CHARACTERS AND CONVENTIONS IN

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE

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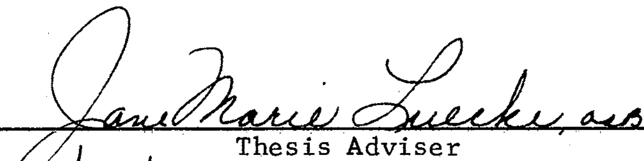

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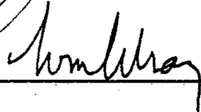

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For many years critics have found _The Franklin's Tale_ to be didactic: it describes and illustrates the ideal marriage, it makes statements about truth and honor, it contains a sermon on patience, it holds remarks about and illustrations of _gentillesse_, and it shows courtly love in action. More recently, however, other readers have begun to doubt the soundness of these lessons as presented in _The Franklin's Tale_. Among these latter critics, A. C. Spearing takes the broadest view. Spearing says that the franklin intends his tale to be a moral fable which proves certain principles concerning _trouthe_, the ideal marriage relationship, and _gentillesse_, but that "...when we come to examine each of the three themes in more detail...the theme will be found to point not towards the clarity of an exemplum, but towards ambiguity and dubiety."[1]

Even Spearing may not go far enough, however. It seems to me that not only are the franklin's teachings ambiguous on the subjects of _trouthe_, marriage, and _gentillesse_, but that the same is true of his remarks about patience and his illustrations of courtly love. The franklin and/or his characters make exemplary statements about correct behavior in most of these areas, and they are aware of accepted standards in those which they do not explicitly discuss, but when we look carefully at the characters, their actions do not always follow these guiding principles. Indeed, in many instances, they seem to be acting solely from personal and selfish motives, sometimes in direct contrast to approved customs. The resolution of the plot, then, is doubly interesting: no permanent harm befalls anyone and everyone is relatively happy in the end.

This observation of the regard given by Chaucer to individual personalities in the face of societal institutions shows, in still another way, the modernity and realism of Chaucer's thinking. He draws these characters with attention to psychological composition, shows them acting according to their own personal desires (which are, at times, realistically contradictory) and, again realistically, he shows the results of such actions: honesty of expression inspires equal honesty of response in others and events turn out surprisingly well for everyone.

First of all, The Franklin's Tale supposedly shows courtly love in action. It does have many of the characteristics of the typical courtly-love framework; but upon comparison with other courtly-love works we see that there are several instances of its characters' behavior which do not follow the expected attitudes. This tale has the basic courtly-love triangle like the ones in Tristan and Iseult, Troilus and Criseyde, The Merchant's Tale,[2] and countless other courtly-love stories. It follows in the tradition by having a very lovesick squire who complains and languishes "as a furye dooth in helle"[3] before making his declaration. Even here, though, there is an element of difference in The Franklin's Tale. In The Merchant's Tale, Damian can assume that May has not lost her head over January; and in Troilus and Criseyde, Troilus knows through Pandarus that Criseyde is not mourning her dead husband and is not in love with anyone else. However, the case is just the opposite with Aurelius. He knows that Dorigen does faithfully love Arveragus. The fact that he declares for her anyway may give a glimpse of his personality which will come into play later: perhaps he is most attracted to whatever seems to be the most impossible to attain.

Dorigen's immediate reaction to Aurelius' declaration is another

instance of difference between The Franklin's Tale and Chaucer's other courtly-love tales. May takes Damian seriously enough, at least, to secrete the note he gives her; and in the Troilus Criseyde accepts the declaration seriously and even goes on to begin making the rules for their relationship. In The Franklin's Tale, however, the corresponding occasion does not have the same outcome at all. Dorigen hears Aurelius' statement with consternation, and her answer reveals a personality which sets her clearly apart from other courtly-love ladies. She is very honest and not at all sympathetic in her reply: "Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wyf" (FT, 984). Not only this, but unlike Criseyde and May, Dorigen does not really take the whole thing seriously. She actually teases Aurelius by setting him an impossible task to perform. She feels no tenderness for him, and she does not pretend to, even in his despairing questioning: "'Is ther noon oother grace in yow?' quod he/ 'No, by that Lord,' quod she, 'that maked me!'" (FT, 999-1000). So it is evident that Dorigen's honesty, her making light of the situation, her lack of concern for Aurelius' feelings, and her immediately stated fidelity to Arveragus are not at all in accord with the expected response to a declaration of courtly love.

This fidelity of Dorigen to Arveragus is, in itself, a condition which is basically impossible for a courtly-love situation. The most fundamental characteristic of the courtly-love tradition is that the passionate, all-consuming true love relationship cannot occur inside of marriage,[4] but Dorigen "loveth hire housbonde as hire hertes lyf" (FT, 816), and is not at all repelled by him as May is by January. The depth of Dorigen's loyalty to and concern for Arveragus is not only indicated in the statement she makes to Aurelius, but it is also shown in the

nature of the impossible task she sets for Aurelius to perform. She wants the black rocks removed because they are a menace to Arveragus' safety and because they remind her of his absence. At the very moment of her lover's declaration, she is thinking, not of him, but of Arveragus. The situation of May and Damian in the pear tree right before January's blind eyes, is, in a figurative sense, much more the usual courtly-love plot than is Dorigen's indignant assertion of love for her husband.

Not only does Dorigen love Arveragus, she keeps no secrets from him. In discussing courtly love, C. S. Lewis points out that "the duty of secrecy in love...is strongly enforced..."[5] and, indeed, the ladies in other stories of this kind go to great lengths to keep most people from knowing about their lovers, with their husbands, of course, at the top of the list of those who must not know. Iseult would have Brangien killed in order to keep her quiet; May rustles around having secret keys made for Damian and sending him notes and signals, and Criseyde tries to "save alwey hire name" (TC, III, 266); but Dorigen not only is determined to tell someone, she is determined to tell her husband: "But why it was to no wight tolde shee,/For out of towne was goon Arveragus" (FT, 1350-1351).

Arveragus does not fit the mold, either. He does not act like a medieval husband, either in or out of a courtly-love situation. This is evident at the very beginning of the tale when he makes plans to act as a courtly lover even within the bounds of marriage: "Of his free wyl" (FT, 745), Arveragus swears not to take the mastery in marriage, but to "folwe hir wyl in al," (FT, 749) remaining "as any lovere to his lady" (FT, 750).[6] Arveragus' trusting spirit is another aberration from the

expected. Andreas Capellanus, who codified the rules of courtly love, declared, "A man in love is always apprehensive...Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love...A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved."[7] Yet, on returning to his wife after a long absence,

> No thyng list hym to been ymaginatyf,
> 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.
> (FT, 1094-1097)

This lack of jealousy on Arveragus' part is also shown by his response when Dorigen tells him of Aurelius' declaration and of her rash promise. He simply says, "Is ther oght elles, Dorigen, but this?" (FT, 1469).

Aurelius, too, again diverges from the expected norm. One would think that after loving Dorigen for "two yeer and moore" (FT, 940) before telling her about it and then after complaining and scheming and agonizing for an equal amount of time, Aurelius would be utterly crushed by the realization that she does not and never will love him; and that, indeed, she comes to him unwillingly and in tears only under orders from her husband. However, at this point, his attitude, too, appears to be rather uncourtly. He does not swoon away or threaten to die, even though he has said "Have mercy, sweete, or ye wol do me deye!" (FT, 978) when he first speaks of his love to Dorigen. He does not even plead his case once more.

Instead, Aurelius formally releases Dorigen from her bargain, and as soon as she has left him and has gone home to Arveragus, Aurelius begins to worry about and lament over the thousand pounds that he owes to the philosopher:

> Aurelius, that his cost hath al forlorn,
> Curseth the tyme that evere he was born:

> 'Allas,' quod he, 'allas that I bihighte
> Of pured gold a thousand pound of wighte
> Unto this philosophre!' (FT, 1557-1561)

He is so panic-stricken that he immediately decides:

> Myn heritage moot I nedes selle,
> And been a beggere; heere may I nat dwelle,
> And shamen al my kynrede in this place.
> (FT, 1563-1565)

He even makes plans to request an easy payment method in order that he can pay the philosopher. In all of this lamentation and worry, however, there is no regret for Dorigen, no thought of her being lost to him and forever gone from his sight and from his hopes of love. Here there is nothing of the wrenching emotion of Troilus grieving over Criseyde's desolate house, and none of the sorrow felt by Tristan when separated from Iseult: "far from her, death came surely."[8] Here there is only Aurelius' complete concern with his financial arrangements immediately after he has parted with Dorigen for the last time.

The number of instances in which Chaucer allows the characters of The Franklin's Tale to depart from the standard behavior of those in a courtly-love framework adds up to a process of individuation. He shows them acting according to their own selfish desires and using institutions as they conveniently fit into specific situations of personal need.[9]

Another instance in The Franklin's Tale in which Chaucer shows the characters' personalities taking precedence over convention is in its apparent illustration of the ideal marriage. From the very beginning, this tale takes an unusual attitude toward the then popular question of conjugal supremacy.[10] It advocates neither complete sovereignty by the husband nor entire control by the wife (each of which is supported in one or more of the tales which precede this one) and yet there is doubt that this tale supports its professed plan of shared sovereignty.

The Clerk's Tale, on one hand, had epitomized the doctrine of complete sovereignty by the husband, and its ending shows the wisdom of Griselda in accepting the customary role of obedient wife. This traditional type of marriage is also advocated by the ending of the Nun's Priest's Tale. Pertelote's advice nearly gets Chauntecleer killed and his own cleverness is his salvation. Both Walter, who does not allow Griselda to speak at all, and the Nun's Priest, who feels that "Wommanes conseil broghte us first to wo" (NPT, 4447), express the typical medieval attitude toward the marriage relationship.

The Wife of Bath, on the other hand, upheld quite the opposite point of view about sovereignty in the home: the idea that the wife, not the husband, should have complete control. The Wife of Bath uses her prologue to tell how she ruthlessly has seized the mastery in all five marriages by whatever means were necessary, and how this has turned out to be for the best. The ending of The Wife of Bath's Tale makes the same point. The woman is the one who has the gentillesse and when she is given the mastery everything is even more perfect than the knight had ever thought possible.

The Franklin's Tale differs from the others in the marriage group in that it apparently suggests an arrangement of shared sovereignty tempered by love. Just as Griselda promises to obey Walter, and just as the knight gives in to the loathly hag, Dorigen and Arveragus make vows and agreements before their marriage. These vows embody their new ideas for marriage, and the content shows that more attention shall be given to the individual marriage partners as persons than as master and servant, and to love than to sovereignty. In keeping with this, Arveragus deals directly with Dorigen in an honest effort to find out her wishes

(a contrast to Walter's conference with Janicula). Sovereignty is to be shared by the partners in a spirit of love and patience: Arveragus promises to be "bothe in lordshipe and servage" (FT, 794), and Dorigen promises to be "His lady, certes, and his wyf also" (FT, 797).

Dorigen and Arveragus seem to have fulfilled these good intentions for a time. It is evident that there is love between them, because when Arveragus is away in England, he "hath sent hire lettres hoom of his welfare" (FT, 838), and, as for Dorigen, "for his absence wepeth she and siketh" (FT, 817).

They must also have a feeling of strong mutual trust and a custom of talking over problems because when Dorigen is confronted with her monumental crisis (having Aurelius demand payment of her bargain), there is the underlying feeling that she has more choices than the two obvious ones of suicide or dishonor. She is not going to commit suicide or she would do it instead of going into her long complaint,[11] and she is not going to give in to Aurelius, or she would do that, too. It is significant, as Donald Baker has pointed out, that there are three categories of exempla in the complaint: women who committed suicide before being ravished, those who did so after rape, and (most importantly) a third category of women who are simply faithful and exemplary wives and sweethearts.[12]

Up to this point, each of the marriage partners has been considerate of the other. However, when Arveragus comes home and Dorigen tells him of her terrible problem, he does not seem to remember "That freendes everych oother moot obeye" (FT, 762). One would expect here a complete discussion of the whole situation, an examination of Dorigen's emotions, and consideration of the opinions of both people. Instead, Arveragus

immediately takes charge, asks Dorigen whether she has anything else to confess, and tells her firmly, "Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay!" (FT, 1474). This is an obviously distasteful solution for Dorigen, for it would have been by far the easiest and quickest had she been at all so inclined. She could simply have kept her word in the first place and saved herself all that hysteria and anguish. With this quick assertion of total mastery, then, Arveragus does not fit the ideal husband of the perfect kind of marriage which the franklin describes at the beginning of the tale:

> That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,
> Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie
> Agayn hir wyl, ne kithe hire jalousie,
> But hire obeye, and folwe hir wyl in al.
> (FT, 746-749)

At this point, too, Dorigen departs from the new ideal. She acts as his wife, but not also as "his lady, certes" (FT, 797). She accepts the decision almost as Griselda might, and goes out to meet Aurelius.[13]

It is evident, then, that instead of giving us an illustration of the ideal marriage in action, Chaucer shows us the characters acting as individuals. We see the basic honesty and trust in her husband which Dorigen has in the fact that she tells him her problem and her love for him in the fact that she obeys him immediately. We see Arveragus' instinctive aggressiveness and leadership, plus a glimpse of his apparent fear of a bad reputation in the fact that he orders Dorigen to do something so much against her will and his own desires. As much as they seem to love each other, and as much as they try to adhere to their vows, more personal considerations override their good intentions in the moment of crisis.

Some critics have found gentillesse to be a third lesson in this tale: "...it is the point of The Franklin's Tale that this is a virtue that can flower in any walk of life; it is not a class prerogative."[14]

This is, indeed, perhaps the impression which one would get from a first reading of the tale, for Arveragus has made a most generous, thoughtful gesture and this nobility inspires similar actions in others, even those of lower social classes. It appears, however, that there are flaws in this theory. Perhaps Arveragus and maybe even Aurelius and the magician are not quite so gentil as they may at first seem. In any event, before making a judgment on this matter, one should establish as nearly as possible exactly what Chaucer means the word gentillesse to convey.

One detailed statement of the meaning of gentillesse is Chaucer's short poem, the Moral Balade on the subject. In this poem Chaucer lists some of the qualities of God, who is the source of gentillesse: "Trewe of his word, sobre, pitous, and free" (G, 9).

The particular quality of being pitous is a very important aspect of gentillesse. One certain line concerning it occurs in several of the tales. One use is in The Knight's Tale when the women persuade Theseus to have mercy on Palamon: "For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte" (KT, 1761). The line occurs again (satirically) in The Merchant's Tale when May is thinking that she would love Damian even "Though he namoore hadde than his sherte./Lo, pitee renneth soone in gentil herte!" (MT, 1985-1986). Again, in The Squire's Tale, when Canacee has taken the swooning falcon into her lap, "Right in hir haukes ledene thus she seyde:/'That pitee renneth soone in gentil herte'" (ST, 478-479). In all of these cases, satirical or not, the word pitee has to do with compassion or

thoughtfulness toward another. Inherent in this connotation is also the idea of generosity; the thought that a noble person must also be "free" (G, 8).

Another emphasis which occurs frequently in Chaucer's work is the idea that gentillesse is a kind of behavior, not an inherited quality. In The Wife of Bath's Tale, the loathly hag makes statements concerning this:

> Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone.
> Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace;
> It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.
> (WBT, 1162-1164)

This very same idea is also emphasized in the short poem, Gentilesse: "But ther may no man, as men may wel see,/Bequethe his heir his vertuous noblesse" (G, 16-17).

At first glance The Franklin's Tale seems to exemplify these characteristics. At least one character from each social class has an opportunity for action which he carries out with apparent generosity: Arveragus lets Dorigen go to Aurelius, Aurelius releases her, and the clerk releases Aurelius from his debt. To accept these "gentil dedes" (FT, 1543) at face value, however, might be misleading. The first act in the poem which seems to show great consideration for another person is Arveragus' refusal to take sovereignty in marriage. He is going to follow Dorigen's will in everything, but he makes one stringent requirement; their new kind of marriage arrangement must be kept a secret: "...the name of soveraynetee,/That wolde he have for shame of his degree" (FT, 751-752). So, at the very beginning, this concern of Arveragus with Dorigen's feelings and wishes is tinged by his selfish and natural desire to appear to the public as completely masterful and in control of the domestic situation.

The next indication of concern for another person is said to be Dorigen's weeping and moaning after Arveragus in his absence; at least Lindsay A. Mann considers this an "aspect of benevolence and compassion."[15] We should consider, however, that there is a large element of self-concern and self-pity in any longing for a lover, and this sorrow for her own situation may have been just as powerful a motivation for all the weeping and wailing as was Dorigen's concern for Arveragus' feelings about being away from home.

The next major incident in gentility is one which has been highly praised as the epitome of gentillesse and generosity: Arveragus decides that Dorigen shall keep her playful promise to Aurelius. Aurelius, for one, certainly sees it as an indication of nobility: "That sith I se his grete gentillesse" (FT, 1527).

Arveragus does give a reason for his immediate command which makes it appear very noble indeed: "Trouthe is the hyeste thing that man may kepe" (FT, 1479), and this concern that Dorigen fulfill her bargain may very well be one factor in Arveragus' decision. However, as Spearing says, "The passage with which Arveragus continues his instructions to Dorigen after his sententia about trouthe is somewhat surprising...it seems as though Arveragus' emotion is caused as much by the thought of what people would say about him if they knew the truth as by his feeling for his wife."[16] No sooner has he stated his decision than 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.'
> (FT, 1480-1483)

Now, this definitely does not give the impression that Arveragus is thinking of Dorigen with empathy, and the next lines are even more

telling as to where one of his concerns lies:

> As I may best, I wol my wo endure,---
> Ne make no contenance of hevynesse,
> That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse.
> (FT, 1484-1486)

Arveragus' generosity is tinged with a concern for himself, his own feelings, and public opinion. He is not thinking of the fact that Dorigen must go and have sexual intercourse with a man whom she does not care for, nor is he thinking solely of the fact that Dorigen will be disgraced if she does not keep her word. She has not even been given a chance to express her feelings to Arveragus and to really tell him her opinions about what should be done, but Arveragus is threatening her with death if she tells anyone else. Even the servants are not allowed to know. It is possible that the very reason that Arveragus makes this decision is that he is afraid of being called cuckold and he is afraid that Aurelius will slander them for spite if the agreement is not kept. Perhaps there is an intimation of this possibility in a remark made by Aurelius' brother, as he sees a way of carrying out the requirements of the rash promise: "Thanne moste she nedes holden hire biheste,/Or elles he shal shame hire atte leeste" (FT, 1163-1164). At any rate, there must be some very deep-seated fear of some kind in control of Arveragus for him to so repudiate the marriage agreement which he himself has instigated.

This idea of concern for his own reputation is also given credence by the fact that Arveragus' very first act of gentillesse, the giving of half the sovereignty to Dorigen, is tinged by the same demand for secrecy and concern for his public image.

Very possibly there is some of each of the supposed motives at work here: concern for Dorigen's reputation and concern for an ideal

trouthe, in addition to concern for his own reputation. However, this very natural mixture in itself prevents the act from being a true result of pure gentillesse as it has been acclaimed.

This seeming act of gentillesse by Arveragus sets off two more such acts in people of lower social classes, one of which is Aurelius' release of Dorigen from her promise. Gentillesse may not be involved here, either; he may simply have changed his mind about wanting her. When Dorigen leaves the house accompanied by the uninformed servants, she runs into Aurelius on the street. He is happy to see her, and "saleweth hire with glad entente,/And asked of hire whiderward she wente" (FT, 1509-1510). Dorigen's response is so uncourtly, so anguished, so unromantic that it must immediately have some kind of detrimental effect on Aurelius' happy anticipation of the garden tryst. She simply cannot be terribly attractive or appealing when she is saying such things as "...allas! allas!" (FT, 1513) in a manner "...half as she were mad" (FT, 1511).

Also, even though she is unwilling, she is now available, and hence perhaps not quite so desirable in Aurelius' eyes. There seems to be some indication that Aurelius wants most what he thinks he cannot have. All the while that Dorigen seems so totally impossible to attain, he thinks of nothing else. He has been love-sick for a total of two years before he speaks to her; she is now obviously very much involved with Arveragus and there is no indication that she will be untrue. Then after he has spoken to Dorigen and she turns him down so firmly by setting an impossible task for him to perform, he is not at all nonplussed, but is desperately love-sick for at least another two years. All of this time, nothing is so important to him as Dorigen. He prays about

her, he tells his brother what is troubling him, and he simply will not be comforted. Nothing is too much trouble to try to attain her; when his brother suggests going to Orleans to see the magician, he gets up and starts immediately. Money means nothing if there is a prospect of obtaining a rendezvous with Dorigen: when the clerk tells him the price of the magic, Aurelius' answer is "Fy on a thousand pound!/This wyde world...I wolde it yeve..." (FT, 1227-1229).

But, as soon as Dorigen is actually there before him, on her way to the garden to carry out her promise, Aurelius can see her as she really is: unhappy, unwilling, upset; just someone else's "treweste and beste wyf" (FT, 1539). He does not want her anymore, and he releases her from her promise. Now his attention turns immediately to the thing he is losing, his money, and he curses his birth because he owes a thousand pounds to the philosopher.

So it is quite possible that in the gentillesse of Aurelius' action, too, there is definitely an element of desiring the impossible which causes him to see the situation in his own way. He may be following his own desires and personality make-up and acting accordingly, in addition to or instead of truly thinking of Dorigen and Arveragus and of their feelings in the matter.

The third act of gentillesse which is so often discussed is that of the clerk who forgives Aurelius his debt because he is so much impressed with the noble, generous behavior of Arveragus and of Aurelius. Perhaps the clerk does not insist that he be paid because he feels that he has not really fulfilled his side of the bargain. When the arrangements are made on Aurelius' visit to the clerk, the question is

> What somme sholde this maistres gerdon be,
> To remoeven alle the rokkes of Britayne,
> And eek from Gerounde to the mouth of Sayne.
> (FT, 1220-1222)

However, after the calculations have all been made, the franklin mentions "...swiche illusiouns and swiche meschaunces/As hethen folk useden in thilke dayes" (FT, 1292-1293), and when all has been accomplished, "...thurgh his magik, for a wyke or tweye,/It semed that alle the rokkes were aweye" (FT, 1295-1296). So, instead of the rocks being sunk underground and flooded for two years, they seem to be gone for approximately two weeks.

Another consideration is that perhaps the philosopher is a bit of a social climber, as some think the franklin is. He may at least desire to behave as he sees the nobility do. There is an indication of his awareness of social class structure in his speech as he releases Aurelius from his debt:

> 'Thou art a squier, and he is a knyght;
> But God forbede, for his blisful myght,
> But if a clerk koude doon a gentil dede
> As wel as any of yow, it is no drede!'
> (FT, 1609-1612)

So, the clerk's gentillesse is not necessarily perfectly unselfish, either: he likes to imitate the behavior of his social betters and he has not really carried out his task to the letter.

In all of these actions which have been acclaimed as marvelous examples of gentillesse, there are distinct indications that some motives other than selfless, generous ones are the moving forces.[17] Since this is true at every class level, we might conclude that instead of teaching us that anyone can be gentil, Chaucer may be saying that anyone at any class level is simply a person, himself, and that he acts from a combination of his own complex needs.

At first reading, _The Franklin's Tale_ seems to have a moral to offer on still another subject: that of _trouthe_, the keeping of one's pledged word. The word first comes to notice in the tale as Dorigen makes her vows to Arveragus that she will be true to him: "Have heer my trouthe, til that my herte breste" (_FT_, 759). The use of the word _trouthe_ and this type of formal phrasing impress upon the listener the fact that this is now a solemn contract, completely binding on its maker.

The next occurrence in which _trouthe_ is invoked is the rash promise of Dorigen, the promise which creates the problem and the suspense of the entire tale:

> I seye, whan ye han maad the coost so clene
> Of rokkes that ther nys no stoon ysene,
> Thanne wol I love yow best of any man,
> Have heer my trouthe, in al that evere I kan.
> (_FT_, 995-998)

This promise, too, has the atmosphere of a formal, legally binding contract. It certainly seems to have been accepted in such a light, for when Aurelius tells her that the black rocks are gone, he demands the fulfillment of her promise, and he warns her, "Aviseth yow er that ye breke youre trouthe" (_FT_, 1320). Also, when Dorigen tells Arveragus of her predicament, he immediately says, "Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay!" (_FT_, 1474). As he goes on in this speech and develops his thoughts on the subject, he makes the remark again, "...ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save" (_FT_, 1478), and these thoughts culminate into the aphorism, "Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe" (_FT_, 1479).

Trouthe is used again to mean fidelity to one's given word in the arrangements which Aurelius makes with the philosopher, for he says, "This bargyn is ful dryve, for we been knyt./Ye shal be payed trewely, by my trouthe!" (_FT_, 1230-1231).

After events work out as they do, and everyone is moved to release everyone else from the promises, more evidence is given that these had been literal, legal, contractual promises. In giving Dorigen her freedom, Aurelius says,

> I yow relesse, madame, into youre hond
> Quyt every serement and every bond
> That ye han maad to me as heerbiforn,
> Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born.
> (FT, 1533-1536)

The philosopher, in releasing Aurelius, is equally formal:

> Sire, I releesse thee thy thousand pound,
> As thou right now were cropen out of the ground,
> Ne nevere er now ne haddest knowen me.
> (FT, 1613-1615)

It would seem, therefore, that in The Franklin's Tale the word trouthe means a promise and that to keep one's trouthe one must fulfill the literal words of that promise. At first it appears that the characters make every sacrifice in order to accomplish this end, but on closer examination we see that this is not entirely the case.

In the first place, while both her husband and her lover are telling Dorigen that she must keep her promise to Aurelius, no one at all mentions the fact that she also has made a promise to Arveragus. For one thing, the promise to Arveragus is made first, which should give it some precedence in this legalistic framework of the franklin. In addition to this, the promise made to Arveragus is made from the depths of her heart and of her love for him, whereas the promise to Aurelius, as all three of them know, is made in jest and in her belief that the request for the removal of the rocks is impossible to fulfill.

Not only are the characters urging Dorigen to break her first promise, at least in the letter, but she does not really keep her second promise, even though she goes to meet Aurelius. The promise is that if

he removes the rocks, "Thanne wol I love yow best of any man" (FT, 997). It is perfectly clear that Dorigen does not love Aurelius at all, and that she does not even pretend to do so.

There are other instances, too, where truth is not always perfectly upheld. In the original bargain Dorigen tells Aurelius that he must "...remoeve alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon" (FT, 993). This is not done; instead, "for a wyke or tweye,/It semed that alle the rokkes were aweye" (FT, 1295-1296). Also, Arveragus has promised to follow Dorigen's will in all, but he does not even ask her what it is when the big crisis is upon them.

Once again the characters do not act according to the ostensible lesson, they act upon their own needs. Dorigen promises to be a true wife, yet because she is impatient with the rocks, and perhaps because she does not want to be too abrupt, she impulsively promises to love Aurelius. When the time comes to fulfill this second promise, she does not keep the first one by killing herself or by denouncing the second promise. She does not keep the second promise, either; she is too honest, too open and straightforward, and this removes her from her predicament. Arveragus has promised to follow Dorigen's will in all things, but his desire for a good reputation and his instinctively masterful tactics prevent him from even asking her will, much less following it when the great crisis arises. Aurelius tries to make Dorigen keep her word, while he has only "seemed" to carry out the other side of the bargain.

These characters act just as real people do: when a crisis demands action they do not stop and look up a list of all the promises they ever made and try to carry them out to the letter; they move on impulse, as

their own personalities and the urgencies of the moment dictate that they should act.

The Franklin's Tale apparently presents still another moralistic teaching:

> Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn,
> For it venquysseth, as thise clerkes seyn,
> Thynges that rigour sholde nevere atteyne.
> (FT, 773-775)

This statement is certainly exemplified by The Clerk's Tale in which Griselda's patience brings her many valuable thynges, but a close examination of The Franklin's Tale shows quite the opposite results. Dorigen, for example, has very little of this particular virtue. While Arveragus is away in England, she "made alwey hir compleint and hir moone" (FT, 920) to the point that "She may not alwey duren in swich rage" (FT, 836). This extreme impatience causes all of Dorigen's problems; she attaches all her frustrations to "thise grisly, feendly rokkes blake" (FT, 868), and her wishing for them to be removed causes her to make the rash promise. Keeping in mind the franklin's sermon on patience and the lesson taught by the story of Griselda, one might say that Dorigen deserves to be in this predicament with Aurelius and one might further expect that she will have to keep her promise to him as payment for this impatience. However, the plot of The Franklin's Tale does not work out this way. Dorigen goes through a great deal of emotional anguish, but she does not really have to undergo any literal, permanent punishment. Her own honesty in openly expressing her true emotions to both Arveragus and Aurelius brings complete release from what she proclaims as her only choices: dishonor or suicide.

Also to be considered here is the fact that Aurelius is the one character who most truly possesses the virtue of patience. He "hadde

loved hire best of any creature,/Two yeer and moore" (FT, 939-940) before he ever made his declaration, and after the rash promise is made, "In langour and in torment furyus,/Two yeer and moore lay wrecche Aurelyus" (FT, 1101-1102). However, in spite of all this patience and this diligence which would almost do credit to Griselda, Aurelius never receives the object of all his devotion: Dorigen's love.

The plot of this tale seems to have worked in such a way as to disprove the words of the franklin: "...who that is moost pacient in love,/He is at his avantage al above" (FT, 771-772). By rewarding Dorigen's impatience and withholding compensation for Aurelius' patience in an ironic reversal of the moralistic expectations, Chaucer undercuts the lesson of patience in the tale. He shows us, instead, the two characters acting naturally in accordance with their own impulses of the moment.

It is obvious, then, that The Franklin's Tale does not serve as a simple exemplum in any of the five cases. The usual conventions of courtly love are modified by Dorigen's honest and wifely attitude and Aurelius' interest more in what he cannot have than in what he can have.

The marriage of Dorigen and Arveragus from the very first is not meant to conform to the old kind of marriage in which the husband is supreme master or to the kind of marriage which the Wife of Bath is advocating, in which the wife holds the sovereignty; it is meant to be a new kind of marriage in which husband and wife share the sovereignty equally. When a serious crisis occurs, however, Arveragus acts in a masterful way without consulting Dorigen, and she acts as his humble wife without a question.

The gentillesse of the tale does not fit the definition because

Arveragus' concern for Dorigen's honor and reputation is tinged by concern for his own reputation, and he lets this worry overshadow a consideration of Dorigen's deepest feelings. We must also realize that the tale's treatment of gentillesse is influenced by the possibility that Aurelius may not really be giving up so much in releasing Dorigen from her promise and that the clerk in releasing Aurelius may perhaps feel a bit guilty about the work he has turned out.

Trouthe in this tale is not treated consistently with Chaucer's other works because the characters act as they feel they should in each individual situation, no matter what former promises they may have made. Dorigen's unhappiness leads her to break, at least conditionally, the letter of her vow to Arveragus; her honest love for him prevents her from keeping the vow to Aurelius; and Arveragus' fear for his reputation prevents him from fulfilling his vow to Dorigen.

The treatment of patience in the tale is certainly different from that in The Clerk's Tale or in the sermon on the subject given by the franklin. Dorigen's wild impatience goes relatively unpunished, while after all of Aurelius' patience he never achieves Dorigen's love.

In each case the interplay of the personality of one or more of the characters causes the reader to consider the questions of these conventions in the light of the individual person and his situation.

The "Janus sit by the fyr, with double berd" (FT, 1252) may be a symbol of this attitude that there are two sides to the questions of standards: that of the rules and that of the individuals. He may be also a symbol of those individuals themselves, with their many-faceted, sometimes contradictory emotions; like Dorigen as she weeps and wails both because she loves Arveragus and because she feels sorry for herself.

Chaucer may be saying not only that there are persons to be considered in the application of rules, but also that if these people act honestly according to their most basic emotions, that things turn out all right for them: Arveragus gets his much-desired secrecy, Aurelius gets his money back, the clerk gets to feel like a noble, and Dorigen gets a full release from her rash promise.

These "social and moral values not only test human beings, but are tested by them,"[18] and Chaucer has apparently decided that the latter is the more important of these tests.

FOOTNOTES

[1]A. C. Spearing, ed., The Franklin's Prologue and Tale from the Canterbury Tales, by Geoffrey Chaucer (London, 1966), p. 24.

[2]Even though this tale is satirical, it shows basic traits of the courtly-love type.

[3]Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Franklin's Tale," Chaucer's Major Poetry, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York, 1963), p. 474, l. 950. Further references to this work will be by initials and line number. Citations from any of The Canterbury Tales and short poems used in this paper will be from this edition. Tales will be identified by the usual initials with the line numbers within the text.

[4]C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London, 1948), p. 13.

[5]Lewis, p. 35.

[6]This is quite a contrast to the statement made by C. S. Lewis: "Marriages had nothing to do with love, and no 'nonsense' about marriage was tolerated" (p. 13).

[7]Quoted by C. Hugh Holman in "Courtly Love in the Merchant's and the Franklin's Tales," Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (New York, 1959), p. 248.

[8]Joseph Bédier, Tristan and Iseult (New York, 1945), p. 131.

[9]Holman has said, "Either consciously or unconsciously in ...The Franklin's Tale, Chaucer employed courtly-love conventions to comment on what men and women make of institutions" (p. 249).

[10]William W. Lawrence, Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales (New York, 1950), p. 123.

[11]James Sledd, "Dorigen's Complaint," Modern Philology, XLV (1947), p. 42.

[12]Donald C. Baker, "A Crux in Chaucer's Franklin's Tale: Dorigen's Complaint," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LX (1961), p. 62.

[13] Chaucer seems to reveal his own view that husbands should take the mastery because he makes everything turn out right when Arveragus does so.

[14] Nevill Coghill, The Poet Chaucer (London, 1949), p. 171.

[15] Lindsay A. Mann, "Gentillesse and the Franklin's Tale," Studies in Philology, LXIII (1966), p. 17.

[16] Spearing, pp. 35-36.

[17] D. S. Silvia, Paul Ruggiers, Nevill Coghill, William W. Lawrence, and Lindsay A. Mann are some of those who have acclaimed these actions as examples of gentillesse.

[18] Helen Corsa, Chaucer, Poet of Mirth and Morality (Notre Dame, 1957), p. 174.

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