III, ii, 247 ff. Another interesting point with respect to mouse-imagery is suggested by the discussion in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, I, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 523, of the connection between Apollo and mice. Mice were apparently associated with Apollo in antiguity: "If the god was appealed to, as god of day, to drive away the mice, which come in the night, his statue might well symbolize his conquest of them by putting the figure of a mouse beneath his feet."

In using the mousetrap metaphor Augustine must have certainly associated Satan with mice. Apollo, as the god of day and light, has, traditionally, been treated by both painters and poets as a type of Christ, the "true light." Therefore, Augustine's image may have its roots in a typological view of the similarities between the mouse and Satan and Apollo and Christ. If such a view informs Hamlet's calling the play treating the murder of Gonzago "The Mousetrap," one might argue that Hamlet is a Christ figure. It should also be pointed out that the OED lists several examples which illustrate the figurative use during the period from 1577 to 1887 of mousetrap as "A device for enticing a person to his destruction or defeat."

[19] George A. Plimpton, The Education of Chaucer (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935), p. 170. Plimpton identifies the exact line numbers. With none of thirty-one references to Augustine's name does Chaucer include references to Augustine's use of the mousetrap metaphor.

[20] "Source of the Quotation from Augustine in 'The Parson's Tale,' 985," MLN, 55 (1940), 211-212; "St. Augustine and the Parson's Tale," Traditio, 7 (1952), 424-430; "Chaucer's 'Parson's Tale' 1025: A Probable Source," N & Q, 209 (1964), 210.

[21] "Muscipula Diaboli, the Symbolism of the Merode Altarpiece," 183.

[22] Philosophy in the West: Readings in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, ed. with introductions by Joseph Katz and Rudolph H. Weingartner (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1956), p. 441.

[23] Among the biblical sources which at least suggest the identification of Satan with a monster of the deep or a creature of the sea are Job 41:1, Ps. 104:26, and Rev. 20:1. It should be pointed out that in "A Bestiary" (ca. 1250), An Old English Miscellany, ed. Richard Morris, E.E.T.S., 49 (1872), p. 17, Satan is imaged as a whale. A possible source for the metaphor of the fishhook may be Job 41:1 ff.

[24] Carl Schmitt, Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes: Sinn and Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols (Hamburg: Hanseatische verlaganstalt), p. 15. An interesting passage appears in this connection in Cyril of Jerusalem's (d. 386) Catecheses, in The Later Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great, ed. and trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 36: Cyril writes that Christ's body "became a bait for death, so that the dragon, hoping to swallow it, might vomit up also those whom he had swallowed." Also, Aulén (pp. 103-104) comments as follows on Luther's use of the metaphor of the fishhook: "God acts like a fisherman, who binds a line to a fishing-rod, attaches a sharp hook, fixes on it a worm, and casts it into the water. The fish comes, sees the worm but not the hook, and bites, thinking that he has taken a good morsel; but the hook is fixed firm in his gills and he is caught. So God does; Christ must become man; God sends Him from high

heaven into the world, where the devil finds Him like 'a worm and no man' (Ps. xxii-6), and swallows Him up. But this is to him as food which he cannot digest. 'For Christ sticks in his gills, and he must spue Him out again, as the whale the prophet Jonah, and even as he chews Him the devil chokes himself and is slain, and is taken captive by Christ." I am indebted to Dr. David S. Berkeley and to Mr. Andrew Harnack for calling my attention to the relationship between the metaphors of the mousetrap and the fishhook.

[25]Muriel Bowden identifies a source for the Prioress' dogs in a story told in *The Knight of La Tour-Landry*, Chap. XX. See her *Commentary on the General Prologue*, p. 98. Dr. Clinton C. Keeler has called my attention to the fact that *God* spelled backwards is *dog*, a fact which may have influenced some of the references to dogs which I cite below.

[26]*Preaching in Medieval England*, pp. 69 and 70.

[27]*Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, p. 224 and fn. In his note Owst cites a number of fourteenth-century works which show the influences of the *Summa Predicantium* and works which allude to it by name.

[28]Quoted in *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, p. 262. Since Bromyard's Summa Predicantium was not available for my own use, I have had to rely exclusively on Owst's renditions of relevant passages.

[29]*Literature and Pulpit*, p. 328. The quotation comes from the "*Eleemosyna*" of Bromyard's Summa Predicantium.

[30]See note 6 above.

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VITA

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