This dissertation has been microfilmed exactly as received

61-5451

ADAMS, George Roy, 1928-
CHAUCER'S GENERAL PROLOGUE: A STUDY IN TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT.

The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1962
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan

Downloaded from SHAREOK. Persistent Handle URL: https://hdl.handle.net/11244/1546

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

CHAUCER'S GENERAL PROLOGUE: A STUDY IN TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

GEORGE ROY ADAMS

Norman, Oklahoma

1961

CHAUCER'S GENERAL PROLOGUE: A STUDY IN TRADITION

AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT

APPROVED BY

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer is very appreciative of the time and effort of the following faculty members in the Department of English at the University of Oklahoma: Dr. Paul G. Ruggiers, Dr. Rudolph C. Bambas, Dr. Calvin G. Thayer, Dr. John P. Cutts, and, in the Department of History, Dr. William H. Maehl, Jr. I wish to express my gratitude to the Fulbright Foundation and to the Southern Fellowships Fund, which made my research possible; I wish to express gratitude also to the Interlibrary Loan Department of the University of Oklahoma Library, which made the research easier.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
I. THE NARRATOR OF THE GENERAL PROLOGUE	2
II. THE FIRST EIGHTEEN LINES	15
III. THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF THE GENERAL PROLOGUE	29
IV. THE BACKGROUND OF THE PORTRAIT SERIES	46
V. BACKGROUNDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL PORTRAIT	70
VI. THE RHETORIC OF THE DESCRIPTIONS	109
CONCLUSION	142
BIBLIOGRAPHY	144

INTRODUCTION

It is no longer necessary to argue the unity and careful structure of Chaucer's General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales.[1] But it is still necessary to document the sources and analyze the artistry of the poem, and, if necessary, argue just what the unity and careful structure are, in order to determine the importance and originality of the poem. Furthermore, because a prologue by its nature ordinarily presents the theme of the work which it precedes, one can partially determine the theme of The Canterbury Tales by an examination of the interaction of The Canterbury Tales and the General Prologue. Part of this interaction can be seen from an examination of the unity, structure, and theme of the General Prologue.

The examination will consider chiefly three constituent elements of the poem: first, the role of the narrator; secondly, the use of conventional topoi, such as the coming of spring and the description of personages; and thirdly, the rhetorical tradition which is reflected in the diction and form. In short, the examination will consider Chaucer both as timeless poet and as representative of tradition.

---

[1] I have used as text for The Canterbury Tales, The Text of The Canterbury Tales, Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts, ed. John M. Manly and Edith Rickert et al. (8 vols.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940). All future quotations from The Canterbury Tales are from this edition. Punctuation is mine.

CHAUCER'S GENERAL PROLOGUE: A STUDY IN TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT

CHAPTER I

THE NARRATOR OF THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

One of the chief unifying elements of the General Prologue is its presentation through the eyes of a single first person narrator, who took part in the pilgrimage described in the poem. To thoroughly assess the "I" of the General Prologue[1] requires an analysis of two aspects of the narration: first, the general tradition of narration in medieval literature, and, secondly, the relationship of the narrator of the General Prologue to that tradition, a relationship that involves at least three elements: the character and personality of the narrator; the function of the narrator, in this case to present an ironic view of humanity; and the artistic methods used in the narration.

---

[1]Bertrand H. Bronson, In Search of Chaucer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 25-31, has no patience with such an undertaking. He feels that "nine-tenths of this talk is misguided and palpably mistaken," that the idea of two Chaucers is "schizoid," that if Chaucer were an experienced persona user he would have created dramatic monologues, and that we must "return to a less sophisticated way of looking at the subject"; that is, by seeing that Chaucer is a highly civilized poet, and that it is he who is speaking to the public. But Chaucer does, of course, create dramatic monologues when necessary, as the Pardoner, the Merchant, the Reeve, the Wife of Bath and the Host show, and saying that Chaucer is the speaker in the General Prologue does not answer the critical question of how he is speaking.

The first consideration, the general tradition of first person narration in the Middle Ages, is beyond the scope of this dissertation; even a brief survey of medieval works using it and articles dealing with it would show the extent and complexity of the tradition.[2] It is sufficient for this discussion simply to note that the narrator in the General Prologue is part of a tradition and that the concept of a first person narrator is, like so much else in the General Prologue, the result of a fusion of tradition and individual genius. The assessment of the tradition I leave to others; it is my purpose to examine the characteristics of the narrator as he appears in the General Prologue.

An analysis of the narrator of the General Prologue is not a simple task, if the number of articles on the subject is a criterion, and must deal both with the character and personality of the narrator, which assumes that he is "real," and the consistency of his presentation, which assumes that he is a literary creation.[3] The problem of the character and personality of the narrator in turn has two facets: his character and personality as presented through his own intrusive comments, and his character and personality as revealed by the simple fact of the narration, that is, by the facts and details which appear in the generally objective and noncommital descriptions. The problem of consistency also has two facets: the relationship between his personality as presented by narration

---

[2]Works which come readily to mind include Le Roman de la Rose, Dante's Commedia, Piers Plowman, Gower's Confessio Amantis, and Chaucer's House of Fame. See esp. Leo Spitzer, "Note on the poetic and empirical 'I' in medieval authors," Traditio, IV (1946), 414-422.

[3]See E. Talbot Donaldson, "Chaucer the Pilgrim," PMLA, LXIX (1954), 928-936; and his Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1958), 874.

and by his intrusive comments, and the problem of shifting point of view. Since both the problem of the narrator's character and personality and of the narrator's consistency share one element in common, the question of objective versus personal comments, there is a fusion of the realistic and literary elements.

The objective facts about the narrator which appear in the framework of the narration (ll. 19-42, 714-821) are these, in the order in which they appear: he has observed the coming of spring at least once, and can describe it in learned language (ll. 1-11); he has observed also that people go on pilgrimages at this time, and he himself is on one (ll. 12-42); he met a group of pilgrims at the Tabard Inn on this particular pilgrimage (ll. 20-34); he is somewhat gregarious and a bit curious, for he made it a point to speak to each of them (l. 31) and learned a great deal about them; he is trained in medieval rhetoric; he demands the right to speak boldly (ll. 725-742); he noticed how careful the Host was to collect his money (l. 760); and he is willing to take part in the telling of tales for "mirthe" (ll. 817-818). This is little enough on which to base a character analysis, but it is supplemented by facts furnished in the descriptions.

It is difficult to separate objective fact from personal opinion in even the most ostensibly objective description, as for example that of the Yeoman, and the problem is more complicated when one suspects that Chaucer is wholeheartedly approving or disapproving of a particular pilgrim. For example, is the statement that the Knight is "parfit" an objective fact, or a personal opinion, or both at once? Although the <u>General Prologue</u> is full of such statements, one is justified in drawing

conclusions as to the nature of the narrator, if he keeps in mind that what seems to be a judgment may be simple fact and simple fact may also express a judgment. The objective facts in the descriptions, then, indicate that the narrator is interested enough to comment on Christian virtue, as expressed both by the Knight and by the Parson; he notes the youth, strength, and accomplishments of the Squire; the efficiency of the Yeoman; the lack of ethics of the Shipman and Miller;[4] the immorality of the Summoner and Miller; the sexuality of many of the pilgrims, including the Wife of Bath, but he prefers not to talk of it; the rank and office, and the potential abilities of some of the pilgrims in public and social life; and, finally, he dislikes sexuality, vulgarity, crime, and fraud.[5] None of these facets of his character is contradictory or inconsistent, and none negates any of the characteristics as established in the framework of the General Prologue. Indeed, some of the material in the descriptions reinforces that in the framework; for example, the remarks on felaweshipe are in accord with the apparent gregariousness of lines 31-32, and his reporting of fraud or hypocrisy in the descriptions anticipates his noting that the Host takes care to get paid before offering free entertainment.

It is in the narrator's intrusive statements that critics find inconsistencies in his characterization. The first such statement appears in his comment that he went on pilgrimage "with ful deuout corage" (l. 22), which can be taken as a personal and intrusive comment, though

---

[4]One must keep in mind that the narrator's saying of the Miller that "Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries" (l. 562) does not mean approval, but only factual comment, and that noting the Shipman's efficiency is not praise of his ethics.

[5]See Donaldson, "Pilgrim," 929-933.

it may be objectively true as well; at any rate, it does not conflict with any of the aspects of his character presented in the objective narration. It can be tested against his comment to the Monk, which is usually taken as an inconsistency: "And I seyde his opinioun was good" (l. 183).[6] Such congeniality is in accord with his talking to "everichon," but is it merely a reflection of his friendliness, and does it conflict with his religious convictions? He says earlier that the Monk is capable of being an abbot, and that he is "ful fat" and "nat pale," comments similar in response to some in portraits without explicit comment; for example, those of the Friar and Miller. Moreover, the comment on the Monk's abilities is in accord with the emphasis on ability in the Knight's description. Therefore, because "ful deuout corage" does not mean "theological training" or "inclination to ecclesiastical argument," and because practical ability and manliness impress the narrator, it is not inconsistent that the devout narrator might agree with the Monk without questioning the Monk's devoutness, especially since the Monk never reaches the extent of heresy that the Summoner reaches.

The apparent inconsistency in the Friar's portrait ("Ther was no man no wher so vertuous," l. 251) is only an apparent one also; the line is preceded by the comment that "Curteys he was, and lowely of seruyse," and is clarified and expanded by "He was the beste beggere in his hous." It is not inconsistent that the narrator would feel that a courteous, humble friar, a good beggar for his house and capable at love-days, is a virtuous man, especially considering the ambiguity of the word

---

[6]See Rosemary Woolf, "Chaucer as a Satirist in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," Crit. Q., I (1959), 150-157, esp. 152.

virtuous.[7] No assistance in analyzing consistency is given by lines 257-258 ("And rage he koude, as it were right a whelpe./ In louedayes ther koude he muchel helpe . . ."") because their meaning is not clear. If they mean, "He became as excited, or expended as much energy, or even yelped and whined like a young dog, and thus was effective at disputes," then whatever pejorative comment is intended is not overt.[8] Moreover, the narrator was even interested enough in the Friar, in contrast to the Knight or Parson, to learn that his name was Huberd.

The Sergeant of the Law's description contains another troublesome intrusion at line 322, "And yet he semed bisier than he was." If one assumes that the narrator's reply to the Monk (l. 183) and the comments on the Friar (ll. 251-258) are those of an innocent or obtuse observer, then the lines on the Sergeant are not consistent with such a narrator. But there is no clear evidence for either the innocence or the obtuseness of the narrator before this comment, and, moreover, that the Sergeant exaggerates in either word or deed the importance and press

---

[7]The Oxford English Dictionary gives as definitions of virtue, "A particular moral excellence" (3), "Superiority or excellence, unusual ability, merit or distinction, in some respect" (5), and "Physical strength" (6) all with examples from the fourteenth century. It further lists (2.d) "Industry, diligence," but with Renaissance examples. For virtuous the OED has "Distinguished by manly qualities" (1), with examples from the fourteenth century, and "Capable, able" (1.c), with examples from the fifteenth century. It further lists "Diligence or industrious in work" (3), but with examples only from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is, of course, also an ironic comment on the morality of the Friar.

[8]For rage as a verb, the OED lists "to act or speak . . . furiously; to storm," (2) with examples from the fourteenth century. It is, of course, also an ironic commentary on the sexuality of the Friar (see "Glossary," The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson [2d ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957] and the OED) and is part of the pun in "louedayes."

of his business could be noted by anyone of average intelligence, just as a man of average intelligence can say, "He seemed reverent, from the sort of words he used." The narrator is impressed by rank, wealth, or ability, as has been demonstrated in reference to the Monk and as can be seen in the portrait of the Manciple, which offers the longest commentary by the narrator, a commentary characteristic of him: the Manciple is so capable and efficient that he can outdo members of a Temple. Hence, though he is not fooled by the false busyness of the Sergeant, he is impressed by his words, as he is impressed by the potentialities of the Monk, and of the Guildsmen:

> Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
> To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.
> Euerych, for the wisdom that he kan,
> Was shaply for to been an alderman (11. 369-372).

The same cognizance of excess seen in the description of the Sergeant is seen again in the description of the Wife of Bath:

> Hir couerchiefs ful fyne were of ground;
> I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound.
> . . . . . .
> Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyue (11. 453-460).

Related to the comment on the Sergeant is the comment on the Summoner's knowledge of law:

> A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
> That he had lerned out of som decre --
> No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
> And eek ye knowen wel how that a iay
> Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope (11. 639-643).

Again, only a very obtuse man would not notice that the drunken Summoner was repeating the same Latin phrases over and over again. The comment on "cursyng" too requires no great intelligence or sensitivity on the part of the narrator, but it does require his "ful deuout corage." The

Summoner's comments deal with matters of damnation and dogma, as the Monk's do not. The whole response of the narrator to the Pardoner (and part of the response is objective) is in accord with his previous comments to the Sergeant's busyness, and the attitude toward the Pardoner's virility ("I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare," l. 691) is consistent with his comments on the strength and manliness of the Monk, Friar, Miller, Squire, and Host.

Thus, contrary to the opinion of Ben Kimpel,[9] a good deal of information about the character and personality of the narrator is supplied by the General Prologue, and, contrary to many critics, there is no inconsistency in characterization. The information supplied by the descriptions can be briefly summarized: the narrator is gregarious, observant, curious, friendly, and devout, but he is frank of speech and will take umbrage at certain statements; he is prone to admire strength, rank, and efficiency; and he is not easily defrauded. These characteristics do not conflict with those summarized earlier. In short, though not so witty, perceptive, consciously ironic and sly as John Major would have him, nor a simple man who reports only what he hears, as Ben Kimpel insists,[10] he is certainly a person with the qualities which we tend to associate today, either critically or in praise, with the middle class "solid citizen."[11]

The function of this solid citizen in the General Prologue, as

---

[9]Ben Kimpel, "The Narrator of the Canterbury Tales," ELH, XX (1953), 77-86, esp. 86.

[10]John M. Major, "The Personality of Chaucer the Pilgrim," PMLA, LXXV (1960), 160-162, esp. 161; Kimpel, 81.

[11]See Donaldson, "Pilgrim," 933; Major, 161; Nevill Coghill, The Poet Chaucer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 118.

in most of Chaucer's work, is to assist the presentation of an ironic view of existence, a view which exposes clearly the tension between precept and practice, between ideal and accomplishment, between the real and apparent.[12] It is necessary for the ironic technique that the apparent be presented clearly and wholly as concrete, and acceptable as "real life," that is, by accurately reflecting existence as most men perceive it and as some men try to come to grips with it. It is only by contrast to a world accepted as real that what is beyond that world has any validity for human experience. To present this experiential reality Chaucer used every resource of medieval literature, life, and thought in the creation of his pilgrims and their milieu; in the General Prologue this reality emerges through the vision of the generally noncommital narrator, one who is irterested in the details of everyday existence and who, as an average man, would not be suspected of perpetrating any philosophical or literary trickery.

For the presentation of the other dimension of the ironic vision, the dimension of the ideal precept, Chaucer uses two methods: first, he includes among the pilgrims "real" people who function as ideal moral, religious, ethical, and social standards; that is, the Knight, the Clerk, the Parson, and the Plowman; and, to a lesser degree, the Squire, the Yeoman, the Manciple, and the Franklin. This use of standards is part

---

[12]See Donaldson, "Pilgrim," 934-936 and Poetry, 878-880; Major, 161; Robert Preston, Chaucer (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952), 168; John F. Danby, "Eighteen Lines of Chaucer's 'Prologue,'" Crit. Q., II (1960), 30-31; Ralph Baldwin, The Unity of the Canterbury Tales ("Anglistica," V; Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955), 67-73; Paull F. Baum, Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1958), 61, 65; D. S. Brewer, Chaucer ("Men and Books"; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), 133, 136; Woolf, 152-154.

of the technique of juxtaposition[13] which operates throughout the General Prologue, appearing in a range from clauses of sentences ("And though that he were worthy, he was wys," l. 68) to whole portraits. Supporting the technique of juxtaposition are all the devices commonly considered to reflect an ironic view: puns, double entendres, objective descriptions of crime and rascality, mock praise, etc. Secondly, Chaucer shows the reaction of the narrator to the excesses of certain pilgrims, a reaction which has prompted the charge of inconsistency in the presentation of the narrator.

It is this ironic vision, then, which lies behind the real and apparent inconsistencies. The apparent inconsistencies I have already discussed; the real one is in the presentation of facts about the pilgrims which the narrator could not possibly know. The portraits present, on the one hand, the narrator's view of their immediate habits, appearances, and tales, supported by facts which he could have learned from conversation, observation and confessions,[14] and, on the other hand, facts about them which only Chaucer knows, but which he offers in the guise of the narrator. The pilgrims can be arranged in six groups, based both on the range of knowledge, that is, whether limited or omniscient (an arrangement based on content), and on the position of the omniscient knowledge in the portrait (an arrangement based on form). Those pilgrims whose portraits are based almost wholly on observation

---

[13]See Donaldson, Poetry, 874.

[14]See Edgar Hill Duncan, "Narrator's Points of View in the Portrait-sketches, Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1954), 77-101, esp. 91-97; he notes also the use of shifting point of view in Roman de la Rose.

include the Yeoman and the Miller; those whose portraits are based almost wholly on omniscience are the Franklin, the Wife of Bath, the Parson, and the Plowman.[15] The portraits of the rest of the pilgrims are based on the alternation of limited and omniscient material.

The omniscient knowledge appears at the beginning of the portraits of the Knight, the Monk, the Cook, and the Manciple; it appears in the middle of the portraits of the Reeve and the Summoner, and at the end of the descriptions of the Squire, the Merchant, the Sergeant, the Guildsmen, the Shipman, and the Pardoner. It appears at both the beginning and end of the portraits of the Prioress, the Friar, and the Physician.

This alternation in point of view is part of the general technique of juxtaposition and variation which Chaucer uses in the General Prologue. A rapprochement between the narrator's information and Chaucer's is made through various techniques which Chaucer uses for verisimilitude:[16] (1) careful details of clothes, equipment, etc., which establish the narrator's powers of observation and his curiosity, and

---

[15]These categories are modified, of course, by information in The Canterbury Tales, such as the confessions of the Host, Wife of Bath, and Pardoner, and by the links. Moreover, as pointed out earlier, a good deal of apparently omniscient material could have been gained on the pilgrimage. Duncan, 89, 99, feels that the descriptions of the Physician, Parson, Plowman, Manciple, and Reeve are based on omniscience.

[16]Duncan, 91-97, points out Chaucer's technique: 1, the involvement of the narrator with the pilgrims; 2, making the narrator a vague personality, so that the center of interest is the pilgrims; verisimilitude is reinforced by the narrator's own comments. See also William Witherle Lawrence, Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 28; and J. V. Cunningham, "The Literary Form of the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," MP, XLIX (1952), 73; R. M. Lumiansky, Of Sondry Folk: The Dramatic Principle in the Canterbury Tales (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955), 20-22.

which give him a sort of omniscience through their accuracy and completeness; (2) occasional references to the placement of the pilgrims spatially on the pilgrimage, which, by a false parallelism, forces the reader to accept careful geographical placement ("beside Bathe," "Dertemouthe," etc.); the spatial placement is from observation, but the geographical placement, like the catalogue of the Knight's campaigns, lies in the ambiguous area of information from conversation, confessions, and omniscience;[17] (3) the occasional indications of the narrator's limited knowledge ("I gesse"; "For aught I woot"; etc.) which, paradoxically, leads the reader to believe that the whole account of the pilgrims stems from a limited and not too bright human source; and (4) the technique of juxtaposing lines from omniscient and from limited knowledge, so that each sort of knowledge lies on the same syntactical and experiential plane as the other.[18]

The foregoing commentary is based upon concrete evidence from the General Prologue itself, and can be labeled "the facts about the narrator"; that this evidence constitutes an ironic vision is hard to demonstrate. Though one can analyze the technique of the poem and present support from the rhetorical manuals and previous literature, one cannot state that these per se equal irony. It may be that Chaucer is merely noncommital or falsely sophisticated or, at worst, again following his usual pattern of leaving such problems "to diuynis" (Knight's Tale, 1. 1323). Yet, it is perhaps more than twentieth century cynicism and sophistication which labels Chaucer an ironist, for the Parson,

---

[17]Duncan, 78-79, 87.

[18]Ibid., 78-81.

whose intensity of belief is alien to our time and is insufficient in itself as evidence for irony, in pointing to the meaning of the pilgrimage, the *caritas* symbolized by *felawshipe* and the Jerusalem beyond Canterbury, also points the way to a reading of *The Canterbury Tales* and, if only because it is a prologue, the *General Prologue* as well.

But Chaucer is too careful an artist to rely upon its mere association with *The Canterbury Tales* for the artistic unity of the *General Prologue*; I have indicated the evidence in the *General Prologue* for the dual vision which functions in *The Canterbury Tales*, a vision which can encompass at once the reality of the *Miller's Tale* and the reality of the *Parson's Tale*. The range of experience implied by these two tales, and clarified by the *Parson's Prologue*, can be seen as well in the *General Prologue*.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST EIGHTEEN LINES

The first eighteen lines of the General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales are Chaucer's renewal of a topos, the coming of spring. The reader feels that Chaucer's version is different from any other in the tradition, and indeed he is right: it is the most original use of the topos in the Middle Ages. The content of the lines combines elements from literary tradition, including allusions from classical antiquity; scientific treatises; and philosophical-theological doctrines. The power of these lines comes partly from the fact that such a heavy weight of content has been gracefully integrated into a form of only eighteen lines, a form which also is influenced by a long tradition, that of rhetorical rules for poetic creation. These eighteen lines, then, represent a rather mechanical juxtaposition of elements from various sources conveyed in a highly rhetorical form. Yet, paradoxically, one feels that Chaucer has created something new. The essence of Chaucer's art lies in this paradox, and perhaps by an analysis of the form, content, and technique of these lines, an approach to the artistic method of Chaucer's General Prologue can be made, an approach which will be valid for the whole of Chaucer's work.

The literary tradition of lines 1-18 has long been recognized

and fully documented.[1] It stretches from Lucretius through the Pervigilium Veneris and Latin lyrics into Provençal, French, German, and English lyrics and romances and is suggested as a rhetorical exercise by Matthew of Vendôme and hinted at by Geoffrey of Vinsauf.[2] The

---

[1]See especially Rosemond Tuve, Seasons and Months: Studies in a Tradition of Middle English Poetry (Paris: Librairie Universitaire, S.A., 1933), and "Spring in Chaucer and Before Him," MLN, LII (1937), 9-16. Other discussions of sources and analogues, along with general commentary, are in Ewald Flügel, "Some Notes on Chaucer's Prologue," JEGP, I (1897), 118-135, esp. 118-123; Eleanor Prescott Hammond, Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1908), 267-270; Frederick Tupper, "Saint Venus and the Canterbury Pilgrims," The Nation, XCVII (1913), 354-356; Albert S. Cook, "Chauceriana I.," Romanic Review, VIII (1917), 210-226; Albert S. Cook, "Chaucerian Papers," Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, XXIII (1919), 1-63, esp. 22-27; Florence M. Grimm, Astronomical Lore in Chaucer (University of Nebraska Studies in Language, Literature and Criticism, No. 2; Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1919), 34, 79-94; Hubertis Cummings, "Chaucer's Prologue 1-7," MLN, XXXVII (1922), 86-90; J. E. Hankins, "Chaucer and the Pervigilium Veneris," MLN, XLIX (1934), 80-83; Rudolph Willard, "Chaucer's 'Holt and Heeth,'" American Speech, XXII (1947), 196-198; Arthur K. Moore, "'Somer' and 'Lenten' as Terms for Spring," N & Q, CXCIV (1949), 82-83; John Speirs, Chaucer the Maker (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 99-103; Brewer, 132-133; Arthur W. Hoffman, "Chaucer's Prologue to Pilgrimage: The Two Voices," ELH, XXI (1954), 1-16, esp. 1-4; Preston, 149-151, 169-170; J. Swart, "The Construction of Chaucer's General Prologue," Neophil., XXXVIII (1954), 127-136; Baldwin, 1-28; Baum, 60; Danby, 28-32. See also the notes to editions of the General Prologue and The Canterbury Tales: The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Walter W. Skeat (7 vols.; 2d ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1900), V, 1-2; Chaucer: The Prologue, The Knight's Tale, The Nonne Preestes Tale from The Canterbury Tales, ed. Richard Morris, rev. W. W. Skeat (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907), 127-129; Chaucer: The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, ed. R. T. Davies (Harrap's English Classics; London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1953), 67-68; Robinson, 650-651. Other references may be found in Dudley David Griffith, Bibliography of Chaucer: 1908-1953 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955).

[2]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova, 791-795; Matthew of Vendôme, Ars Versificatoria, I, 107-108, 111; both treatises are printed in Edmond Faral, Les Arts Poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siècle: Recherches et Documents sur la Technique Littéraire du Moyen Âge (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1928; reprinted, 1958). See also Faral's commentary, 81.

traditional elements of the topos (shoures, droghte, flour, foweles, sonne) can be illustrated from dozens of examples.[3] But although many of these analogues and sources contain elements identical to Chaucer's, and though many of them may be founded upon the same symbolism and the same varied sources, none of them contains so many varied sources and symbols so systematically used and so skillfully assimilated.

Fused with the literary tradition apparent in the General Prologue (and perhaps in all examples of the topos) is a clearly defined scientific description of spring,[4] such as that found in the Secreta Secretorum:

> In veer the tyme is so hote, þe wyndis risen the snowe meltith. Ryvers aforsen hem to renne and wexen hoote, the

---

[3]To those examples cited in the works referred to in note 2 may be added, for the sake of completeness, The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus, trans. F. W. Cornish (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913, rev. 1950), XLVI ("Iam ver egelidos refert tepores"); The Fasti of Ovid, ed. and trans. J. G. Frazer (5 vols.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1929), Fasti, IV, 85-132; P. Ovidi Nasonis: Tristivm Libri Qvinqve, etc., ed. S. C. Owen (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1915), Tristia, III, xii; Les Poésies de Bernart Marti, ed. Ernest Hoepffner (CFMA, No. 61; Paris: Eduard Champion, 1929), VII ("Qvan l'erb' es reverdezida"); Les Chansons attribuées à Guiot de Dijon et Jocelin, ed. Elisabeth Nissen (CFMA, No. 59; Paris: Honoré Champion, 1928); Early Irish Lyrics: Eighth to Twelfth Century, ed. and trans. Gerard Murphy (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), No. 52 ("May-Day"); Thomas Parry, A History of Welsh Literature, trans. H. Idris Bell (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 58; Dafydd ap Gwilym: Fifty Poems, trans. H. Idris Bell and David Bell (London: The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorian, 1942), Nos. XXXVII, XXXVIII; Deutsche Lyrik des Mittelalters, ed. Max Wehrli (Zürich: Manesse Verlag, Conjett and Huber, 1955), No. 47; Ten Centuries of Spanish Poetry, eds. Eleanor L. Turnbull and Pedro Salinas (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), No. 19 ("Dia de la Pascua"); Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries, ed. Rossel Hope Robbins (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), Nos. 67, 141; English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century, ed. Carleton Brown (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932), Nos. 6, 7, 52, 54, 62, 63, 76, 81, 86.

[4]Tuve, Seasons and Months, 46-70, and "Spring in Chaucer," 9-16.

> humydite of the erthe mountith into the croppe of alle growyng thingis, and makith trees and herbes to leve and floure, þe medis wexen grene, the sedis risen, and cornes wexen, and flouris taken coloure; foweles clothen them alle newe and bigynne to synge. . . .[5]

The opening of spring, presented partly in astrological terms by Chaucer (ll. 7-8), has scientific sanction: "Ver bigynneth whan þe sonne entrith into the signe of þe Ram, and dewrith four skore dayes and xiij, and xviij houres, and the fourthe part of an houre, that is, from the xiij day of marche unto the xiij day of June."[6] Even the love motif dominant in the literary tradition has sanction in treatises; the Secreta Secretorum, for example, calls the earth in spring a "spouse semly dighte."[7]

Inherent in this scientific comment on spring is the doctrine of the "four humors" and of the "four elements," presented by Chaucer in the order water (shoures), earth (ll. 1-4), air (Zephirus), and fire (sonne). Of the humors, spring partakes of those which are hot and moist. These are the humors of human blood,[8] and because "ther is no condicioun in best, ne in planet of hevene, ne in erthe that it ne is founden in man,"[9] then the activity of spring will be repeated in man's blood, which is also like the water in earth.[10] Hence, as the "shoures

---

[5]Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum, ed. Robert Steele (EETS, ES 74; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1898), 27; Tuve, Seasons and Months, 53.

[6]Secreta Secretorum, 27; Tuve, Seasons and Months, 170-181.

[7]Secreta Secretorum, 73; Tuve, Seasons and Months, 63.

[8]Secreta Secretorum, 219-220, 236-237; see also Li livres dou tresor de Brunetto Latini, ed. Francis J. Carmody (University of California Publications in Modern Philology, Vol. 22; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1948), I, 99, 2. Swart, 136, notes that the four humors appear in the General Prologue.

[9]Secreta Secretorum, 35. [10]Latini, Tresor, I, 105, 1.

soote" pierce the "droghte of March" and "bathen every veyne," so in this time "sterith mannes blood and spredith into alle the membris of þe body,"[11] and men will burgeon both physically and, because of the symbolic nature of blood, spiritually, and will "goon on pilgrymages."

The most apparent philosophical-theological doctrine informing the structure of lines 1-18 is that of "the great chain of being,"[12] a concept expressed most importantly for the purposes of Chaucer criticism by Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's Somnium Scipionis:

> . . . cumque omnia continuis successionibus se sequantur degenerantia per ordinem ad imum meandi: inuenientur pressius intuenti a summo deo usque ad ultimam rerum faecem una mutuis se uinculis religans et nusquam interrupta conexio. et haec est homeri catena aurea. . . .[13]

Chaucer summarizes the doctrine in The Knight's Tale, 11. 2987-2993:

> The firste moeuere of the cause aboue,
> Whan he first made the faire cheyne of loue,
> . . . . . .
> With that faire cheyne of loue he bond
> The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
> In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee.

Lines 1-18 reflect the hierarchical order of this catena aurea: the vegetable world (11. 1-7), the animal world (11. 7-11), and the human world (11. 11-18); it is the same hierarchy as that in Genesis I:9-28. Each link in the chain, as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas insist, borders on a higher,[14] and this contingency is indicated by Chaucer through the

---

[11] Secreta Secretorum, 35; Tuve, Seasons and Months, 56.

[12] See Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936); Alan M. F. Gunn, The Mirror of Love, A Reinterpretation of "The Romance of the Rose" (Lubbock, Tex.: Texas Tech Press, 1952).

[13] Commentariorum in Somnium Scipionis, I. xiii. 15, in Macrobius, ed. Franz Eyssenhardt (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1893), 542. Translated in Lovejoy, 63.

[14] Lovejoy, 79.

syntax: the vegetable and animal worlds are linked through the conjunction And; the human world is linked to them through the Than-clause (ll. 11-18) of the conditional sentence begun in the first line.

Within this hierarchical order is a circular movement from heaven (shoures soote) to earth (roote, veyne) back through flour and tendre croppes to sonne and foweles, ending in holy blisful martir, a return to heaven, but with an emphasis different from that of shoures soote.[15] The culmination in holy blisful martir places the emphasis on Christian love as the impelling force of the pilgrimage, links the two motifs of rebirth and pilgrimage, and implicitly identifies the showers of heaven with the blood of martyrs.

The "shoures soote" are a symbol of the sacrament of baptism and hence have regenerative powers.[16] Tertullian, for example, states in De baptismo that water is "divini spiritus sedes" and hence "ne mirum sit in baptismo, si aquae animae noverunt."[17] Further, all water has this sacramental power to renew life: "omnes aquae de pristina originis praerogativa sacramentum sanctificationis consequuntur invocato deo."[18] This is echoed in a scientific treatise, the Secreta Secretorum: "rayn . . . ys þe grace of god, þe benysoun of hevene, strenth of þe erþe, and helpe to alle þat levyn . . . he by rayne what þinge þat is makys

---

[15]Swart, 136.

[16]Preston, 170, notes that the General Prologue shows a consciousness of "water of life quenching the drought, it contains death and resurrection, Lent and Easter, a new Spring that may come to all pilgrims."

[17]Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum, XX: Q. Sept. Florent. Tertulliani Opera (Vienna, 1890), Pars I, VII (De baptismo), 3.

[18]De baptismo, 4.

whik, dede þinges reburgones, and he gevys hys benysoun in alle vertuz."[19] Tertullian remarks that the angel in the pool at Bethsaida healed bodies, but that corporal healing signifies spiritual healing, "ea forma qua semper carnalia in figuram spiritualium antecedunt."[20] Hence all baptismal waters can pierce to the root of spiritual aridity: "fons vita [i.e., Christ] circuit universa orbis terra spatia, sitientes potans, aridítates infundens, terras rigans."[21] Blood, like water, has also renewing powers: "sanguis autem Christi est summum medicamentum aridis cordis nostri."[22] The religious symbolism which underlies the literary and scientific descriptions of spring explains not only the medicamentum which the "holy blisful martir" used to help the pilgrims "whan that they were seeke," but explains also the dual nature of the sickness, which is both physical, cured by the renewal of spring, and spiritual, cured by the efficacy of martyr's blood.

The preceding discussion reveals several facts about Chaucer's art: first, that there is little in lines 1-18 which has no source or analogue in medieval writing; second, that a large body of not only

---

[19]Secreta Secretorum, 59.

[20]De baptismo, 5.

[21]Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne (221 vols; Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844-1865), LIII: Salvianus, etc. The quotation is from Arnobius Junior, Conflictus de deo trino et uno, etc. II, 305.

[22]Lexicon Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis Polonorum (Warsaw, 1956), I, 746. See "Ariditas." The quotation is from Nicholas de Btonie, Sermones, I, 234. For ariditas as "dryness of spirit" see J. H. Baxter and Charles Johnson, Medieval Latin Word-List (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934). See also Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century, ed. Carleton Brown (2d ed. rev. by G. V. Smithers; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), No. 18, l. 4 ("Welle of lyf, vur, charite and gostlych oynement").

literary, but also scientific and theological materials is apparent in these lines; and third, that this material is fused so that it is impossible to determine which influence was foremost in Chaucer's mind in any one given line. This fusion focusses attention on the purpose and result of the lines: Chaucer intended to present an experience with both universal and contemporary meaning; to do this he combined elements from all the statements of human experience available to him, poetic, cultural, scientific, experiential, and religious. The result of this fusion is the feeling on the part of the reader that Chaucer's description of spring is somehow more meaningful than any other in the tradition. And this feeling is supported by the formal complexity of the poem.

The total structure of lines 1-18 falls into three distinct sections, of four, seven, and seven lines respectively, which present a temporal and historical progression. The first section, lines 1-4, is concerned primarily with the perpetual cyclic renewal of nature, a concern emphasized in the short space of four lines by the piling up of specific words dealing with natural processes (shoures, droghte, roote, veyne, engendred, flour), and by specific seasonal indications, (Aprill, March).

The second section, while continuing the emphasis on nature, implicitly and explicitly deals also with elements which derive from a definite historical and cultural entity, classical antiquity. The classical background represented by these lines furnishes not only sources and analogues for the spring topos in general,[23] but also for the pilgrimage motif. Catullus, for example, remarks of spring,

---

[23]See Tuve, Seasons and Months, 11-45.

iam mens praetrepidans avet vagari,
iam laeti studio pedes vigescunt.
o dulces comitum valete coetus
longe quos simul a domo profectos . . . .[24]

and Ovid comments on a journey to the house of "hospitis antiqui"[25] on April 19, a date close to that of the journey of the Canterbury pilgrims from the inn of the host, Harry Bailey. This background is presented by the accumulation of words from classical antiquity, and although the terms are astrological as well, classical connotations are carried by Zephirus, yonge sonne (Phoebus), Ram (Aries), smale foweles (Philomena), and nature (Natura). The equation of sonne and Phoebus is explicit in poets who make an obvious display of erudition, as does Lydgate, for example, in his lines beginning "Whan bri3te phebus passed was þeram/ Myd of Aprille"[26] or "Whan Phebus in the Crabbe had nere hys cours ronne";[27] or, at a later period, George Ripley, in lines beginning, "When Sol is in Aries & Phebus shynyth bright."[28] More pertinently, evidence appears in the work of Chaucer:

Phebus hath of gold his stremes doun sent,
To gladen euery flour with his warmnesse.
He was that tyme in Geminis.
(Merchant's Tale, ll. 2229-2223)

---

[24]Catullus, XLVI.

[25]Ovid, Fasti, XIII, 687 ff.

[26]Lydgate's Siege of Thebes, ed. Axel Erdmann (EETS, ES 108; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1911), 1-17.

[27]The Assembly of Gods, etc. by John Lydgate, ed. Oscar Lovell Triggs (EETS, ES 69; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896), 1-2.

[28]Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, The Index of Middle English Verse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), No. 4017.

> Phebus the sonne ful iolyf was and cleer;
> For he was ny his exaltacioun
> In Martes face, and in his mansioun
> In Aries.
> (Squire's Tale, 11. 48-51)

Coincident with the astrological and classical overtones of yonge sonne is the implicit symbolic equation of the sun and God, Christ, and grace, a symbolic equation parallel to the one of rain as grace and Christ, "þat swete dew";[29] the second section as a whole is dominated by Venus (Natura), the copulatrix amorum and renewer of life.[30]

The same complexity of statement can be seen in the "smale foweles . . ./ That slepen al the nyght with open eye," which not only represent the classical Philomela, but which have also a theological and scientific background. The Secreta Secretorum notes that in spring one hears "þe nyghtyngale soun,"[31] a statement common in the literary sources and analogues of Chaucer's poem;[32] but, along with the description of the nightingale in Pliny's Historia naturalis,[33] it indicates again the scientific foundation of the literary tradition in general and

---

[29]St. Jeremie's 15 Tokens before Doomsday, ed. F. J. Furnivall (EETS 69; London: N. Trübner & Co., 1878); Brown-Robbins, Index, No. 3472: "þe sunne of grace hym schynit in / in on day quan it was morwe," etc.

[30]See Tuve, Seasons and Months, 11-26; Tupper, 354.

[31]Secreta Secretorum, 73; Tuve, Seasons and Months, 59-62.

[32]Tuve, Seasons and Months, 61-62; see also above, page 16, note 1.

[33]Pliny: Natural History, ed. H. Rackham, III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940), X. xliii. 81. Repeated in Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarvm sive originvm, ed. W. M. Lindsay, II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1911), XII. vii. 37. For discussions of nightingales in literature see, in addition to works citedd in the notes, Ernest Whitney Martin, The Birds of the Latin Poets (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1914); Thomas P. Harrison, They Tell of Birds (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1956).

of the General Prologue in particular. But in the Middle Ages the scientifically and poetically described nightingale had symbolic meaning,[34] and for this reason it is no accident of rhyme that the smale foweles passage comes at a climactic position, just before the Than-clause. The traditional use of the nightingale in love poetry, the similarity of its Latin name, Luscina, with the goddess of birth,[35] and the popular belief that to hear the nightingale before the cuckoo ensures good luck in love and marriage,[36] all support the erotic motif of lines 1-11. But what links the smale foweles to the Than-clause which follows is the symbolic use of the nightingale as both the Christian soul seeking union with Christ, and as Christ himself.[37] As a symbol of Christ, the nightingale reinforces the baptismal symbolism of lines 1-4; as the questing soul, the nightingale passage anticipates the pilgrymage of lines 11-18. The relationship between nightingale, spring, and pilgrimage is indicated in one of the lyrics of Jaufre Rudel:

> Quan lo rossinhols el folhos
> Dona d'amor . . .
> . . . qui sai rema deleytes
> E Dieu non sies en Belleen

---

[34]See P. Maximilianus, O.F.M., "Philomena van John Peckham," Neophil., XXXVIII (1954), 206-217, 290-300; Carol Maddison, "'Brave Prick Song': An Answer to Sir Thomas Browne," MLN, LXXV (1960), 468-478.

[35]Maddison, 472, says that Isidore derives Luscinia from the root luc-, "light"; thus Luscinia and Lucina have the same root. In The Book of the Beasts, ed. and trans. T. H. White (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954), 139, the nightingale is called "Lucina."

[36]See Lean's Collecteana, ed. Vincent Stuckey Lean (4 vols.; Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1902-1904), II, 1, 60.

[37]Maximilianus, 206-217; Maddison, 474.

No sai cum ja mais sia pros
Ni cum ja venh' a guerimen . . . .[38]

Moreover, the nightingale in The Owl and the Nightingale reminds the owl that his singing makes man think of the bliss of heaven,[39] just as the Parson reminds the pilgrims that the goal of their journey is, like Rudel's Belleen, one greater than Canterbury. Lines 5-11, then, reflect the highest culture attained by man before the Christian period, and at the same time establish a definite time, mid-April,[40] for the pilgrimage, and provide a link with section three.

Section three, lines 12-18, is an overtly Christian passage, emphasizing the most important aspect of the cyclic rebirth, pilgrimage, and a more specifically temporal statement (England since Saint Thomas of Canterbury), which leads directly into the specific pilgrimage which Chaucer describes. As in the case of the first two sections, Chaucer emphasizes his point by the accumulation of words: pilgrymages, palmeres, halwes, Caunterbury, holy blisful martir, and seeke.

For the religious symbolism of the pilgrymage motif little

---

[38]Les Chansons de Jaufré Rudel, ed. Alfred Jeanroy (CFMA, No. 15; Paris: Edouard Champion, 1915), I, 1, 36-39; Tuve, Seasons and Months, 103, cites this lyric, but without commenting on the pilgrimage motif.

[39]The Owl and the Nightingale, ed. Eric Gerald Stanley (Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1960), 716 ff.

[40]The time is definitely established as April 16-19 by evidence in The Canterbury Tales. But there is corroborative evidence in the General Prologue. The nightingale, for example, returns to England around April 17; see The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities, etc., ed. R. Chambers (2 vols.; London: J. B. Lippincott, n.d.), I, p. 514. Astrological evidence in ll. 7-8 further establishes the date (see Robinson, 651); though Venus does not appear, it is apparent that Venus is the dominant planet (Tupper, 354).

commentary is necessary; such a work as Le Pèlerinage de la vie humaine, which Chaucer knew, or Chaucer's own words provide sufficient gloss:

> This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
> And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro.
> (Knight's Tale, 11. 2847-2848)

Chaucer's fusion of the erotic with the motifs of the pilgrimage and the ranks of society has also an analogue in a fourteenth century lyric in which Christ says,

> I come vram þe wedlock as a svete spouse, þet
> habbe my wif wiþ me in-nome.
> I come vram vi3t a staleworþe kny3t, þet myne
> vo habbe ouercome.
> I come vram þe chepyng as a Riche chapman, þet
> mankynde habbe ibou3t.
> I come vram an vncouþe londe as a sely pylegrym,
> þet ferr habbe i-sou3t.[41]

The first eighteen lines of the General Prologue, then, have a climactic and multilayered structure. The rhetorical period Whan . . . Whan . . . Than . . . is accompanied by the patterns vegetable world, animal world, human world (the "chain of being" and the order in Genesis); and natural world, classical world, and Christian world. In tension with this linear and hierarchical movement is a cyclic movement from heaven to earth and back to heaven, which is an emblem of a general ritual pattern, the rebirth in spring of nature, and of a specific Christian one, Easter.[42] Spring in the Middle Ages was the time of the creation of the

---

[41]Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century, No. 36, 5-8.

[42]For the relationship between spring and Easter see Jeanroy, Rudel, No. 4, 50; Brown, English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century, Nos. 54, 81; Le Roman de Troie par Benôit de Sainte-Maure, ed. Léopold Constans (Paris: Firmin Didot et Cie, 1904), I, 1167-1168; Turnbull and Salinas, Spanish Poetry, No. 19; Florie et Blancheflor, ed. Margaret M. Pelan (Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strassbourg; Paris: Société d'Édition: Les Belles Lettres, 1956), 161; Le Roman

world by God[43] and of the resurrection of Christ, a duality reflected in the taking on of man's nature by God, an event celebrated by the carol beginning "The sonne of god hath take nature/ Of mylde Mary";[44] the spelling which can equate the "yonge sonne" with "The sonne of god" is more than a pun; it is another expression of the nature-spirit duality which runs throughout the General Prologue and which led a medieval poet to write a song of love to Jesus using a familiar motif:

> Nv yh she blostme sprynge,
> hic herde a fuheles song.
> a swete longinge
> myn herte þure þhut sprong,
> . . . . . .
> of iesu crist hi synge.[45]

and another to write one with imagery reminiscent of the General Prologue:

> Suete ihesu, min huerte bote,
> in myn huerte þou sete a rote
> of þi loue þat is so swote,
> ant leue þat hit springe mote.[46]

The complex interrelationships of scientific, theological and literary material in lines 1-18 are focussed by the syntactic structure, so that the result clause presents at once the linear idea of pilgrimage and the cyclic idea of rebirth; the duality represented by this structure is at the heart of Chaucer's vision and artistry.

---

de Flamenca, ed. and trans. Paul Meyer (Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1865), 2339-2391, 2669-2684. Also see Baldwin, 24-25.

[43]Hammond, 269; Tuve, Seasons and Months, 127-170; Baldwin, 25-26.

[44]Brown-Robbins, Index, No. 3468.

[45]Brown, Lyrics of the XIIIth Century, No. 63.

[46]Brown, Religious Lyrics, No. 7, 9-12.

CHAPTER III

THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

Like so many other aspects of Chaucer's art, the ironic method had predecessors in literature[1] and sanction in rhetorical manuals. The discussion of irony in medieval literature is, like the discussion of methods of narration, beyond the scope of this dissertation, but general comment on the rhetorical element in Chaucer's irony is possible and pertinent.

Irony as a rhetorical technique makes uses of the rhetorical figures, particularly the figures of diction (verborum exornationes),[2] which are related to tropes.[3] The five figures involved in irony are

---

[1]See Earle Birney, "English Irony before Chaucer," UTQ, VI (1937), 538-557, and G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 229 ff.

[2]For the most extended discussion of these, see Cicero Ad C. Herennium De Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica Ad. Herennium), ed. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), IV. xiii. 19-xxxiv. 46; Ars versificatoria, III. 45; Poetria Nova, 1098-1229; Summa de coloribus rhetoricus, in Faral, 321-327; Laborintus, 441-522, in Faral, 336-377; The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, ed. and trans. H. E. Butler (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), IX. iii.

[3]Quintilian, VIII. vi. 2-6, remarks that some of these figures are often called tropes (tropos). As tropes they are part of the "high" or "grand style" (elocutio or stylus gravis). For a list and discussion of tropes see Ad Herenn., IV. xxxi. 42-xxxiv. 46; Quintilian, VIII. vi; Poetria Nova, 765-1093; Documentum de Arte Versificandi, III. 4-47, in Faral, 263-320; Laborintus, 385-439.

deminutio (diminutio),[4] or disparagement, including self-disparagement, characteristic of low-norm satire;[5] significatio, or leaving more understood than said, accomplished partly through the use of hyperbole (exsuperationem), ambiguity (ambiguum), logical consequence (consequentiam), suddenly stopping short (abscissionem), and analogy (similitudinem);[6] permutatio,[7] or giving more meaning than the words seem to carry; allegoria (inversio)[8] with the same definition as permutatio; and ironia (illusio), properly speaking a species of allegoria, and which presents contraries, partly through the use of wit (ἀστεϊσμός, urbanitas), saying the contrary of what we mean (ἀντίφρασις), and sarcasm (σαρκασμός).[9]

Most of these techniques appear in the General Prologue. For example, deminutio might be said to be the stock in trade of Chaucer's persona, and appears in such lines as, "My wit is short, ye may wel vnderstonde" (l. 746). Of the figure significatio, Chaucer uses the techniques of exsuperatio ("His mouth as greet was as a greet fourneys" [l. 559]) ambiguum ("a brooch of gold ful shene/ On which ther was first writen a crowned A,/ And after Amor vincit omnia"[ll. 160-162]) consequentia ("She koude muche of wandrynge by the weye./ Gat tothed was

---

[4]Ad Herenn., IV. xxxviii. 50, calls this a figure of thought; see also Poetria Nova, 1236-1237; Laborintus, 529-530.

[5]See Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 226-229.

[6]Ad Herenn., IV. liv. 67, calls significatio a figure of thought; see also Quintilian, IX. i. 27, ii. 3; Poetria Nova, 1269-1270; Laborintus, 561-570.

[7]Ad Herenn., IV. xxxiv. 46; Poetria Nova, 949-954.

[8]Quintilian, VIII. vi. 43-46.

[9]Ibid., VIII. vi. 54-61; see also IV. i. 39; VI. ii. 15; VI. iii. 68; IX. i. 3-7; IX. ii. 44; IX. ii. 97; IX. iii. 29.

she . . ." 11. 467-468), abscissio ("But ther of nedeth nat to speke as nouthe" 1. 462), and similitudo ("I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare" 1. 691). Of allegoria, σαρκασμός appears in the description of the Summoner:

> A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.
> He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
> A good felawe to haue his concubyn
> A twelf monthe, and excuse hym atte fulle (11. 648-651).

This example serves also for ἀστεισμός and ἀντίφρασις as Quintilian defines them.

It is obvious both that the figures have overlapping definitions and that there is no standard terminology, neither situation being uncommon in rhetorical definitions; but whatever the terminology, it was familiar to Chaucer. No textbook, of course, can make an artist an ironist, but the fact that Chaucer was both an ironist and rhetorician cannot be ignored, nor can one discount the influence of any material which Chaucer read on a mind of such urbanitas.

It is not surprising then that the General Prologue should follow rhetorical principles.[10] The General Prologue as a whole is the exordium to the oratio of The Canterbury Tales, but it is in itself an oratio and has its own structure of exordium, narratio, perhaps divisio, and conclusio.[11] Of the two types of exordia possible, principium and insinuatio,[12] Chaucer chose the latter, for it not only, like the

---

[10]For commentary on rhetoric in the General Prologue, see Baldwin, 29-37; Tuve, Seasons and Months, 93-94; Brewer, 132; Baum, 60; Kemp Malone, "Style and Structure in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," ELH, XIII (1946), 38-45.

[11]Ad Herenn., I. iii. 4-iv. 6.

[12]Ibid., I. iv. 6-7.

principium, has as its purpose to render the reader or listener adtentos, dociles, and benivolos, but also allows for this purpose the use of something unexpected (praeter expectationem).[13] Chaucer accomplishes this by altering in form, though not in content, the topos of the coming of spring.

The normal pattern for the spring motif is the dual burgeoning of nature and of love, as illustrated by the thirteenth century lyric,

> When þe nyhtegale singes þe wodes waxen grene,
> Lef & gras & blosme springes in averyl, y wene,
> ant love is to myn herte gon wiþ one spere so kene,
> nygt & day my blod hit drynkes, myn herte deþ me tene.[14]

Chaucer, however, unexpectedly follows his version of the topos (ll. 1-11) with this line: "Than longen folk to goon on pilgrymages," an activity which, on the surface, has little to do with love.[15] In form, then, lines 1-18 are praeter expectationem. But what Chaucer has done is to shift to another plane of definition, so that he actually is illustrating the rebirth of love in lines 12-19, but it is caritas, not amor.

Lines 1-18 are a periodic sentence; rhetorical manuals do not define a periodic sentence as it is known today, that is, "a sentence in which the grammatical form and essential meaning are not completed until the end is reached: distinguished from loose sentence."[16] But they define continuatio (conclusio), a tightly organized and continuous group

---

[13]Ibid., I. vi. 10.

[14]Brown, English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century, No. 86.

[15]But see the discussion above, 19-20.

[16]Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (College ed.; Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1956), 1088.

of words embracing a complete thought, and state that a sentence should rise, and grow in force, and that continuatio is used in maxims, contrasts, conclusions, etc.;[17] one of the examples given by the Rhetorica Ad Herennium is a periodic sentence as defined above.[18] Lines 1-18 of the General Prologue fit both the modern definition and that furnished by rhetorical manuals. Its structure of three membra[19] (Whan . . . Whan . . . Than) fulfills the requirements for both the best use of the figure (three membra),[20] and for the figure conpar, which is a sentence composed of membra of virtually equal numbers of syllables;[21] the three clauses of lines 1-18 contain around twenty, thirty-five and thirty-five syllables respectively.[22]

The opening lines can be analyzed according to the general discussion in the rhetorical manuals of the methods of beginning a work, and specifically of the natural and artificial orders and of the use of zeugma and hypozeuxis. Matthew of Vendôme advocates the use of zeugma (several

---

[17]Ad Herenn., IV. xix. 27; Quintilian, IX. iv. 22-23, 124. Quintilian also notes (IX. iv. 30) the force of having a passage converge to a point at the end.

[18]Ad Herenn., IV. xix. 27. Such a long periodic sentence as Chaucer uses probably violates the rules; see Ad. Herenn., IV. xii. 18. See also Poetria Nova, 1939-1940.

[19]A membrum is a sentence member which does not complete the entire thought; see Ad Herenn., IV. xix. 26; Quintilian, IX. 3. 98.

[20]Ad Herenn., IV. xix. 26.

[21]Ibid., IV. xx. 27-28.

[22]Ibid., IV. xxxv. 34; Quintilian IX. iii. 54-56; IX. i. 34. The movement toward the climax is slightly related to the figure of diction gradatio, or passing to a following word by repetition of a preceding one; it is often called catena, an interesting rhetorical sanction for the catena aurea inherent in the structure of the General Prologue.

propositions controlled by a single verb) and hypozeuxis (the juxtaposition of complete propositions, each with its own verb).[23] Chaucer chose the latter method, using the juxtaposed propositions to create a periodic sentence embracing a general statement (Continuatio . . . in sententia)[24] with its climax on pilgrymage. Whichever is used, Matthew advises the use of a general idea or proverb (generalis sententiae sive proverbii),[25] advice which Chaucer follows by using the spring topos. Geoffrey of Vinsauf advocates a proverbium or sententia also in the course of his discussion of the two methods of beginning a poem, by following the natural order (ordo naturalis) or the artificial order (ordo artificialis), which can, as does the natural order, begin at the beginning, but which can in addition begin with a proverbium;[26] Chaucer chose the artificial order.[27]

To move to the narratio from the exordium in artificial order which has used a proverb, Geoffrey counsels the use of a formula which states, "Here is proof";[28] Chaucer furnishes this formula by citing the experiences of a group of pilgrims to prove that people long to go on pilgrimages.

The Rhetorica Ad Herennium distinguishes three kinds of narratio: fabula, historia, and argumentum; Chaucer, concerned with artistic verisimilitude, chose argumentum, which deals with fictional events which

---

[23]Ars versificatoria, I. 3-14; Faral, 58.

[24]Ad Herenn., IV. xix. 27.

[25]Ars versificatoria, I. 16.

[26]Poetria Nova, 87-99, 125-133; Documentum, II. i. 5.

[27]See Baldwin, 33-34.

[28]Documentum, II. i. 5.

could be true (ficta res quae tamen fieri potuit).[29] Oddly enough, medieval rhetoricians do not deal explicitly with the narratio as a segment of a work, but the Rhetorica Ad Herennium gives explicit instructions on how to handle a narratio.[30]

First, the narratio must be brief; that is, it does not begin too far back in time, it is summary and not detailed, it stops when necessary, and it has no digressions.[31] In the matter of digression, medieval practice and Chaucer depart from classical admonition. One can argue that the Rhetorica Ad Herennium provides in the divisio the genus demonstrativum, in which the characters of man are presented for praise or blame,[32] and that the descriptions of the pilgrims function as the divisio of the General Prologue. But, though the description of Harry Bailey might be considered part of the divisio, it is obvious that Chaucer has returned to the narratio at line 715, and that the descriptions of the pilgrims are, in the light of the Rhetorica Ad Herennium, a digressio which is too long and too detailed. What the descriptions represent is a typical, and sometimes unfortunate, tendency in medieval literature, that of amplification.[33]

The term amplificatio appears in the Rhetorica Ad Herennium only in the discussion of the conclusio;[34] what is termed amplificatio,

---

[29]Ad Herenn., I. viii. 13.

[30]Ad Herenn., I. ix. 14-16. For the medieval equation, narratio = "narration," see Charles Sears Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400), Interpreted from Representative Works (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), 193.

[31]Ad Herenn., I. ix. 14-16. [32]Ibid., III. vi. 10-11.

[33]Gunn, 63-138, notes that this is the chief interest of medieval writers.

[34]Ad Herenn., II. xxx. 47-49.

dilatatio, or augmentatio in the Middle Ages is considered a function or style, though presumably considerations of style would apply to all parts of the oratio. In Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Documentum, however, the discussion of dilation follows immediately the discussion on transition from the principium (exordium), and though he does not state the relationship explicitly, it is obvious that Geoffrey intends for dilation to be part of the main body of the work.[35]

Though it may be mere coincidence, Chaucer's General Prologue follows the order of the elements of amplification given in the Poetria Nova:[36]

(1) Interpretatio, or the replacement of a word by the use of another; it is arguable whether or not this appears in the General Prologue, though it is possible that Chaucer intended "perced to the roote" to equal "bathed euery veyne."

(2) Expolitio, or dealing with the same subject while seeming to say something new, accomplished by repeating the same idea with changes in statement. This is the method of lines 1-11, which say in various ways, "When spring has come. . . ." It is noteworthy that this technique is often confused with interpretatio.[37]

(3) Circuito (circumlocutio), or the expression of a simple idea in a roundabout or indirect manner, as in the whole of lines 1-11.

(4) Similitudo, or comparison, one version of which is a detailed parallel between two objects, etc.; in the General Prologue this parallel is stated in the form, "The rebirth of nature (ll. 1-11) is like

---

[35]Documentum, II. ii. 1 ff.

[36]Poetria Nova, 220-689. [37]Faral, 64.

the rebirth of religious fervor" (11. 12-18).

(5) Exclamatio: this does not appear in the General Prologue.

(6) Prosopopeia, or personification: this does not appear in the General Prologue.

(7) Digressio, or a departure from the subject; Chaucer marks his digression with the lines, "But, nathelees, whil I haue tyme and space. . . ." In the rhetorical manuals it is often confused with similitudo and descriptio.[38]

(8) Descriptio: this appears in the General Prologue in the series of portraits.

(9) Oppositum, or the negation of the contrary of an idea on the one hand, while affirming the idea on the other, as in Chaucer's defense of his literary method (11. 725-742), which denies any motive of shocking or speaking rudely, while affirming the necessity of his literary method.

The second requirement of the narratio is that it be clear, and this is accomplished through the use of language which is clear, familiar, with no shifts of any sort, and no omissions.[39] Chaucer's poem can be said generally to fulfill these requirements, though the question of the language of the poem is worth discussion.

The discussion of style and diction in rhetorical manuals is contradictory and confusing at best. The Rhetorica Ad Herennium, for example, speaks of three styles: gravis, using impressive words and with figures of speech; mediocris, lower than gravis, but not at the

---

[38] Ibid., 74.

[39] Ad Herenn., I. ix. 14-16.

colloquial level; and adtenuata, using current idiom.[40] At the same time it speaks of delivery (pronuntiatio), dividing it into tone of conversation (sermonem), tone of debate (contentionem), and tone of amplification (amplificationem). The conversational tone is divided again into four types: dignified (dignitationem), explanatory (demonstrationem), narrative (narrationem), and facetious (iocationem). The narrative type is defined as that which sets forth events that might have occurred, a definition identical to that of the part of oratio called narratio. For this narrative conversational tone (sermo in narratio), one uses varied intonations, so that the narrative seems to recount everything just as it took place.[41] Using tonal analysis, then, one can place the General Prologue in the category of narrative conversational tone, and though one cannot restrict the art of Chaucer to simply rhetorical categories, it is permissible to assume that this tone is the rhetorical foundation for the device of conversational intrusion in the narration of the General Prologue.

Chaucer was acquainted with the rhetorical discussions of style, and stylistic doctrines must be considered in an assessment of the art of the General Prologue. Although it is begging the question to say that Chaucer fulfilled the requirement of familiarity in diction by using only words familiar to his readers and listeners, yet that is exactly the case. There are few words in the poem which are not in the everyday vocabulary or idiom of the fourteenth century, and those which are not (Zephirus, Ram, and professional jargon) are either familiar from

---

[40] Ibid., IV. viii. 11-x. 14.

[41] Ibid., III. xiii. 23.

literary contexts or from the context of Chaucer's poem.[42] The diction, then, of the General Prologue is in accord with the conversational tone.

But what is the level of style of the poem? The Rhetorica Ad Herennium proposes as criteria for the "grand style" (sermo gravis) impressive words, smooth, flowing lines, ornate arrangement, and figures of speech.[43] Of these criteria only figures of speech are concrete enough to establish a stylistic level. Of the figures of speech, the Rhetorica Ad Herennium cites repetitio, contentio, interrogatio, adnominatio, permissio, and dissolutum in terms which relate them specifically to the grand style, though it does not specifically forbid other figures and tropes. Only adnominatio of this group appears in the first eighteen lines of the General Prologue (seke . . . seeke), though they do appear in the lines following.

For example, repetitio appears in "And though . . . ./ And of . . . ." (ll. 68-69), contentio in "And though that he were worthy, he was wys" (l. 69), interrogatio in "Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace, etc." (ll. 573-575), permissio in his apology for his literary tenets and his awkwardness (ll. 725 ff.), and dissolutum in "His bootes souple, his hors in greet estat" (l. 203). Geoffrey of Vinsauf includes the use of tropes under difficultas ornata (modus gravis), and of those mentioned by Geoffrey and Matthew of Vendôme, these appear in the first eighteen lines: translatio ("Aprill . . . hath perced"), pronominatio ("yonge sonne"), denominatio ("Zephiris"), transgressio ("the droghte

---

[42]This statement can be checked by reference to the Middle English Dictionary, ed. Hans Kurath (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1954), or the OED.

[43]Ad Herenn., IV. viii. 11.

of March hath perced") and superlatio ("euery shires ende").[44] Therefore, many commentators are justified in feeling that lines 1-18 are in "high style."[45]

The whole problem of the stylistic level is complicated in general by the fact that vernacular poetry often will not fit into rules divised originally for Latin prose, no matter how the Middle Ages altered the doctrines, and in particular by the fact that Chaucer's works contain a good deal of adverse criticism of "high style." What he is criticising, according to Charles Sears Baldwin, is prolix rhetorical construction in general and ornamental description in particular.[46] It is not rewarding critically to examine the paradox of Chaucer's condemning rhetoric and description though making good use of both in the General Prologue; however, the ambiguity of one condemnation is worth noting, since it can be interpreted as condemning prologues in general:

> Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,
> Kepe hem in stoor til so be ye endite
> Heigh stile, as whan that men to kynges write.
> . . . . . .
> I seye that first with heigh stile he enditeth,
> Er he the body of his tale writeth,
> A prohemye, in the which discryueth he
> Pemond. . . .
> . . . . . .
> And trewely, as to my iuggement,
> Me thynketh it a thyng inpartinent.
> (Clerk's Prologue, 16-18, 41-44, 53-54)[47]

---

[44]Ibid., IV. xiii. 19; xv. 21-22, xxiii. 32, xxix. 39, xxx. 41; Ars versificatoria, III. ii. 12-44; Poetria Nova, 765-1093.

[45]See R. Baldwin, Unity, 29: "The Canterbury Tales opens... with a passage in the high style, which poses a stylistic challenge at the outset." He further notes that styles in medieval practice overlapped, and that all three styles are fused in Chaucer.

[46]Charles Sears Baldwin, "Cicero on Parnassus," PMLA, XLII (1927), 106-112.

[47]Quoted in Baldwin, "Cicero," 109. The problem proposed by Baldwin may be a false one, since it is the Clerk who is speaking.

It is difficult to tell from the passage whether Chaucer is opposed to a "prohemye" as "heigh stile," or to the fact that it "discryueth," or to the particular proem of Petrarch, for one or both reasons.

If, on the basis of Chaucer's critical comments, one makes the equation, "colours" equals description, then one is faced with a paradox which needs further commentary in the light of Chaucer's poetic development. But if, on the same basis, one makes the equation, rhetoric ("Your termes, your colours, and youre figures") equals "heigh style," or description equals "heigh stile," or "prohemye" equals "heigh stile," then all or any part of the General Prologue can be called "high style," depending upon the particular equation chosen. The reasons why scholars feel that the first eighteen lines are high style and the rest low style are easy to see: lines 1-18 are a periodic sentence, they contain rhetorical devices,[48] there is no conversational intrusion by the narrator, and they have classical allusions.[49] At any rate, only one fact emerges from a survey of Chaucer's comments on style: he condemned "heigh stile" but wrote rhetorically just the same. The paradox is simply resolved, however, by analogy with Sir Thopas, which condemns the worst metrical romances, though Chaucer wrote The Knight's Tale, The Squire's Tale, and Troilus and Criseyde. What Chaucer did in Sir Thopas he is doing in his criticism of rhetoric, condemning the excesses of the tradition. In this he is supported by the Rhetorica Ad Herennium, which condemns excesses and perversions in the three styles.[50]

---

[48]Tuve, Seasons and Months, 93-94, lists as some of the figures used in them significatio (5, 8), translatio (2, 6, 7, 8, 11), nominatio (3, 5), similiter desinens (3-4, 7), and similiter cadens (7).

[49]See above, 22-25. [50]Ad Herenn. IV. x. 15-xi. 16.

Little help can be given in placing the General Prologue stylistically by the rhetorical manuals' discussion of the three styles, even in the medieval development of the doctrine which relates the styles to the classes of the persons involved,[51] for by this doctrine there should be at least four stylistic levels in the descriptions.[52] Little assistance is given, too, by the insistence of the rhetoricians that word choice should be in accord with the persons and circumstances concerned,[53] since, though he was aware of it, Chaucer violates this principle for ironic effect, as in the use of the adjectives worthy and parfit.

Some assistance is given, however, by the medieval rhetorical doctrine of the two forms of ornament, difficult (difficultas ornata or modus gravis), and easy (ornata facilitas or materia levis).[54] The modus gravis is obviously related to the elocutio or stylus gravis, and employs tropes as listed by the Rhetorica Ad Herennium (nominatio, pronominatio, denominatio, circuito, transgressio, superlatio, intellectio, abusio, translatio, and permutatio),[55] or as defined by treatises such as Matthew of Vendôme's Ars versificatoria: metaphora, antithetum, methonomia, sidonoche, peryfrasis, metalemsis or clemax, allegoria, and aenigma.[56]

---

[51]Documentum, III. 145; Faral, 86-88.

[52]Swart, 134, notes varying treatments of the descriptions.

[53]Documentum, III. 145.

[54]Poetria Nova, 830-832, 1094, 1892; Documentum, II. 34; III. 1 ff.; Laborintus, 343-385, 431. Poetria Nova, 781-799, puts a description of spring under ornata difficultas.

[55]Ad Herenn., IV. xxxi. 42-xxxiv. 46. For illustrations in Chaucer, see above, 39.

[56]Ars Versificatoria, III. 18-44.

This highly figurative language does not appear in the ornata facilitas, which uses the "colors of rhetoric"; the colors are listed and defined by the Rhetorica Ad Herennium, which also assigns five of them (repetitio, contentio, interrogatio, adnominatio, dissolutio) to the elocutio gravis.[57] Moreover, Matthew does not discuss the two modes of ornamentation, and allows both tropes and colors in the same work, as, presumably, the Rhetorica Ad Herennium does; even Geoffrey, who makes the distinction, prefaces his remarks on the two modes by saying that whether the work be long or short, it ought to be "colored" ("Sit brevis aut longus, se semper sermo coloret/ Intus et exterius, sed discernendo colorem/ Ordine discreto").[58] It appears from all manuals, then, that the stylus gravis can use both tropes and colors, but the stylus adtenuata was restricted to colors only.

From the foregoing discussion of stylistic problems, certain conclusions are possible: first, Chaucer condemns the "heigh [exaggerated, prolix, overblown] stile," though he uses the rhetorical devices of the modus gravis; secondly, "rhetorical colors" are not the province of the simple style alone; and thirdly, one can distinguish between tone (pronuntiatio) and style (elocutio, stylus). Based on these points, I would describe the General Prologue as a poem in high style and conversational tone. This dual structure helps both to conceal the highly rhetorical structure of the poem, a concealment necessary to verisimilitude, and to increase this verisimilitude through the conversational tone of the narrator, a tone which gives the effect of the "plain style"

---

[57]See above, 39.

[58]Poetria Nova, 737-739.

(subtile) demanded in Cicero's Orator for the presentation of proof.[59] Most significantly, this tension between style and tone not only represents a contribution to literary form which is peculiarly Chaucerian, but also represents another aspect of that dual vision which is at the heart of Chaucer's art and which dominates its expression in the General Prologue.

The third requirement of the narratio is that it have verisimilitude, accomplished by the use of elements which are usual, expected, and natural, by care in the chronology, by a clear statement of the standing and motives of the people involved, and by a demonstration of the advantages of the chosen scene of action; if the matter is fictitious, more care will have to be taken with these criteria.[60] It is not necessary to comment on these points, since they seem almost a summary of some of the methods Chaucer uses to gain verisimilitude.

The conclusio of an oratio has three parts: enumeratio, or statement of the points made; amplificatio, or the use of commonplaces (loci communes, Greek topoi);[61] and commiseratio, or the moving of the audience to sympathy. Chaucer uses only enumeratio, in

> Now haue I told yow soothly, in a clause,
> The staat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
> Why that assembled was this compaignye . . . (ll. 715-717),

and the tenth commonplace of amplificatio, which details all that took place in the deed and all the circumstances of the act, so that the event seems to take place before the hearer's eyes.

---

[59] Cicero: Orator, ed. and trans. H. M. Hubbell (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1939), 21.69 ff.

[60] Ad Herenn., I. ix. 14-x. 16. [61] Ibid., II. xxx. 47-49.

It is of course impossible to confine the art of a major writer, especially an ironic one, to a system or rigid categories. It is likely that Chaucer would not have written much differently had he never seen a rhetoric book. But it is a fact that Chaucer was not only acquainted with rhetorical tradition, but that he made constant use of it. What is important about this fact is not that one can analyze the structure of the General Prologue from rhetorical manuals, but that such an analysis shows clearly and precisely the relationship between mechanical principles and vital art, the interaction of tradition and the individual talent.

CHAPTER IV

THE BACKGROUND OF THE PORTRAIT SERIES

The interaction of tradition and talent can be seen in the series of pilgrims, which is the major part of the *General Prologue*, but which rhetorically is a *digressio*. Chaucer maintains the unity of his poem by careful integration of the *digressio* into the framework of the poem, and by a careful transition between the spring *topos* and the descriptions. For example, lines 1-18 *per se* have little to do with lines 43-750, but Chaucer has unified what are two separate *topoi* through the introduction of *pilgrymage* in line 12,[1] following it with the description of some real "folk . . . on pilgrymage."

For the most part Chaucer is successful in his use of unifying devices; however, the detailed descriptions of the pilgrims are not anticipated in lines 1-18. Spring is described in these lines, and there is full use of metaphor, but there is no concrete picture of flowers and meadows as there is of clothing and faces. What Chaucer presents, however, in lines 1-18 is the *character* of spring, and that motif is repeated in the descriptions. The failure to present concrete images of spring is a lapse, though the only one in the unity of the *General Prologue*.

---

[1]See above, chap. ii.

Most of the elements of form and content found in the first eighteen lines carry over into the series of portraits. The hierarchical organization of the pilgrims is symbolic of the chain of being, and the range of the hierarchy is symbolic of an allied concept, "plenitude."[2] In lines 1-18 the concept of plenitude is implicit in Chaucer's statement that "every veyne," "every holt and heeth," and "every shires ende" are involved in the rebirth cycle; this implicit statement of the fullness and completeness of the spring rebirth is reflected in the fullness and completeness of the catalog of pilgrims.[3]

As in the case of lines 1-18, the series of portraits stems from a long tradition, a tradition which can be divided into classical analogues, including epic, satiric, and dramatic ones; and medieval analogues, including examples from romance, drama, and didactic literature.

The Characters of Theophrastus[4] was available in the Middle Ages and influential for the English Renaissance; the text as it exists today has some remarkable parallels to the General Prologue: there are thirty Characters; they are of varying length; they deal with social and professional types (Flattery is the parasite; Boorishness, the rustic;

---

[2]Lovejoy, 52-77; Gunn, 203-275 and passim.

[3]Almost all commentators note that it does not include the higher ranks of society (pope, king, bishop, etc.). But the topoi used in the General Prologue are constantly modified by considerations of verisimilitude. For a commentary on the background of the catalogue series, see Claes Schaar, The Golden Mirror: Studies in Chaucer's Descriptive Technique and Its Literary Background (Skrifter Utgivna av Kungl. Humanistika Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, 54; Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1955), 354-360.

[4]The Characters of Theophrastus, ed. and trans. J. M. Edmonds (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929).

Oligarchy, officials in public life);[5] they vary in technique from concrete examples of behavior to scenes with dialogue, or even monologues;[6] occasional descriptions of dress appear; and they are in part based upon traditional literary forms like New Comedy[7] and in part on classical rhetoric.[8]

But Benjamin Boyce has pointed out that "there is no evidence that Chaucer knew Theophrastus' Characters," that "characterization in a fictitious narrative" is not the same as a Character, and that "Chaucer chose his pilgrims first on a basis of social and professional, not moral, classification," which puts the General Prologue in the genre of "Estates literatur."[9] Chaucer's figures have "too much effictio, [i.e., catalogue of external description] too much of face, figure, and 'array' in the manner recommended by the thirteenth-century poetria." In short, "Chaucer's method and his intentions are not, on the whole, Theophrastan, but because of his psychological insight, his concreteness, and his scheme of social-moral types, the effect of his portraits is in some cases very similar."[10]

Until evidence for a medieval Latin translation appears, or until evidence that Chaucer somehow knew Theophrastus is made available, the parallels between the General Prologue and the Characters must be seen as a literary coincidence, but one not without some importance: it

---

[5]Benjamin Boyce, The Theophrastan Character in England to 1642 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), 7.

[6]Boyce, 8.

[7]Boyce, 7.

[8]Boyce, 11-36.

[9]Boyce, 59.

[10]Boyce, 61. For a discussion of the rhetorical term effictio see below, chap. vi.

places the General Prologue in a tradition extending back to classical antiquity, and it lends support to the reading of the General Prologue as a social commentary[11] in the classical, not in the medieval, sense.

A second group of classical portraits in a series belongs as much to painting as to drama; it is the series of portraits in the Terence manuscripts,[12] and includes the stock characters of Roman comedy: the old man (senex), the youth (adulescens), the eunuch (eunuchus), and the prostitute (meretrix); the characters appear in the plays, of course, but not in a series. To these characters Chaucer might have added from the plays of Plautus the cook (cocus) and merchant (mercator). But the Terence illustrations are scenes rather than portraits, and despite the slight resemblance to the Franklin, Squire, Pardoner, Wife of Bath, Cook, and Merchant of the General Prologue, it is doubtful whether Chaucer saw either the plays or the illustrations.

A source accessible to Chaucer can be found in Old French or Provençal mystery plays, which have lists of characters closely resembling the series in the "estates of the world" literature, as for example the mystery of Saint Martin, which includes knights, priest, the wife of the Count of Milan, the abbot of a monastery with his secretary, tailor, and clerk;[13] these characters are listed in the prologues of the

---

[11]For the relationship of the Characters and satire, see Boyce, 91-115, 168-173. Horace's Satires, I. i, contains a short list of professions: merchant, soldier, lawyer, farmer, bourgeois, teacher, innkeeper, and sailor.

[12]See Günther Jachmann, Die Geschichte des Terenztextes im Altertum (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, Universitäts-Buchdruckerei, 1924).

[13]See David Hobart Carnahan, The Prologue in the Old French and Provençal Mystery (New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor Co., 1905), 176-177.

mysteries, which have other parallels to the General Prologue: they contain an analysis of the play, a description of the stage setting, introduction of the actors, apology for the subject, and reasons for the play.[14] Though the personalities of the characters might emerge in the course of the play, these series have only brief descriptions:

> . . . Barbe, belle et courtoyse,
> Qui est cy bas en ceste chambre,
> Et a le cueur moult a malaise.
> . . . . . .
> Voicy le messager du Roy,
> Qui est pere de la pucelle,
> Gentil, gallant, en bel arroy . . .[15]

But, as in the case of the plays of Plautus and Terence, it is not likely that Chaucer read these mysteries.

The series in the Thebaid[16] is a short one, less than half that of the General Prologue, and is interlaced with history, mythology, dialogue, rites, personified abstractions, and heroic similes, and generally follows the pattern of the description of Tydeus, who is flashing, happy, hale of limb, and like a newly-scaled and venomous snake, leading a band of warriors with bronze-bound shields, fierce spears, and Mars on their helmets;[17] other portraits may stress the handiwork of the armor, or the height of the warrior, but there is little variation in the series. The emphasis, as in Chaucer's own descriptions of Lycurgus and Emetrius

---

[14] Ibid., 7.

[15] Ibid., 175. Chaucer probably saw mystery plays, and an examination of the relationship between medieval drama accessible to him and his "dramatic" technique needs to be made.

[16] Statius: Thebaid, I-IV, ed. and trans. J. H. Mozley (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1928), IV, 32-308.

[17] Thebaid, IV, 93-115.

in the Knight's Tale, is on the power, brightness and terrifying aspect of the warriors. There is little objective description, and no use of effictio.

More immediate influences on the General Prologue can be found in medieval romance. The Roman de Thèbes, a medieval expansion of the Theban story, has no series of portraits, though it does have brief descriptions of knights, usually in conventional terminology,[18] scattered throughout the battle scenes.

Boccaccio's Filostrato and Teseida[19] have short series of portraits, and are important because they contributed elements to the portrait of Diomede in Troilus and Criseyde, to Lycurgus and Emetrius in the Knight's Tale, and to the Knight in the General Prologue, indicating that Chaucer read them with some care. The descriptions in the Teseida are a mixture of the type found in the Thebaid and of the descriptions in the Filostrato, which are of the type represented by the description of Diomedes, who was large and handsome, young, fresh and rather pleasing, strong and fierce when necessary, who spoke more than the other Greeks, who was by nature prone to love, and who was heir to Caledonia and Argos.[20]

By far the largest contribution to Chaucer was made by the

---

[18]Le Roman de Thèbes, ed. Léopold Constans (SATF; Paris: Firmin Didot et Cie, 1890), 1101 ff.

[19]For editions and commentary, see Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, eds. W. F. Bryan, Germaine Dempster, et al. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), 82-105; The Book of Troilus and Criseyde by Chaucer, ed. Robert Kilburn Root (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1926).

[20]Robert K. Root, "Chaucer's Dares," MP, XV (1917), 1-22.

series of portraits found in the various redactions of the Trojan story: the De Excidio Troiae Historia of Dares Phrygius, which was the source for versions by Joseph of Exeter and Benôit de Sainte Maure, and the Historia Destructionis Troiae of Guido della Colonne, a translation of Benoit; the "Gest Hystoriale," a Middle English translation of Guido, presumably was not known to Chaucer.[21] The portraits in Dares follow the pattern of that of Diomedes: he was strong, square, well-made in body, austere in visage, most fierce in war, fiery in spirit, impatient, and audacious.[22] The other versions generally follow Dares', with the additions of Diomedes' fierce voice, lying, and torments in love;[23] Chaucer made use of most of these descriptions in Troilus and Criseyde.[24] In none of these versions does the rhetorical effictio-notatio (description of character and personality) dichotomy appear, and in most of them the notatio element dominates; in the descriptions of the women, however, the tradition can be seen in very abbreviated form. Physical description in most of them is limited to a brief and conventional phrase, and there is little commentary on clothing.

The pattern of descriptions in Benôit's Roman de Troie, probably

---

[21]Guido de Columnis: Historia Destructionis Troiae, ed. Nathaniel Edward Griffin (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1936); Le Roman de Troie par Benôit de Sainte-Maure, ed. Léopold Constans (SATF; Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot et Cie, 1904-1912); The "Gest Hystoriale" of the Destruction of Troy, eds. The Rev. George O. Panton and David Donaldson (EETS 39; London: N. Trübner & Co., 1879); the work of Dares and Joseph was not available to me; see Root, "Dares."

[22]Quoted in Root, "Dares," 8.

[23]Ibid., 8-10.

[24]Ibid., 13.

the most influential series on the General Prologue, can be seen in the first five Trojan heroes. For instance, a total of seventeen lines is devoted to the description of Priam, and his description is in the following order: his general appearance (l. 5295), his name (l. 5296), the general appearance of his visage (ll. 5297-5298), a specific account of his voice (ll. 5299-5300), and his character and abilities (ll. 5301-5312). Hector's description, in sixty-seven lines, is in the following pattern: his character and abilities (l. 5313), his name (l. 5314), his character and abilities (ll. 5315-5324), the narrator's comment (ll. 5325-5328), his character and abilities (l. 5329), specific details of his visage (ll. 5330-5334), a general description of his body (ll. 5335-5340), his character and abilities (ll. 5341-5362), his general appearance (ll. 5363-5364), details of his visage (l. 5365), and his character and abilities (ll. 5366-5380). The twins, Helenius and Deiphebus, oddly enough, receive only eleven lines, in this order: their characters and names (ll. 5381-5383), their general appearance (ll. 5384-5387), and their characters and abilities (ll. 5388-5392). The portrait of Troilus (fifty-three lines), the most influential on Chaucer, has this pattern: his name and general appearance (l. 5393), specific details of his visage (ll. 5394-5400), his general appearance and character (ll. 5401-5406), specific details of his visage (ll. 5407-5412), specific details of his body (ll. 5413-5426), and his character and abilities (ll. 5427-5446).

In a recent article, R. M. Lumiansky notes the influence of Benoît on Chaucer.[25] Lumiansky's arguments in favor of Benoît's influence

---

[25]R. M. Lumiansky, "Benoît's Portraits and Chaucer's General Prologue," JEGP, LV (1956), 431-438.

can be briefly summarized: all the portraits but one include physical and temperamental traits, a feature common in Chaucer's portraits; the sketches vary from four to sixty-eight lines, a variation similar to Chaucer's; there is an intentional grouping of the portraits, echoed by Chaucer's use of such groupings as Knight-Squire-Yeoman, Summoner-Pardoner, etc., and by Chaucer's breaking of the series into two halves, before and after the Plowman; the portraits serve as prologues to later action, as do Chaucer's; later behavior of the persons is inherent in both Benôit's and Chaucer's descriptions; both Benôit and Chaucer use a conversational framework and narrator's comments; and the relationship between Hector and Troilus is echoed in that between the Knight and Squire. There is another parallel which Lumiansky does not mention: the number of Benôit's portraits (thirty-two) is close to Chaucer's. As differences Lumiansky cites the fact that Benôit's portraits deal with only one class of society, the knightly, that no past experiences of the warriors are given, and that Benôit's narrator injects no realistic personal prejudices.[26]

The first four pilgrims in The Canterbury Tales will show the general relationship of the two series. Chaucer devotes a total of thirty-five lines to the description of the Knight, and the description is in the following order: the Knight's rank and character (l. 43), his character and abilities (ll. 44-50), his campaigns and abilities (ll. 51-66), his character (ll. 67-72), a description of his clothing (ll. 73-78), and his campaigns (ll. 79, 101-102). The description of his son, the Squire, has fewer lines (twenty-one) but a more elaborate

---

[26]Lumiansky, 435-438. A list of the heroes appears in 431-433, with a brief analysis of the contents of each description.

pattern: his rank (l. 79), his character (l. 80), his general appearance and the narrator's comment (ll. 81-84), his campaigns and his abilities (ll. 85-88), his general appearance (ll. 89-90), his character (ll. 91-92), a description of his clothing (l. 93), his abilities (ll. 94-96), and his character (97-100). The description of the Yeoman has a heavy emphasis on his external appearance; it follows this order: his rank (l. 101), description of his clothing and equipment (ll. 103-105), his character and abilities (ll. 106-107), his equipment (l. 108), specific details of his visage (l. 109), his abilities (l. 110), description of his clothing and equipment (ll. 111-116), and his profession (l. 117). The Nun has both a name and the longest description (forty-four lines), which follows this order: her rank (l. 118), her character (ll. 119-120), her name, Eglentyne (l. 121), her character and abilities (ll. 122-150), description of her clothing (l. 151), specific details of her visage and the narrator's comment (ll. 152-156), and description of her clothing (ll. 157-162).

When one compares the order of details and the details chosen in both Benôit's and Chaucer's portraits, he must agree with Lumiansky that Benôit's work influenced the General Prologue, but it is not necessary to attribute such an influence to Benôit alone, because both Guido's tale and the "Gest Hystoriale" share the same characteristics as The Roman de Troie, though perhaps Benôit was the most immediate source, and Chaucer probably never saw the "Gest Hystoriale." But Benôit's series of portraits have limitations and must be supplemented from another source if one is to arrive at a series of portraits resembling those in the General Prologue.

When one turns to medieval didactic literature he is immediately confronted with a likely source, the series of portraits in the Roman de la Rose.[27] Since J. V. Cunningham has said most of what is necessary to know about Chaucer's debt to these portraits, it is sufficient simply to summarize his statements: "The literary form to which the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales belongs and of which it is a special realization is the form of the dream-vision prologue in the tradition of the Romance of the Rose and of the associated French and English poems of the subsequent century and a half."[28] The model for the portraits is the double series of portraits in the Roman de la Rose. The technique is similar in the two works, as is the average length of the portraits, around thirty lines; both works use a mixture of objective presentation and author's comments; in both characters act and interact; and in both the narrator is a participant in the action.[29] Cunningham fails to note the parallel in the number of the descriptions in the two works, twenty-five in the Roman[30] and thirty-two in the General Prologue.

The Roman de la Rose offers a series of portraits of approximately the same number as in the General Prologue, a series which follows a version of the spring topos; which offers portraits with a combination of description (including that of clothing) and character

---

[27]Le Roman de la Rose par Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, publié d'après les manuscrits, ed. Ernest Langlois (5 vols.; SATF; Paris: Firmin Didot [I, II]; Honoré Champion [III-V], 1914-1924).

[28]J. V. Cunningham, "The Literary Form of the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," MP, XLIX (1952), 172-181.

[29]Cunningham, 177-180.

[30]That is, without counting those which appear later in the course of the poem.

following a rhetorical tradition (effictio and notatio); and which, though the vices portrayed are without real status, offers in a sense a range of society. The first four descriptions in the series of paintings are a good example of Guillaume de Lorris' technique.[31] The description of Hate, in fourteen lines, is in the following order: her name (l. 147), her general appearance (ll. 148-151), her character (ll. 152-154), specific details of her visage (ll. 155-157), her general appearance (ll. 158-159), and specific details of her appearance (ll. 160-161). Felonye is briefly described by name and position (ll. 162-165). The description of Vilanye, like that of Hate, has a total of fourteen lines; the order of the description follows: her name and position (ll. 166-168), her general appearance (ll. 169-174), the narrator's comments (ll. 175-176), and the general appearance of the vice (ll. 177-180). The description of Coveityse is more specific than that of the other three; twenty-five lines are devoted to her description, which follows this order: her name (l. 181), specific characteristics (ll. 182-201), specific details of her appearance (l. 202), and general characteristics of the vice (ll. 203-206).

Some of Cunningham's comments on the Roman are similar to Lumiansky's on Benôit, particularly those on the length of the portraits and the use of author's comments. Strangely enough, however, there is no single article on the series of portraits in the General Prologue which proposes a fusion of the series in Benôit and all the portraits in the Roman de la Rose as a fairly complete source and model for those

---

[31] My discussion of the descriptions of the vices in the Roman de la Rose is based on The Romaunt of the Rose, a close English translation which may be by Chaucer. All citations are from Robinson.

in Chaucer's poem. Many scholars deal with the series in the Roman de Troie, but disregard it as an influence on Chaucer; John Livingston Lowes, for example, says that "in its essays at characterization Benôit's bead-roll stands to Chaucer's Prologue as a nursery-tale stands to the Troilus";[32] he goes on to say that more realism can be found in Dante than in Benôit and to define the originality of the descriptions in Chaucer: "garb, and the manner of sitting a horse, and beards, and physiognomy merge with salient traits of personality to give a series of living portraits."[33] Though he notes that the Roman de la Rose contains such portraits as that of Idleness, "a damsel matched, feature for feature, and detail for detail of her dress"[34] with many portraits which followed for the next two centuries, he does not cite the Roman as a source for Chaucer's portraits; Louis A. Haselmayer, Jr., notes the possible influence of both Benôit and Guillaume, but dismisses Benôit: "that Benôit had any direct influence upon the Chaucerian grouping is unlikely";[35] though he analyzes the portraits in the Roman de la Rose, he makes no comparison with the General Prologue as Cunningham does. Robert A. Pratt and Karl Young state that the only comparable grouping to the General Prologue is in the Roman de Troie, but they dismiss it, along with other portraits, with the observation that "the

---

[32]John Livingston Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of his Genius (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), 198-199.

[33]Ibid., 199-200. He also notes, in passing, the difference between Chaucer and Theophrastus, 200, 201-202.

[34]Ibid., 77.

[35]Louis A. Haselmayer, Jr., "Chaucer and Medieval Verse Portraiture" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of English, Yale University, 1937), 286.

portraits of Benôit de Sainte-Maure and his successors are much too limited in social variety and in realistic detail" to be an important source;[36] they ignore the Roman de la Rose, although they note that in descriptions of "pagan kings, old hags," and "allegorical personages" there was "often attained a certain degree of distinctiveness";[37] R. M. Lumiansky, in the article cited earlier, pleads for the influence of Benôit, and Cunningham, also cited earlier, stresses the influence of the Roman de la Rose.

In assessing various sources for their influences on the General Prologue, one must be aware of the component parts of the General Prologue's structure: (1) the tradition of the individual portrait and the form it takes in the General Prologue, that is, what creates or fails to create the "realistic detail" and "certain degree of distinctiveness" demanded by Young and Pratt; (2) the grouping of individual portraits into series, as in the case of Benôit and Guillaume, and any variations this grouping takes in the General Prologue; (3) what does or does not make Chaucer's portraits those of human figures as distinguished from idealized figures from romance or "allegorical personages"; and (4) the "social variety" necessary to any text which is to be considered as a source for the General Prologue. Some of these components are offered by the sources and analogues already discussed, but it is necessary at this point to consider a source for the social variety of the General Prologue; that source is readily found in the class of didactic texts

---

[36]Robert A. Pratt and Karl Young, "The Literary Framework of the Canterbury Tales," in Sources and Analogues, 5.

[37]Sources and Analogues, 5, note 4.

dealing with the virtues and vices, especially that class known as the "estates of the world."

The "estates of the world" satire[38] is a topos which extends roughly from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries; at one extreme of the topos is the enumeration of the ranks of society on public and ecclesiastical documents; at the other is the use of the topos for literary and didactic purposes.

Typical of the first category are documents such as number 77 (1068 A.D.) in English Historical Documents,[39] the signatures of which are in this order: king, queen, archbishops, bishops, abbots, dukes, princes, laymen, king's household. That this order reflects at least an ideal ordering of society can be seen in its almost identical repetition in a document twenty years later: sons of the king, archbishops, bishops, earls, barons, abbots, monks, laymen.[40] In a condensed form it appears in the next century as queen, bishop, earls, others.[41] Similar series of signatures can be found on the continent, as for example in a Belgian document of the twelfth century, which has the order bishops, count, noble and free man, household of duke, household of count, others.[42] The obviously ideal and symbolic triad of clergy, nobility, and workers

---

[38]See Ruth Mohl, The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933); Frederick Tupper, Types of Society in Medieval Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1926).

[39]English Historical Documents: 1042-1189, eds. David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

[40]Documents, No. 52. [41]Documents, No. 45.

[42]V. Barbier, Histoire de l'Abbaye de Floreffe de l'ordre de Prémontré (2d ed.; Namur: V. Delvaux, 1892), II, 41-42.

can be seen controlling these series, but it is evident that by the twelfth century social changes had reduced this simple triad to a complex hierarchy. It is outside the purpose of this study to comment on social changes in the Middle Ages, but it is worth noting that the estates, expanded to include the bourgeois class, can still be seen at work as a concept for ordering society as late as the fifteenth century, in the seating arrangements established by the Harleian MS, B.M., 4011, fol. 171: pope, emperor, king, cardinal, prince, archbishop; bishop, viscount, marquis, earl; mayor of London, baron, abbot, chief justice, speaker of Parliament; knight, unmitered abbot or prior, dean, archdeacon, master of the Rolls, under judges and barons of the Exchequer, provincials, doctors of divinity or of both laws, prothonatory of the Pope's collector, mayor of the Staple; squire, sergeants at law, ex-mayors of London, masters of Chancery, preachers, residencers, parsons, apprentices of the law, merchants, franklins.[43]

In both the legal documents of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and in the social one of the fifteenth one can discern the insufficiency of the three estates as an accurate reflection of society, and in the fifteenth century document is demonstrated the refusal of the third estate to remain simply "workers" or "peasants"; the Harleian manuscript especially reveals a fully developed bourgeois society with important political and social functions, a society with representatives on the Canterbury pilgrimage. The collapse of the symbolic and ideal scheme of three estates with clearly defined functions is reflected also

---

[43]Printed in Chaucer's World, comp. Edith Rickert, eds. Clair C. Olson and Martin M. Crow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 331-332.

in the literary and didactic documents using the topos of the estates.

These documents can be classified generally into two main types, those of complaint and satire, and those dealing with the more specialized "Dance of Death" motif,[44] but estates satire as a whole takes the form of a presentation of the vices and virtues of each estate. Because the scheme is theoretical, the order of the estates is shifted at will by the satirist; although many of the lists may actually reflect the social organization at a given time, personal considerations can dictate the order, as in the case of the twelfth-century Le livre des manières of Étienne de Fougeres, which gives an unrealistically high rank to "des clercs" and "des vilains" in its series: kings, clerks, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, knights, peasants, citizens and bourgeois, ladies and maidens.[45] Sometimes the estates are divided into two, as in the Liber de Moribus Hominum et Officiis Nobilium of Jacobis de Cessolis[46] or the Sermones nulli parcentes,[47] both of the thirteenth century, or into four, as in the case of the Harleian manuscript cited above.

Although many examples of the topos were available to Chaucer, a readily available source lay in the works of his friend, John Gower.[48]

---

[44]See James M. Clark, The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Glasgow: Jackson, Son & Company, 1950). Pages 114-118 contain lists of the estates in poems and paintings.

[45]Mohl, 36.

[46]Tupper, Types of Society, 22-23.

[47]Mohl, 23-24.

[48]The Complete Works of John Gower, ed. G. C. Macaulay (4 vols.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1899-1901).

Gower's works are important to the General Prologue for three reasons: the Confessio Amantis furnishes a model for framed stories; the Vox Clamantis, the Mirour de l'omme, and the Confessio Amantis are all examples of estates literature; and the Confessio Amantis has love as its theme.[49]

The Confessio Amantis as a source for framed tales has been sufficiently criticized by scholars;[50] of the Mirour de l'omme it is sufficient to note that it presents a fairly full range of medieval society: in the "Table of Contents" the order is high prelates, archdeacons, officials, deans, and others; possessioners, mendicants; emperors, king, princes; knights, soldiers; judges, pleaders, viscounts, baillifs, questors; merchants, artificers, victuallers; the poem itself contains this series: pope and cardinals, bishops, archdeacons, officials, and deans, parish priests, chantry priests, clerks, monks and friars, emperors and kings, lords, knights, squires and men at arms, men of law (pleaders and judges), viscounts, baillifs, questors, merchants and traders, artificers (goldsmiths, jewelers, spice-merchants, physicians, furriers, drapers), victuallers (tavern-keepers, beer-sellers, butchers, poulterers), laborers.[51] Not including the high prelates and higher nobility, the poem furnishes twenty-six estates, a number close to that of the Roman de la Rose, the Roman de Troie, and the General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales. To show the variety possible in the series of estates, one can compare the series in Piers Plowman;[52] though

---

[49]Confessio Amantis, I, 93 ff.

[50]For example, see Sources and Analogues, 10-11.

[51]Mirour, 18421 ff.

[52]Piers Plowman: The A Version (Will's Visions of Piers

it is not likely that Chaucer ever read the poem: plowers, traders, mirth-makers, beggars, pilgrims and palmers, hermits, four orders of friars, pardoner, parsons and parish priests, sergeants of law, bishops, archdeacons and deans, barons, burgesses and bondsmen, bakers, butchers and brewers, websters and linen-weavers, tailors, fullers, toll-takers, masons, miners, ditchers and farm laborers, cooks and their boys, taverners. It is obvious that this order shows the same "artistic disorder" as Chaucer's series, but it is based partly on the demands of alliteration, and partly on Langland's prejudices; bishops, for example, are placed lower than plowers. Other resemblances to the General Prologue can be seen in the pairing pilgrims and palmers, the inclusion of a pardoner, a webster, cooks, sergeants of law, and a taverner; apparently both Chaucer and Langland are reflecting the contemporary social scene. The number of estates (thirty-two) is close to the number in the General Prologue and the Mirour de l'omme. The Confessio Amantis, on the other hand, has close parallels with the Roman de la Rose: they are both related to the estates topos through their concentration on vices and virtues;[53] they have series either of estates or of portraits; they both open with the spring topos; and they both have love as a theme. By extending the love motif into the description of the pilgrims, Chaucer helps link them to lines 1-18.

Plowman and Do-Well), ed. George Kane (London: The Athlone Press, 1960), 17-109.

[53]As Arthur Hoffman and J. V. Cunningham have pointed out, love is a dominant motif in the General Prologue; Eugene Slaughter, Virtue According to Love -- in Chaucer (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), 231-234, points out that virtues and vices figure largely in the General Prologue.

The range of variation possible in the topos and the fact that Gower used the topos make it imperative that the relationship of the General Prologue to the estates topos be examined with some care, for it indicates not only that the apparently jumbled order of the pilgrims has precedent, but that the careful arrangement of the pilgrims may also have come from models. But, despite the resemblances between the General Prologue and estates literature, scholars still debate the relationship; for example, Louis A. Haselmayer, Jr., insists the influence of estates literature upon Chaucer is slight,[54] though others have suggested an influence; H. S. V. Jones suggests the relationship in passing;[55] Frederick Tupper, who long argued the influence of commentary on the vices and virtues as a controlling principle in some of The Canterbury Tales, deals, though briefly, with the General Prologue as an example of the estates topos;[56] Ruth Mohl, although insisting that the General Prologue is clearly an example of the topos, does not discuss the Prologue at length;[57] Boyce feels that the General Prologue belongs to the genre.[58]

Tupper's insistence of Chaucer's use of medieval material on the virtues and vices, although much maligned, is in essence true;[59] the

---

[54]Haselmayer, "Portraiture," 288.

[55]H. S. V. Jones, "The Plan of the Canterbury Tales," MP, XIII (1915-1916), 45-48.

[56]Tupper, Types of Society, 33-35; but in "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," PMLA, XXIX (1914), 93-128, Tupper says there is little use of vices in the General Prologue.

[57]Mohl, 102-103; 261.

[58]Boyce, 59.

[59]But see above, note 56. See also Schaar, 354.

descriptions of the pilgrims embody material from tracts, sermons, poems, etc., on the vices and virtues, a genre which developed specialized types like the estates and Dance of Death poems and which is reflected in the Roman de la Rose. Many of the estates poems deal with the virtues and vices common to the individual classes of society, and the General Prologue belongs on the whole to this pattern. However, as Ruth Mohl has pointed out, many of the estates poems from the twelfth to the sixteenth century deal primarily with a single controlling vice, as for example Le livre des manières, which develops the theme, "All is vanity," the Des diverses classes d'hommes, which inveighs against cupidity, or the Contra avaros, whose title explains its theme, or especially with the two chief sins, Pride and Avarice, with passing reference at others.[60] A rapid survey of the General Prologue reveals how prevalent these sins are among the Canterbury pilgrims. That Chaucer intended this emphasis can be seen in the fact that he elevates "array" to a major category of description, and in the repetition of words such as gold, wynne, profit, etc.

The nature of much of the material in the Canterbury portraits, then, coupled with the fact that great variation in the order of the estates was allowed, places the General Prologue squarely in the estates topos. But as always, it is an analysis of Chaucer's variations from a topos which is most valuable in the assessment of his art. The most obvious departure which Chaucer makes from the estates pattern is the suppression of complaint and satire.[61] The purpose of an estates poem

---

[60]Mohl, passim.

[61]See John Peter, Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), 9-13, for definitions of these two words.

is to point out evils as explicitly as possible, and to condemn them as vehemently as possible. Chaucer's method is directly opposed to this; although Chaucer's intent is satirical, the satire becomes only one element in the realistic presentation of a group of people on pilgrimage, and it is not stressed, but emerges through Chaucer's ironic technique. Most of the estates poems simply present examples of vice; Chaucer either juxtaposes examples of absolute virtue (the Parson and the Plowman) with examples of absolute vice (the Miller and the Wife of Bath), or at least places them in the same poem, as in the case of the Knight and Summoner. This technique, typical of the ironic view controlling the whole General Prologue, is the second significant deviation which Chaucer makes from the estates topos, but it is a deviation with precedents in tracts on the vices and virtues and in the Roman de la Rose.

The third deviation is the inclusion of virtue and vice in a single portrait or (and this is a modification of the technique) the balancing of a theological virtue or vice with a worldly vice or virtue, creating a purposeful ambiguity. Significantly, the portraits in the Roman de la Rose are a mixture of theological vices and virtues (for example, Avarice and Franchaise) and courtly, that is, social ones (for example, Novel-Pensee and Cortoise).

This deviation stems from the ironic vision which is expressed partly through the use of a rather objective narrator. The character and personality of this narrator allow Chaucer to make comments on the worldly virtues of sinners in such a context that these worldly virtues become part of theological vices. This technique, part of the technique of juxtaposition used in Chaucer's ironic method, gives consistency to the portrait, so that each portrait, though ostensibly a fusion of

virtues and vices, is actually clearly either vice or virtue (usually vice), and as such is in the tradition of the estates of the world topos.

The estates topos does not furnish all the elements necessary for the creation of the General Prologue; one of the chief elements of the General Prologue, personal description, hardly figures at all in estates literature. Chaucer's fourth deviation is the inclusion of description. The immediate sources of descriptions in a series are, as I have indicated, the Roman de Troie and the Roman de la Rose; the sources of the technique of description are rhetorical manuals and literary models.

The order of the General Prologue is no more unusual than that of any other example of the topos, and is less so than that of Le livre des manières. But it is on the basis of that order that criticism might be leveled at an insistence on the estates topos as the most direct source for the form of the Canterbury series. It is possible, for example, that the pilgrims reproduce exactly, or nearly so, an actual company of pilgrims. It is also possible that Chaucer worked backwards from the Tales, and, based upon his actual knowledge of fourteenth century society, created the Prologue to fit them. One can argue also that the order is not jumbled at all or based on any model, but is carefully chosen by Chaucer, as can be seen in the groupings of the pilgrims (Knight, Squire, Yeoman; Monk, Friar, etc.) for these are natural groupings based upon Chaucer's observations of life and people. Moreover, it is possible that Chaucer added to the series after the first draft. In rebuttal I offer four pieces of evidence: (1) the close parallel between the General Prologue and examples of the estates topos; (2) the fact

that Chaucer was a consistent user of sources, even to translating them directly; (3) the fact that his friend Gower used the topos; and (4) the fact that Chaucer could do anything he wanted with sources, as Troilus and Criseyde shows.

What is most important in considering the estates of the world motif as a source for Chaucer's General Prologue is the reason why Chaucer chose to use it: along with the Roman de Troie and the Roman de la Rose, it furnished him to a certain degree form, content, and a basis upon which to establish the verisimilitude of his characters.

Both form and content are, of course, components of verisimilitude, and a good deal of commentary from all types of social criticism make up one part of the descriptions. But it is primarily as an ordering framework that the estates topos contributed to the General Prologue's verisimilitude. The estates topos presents ostensibly (and perhaps realistically, to judge by other sorts of documents) a picture of medieval society; moreover, the commentary on society in the topos was an expression of contemporary conditions. In form, then, the topos offered to Chaucer a realistic picture of the structure of fourteenth century England, and, to a certain extent, something of its ambiance. Moreover, it is a picture which is hierarchical and inclusive, and is symbolic of the chain of being and plenitude.

CHAPTER V

BACKGROUNDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL PORTRAIT

The Middle Ages furnished its writers both theory and examples of description; the theory was furnished by rhetorical manuals, under the category of *descriptio*. The prose practice of *iconismos*[1] probably preceded the codification of the technique of description, but for purposes of medieval studies, the starting point in the investigation of descriptive techniques lies in the rhetorical tradition established by the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, Quintilian's *Instituta oratoriae*, Cicero's *De inventione*, Horace's *Ars poetica*, and the treatises of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Descriptio,[2] a method of amplification, as formulated by the Middle Ages, encompasses the figures of thought (*exornationes sententiarum*) *effictio* and *notatio*, as established and defined by the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*:

> Notatio est cum alicuius natura certis describitur signis, quae, sicuti notae quae, naturae sunt adtributa.
>
> Effictio est cum exprimitur atque effingitur verbis corporis cuiuspiam forma quoad satis sit ad intellegendum.[3]

---

[1]Haselmayer, "Portraiture," 2-24; *Sources and Analogues*, 3-4.

[2]*Ad Herenn.*, IV. xxxix. 51; Quintilian, IV. iii. 12; IV. ii. 44; IX. iv. 138; *Ars versificatoria*, I. 38-92; *Nova Poetria*, 554-667; *Documentum*, II. 2. 3-10; Faral, 75-81.

[3]*Ad Herenn.*, IV. xlix. 63-l. 63.

In practice, effictio generally took the form of a head to toe catalogue, and soon developed a standard set of adjectives. The key words in a complete description are forma (effictio) and natura (notatio), or "appearance" and "character." Matthew of Vendôme takes both these into account in his remarks on descriptio: "Et notandum quod cujuslibet personae duplex potest esse descriptio: una superficialis, alia intrinseca."[4]

Both classical and medieval rhetoricians were aware that the realistic presentation of a person entailed more than a simple division into effictio and notatio, and though the use of attributa was schematized, the attributa furnished an amplification of notatio and, to a certain extent, of effictio. In Cicero's De inventione they are introduced with this grouping:

> Ac personis has res adtributas putamus: nomen, naturam, victum, fortunam, habitum, affectionem, studia, consilia, facta, casus, orationes.[5]

The schema is modified in the Rhetorica Ad Herennium, which deals with the attributa under the demonstrativum genus, which includes praise (laus) and blame (vituperatio). The attributa are grouped under the headings rerum externarum, which stem from casus or fortuna, and include genus, educatio, divitiae, potestates, gloriae, civitas, amicitiae; rerum corporis, which include velocitas, vires, dignitas, valetudo; and rerum animi, which stem from consilium and cogitatio, and which include prudentia, iustitia, fortitudo, modestia.[6]

---

[4]Ars versificatoria, I. 74.

[5]Cicero: De inventione, etc., ed. and trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), I. xxiv. 34.

[6]Ad Herenn., III. vi.

Although most of these attributa will fit easily into the simpler scheme of effictio (rerum corporis) and notatio (rerum animi), the rerum externarum remain a separate category and demonstrate the weakness in the simple two-division scheme. Description of clothing, which figures largely in the medieval effictio, is ignored in most of the rhetorical texts, and is a minor element in Sidonius' model portrait of Theodoric.

Matthew of Vendôme offers a slightly modified version of the De inventione schema: nomen, natura (which he divides into anima and corpis), convictus, fortuna, habitus, studium, affectio, consilium, casus, facta, orationes, extrinseca (natio, patria, aetatis, cognatio, sexus).[7] That many of these appear in the descriptions in the General Prologue is obvious from only a cursory survey; for example, argumentum a nomine appears in the name of the Prioress, Eglentyne, which expresses at once her disposition and her romance origins; the elements of natura appear wherever there is an effictio-notatio organization; natio, aetatis, and sexus appear at once in "With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER. . . ./ Of twenty yeer of age he was"; studium appears in "Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede"; affectio dictates the account of the Prioress' weeping; casus lies behind the Wife of Bath's deafness; facta are accomplished by the Knight; and the Friar, who "kan/ So muche of daliaunce and fair langage," provides an example of orationes.

A third element in the presentation of character, speech, is defined by the Rhetorica Ad Herennium: "Sermocinatio est cum alicui personae sermo adtribitur et is exponitur cum ratione dignitatis."[8]

---

[7]Ars versificatoria, I. 75-83.

[8]Ad Herenn., IV. lii. 65.

This is not discussed in the medieval manuals, but can be considered as subsumed under atrributum ab oratione. Whether it is ignored because medieval practice seldom used it, or whether medieval practice found no sanction in manuals is hard to determine, but the fact is that seldom do either manuals or literary works present the speech of the person being described in formal portraits.

That Chaucer was acquainted with both rhetorical precept and practice can be seen in the portrait of Blanche in The Book of the Duchess:

> For every heer on hir hed,
> . . . . . .
> Me thoghte most lyk gold hyt was.
> And whiche eyen my lady hadde!
> Debonaire, goode, glade, and sadde, etc.
> . . . . . .
> But which a visage had she thertoo!
> . . . . . .
> . . . whit, rody, fressh, and lyvely hewed.
> . . . . . .
> Hyt was whit, smothe, streght, and pure flat.
> . . . . . .
> Hyr throte, as I have now memoyre,
> Semed a round tour of yvorye.
> . . . . . .
> Ryght faire shuldres and body long
> She had, and armes, every lyth
> Fattysh, flesshy, not gret therwith;
> Ryght white handes, and nayles rede,
> Rounde brestes; and of good brede
> Hyr hippes were, a streight flat bak.[9]

Though the description of Blanche is not a complete catalogue, it is obvious that Chaucer was aware of the effictio tradition, even to the use of standard diction. But it is obvious also that even in this early poem Chaucer was experimenting with traditional forms; not only is the catalogue abridged, but the complete passage is interspersed with elements

---

[9]In Robinson, 855 ff.

of notatio and attributa, and is full of rhetorical colors like exclamatio, interrogatio, etc.

How the attributa, and for that matter the simpler effictio-notatio scheme, fit into the categories set up by Chaucer in the framework of the portraits in the General Prologue (11. 39-41, 716) is problematical. However, if one grants that Chaucer had a clear schema in mind, it is probably safe to make some equations between Chaucer's groupings and those found in rhetoric manuals and literary texts. Under condicioun, which is best translated as "circumstances," can be grouped most of the rerum externarum of the Rhetorica Ad Herennium and those which correspond in Matthew and Geoffrey; whiche, equalling "personality" or "character," includes the rerum animi of the Rhetorica Ad Herennium and the correspondences in Matthew, Geoffrey, and Cicero, with some overlapping into the rerum externarum and corporis, since it is difficult to separate from a person's character the circumstances which created it and the external expressions of it; it corresponds to qualitas, maneres, manieres; degree (estaat), a medieval concept with no exact equivalent in Latin antiquity, includes elements from both the rerum externarum of the Rhetorica Ad Herennium and the extrinseca of Matthew, especially natio, cognatio, and sexus. The preceding three categories correspond roughly to notatio; array, except as an expression of the other three categories, has theoretical sanction only from Geoffrey, though it has implicit sanction from medieval practice of effictio, and corresponds to apparayle, taille.[10] Nombre and cause have no correspond-

[10]Baldwin, Unity, 36-37, defines Chaucer's categories thus: condicioun means state of being (inner character and external circumstances), conduct, nature; whiche (L. quale) is the same as qualitas,

ing categories in rhetorical manuals; cause, roughly equal to casus, is not an equivalent, for casus refers to events which shaped a person's character.[11] Chaucer, like other rhetoricians before him, has used the basic formulae of rhetoric, but has made his own schema to express them.

The introduction to the descriptions of the pilgrims is a typically Chaucerian fusion of imitation and rhetoric:

> But, nathelees, whil I haue tyme and space,
> Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
> Me thynketh it acordant to resoun
> To telle yow al the condicioun
> Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
> And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
> And eek in what array that they were inne.
> (11. 35-41).

Because it is probable that one of the sources for the series of portraits is the series found in many of the Troy stories, it is not startling that analogues to Chaucer's lines can be found in most of them. In the Roman de Troie, for example, Benôit feels

> Qu'ici endreit voust demostrer
> E les semblances reconter
> E la forme qu'aveit chascuns . . . .[12]

Guido's translation of Benoit says, quoting from Dares as Benoit did, that Dares "uoluit in hoc loco quorundam Grecorum et Troyanorum colores et formas describere . . . vniuscuiusque maioris formam inspiciens et contemplans ut ipsorum in suo opere sciret describere qualitates."[13]

---

a quality or property; degree equals rank, status, condition, a class designation; array equals dress, state, condition, that is, garb and equipage. He sums them up as exterior or physical description, interior or moral portrayal, social rank, dress.

[11]It may be causa ("motive") as in legal questions; Ad Herenn., II. iii. 4. It may also be a faint echo of Scholasticism.

[12]Roman de Troie, 5095-5097.

[13]Guido, Historia Troiae, 83.

Guido's lines appear in the "Gest Hystoriale," where the author proposes to describe "þe tulkes of Grece;/ Of þere shap for to shew and þere shene colour."[14] But a similar introductory passage is found in the Roman de la Rose:

> Des ore si cum je saure
> Vous conterai comment J'ovre.
> Primes de quoi Deduit servoit,
> Et quel compaignie il avoit . . . .[15]

This passage is translated in the Romaunt of the Rose as,

> From hennesforth how that I wroughte,
> I shal you tellen, as me thoughte.
> First, wherof Mirthe served there,
> And eek what folk ther with him were . . . .[16]

Later the Poet looks at the shap (cors), the bodies (façons), the cheres (chieres), the countenaunce (semblances) and the maneres (manieres) of the carolers, and later the "fasoun and the countenaunces" ("les contenances,/ Et les façons et les semblances") of the dancers. Of Ydelnesse the poet remarks that he has reported her "shap and apparayle" ("la facon et la taille").

Obviously there is a good deal of overlapping and redundancy in terms, but four general groupings seem to be indicated: (1) color, colour, cheres, chieres, countenaunces, semblances; (2) form, shap, cors, façons, fasoun; (3) qualitas, maneres, manieres; (4) apparayle, taille. These correspond generally to the descriptions of head and body (1-2), the rhetorical technique of effictio; character, the rhetorical device of notatio (3); and a category which, generally, is medieval, the

---

[14]"Gest Hystoriale," 3732-3734.

[15]Roman de la Rose, 136-138.

[16]Romaunt de la Rose, 144-146.

description of clothing(4).

In his study of medieval verse portraiture, Haselmayer, stresses the tradition of the effictio as the dominant one in the Middle Ages and cites principally examples which are purely catalogues with little or no notatio, attributa, etc., so that he can stress the originality of Chaucer, which he insists is a product of Chaucer's observation, milieu, acquaintanceship, experience, and genius. It is true that all these characteristics helped shape the portraits of the pilgrims, and it is true that the effictio has little place in the General Prologue. But since so many rhetorical elements do appear in the portraits, one must dismiss the rhetorical tradition with caution. It is safer to say that Chaucer modifies or experiments with rhetoric than to say that he ignores it. For example, his use of resoun is not directly out of rhetorical manuals, and his use of effictio is in an abridged form in the Prioress' portrait, but both are clearly based on rhetorical theory and practice.

The examples of description were, of course, furnished by a multitude of texts, texts which may either be based on rhetorical precepts, or may have furnished the examples from which the theory was derived. Claes Schaar, in his extensive study of medieval description,[17] ignores the rhetorical effictio-notatio tradition, preferring to use various examples of medieval portraiture. He concludes from this inductive study that there was in the Middle Ages "a literary technique of

---

[17]Claes Schaar, Mirror. He defends his method in "A Postscript to Chaucer Studies," Engl. Stud., XLII (1961), 153-156, esp. 154: "I do not throughout analyse Chaucer's technique as a medieval rhetorician would analyse it since my aims are different from what his would be."

portrayal with which Chaucer may have been acquainted and which was of a traditional nature," and that the closest parallels to the portraits in the General Prologue can be found in Middle English poetry.[18]

As an analytical method, Schaar isolates from medieval poetry nine methods of describing appearance, disposition, and character, and uses examples from Chaucer's works as models: (1) "particular idealization," the minute description of outward appearance, with emphasis on beauty and perfection, as in The Book of the Duchess; (2) "objective description," a minute outward description, without idealization, as in the General Prologue, 11. 587 ff.; (3) "drastic description," or distortion of proportions, rare in Chaucer, but found in The House of Fame, 11. 1368 ff.; (4) "general idealization," as in Troilus and Criseyde, I, 11. 99 ff.; (5) "description of profession or status," or of disposition when it is reflected in a profession, etc., as in the General Prologue, 11. 415 ff.; (6) "description of habits," as in the General Prologue, 11. 168 ff.; (7) "objective characterization," as in the General Prologue, 11. 483 ff., 560 ff.; (8) "idealizing characterization," as in The Legend of Good Women, 11. 1524 ff.; and (9) "drastic characterization," as in The Book of the Duchess, 11. 630 ff. Types 1-3 are "concrete description," and types 4-9 are "abstract description."[19]

Schaar's categories are helpful in assessing the art of Chaucer's portraits, but he leaves a good deal unsaid by slighting the rhetorical tradition. For example, Schaar notes that the portrait of the Prioress is mostly "description of habits" (type 6), with some "objective characterization" (type 7);[20] this is accurate enough, and says something

---

[18]Schaar, Mirror, 324. [19]Ibid., 167-170. [20]Ibid., 203.

about Chaucer as timeless artist, but it must be balanced by a statement of Chaucer as a traditionalist, and the tradition is rhetorical: the Prioress' description uses both effictio

> Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,
> Hir mouth ful smal, and ther to softe and reed,
> But, sikerly, she hadde a fair forheed;
> It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe,
> For, hardily, she was nat vndergrowe.
> (ll. 152-156)

and notatio

> In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest . . .
> . . . . . .
> She was so charitable and so pitous
> She wolde wepe if that she sawe a mous
> Caught in a trappe. . . .
> (ll. 132, 143-145)

Schaar's intention is purely descriptive, not critical, but to ignore the rhetoric in such a portrait misleads the reader. Moreover, knowledge of the rhetorical tradition allows the reader to discern more clearly Chaucer's debt to and his deviations from this tradition. For example, the catalogue in the Prioress' portrait is ironic, to be sure; but though it is a curtailed one, it is one in which many rhetorical elements enter, recalling an earlier portrait, that of Blanche. Similar versions of the ironic, shortened catalogue can be found in the portraits of the Reeve, the Pardoner, and the Miller. Because of the prevalence of rhetorical tradition in Chaucer, any assessment of concrete or abstract, ideal or objective elements in Chaucer's work must be related to the rhetorical techniques which express them.

But Chaucer's descriptions cannot be analyzed simply by recourse to rhetorical manuals, and the real nature of his accomplishment is perhaps best seen by analyzing the components of his portraits. In the analyses of the descriptions which follow, I will use both Schaar's

and Chaucer's categories ("condicioun," "whiche," "degree," and "array"),[21] adding to them some analytical symbols of my own: "S" indicates the use of superlatives; "/as.../" indicates the use of simile; qualifying clauses are in parentheses; general statements are marked "g"; a fusion or mixture of generalization and specific statement is marked "gs"; specific statements are left as they are; the "so that" construction is marked thus: "so . . . that"; the simple scheme of effictio and notatio is easily recognized. All the citations have been translated into modern English to facilitate comparison.

Following Chaucer's lead, I will begin with the Knight, and the best beginning for sources and analogues of warrior's descriptions is, as Edmond Faral has pointed out,[22] Sidonius' portrait of Theodoric: Theodoric has a well-proportioned body, shorter than the tallest, taller and more commanding than the average (1, 2, gs); the top of his head is round (2); he has curly hair, even forehead, errect and sinewy neck (1, 2, gs); shaggy brows, and very long eyelashes (2, gs); he has a gracefully curved nose and delicately molded and moderately sized lips (1, 2, gs); his nostrils are trimmed daily, and he is clean-shaven (2, 6, "whiche"); his neck is not fat, but full (1, 2, gs); his skin is white (though he blushes with modesty) (2, 8, "whiche"); he has well-shaped shoulders (1, 2, gs), sturdy upper arms, hard forearms, broad hands, prominent chest, flat stomach, bulging ribs, muscular sides,

---

[21] General Prologue, 38-41; it will become apparent that Chaucer's categories are not inclusive enough; he ignores external appearance (semblaunt or effictio) completely except for clothing ("array"). I have made no entries for external appearance, since Chaucer's categories do not cover it.

[22] Faral, 80-81.

strong loins (2, gs); his thighs are hard /as horn/ (2); he has vigorous upper legs, graceful knees, sturdy calves (1, 2, gs); his feet are of medium size (2, gs).[23]

An account of Theodoric's daily habits follows the effictio, and is clearly intended to present notatio. Seldom in medieval literature will one find a catalogue so complete (head to foot) as Theodoric's, or with so little infusion of character traits. To be sure, there are implicit value judgments in the portrait, as for example in Theodoric's blushing with modesty, which is also an implicit statement of notatio; but the intention of Sidonius is clearly to present an objective portrait.

To this account can be compared that of Kublai Khan from The Travels of Marco Polo, an account which is, like that of Theodoric, ostensibly an accurate report of a historical personage: Kublai Khan is eighty-five years old (2, "condicioun"); he was a gallant soldier and excellent captain before taking the throne (1, 2, 5, "whiche," "degree," gs); he is of good stature, neither tall nor short; he is of middle height (1, 2, gs); he has an attractive amount of flesh and is shapely in all limbs (1, g); his complexion is white-red, his eyes are black and fine, and his nose is well-formed and set on (1, 2, gs); he has four wives (2, "condicioun").[24]

A third example of historical reporting is the description of Alexander from The Wars of Alexander: Alexander is like no other man

---

[23]Sidonius: Poems and Letters, ed. W. B. Anderson (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1936), I. 2. 2-3; quoted in Faral, 80-81. For his daily habits, see I. 2. 4-10.

[24]The Travels of Marco Polo, ed. Sir E. Denison and Eileen Power ("The Broadway Travellers"; London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1931), 114.

and does not resemble his parents (2, "condicioun," "whiche"); his hair was strange (3, 4, gs); it was long, sharp /lion's locks/ (2, 3); he looked grimly with great, glistening eyes (3, 4, "whiche," gs), bright /as blazing stars/, and they were of different hues (2); one was burning in its glance /as black as coal/, the other yellow /as gold/ (2, 3); he was wall-eyed (as the source says) (2); it says also that his teeth were /as biting as boar's tusks/ (2, 3); his voice was so fierce and stern that it astonished (3, 4); he roared /like a lion/ (2, 3, "whiche"); his fierce figure and form foreshadowed his prowess, love of prize, hardiness, courtesy, cruel might, and the worship he won when he was older (5, 6, "condicioun," "whiche"); he was called Alexander (2, "condicioun").[25]

The portrait of Kublai Khan stands as sort of a transition technique between the rhetorical portrait of Theodoric and the romance portrait of Alexander. The description of Kublai Khan is apparently based on the effictio technique, but it is shortened and rearranged, and there are explicit value judgments in it; in these characteristics it resembles some of the portraits in the General Prologue. The portrait of Alexander is at once objective and literary; the large percentage of similes and specific details, as well as the citation from authority, is an attempt to present an actual historical person. But the portrait is carefully arranged in two halves, based on the effictio-notatio pattern. The catalogue, as in the case of the portrait of Kublai Khan, is in a shortened form, but it moves from Alexander's hair downward to his eyes and mouth, and from that to his voice. The material which follows is

---

[25]The Wars of Alexander: An Alliterative Romance, ed. Walter W. Skeat (EETS, ES 47; London: N. Trübner & Co., 1886), 599-620.

compressed also, but it is clearly intended as notatio. The diction in both halves of the portrait is focussed around the fierceness of Alexander, and is calculated to present a unified symbolic figure: Alexander as a lion. In its use of objective though carefully chosen detail, in its inclusion of physique and character, in its careful structure, and in its foundation on rhetoric, the portrait is a close analogue to the work of Chaucer in the General Prologue, though ironically, it is the portrait of the Miller which most resembles in technique that of Alexander.

Another romance portrait which purports to that of an historical personage is that of James of Douglas in The Bruce: James of Douglas was loyal in all deeds; his heart was set on high honor; he was loved by all (4, "whiche," gs); he was not handsome (2, g) for his visage was somewhat grey, and his hair was black (2); he had well-made limbs, broad shoulders, well-made body (1, gs); he was meek and sweet in company but hard in battle (i, "whiche," gs); he lisped somewhat (2, "condicioun"), but it suited him (i, "whiche," gs): it made him /like Hector/ (8, "whiche").[26]

The portrait of James of Douglas follows a pattern which is common in Middle English romances, and is found in Chaucer as well: the interlacing of notatio with a short effictio, the stress on chivalric virtues, conventional diction, and a literary allusion; it is, in short, more "literary" than the other portraits.

This group of portraits, which can be loosely grouped under

---

[26]The Bruce: or, The Book of the most excellent and noble prince, Robert du Broyss, King of Scots, ed. Walter W. Skeat (EETS, ES 11; London: N. Trübner & Co., 1870), I, 375-404.

the heading of "historical" or "biographical," has several elements in common: (1) the portraits follow, though not strictly, the effictio-notatio pattern of the Theodoric portrait; (2) they mingle general and concrete description, and though they are ostensibly objective and realistic, there is at least implicit idealization; superlatives are implied also, if not stated; (3) there is no mention of clothing, horses, armor, etc; (4) the portraits are ornamental and static, despite insistence on martial prowess; and (5) the portraits have a clearly discernible, carefully planned, structure.

At the opposite pole from the historical portrait is that which can be loosely termed the "supernatural," and which includes dwarves, elves, giants, witches, Saracens, etc., and even some heroes, as in the case of Charlemagne in Otuel and Roland,[27] where he is represented as being twenty feet tall, and extends into allegorical portraits, which are a separate category. In Chaucer such portraits, called "drastic" by Schaar, are found in the description of Fame in The House of Fame, of Philosophy in the Boece, and to a certain extent in the Miller[28] (he can break doors with his head, his beard is as big as a spade, and his mouth is as great as a furnace) and in the Wife of Bath (her kerchiefs weigh ten pounds, she had five husbands, and she is gap-toothed and broad-hipped).

By far the largest category of portraits in medieval literature (one is tempted to say the only category) is that of the knights and

---

[27]Firumbras and Otuel and Roland, ed. Mary Isabelle O'Sullivan (EETS, 198; London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 1984.

[28]See Schaar, 167-170.

ladies of romance, which can be termed "courtly" portraits. In these portraits will be found some elements lacking in the historical ones. For example, the portrait of the wounded knight in Guy of Warwick has only a faint echo of the effictio; it has description of clothing, and it is a functional portrait; that is, it is part of the narrative action and is not simply a static rhetorical decoration: There is no fairer man (4, Sgs); his beard was long /as a span/, his visage pale and wan (for wounds and loss of blood), his eyes black (2), his visage broad (2, gs); his forehead was long and well-made (1, gs); he was fair and long (1, g); no goodlier man was ever born (4, "whiche," Sgs); he was dressed in a scarlet robe (2, "array"); he was wounded through the body (2, "condicioun," gs); he seemed indeed to be a knight (4, "degree," gs); his neck was fair, white, and long, his fingers large and strong, his shoulders thick, his breast broad (2, gs); he was well-made on every side (4, g); he was carrying a steel sword; his shield was at his head (2, "array").[29]

This portrait is one of those which Schaar cites as an example of the realism in Middle English literature which might have influenced Chaucer;[30] the realism does not lie so much in the deviations from the strict rhetorical effictio and the resemblances to the historical portrait, but in the inclusion of descriptions of clothing and, more importantly, in the inclusion of the portrait in the narrative action. This realism is that of the Chaucerian portrait, and the use of super-

---

[29]The Romance of Guy of Warwick, ed. Julius Zupitza (EETS, ES 25-26; London: N. Trübner & Co., 1875-1876), 4284-4302.

[30]Schaar, 319.

latives and similes resembles Chaucer's technique. Besides the knight in Guy of Warwick there is precedent for the use of superlatives in describing warriors; for example, Havelok (ll. 979-998)[31] and Troilus (Roman de Troie, 5438-5439).

For other elements lacking in the historical portraits, details of armor, clothing, and horses, one can turn to the portrait of the Green Knight in Middle English, or to the descriptions of Narpi in The Coming of Cuculain[32] or to the knight in the Maginogion,[33] and one can even turn to earlier works of Chaucer himself.

The portrait of the Green Knight has the following pattern: He is very tall and thick (2, g), with long and large legs (2, gs); he is half a giant (3); he is strong in back and breast, with small belly and waist (2, gs); he is clean featured (2, g); everything was green (2, 3, "array," g); he had green clothes: a straight coat, an ermine-lined mantle, and hood on his shoulders (2, "array"); he wore well-fitting green hose fastened to the calf of his leg, clean golden spurs over barred and embroidered silk (1, 2, "array"); everything was green (2, "array," g): the bars of his belt and the stones (2, "array," gs); his saddle and silk equipment were embroidered with birds, etc., in green and gold; his bridle and all the metal was enamelled green, with green stones (2, "array"); his horse was green and he had green hair and beard

---

[31]The Lay of Havelok the Dane, ed. Walter W. Skeat (EETS, ES 4; London: N. Trübner & Co., 1868), 979-998.

[32]Standish O'Grady, The Coming of Cuculain: A Romance of the Heroic Age of Ireland (London: Methuen & Co., 1894), 81.

[33]Les Mabinogion, ed. and trans. J. Loth, I (Paris: Fontemoing et Cie, 1913), 84.

as big /as a bush/, clipped above the elbows (2, 3, "array"); his horse's hair and tail were decorated with gold and green (2, "array"); he wore no armor, but carried a holly bush and an axe (2, "array").[34] The portrait of the Green Knight is obviously oriented around effictio, but it is that aspect of effictio which Chaucer termed "array."

The portrait of Troilus from the Roman de Troie, which Chaucer used in Troilus and Criseyde, uses a fusion of effictio and notatio, as the rhetorical manuals would counsel: Troilus was marvelously handsome (4, g): he had a laughing aspect, ruddy face, clear open visage, and a well-developed forehead (1, gs); he seemed indeed a knight (4, "degree," g); he had blond hair, was very charming, and had shining grey eyes full of gaiety (4, 8, "whiche"); there were none other like their beauty (1, S); he was always in good humor, and so sweet in his reflections that it was a delight to see him; but he had another aspect toward his enemies (8, "whiche"); he had a high and well-supported nose; his features were well suited to arms; he had a well-made mouth and beautiful teeth whiter /than ivory or silver/; he had a square chin, a long, straight neck, as was suited to arms; he had well-made shoulders, sloping downward; his chest was well formed beneath his hauberk; he had well-made and handsome hands and arms, a well-made stomach, well-fitted clothes and full thighs (1, 4, "array," g, gs); he was a marvelously handsome knight (4, "degree," g); he had straight legs, and arched feet, and all his members were well-made; his legs were well spread; he was of attractive stature: he was large, but it well suited him (1, 4, g, gs); there was no more valiant

---

[34] Sir Gawain and The Green Knight, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (EETS, 210; London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 136-220.

man on earth (8, "whiche," S), who had so much joy or pleasure, nor said less to displease others, nor of so great courage, nor more worthy of prize and barony; he was not insolent nor excessive, but blithe and gay and amorous; he was well loved and loved well, and endured much from it (8, "whiche," Sgs); he was a bachelor and young (7); he was the most handsome of the Trojans and had the most prowess except for his brother, Hector (8, "whiche," S); but he was powerful, courteous, and generous (8, "whiche").[35]

In striking contrast with these two portraits is the portrait of Chaucer's Knight in The Canterbury Tales: he is a worthy knight (8, "whiche," "degree," g); from early childhood he loved chivalry, truth, honor, generosity, and courtesy (8, "whiche"); he was worthy in his lord's war (8, "whiche," gs); no one had ridden farther in Christian and pagan lands, and he was always honored (8, "condicioun," Sgs); he was at Alexandria (when it was won) (5, "condicioun"); he had often sat at the head of the table above all other nations in Prussia (5, "condicioun," S); he campaigned in Lithuania and Russia (5, "condicioun," gs); no Christian had done this so often (5, "condicioun," S); he had been at the siege of Granada (in Algezir) (5, "condicioun"); he had ridden in Benmarin (5, "condicioun," gs); he was at Lyas and Attalia (when they were won) (5, "condicioun"); and in the Mediterranean (5, "condicioun," gs); he had been in many noble campaigns (5, "condicioun," g); he had been in fifteen mortal battles (5, "condicioun"); he had fought in the lists three times and had always won (5, "condicioun," S); he had been with the lord of Balat against Turkish pagans (5, "condicioun," gs) and

---

[35]Roman de Troie, 5393 ff.

had always won the highest prize (5, "condicioun," Sgs); although worthy, he was wise (8, "whiche," g); meek in bearing /as a maiden/ (8, "whiche"), and never spoke rudely to anyone (8, "whiche," S); he was a truly perfect knight (8, "whiche," "degree," Sg); his array (1, "array," g): his horses were good, but he was not flashy (1, "whiche," "array," gs); he wore an armor stained tunic (for he had just come from travelling and was on pilgrimage) (2, "whiche," "array"); his son, a squire, was with him (2, "degree").

What is original in this description obviously does not lie in its structure or diction; the repetition of the adjective worthy, often commented upon, is no different in purpose or effect from the repetition of green and gold in the description of the Green Knight; the use of superlatives, also noted by critics, has ample precedent. But it is noteworthy that Chaucer ignores completely the effictio of the Knight, and the emphasis on notatio ("whiche") and "condicioun" elevates the Knight into symbolic status, in much the same way that the emphasis on effictio ("array") in the portrait of the Green Knight reveals his symbolic function. But the emphasis on the details of the Green Knight's clothing is also for the purpose of revealing his symbolic function; the emphasis on the Knight's armor-stained tunic is for the purpose of character revelation, a comment on "array" which is at the same time a statement of notatio, a concrete reminder that he is "worthy . . . in his lordes werre." Unlike the knights of romance, he is not clad in scarlet, silk, or furs; "hise hors were goode, but he was nat gay," and his purpose is not pleasure but "to doon his pilgrymage"; moreover, unlike knights of romance, he has no name.

The gypoun passage is a good illustration of Chaucer's method of using literary sources. It is apparently one of those passages drawn from observation and experience which critics insist are the bases for the Canterbury portraits.[36] And indeed it may be; Chaucer, by reinforcing his portrait with actual military campaigns of the period, certainly intends for the reader to see the Knight as real and contemporary and to feel that Chaucer saw him too. But there is precedent for this sort of realism in at least two other sources, both of which Chaucer read: Statius' Thebaid (III, 326 ff., 870 ff.) and Boccaccio's Teseida. The Teseida passage, especially, provides in the description of Evander a close analogue, which Frank E. Bryant summarizes:

Evander	Knight
Dirty from arms and sweat	Tunic stained by armor
Not beautiful, but valorous	Not gay, but worthy and wise
Humble, spoke well to all	Meek as a maid, never discourteous.[37]

A second illustration of how Chaucer manipulates literary sources appears in the juxtaposition of the Knight with the Squire. Conventionally, "a verray, parfit, gentil, knyght," who shunned "vileynye" and loved "curteisye," would be expected to be a lover as well, but Chaucer transmutes that aspect of the Knight's character into another personage, his son. The removal of this traditional element in the description of the Knight, an element associated with knight-errantry, fantastic creatures, enchanted castles, and breathtakingly beautiful women, creates an emphasis on the martial aspect of knighthood, and

---

[36]Haselmayer, "Portraits," is especially insistent on Chaucer's creation from observation.

[37]Frank E. Bryant, "Did Boccaccio Suggest the Character of Chaucer's Knight?" MLN, XVII (1902), 470-471.

even the traditional fantastic prowess of the knight is transmuted into an account of actual fourteenth century campaigns. Because Chaucer can manipulate conventions so, it is best to be extremely cautious in ascribing passages to his observation, to contemporary documents or even to literature.

The Squire is a case in point. He is partially created out of the erotic aspect of knighthood, but he is created also of elements which maintain the relationship of his description to lines 1-18. He is part of the tradition of young knights; for example, his accomplishments are those of Guillaume in Le Roman de Flamenca:

> Fo noiris a Paris en Franza,
> Lai apres tan de las .vii. artz
> Que pogra ben en totas partz
> Tener escolas, si volgues,
> Legir e cantar . . . .[38]

He is more courtly than the young Lancelot: "Er lernet schachzabel und wurffzabel und allerhand spiel das man spielen macht mit den handen."[39] His love-fever is conventional also, as lyric tradition shows: "Icham for wowying al forwake . . . ."[40] Chaucer makes him real through his campaigns (ll. 85-86) and through his honor to his father (l. 100), a service which has contemporary documentation, but which has romance analogues as well.[41] His physique is described in conventional terms: "Of his

---

[38]Le Roman de Flamenca, ed. and trans. Paul Meyer (Paris: A. Franck, 1865), 1630-1634. The second edition was not available to me.

[39]Lancelot, nach der Heidelberger Pergamenthauschrift, ed. Reinhold Kluge, I (Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, 42; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1948), 34. 25-26.

[40]Brown, XIIIth Century Lyrics, No. 77. See also Chaucer's "A Complaint to his Lady," 50, and Deutsche Lyrik, No. 73.

[41]Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the

stature he was of euene lengthe,/ And wonderly delyuere and of greet strengthe" (11. 83-84). Finally, his portrait contains two brief repetitive effictio-notatio patterns in 11. 80-89 and 11. 90-100.

But what links him thematically with the springtime topos is, on the one hand, verbal echoes ("fresshe floures," "May," "nyghtyngale"), and on the other hand, the material underlying his springtime description. For instance, the De proprietatibus rerum furnishes this symbolic analogue: "Maye is a tyme of solace and of liking:/ Þerefore he is peyntid a 3ongelynge ridynge."[42] The Parliament of the Three Ages supplies an allegorical analogue: Youth is riding on a high horse; he is broad in breast and shoulders; he has a garland on his hair, with roses, pearls, etc.; he is clad in green and gold, embroidered with gems.[43] This pattern of analogues from romance, scientific tracts, allegorical portraits, with a structure from rhetorical manuals is identical to that in lines 1-18, and is evidence of the unity of the General Prologue.

The other half of the courtly group is that dealing with women, generally beautiful, and in courtly and erotic contexts. Enough has been written about such descriptions to make extended discussion unnecessary;[44] in general they used the effictio-notatio pattern with conventional diction, as in the descriptions of Blanche and Criseyde. Chaucer's use of

---

Canterbury Tales (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 75-76, 82-83.

[42]Quoted in Tuve, Seasons and Months, 156.

[43]The Parliament of the Three Ages, ed. M. Y. Offord (EETS, 246; London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 109-135.

[44]See Haselmayer, "Portraits," passim; Schaar, Mirror, and the bibliographies in both.

the type in the General Prologue appears in the brief effictio of the Prioress, to which might be added its comic counterpart, with its concomitant "array," the description of the Wife of Bath:

> Hir couerchiefs ful fyne were of ground
> (I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound)
> That on a Sonday weren vp on hir heed.
> Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
> Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
> (ll. 455-457)
>
> Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
> (1. 458)
> . . . . . .
> Gat tothed was she . . . .
> . . . she sat
> Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
> As brood as is a bokeler or a targe,
> A foot mantel aboute hir hipes large,
> And on hir feet a peyre of spores sharpe.
> (11. 468-473)

The structure of the description is that of the Squire's: it moves from head to foot in lines 453-457 and repeats the movement in lines 468-473. Of the other woman on the pilgrimage we know only that she was the Prioress' "chapeleyne."

More important than the fact that Chaucer did not use the courtly tradition of description in the General Prologue are the reasons why he did not and why he modified what he did use. The reasons are simple: it would violate both the principle of decorum as enunciated by Horace,[45] and the principle of verisimilitude as enunciated by Chaucer through his repetition of the word sooth and as defined in lines 715-742. Because it is not likely that such a pilgrimage as Chaucer describes would include members of the nobility, Chaucer excludes them; but it is exactly that

---

[45]Quinti Horatii Flacci Opera Omnia, ed. E. C. Wickham, II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1891), 114-127, 158-178.

class which was traditionally described in courtly terms, whether the person described were knight or lady. A subgroup of descriptions of beautiful women, the supernatural ones, would also be excluded on grounds of verisimilitude, as would their male counterparts. Those elements of description and character in the courtly portraits were not the principal ones Chaucer needed for the themes and structure of his poem. For those elements Chaucer turned primarily to didactic literature.

The third estate, like the ecclesiastic, is one which is seldom described in medieval literature outside of complaint and satire, though a few examples appear in other genres. But it figures largely in the General Prologue, and because so few literary sources and analogues can be cited, Chaucer can be said to be the creator of this group. But even in Chaucer, the structure of their descriptions, largely notatio, betrays their didactic origin.

The Merchant's finances, for instance, may be unsound (l. 280) as Tupper, basing his statements on the Chess Book of de Cessolis, insists.[46] Whether he is or not matters less than the fact that most of the material in his portrait is related in some way to moral commentary on virtues and vices, commentary represented by such texts as the Chess Book. Muriel Bowden devotes only seven pages to her discussion of the Merchant, and most of her discussion deals with contemporary merchant organizations and activities; in the course of her discussion she mentions the importance of Middleburgh and Orwell (l. 277), supporting her discussion with a fifteenth century text advocating control of the sea; the problem of usury, citing Gower's Mirour, Piers Plowman, Bromyard, and

---

[46]Tupper, Types, 43-45.

de Cessolis in support; and the question of foreign exchange (l. 278), citing a statute of 1350 and Piers Plowman in evidence. She notes that except "possibly for the 'Flaundryssh bever hat' there is nothing individual in the Merchant's attire," though his motley coat (l. 271) may be a distinctive livery.[47]

But she notes that to individualize the Merchant, Chaucer gives him a dignified manner and solemn remarks on his profits (ll. 274-275); she is of the opinion that he is based upon a real person.[48] It may well be that the forked beard, the beaver hat, the pompous manner are copied directly from life; it would be absurd to say that Chaucer had never met examples of such men. But it is significant that the texts which Bowden and others cite in relation to the Merchant are for the most part moral and didactic treatises. One such treatise provides an analogue, and possibly a source, for the Merchant's speech; it is Gower's Mirour de l'omme: "ils font ore lour parlance/ De maint mill."[49] Of course, the treatises dealing with the evils of the times claim to be reproducing the times, and indeed they may, just as Chaucer may be. But given Chaucer's general reliance on sources, and given the highly rhetorical structure of the General Prologue, it seems likely that the Merchant's description comes largely from such estates of the world texts as Gower's.

These treatises, supported by contemporary documents and observation, furnish the notatio of the Merchant; the effictio too may be

---

[47]Bowden, 146-153.

[48]Ibid., 151-153.

[49]Mirour de l'omme, 25819-25820. This is not cited by Bowden or Ewald Flügel, "Gower's Mirour de l'omme und Chaucer's prolog," Anglia, XXIV (1901), 437-508.

from such sources. At any rate, the emphasis in the Merchant's description, as in those of the Knight and Squire, is on the character of the pilgrim, not the external appearance. This emphasis assures the unity of the three descriptions with lines 1-18.

Bowden's discussion of the Physician[50] is longer than that of the Merchant, but a good deal of it is taken up with the discussion of the medical sources in the catalogue (11. 429-434), some of which appear in the Roman de la Rose. It is noteworthy that most of her discussion cites medical and scientific treatises, Gower's Mirour, Piers Plowman, Petrarch's gibes at doctors, and the Roman de la Rose. Tupper notes of the portrait that "Every important trait is typical of the profession, not a single touch of the eccentric or personal!"[51]

Of the personal traits, the Physician's lack of Bible study (l. 438) is noted by Tupper and Bowden[52] as typical medieval comment on doctors; one ought to note in this connection Cassiodorus' injunction that physicians should not place their faith in herbs and human counsels, but to trust in the true healer, God.[53] This relationship of physical healer and spiritual healer recalls the role of Thomas à Becket in line 18 of the General Prologue. Another of his personal characteristics, his "mesurable" diet, has an analogue in The Book of Virtues and Vices:

---

[50]Bowden, 199-211.

[51]Tupper, Types, 45.

[52]Ibid., 47-49; Bowden, 207-208.

[53]An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings, by Cassiodorus Senator, trans. Leslie Webber Jones (Records of Civilization; New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 135. On 136 is a catalogue of medical authorities similar to Chaucer's.

"þilke þat lyuen as bi phisike, holden þe mesure of Ypocras, þat is litle and strei3t."[54]

It is obvious, then, that the representatives of the knightly estate (Knight and Squire) and two representatives of the bourgeoisie (Merchant and Physician) are created of literary and didactic sources, with infusions of contemporary science and history. Three examples of the clerical estate follow the same pattern.

For the Monk's comments on claustration (ll. 179-182) Bowden cites Langland, Gower, and Wyclif; against the excesses of "venerie" she cites Lollard tracts and sermons, Langland, Gower, and church decrees; similar documentation is used against rich clothing for monks.[55] She feels that the Monk is drawn from a living model,[56] but obviously the notatio and part of the effictio (his clothing or "array") are from didactic and satiric sources; even the "ful curious pyn" has an analogue in Gower's Mirour: "L'aimal d'argent n'est pas oubliz."[57] For the remainder of the effictio one can turn to scientific sources like the Secreta Secretorum or the physiognomists.[58] His "eyen stepe and rollyng" may come from such a text as The Book of Vices and Virtues:

> þe holy men rennep as greyhoundes, for þei hane euere here ei3en to heuene, for þere þei seen þe praie þat þei honten

---

[54]The Book of Vices and Virtues, ed. W. Nelson Francis (EETS, 217; London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 51.

[55]Bowden, 107-116; Chaucer's World, 339.

[56]Bowden, 115-116.

[57]Mirour, 21020. Macaulay glosses aimal as "jewel (?)."

[58]Secreta Secretorum, 115: "He þat hauys steepe-out eghen ys . . . feloun."

> and chase after; and þerefore þei forȝeten alle here goodes worldely.[59]

His general physical appearance recalls moral commentary on Gluttony.

For the Parson, Bowden cites such works as Myre's Instructions for Parish Priests, Lollard sermons and tracts, Bromyard, Gower, and Langland;[60] the portrait has no effictio, and the analogues reinforce the heavy emphasis on character.

The Summoner is made up mostly of elements from medical and scientific treatises. Haselmayer notes that there is relatively little contemporary documentation for the corruption of the Summoner, but there is in literary sources; but he feels that the Summoner is based on living models.[61] But a good deal of the analogues for the Summoner's portrait are from didactic literary sources; Langland, for instance, says summoners are avaricious and lecherous.[62] Bowden sums up his portrait as "strongly typical of his class in literature, if not in life, individualized through loud coarseness and a revealing malady."[63]

This brief survey of the three estates in the General Prologue indicates that little in the portraits need necessarily come from Chaucer's personal observations, though they may reinforce contemporary literary and didactic texts. Chaucer probably read Gower's works, all three of them examples of the estates of the world literature, and no

---

[59] Vices and Virtues, 74.

[60] Bowden, 230-238.

[61] Quoted in Bowden, 265-266; he makes the same comments in "Portraits," 359.

[62] Quoted in Bowden, 269.

[63] Ibid., 272.

doubt heard sermons of such material; that he read literary works and scientific and medical tracts is certain. It is not surprising, then, that the content and intent of the portraits is identical to that of the first eighteen lines.

At the opposite pole from the historical description is the allegorical description, which does not figure directly in the General Prologue, except insofar as the Parson or the Summoner reach symbolic status. Although literary texts furnish sources and analogues for personified abstractions, verisimilitude prevents their explicit appearance in the General Prologue. However, as I have pointed out earlier, the General Prologue is greatly influenced by the Roman de la Rose, with its personified vices and virtues inside, its narrator who takes part in the action, and its opening with the spring topos. The portraits are introduced by lines which are reminiscent of the General Prologue:

> And I wol telle you, redily,
> Of thilke images the semblaunce,
> As fer as I have remembraunce.

The series of portraits in the Roman are a melange of Christian and courtly virtues and vices; Chaucer's range of abstraction from the Knight (chivalrye and the church militant) to the Parson (caritas and the church triumphant) echoes the fusion of Christian and courtly virtues and vices in the Romaunt of the Rose, which has Villanye next to Coveityse on the wall, Pride and Newe-Thought inside the garden, and a synthesis of a Christian and a courtly virtue in "dame Fraunchyse," who is described simply as a conventional courtly heroine,

> Arrayed in ful noble gyse.
> She was not broun ne dun of hewe,
> But whyt as snowe y-fallen newe.
> Her nose was wrought at point devys,
> For it was gentil and tretys,

and whose portrait follows the effictio-notatio pattern. Moreover, if the vices are taken as of low estate, the range in the Roman is similar to Chaucer's.

The descriptions themselves are a fusion of effictio and notatio, have varied patterns, and use varying numbers of lines, all of which are characteristic of the descriptions in the General Prologue. The portrait of Vilanye even makes use of Chaucer's characteristic repetition of And (with a ratio of around once per five lines) and an emphasis on semed (three times in fourteen lines). But the use of repetition and of semed is not the ironic one of the General Prologue, nor is the content of the Roman portrait the mélange of literary, historical, and scientific materials found in the General Prologue portraits.

The structure of the fifth Roman portrait, Avarice, shows that the emphasis in it, as in all the portraits in the Roman, is on the character of the vice; the details of appearance and clothing, whether general or specific, are intended to reflect the character of the vice, so that the portrait is a unified picture: Another image was seated near Coveitise, called Avarice (2, "degree"); she was ugly, dirty, misshapen, thin, and poor, and green /as an onion/; she was so discolored that she seemed to be in languor; she seemed /like a thing dead of hunger/ (which lived only on bread made of strong and bitter vinegar); along with its thinness, it was poorly dressed: its coat was old and torn, /as if dogs had chewed it/; the coat was very poor and worn and full of old patches; beside it hung a very old mantle upon a rock, and a coat of cheap cloth; there was no fine fur, for it was very old and poor, of black and heavy lamb's skin; it was at least twenty years old (3, "array"); but Avarice

seldom hastens to dress herself: it pains her to use her clothes, for if they wear out, she would have to get new ones; in her hand she held a purse (which she hid away and knotted so tightly that a person would have a long struggle getting something out); but she did not intend for that to happen; it was not her intent that anything should come out of that purse (9, "whiche").[64]

But the portrait of Avarice, because it is a portrait, is a transformation of an abstract vice into a concrete human form. It is the result of a learned and inductive method: from all possible manifestations of avaricious conduct in human society is created the concrete picture of an abstract vice. But art is deductive as well as inductive; if the first lines of the portrait were

> *And she was Margerite hight.
> Ful foul in forme was that wight,

then the reader would be presented with a portrait of an avaricious woman with "realistic" though slightly exaggerated details, and the portrait would be deductive, created from the description of an abstract vice.

That Jean de Meun was aware of the relationship between the abstract and concrete in description can be seen in another vice, False-Semblant, whose portrait recalls in the last lines the parallels between the descriptions of the Squire and the Friar in the General Prologue. He is

> a frere,
> With chere simple, and ful pitous;
> His looking was not disdeinous,
> Ne proud, but meke and ful pesible.

---

[64] Roman de la Rose, 197 ff.

About his nekke he bar a bible,
And squierly forth gan he gon.[65]

If his name were Huberd instead of False-Semblant, the portrait could be that of Chaucer's Friar, or for that matter "The Friar," since the portrait is based upon characteristics found in most of the complaints and satires against friars. Furthermore, his sermon to Wicked-Tonge, removed from context, is religious truth from a preacher, not hypocrisy from a personified vice:

"Right here anoon thou shalt be shriven,
And sey thy sinne withoute more;
Of this shalt thou repente sore;
For I am preest, and have poustee
To shryve folk of most dignitee
That been, as wyde as world may dure."[66]

The same interaction between the abstract vice and its concrete realization in an individual is seen in the description of a Dominican friar in Pierce the Ploughman's Crede:

And fond in a freitour . a frere on a bench,
A greet cherl & a grym . growen as a tonne,
Wiþ a face as fat . as a full bledder,
Blowen bretfull of breþ . & as a bagge honged
On boþen his chekes, & his chyn . wiþ a chol lollede,
As greet as a gos eye . growen all of grece;
Þat all wagged his fleche . as a quyk myre.
His cope þat biclypped him . wel clene was it folden,
Of double worstede y-dyzt . doun to þe hele;
His kyrtel of clene whijt . clenlyche y-sewed;
Hyt was good y-now of ground . greyn for to beren.[67]

The last four lines recall Chaucer's Friar:

But he was lyk a maister or a pope:
Of double worstede was his semycope

---

[65]Romaunt of the Rose, 7408-7413.

[66]Ibid., 7674-7679.

[67]Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, ed. Walter W. Skeat (EETS, 30; London: N. Trubner & Co., 1867), 220-230.

That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
(11. 261-263)

If the opening lines of the friar's description were,

*And fond the greet gome . Glotorye gloppyng,

then the portrait would serve very well as a portrait for Glottonye on the garden wall in the Romaunt. The tradition of complaint and satire and of personified abstractions is apparent in both the portraits of False-Semblant (Hypocrisy, friars) and of the fat Dominican (Gluttony, friars).

The same traditions lie behind Chaucer's portraits, as can be seen from the examples cited above and in the relationships between Envy in Piers Plowman and the Roman and its use in the Reeve. It can be seen also in the description of the Monk, the Franklin, and the Summoner, who all represent Gluttony, and in the portrait of the Prioress, which has elements taken from the old lecheress of the Roman de la Rose, La Vieille. Typically, however, Chaucer transforms simple equations into complex formulae: the Monk has overtones of Sloth and Lechery as well as Gluttony, and the Summoner is as much personified Lechery as he is personified Gluttony. On the other hand, La Vieille is strictly speaking a personification of many vices (lechery, hypocrisy, avarice) and their various courtly and social branches (prostitution, pimping, poverty). Chaucer uses only one element from her description, the counsel on table manners, but the overtones of sexuality carry over into the portrait of the Prioress, in her description (from elements of heroines in romances), and in her brooch with Amor on it; in other words, didactic material is put to the uses of Chaucerian irony.

Any portrait which follows details like the following from the

Secreta Secretorum may be influenced by such scientific tracts:

> The beste forme is in mene men that have the eyen and the heere blak, the visage rounde, coloure whijt, reed, and browne medled togidre, these have hool hert and trewe, they that have the hed meene, not to litille ne to moche, and speken litille but if it be nede, and the voyce swete, suche complexioun is good, and suche men take nere the . . . .[68]

Even a portrait intended as historical may reflect such physiognomical lore, as for example the one of James of Douglas in The Bruce:

> His hart on hey honour wes set:
> . . . . . .
> And had blak har, as Ic hard say;
> . . . . . .
> And meyk and sweyt in cumpany.[69]

But only in Chaucer is there explicit concentration on scientific details as indices of a person's character, such as the Cook's "mormal," the "saucefleem" face of the Summoner, the "gat" tooth of the Wife of Bath, the "eyen stepe" of the Monk, and the "sangwyn" complexion and "sop in wyn" of the Franklin. And only in Chaucer is there a relationship between the scientific details which underlie the portraits and the scientific details which underlie their milieu; the four humors inherent in the springtime topos of lines 1-18 are repeated in the "saucefleem" Summoner, the "choleric" Reeve, and the "sangwyn" Franklin.

It cannot be denied that a good deal of the material which went into the making of the Canterbury portraits was based upon Chaucer's own observations, even to the extent of his using people whom he knew or knew of. But the relationship of personal observation and secondary sources is circular and complex; one can never be certain if the ranks of society

---

[68] Secreta Secretorum, 16.

[69] The Bruce, 377-390. Charlemagne in Otuel and Roland, 1987, is "Blake of here, red of face."

in fourteenth century England, for example, reflect the conditions of the times, or whether they are a desperate attempt to revise an outdated system to fit changed times, or whether the ranks themselves are trying to adjust themselves to an abstract system. Similar problems arise in the analysis of accounts of courtly behavior on the part of persons in historical accounts. The problem becomes more vexed when a given example can be shown to fit both the times and a topos, as in the case of the Friar. The problems are especially acute in Chaucer, whose portraits, even the highly idealized ones, give the impression of eye-witness accounts. Indeed, much of the fourteenth century milieu, including perhaps even veiled topical references, appears in his work, though it must be remembered that this milieu is filtered through the ironic vision of a much-travelled, widely-read, and very sophisticated man.

One can make a judgment about truth and topos fairly easily in the cases of the Knight or the Squire, but the case of the Parson is more difficult. His description might have come from personal acquaintance with such a parson, but more likely the description is based upon material from complaint and satire, pulpit condemnations, and from such handbooks as Johannes Miraeus' Manuale Sacerdotis or John Myrc's Instructions for Parish Priests, which is aimed at the priest who is not a clerk, and which counsels that the priest who is evil is worth little, that he should not speak much of tithing, though a non-tither can be excommunicated, that he should hasten to the sick, etc.; in short, such a manual provides in didactic form an outline for the Parson's character.[70] On the other hand, Chaucer's character, insofar as we can judge it, would lead him to seek

---

[70]Quoted in Bowden, 232-234.

out the acquaintance of such a parson, and it must be allowed that a good deal of pulpit rhetoric inveighing against bad parsons must have come from good ones.

In like manner, one can grant that Chaucer probably had personal acquaintance with physicians, but the character of the Physician in the General Prologue is most likely the product of contemporary satire and of medical treatises like Arderne's Fistula in ano, which has a list of medical authorities similar to that in the General Prologue.[71] The character of the Monk is obviously a product of contemporary complaint and satire. Yet, however many written sources one may find for the descriptions of the Canterbury pilgrims, and however much one may deplore the heavy emphasis on Chaucer's observation, one must allow that Chaucer may indeed have known people exactly like those in the General Prologue.

To balance this view one must remember Chaucer's technique for creating the portraits for the General Prologue: first, it was necessary for him to find a general enclosing form for a group of pilgrims on the way to Canterbury; this he found in such works as the Roman de Troie and the Roman de la Rose; but it had to be realistically jumbled and of wide social range; this requirement he found in the estates topos, probably as it appeared in the works of John Gower. Second, it was necessary for his ironic technique that these pilgrims appear as real people; he accomplished this in various ways: he, as a pilgrim, actually talked to them, heard them tell stories, and even learned the names of some (Huberd, Eglentyne), names which come from literature as much as from life; he learned a good deal about their character, but the facts are from romance, scientific

---

[71]Bowden, 200-202.

tracts, didactic treatises, sermons, history, etc.; he describes their personal appearances, but this technique is counselled by rhetorical manuals and practiced by hundreds of writers, chiefly of romances. Third, it was necessary that these pilgrims have some relationship to the religious aspect of the pilgrimage as well as to the social; to assure this, Chaucer stressed the notatio of the pilgrims ("condicioun," "whiche," "degree") as opposed to the effictio ("array"), so that they in fact approach the status of a series of personified virtues and vices, as in the Roman de la Rose, but with the social ranking in the Mirour de l'omme.

Even such a survey as brief as the preceding one has been indicates clearly certain aspects of Chaucer's artistry in the General Prologue. It is clear, for example, that although Chaucer's personal observation may indeed have contributed a good deal to his portrait technique, yet the range of analogues is such that it is also clear that their resemblances to Chaucer's material is not coincidental; in fact, the obvious echoes in the portraits of material in lines 1-18 indicate that the portraits, in part at least, are shaped in accord with definite principles of unity in form and content. These principles must inevitably affect not only personal observation, but also material borrowed from any source, whether literary, scientific, or theological. It is clear also that no one source of form, content, or technique will account for Chaucer's portraits; given the fact that the springtime topos of lines 1-18 was almost ready-made for him, it was necessary for Chaucer to search out varied sources in order to make the descriptions part of a unified whole. To insist that a single source or tradition will account for Chaucer's practice, is akin to insisting that an ironist need see only appearance or reality to practice his art. The approach to an understanding of an

ironic and sophisticated artist like Chaucer can be only through many paths and with much backtracking.

CHAPTER VI

THE RHETORIC OF THE DESCRIPTIONS

The General Prologue as a whole falls into four major sections: the spring topos (ll. 1-18), the framework of the descriptions (ll. 19-42, 747-821), the descriptions themselves (ll. 43-714), and Chaucer's statement of artistic principles (ll. 714-746).[1] As an artist Chaucer has unified these sections through the use of a single point of view, and through the maintenance of a single theme and similar content.

The spring topos, itself a periodic sentence of three members, has its emphasis on pilgrymage. This in turn leads to a consideration of some particular people on pilgrimage. The rebirth theme of the spring topos, a theme with both natural and theological meanings, is maintained in the pilgrims' description through an emphasis on vices and virtues; that is, through a revelation of either spiritual ariditas or spiritual fullness, and through an effort to present the pilgrims as living, natural, and operating in a real milieu, generally the England of every shire's end and specifically the Tabard Inn and the road to Canterbury. This milieu is presented in the framework. The doctrines of the chain of being and of plenitude in the spring topos are reflected in the hierarchical and inclusive arrangement of the pilgrims, an arrangement based

---

[1]This is the rhetorical figures permissio, oppositum, and licentia, the right to speak out; Ad Herenn., IV. xxxvi. 48; see above, 37, 39.

on a didactic topos, the estates of the world, a source which reinforces the theological material inherent in the individual portraits, and which further helps link them to the first eighteen lines. The apology, or statement of artistic principles, is calculated, by an insistence that the narrator is telling the absolute truth, to increase the verisimilitude of the narration and to focus attention on the natural pole of the dual theme. The second half of the framework (ll. 747-821) is focussed on the preparations for the pilgrimage (a passing glance at the theological import of the General Prologue), and the introduction of the Host, whose portrayal ends the General Prologue on a realistic and natural note; it is a real pilgrimage with a real guide, who in his manliness and extroversion is a living symbol of the vitality of spring.

This artistic structure is at the same time a rhetorical one, as I indicated in Chapters III and V. The same rhetorical principles which govern the General Prologue as a whole govern also the framework of the descriptions and the descriptions themselves.

Chaucer's line in the introduction of the pilgrims, "Me thynketh it acordant to resoun" (l. 37), has no source or analogue except in the other work of Chaucer himself. It means, on the one hand, "It seems logical"; but on the other, as R. C. Goffin has convincingly demonstrated, it is a technical rhetorical term equivalent to "order, system, law, purpose," and can be found in Jean d'Antioch, the Laborintus, and in Brunetto Latini among others.[2] Because this is a rhetorical concept, one would assume that the lines following would also be an expression of rhetorical de-

---

[2]R. C. Goffin, "Chaucer and 'Reason,'" MLR, XXI (1926), 13-18.

vices. Goffin notes that such lines as "shap and aparayle" represent a regular rhetorical pattern of description as expressed, for example, in Quintilian's Instituta oratoriae and illustrated by descriptions in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Nova Poetria.[3]

Chaucer's use of clause at the end of the descriptions of the pilgrims is like his use of recoun at the beginning of the descriptions; that is, the term is at once colloquial and technical, so that the line is ambiguous: it can mean, "Now I have, in a clause, told you, etc.," or it can mean, "Now I have, briefly, told you, etc." As a technical rhetorical term it is a borrowing from Old French clause, itself derived from a theoretical *clausa, a diminutive of Latin clausula. Clausula has several definitions, but those closest to Chaucer's usage in the General Prologue have to do with clausula either as the conclusion of a work, or as a section of a work.

Evidence for the former meaning is more abundant than for the latter, at least for clausula as "an extended section of a work," and not simply "a sentence" or "brief passage." It is possible that Chaucer intended the descriptions to be the conclusion of one section of the introduction, and indeed they do serve that function. But, as Quintilian points out, clausula in this sense ordinarily means to most writers "an impressive close," and the descriptions hardly fit that criterion. Moreover, the descriptions are more correctly categorized as digressio or dilatatio than clausula.

The definition which most nearly fits what Chaucer had in mind is clause (clausula) as a rhetorical section in a work, such as described

---

[3]Ibid., 15-16; see also Baldwin, Unity, 35-36.

by Diomedes: "compositio verborum plausibilis structurae, exitu terminata";[4] this is obviously the sense in which Baldwin took the term in The Unity of the Canterbury Tales[5] and is one which best fits Chaucer's rhetorical intention. As a colloquialism, Chaucer elsewhere uses the phrase "in a clause" as a circumlocution for "briefly,"[6] and it seems clear that he is using the phrase with this meaning in the General Prologue. Clause, then, with resoun, serves as a part of the framework of rhetorical terms for the descriptions, and indicates that the reader is to expect further examples of rhetoric in the descriptions themselves. Moreover, the ambiguity of the two terms is part of the pattern of at once disguising and revealing rhetoric in the General Prologue, and is one more expression of the duality inherent in the form and content of the poem.

This duality is maintained in the portraits partly through their content, but partly also through the repetition of motifs from lines 1-18. Rhetorical manuals provide a full theory of repetition, based on the figure, repetitio (epanaphora, epibole), the use of the same word for the

---

[4]See Dizionario Etimologico Italiano, eds. Carlo Battisti and Giovanni Alessio (Florence: G. Barbera, 1950); Diccionario Critico Etimologico de la Lengua Castellana, ed. J. Corominas (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1954); Dictionnaire de L'ancienne Langue Française . . . du IX^e au XV^e Siècle, ed. Frederic Godefroy (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1881); Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus, ed. J. F. Niermeyer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955); Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis, ed. Léopold Favre (Niort: L. Favre, 1884); Lexique Roman, ou Dictionaire . . . des Troubadours, ed. M. Raynouard (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, n.d.); Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch, comp. Adolf Tohler, ed. Erhard Lommatzsch (Berlin, Weidmannschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1915); for the Diomedes quotation see Lexicon Totius Latinitatis, ed. Aegidio Forcellini et al. (Padua: Typis Seminarii, 1940).

[5]Baldwin, Unity, 35-57.

[6]For example, Knight's Tale, 1763.

beginning of successive phrases, a figure which has gravitas; conversio, the use of the same word at the ends of successive phrases; conplexio, a fusion of the two; and traductio, frequent reintroduction of the same word, or the use of the same word in different grammatical functions.[7] The Rhetorica Ad Herennium remarks that the use of these figures lends "elegance" (festivitas) and "ornateness" (dignitas), which are words used in conjunction with the high style.[8]

Related to this theory of repetition are the figures of thought expolitio, remaining with the subject while seeming to say something new by using repetition with slight change,[9] and interpretatio, replacement of words with others of the same meaning;[10] and the trope adnominatio, using similar words to express dissimilar things, or using words with a close resemblance.[11]

The rhetorical pattern of repetition in the General Prologue serves three purposes: it links the pilgrims with the motifs of the spring topos; it links them with one another; and it functions as part of the ironic commentary. The religious aspect of the pilgrimage motif and the ironic comment upon it are maintained both by the use of representatives of the Church (the Prioress, the Monk, the Friar, the Parson, the Pardoner, and the Summoner), and by the accumulation of words with religious meanings or connotations: Christes, Cristendom, Christen, grace, Seinte, Dyvyne, reverence, charitee, charitable, chapel, yshryve, absolucion, confessour, penance, orders, hooly, cloystre, celle, good, synne,

---

[7] Ad Herenn., IV. xiii. 19-xiv. 21.

[8] Ibid., IV. xiv. 21.

[9] Ibid., IV. xlii. 54.

[10] Ibid., IV. xxviii. 38.

[11] Ibid., IV. xxi. 29.

religioun, God, etc.

The pilgrimage motif itself, explicitly stated in line 12, is echoed in lines 21, 25, and 78, is implied in the account of the Wife of Bath's travels (ll. 463-467), and is stated explicitly again in the Host's plan (l. 792). It is of course an implicit ambience in all the descriptions, and helps to illuminate what is said about the characters of the individual pilgrims. But the repetition is more carefully controlled than this. The explicit repetition occurs at key places: it is juxtaposed to the rebirth motif of lines 1-11, and it is connected with Chaucer and with a definite set of pilgrims (ll. 19-26); moreover, to balance the religious connotations of pilgrimage (ll. 12-18), Chaucer makes the motif part of the descriptions of the exemplars of secular virtue (the Knight, ll. 77-78) and of secular love (the Wife of Bath, ll. 463-467).

The social component of the pilgrimage is introduced in line 25 ("sondry folk . . . In felaweshipe") and is reiterated by the pilgrim narrator ("I was of hir felaweshipe anon"), in the description of the Wife of Bath ("In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe"), in the description of the Guildsmen ("a greet Fraternytee"), and in the description of the Parson (ll. 506-511); it has its ironic and satiric expression in the phrase "good felawe" in the descriptions of the Shipman (l. 395) and of the Summoner (ll. 648-653). The fellowship motif is one expression of the love motif established implicitly in lines 1-18 and running throughout the General Prologue. The Squire, for example, echoes lines 9-11 in

> So hoote he louede that by nyghtertale
> He slepte namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
> (ll. 97-98)

This motif is continued throughout the General Prologue in such words as love, lovere, corages, hoote, Amor, etc., and runs the gamut from romantic love (the Squire) through compulsive eroticism (the Wife of Bath) to perversion (the Summoner and Pardoner) on the one hand, and from genuine caritas (the Parson) to its parody in the Prioress on the other. The overt manifestation of love and fellowship in joy, singing, etc., established by "smale foweles maken melodye" is reiterated by the pilgrims: the Squire is "floytynge al the day," the Prioress "soong the seruyce," the Monk's bells "gynglen," the Miller plays the bagpipe, etc.

Closely involved with the pilgrimage and love motif is the motif of rebirth, announced in lines 1-14 and carried throughout the General Prologue by words such as grene and floures (with its accompanying adjectives white and reede), and implicit in the descriptions of the pilgrims' new clothes:

> Embrouded was he as it were a meede
> Al ful of fresshe floures white and reede.
> (11. 89-90)
>
> His nekke whit was as the flour delys.
> (1. 238)
>
> And he was clad in coote and hood of grene
> (1. 103)
>
> A peyre of bedes gauded al with grene.
> (1. 159)
>
> Hir mouth . . . softe and reed.
> (1. 153)
>
> Whit was his berd as is the dayesye.
> Of his complexioun he was sangwyn
> (11. 332-333)
>
> Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed.
> (1. 456)
>
> Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was.
> (1. 365)

As evident as the identification of the pilgrims with burgeoning nature is their identification with cupiditas. The motif appears throughout the descriptions, carried by such words as profit, rente, purchase, wynne, etc., and is the negation of the doctrine of true plenitude implicit in the General Prologue. Chaucer begins with a religious connotation for the motif, in the Knight:

> At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.
> (1. 51)

> At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye
> Whan they were wonne . . .
> (11. 58-59)

He then moves to more worldly definitions: the Friar deals only with situations "ther as profit sholde arise," and "His purchas was wel bettre than his rente"; the Merchant is "Sownynge alwey thencrees of his wynnyng"; the Sergeant is a "greet . . . purchasour" whose "purchasyng myghte nat been infect"; the Guildsmen have "catel . . . ynogh and rente"; the Physician is in collusion with druggists, "for ech of hem made oother for to wynne." Opposed to the cupidity of these pilgrims are the Parson who "sette nat his benefice to hyre," and the Plowman, who would "dyke and delve . . . for euery poure wight/ With outen hire." But they are lost among the pilgrims, and the cupiditas motif is resumed again with the Reeve, on whom "noon auditour koude . . . wynne," and who "koude bettre than his lord purchase," and by the Pardoner, who "gat hym moore moneye/ Than that the persoun gat in monthes tweye," and who preaches only "To wynne siluer." The motif closes with the Host's emphatic denial that considerations of money have dictated his plan for the Canterbury trip, a denial which makes the Host an ironic counterpart of the Parson.

Running through the cupidity motif like an ironic catena aurea is the color word gold, submerged, naturally enough, in the image of the "yonge sonne," but explicit in the human world. It appears first, like the word wynne, in a religious context, in the Prioress' "brooch of gold ful shene" and in the Monk's "ful curious pyn," which is a "loue knot." These two references link the gold motif with the love motif as the use of wynne in the Knight's description links that motif with the religious elements of the General Prologue. The Clerk, with "litel gold in cofre," introduces various connotations of gold. The physician loves "gold in special"; the Parson uses the word as a sermon topic; the Miller has "a thombe of gold." Unlike the word silver which appears in only two contexts, gold, which is a traditional symbol, appears in various permutations, which emphasize its prevalence in human activities and its relation to the doctrine, Cupiditas radix malorum est.

Counterpointing the use of gold and the cupidity motif is the repetition of the adjective riche. It appears, as do wynne and gold, in various contexts, but unlike them appears in the ethical contexts last. It appears first in its worldly form in the Friar, who deals "al with riche," moves toward the ethical in the Clerk, who does not desire "robes riche," is ironically ethical in the portrait of the Sergeant, who is "ful riche of excellence," and is moralistically defined in that of the Parson, who is "riche . . . of holy thoght and werk."

Balancing the cupidity motif is the motif of worthynesse and honour, of the truly parfit, gentil, and wys. As in the case of wynne, gold, and riche, Chaucer uses various permutations of these words and concepts, balancing and opposing for ironic, satiric, or laudatory

comment. The Knight, for example, is "wys" in the sense of "prudent," but also in its modern sense; the Sergeant is "war and wys," in the sense of careful, crafty, and learned; the Shipman is "wys to undertake," meaning skilled, experienced, with overtones of criminality; the Manciple "is wys in byynge of vitaille," in the sense of thrifty and experienced, with overtones of graft; the Host is a good business man, prudent, with a good education ("wys and wel ytaught"). Similarly, the Knight, the Franklin, the Physician, and the Plowman are all perfect, but the perfection of the Franklin and the Physician is framed and illuminated by the perfection of the Knight and the Plowman:

> He was a verray, parfit, gentil knyght.
> (l. 72)
>
> For he was Epicurus owene sone
> That heeld opynyoun that pleyn delit
> Was verray felicitee parfit.
> (ll. 336-338)
>
> He was a verray parfit practisour.
> (l. 422)
>
> A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
> Lyuynge in pees and parfit charitee.
> (ll. 531-532)

The Tabard Inn, the Knight, the Summoner, and the Pardoner are all "gentil," but the connotations of the word must be measured against the norm established by the "verray, parfit, gentil" Knight:

> . . . assembled was this compaignye
> In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye
> That highte the Tabard. . . .
> (ll. 717-719)
>
> He was a gentil harlot, and a kynde.
> (l. 647)
>
> With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER. . . .
> (l. 671)

Both the Knight and the Squire are courteous, as would be expected from representatives of the chivalric estate:

> . . . he loued chiualrye,
> Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye
> (11. 45-46)

> Curteys he was, lowely and seruysable. . . .
> (1. 99)

but, ironically and satirically, so are the Prioress

> In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest
> (1. 132)

and the Friar

> Curteys he was, and lowely of seruyse.
> (1. 250)

The technique of repetition has a second function: it serves to link the pilgrims with one another and with their milieu, reinforcing the chain of being motif. This unifying technique functions from the first pilgrim introduced: the Knight is "nat gay," a characteristic which contrasts to but anticipates the "Syngynge" and "floytynge" Squire, and both the Knight and the Squire have conducted themselves well. The Squire himself, a lover who "koude songes make" and who "slepte namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale," echoes lines 9-10, and the Yeoman's green clothes and Saint Christopher's medal recall lines 1-7 and 12-18.

The Prioress is linked to the motifs of lines 1-14 through her name, Eglentyne, and through the inscription on her brooch; she echoes both lines 1-18 and the Yeoman in her "bedes gauded al with grene"; and she recalls the Squire through the romance elements in her description.

The Monk's bridle, which jingles like a "chapel belle," foreshadows the use of the word in the description of the Friar, whose robe is as round as "a belle out of the presse," and in the geographical

setting of the Tabard Inn "faste by the Belle." The Monk, whose estate is roughly equal to that of the Prioress, not unnaturally shares some of her characteristics. Her "smale houndes" reappear as his "Grehoundes"; her eating habits are paralleled by the Monk's delight in "A fat swan"; and they are similar in size: she has a forehead "a spanne brood" and is "nat vndergrowe"; he is "a lord ful fat."

The comments on food and eating in the descriptions of the Prioress and the Monk are echoed in the description of the Friar, who knows "euery hostiler and tappestere" and the "selleres of vitaille" in his vicinity. His physical description ("His nekke whit was as the flour delys") recalls both lines 1-14 and the Squire; like the Squire, "he hadde a murye note," is as "strong . . . as a champioun," and is "Curteys." But he recalls the Monk also by antithesis, for he is "nat lyk a cloystrer," and his eyes are not "stepe and rollynge" but "twynkled." By antithesis also he anticipates the Clerk, for he is not dressed in a "thredbare cope, as is a poure scoler."

But he is related to that other antithesis of the Clerk, the Merchant. His character and deportment are like the Merchant's: he is greatly concerned with "purchas," and he is "a ful solempne man." The last lines of their descriptions echo one another, though the Merchant's uses occultatio (saying that we do not know):

> This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.
> (l. 269)

> For sothe, he was a worthy man with alle,
> But sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.
> (ll. 283-284)

The Merchant in turn has points of relationship with the Clerk, though only through antithesis. The speech of the Merchant, for example,

is full of "thencrees of his wynnyng," but the Clerk's is "ful of heigh sentence" and "moral vertu," recalling also the "so vertuous" Friar. The Merchant and Monk figure by contrast also in the description of the Clerk's clothing and physique, and there is a passing attack on the Squire as well as other clerks in the Clerk's rejection of "gay sautrie." Finally, there is a contrast in the conclusions of the descriptions, for the Merchant spends his time in business (ll. 279-282), but the Clerk his in prayer and study (ll. 299-303).

The learned pilgrim who follows them, the Sergeant, is the antithesis of the Clerk and the Knight, but resembles the Merchant. They are dressed similarly:

> In motlee, and hye on hors he sat.
> (l. 271)
>
> He rood but hoomly in a medlee coote. . . .
> (l. 328)

They are alike in their skill with their affairs, though the actual wording of the Sergeant's description echoes the Friar's. He has in his company the Franklin, who, in his dress, political experience, and appearance resembles most closely the Knight and the Squire. His beard recalls the description of the Squire, and there is a distant echo of the Knight-Squire relationship in "he was Epicurus owene sone." His duties parody lines 52-66 of the Knight's description:

> Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.
> . . . . . .
> A shirreue hadde he been, and a countour;
> Was nowher swich a worthy vauasour.
> (ll. 356, 359-360)

His clothing too seems a parody of a Crusader's dress:

> An anlaas and a gipser al of silk
> Heeng at his girdel. . . .
> (ll. 357-358)

But his concern with food echoes elements in the characters of the Monk and the Friar. Moreover, he is more worldly than the Knight. Because he is in the company of the Sergeant, "sessions" and "countour" signifies at least quasi-legal functions, and he is as busy as the Sergeant. He seems to be a landholder like the Reeve.

The description of the Franklin, containing as it does elements of most of the preceding pilgrims, acts as a sort of subtotal summary and brings the first section of descriptions full circle, from a knight who is a worthy man to a knight who is a worthy vavasor.

The next section of pilgrims is begun by the five Guildsmen who, following close upon the descriptions of the Merchant and the Sergeant, echo them. Like the Merchant, they are "solempne"; like the Sergeant they present the problem of appearance and reality: "Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys." Indeed, they present in embryo that grand bourgeois, the Merchant, even though they are representatives of labor and he of capitalism. The Shipman, on the other hand, is in direct opposition to the Merchant ("Ful many a draughte of wyn hadde he drawe . . . whil that the chapman sleep"), although ironically the words "from Hulle to Cartage" in his description echo the Merchant's "Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle."

The Physician, like the Knight, is "verray parfit," and the Knight's catalogue of battles is paralleled by the Physician's catalogue of warriors against disease. He has affinities with that other knight, the Franklin, through his "sangwyn" robe, which both recalls the Franklin's complexion and maintains the medical motif. But unlike the Franklin, the Physician is "Of his diete mesurable," so that he will never

resemble the Franklin or the Pardoner, and is "esy of dispence." His concern for the Franklin's "sondry sesons" is for medical purposes, for he is "grounded in astronomye."

The portrait of the Wife of Bath opens with a comment on a physical defect, linking her portrait to that of the Physician, but her real affinities are, not unexpectedly, with the Guildsmen. Her character is such that

> In al the parisshe, wyf ne was ther noon
> That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon,
> (11. 449-450)

which recalls the Guildsmen's wives:

> "It is ful fair to been ycleped 'madame,'
> And goon to vigilies al bifore. . . ."
> (11. 376-377)

Her new and bright clothes (11. 453-457) recall those of the Guildsmen (11. 365-368).

But her description has wider ramifications than that of a petite bourgeoise. She is given one of the three major confessions in The Canterbury Tales, and that position of importance is anticipated by her position in the General Prologue and by the nature of her description. Her portrait stands at the end of one section of pilgrims, and like the Franklin's, her character is a summary of that of many of the preceding pilgrims. More importantly, she shares elements of the chief motifs of lines 1-18: she is erotic ("Housbondes . . . she hadde fyue"), and she is a pilgrim who "hadde passed many a straunge strem"; in one of her physical characteristics she sums up both motifs: "Gat tothed was she . . . ." Moreover, she is immediately juxtaposed with the Parson, a sort of English Venus or Dame World versus an English exemplar of caritas.

The Parson's portrait opens with four lines which immediately contrast him with the worldly members of the pilgrimage, both lay and religious, but which link him to the Clerk, who is the Parson in youth:

> A good man was ther of religioun,
> And was a poure PERSOUN of a toun,
> But riche he was of holy thoght and werk.
> He was also a lerned man, a clerk.
> . . . . . .
> His parisshens deuoutly wolde he teche.
> (11. 477-480, 482)

Like the Clerk, he rejects the avarice and the worldliness of the Merchant, the Friar, and the Monk, and the patronage offered by guildsmen (11. 507-514). The food and eating motif of the other clergy and the Franklin is echoed in the Parson, but with more serious intent; it is in the metaphor of the parson as shepherd and in the reference to "spiced conscience." His brother, the Plowman, shares his characteristics, and even translates his metaphor "shiten shepherde" into practice: he "hadde ylad of donge ful many a fother." Like his brother, the Plowman is the antithesis of the Wife of Bath, for his concept of fellowship is to love "his neighebore right as hym selue." Worldliness is rejected again in his coat, "a tabard," which is not that of the Host's inn. The two brothers, then, are a secular and religious rejection of the worldly values represented by most of the other pilgrims.

Worldliness in its crudest form is represented by the Miller, a representative of the rural life, like the Plowman. But the Miller is also a lower-class parody of the Squire. The Squire is "of greet strengthe"; the Miller is a "stout carl" who, like a knight, carries "A swerd and a bokeler"; the Squire can "endite," "purtreye," and "write"; the Miller plays a bagpipe; the Squire's colors are white and red; the

Miller's are black and red. Some of these echoes he shares as well with the Friar, just as his "mouth as greet . . . as a greet fourneys" recalls that manly man, the Monk (l. 202). He is separated from his future enemy, the Reeve, by the Manciple, who probably deals in the Miller's products among his "vitaille." The Manciple, who works for a "temple," echoes the Sergeant in the "maistres . . . That weren of lawe expert" and foreshadows the Reeve in the line, "stywardes of rente and lond," thereby commenting on both those clever and busy men.

The Reeve and Miller are opposites, and are planned so deliberately by Chaucer:

Reeve	Miller
sclendre	Ful big
berd was shaue	berd . . . was reed
surcote of pers	whit cote
---	iangler
rusty blade	swerd and a bokeler
hyndreste of oure route	broghte vs out of towne

It is chiefly on this antithesis that their future quarrel is based. Furthermore, the Reeve has certain clerical characteristics: he is clean shaven, his "top was dokked lyk a preest," he is dressed "as is a frere," and in the lines "He koude bettre than his lord purchace" and "His lordes sheep" were "hoolly in this reues gouernynge," he recalls the Friar and the Parson; this overtone of clericalism would also account for an antipathy to a speaker "of synne and harlotries."

Sin and harlotries characterize the last two pilgrims, the Summoner and the Pardoner, who act as summary characters for all the viciousness of the preceding pilgrims. They are at the opposite pole from the Knight, and in them displacement of imagery reaches the demonic

stage.[12] Like the Monk, the Franklin, and the Wife of Bath, the Summoner has a red face, but it is "fyr reed," demonic and lustful, the result of an excess of the habits of the Monk and Franklin:

> Wel loued he garlek, oynons, and eek lekes,
> And for to drynke strong wyn, reed as blood.
> (11. 634-635)

He is a lover like the Squire, but the simile has undergone a change:

> As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe.
> (1. 626)

Like the Sergeant, he professes legal knowledge, but all he knows "by roote" is "Questio quid iuris"; like the Shipman, he is a good fellow, who would, like the Clerk, gladly teach, but his text has undergone displacement:

> And if he foond owher a good felawe,
> He wolde techen hym to haue noon awe
> In swich caas of the ercedekenes curs.
> (11. 653-655)

Like the Reeve, he is feared, though he has, like the Friar, the acquaintance of young women of the diocese; worst of all, as a "gentil harlot, and a kynde," carrying a "bokeler . . . maad . . . of a cake," he is a demonic parody of the Knight.

"Gentil" too is his friend the Pardoner who, like the Knight, has his field of campaigns, "from Berwyk in to Ware," and whose home, "Rounciual," recalls the Chanson de Roland. His hair, by parody, recalls the Squire's, as the singing of his lecherous goat's voice is a displacement of the Squire's singing, and contrasts the Pardoner with the manly Monk, as do his "glaryngeeyen."

---

[12]For definitions of these terms see Frye, 136-140, 155-158.

He is a contrast also with the virile Host, a secular version of the Monk; the Host is "A semely man . . . For to been a marchal in an halle," a "large man, with eyen stepe," and "of manhode hym lakked right naught," all of which echo the Monk, who is "A manly man, to been an abbot able," who is "ful fat," and with "eyen stepe and rollynge." They are related further in that the Monk loves "a fat swan," and the Host is a purveyor of food.

Just as these repetitions bind the pilgrims together in the chain of being, so do other repetitions maintain the concept of plenitude. One expression of this doctrine is the repetition of the adverbs "very" and "ful"; a second is the use of the catalogue.

The catalogue has no sanction in rhetorical manuals; however, a theory of catalogue could be constructed from the figures frequentatio, enumeratio, and consumatio,[13] and the word catalogus was known, as was the practice. Chaucer uses two types of catalogues, which can be defined as the formal and the informal catalogue. Both types can be illustrated by the description of the Wife of Bath. Her physical description and the description of her clothes are informal catalogues:

> Hir couerchiefs ful fyne were of ground;
> I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
> That on a Sonday weren vp on hir heed.
> Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
> Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
> Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
> (11. 453-458)

This is, of course, an adaptation of the rhetorical technique of descriptio, which in practice was a catalogue. A more formal catalogue can be seen in the account of her travels:

---

[13] Ad Herenn., II. xxx. 47-IV. xl. 52; Quintilian, IX. ii. 103.

> And thries hadde she been at Ierusalem.
> She hadde passed many a straunge strem:
> At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloyne,
> In Galice at Seint Iame, and at Coloyne;
> She koude muche of wandrynge by the weye.
> (11. 463-467)

But even this catalogue is looser than the brief catalogue of the Squire's career (11. 85-86), as is the catalogue of the career of the Knight (11. 51-66) and, in a more humorous context, the catalog in the description of the Cook (11. 380-384). At its most formal it is found in the description of the Physician:

> Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
> And Deiscorides, and eek Rusus,
> Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,
> Serapion, Razis, and Auycen,
> Auerrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,
> Bernard and Gatesden and Gilbertyn.
> (11. 429-434).

Even though rhetorical theory does not provide for the catalogue, Chaucer adapted to his ironic and descriptive purposes a form which is patently rhetorical, though not discussed in manuals. In fact, as has been obvious throughout the General Prologue, Chaucer often loosely defines rhetorical terms and techniques; but the adaptation is toward one artistic end, the presentation of Chaucer's ironic vision of the world.

As I have noted earlier, this presentation is generally through the juxtaposition of the real and apparent, of precept and practice. It is sanctioned by the rhetorical technique of argument through contraries (the figures contentio and contrarium) and is one of the major formal techniques in the General Prologue.

The technique appears in the troublesome line 68, which comments on the condition of chivalry in Chaucer's time: "And though that he were

worthy, he was wys." Robinson, following Tupper, says that this line presents the medieval contrast between audacia and prudentia,[14] and, considering Chaucer's emphasis elsewhere on prudence as a value, and his satiric device of double entendre, this contrast is undoubtedly intended. But though the Knight is both the preuz and sage of Roland and Oliver, because of the range of connotation which arises from the use of wys in the General Prologue, it cannot be doubted that there is also a satiric intention implicit in a worthy knight who is wise also.

The Yeoman is developed in much the same way as the Knight; to the realistic observation that he had "a not heed" and a "broun visage" is linked by rhyme the idealizing statement that "Of wodecraft wel koude he al the vsage." Similarly, his profession and his religious tendencies are fused:

> A Cristofre on his brest of siluer shene;
> An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene.
> (11. 115-116)

Saint Christopher was the patron saint not only of travellers, but also of foresters, so that the juxtaposition of lines 115 and 116 is only a surface juxtaposition; the inner unity of the two is apparent and is marked by the rhyme scheme.

The first three pilgrims form a group (11. 43-117), and hence their individual characters are determined partly by the interacting elements in the group. The Knight has been in many wars for his lord; the Squire has campaigned in "so litel space" for his "lady grace." The Knight is "meke" and "gentil"; the Squire is "Curteys." The portrait of the Knight ends with an emphasis upon pilgrimage, the Squire's

---

[14]Robinson, 652.

with his submission to his father. Both portraits speak of past and present action (rhetorically, exemplum), and both are in contrast to the statically presented Yeoman, who, though wearing "pecock arwes kene," a "gay bracer," and a "gay daggere," is yet less brilliantly dressed than the Squire, "Embrouded . . . as . . . a meede." The Squire in turn is in direct contrast to his father's "bismotered" clothing, and with his "Syngynge" and "floytynge" is carefully placed between the quietly efficient Knight and Yeoman.

The Prioress is presented through emphasis on the rhetorical color repetitio (anaphora), in her case used to emphasize the technique of juxtaposition. That this emphasis is for satiric purpose can be seen by looking at the sentences in order:

> And she was cleped Madame Eglentyne.
>
> And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly
> After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe.
>
> And sikerly she was of greet desport,
> And ful plesaunt and amyable of port,
> And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
> Of court . . .
> And to been holden digne of reuerence.
>
> And al was conscience and tendre herte.
>
> And ther on heng a brooch of gold ful shene
> On which ther was first writen a crowned A,
> And after Amor vincit omnia.
>
> (11. 121 ff.)

The sum of all the ambiguities in the portrait is contained in the last three lines. They are the climax of the heavy emphasis on the anaphora with And, used no more frequently than in the other portraits (the ratio of and to lines in all four portraits is roughly 1:5), but more carefully and more obviously for satiric intent.

The use of the repetition of And with the technique of juxtaposition is found also in the description of the Monk, again for satiric emphasis:

> And heeld after the newe world the space.
>
> And I seyde his opinioun was good.
>
> And for to festne his hood vnder his chyn
> He hadde of gold wroght a ful curious pyn,
> A loue knotte . . . .
>
> His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
> And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.
> (11.176 ff.)

Moreover, the juxtaposition of secular and religious characteristics is emphasized by chiasma:

> And outridere — that louede venerye,
> A manly man, — to been an abbot able.

Chiasma operates again in the juxtaposition of the church bells with the bells on the Monk's bridle, which Chaucer heard

> Gynglen in a whist-
> lynge wynd — as cleere
> And eek as loude — as dooth the chapel belle.

The conjunction And functions again to emphasize the satire.

The Monk's portrait is juxtaposed with that of the Prioress, but is linked with it through likeness in profession (he is a prior), in length of lines of description (Prioress 44, Monk 42), and in the sort of satire implicit in the portraits. This satire is carried partly by the technique of interpretatio, so that the Monk's "loue knotte" echoes the Prioress' "brooch," and partly by the juxtaposition of the two portraits, so that the Monk's masculinity and the Prioress' femininity are contrasted and emphasized. Chaucer avoids the effect of sameness in the

portraits by varying the proportions of the portrait and by varying slightly the And to lines ratio (around 1:5 in the Prioress' description and 1:7 in the Monk's).

For the Friar's portrait Chaucer introduces another rhetorical element, the argumentatio;[15] the full syllogism implicit in lines 210-211 is this:

> Those who use "daliaunce and fair langage" seduce women.
> The Friar uses them.
> Ergo, the Friar seduces women.

That this is the conclusion intended in the enthymeme is implicit in the lines which follow:

> He hadde maad ful many a mariage
> Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
> (ll. 212-213)

Juxtaposed with this enthymeme is a line concerned with his religious activities, which throws into relief the satire intended in the enthymeme and in the comment on the generosity of the Friar:

> Vn to his ordre he was a noble post
> (l. 214)

For the Friar's portrait Chaucer retains the use of anaphora, interlacing two conjunctions, And and For. But the satiric emphasis is carried by the use of juxtaposition and interpretatio; in the sixty-one lines of the portrait the words wommen, wyves or wydwe appear four times, and perhaps the word tappestere adds a fifth, so that the whole range of feminine status is covered.

The portrait of the Friar is juxtaposed with that of the Monk, and from it some interesting comparisons and contrasts emerge. The Monk

---

[15] Ad Herenn., II. xviii. 28-xxviii. 45; Quintilian, V. x. 1 ff.

does not mind being "out of his cloystre," and obviously inclines to fine living; the Friar, who is "nat lyk a cloystrer," deals only with "riche." The Monk has "eyen stepe and rollynge," and the Friar's "eyen twynkled"; the Monk is an "outridere" who could be an abbot and the Friar is a "lymytour" who is like a master or a Pope; the Monk is "ful fat and in good poynt," and wears a gold love-knot; the Friar is strong and associates with all sorts of women Though the actual structure and technique of the two portraits differ, they are united by the resemblances already noted. More importantly they are linked by condemnation of worldliness and sexuality, a condemnation which relates the two portraits to that of the Prioress, forming a second group of three portraits, a group in direct contrast to the values expressed by the idealized Knight, Squire, and Yeoma...

The portrait of the "ful solempne" Friar closes with emphasis on profit (l. 249), purchas and rente (l. 256), and on his rich clothing (ll. 259-263), serving as a link between the worldly trio of lines 118-269 and the Merchant who speaks "ful solempnely" of his "wynnyng." The portrait of the Merchant is short, without the rhetorical devices used in the earlier portraits. Chaucer depends for his satire here on the Merchant's emphasis on money, on the accumulation in fourteen lines of mercantile jargon and allusions (Flaundryssh, wynnyng, Middelburgh and Orewelle, eschaunge, dette, bargaynes, cheuysaunce), and on the juxtaposition with the worldly religious representatives, who indicate how the desire for gain of the "worthy" Merchant has infected with worldliness the "worthy lymytour," the "ful fat" Monk, and the Prioress who "peyned hire to countrefete cheere/ Of court."

The placement of the Merchant's portrait makes it a bridge between the worldly representatives of religion and the Clerk. For his comment on the Clerk Chaucer returns to emphasis on And, reinforcing it by repetition and juxtaposition. In contradistinction to the Monk, the Clerk is "nat right fat"; unlike the richly robed Monk and Friar, "Ful thredbare was his ouereste courtepy"; unlike the Merchant, he has "litel gold in cofre"; unlike the Friar, his speech contains "moral vertu," and he is dedicated to teaching. Unlike all the representatives of religion who were described before him, he is not "worldly." As in the case of the Merchant, accumulatio functions here with words suggesting the Clerk's character: nat right fat, sobrely, thredbare, Aristotle, philosophre, preye, scoleye, studie, reuerence, moral vertu, teche. His portrait stands at the end of a group of four persons secular and religious, but all worldly, and by this juxtaposition stands as an implicit reproach to all four.

For the portrait of the Sergeant of Law Chaucer returns to the emphasis on the conjunction And for satiric commentary both explicit:

> Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
> And yet he semed bisier than he was.
> (ll. 321-322)

and implicit, in lines which imply that the Sergeant operates by rote, with no real understanding of the principles of justice:

> And every statut koude he pleyn by roote.
> (l. 327)

Juxtaposed with him is the Franklin, who is "in his compaignye," and, having been a "countour," functions in a semi-legal office. Like the Sergeant, he is a householder, but unlike him, the Franklin is as busy as he seems:

At sessions ther he was lord and sire.
Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.
. . . . . .
A shirreue hadde he been, and a countour.
(11. 355-356, 360)

He is, then, like the Sergeant, cognizant of English law. As in the case of the Sergeant, Chaucer abandons the use of anaphora; the portrait is presented chiefly through the techniques of interpretatio and accumulatio, the words indicating either his Epicureanism (sop in wyn, delyt, Epicurus, felicitee, Seint Iulyan, ale, deyntees, stuwe, sauce, table), or his official functions (sessions, lord, knyght of the shire, shirreue, countour, vauasour). By juxtaposition, each portrait comments upon and illuminates the other; the Epicurean, political, semi-legal, genuinely hospitable Franklin, wearing an "anlaas and a gipser al of silk," is contrasted with the precise, legally trained, rather grasping Sergeant, travelling "but hoomly in a medlee coote/ Girt with a ceynt of silk." It is the common contrast between the introvert and extrovert, and between the hoarder and the spender.

For the five Guildsmen Chaucer returns to the technique of juxtaposition and anaphora, but with an additional modification, the use of ambiguous referent, and with the use of direct quotation found in the Monk's portrait:

And they were clothed alle in oo lyueree
Of a solempne and a greet fraternytee.
. . . . . .
For catel hadde they ynogh, and rente,
And eek hir wyues wolde it wel assente,
(And elles certeyn they were to blame),
"It is ful fair, etc.
(11. 363-364, 373-376)

Line 374 functions momentarily to modify line 373 before becoming clearly the modifier of lines 375-376 ff. With the Guildsmen is their Cook, who

is presented by the technique of juxtaposition:

> But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
> That on his shyne a mormal hadde he,
> For blankmanger that made he with the beste.
> (ll. 385-387)

The rest of the Cook's character emerges through accumulatio; the words for his trade (boille, tart, galyngale, ale, rooste, mortreux, blankmanger) crowd the nine lines of his portrait and enclose the mormal, which serves as the focal point of his character. The Guildsmen and their Cook form a group by themselves, and each illuminates the portraits of the other, the newly dressed and self important fraternity men contrasted with their diseased cook from London's low life.

For the portrait of the Shipman Chaucer uses the same technique of the "floating line" as in the description of the Guildsmen:

> And certeynly he was a good felawe.
> Ful many a draughte, etc.
> (ll. 395 ff.)

Line 395 (emphasized by the conjunction And) can be the summary of lines 388-394, in which case it is an innocent judgment, or it can be the topic sentence introducing the account of his thefts. It is both, of course, and is a good example of the ironic technique of juxtaposition at work. The sinister meaning which emerges from the line is reinforced by the same technique at work in the juxtaposition of lines 401-408 with line 409 (emphasized by the conjunction And), where the innocent account of the Shipman's skill takes on other overtones when followed by the line, "And euery cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne," a line recalling one etymology of viking. The portrait ends with the use of accumulatio: tydes, stremes, herberwe, lodemenage, tempest, hauenes, cryke, barge.

As in the description of the Shipman, Chaucer uses for the

Physician the technique of the "floating line"; line 422 ("He was a verray parfit practisour") both summarizes the account of the Physician's astronomical skills and introduces the account of his collusion with the apothecaries. But the character of the Physician is presented chiefly through the use of the summary line which is little related to the subject matter preceding it, and hence more emphatic in its role as a juxtaposed afterthought. Line 422 serves admirably as a summary of the Physician's astronomical skill, but line 428 ("Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to begynne") has little function as a summary statement about his use of druggists, but a great deal to do with his character. Line 438 ("His studie was but litel on the Bible") has nothing to do with the Physician's learning and eating habits, but tells much about his character. It is the same sort of statement as the pun (adnominatio) in the last two lines of the description, an innocent statement about the character of the Physician which reveals everything about him. Even more than the Shipman, the Physician is presented through the device of accumulatio (there is an average of one medical word every two lines), and by that of formal catalogue, the medical authorities in lines 429-434. The Physician is linked to the Shipman through their skills (the Shipman can "rekene wel his tydes" and "knew alle the hauenes"; the Physician "Wel knew . . . the olde Esculapius"); in his carefulness, "diete mesurable," and thriftiness, he is the direct antithesis to the Wife of Bath. But he is linked to the Wife of Bath through the technique of formal catalogue (her travels, ll. 463-466), through her skill, both in weaving and in love ("Of remedies of loue she knew"), and through their antithesis, again that of the extrovert and introvert.

The Parson and the Plowman are presented in techniques like that of the preceding pilgrims; their descriptions recall that of the Knight:

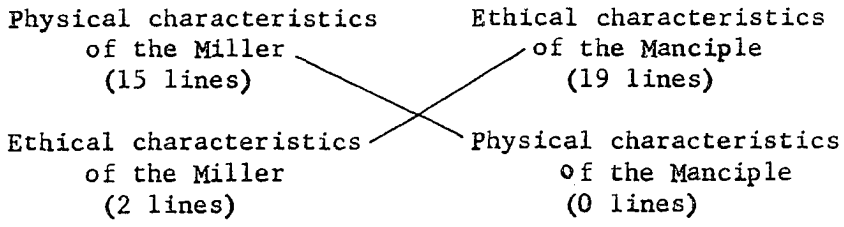
> And thogh he hooly were and vertuous,
> He was noght to synful men despitous,
> Ne of his speche daungerous . digne.
> (11. 515-517)

These lines echo lines 68-71 of the Knight's portrait. Moreover, Chaucer returns to the use of repetitio for commentary:

> And was a poure PERSOUN of a toun.
> . . . . . .
> And in aduersitee ful pacient;
> And swich he was preued ofte sithes.
> . . . . . .
> And this figure he added eek ther to,
> That if gold ruste, etc.
> (11. 478 ff.)

Lines 501-506 are direct quotation (sermocinatio), in the manner of the Monk's portrait. This technique, recalling the Monk, coupled with the emphasis on And, recalling the usage in the portraits of the Prioress, Monk, and Friar, places the truly Christian Parson in his proper perspective through implicit comparison. The Plowman is joined to the Parson through ties of blood and through similar content, although the Plowman's portrait does not use anaphora or direct quotation.

The Miller and the Manciple are united both through their shrewd practice and through the chiasmic and contrasted pattern of their descriptions:



Both are summed up in similar lines, introduced by And:

> And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
> (l. 563)

> And yet this maunciple sette hir aller cappe.
> (l. 586)

In character they are antitheses, and are roughly the introvert-extrovert contrast: the Miller is "a iangler and a goliardeys," and the Manciple is "gentil." The Reeve is even more of an introvert than the Manciple, to whom he is related through practice (the Reeve's lord's goods are "hoolly in this reues gouernynge," and the Manciple has control of the buying for the temple), and through profession, for the Reeve is a rural version of the Manciple. Through his rural life and profession he is related to the Miller, but by his personality and location in the pilgrims, he is the direct antithesis to the Miller. He and the Miller stand as the outer limits of the group of three, of which the Manciple, the urban pilgrim, is the center.

The Summoner and the Pardoner are linked not only by the explicit statement of their friendship and by their characters, but by the implicit relationship of their professions (summoning and pardoning) and by the similarities in technique of presentation. There is little of the techniques used for the earlier pilgrims; because Chaucer reacts most strongly against them, the ironic method of juxtaposition and afterthought is out of place. In their descriptions there is a good deal more of subjective commentary, and this fact, coupled with the climactic position of the two at the end of the list, indicates that the reader is to consider them as the worst of the pilgrims.

The portrait of the Host makes use of the anaphora with And,

sermocinatio (even more so than in the Monk and Parson), and similarity and contrast to preceding pilgrims. In his personality he is like the Wife of Bath and the Monk, to whom he is linked in his use of direct discourse; in his shrewdness in managing, he recalls many of the pilgrims; in his "eyen stepe" and manliness he, like the Monk, is a direct contrast to the last pilgrim presented, the Pardoner, who has "glarynge eyen" and may be "a geldyng or a mare." In short, the Host, since he must stand as surrogate for the narrator, and as guide for the pilgrimage, sums up in secular form many of the essentials of both the secular and religious life necessary to make him stand as an acceptable and likeable Everyman.

The principle of variation upon a theme (expolitio) is one expression of the ironic vision which shaped the General Prologue. That the world is not a simple opposition of Parson versus Pardoner or Clerk versus Merchant is made manifest not only in the range of the pilgrims themselves, but also in the permutations of the words used to characterize them; it is a world where both Physician and Plowman can be "parfit," where both Knight and Friar can be "curteys," where Parson and Prioress and Pardoner can represent a single estate. It is a world of being and seeming, of what ought to be and what is, and only the ironic vision can control and shape the dual vision into an artistic unity. This duality of vision if presented overtly to the reader by the pilgrim narrator himself,

> Me thynketh it acordant to resoun
> To telle yow al the condicioun
> Of ech of hem, so as it semed me.
> (ll. 37-39)

It is emphasized clearly during the course of the descriptions, in the portrait of the Sergeant ("And yet he semed bisier than he was") and of

the Guildsmen ("Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys"), and is echoed distantly in the adverb semely, derived from the same root as semed. The word semed is a statement in miniature of the ironic vision which informs the General Prologue from its smallest to its largest elements.

CONCLUSION

Ordinarily one expects of a prologue only that it introduce the material which follows it and that it embody the same point of view as the body of the work. Not only does Chaucer's General Prologue fulfill these requirements, but in addition it has an artistic structure of its own.

This structure, presented through a first-person narrator, embodies Chaucer's own artistic vision, but is also the product of traditional themes and rhetorical principles. The first of these traditional themes is the topos of the coming of spring, with the rebirth of nature and of love. To this traditional treatment Chaucer adds, through the motif of pilgrimage, the theme of spiritual rebirth. The theme is presented partly through the careful tripartite structure of the first eighteen lines, a structure which is the product both of Chaucer's own artistry, and of a syntactical device, the periodic sentence.

The body of the Prologue expands the pilgrimage motif introduced in the spring topos by concentrating on a particular group of pilgrims making a specific pilgrimage. They are presented through a series of portraits embodying material from literary and didactic sources, and are created partially of traditional and rhetorical descriptive devices. The series itself is part of a tradition, but the greatest influence on the Canterbury series is a didactic topos called "the

estates of the world." The use of such a series allows Chaucer to present the pilgrims as "real," as part of a social structure, and at the same time allows him to maintain two concepts introduced in the spring topos: the concept of the chain of being and of plenitude. The hierarchical structure of the series is symbolic of the chain of being, and the inclusiveness of the series is an analogue to the idea of plenitude.

Through the use of the series and the heavily didactic portraits, Chaucer preserves the unity of his poem: the realism of the pilgrims' external descriptions (the rhetorical device effictio) is an expression of the natural rebirth in the spring topos; the delineation of character (the rhetorical device notatio) links the pilgrims to the spiritual element of the pilgrimage.

This duality is that of The Canterbury Tales, which divides the vision of human experience between that of the Knight and that of the Parson; the range of love in The Canterbury Tales from "hende Nicholas" to Constance is foreshadowed by the range of love among the pilgrims, from the Summoner to the Parson. The care expended in the structure and theme of the General Prologue is for the purpose of presenting clearly this dual vision, a vision which prepares the reader to be brought out of town by the Miller on his own Canterbury pilgrimage to "thilke parfit, glorious pilgrymage/ That highte Ierusalem celestial."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Anderson, W. B. (ed.). Sidonius: Poems and Letters. London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1936.

Bell, H. Idris and David Bell (trans.). Dafydd ap Gwilym: Fifty Poems. London: The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorian, 1942.

Brown, Carleton (ed.). English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932.

_____. (ed.). Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century. 2d ed. revised. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952.

Butler, H. E. (ed. and trans.). The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921.

Caplan, Harry (ed.). Cicero Ad C. Herennium de Ratione Dicendi. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954.

Carmody, Francis J. (ed.). Li livres dou tresor de Brunetto Latini. University of California Publications in Modern Philology, Vol. 22. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948.

Constans, Leopold (ed.). Le Roman de Thebes. Societe des Anciens Textes Francais. Paris: Firmin Didot et Cie, 1890.

_____. (ed.). Le Roman de Troie. Societe des Anciens Textes Francais. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1904-1912.

Cornish, F. W. (trans.). The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus. Revised ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950.

Davies, R. T. (ed.). Chaucer: The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales. Harrap's English Classics. London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1953.

Denison, Sir E. and Eileen Power (eds.). The Travels of Marco Polo. "The Broadway Travellers." London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1931.

Donaldson, E. Talbot. Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader. New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1958.

Edmonds, J. M. (ed. and trans.). The Characters of Theophrastus. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929.

Erdmann, Axel (ed.). Lydgate's Siege of Thebes. Early English Text Society, Extra Series 108. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1911.

Eyssenhardt, Franz (ed.). Macrobius. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1893.

Faral, Edmond. Les Arts Poetiques du XII^{e} et du XIII^{e} Siecle: Recherches et Documents sur la Technique Litteraire du Moyen Age. Paris: Librairie Honore Champion, 1958.

Francis, W. Nelson (ed.). The Book of Vices and Virtues. Early English Text Society, No. 217. London: Oxford University Press, 1942.

Frazer, J. G. (ed. and trans.). The Fasti of Ovid. 5 vols. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1929.

Furnivall, F. J. (ed.). St. Jeremie's 15 Tokens before Doomsday. Early English Text Society, No. 69. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1878.

Gollancz, Sir Israel (ed.). Sir Gawain and The Green Knight. Early English Text Society, No. 210. London: Oxford University Press, 1940.

Griffin, Nathaniel Edward (ed.). Guido de Columnis: Historia Destructionis Troiae. Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1936.

Hoepffner, Ernest (ed.). Les Poesies de Bernart Marti. Classiques Francais du Moyen Age, No. 61. Paris: Edouard Champion, 1929.

Hubbell, H. M. (ed. and trans.). Cicero: Orator. London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1939.

Jeanroy, Alfred (ed.). Les Chansons de Jaufre Rudel. Classiques Francais du Moyen Age, No. 15. Paris: Edouard Champion, 1915.

Jones, Leslie Webber (trans.). An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings, by Cassiodorus Senator. Records of Civilization. New York: Columbia University Press, 1946.

Kane, George (ed.). Piers Plowman: The A Version (Will's Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well). London: The Athlone Press, 1960.

Kluge, Reinhold (ed.). Lancelot, nach der Heidelberger Pergamenthauschrift. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, No. 42. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1948.

Langlois, Ernest (ed.). Le Roman de la Rose par Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, publié d'après des manuscrits. Société des Anciens Textes Français. Paris: Firmin Didot and Edouard Champion, 1914-1924.

Lindsay, W. M. (ed.). Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarvm sive originvm. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1911.

Loth, J. (ed. and trans.). Les Mabinogion. Paris: Fontemoing et Cie, 1913.

Macaulay, G. C. (ed.). The Complete Works of John Gower. 4 vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1899-1901.

Manly, John M., Edith Rickert, et al. (eds.). The Text of The Canterbury Tales, Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts. 8 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940.

Meyer, Paul (ed. and trans.). Le Roman de Flamenca. Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1865.

Morris, Richard (ed.). Chaucer: The Prologue, The Knight's Tale, The Nonne Preestes Tale from The Canterbury Tales. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907.

Mozley, J. H. (ed. and trans.). Statius: Thebaid, I-IV. London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1928.

Murphy, Gerard (ed. and trans.). Early Irish Lyrics: Eighth to Twelfth Century. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956.

Nissen, Elisabeth (ed.). Les Chansons attribuées à Guiot de Dijon et Jocelin. Classiques Français du Moyen Age, No. 59. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1928.

Offord, M. Y. (ed.). The Parliament of the Three Ages. Early English Text Society, No. 246. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.

O'Grady, Standish. The Coming of Cuculain: A Romance of the Heroic Age of Ireland. London: Methuen & Co., 1894.

O'Sullivan, Mary Isabelle (ed.). Firumbras and Otuel and Roland. Early English Text Society, No. 198. London: Oxford University Press, 1935.

Owen, S. G. (ed.). P. Ovidi Nasonis: Tristivm Libri Qvinqve. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1915.

Panton, George O. and David Donaldson (eds.). The "Gest Hystoriale" of the Destruction of Troy. Early English Text Society, No. 39. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1879.

Pelan, Margaret M. (ed.). Florie et Blancheflor. Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strassbourg. Paris: Société d' Édition: Les Belles Lettres, 1956.

Rackham, H. (ed.). Pliny: Natural History. Vol. III. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940.

Robbins, Rossel Hope (ed.). Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952.

Robinson, F. N. (ed.). The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. 2d ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957.

Root, Robert Kilburn (ed.). The Book of Troilus and Criseyde by Chaucer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1926.

Skeat, Walter W. (ed.). The Bruce: or, The Book of the most excellent and noble prince, Robert du Broyss, King of Scots. Early English Text Society, Extra Series 11. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1870.

_____. (ed.). The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. 7 vols. 2d ed. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1900.

_____. (ed.). The Lay of Havelok the Dane. Early English Text Society, Extra Series 4. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1868.

_____. (ed.). Pierce the Ploughman's Crede. Early English Text Society, No. 30. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1867.

_____. (ed.). The Wars of Alexander: An Alliterative Romance. Early English Text Society, Extra Series 47. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1886.

Stanley, Eric Gerald (ed.). The Owl and the Nightingale. Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1960.

Steele, Robert (ed.). Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum. Early English Text Society, Extra Series 74. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1898.

Triggs, Oscar Lovell (ed.). The Assembly of Gods, etc. by John Lydgate. Early English Text Society, Extra Series 69. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1896.

Turnbull, Eleanor L. and Pedro Salinas (eds.). Ten Centuries of Spanish Poetry. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1955.

Wehrli, Max (ed.). Deutsche Lyrik des Mittelalters. Zurich: Manesse Verlag, Conjett and Huber, 1955.

White, T. H. (ed. and trans.). The Book of the Beasts. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954.

Wickham, E. C. (ed.). Quinti Horatii Flacci Opera Omnia. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1891.

Zupitza, Julius (ed.). The Romance of Guy of Warwick. Early English Text Society, Extra Series 25-26. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1875-1876.

Secondary Sources

Atkins, J. W. H. English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943.

Baldwin, Charles Sears. "Cicero on Parnassus," Publications of the Modern Language Association, XLII (1927), 106-112.

_____. Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400), Interpreted from Representative Works. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928.

Baldwin, Ralph. The Unity of the Canterbury Tales. "Anglistica," V. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955.

Barbier, Victor. Histoire de l'Abbaye de Floreffe de l'ordre de Premontre. 2d ed. Namur: V. Delvaux, 1892.

Baum, Paull F. Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1958.

Birney, Earle. "English Irony before Chaucer," University of Toronto Quarterly, VI (1937), 538-557.

Bowden, Muriel. A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948.

Boyce, Benjamin. The Theophrastan Character in England to 1642. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947.

Brewer, D. S. Chaucer. "Men and Books." London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953.

Bronson, Bertrand H. In Search of Chaucer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960.

Brown, Carleton and Rossell Hope Robbins. The Index of Middle English Verse. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

Bryan, W. F., Germaine Dempster, et al. (eds.). Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941.

Bryant, Frank E. "Did Boccaccio Suggest the Character of Chaucer's Knight?" Modern Language Notes, XVII (1902), 470-471.

Carnahan, David Hobart. The Prologue in the Old French and Provencal Mystery. New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor Co., 1905.

Chambers, R. (ed.). The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities, etc. 2 vols. London: N. B. Lippincott, n.d.

Clark, James M. The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Glasgow: Jackson, Son & Company, 1950.

Coghill, Nevill. The Poet Chaucer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949.

Cook, Albert S. "Chauceriana I.," Romanic Review, VIII (1917), 210-226.

_____. "Chaucerian Papers," Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, XXIII (1919), 1-63.

Cummings, Hubertis. "Chaucer's Prologue 1-7," Modern Language Notes, XXXVII (1922), 86-90.

Cunningham, J. V. "The Literary Form of the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," Modern Philology, XLIX (1952), 172-181.

Danby, John F. "Eighteen Lines of Chaucer's 'Prologue,'" Critical Quarterly, II (1960), 28-32.

Donaldson, E. Talbot. "Chaucer the Pilgrim," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXIX (1954), 928-936.

Douglas, David C. and George W. Greenaway (eds.). English Historical Documents: 1042-1189. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953.

Duncan, Edgar Hill. "Narrator's Points of View in the Portrait-sketches, Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1954.

Flugel, Ewald. "Gower's Mirour de l'omme und Chaucer's prolog," Anglia, XXIV (1901), 437-508.

_____. "Some Notes on Chaucer's Prologue," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, I (1897), 118-135.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.

Goffin, R. C. "Chaucer and 'Reason,'" Modern Language Review, XXI (1926), 13-18.

Griffith, Dudley David. Bibliography of Chaucer: 1908-1953. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955.

Grimm, Florence M. Astronomical Lore in Chaucer. University of Nebraska Studies in Language, Literature, and Criticism, No. 2. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1919.

Gunn, Alan M. F. The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of "The Romance of the Rose." Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1952.

Hammond, Eleanor Prescott. Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1908.

Hankins, J. E. "Chaucer and the Pervigilium Veneris," Modern Language Notes, XLIX (1934), 80-83.

Harrison, Thomas P. They Tell of Birds. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1956.

Haselmayer, Louis A., Jr. "Chaucer and Medieval Verse Portraiture." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1937.

Hoffman, Arthur W. "Chaucer's Prologue to Pilgrimage: The Two Voices," Journal of English Literary History, XXI (1954), 1-16.

Jachmann, Gunther. Die Geschichte des Terenztextes im Altertum. Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, Universitats-Buchdruckerei, 1924.

Jones, H. S. V. "The Plan of the Canterbury Tales," Modern Philology, XIII (1915-1916), 45-48.

Kimpel, Ben. "The Narrator of the Canterbury Tales," Journal of English Literary History, XX (1953), 77-86.

Lausberg, Heinrich. Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft. 2 vols. Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1960.

Lawrence, William Witherle. Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales. New York: Columbia University Press, 1950.

Lean, Vincent Stuckey (ed.). Lean's Collecteana. 4 vols. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1902-1904.

Lewis, C. S. Studies in Words. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

Lovejoy, Arthur O. The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936.

Lowes, John Livingston. Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of his Genius. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934.

Lumiansky, R. M. "Benôit's Portraits and Chaucer's General Prologue," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LV (1956), 431-438.

_____. Of Sondry Folk: The Dramatic Principle in the Canterbury Tales. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955.

Maddison, Carol. "'Brave Prick Song': An Answer to Sir Thomas Browne," Modern Language Notes, LXXV (1960), 468-478.

Major, John M. "The Personality of Chaucer the Pilgrim," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXXV (1960), 160-162.

Malone, Kemp. "Style and Structure in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," Journal of English Literary History, XIII (1946), 38-45.

Martin, Ernest Whitney. The Birds of the Latin Poets. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1914.

Maxmilianus, P., O. F. M. "Philomena van John Peckham," Neophilologus, XXXVIII (1954), 206-217, 290-300.

Mohl, Ruth. The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature. New York: Columbia University Press, 1933.

Moore, Arthur K. "'Somer' and 'Lenten' as Terms for Spring," Notes and Queries, CXCIV (1949), 82-83.

Olson, Clair C. and Martin M. Crow (eds.). Chaucer's World. Compiled by Edith Rickert. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.

Owst, G. R. Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933.

Parry, Thomas. A History of Welsh Literature. Translated by H. Idris Bell. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955.

Peter, John. Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956.

Preston, Robert. Chaucer. London: Sheed and Ward, 1952.

Root, Robert K. "Chaucer's Dares," Modern Philology, XV (1917), 1-22.

Schaar, Claes. The Golden Mirror: Studies in Chaucer's Descriptive Technique and Its Literary Background. Skrifter Utgivna av Kungl. Humanistka Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, 54. Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1955.

Schaar, Claes. "A Postscript to Chaucer Studies," English Studies, XLII (1961), 153-156.

Slaughter, Eugene. Virtue According to Love--in Chaucer. New York: Bookman Associates, 1957.

Speirs, John. Chaucer the Maker. London: Faber and Faber, 1951.

Swart, J. "The Construction of Chaucer's General Prologue," Neophilologus, XXXVIII (1954), 127-136.

Tupper, Frederick. "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," Publications of The Modern Language Association, XXIX (1914), 93-128.

_____. "Saint Venus and the Canterbury Pilgrims," The Nation, XCVII (1913), 354-356.

_____. Types of Society in Medieval Literature. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1926.

Tuve, Rosamond. Seasons and Months: Studies in a Tradition of Middle English Poetry. Paris: Librairie Universitaire, S. A., 1933.

_____. "Spring in Chaucer and Before Him," Modern Language Notes, LII (1937), 9-16.

Willard, Rudolph. "Chaucer's 'Holt and Heeth,'" American Speech, XXII (1947), 196-198.

Woolf, Rosemary, "Chaucer as a Satirist in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," Critical Quarterly, I (1959), 150-157.