

"IMAGINATIVE TYPOLOGY" IN THE CANTERBURY TALES

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IN

THE CANTERBURY TALES

By

RONALD BRUCE BOND, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Ronald Bruce Bond, B.A. (McMaster University)

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## PREFACE

As the title of this thesis indicates, I believe that the Canterbury Tales is receptive to both aesthetic and historical approaches. This conviction stems from repeated exposure to Chaucer at different times during the last five years, and from a more recently acquired familiarity with other Middle English and Continental authors contemporary with him. Although he is nowhere mentioned in the thesis, I count my reading of Dante as a major force in showing how the medieval imagination operated. When I first encountered Chaucer, however, my knowledge of the medieval period was nil: I was forced then to rely on "aesthetic" avenues into his works. Now, with a small inkling of what "historical" criticism involves, I can still appreciate how valid is the search for image patterns, double meanings, and the ways in which Chaucer creates character and atmosphere. Yet now too, I can see how relevant is the fourteenth century's cultural situation to Chaucer's artistry, for Chaucer, no matter how much he transcends them, is nonetheless heir to the ideas and modes of expression of his time.

I have referred solely to F. N. Robinson's edition of Chaucer's works during the preparation of this thesis, and following him, I have adopted the Manly-Rickert sequence of the tales, without speculation on the implications of the "Bradshaw shift" for the gist of what follows. Similarly, when quoting

Piers the Plowman, Skeat's B-text, as the one with which most readers are familiar, is used. Quotations from the Bible follow the Vulgate's rendering, but the Revised Standard's version of the pertinent extract is provided in the footnotes. These notes come at the end of the text so as not to distract the reader who wishes to pursue the argument without documentation and peripheral observations. In order to facilitate reference when quotations from Chaucer are introduced, the appropriate page number in Robinson's text is given.

Many have been helpful in the writing of the thesis. I should like to thank Dr. Chauncey Wood, whose graduate class on Chaucer conveyed both his thoughtful planning as a teacher and his scholarly intimacy with medieval literature. I would also thank Dr. Wood for permission to read and quote from the manuscript of his forthcoming book. To Dr. Thomas Cain go my thanks for his personal interest in this project, and for the critical techniques he passed on for approaching Spenser; I have found many of these applicable to Chaucer. My supervisor for this work was Dr. Alvin Lee. It was my good fortune to be taught by him in the Introductory English course at McMaster, and then to participate in his undergraduate Chaucer seminar, where he suggested the topic for this thesis. Finally, I thank my wife Shirley, who in so many ways made this task easier.

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# I

## INTRODUCTION

In dealing with a group of stories as disparate as those which make up the set known as the Canterbury Tales, the question of why they have been bound together, or whether there is any unity sustaining them, is bound to assume considerable importance. With the case of the Canterbury Tales themselves, moreover, this question becomes more complex with our knowledge that what is now extant does not conform to Chaucer's announced plan for the work. Then too, the presence of several manuscripts has led scholars to posit various sequences in which the tales should fall, and in discussions of the Canterbury Tales' structural integrity, assertions about links and juxtapositions between tales have always to be tempered by at least a tacit acknowledgement that an assumed order in the tales may not be the right one.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of these problems, however, various patterns of unity have been observed in the Tales. Perhaps one of the most important of these -- albeit one of the most obvious -- is the "Roadside Drama" theory. Given its most eloquent expression by G. L. Kittredge, this view of the Tales asks us to envision constantly the lively, and often exuberant pilgrims -- sometimes fighting, sometimes in accord -- as they wend their way along the road to Beckett's shrine.<sup>2</sup> While Kittredge

certainly espouses the Tales in all their enormous vitality, it is evident to the more perverse that by pushing the mental picture of the actual pilgrimage too far, one confronts such cruces as having to explain how the raconteur could be heard over thirty horses' pounding hooves. Another explanation of the Canterbury Tales as a single entity revolves around a figurative reading of the whole pilgrimage motif. Emphasizing as it does the homo peregrinus tradition, such an interpretation of the tales' framing device issues from the quotation from Jeremiah which ushers in the Parson's Tale, and from scattered lines throughout the tales, such as: "This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo/ And we been pilgrymes passynge to and fro" (I 2847-2848, p. 44). The significance of such a premise for explicating the Parson's Prologue, the Parson's Tale and the Spring Opening is, in general, tenable. As Robert Jordan has remarked,<sup>3</sup> nonetheless, in connection with Baldwin's The Unity of The Canterbury Tales,<sup>4</sup> the "frame" is admirably treated, while the social fabric, the "quitting" element, and the comic tales receive silent neglect.

The attempt to integrate the Canterbury Tales in a scheme which embraces both the comic and the didactic stories has to my mind been given its most useful directives from D. W. Robertson's pioneer study A Preface to Chaucer.<sup>5</sup> Robertson, to oversimplify, makes a plea for historical criticism of medieval literature, and although his book is but an introduction to a close reading of Chaucer, he would place the Canterbury Tales



in a conceptual framework, a normative world-view which lends weight to the overtly didactic tales and conversely provides a standard against which comic incongruity can be measured. Since Robertson's thesis proves most suggestive as a catalyst for my own ideas, and since his argument has occasioned considerable dissent and resentment,<sup>6</sup> we should perhaps afford it a more detailed look than we have the ideas of the other critics mentioned thus far.

As the sub-title of A Preface to Chaucer indicates, Robertson is concerned with re-directing the attention of those who read medieval literature to perspectives which are usually alien to the modern, Romantically pre-conditioned mentality. He proceeds from a thoroughly documented analysis of the predominance which the Bible and its accreted commentaries held in the Middle Ages to a somewhat more disputatious point: that the cultural esteem for the Bible and for exegetical lore provided an unavoidable context for associations which medieval artists, be they literary or graphic, could scarcely help availing themselves of. He is thus led, for example, in his treatment of Chaucer's Miller, to adduce iconographic representations of bagpipes as the artistic equivalent of the male genitalia.<sup>7</sup> His conviction is that given examples nearly contemporaneous with Chaucer of the grotesque "lover" playing a bagpipe, Chaucer may well have been exploiting a recognizable artistic convention. To object, as one reviewer has done,<sup>8</sup> that one

will never be able to look at bagpipes again without having obscene fantasies is surely to be obtuse to an essential fact: that Chaucer, as most significant writers do, works within a literary tradition, no matter how life-like the end result might be. Indeed, it would seem far more pleasing aesthetically to admit that Chaucer inserted this detail in the Miller's portrait in order to buttress the impression of an extremely animalistic man, who ultimately tells a relatively bawdy story, than merely to ascribe its inclusion to Chaucer's realism and his interest in purveying a vivid atmosphere. Robertson's method, then, of placing individual images within an iconographic or conceptual framework does not contort the text, but rather recognizes its intrinsic richness and complexity.<sup>9</sup>

Critics of Robertson often cavil over what seems to them his too facile account of the charity-cupidity syndrome in medieval literature. Again, they appear to forget that Robertson's proposal is based on St. Augustine's very precise definition:

I call "charity" the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for his own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and of one's neighbour for the sake of God; but cupidity is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of one's self, one's neighbour, or any corporal thing for the sake of something other than God. 10

Augustine's distinction, then, can be re-stated as an assertion of the place that God and the God-centred life should have in the place of the individual man. The Prologue to the Canterbury

Tales evinces such an attitude, inasmuch as the Parson, the Plowman, the Clerk and possibly the Knight are the only figures whom we can positively disassociate from Chaucer's pervasive irony. That these four Christianly-committed people are in the minority does not preclude their being normative; those other personages who, to a greater or lesser degree, become the victims of Chaucer's pen may constitute the norm, but they must be compared with the four examples of God-centredness, whether the comparison reflects to their detriment or not.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Chaucer was enough of a realist -- in the modern colloquial sense -- to fashion very few ideal figures among the Canterbury pilgrims; on the other hand, he was sufficiently medieval to believe that reality inhered in God, the Bible and in sacramental nature, and that life in this world was but a preparation for the real after-life.

Robertson's critical technique -- what his detractors in a McCarthy-like frenzy call "Robertsonianism" -- has been called "pan-allegorical".<sup>12</sup> While it is certainly true that Robertson often neglects the literal text for a figurative meaning, he himself tends to use allegory in a very confined way, as when "one thing is said by the words, but something else is understood".<sup>13</sup> In Robertson's terminology, then, -- and his is medieval terminology -- allegory is not a sustained strand of meaning which runs contrapuntally along with all the images in a given text; instead, it is a literary device including all those tropes which an author may employ to give

ulterior significance to a specific word or image cluster. Robertson as an explicator of images in the Canterbury Tales, therefore, is more useful than he is as a contributor to our appreciation of structural unity. Nevertheless his illumination of the fourteenth century's priorities suggests that perhaps some sort of sustained allegory undergirds the Chaucerian narrative. Consequently, the question raised by Robertson's erudite explanation of several involved images in the Canterbury Tales is ". . . to what extent does this 'allegory' produce a continuous level of meaning beyond the literal, and to what extent merely a number of separate allusions".<sup>14</sup>

Robertson's research into the cultural ambience in which Chaucer moved led him irrevocably into the domain of patristic exegesis. One of the major concerns of the various exegetes to whom Robertson alludes was to relate Biblical passages from the Old Testament to those from the New Testament and vice versa. This interpretational method relies on the reader's perception of the similarity between Old and New Testament persons, things or situations. Since Robertson, and most other writers, use the word "allegory" to describe this critical phenomenon, when in actual fact it should be called typology,<sup>15</sup> considerable confusion about what typology is, and about how it can be distinguished from the broader generic term "allegory", is likely to ensue. Insofar as typology and typological reading of the Canterbury Tales will become

extremely conspicuous in this thesis, it would undoubtedly be wise to summarize what typology meant historically, and to illustrate how it tends to function in imaginative literary texts. With an awareness of how typology operates, we will then be able to estimate how Chaucer uses it as a unifying and structuring device in the Canterbury Tales.

When we apprehend poems that have been traditionally called allegories -- Prudentius' Psychomachia, The Romance of the Rose, Capella's Marriage of Mercury and Philology -- we see a basic sort of literary structure where passions, vices, virtues and all sorts of "abstract" qualities have been given concrete form as personifications. Allegory as a mode of expression, then, seems intimately connected with the humanistic vision of man as a morally responsible entity, as a person whose more indefinable qualities must be personified to be perceived by literary means. Most allegories of this type postulate an implicit trust in the possibilities for man's betterment. As Rosemond Tuve has stated,

This conception of man as that creature whose property it is to be salvationis capax, who belongs to the kind that may be delivered from the ravishment of death and united to the heavenly original whence it sprang, is a conception of man which is of central importance to the question of allegorical reading. 16

This faith in man as being salvationis capax is one pre-supposition of allegory; the other is that the narrative will be conditioned by the significance of the abstractions. Accordingly, the abstract's impingement on the concrete militates against

there being any sort of psychological realism in the personification concerned, for the events chosen to reveal a given quality will be typical and generic, rather than individualistic and specific.

Symbolism proceeds from a different set of assumptions.

To quote C. S. Lewis: <sup>17</sup>

The allegorist leaves the given -- his own passions -- to talk of that which is confessedly less real, [in the modern sense] which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find out that which is more real. To put the difference in another way, for the symbolist it is we who are the allegory.

Symbolism, moreover, appeals to a view of man which is slightly less optimistic than the perspective held by the allegorists: since for the symbolist, man and his world are sacramental -- imitations of some transcendent reality -- there is a sense in which, for the symbolist, man is flawed, imperfect, salvationis egens.

Typology, which is here our major concern, mediates between symbolism and allegory. As it was originally applied to scriptural interpretation, it dealt with Old Testament persons, events or things as prefigurations or types of passages in the New Testament.<sup>18</sup> Thus Adam, who fell through a woman's evil, in conjunction with the serpent-proffered food, anticipates Christ who brings salvation because of a womanly miracle, in conjunction with his own Eucharistic sacrifice, thereby overthrowing the serpent, Death. The single most important fact about typology is that for the explicator both Christ

and Adam were historically real persons. Thus, as in symbolism, concrete reality has meaning; yet it points to truth of a higher order. On the other hand, typology is similar to allegory in that both Christ and Adam, in our example, would be conceived of by "moderns" as an almost schizoid personality acting roles determined for them by God's historical plan: that is to say, the First Adam and the Second Adam together constitute Man. To summarize, typology is symbolic inasmuch as it insists upon the importance of the actual and the historical. The importance it accords to the concrete asserts the validity of the individual and the individual's acts. Typology is allegorical because in the relationship between two persons or events widely separated in time, it acknowledges an expression of a more objective, transcendental reality.

Another way in which typology can be said to bridge the gap between allegory and symbolism involves the distinction previously made between man salvationis capax, and man salvationis egens. Since typology depends upon expectation and fulfillment, it is a viable method for realizing the double nature of man. When we consider Adam as precursor of Christ, Adam is man requiring salvation, Christ is the man, par excellence, who is capable of saving. This is not to imply that Adam is a symbol and Christ an allegory; rather it is an attempt to show that characteristic elements of both symbolism and allegory become inextricably fused in typology.

The search for types and antitypes in the Bible consumed

the scholarly energies of a large number of patristic commentators. As a scheme for synthesizing the Bible, and ultimately all human history and experience, typology was of undeniable aid. Another strategy for synthesizing, however --- and one which was often utilized concomitantly with typological ingenuity --- was governed by the "four-fold" levels of scriptural interpretation. Using literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical readings of a sacred text, commentators could demonstrate its pertinence to the life of Christ, the individual Christian and the eschatological after-life. According to Jean Danielou, the propensity for heavy allegorical exegesis was initiated by the Greek commentators, Philo and Origen, and passed from them to the Latin West, especially through the writings of Ambrose and Gregory the Great.<sup>19</sup> When this tradition becomes relevant in Old and Middle English texts is a vexed question, but poems like The Phoenix, Andreas, Daniel and Exodus make telling use of typology, if not strictly "four-fold" thinking.

The applicability of the "four-fold" system of Biblical interpretation for sacred works has not provoked much concern among literary critics dealing with medieval texts. What has elicited their censure, however, is the adoption of this critical tool by modern interpreters of secular literary writings. Their alarm is based on the assertion that medieval authors did not consciously cast secular works so that they might be read spiritually. It is thus unfortunate that typology and "four-fold" exegesis have been so consistently linked, for it is clearly demonstrable



that for medieval artists such as Chaucer, Langland, the lyricists and the writers of the miracle plays, typology with various ramifications was a frequently used literary technique. Thus, our attention as critics should perhaps focus more on sophisticated typological strands than on a purely "four-fold" method of extrapolation.

The change from typology as a kind of interpretation to typology as an imaginative literary form seems to have been primarily effected by the early Christian formulations of the liturgy. With each major feast day, went a nexus of patristic interpretation which could charge the ritual with a mystic exemplum of how God revealed Himself in history.<sup>20</sup> The liturgical significance of Easter Eve, for instance, involves an elaborate use of typological correspondences.<sup>21</sup> In the morning, all the lamps are extinguished so that when the Paschal candle enters the Church, the observer may meditate on the New Law's dispelling of the Old Law's darkness. Since the death and resurrection of Christ are symbolically parallel to the rituals enacted in baptism, the catechumens are read twelve Biblical extracts typologically apt for the occasion. Some of these are: "the story of the Deluge whose water purified the world, the passage of the Red Sea by the Children of Israel . . . , and the verse in Isaiah which speaks of those who thirst for the water of life".<sup>22</sup> The liturgy, then, manifests an aesthetic sensibility in its ordering of typological motifs, and for the church-going

author, this fact, and the usage of books like the Sarum Missal, would provide a solid imaginative foundation should he choose to transpose any part of his religious experience into a literary context.

Such transpositions did occur. In the Old English period, many poems -- most obviously Christ I -- make use of typologically oriented narratives.<sup>23</sup> In Piers the Plowman, the phrase ex vi transitionis which occurs in the Riddle of Patience has figural significance pointing back through the Sarum Missal to the Red Sea Crossing.<sup>24</sup> In the same poem, the allegorized treatment of the Good Samaritan parable, and the allusion to Christ as "triacle" (B-text, Passus 1, 146-162)<sup>25</sup> both attest to Langland's adaptation of standard typological motifs. The imagery of many Middle English lyrics, moreover, is organized around various figurae; the poems addressed to, or describing Mary, for instance, are particularly rife with prefigurative images and types.<sup>26</sup> One of the best examples is a lyric attributed to William of Shoreham which calls Mary variously the dove of Noah, the Burning Bush, David's sling and Solomon's temple, and equates her with Judith, Esther, Rachel and the woman crowned with twelve stars in Revelations.<sup>27</sup> It is evident, therefore, that for a medieval author, typological correspondences could provide a source of imagery and a succinct way of talking about time, history and eternity. It remains to be shown that Chaucer was familiar with the typological habit of mind.

Even omitting the Canterbury Tales, there is evidence

in the short poems that Chaucer knew and could use what we have called typology. Although it is a free translation of a prayer in Déguilleville's Pélerinage de la Vie Humaine, Chaucer's "An ABC" will suffice as an example of his awareness of at least Marian typology. In the fourth stanza, for instance, there is an oblique reference to the fact that Mary's grace has transformed Eve's treachery:

For, certes, Crystes blisful mooder deere,  
 Were now the bowe bent in swich manere  
 As it was first of justice and of ire  
 The rightful God nolde of no mercy heere;  
 But thurgh thee han we grace, as we desire (ll. 28-32, p. 525).

The stanza devoted to Mary as the unconsumed bush also merits quotation, since it refers explicitly to the "figure" (type), and since its last two lines show how a traditional typological motif such as Mary as the bush can lead to an imaginative reconstruction of a new and individualistic figural relationship:

Moises that saugh the bush with flawmes rede  
 Brenninge, of which ther never a stikke brende,  
 Was signe of thin unwemmed maidenhede.  
 Thou art the bush on which ther gan descende  
 The Holi Gost, the which the Moyses wende  
 Had ben a-fyr; and this was in figure.  
 Now, ladi, from the fyr thou us defende  
 Which that in helle eternalli shal dure (ll. 89-96, p. 525).

The penultimate stanza moves from mention of Isaac as type of Christ, to an allusion to Christ as the Paschal Lamb who transcends the function of the Hebraic Passover lamb. Ending the poem is a magnificent stanza collating the iconographic depiction of Mary as the well of mercy with the traditional concept of fallen mankind as the seed of Adam: the relevance of her fertilizing

water to spiritually dry man is obvious.

Keeping in mind how common is the association of Mary with the well in medieval literature, it seems likely that the occurrence of "welle" in the following lines from the "Complaint of Mars" has ironic connotations: "My lady is the verrey sours and welle/ Of beaute, lust, freedom and gentil-lesse" (ll. 174-175, p. 531). If this is the case, then we have here the second of two ways in which Chaucer in his shorter poems employs typology. The first, as seen in "An ABC", is the non-ironic, didactic manipulation of figural motifs to evoke religious awe. The second is the method revealed microcosmically in the lines from the "Complaint of Mars": the deliberate exploitation of typological imagery and associations in incongruous contexts. In the latter instance, the extrinsic connotations are indispensable factors for the determination of the passage's tone.

During the following examination of typological motifs in the Canterbury Tales, there will be occasion to discuss both the straightforward and the ironic purposes of figural associations. For this part of our discussion, liturgical, patristic and other literary materials will necessarily be brought forward. In very few cases will there be sufficient evidence to suggest that Chaucer knew these materials directly. What is intended, nonetheless, is that the modern reader should recognize some of the connotations which accrued to various

people, places, events and sayings during the Middle Ages. Furthermore, this thesis will explore the notion that the medieval predilection for typological thinking influenced Chaucer's own thinking about the structure and the unification of the Canterbury Tales.

## II

### THE TAVERN, FALLEN HUMANITY AND JUDGEMENT

In the preceding chapter, we surveyed the uses of typology with regard to Biblical interpretation, and the subsequent adaptation of the typological method as a literary tool by several medieval writers, including Chaucer. When the Canterbury Tales are confronted, further evidence of Chaucer's familiarity with the commonly accepted types and antitypes comes to the fore. Since the instances illustrative of this familiarity are quite numerous, several of the more prominent typological references will have to suffice as examples. The parody of the Canticum Canticorum in both the Miller's and the Merchant's tales is a humorous, but culpable, perversion of the idea that all marriage unions prefigure the true union between Christ and the Church.<sup>1</sup> These passages read as follows:

What do ye, hony-comb, sweete Alisoun,  
My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome?  
Awaketh, lemman myn, and speketh to me!  
Wel litel thynken ye upon my wo,  
That for youre love I swete there I go.  
No wonder is thogh that I swelte and swete  
I moorne as dooth a lamb after the tete.  
Ywis, lemman, I have swich love-longynge  
That lik a turtel trewe is my moornynge.  
I may nat ete na moore than a mayde (I 3698-3707, p. 53),

and

Rys up, my wyf, my love, my lady free!  
The turtles voys is herd, my dowve sweete;

The wynter is goon with alle his reynes weete.  
 Com forth now, with thyne eyen columbyn!  
 How fairer been thy brestes than is wyn!  
 The gardyn is enclosed al aboute;  
 Com forth, my white spouse! . . . (IV 2138-2144, p. 124).

Then too, the Pardoner's disquisition on gluttony at the outset of his tale involves the implied contrast between Adam, and Christ, the Second Adam.<sup>2</sup> The prologues to both the Prioress' and the Second Nun's Tales contain encomiums of the Virgin which employ standard typological motifs. The Wife of Bath makes mention of her attendance at the "pleyes of myracles" (III 558, p. 81) which depended heavily on typology.<sup>3</sup> All these cases attest to Chaucer's obvious awareness of the usual medieval approach to the Scriptures, and they further demonstrate the premise that typology can be employed artistically for either serious or humorous purposes.

The intention of this and subsequent chapters is to indicate how this rather strict incorporation of Biblical typology into the Canterbury Tales is supplemented by Chaucer's use of "imaginative typology": "linked" characters, settings and situations employed in a structural scheme which closely resembles typology, and which derives ultimately from it. "Imaginative typology" does not rely solely on the traditional types and antitypes; while it may use some of them, it is free to adumbrate them with others of the poet's own conception so that not only a theological, but an aesthetic, impact results. A hallmark of figural interpretation of the Bible is that a corresponding type and antitype are linked only secondarily by

the images involved. While these images are often deployed as clues for recognizing a typological relationship, the final significance relies on a theological similarity. So too in this critique of the Canterbury Tales: the images involved in the correspondences which we shall examine are subservient to the conceptual affinities they bear.

The spring opening of the Tales has called forth various kinds of critical commentary. These range from attempts to place the description in a medieval literary tradition of spring-time beginnings, to source hunting, to commentary on the structure of the passage, to accounts of its symbolic overtones.<sup>4</sup> While all of these approaches have their place, it is the last two which interest us here. The first eighteen lines of the Tales constitute a generalized statement about revitalized nature and the ensuing proliferation of pilgrimages. The focus is not narrowed to the specifically Chaucerian pilgrimage until line 19. This generalized opening invites us both to compare and contrast its tenor with that of the pilgrimage recorded by the Canterbury Tales, and it further suggests that in its very universality there may inhere some symbolic significance. If symbolism is indeed present in the passage, most readers would probably see in it an elaboration of the idea that man is a spiritual pilgrim in life. This concept would receive confirmation, not only from the "when . . . when . . . then" construction of the excerpt in question, but also from Egeus' remark in the



Knight's Tale (quoted on p. 2), and from the Parson's pertinent allusions to the peregrinatio tradition both in his prologue and in the text which he chooses as a basis for his sermon:

And Jhesu for his grace, wit me sende  
To shewe yow the wey in this viage  
Of thilke paffit glorious pilgrymage (X 48-50, p. 228),

and

State super vias, et videte, et interrogate  
de viis antiquis qui sit via bona, et ambulate  
in ea; et invenietis refrigerium animabus  
vestris (X 75, p. 229).

The April date itself is of considerable import. As R. T. Davies has observed in connection with his study of early English lyrics,

April was the first month of the medieval year  
and the first month of Mary's pregnancy, and  
the month in which spring renews the earth  
may be interpreted as that in which begins  
the new age of man's redemption. 5

Consonant with Davies' proposal that April is charged with potentialities for man's spiritual growth is the more detailed research of Chauncey Wood into Chaucer's astronomical periphrasis in the passage. As he sees it, Chaucer's specific collocation of the sun halfway through the zodiacal sign of the Ram is meant to recall a Biblical parallel:

. . . the Bible recounts a mid-April pilgrimage  
-- the pilgrimage of Noah in his journey on the  
ark, which began on April 17 as recounted in  
Genesis 7: 11 . . . . 6

He goes on, moreover, to pursue the attendant associations of the Flood with Baptism and concludes that

The flood is a two-sided symbol that is ideal

for Chaucer's purposes, for the flood was sent to punish sin, and yet the event itself figures forth the way of salvation, through the ark of Noah and through baptism and the other sacraments for the individual Christian.<sup>7</sup>

Wood's argument, then, turns on his contention that the rather elaborate use of astrological imagery in the spring opening is meant by Chaucer to be an astronomical periphrasis: for the reader perceptive enough to recognize the trope, and then to follow up its ulterior significance, the passage would point unavoidably to the Biblical flood which occurred on the same date, and to the idea of Baptism with which the Flood was traditionally linked. What is important, moreover, in Chaucer's dating of the pilgrimage is the ambivalence created by the contrasting notions of judgement and mercy associated with the Flood. This ambivalence runs throughout the tales, and in the remainder of this chapter, we shall look at the judgement motif from a typological perspective.

The meeting of the pilgrims at the Tabard Inn managed by Harry Bailly is fraught with more meaning than at first would appear. On the simplest level, the inn is a convenient place for a number of "sondry folk" to come together, and the inn's proprietor is a logical person to be chosen as the leader of the pilgrimage, since he would have had dealings with all manner of men in his vocation. The inn functions on the realistic plane, then, as an appropriate place for assembly. The spiritual connotations of the spring opening, on the other hand, with

the related concepts of judgement and mercy, punishment and reward would possibly suggest that Chaucer intended other meanings to accrue to his assembling of the wayfarers at the Tabard.

Inns have two distinct kinds of associations in the medieval period. They are often used symbolically as the goal of man's earthly pilgrimage. We find the inn used in this sense, for instance, in the Ancrene Riwe: "þe gode pilegrim halt eaver his rihte wei fordward . . . and hiheð toward his giste".<sup>8</sup> This inn sometimes occurs in conjunction with Julian the patron saint of hospitality: "Ha ifindeð iwis sein Iulienes in. þe wei fearinde men zeornliche biseched".<sup>9</sup> To the homo peregrinus, then, the inn represents peace and comfort at the end of his journey. In Piers the Plowman, we find a related, though slightly different inclusion of the inn, for in that poem the inn is not the final eschatological resting place, but rather the Church Militant to whose care wounded, transgressing man is committed by the Good Samaritan, who is allegorically Christ.<sup>10</sup> It must be noted, however, that in both these cases, man as spiritual pilgrim finds solace in the inn.

In contrast, the second major significance of inns in medieval literature involves pejorative connotations. According to this usage, the inn is the tavern, the prime repository of vice. The Oxford English Dictionary lists several of the early comments on taverns: Richard of Gloucester writes in 1297 "Hor yldelnesse hom ssal bringe to sunne of lecherye/ To taverne and to sleupe and to hasardie" and Richard Brunne in his tract

Handlyng Synne (1303) says succinctly that "Taverne ys þe devyls knyfe/ Hyt sleþ þe oper soule or lyfe". G. R. Owst, moreover, has demonstrated the vigour with which medieval preachers inveighed against taverns and the so-called tavern vices.<sup>11</sup> The tavern, of course, is primarily linked with gula, a sin which includes drunkenness and gluttony, and sub-species such as swearing and gambling. In the pseudo-Vincentian Speculum Morale, which dates from the first half of the fourteenth century, three chapters are given over to the tavern sins.<sup>12</sup> In Piers the Plowman, Gluttony's intention of going to confession is overcome when he enters a tavern and becomes exceedingly inebriated.<sup>13</sup> The depiction of gluttony as a tavern gathering on a mural at the church of Inglestone, Essex (produced circa 1400) would suggest, moreover, that the tavern could serve without comment as an iconographic symbol of gula.<sup>14</sup>

The inn as tavern is even more insidious when we encounter it as the habitation of the Devil himself. In Dom Michel's Ayenbite of Inwit, we find the following:

þe taverne ys þe scole of þe dyevle huere his  
deciples studieþ and his oꝝene chapele þer huer  
ine deþ his seruese and þer huer he makeþ his  
miracles zuiche as behoveþ to þe dyevle . . . .  
Ac þe dyevel deþ al ayenward ine þe taverne.  
Vor huanne þe glotoun geþ in þe taverne ha geþ  
opriȝt; huanne he comp a-yen he ne hep uot þet  
him moze sostyeni ne bere. 15

The anonymous fifteenth century Jacob's Well presents the same idea:

At þe taverne often þe glotonye begynneth; for  
þe taverne is welle of glotonye, for it may be

clepyd þe develyſ scholehouſ and þe develyſ<sub>16</sub>  
chapel.

Without belabouring the apposition of the tavern, vice and the Devil, it is evident that for literary artists at least the tavern meant considerably more than a place where one could go for a casual drink.

We must now consider whether either of these two streams of interpretation regarding inns is relevant to Chaucer's inn at Southwerk. Chaucer can hardly be alluding to the inn which stands as the goal of man's spiritual pilgrimage, since the Tabard is the place from which his progression begins. The announced intention notwithstanding, it is not where it ends. Neither can the Tabard be identified with the Church awaiting Christ's return, since the worldly Harry Bailly, not the Parson is invested with its leadership. If we scrutinize mention of the Tabard and its host with the negative implications of the tavern in mind, however, the results are much more gratifying.

Harry Bailly, first of all, is repeatedly associated in the General Prologue with strong drink (I 750, 819-821, 832, pp. 24 and 25). This might appear quite innocuous, since he is an innkeeper, but when after the Knight's Tale, the Miller obtrudes on Harry's role as keeper of the peace, his previous role as provider of drink is called into qu<sup>s</sup><sub>A</sub>tion. The Miller, it will be noticed, specifically blames the Tabard Inn for his intoxication: "And therfore that I myſspeke or ſeye/ Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I yow preye" (I 3139-3140, p. 47). The Miller's inability to sit properly on his horse (I 3120-3121, p. 47) --

the rider-horse image being a common symbol for the reason's control of the flesh -- links him with the Parson's description of drunkenness as "the horrible sepulture of mannes resoun" (X 821, p. 255), and Harry's liberal supplying of wine and ale at the Tabard makes him virtually the devil's advocate. It is significant moreover, that following Harry's inability to assuage the Miller, there follows an apologetic authorial intrusion (I 3171-3186, p. 48). Harry's leadership of the pilgrimage and his function as orderer of the tales has been undermined, ironically enough, by the wares which he sells, and Chaucer, like a deus ex machina, steps in to assert his role as the real ordering force behind the tales.

We have in this episode a microcosmic exemplum of a situation which recurs throughout the Tales. Once having lost control to the Miller, Harry tacitly submits to the Reeve's vengeful attack on millers. The Reeve, significantly, describes life itself by means of a tavern metaphor:

For sikerly, whan I was bore, anon  
 Deeth drough the tappe of lyf and leet it gon;  
 And ever si the hath so the tappe yronne  
 Til that almoost al empty is the tonne (I 3891-3894, p. 55).

Harry's reassertion of control before the Cook's Tale, then, is splendidly humorous because of its confident pomposity:

'I wol yow telle as wel as ever I kan  
 A litel jape that fil in oure citee'.  
 Oure Hoost answerede and seide  
 'Igrante it thee' (I 4342-4344, p. 60).

Harry's continual efforts to maintain peace find opposition shortly, however, in the altercation between the Friar and the

Summoner which immediately precedes the Wife's tale. At this juncture, Harry himself blames over-indulgence as the destroyer of "game":

Oure Hooste cride 'Pees! and that anon!  
 And seyde, 'Lat the womman telle hire tale.  
 Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale' (III 850-852, p. 84).

Again, the irony in this situation is obvious. What makes it even more pointed is that Harry himself places great value on ale in his oaths (IV 1212 b-d). That Harry's attitude toward ale is confused is most clearly demonstrated by his eulogy of it in Fragment IX:

Thanne ganoure Hoost to laughen wonder loude  
 And seyde: 'Ise wel it is necessarie  
 Where that we goon, good drynke with us carie  
 For that wol turne rancour and disease  
 T'accord and love, and many a wrong apese.  
 O thou Bacus, yblessed be thy name  
 Thou so kanst turnen earnest into game!  
 Worshipe and thank be to thy deitee! (IX 94-101, p. 225).

The implications of this passage need to be explored, for Harry in this unguarded moment says much more than he knows. In the first place, it is obvious that his early recriminations against drink stemmed solely from his own sense of vulnerability. Then too, his deification of Bacchus puts him on the same shaky ground as those who like January, or Palamon and Arcite, are subservient to false gods. And perhaps most significantly, his assumption that "earnest" is to be avoided at all costs is at odds with Chaucer's implied assumption that readers of the Canterbury Tales will perhaps neglect the "game" for the "earnest":

"And eek men shal nat maken earnest of game" (I 3186, p. 48).

Chaucer thinks people are a little too prone to take everything seriously; Harry is an exception in that he will take nothing seriously.<sup>17</sup>

With characteristic subtlety, then, Chaucer has implicated the Tabard Inn and its proprietor Harry Bailly with the sin of drunkenness, which is the sepulchre of reason. His purposes in doing so need to be explained. In some of the short poems, like "The Former Age", "Truth" and "Lak of Stedfastnesse", Chaucer advances a rather bleak view of contemporary Englishmen; this attitude would at first seem to be at variance with his exuberant portrayal of human life in much of the Canterbury Tales. Nonetheless, in the poem "Truth" we have what seems to be Chaucer's most consistent attitude: "Her is non hoom, her nis but wildernesse:/ Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth beste, out of thy stal" (ll. 17-18, p. 536). This exhortation would appear to indicate that man is fallen --bestial -- but that constant striving toward the true home can result in delivrance. Pilgrimage begins at the lowest point,<sup>18</sup> at the sepulchre of reason; at the precise moment of the Fall when man becomes bestial. That Chaucer may have been intending by his use of the Tabard as the convention place to represent degenerate mankind -- albeit with magnificent capacities for redemption -- is substantiated by several other considerations.

Although the Parson follows Gregory the Great in listing Pride as the chief sin, the Canterbury Tales as a whole does not always bear out this emphasis.<sup>19</sup> In the Pardoner's Tale, for



example, gluttony is designated as the reason for the Fall:

O glotonye, ful of cursednesse!  
 O cause first of our confusioun!  
 O original of oure dampnacioun! (VI 498-500, p. 150).

This inconsistency<sup>20</sup> points up the fact that if Chaucer was not actually familiar with the Cassianic order of the sins, he at least knew the tradition making the original sin gluttony.<sup>21</sup> The egress of the pilgrimage from the tavern, locus classicus for the sin of gula, may contain an oblique intimation of this doctrine.

Perhaps even more instructive as to Chaucer's purposes is the specific appellation of the inn as the "Tabard". While it is true, as Muriel Bowden has shown<sup>22</sup>, that such a tavern actually existed in Southwark, why did Chaucer choose that particular tavern? An answer may very well lie in the fact that the tabard "a garment of coarse material . . . formerly worn out-of-doors by the lower classes, also by monks and foot-soldiers" (OED) is worn by the Plowman (I 541, p. 22), a "trewe swynkere" (I 531, p. 22). Just as Adam was condemned to till the soil for his sin (Genesis 3), so the "garments of skin" with which he was vested after the Fall sometimes symbolized corrupted humanity.<sup>23</sup> The image of Fallen Mankind, therefore, is possibly inherent not only in the initiation of the pilgrimage from the tavern, but also from the connotations of the hairshirt which "tabard" may carry.

The hieratic values of both drunkenness and tabard at the outset ramify throughout the Tales as a whole. If we see

the beginning of the work as presenting two alternatives, one connected with the salutary associations of the baptismal concept and the journey towards Beckett's shrine, and the other connected with the tavern, the hairshirt, the punitive aspect of the Flood, and the capacity in mankind to invert God's established order, turning everything "up-so-doun" by making a sepulchre of his reason, then we have the two poles toward which man can be attracted, and the two areas around which the tales told by the pilgrims can be grouped. Inherent in Chaucer's opening, therefore, is a shadow or prefiguration of the reality which the pilgrimage and the tales make manifest. It is pertinent now to consider how the images of sinful man which are intrinsic to Chaucer's initial vision of humanity serve him as types for sinful men throughout the Canterbury Tales.

In the Knight's Tale, the inordinate love of Palamon and Arcite for Emily is at one point expressed in terms of the drunkenness metaphor:

We witen nat what thing we preyen heere:  
 We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.  
 A dronke man woot wel he hath a hous  
 But he noot which the righte wey is thider,  
 And to a dronke man the wey is slider.  
 And certes in this world so faren we;  
 We seken faste after felicitee,  
 But we goon wrong ful often, trewely. (I 1260-1267, p. 29)

This excerpt should be glossed in the light of two other Chaucerian passages. In "Truth" Chaucer writes: "Her is non hoom, her nis but wildernesse". The home that Palamon and Arcite should be

seeking then is the summum bonum of life with God; that they express their attraction to Emily with words like "Paradise" (I 1237, p. 29), and their separation from her as "purgatory" and "hell" (I 1226, p. 29) makes stringently ironic their amor concupiscendi. The passage in question should also be compared with the following from Chaucer's Boece:

But I retorne ayen to the studies of men of  
 whiche men the corage alwey reherceth and  
 seketh the sovereyne good, al be it so that  
 it be with a dyrked memorie; but he not by  
 which path ryght as a dronke man not nat by  
 which path he may retourne hom to his house (III, Prosa II,  
 82-87).<sup>24</sup>

The heavy borrowing from Boethius in the Knight's Tale makes almost certain the fact that Palamon and Arcite are being compared to this man whose metaphorical drunkenness impedes his quest for the "sovereyne good". The Knight's imposition of order at the conclusion of the tale, however, suggests that for Chaucer the obstacles to attainment of the highest good, caused by man's subversion of the ordained hierarchies, may be overcome.

When the Knight is finished his tale, Harry Bailly adheres to the socially recognized pyramid by inviting the Monk to tell a tale. Again, it is up to the Miller, who is more than metaphorically drunk, to thwart Harry's plan. The ironies implicit in this set-up redound, as we have seen, to Harry's discredit. But further irony lurks in the fact that the Miller's Tale revolves around a parody of the Biblical flood, a parody which casts Nicholas in the guise of mock redeemer:

"Yet shal I saven hire and thee and me" (I 3533, p. 51), and "Thy wyf shal I wel saven, out of doute" (I 3561, p. 52). The Miller, therefore, unwittingly calls to mind both the Flood and the inn symbols with which the Tales opened. That he is also compared to Pilate (I 3124, p. 470) makes him another type of the fallen, degenerate man for whom the Flood came not to save but to destroy.

Drunkenness is one index to other misdirected characters in the Tales. The Wife of Bath, who so subtly manipulates Scriptures for her own ends, admits a proclivity towards Bacchus: "He sholde nat han daunted me fro drynke! / And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke" (III 463-464, p. 80). Both the Merchant and Melibeus allude to drunkenness in a broader, more general sense. Like Palamon and Arcite, January in making a false god of a woman is "dronken in plesaunce" (IV 1788, p. 120). When the denouement of the Merchant's Tale occurs in the pear tree, we may have a recapitulation for humorous and ironic purposes of the Garden of Eden scene: the pear tree is sometimes glossed as the tree of Vetus Adam<sup>25</sup>, Damyan has been compared to the "famulier foo" (IV 1784, p. 120) and to a snake (1786), and the joint action of May and him does indeed cause January's eyes to be opened, recalling Satan's promise to Adam and Eve. Consonant with his complete spiritual obtuseness, however, January still cannot distinguish between good and evil. If January's role is ironically similar to Adam's, then his intoxication with pleasure is reminiscent of the Cassianic account of the Fall. Substantia-

tion for the fact that drunkenness was a term embracing enough to signify fascination with the world at the expense of spiritual awareness lies in the tale which Chaucer the pilgrim tells.

The explanation of Melibee's name is primarily a description of fallen man:

Thy name is Melibee, this is to seyn "a man that drynketh hony". / Thou hast ydronke so muchel hony of sweete temporeel riches, and delices and honours of this world, / that thou art dronken, and hast forgeten Jhesu Crist thy creatour. / Thou ne hast nat doon to hym swich honour and reverence as thee oughte, / ne thou ne hast nat wel ytaken kep to the wordes of Ovide, that seith "Under the hony of the goodes of the body is hyd the venym that sleeth th soule" (Emphasis mine) (VII 1409-1414, p. 178).

These references to drunkenness confirm the fact that for Chaucer a drunk man is the type of carnality. The relevant antitype in this regard is the Pardoner, a man who represents the nadir of drunken perversity. He stands as the reality of which all the other figures in the Canterbury Tales who are linked with, or described in terms of, drunkenness are but shadows.

It is intriguing to note the way in which Chaucer has the Pardoner, a drunkard and a sexually devious character, tell a highly complex tale which is meant to illustrate a respected theological tenet. In his use of many Biblical and doctrinal commonplaces, the Pardoner stands on the same ground as the Miller and the Wife of Bath. There cannot be too much emphasis placed on the fact that the humour and irony occasioned by

Chaucer's placing of sacred texts in the mouths of scurrilous characters does not discount his giving them rope with which to hang themselves. This premise is especially evident in the Pardoner's case.

The Pardoner's insistence on drinking before he tells his tale is a clue to his typological function in the Tales as a whole. If sin is the overthrowing of reason by sensuality (X 259, p. 234), then drunkenness is the condition in which the reason is most debased. Thus, when the Pardoner claims "I shal yow telle a thyng/ That shal by reson been at youre likyng" (VI 457-458, p.149), he is making a conscious travesty of Church teaching. The Pardoner's Tale, in short, reflects a world turned "up-so-down": at nearly all points it proceeds by way of inversions.

The setting is in the "develes temple" (VI 470, p. 150). Rather than glorify Christ in His temple, the riotous youths re-crucify Him with their oaths, and re-enact the Fall with their gluttonous overindulgence. The bread and wine they drink make them more bestial, in contrast to the eucharistic elements which elevate man above his fleshly mortality. Unlike most, they seek Death. The treasure, which unknown to them is Death, does not crown the tree; instead it lies at the tree's base.

The tale is not so much about avarice, then, as one might think radix malorum est cupiditas suggests, but rather it is about cupiditas in its Augustinian sense as the misdirected and self-oriented love of the world.<sup>26</sup> The child's admonition

makes this clear, for he urges the three men to prepare themselves spiritually to meet death; in effect, he echoes Egeus' words that man must make a virtue of the necessity of death.<sup>27</sup> It is significant, moreover, that the death he is called on to account for came upon a man who was drunk. When the rioters spurn his almost Boethian advice, and take instead the old man's directions to turn up the "croked wey" (VI 761, p. 153),<sup>28</sup> they indeed find death in the form of gold, which for the Parson emblemizes the fading object of temporal desire.<sup>29</sup> And each of the rioters, in seeking to save his earthly life with the sustenance of gold, eventually loses his spiritual as well as his corporal life. While this account of the tale is perforce sketchy, it does have a tremendous relevance to the Pardoner himself. The Pardoner, as a drunkard and an avaricious man, is in spite of self-deprecating avowals, unrepentant to the last. Had he been placed in the tale, he too would have rejected the child's remarks about preparedness for death. His final words, "Unbokele anon thy purs" (VI 945, p. 154) suggests that even his assertion that Christ's pardon is best (917) is the trick of a demagogue, and the rhetorical wile of a man who is not just physically drunk, but who, like Melibee, is "dronken in temporeel richesses".

When dealing with <sup>the</sup> opening spring section, we noticed that Chaucer uses the Flood-Baptism associations of the April date as a double-edged symbol, simultaneously pointing to both

judgement and mercy. Since we have been analyzing various "fallen" characters, it would be fruitful to consider their connection with the judgemental aspect of this symbol. From the retributive notions accruing to the advent of the Flood come a host of characters who seem to personify judgement without mercy, and who function on several levels as representatives of the legalistic and vengeful Old Law.

Harry Bailly repeatedly refers to himself as the judge in the General Prologue. Although he sets himself up only as a literary adjudicator, his perfunctory comment about the boredom that will result if only the spiritual purpose of the pilgrimage is adhered to is suggestive as to his real nature:

Ye goon to Caunterbury -- God yow speede,  
 The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!  
 And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye  
 Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;  
 For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon  
 To ride by the weye dounb as a stoon  
 And therefore wol I maken yow disport  
 As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort (I 769-776, p. 24).

Harry implies here that God's reward is not enough, that he can institute a plan that will not only dispel the mirthlessness of the spiritually motivated pilgrimage, but will also offer reward in the more tangible form of a supper. When we recall Harry's association with the tavern and with gluttony, we are vindicated in viewing his proposal, no matter how convincing as a justification for the existence of the tales, with considerable suspicion. To establish positively that Harry's aspirations as judge are being carefully undermined by Chaucer, we must



ascertain whether Harry's literary pretensions meet with Chaucer's approval.

We have already noted that very early in the sequence of tales, Harry loses control of the order in which the pilgrims will speak, and that throughout the Tales there is a constant alternation between threats to his leadership and his reassertion of it. Harry's control of the Canterbury Tales' structure, then, is slight. So too is his literary acumen. In the first place, he is consistently antagonistic to serious, didactic tales, and this predilection reinforces what we have said about his being at odds with the religious intentions of the pilgrimage. The Host's antipathy to the penitential bias of the journey is shown, for instance, in his words to the Clerk:

But precheth nat, as freres doon in Lente  
To make us for oure olde synnes wepe,  
Ne that thy tale make us nat to slepe (IV 12-14, p. 101).

Furthermore, his militant misogyny causes him to focus not on January's spiritual myopia, which is the real topic of the Merchant's Tale, but on May's duplicity. Similarly, when Chaucer in the Melibeus develops a transparent allegory about justice in the soul, Harry thinks the story is about marriage and wishes that his own wife Goodlief could have heard it. Chaucer makes further use of Harry's obtuseness as a foil for his own literary skill, when the Host fails to recognize the satiric wit in Sir Thopas; in addition, he makes Harry violate his own literary preferences by having him ask for a less exuberant story. As Alan Gaylord has perceptively shown in his study of

"sentence" and "solaas" in Fragment VII, Harry and Chaucer rarely see eye-to-eye on literary matters and their divergence makes for much fun.<sup>30</sup> Harry, according to Gaylord, is too simplistic and literal-minded to suit Chaucer, for he

expects to hear about real toads in real gardens; he is most pleased if it turns out the toads and the gardens belong to someone he knows, and if what is said about them confirms what he had always thought about gardening. 31

Inasmuch as Harry's illusions about himself are silly, he is the source of much humour. But when we remember that he sets himself up as judge of the tales because he has no sympathy for the religious motive of the pilgrimage, when we recall his dislike for morally serious tales, when we see him provoking the Parson's censure (II 1170-1171, p. 75)<sup>32</sup>, we are justified in deeming his role as judge as an ironic counterpart to the role played by God for all the pilgrims, including Harry.

The theme of judgement also informs the "quitting" tales. In attacking Oswald the carpenter, the Miller tells a tale which alludes to the Flood from which Noah the carpenter escaped by God's mercy. That the Miller is unaware of the parallel he has set up strengthens the incongruity of his telling a Biblically-based tale for spiteful purposes. The Reeve's narration is prefaced by a Biblical passage meant originally to induce charity, but used here as an excuse for revenge: "He kan wel in myn eye seen a stalke/ But in his owene he kan nat seen a balke" (I 3919-3920, p. 55). The tale itself is an exemplum of retributive justice, where measure-for-measure the

characters find their nemesis. In her prologue, the Wife of Bath admits to being the whip of the marriage relationship (III 175, p. 77).<sup>33</sup> Also in keeping with this theme of un pitying judgement is the Summoner's Prologue which, as John Fleming has shown,<sup>34</sup> inverts an iconographic tradition in which Mary is the source of mercy in order to further ~~his~~<sup>its</sup> own vengeful diatribe against the Friar. Indeed, throughout the Tales, the most unsympathetic characters invoke the old, talionic law as excuse for their own unbending positions. That each of them is being judged in terms of the spiritual motive of the pilgrimage is a consideration to which they pay scanty attention. The Pardoner, as a man who would be an agent of God's mercy, exemplifies this general short-sightedness among the Canterbury pilgrims, for as his attack on Harry Bailly shows, he envisions himself primarily as a judge of other men.

This chapter, then, has attempted to show how the spring opening and the tavern meeting place set up various themes which recur throughout the Tales. Drunkenness, as the symbol for fallen, demonically-oriented man, functions typologically throughout, for in the Tabard we find an anticipation of the alestake by which the Pardoner drinks, and in the disruptions of order caused by drunkenness, types of the "up-so-down" world which the Pardoner's Tale represents. Such a world is of the kind that the Flood came to punish, and which Baptism seeks to destroy. In the next chapter, we shall look at the saving dimension of the Flood, the people for whom the goal of the

pilgrimage means something, and the fictional characters who live by mercy, not judgement.

### III

#### THE WELL, ALCHEMY AND PENITENT HUMANITY

Although the Canterbury Tales does not adhere to a strictly dialectical moral scheme, it does evince a philosophical attitude which lends shape to the contours of the tales, and provides a solid touchstone for the interpretation of individual tales. The previous chapter reviewed one aspect of this attitude by showing how the characteristically medieval tendency to look on this world as a wilderness, on life in this world as alienation from the true home, on earth-bound man as flawed by the Fall and therefore susceptible to sin and God's judgement -- how this tendency informs to some considerable degree Chaucer's vision of mankind. On another level, however, both for the medieval Christian and for Chaucer, man is capable of redemption. It is to this area that our typological analysis of the Canterbury Tales will now turn.

Throughout the Tales, there is a recurring emphasis on wells. To realize how Chaucer uses the well image, it is imperative to examine the contexts involved, and then to compare Chaucer's usage with the contemporary tradition. Let us first look, therefore, at Chaucer's handling of the well image.

In the Marian poem, "An ABC", there is this passage:  
"Zacharie yow clepeth the open welle/  
To washe sinful soule

out of his guilt" (ll. 177-178, p. 526). Mary's association with the well is derived from at least two Biblical passages.

The first of these is in the oracular book of Zechariah:

In die illa erit fons patens domui David  
et habitantibus Ierusalem in ablutionem  
peccatoris et menstruatae.(Zechariah 13: 1)<sup>1</sup>

The second Biblical text prominent in supporting the link between the well and Mary is from the Canticle of Canticles:

Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa  
hortus conclusus, fons signatus . . .  
Fons hortorum, puteus aquarum viventium  
quae fluunt impetu de Libano.(Canticle of Canticles 4:  
12 and 15)<sup>2</sup>

The latter extract, with its conjunction of the well with the hortus conclusus, is of particular importance to Chaucer, as we shall see shortly.

The Canterbury Tales is replete <sup>w</sup>ith references to the well in the Zecharian sense as the source of purgation for man's sins. It is Mary's capacity for mercy and her role as advocate for sinful man that causes the "litel clergeon" (VII 503, p. 161) in the Prioress's Tale to address her continually.<sup>3</sup> At one point, he uses the conventional tag: "This welle of mercy, Cristes mooder sweete/ I loved alwey, as after my konnyng" (VII 656-657, p. 163). Similarly, the Prologue to the Second Nun's Tale employs the idea that Mary's mediation enacts a catharsis of man's fallen nature:

Thow Mayde and Mooder, doghter of thy Sone,  
Thow, welle of mercy, synful soules cure,  
In whom that God for bountee chees to wone,  
Thow humble, and heigh over every creature,  
Thow nobledest so ferforthoure nature,

That no desdeyn the Makere hadde of kynde  
 His Sone in blood and flessh to clothe and wynde  
 (VII 36-42, p. 207).

Mary's function here as the well of mercy is made even more aesthetically purposeful when we recall that the nun describes herself as living "in this desert of galle" (VIII 52, p. 207) as an "unworthy sone of Eve" (VIII 62, p. 207). Indeed, it is precisely because she has inherited original sin from Adam and Eve that the nun is compelled to live in the desert of this world beseeching Eve's antitype for cleansing and life-giving water.

The merciful, cleansing attributes of the well are sometimes utilized without direct mention of Mary, and sometimes with Christ, not <sup>Her</sup> ~~She~~, as the relevant mediator. Thus, in the Monk's Tale, there is a well which God's pity causes to spring out of the ground for the despairing Samson (VII 2039-2046, p. 190). A more extended and complex situation involving the well occurs in the Man of Law's Tale, when Constance invokes the Cross thus:

O cleere, o welful auter, hooly croys,  
 Reed of the Lambes blood ful of pitee,  
 That wessh the world fro the old iniquitee,  
 Me fro the feend and fro his clawes kepe,  
 That day that I shal drenchen in the depe (II 451-455, p. 67).

The almost "Metaphysical" casting of this stanza, with its concentration of meaning involving the Deluge, baptism and their relationship to Constance's own predicament, makes very feasible the possibility of their being a pun on "welful". This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that "cleere" would seem to be an

epithet more applicable to a well than to an altar or a cross.

To this point, we have discussed Chaucer's use of the well solely as a static, descriptive device. The image occurs several times in the Tales, however, in a narrative context, and in view of the religious uses we have surveyed, it is not too speculative to infer that these other occurrences have theological overtones. In the Franklin's Tale, for example, Dorigen alludes to a number of maidens who would rather die than forfeit their honour:

Rather than they wolde lese hir maydenhede  
They prively been stirt into a welle  
And dreynthe hemselven as the bookes telle (V 1376-1378, p. 142).

The specific way in which these virgins go to their deaths, be it derived from the sources or not, cannot help but mirror the references to Mary, Blessed Virgin and well. As the paragon of innocence, Mary is suggested too in the Clerk's account of Griselda:

Grisilde of this God woot, ful innocent  
That for hire shapen was al this array  
To fecchen water at a welle is went (IV 274-276, p. 104).

Earlier in the tale, the description of Griselda's virtue includes the epigrammatic statement: "Wel offer of the welle than of the tonne/ She drank . . ." (IV 215-216, p. 103). Since the saint-like natures of Griselda and Constance are mimetic of Mary, it is highly likely that these narrative references to the well are patent allusions to the Virgin.

A brief look at some non-Chaucerian functions of the well image would suggest, moreover, that his wells may connote



broader meanings than those so far mentioned. The saving grace of Mary's well, for instance, is sometimes linked with Christ's blood and with baptism. The following lines from The Pearl are exemplary:

Innoghe þer wax out of þat welle,  
 Blod & water of brode wounde:  
 þe blod uis bozt fro bale of helle,  
 & delyvered uis of þe deth secounde;  
 þe water is baptem, þe soþe to telle  
 þat folzed þe glayve so grymly grounde,  
 þat washez away þe gyltez felle  
 þat Adam wyth inne deth uis drounde.<sup>5</sup>

The metamorphosis evident here, from Mary as well to the well as baptism, is also encountered in an early English carol:

There is a blossom sprong of a thorn  
 To save mankind that was forlorne  
 As the prophettis said beforne  
 Deo patri sit gloria.  
 Ther sprong a well at Maris fote  
 That torned al this world to bote;  
 Of her toke Jesu flesshe and blod.  
 From that well ther strake a strem;  
 Out of Egypt into Bedlem  
 God thorough his highness torned it again.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the well-baptism configuration, there is in both of the quoted passages a typological framework, suggested by Adam and his sins in the extract from The Pearl, and by the mention of Egypt and the Red Sea Crossing in the carol. As we return to Chaucer's poetry, we should keep both the baptismal and the typological implications of the well in mind.

That Chaucer may intend the well to carry baptismal connotations is strongly supported by the Man of Law's Tale. Constance's trust in the "cleere . . . welful auter" (II 451, p. 67) may, as we have said, turn on the word-play involving

the well which washes the world from old iniquities. But the Man of Law's narrative contains other clues as to how the well image functions. In the first place, the plot line consists of an alternation between Constance's being set adrift in the sea, and her subsequent rescue by God. The "coold water" (II 352, p. 66) of baptism, symbolic of the "newe lawe" (II 337, p. 65) is the Christian sacrament against which the Sultanness rebels, and as such it stands in contrast to the chaotic maze (II 526, p. 67) which the sea represents. Finally, it is significant that the Sultanness and Donegild, not the Sultan and Alla, are Constance's antagonists. The earthly, perfidious mother-in-laws stand at the opposite pole to Mary, for if Constance finds stability and repose from Fortune's vicissitudes only because of her "marriage" to the never-changing Christ, Mary is the heavenly counterpart of Donegild and the Sultanness. And since the Sultanness is depicted as the "welle of vices" (II 323, p. 65), and since water imagery is so predominant in the tale as a whole, it does not take a very large imaginative leap for us to think of Mary's association with the well of virtues, in typological contrast to the earthly, insidious mother-in-law figures. Such an interpretation is strengthened by the fact that in Trivet's Life of Constance and in Gower's Tale of Constance, the two principal analogues, the sultanness is merely called "le membre au diable" and "this olde feend" respectively:<sup>7</sup> Chaucer would appear, therefore, to be attempting to delineate an even sharper typological antimony between the tale's major forces than his sources

offered him.

In the Clerk's Tale, the lines "Wel offer of the welle,  
than of the tonne/ She drank . . ." as applied to the virtuously  
beautiful heroine are conducive to a typological interpretation.  
Abstinence from drink as a predictable habit for a religious  
model, as this description of Virginia from the Physician's Tale  
illustrates: "Bacus hadde of hir mouthe right no maistrie/ For  
wyn and youthe dooth Venus encresse" (VI 58-59, p. 145). But  
the particular conjunction of the well with the tun should be  
read with what we have said about drunkenness in mind. If  
drunkenness is the sepulchre of the reason and a prime cause  
of the fall from innocence, then figurative drinking from the  
well is the antitypical action which can restore man to God's  
grace.<sup>8</sup> An analogue for this reading is available in a Middle  
English lyric, which begins with the appellation of Mary as well,  
and continues with the imprecation that "Thu bring us us of care,  
of drede/ That Eve bitterliche us brews".<sup>9</sup> Thus the association  
of drinking from a well with reception of grace and the acqui-  
sition of virtue may serve Chaucer as a figural counterpart for  
the loss of both grace and natural virtue which transpired with  
the gluttonous act in the Garden of Eden.

R. P. Miller has claimed that

. . . the principle of opposites, philosophically  
affiliated with the Boethian [or Augustinian] view  
of evil as a denial of good, powerfully affects the  
allegorical habit of mind. . . . One consequence of  
the principle is the proliferation of antitypes

within the figurative system . . . .<sup>10</sup>

Miller's observation perhaps explains why the well image is not restricted in use to the saintly characters and to Mary. The well may also be exploited for ironic purposes, with an in malo meaning, and with typological overtones.

The hortus conclusus tradition, deriving from the Cantic of Canticles, includes, as we have seen, a well.<sup>11</sup> It is thus no accident that the garden of the so-called "courtly love" tradition, the garden of Deduit and specious delights, frequently features a well among its characteristics. As D. W. Robertson has shown, this well is identifiable with Narcissistic self-love, with mirrors, with bird snares, and with indulgent fantasies.<sup>12</sup> The garden of immoderate sexual pleasure is closely patterned, then on the Paradisal garden of the Bible, but the similarity is not indicative of an intended comparison, but of an intended contrast. Thus, the fons vitae of the true garden becomes, in effect, the fons mortis in the romance garden. This relationship, founded on parody, results in a typological correspondence between the false and the true gardens. In keeping with our concern with well imagery, we should examine how Chaucer manipulates this tradition.

Arcite's idolatrous love for Emily is described at one point as "now up, now doun, as boket in a welle" (I 1533, p. 32). Although this might seem to be but a homely simile for his euphoria, his veneration of Emily, and both his and Palamon's phrasing of their love in theological terminology, would imply

that she is indeed the well in which he foolishly drowns himself. The fact that he and Palamon are constantly beseeching Emily for pity (Mary's faculty) further establishes this irony. A less oblique instance of misdirected love worshipping a lady occurs when the Squire in his tale tells us that the Tercelet "semed welle of alle gentillesse" (V 505, p. 133); the difference between seeming and reality here, as elsewhere in the tales, is all too pertinent.<sup>13</sup> Although May, in the Merchant's Tale, is never explicitly called a well, she certainly can be seen as its human counterpart on the basis of the following account:

He January made a gardyn walled al with stoon;  
 So fair a gardyn woot I nowher noon.  
 For, out of doute, I verrailly suppose  
 That he that wroot the Romance of the Rose  
 He koude of it the beautee wel devyse;  
 Ne Pripus ne myghte nat suffise,  
 Though he be god of gardyns, for to telle  
 The beautee of the gardyn and the welle,  
 That stood under a laurer alwey grene.  
 Ful ofte tyme he Pluto and his queene,  
 Proserpina, and al hire fayerye,  
 Disporten hem and maken melodye  
 Aboute that welle, and daunced, as men tolde (IV 2029-2041,  
 p. 123).

That this passage is charged with sexual overtones is clear:

Priapus, symbol of the phallus, as well as being the god of gardens, presides over the "old" dance and the carnally illicit making of melody.<sup>14</sup> In view of the general purport of the extract, then, and because January has already described himself as the ever green laurel (IV 1465-1466, p. 117), it is reasonable to assume that the well in the passage, which stands under the laurel, and which is the focus of all the merry-making is none other than May herself.<sup>15</sup>

As one might expect, the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner also reveal themselves in making unconscious parodies of the true, Biblically-conceived well. In this regard, D. W. Robertson has incisively commented on the Wife of Bath:

The 'five husbands' mentioned in the General Prologue and again at the beginning of the prologue to the tale, together with the hint of an analogy between a lady with five husbands from 'biside Bath' and another with five husbands 'biside a welle' suggests that the wife's marital condition may be an iconographic device based on the story of the Samaritan. 16

The wife is also akin to the Samaritan woman in that both require the well of "living water" which is Christ, rather than the literal well, which glossators saw as the water of temporal carnality. What Robertson fails to point out in his excellent discussion of the Wife of Bath is that her tale too alludes to the well, or bath, concept. When the knight finds the lady fair, "For joye he hente hire in his armes two/ His herte bathed in a bath of blisse" (III 1252-1253, p. 88). The emphasis on "bath" in these lines harks back to the Wife's provenance, and corroborates with the gist of her prologue: she wants to have mastery over men so that she will become the source of mercy, obviating the need for Mary.

The Pardoner's prologue makes a travesty of the Christian implications of wells, as it does of almost all the Biblical images. In trying to sell his fake relics, the Pardoner tells of a sheep bone which, when placed in a well, will give the water such miraculous properties that it can cure infected cattle (VI 350-365, p. 148). His perverted, upside-down mind neglects

to realize that he should be concerned with the well of mercy which makes men whole and multiplies their virtues, not with saving cattle and multiplying worldly goods.

To re-iterate, then, we may conclude that Chaucer invests his well images with several distinct kinds of attributes. The antitype of all wells is Mary, or Christ, whose pity has a felicitous and redeeming effect on mankind. This well has affinities with baptism, and hence with the Canterbury Tales' spring opening. In contrast, stand the wells of temporal delight, connected with self-indulgent love, or cupiditas. These wells both parody and pre-figure the true wells, which are representative of mercy.

Concomitant with the well imagery in the Tales is the emphasis put on gold as a symbol for virtue and spiritual perfection. This emphasis does not deter Chaucer's use of gold in connection with persons of extreme mundiality however. The Miller, with his thumb of gold, for instance, has a niche in the tradition mentioned by John of Scot:

When a phantasy of gold or of some precious material is impressed on the corporal sense, the phantasy seems to that sense beautiful and naturally attractive because it is founded upon a creature which is intrinsically good. But the woman, that is, the carnal sense is deceived and delighted, failing to perceive hiding beneath this false and fancied [phantastica] beauty a malice that is cupidity which is the 'root 17 of all evil'.

Nonetheless, gold's scarcity and value make it a fitting emblem also of spiritual rectitude. The association of gold with

quintessential man is first made explicit in the General Prologue's profile of the Parson:

Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,  
 And this figure he added eek therto,  
 That if gold rust what shal iren do? (I 498-500, p. 22)

E. L. Bode has reviewed some of the probable sources of this metaphor, and his conclusion is that ". . . passages from five biblical authors illustrate the appeal of describing moral decadence as rusted or tarnished precious metals":<sup>18</sup>

Quomodo obscuratum est aurum, mutatus est color optimus (Lamentations 4: 1).

Argentum reprobum vocate eos, quia Dominus proiecit illos (Jeremiah 6: 30).

Argentum tuum versum est in scoriam (Isaiah 1: 22).

Filii homines, versa est mihi domus Israel in scoriam, omnes isti aes et stannum et ferrum et plumbum in medio fornacis scoria argenti facti sunt (Ezekiel 22: 18).

Aufer robiginem de argento et agreietur vas purissimum (Proverbs 25: 4).

Aurum et argentum vestrum aeruginavit, et aerugo eorum in testimonium vobis erit, et manducabit carnes vestras sicut ignis (James 5: 3).

Then too, because virginity is also an emblem of spiritual perfection, the linking of gold and chastity in the Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale is not unexpected (II 25-32, p. 62). Indeed, the regular medieval attitude to the subject was that virtue, not gold, was the real "gold".<sup>19</sup> The concept of the thesaurus meritorium, therefore, undergirds the connection of Constance with treasure in the Man of Law's Tale: "A certein tresor that she thider ladde" (II 442, p. 62) and "He foond also



the tresor that she broghte" (II 515, p. 67). Chaucer uses the symbol of gold in a much more complicated sense, however, in the Clerk's Tale. Near the conclusion of the tale, there is this stanza:

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:  
 It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes  
 In al a toun Grisildis thre or two;  
 For if that they were put to swiche assayes,  
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes  
 With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair ay ye  
 It wolde rather breste a-two than plye (IV 1163-1169, p. 114).

Griselda is clearly the human personage meant by pure gold in the metaphor. The clerk proceeds, however, to equate the Wife of Bath with the "badde alayes" which present an illusory beauty to the eye. Thus this metaphor in itself should speak eloquently against the Wife's interest in her husband's "tresor" (III 204, p. 78), and against her assertion that virginity is not so important as the Church would have it to be:

I nyl envye no virginitee.  
 Lat hem be breed of pured white-seed  
 And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed;  
 And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle kan,  
 Oure Lord Jhesu refresshed many a man.  
 In swich estaat as God hath cleped us  
 I wol persevere; I nam nat precius (III 142-148, p.77).

Since the Clerk's conceit about pure gold is so similar to the Wife's about pure bread, her statement that she is "nat precius" should undoubtedly reflect the Clerk's words: she means "Precius" as "fastidious"; we, the readers, are aware of its primary meaning of "valuable".

The gold-virginity motif also underlies the often neglected Shipman's Tale. Beneath the facade of bawdry,<sup>20</sup> and the extensive

word play, there subsists a serious moral lesson. The merchant's consuming interest in gold and his wares renders him unaware of the violation enacted by Daun John on his wife's "virginity". The patristic commonplace concerning the payment of the marriage debt<sup>21</sup> is thus given a perverse twist at the dénouement of the tale, when the wife forces her miscreant husband to tally his debt upon her "tail". In the merchant's passion for gold, then, rather than for "gold" lies his undoing.

The tale most obviously dealing with gold, of course, is the Canon's Yeoman's. That the literary functions of this tale have been passed over until recently is perhaps accounted for by the obscurity of the alchemical jargon which it contains, and by the critical penchant for keeping it separate from the other tale in Fragment VIII, the Second Nun's. The investigations of Joseph E. Grennen and others, however, to which much of the following discussion is indebted, have cleared the way for a more mature appreciation of the tale, and its place in the framework of tales as a group.

Charles Muscatine's comment that ". . . the poem expresses neither credulity nor skepticism, but rather a distinction between false alchemy and God's"<sup>22</sup> is undeniably the only possible starting point for a critical appraisal of the Yeoman's story. The parallel between God and the alchemist is a common one, as several examples will show. In the Ancrene Riwe, the metaphor appears twice: "for als wa prued<sup>x</sup> godd his leove icorene as þe goltsmid<sup>x</sup> fon ded<sup>x</sup> þe i þe fure. † false

gold forwarded þrin, þ gode ki med ut brigtre".<sup>23</sup> The second passage reads: "alswa as þe goltsmid cleansed þ gold iþe fur, alswa ded godd te sawle i fur of fondunge".<sup>24</sup> In medieval sermons, moreover, the alchemical stone is sometimes designated as Christ, and sometimes equated with the act of confession.<sup>25</sup> Even the virtues can be compared with the alchemical end-product. To quote B. L. Grenberg, "The equation of the philosopher's stone with heavenly wisdom or truth is supported by the English translation of John of Rupescissa's De consideratione quintae essentiae . . .".<sup>26</sup> With these inducements for considering the Canon's Yeoman's Tale as a distorted and pale reflection of true alchemy, we should turn to some of its details.

The allusion to alchemy as the "secree of secrees" (VIII 1447, p. 222) recalls the situation in the Miller's Tale where there is thematic play on God's and Alisoun's "pryvyte". The mixing of the elements in the "crosselet" involves a similar ambivalence, for as Grennen has demonstrated, the word means "small cross" or "chalice" as well as crucible.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the macrocosmic furnace of the universe where the elements are mixed by God in the creative act is paralleled by the demonic activity of the canon in concocting his mixture of elements.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the canon's efforts constitute a startlingly exact reversal of the original creative act: God imposed order on the waters, and the elements ensued; the canon's endeavours cause disorder ("Oure pot is broke"), and from the elements which God had created, the canon retrogresses to be left with an end-product

of water. The tale, then, presents a world without purpose, without teleology,<sup>29</sup> and inasmuch as it provides an inversion of the initial creative plan, it is a world like the Pardoner's, a world turned "up-so-down".

The thematic importance of the Canon's Yeoman's Tale is enhanced by its juxtaposition with the Second Nun's Tale. The alchemical process is frequently envisioned as a marriage ceremony, whereby the male and female principles, Sol and Luna "marry" and become "crowned". Cecilia, it will be noticed, marries and becomes crowned with roses and lilies (VIII 220, p. 209), symbolic of martyrdom and chastity respectively. This attainment, which is perfectly appropriate for a saint, takes on another level of meaning, however, when read in conjunction with the alchemical method:

Red and white are the crowns given to Valerian and Cecile for their sacred marriage, and red and white are the alchemical waters -- "rubifyng" and "albi-ficacioun" (779, 805) -- which produce gold and silver.<sup>30</sup>

The quest for sainthood bears yet another analogy with the alchemical quest for gold, in that, just as a saint must cast off the dross of his mortality and become transformed, so the chemist purifies his materials. Of this affinity Rosenberg writes:

. . . in alchemy . . . the base prima materia is, as the alchemists themselves termed it, "mortified" so that the spirit of perfection (in the case of metals, gold) may ascend; the flesh of Cecile is also mortified in her martyrdom so that her soul may ascend --<sup>31</sup> to heaven.

The plot lines of the two tales mirror each other, then, and

as a unit, they serve as an appropriate summation of the ambivalence with which gold and its relationship to humans are treated throughout the tales.<sup>32</sup> The name of Cecilia's persecutor, Almachius, can with a simple rearrangement of letters be read as "Alchamius": this orthographical quirk, reinforced by the lapis-Christus tradition, and the extracts which we have adduced from the Ancrene Riwe makes probable that he is to be regarded as God's instrument, a person, like Walter, who tests the moral gold of a Christian saint and finds it unalloyed.

Although the Manciple's Tale intervenes, the location of the Canon's Yeoman's Tale so close to the Parson's Tale has a thematic purport which has hitherto gone without remark. In the General Prologue, the figure of the Parson as spiritual gold is unquestionably prominent, and throughout the Tales, gold is a persistent metaphor for morally refined mankind. The proximity of the Parson's sermon, consequently, to the two "alchemical" tales, one treating with spiritual purification and the other with a worldly and false science, recalls the proleptic function of the metaphor in the General Prologue.

The Parson is linked in another way with Fragment VIII's gold imagery. In his prologue, the Parson makes the following claim:

I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose  
 To knytte up al this feeste and make an ende.  
 And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende  
 To shewe yow the wey in this viage  
 Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage  
 That highte Jerusalem celestial (X 46-51, p. 228).

The translation of the actual pilgrimage to Canterbury to the metaphorical pilgrimage to Jerusalem accomplished here by the Parson bears considerable relevance to the Yeoman's words about the Canon. Quite pretentiously, he remarks:

I seye, my lord kan swich subtilitee --  
 But al his craft ye may nat wite at me,  
 And somewhat helpe I yet to his wirkyng --  
 That al this ground on which we been ridyng,  
 Til that we come to Caunterbury toun  
 He koude al clene turne it up-so-doun  
 And pave it al of silver and of gold (VIII 620-626, p. 214).

Implicit beneath the surface of this boast is the apocalyptic vision of the Heavenly City, for the Yeoman unwittingly echoes Revelations 21: 21: "et platea civitatis aurum mundum, tanquam vitrum perlucidum".<sup>33</sup> Not only are the canon's techniques mis-directed, as the irrefutably suggestive phrase "up-so-doun" indicates, but the yeoman is shown to be singularly obtuse in his unconscious use of a Biblical allusion.

Earthly gold, then, manifested as the object of mercantile and perverse desire, or as the symbol of man's fancied love for woman, is the type prefigurative of heavenly gold, the gold of a virtuous terrestrial life, of moral wisdom and of the eschatological city. In Cecilia's endurance of the "bath of flambes rede" (VIII 515, p. 213), we have the drawing together of the typologically-oriented well imagery and the similarly based alchemical imagery. Baptism is modelled on a pattern of descent into and ascent from a body of water; the Old, fleshly man is left behind and the New man emerges unscathed and transfigured. The alchemical wedding of the

Second Nun's Tale collates the concept of spiritual purification by means of an "alchemical" process, with that of the regeneration offered by Baptism, and further suggests Mary, exemplar of Mercy, who was frequently affiliated in typological thinking with the unconsumed bush of Moses.<sup>34</sup>

The judgement motif which we examined in the preceding chapter finds its parallel, therefore, in the connotations of mercy and cleansing which both the well image and the alchemical process imply. That Chaucer felt compelled to add the following sentences about mercy to the tale which the fictional Chaucer redacts almost verbatim from his source attests to his concern for highlighting the salvatory aspect of God:

For wel we knowe that youre liberal grace and  
 mercy stretchen hem ferther into goodnesse than  
 doon oure outrageouse giltes and trespas into  
 wikkednesse al be it that cursedly and dampnablely  
 we han agilt agayn youre heigh lordshippe (Tale of Melibee,  
 V88 1824-1825, p. 187),

and

For doutelees, if we be sory and repentant of  
 the synnes and giltes which we han trespassed  
 in the sighte of oure Lord God, he is so free  
 and so merciabile that he wole foryeven us oure  
 giltes an bringen us to the blisse that nevere  
 hath ende. Amen (VII 1884-1888, p. 188).<sup>35</sup>

The same emphasis on mercy obtains in the Parson's Tale for there the focus is on how to circumvent the wrath of God on the Judgment Day: the three actions of Penitence attract God's grace, and enable men to find refreshing for their souls. Even the prolonged discourse on sin is tempered with the Parson's assurance

that though a man "never so longe have leyn in synne, the mercy of Crist is alwey redy to receiven hym to mercy" (X 1072, p. 264). Thus, the Parson's Tale embodies the supreme tribute to mercy. The Canterbury Tales, moreover, displays an architectonic consistency by having the parson's narrative stand last, for

. . . the tales opened . . . with an image of Noah's flood, often understood as a type of baptism, and they should fittingly close with an emphasis on the sacrament of penance which takes up the cleansing of sin after baptism. 36



#### IV

#### CONCLUSIONS

If, as hopefully this thesis has shown, the Canterbury Tales exhibits a unity which goes beyond the sort of unity offered by the framing pilgrimage device, then the individual tales mirror each other, and various human personages become "linked" conceptually. Thus, the Knight's Tale is indispensable in reading the Squire's Tale, for not only does the son parrot his father's theme in telling a story about pity, adversity and fortune, but his tale is an exercise in inflated rhetoric, a macrologia in contrast to his father's tale, which unobtrusively incorporated rhetoric into the narrative, and without becoming too prolix, emerged as the longest verse tale in the group. The linkage between human characters in the tales is equally important for aesthetic considerations. At one point, for instance, Justinus admonishes January about his deluded view of marriage in the following way: "Paraunter she may be youre purgatorie!/ She may be Goddes meene and Goddes whippe;" (IV 1670-1671). These lines echo two of the Wife of Bath's statements in her Prologue: "This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe" (III 175, p. 77), and "By God! in erthe I was his purgatorie" (III 489, p. 80). May and the Wife, then, are both examples of the "tribulacioun in marriage" (III 173, p. 77): they stand on common conceptual ground as malae feminae.<sup>1</sup>

What makes this instance of linked, or typologically conceived, characters all the more intriguing is the violation of narrative consistency by which it is accomplished. The Merchant, it will be observed, is telling the tale in which Justinus, who makes the remarks alluding to the Wife, is merely a fictional character, and an abstract personification at that. When Justinus recalls the Wife of Bath, which he does implicitly in the lines just cited, and explicitly in lines 1685-1687, he is transgressing the laws of narrative reality; yet behind the fictional character's knowledge of an actual pilgrim, we see Chaucer's hand at work, re-casting the impression that the Wife of Bath has made on our minds, and causing it to impinge on our impression of May. Thus it would appear that Chaucer intends to create a floating conceptual ambience in which the demarcations between the "real" pilgrimage and the "fictional" tales disintegrate, enabling us to fuse the tellers and their tales in one all-embracing imaginative vision.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the barriers between Chaucer's and his narrators' fictive reality become blurred, so too do the differences between the concrete and the abstract. Thus, because of the conventionality of the rider-horse analogy as a symbol for the reason's control of the concupiscent passions, John's and Aleyn's loss of their horse in the Reeve's Tale assumes abstract, metaphorical proportions, in spite of the fabliau-like surface of the tale as a whole. For Chaucer, as for the entire medieval world, the physical universe and its every-day objects often take on

figurative meanings.<sup>3</sup>

It is because of the pre-dominance which typology assumed in medieval art and sacred literature, as a medium for expressing conceptual correspondences that this thesis has chosen to designate Chaucer's recurrent thematic emphases as "imaginative typology". In the relationship between the tavern and the well, Chaucer establishes a polarization which is only made explicit in the lines about Griselda: "Wel ofter of the welle, than of the tonne/ She drank . . . ". The proliferation of well images, however, and the virtually complete castigation of drink makes probable that we cannot attribute "negligence" but only the typical medieval practice of indirection to Chaucer for not making this connection clear. Similarly, to view Harry and the Parson as typologically related alternatives for the role of leader is not merely<sup>a</sup> critical speculation, but an observation dependent on the social and symbolic connotations of the pilgrimage. For Chaucer, the situation was probably analagous to that experienced by a person confronted by the Old and New Testaments: just as Harry must finally give way to the Parson, the Old Testament must ultimately be superseded by the New.

By no means, then, does this thesis assert that typology is the only governing principle by which Chaucer structures the Canterbury Tales. Rather it proposes yet another critical strategy for handling this slippery and variegated group of stories as the literary unit which they were presumably meant to be.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1 For a concise introduction to these problems, see the Introduction in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston, 1961). This edition will be used for references and quotations throughout this thesis. C. A. Owen gives the topic more detailed consideration in "The Design of The Canterbury Tales", Companion to Chaucer Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto, 1968), pp. 192-207.

2 See G. L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

3 Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

4 The Unity of the Canterbury Tales (Copenhagen, 1955).

5 A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, 1963).

6 For a recent appraisal of Robertson's impact on medievalists, see A. Leigh DeNeef, "Robertson and the Critics", Chaucer Review, II (1967-1968), 205-234.

7 A Preface, p. 128.

8 Francis Lee Utley, "Robertsonianism Redivivus", Romance Philology, XIX (1965), 250-260.

9 E. T. Donaldson, "Patristic Exegesis: the Opposition", Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (New York, 1961) imputes that Robertson "contorts the text", p. 15.

10 St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. D. W. Robertson (Indiannapolis, 1958), p. 88.

11 The terms "norm" and "normative" are used by Chauncey Wood, The Country of the Stars: Studies in Chaucer's Poetic Uses of Astrological Imagery, in manuscript. To be published by Princeton University Press.

12 Charles Donahue, "Patristic Exegesis: Summation", Critical Approaches, p. 61.

- 13 A Preface, p. 288 et passim.
- 14 R. E. Kaske, "Chaucer and Medieval Allegory", Journal of English Literary History, XXX (1963), 192.
- 15 See Charles Donahue, "Patristic Exegesis: Summation", Critical Approaches, pp. 61-82. In this article, Donahue very usefully distinguishes between the Greek method of attaching an added meaning to a given text, and the Hebraic predisposition to see divine relationships in historically revealed events and persons. This last is typology. See also Jean Danielou, From Shadows to Reality, trans. Dom Wulstan Hibberd (London, 1960), p. 24 ff.
- 16 Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton, 1966), p. 17.
- 17 C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (Oxford, 1959), p. 45.
- 18 In his essay "Figura" found in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (New York, 1959), pp. 11-78, Erich Auerbach traces the semantic development of the word "figura" and shows that typus is one of its more common synonyms.
- 19 From Shadows to Reality, pp. 1-7.
- 20 See Jean Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy (Notre Dame, 1956).
- 21 Emile Male, The Gothic Image (New York, 1958) gives a more elaborate account of the Easter Eve ritual, pp. 16-17.
- 22 Ibid., p. 17.
- 23 For an illuminating analysis of the Old English poet's reliance on typology in Christ I, see Robert B. Burlin, The Old English Advent: A Typological Commentary (New Haven, 1968).
- 24 Langland, The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman, Vol. I, ed. W. W. Skeat (Oxford, 1886), B-text, XIII, p. 396, l. 15.
- 25 Christ is the New Testament Fulfillment of the brazen serpent which Moses raised in the desert. The idea is based on Numbers 21: 8-9, and John 3: 14. See Ben H. Smith, Jr., Traditional Imagery of Charity in Piers Plowman (The Hague, 1966), pp. 21-24.

26 See, for instance, poems numbered 5, 12 and 123 A in Medieval English Lyrics, ed. R. T. Davies (n. p., 1966). For a critical analysis of the typological mode in the lyricists, see Rosemary Woolf, The English Religious Lyrics in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1968), pp. 282-304.

27 See Davies, Medieval English Lyrics, pp. 103-105.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup> In connection with the Miller's Tale, consult R. E. Kaske, "The Canticum Canticorum in the Miller's Tale", Studies in Philology, LIX (1962), 479-500.

<sup>2</sup> Pardoner's Tale, Vi 498-504, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> See Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, Vol. I, (Oxford, 1933), p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> For criticism representative of these trends, see the following: Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (New York, 1967), pp. 19-43; Bernard F. Huppe, A Reading of the Canterbury Tales (Albany, 1967), pp. 12-20; Thomas A. Kirby, "The General Prologue", Companion to Chaucer Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto, 1968), pp. 208-228.

<sup>5</sup> Medieval English Lyrics (n. p., 1966), p. 18. Davies' comment that April is the first month of the medieval year should perhaps be viewed with some hesitancy in the light of these lines from the Nun's Priest's Tale: "Whan that the month in which the world bigan/ That highte March, whan God first maked man" (VII 3187-3188, p. 203).

<sup>6</sup> The Country of the Stars, p. 186.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Ancrene Wisse, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien (London, 1962), p. 178.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> Skeat, Piers the Plowman, XX.

<sup>11</sup> Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 425-429.

<sup>12</sup> See Morton W. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (Michigan, 1952), p. 126.

<sup>13</sup> Skeat, Piers the Plowman, V, pp. 158-166, ll. 304-391.

- 14 Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins, p. 199.
- 15 W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster, eds., Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (Chicago, 1941), p. 438.
- 16 Ibid., p. 438.
- 17 For the discrepancy between how Harry and Chaucer think about the way in which the tales should be told, see Alan T. Gaylord, "Sentence and Solaas in Fragment VII of The Canterbury Tales: Harry Bailly as Horseback Editor", PMLA, LXXXII (1967), 226-235.
- 18 We should compare Chaucer's practice here with the epic convention of locating the hero in medias res at the point when his efforts to return home seem most futile. Consider also the beginning of The Divine Comedy in the dark wood, and the dramatic alternatives presented to Will at the outset of Piers the Plowman.
- 19 See Gregory the Great, Moralia XXXI, XLV in J. P. Migne, Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina, LXXVI, col. 621, (Paris, 1841-1842).
- 20 Cf. the Summoner's Tale, III 1915-1917, p. 96.
- 21 See Cassian, Collatio V, II in P. L. XLIX, col. 611.
- 22 A Commentary on the General Prologue, pp. 38-39.
- 23 Cf. Ancrene Wisse (P. 185): "Ure alde curtel is þe flesch þ we of adam ure alde feader habbed". See also Jean Danielou, The Bible and The Liturgy (Notre Dame, 1956), pp. 22 and 38.
- 24 Cf. Bernard L. Jefferson, Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius (Princeton, 1917), pp. 82-83.
- 25 "The tree that Damyan and May climb is not a sycamore tree, which is the tree of life (P. L. 67, 671, 676), but a pear tree which bears fruit that crowned the tree called Vetus Adam (Hugh of St. Victor, "De Fructibus", P. L. 176, 100)". Sister Mary Raynela Makarewicz, The Patristic Influence on Chaucer (Washington, 1953), pp. 110-111.
- 26 Ibid., pp. 216-217.



27 That there is a close relationship between the child's advice and the Knight's Tale than has been previously recognized is perhaps signalled by the Knight's quelling of the fight which erupts between Harry and the Pardoner.

28 The "croked wey" here is probably an inversion of the true ways to God. See the Parson's Tale, X 75-80, p. 229.

29 "What difference is bitwixe an ydolastre and an avaricious man, but that an ydolastre, per aventure, ne hath but o mawmet or two, and the avaricious man hath manye? For certes, every floryn in his cofre is his mawmet." (Parson's Tale, X 748, p. 252.)

30 "Sentence and Solaas in Fragment VII", p. 227.

31 Ibid., p. 232.

32 The Parson's remarks occur, however, in the Epilogue to the Man of Law's Tale which, since it is found in only one manuscript, Seldon B 14, may be spurious.

33 Cf. the Merchant's Tale, IV 1671, p. 119 where May becomes January's whip.

34 "The Summoner's Prologue: An Iconographic Adjustment", Chaucer Review, II (1967), 95-107.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup> "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."

<sup>2</sup> "A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed . . . A garden fountain, a well of living water and flowing streams from Lebanon."

<sup>3</sup> Rosemary Woolf points out that "devotion to the Virgin was made compulsory for everybody at the Lateran Council of 1215, when the Ave Maria was added to the Pater Noster and the Creed, as part of the basic minimum of doctrine and prayer which every layman must learn". See The English Religious Lyrics in the Middle Ages, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> For the conceptual ramifications of the well image, consult D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, pp. 91-96 et passim.

<sup>5</sup> The Pearl, ed. and trans. Sister Mary Vincent Hillman (Notre Dame, 1967), XI, 649-656.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by R. T. Davies, Medieval English Lyrics, p. 350.

<sup>7</sup> Bryan and Dempster, eds., Sources and Analogues, p. 167 and p. 184.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the riddling effect of these stanzas from an eleventh century poem found in the MS of St. Augustine of Canterbury:

Ioannes baptista  
erat pincerna  
atque preclari  
poculi vini  
porrexit cunctis  
vocatis sanctis.

Heriger ait:  
'prudenter egit  
Christus Iohannem  
ponens pincernam  
quoniam vinum  
non bibit unquam.

Quoted by Helen Waddell, Medieval Latin Lyrics (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 162.

<sup>9</sup> R. T. Davies, Medieval English Lyrics, Lyrics #12, ll. 29-30.

<sup>10</sup> "Allegory in the Canterbury Tales", Companion to Chaucer Studies, p. 274.

- 11 See D. W. Robertson, "The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach Through Symbolism and Allegory", Speculum, XXVI (1951), 24-49.
- 12 Robertson, A Preface, pp. 93-95.
- 13 See especially the Franklin's Tale, where the appearance-illusion theme becomes focused on the line: "It semed that alle the rokkes were aweye" (V 1296, p. 141).
- 14 For the distinction between the New and Old dance, refer to Robertson, A Preface, pp. 127-132.
- 15 À la Freud, the laurel and well may also have brutally ironic genital connotations.
- 16 A Preface, p. 320.
- 17 Robertson, quoting John of Scot, A Preface, p. 70.
- 18 "The Source of Chaucer's 'Rusted Gold'", Medieval Studies, XXIV (1962), 370.
- 19 "Vertew is verry ryches, þe wiche makeþ mans soule ryche for ever!" Middle English Sermons, ed. Woodburn O. Ross EETS #209 (London, 1960), p. 266.
- 20 The term is Janette Richardson's and is taken from her perceptive article on the substratum of seriousness in the Shipman's Tale: "The Facade of Bawdry: Image Patterns in Chaucer's Shipman's Tale", Journal of English Literary History, XXXII (1965), 303-313.
- 21 See the Parson's Tale, X 940-941, p. 259.
- 22 Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), p. 215.
- 23 Ancrene Wisse, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien, p. 94.
- 24 Ibid., p. 121.
- 25 Ross, Middle English Sermons, p. 322 and p. 286.
- 26 "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale: Boethian Wisdom and the Alchemists", Chaucer Review, I (1966), p. 41.
- 27 "The Canon's Yeoman's Alchemical 'Mass'", Studies in Philology, LXII (1965), p. 557.
- 28 See J. E. Grennen, "The Canon's Yeoman and the Cosmic

Furnace: Language and Meaning in 'The Canon's Yeoman's Tale', Criticism, IV (1962), 225-240.

29 The phrase is Muscatine's in Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 218.

30 Bruce Rosenberg, "The Contrary Tales of the Second Nun and the Canon's Yeoman", Chaucer Review, II (1968), 282.

31 Ibid., p. 280.

32 This contention stands, in spite of the assertion by a student of the manuscripts that "the evidence against the connection of the tales is overwhelming". C. A. Owen, "The Design of the Canterbury Tales", Companion to Chaucer Studies, p. 197.

33 "And the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass."

34 See, for example, the Prologue to the Prioress's Tale, VII 467-473, p. 161.

35 See Bryan and Dempster, eds., Sources and Analogues, p. 565.

36 Chauncey Wood, The Country of the Stars, p. 321.

## FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION

<sup>1</sup> The association between May and the Wife on the basis of the whip image is given more credence by the depiction of the Wife in the illustrations accompanying the Fairfax Ms as sitting on a horse, with whip in hand. May's connection with the whip, therefore, is not fortuitous, but in a tradition which portrayed malicious and insidious women in this attitude.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Jordan, in Chaucer and the Shape of Creation, repeatedly returns to the point that "although the narrative viewpoint is altogether inconsistent, the moral viewpoint remains firm" (p. 151).

<sup>3</sup> "Medieval culture as a whole is much more receptive to the production of nonrepresentational art than ours is. The medieval audience is ready and able to see effortlessly beyond the surface representation of form and image to a higher reality, and to see the concrete itself as metaphor and symbol". Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 14. For a practical example of how the concrete object carries abstract meanings, see the following studies of Gothic architecture: K. J. Conant, "Medieval Academy Excavations at Cluny IX: Systematic Dimensions in the Buildings", Speculum, XXXVIII (1963), 1-45, and George Lesser, Gothic Cathedrals and Sacred Geometry, 2 vols. (London, 1957).

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