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THE ACTIVE IMAGE: MEDIEVAL ALLEGORY AND CHAUCER

by

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This work is dedicated to my Mother, my Father, and Gary.

ABSTRACT

In the field of medieval studies, the phrase "allegorical interpretation" has generated continuous scholarly altercation. The debate is centred around the question of the degree to which patristic exegesis should be applied to medieval literature, a question thorny with attached problems like the relationships between allegory and symbol, allegory and convention, and allegory and personification. Unfortunately, the dialectic of critical discussion has made allegory synonymous with a style of interpretation which is rooted in the writings of the Church Fathers and applies doctrine systematically to pieces of literature. Another mode of entrance to medieval allegory has gone rather unnoticed: interpretation based on the literal sequence of events in allegorical narrative, in the story itself. This thesis offers a reading of three works important in the allegorical tradition of the Middle Ages. It then examines the usefulness of its allegorical method of reading in appreciating the work of Geoffrey Chaucer.

Chapter I studies traditional and modern definitions of allegory and concludes with a definition to be used in the thesis. Chapter II develops the idea that actions of allegorical images within the narrative process are the best indicators of an allegory's meaning, and tests the concept in discussion of the Psychomachia by Prudentius, the de Planctu Naturae by Alain de Lille and the Roman de la Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Chapter III traces Chaucer's

debt to the allegorical tradition and uses the allegorical method to explore his Book of the Duchess. Chapter IV demonstrates that rather than abandoning allegory in his artistic maturity, Chaucer developed it even further as a narrative form than he had done in earlier works and used it in what is generally considered to be his most "realistic" and least allegorical work--The Canterbury Tales.

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CHAPTER I

ALLEGORY: THE DEFINITIONS AND THE DEBATE

"Deux erreurs: 1° prendre tout litteralement;
2° prendre tout spirituellement"

--Pascal

In a study of the medieval tradition of allegory and its influence on Chaucer, a necessary first step is to clarify the term "allegory." Today the word seems to serve a variety of critical uses, sometimes meaning a particular genre, sometimes a structural principle, sometimes a trope, and sometimes a method of interpretation. It appears that a considerable disjunction has occurred in the meaning of the word since "allegory" was born from a union of the Greek allos (other) and agoreuein (speak openly, speak in the assembly or market), and came to mean speech with hidden meaning, or inversion of sense.[1] Such a confusion--or perhaps profusion--of thought surrounds allegory now that it causes some discomfort as a critical term. Louis MacNeice attempts to ignore it and substitutes "parable" because, he says, allegory "...is a word to which many people today are allergic and if one uses it too widely one has no word left for the category of allegory proper."[2]

In the face of such difficulties, it is prudent to begin with a brief history of allegory as a literary phenomenon. John MacQueen traces allegory back to origins in Greek myths, narratives of the doings of gods and men which came to be used as explanations of

various facets of human experience. In Hesiod's Works and Days (8th century B.C.), some of the legends are peopled by characters whose names state their functions in the story (for instance, Prometheus means forethought) and who thus initiate the tradition of personifications acting within a narrative frame. By the 1st century B.C., the tendency to read the myths as reflections of physical or ethical principles was well established. For example, the rape of Proserpina by Pluto was interpreted as a reference to the yearly regeneration of the earth's fruitfulness and to the cycle of human death and birth.[3] The Romans adopted both the Greek tales and the Greek device of double meaning in literary creation and interpretation, defining such doubleness by the word allegoria in Roman rhetorical theory. Cicero, in his Orator, describes allegory as "a continuous stream of metaphors;"[4] Quintillian indicates that "allegoriam facit continua metaphora"[5] and understands its function as a presentation of either "one thing in words and another in meaning or else something absolutely opposed to the meaning of the words (aut aliud verbis aliud sensu ostendit aut etiam interim contrarium)."[6]

Christian scholars of the Middle Ages accepted the Roman definitions of allegory as literary trope,[7] but added a new dimension to the term, a dimension they found in St. Paul's usage in Galatians 4. 22-26:

> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.[8]

Since the Bible was held to be true history as well as divine revelation, the attribution of allegory to its writings gave the term a resonance it had not possessed in the rhetorical formulae: not only was the underlying meaning of the words seen as true, but the words themselves were true, and were not solely literary invention. The literal level of Biblical allegory possesses an historical truth as well as a life of hidden meaning. This sense of allegory in Scripture grew into a method of Biblical interpretation that encouraged the discovery of many different meanings within one group of words, a method which appears to have started with the early Church Fathers, received use throughout the Dark Ages and found clear exposition in the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas. In this exegetical tradition, the Venerable Bede, writing near the beginning of the 5th century A.D., pointed out how both the facts (people, places, things and events) and the words (figurative expressions) of the Bible are allegorical, and noted that their allegorical significance can refer to history, to Christ's New law, to the conduct of life or to the final end of all being in heaven.[9] By the 13th century, St. Thomas was able to formulate established practice in the following way:

> The author of Holy Scripture is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man can do) but by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property that the things signified by words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal and presupposes it. For as the Apostle says (Heb. 10:1)

> the Old Law is a figure of the New Law and Dionysus says: 'The New Law itself is a figure of future glory.' Again, in the New Law, whatever our Head has done is a type of what we ought to do. Therefore, so far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense: so far as the things done in Christ, or so far as the things which signify Christ, are types of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense.[10]

Although scholars disagree on the extent to which the four-fold method of interpretation was applied in its fulness to texts,[11] it is apparent both from the collections of medieval sermons that have survived and testimonies in literature such as Chaucer's "Parson's Tale" that the habit of allegorizing Biblical texts in some manner was well-established among the clergy and learned people of late medieval society. This habit often extended past the Scriptures to physical phenomena, as D. W. Robertson mentions in A Preface to Chaucer:

> As the Middle Ages progressed, the idea developed that if things in the Bible are significant, other things are significant also, so that creation itself is an allegorical book revealing beneath the literal or visible surfaces of objects 'the invisible things of God' (Rom. 1. 20).[12]

Thus, not only were Moses and Abraham types of Christ; so were the lion and pelican,[13] the harp and the bow.[14] Similarly, pagan poets came to be studied for their "Egyptian gold and silver," for material which could be interpreted in Christian terms. Cicero, Statius, Virgil and especially Ovid were prized for the lessons which could be adduced from them through allegorical interpretation.

As the exegetes were developing their allegorically resonant readings of Scripture, and still occasionally repeating Origen's

arguments against the allegories of the pagan poets as nothing but fables,[15] a secular strain of allegory with roots in both the practice of the pagan poets and the teaching of the Church was growing. Following the method of late Roman authors such as Statius, who personified abstract concepts and used them as characters in narrative, Prudentius composed near the beginning of the 5th century the Psychomachia in which the vices and virtues of the human soul are personified as combatants in a violent war for possession of man. In spite of some logical inconsistency in the tale, it was an influential work throughout the Middle Ages, leading the way for development of more sophisticated personifications in narratives. In the early 6th century, Boethius composed his De Consolatione Philosophiae in which Philosophy appears as a visionary lady who holds a conversation with the imprisoned author. Not only the sentence of this treatise was beloved by ten centuries of readers after its composition; the style of treating an image of a concept with the same realism, in the same narrative depth, as an image of a particular existence--in this case, Boethius--was imitated by later writers of medieval allegory. By the 12th and 13th centuries, allegorical debates and dream visions were settled conventions in secular poetry. At the beginning of the 14th century, Dante was describing his poetic technique as allegory--either "allegory of the poets" as in his Convivio, or (if the Epistle to Can Grande is authentic) four-fold, sacred allegory as in the Divine Comedy. Chaucer himself, although the degree to which his work is allegory seems a matter of critical dispute, showed himself aware of both the theological and secular streams of allegory by frequently using commonplace allegorical terms like "sentence" and "fruyt and chaf," and

turning to such allegories as the Roman de la Rose for material.

It is evident that the Middle Ages had a variety of practices, all of which were termed "allegory." Robert Hollander, in his study of Dante, attempts to sort out the different kinds of allegory by distinguishing:

> ...four major medieval theories of allegory which themselves reflect one another in complex and often puzzling ways. Insofar as they may be disentangled one from another, these four theories may be described as follows: 1) the personification allegory of a few Christian poets, especially Prudentius and Martianus Capella, which in turn is essentially similar in technique to 2) the medieval allegorical interpretation of Virgil and Ovid. These two theories, the first "creative," the second critical, are together different in nature from 3) what the grammarians and rhetoricians called allegoria, thus signifying the writer's command of his tropes, his rhetorical embellishment.... (and) 4) the four-fold exegesis of Scripture.[16]

It must also be noted that the scriptural exegetes called all three levels of meaning beneath the literal "allegorical" even while they assigned the term "allegorical level" to the single sense referring to typology, or Christ's fulfilment of the Old Testament.

Although Hollander's divisions illustrate the medieval variety of meanings for the word allegory, they do not illustrate the true differentiation of allegorical patterns in the period. Jean Pepin takes issue with Hollander for this reason:

> Il n'est certainement pas illégitime de fractionner ainsi le vaste champ de l'allégorie médiévale, en ce sens qu'aucune de ces conceptions ne coïncide avec les autres. Mais s'agit-il bien de quatre démarches sans rapport entre elles, et non pas de variétés intérieures aux deux grandes divisions dégagées ci-dessus? On peut en douter.... En sorte que, compte tenu des multiples specifications dont il est loisible de le subdiviser, le véritable clivage

> à reconnaître d'abord dans la notion traditionnelle de l'allégorie demeure, conformément aux dictionnaires, la dualité de l'expression et de l'interpretation.[17]

C. S. Lewis, in The Allegory of Love, draws a similar kind of dividing line when he defends his lack of attention to the multiple senses of Scripture by stating:

> I am concerned much more to explain a taste than to record the steps by which it found its gratification; and...my subject is secular and creative allegory, not religious and exegetical allegory.[18]

But such a firm separation of kinds becomes increasingly difficult in studying the literature of the late Middle Ages, when secular allegories like Piers Plowman and Pearl appear to have much of a tropological tone about them, when Dante comes near to borrowing the method of Scriptural exegesis for his vision of Beatrice and beatitude, and when Chaucer ends a tale of a cock and a hen with an admonition (quoted from St. Paul) that all is written for doctrine. On the other side of the allegory, so to speak, a number of Dante critics have followed the guide to interpretation offered in the Epistle to Can Grande and subjected the Divine Comedy to rigorous four-fold exegesis. D. W. Robertson, Bernard Huppé and followers aver that Chaucer intended his w[illegible] to be read for doctrine primarily and delight secondarily; they attempt to demonstrate an alleged basic Chaucerian concern with differentiating caritas from cupiditas.

To neglect either the sentence or solas of any literary work, medieval or otherwise, produces an incomplete appreciation of the work; one cannot help but feel dissatisfied with theories which promise to be means of organizing an appreciation of allegorical practice

in medieval writers but which then proceed to separate the sacred and secular allegorical kinds, fixing pieces of literature to a static frame of critical constructs. The literature seems to evade such rigidity; Dante and Chaucer, for two superior examples, use all the versions of allegorical figure known to their times, mixing styles with conscious art in a fluid fusion resistant to any criticism based in solely sacred or solely secular practice.

Besides coming to terms with the numerous shades of meaning attached to allegory in the Middle Ages, a study of this sort must also acknowledge shades of definitions brought forward in modern times, for commentary and scholarship in a generation that is steeped in Freud and Jung can often look on allegory in ways different from early writers. Modern definitions of allegory are made in the context of the Romantic antipathy for the term. Samuel Taylor Coleridge often castigated it (perhaps more in reaction to 18th-century personifications than to medieval allegories, since he is an admirer of such practitioners of allegory as Dante, Spenser and Chaucer). Says Coleridge:

> The mere entymological meaning of the word, allegory,--to talk of one thing and thereby convey another,--is too wide. The true sense is this,--the employment of one set of agents and images to convey in disguise a moral meaning, with a likeness to the imagination, but with a difference to the understanding,--those agents and images being so combined as to form a homogeneous whole. This distinguishes it from metaphor, which is part of an allegory.... Narrative allegory is distinguished from mythology as reality from symbol; it is, in short, the proper intermedium between person and personification.[19]

He discusses his sense of the difference between allegory and symbol:

> Now an allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture language, which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; the principal being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike unsubstantial, and the former shapeless to boot. On the other hand a symbol...is characterized by a tra lucence of the special in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal. It always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible;...[20]

An echo of this judgement can be heard in C. S. Lewis' argument that allegory is the opposite of symbolism. Says Lewis:

> The difference between the two can hardly be exaggerated. The allegorist leaves the given--his own passions--to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real.[21]

This assertion is questionable. Are the allegorist's own passions the starting point for his creation? "Passions" were more often considered as the seeds of deception than the roots of truth in the Middle Ages, if the oft-repeated teachings of the Church on the subject had any influence. Furthermore, who would confess the fiction of an allegory to be less real than an individual's passions, when the subject of medieval allegory was often the pursuit of true reality through the action of concepts in the mind? Lewis betrays his post-Romantic preferences for realistic mimesis as opposed to idealistic styles in literature, for individual-centred writing as opposed to more general visions of human experience, when he assumes the writer's "own passions" are the only possible sources of "real" literary creation. Lewis concludes: "Symbolism is a mode of thought, but allegory is a mode of expression."[22] His later discussions imply that the characteristic

element of allegory is the personified abstraction. Lewis' division between allegory and symbol has been adopted by other critics, including Barbara Seward. She distinguishes allegory and symbol in this manner:

> A simile presents an explicit comparison between one thing or concept and another, a metaphor presents a like comparison implicitly, an image substitutes identification for comparison, and an allegorical device is most commonly employed as the vehicle of a single abstract idea. Various as they are, all four resemble each other and differ from the symbol in expressing little more than simple, definite correspondences between two analogous conceptions.[23]
>
> ...when...an allegorical object is given meanings too indefinite, complex or mysterious to be adequately expressed in any other way, the object can legitimately be termed a symbol.[24]

The distinction between allegory and symbol has met opposition from other contemporary critics. Robertson, among others, rejects such a dichotomy applied to medieval allegory which is based, as he sees it, in the exegetical practices of the Church. He interprets the anti-allegory, pro-symbol school as assuming that things are symbols while actions are allegories, then attacks such a view, maintaining that symbol and allegory are not separable in this way. The definition of allegory he offers follows closely that of Quintillian and Isidore of Seville: "Allegory is simply the device of saying one thing to mean another, and its ulterior meaning may rest on things or on actions, or on both together."[25]

Among scholars adopting an approach contrary to or modifying that of Lewis is Bertrand Bronson. He takes up the earlier commentator on two main points:

> In the sense in which the Platonist can maintain that the ideal is more real than the phenomenal world, it is legitimate for the serious allegorist to claim that through his idealized figures he is seeking to depict essential realities, precisely that ideal world in which both (he and the symbolist) are most interested. If, moreover, we consent to the proposition that symbolism is a mode of thought, allegory a mode of expression, it has to be pointed out that a mode of thought is not operative in art until it has found utterance in a valid mode of artistic expression. Thus, it is clear that symbolism and allegory are not proper opposites. The true opposite of allegory is naturalism, these two modes being at either extreme of the scale of representative expression.[26]

Northrop Frye, in his monumentally synthetic Anatomy of Criticism, faces the same issue. Genuine allegory, he says, "is a structural element in literature; it has to be there, and cannot be added by critical interpretation alone."[27] However, any thematic interpretation of a piece of literature treats the literature as:

> ...a potential allegory of events and ideas. The relation of such commentary to poetry itself is the source of the contrast which was developed by several critics of the Romantic period between 'symbolism' and 'allegory,' symbolism here being used in the sense of thematically significant imagery. The contrast is between a 'concrete' approach to symbols which begins with images of actual things and works outward to ideas and propositions, and an 'abstract' approach which begins with the idea and then tries to find a concrete image to represent it. This distinction is valid enough in itself, but it has deposited a large terminal moraine of confusion in modern criticism, largely because the term allegory is very loosely employed for a variety of literary phenomena.
>
> We have actual allegory when a poet explicitly indicates the relationship of his images to examples and precepts, and so tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed. A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear he is saying 'by this I also mean that.' If this seems to be done continuously, we may say, cautiously, that what he is writing 'is' an allegory.... But even continuous allegory is still a structure of images, not of disguised ideas, and commentary has to proceed with it exactly as it does with all other literature, trying to see what precepts and examples are suggested by the imagery as a whole.[28]

While some modern critics have wrestled with distinctions among figures of speech, allegories and symbols, others have produced an approach to allegory based on psychological principles. Paul Piehler exemplifies this school in his study of "visionary" allegories:

> Medieval allegory itself frequently depicts a psychological process by which the spiritual forces are identified in the form of personifications, analysed in dialogue, and then either accepted or rejected for absorption into the personal psychic entity of those who participate in the spiritual processes the allegory embodies. In this respect, as in many others, medieval allegory refines and intellectualizes spiritual processes embodied in ancient myth and ritual.[29]

Edwin Honig, whose Dark Conceit: the Making of Allegory attempts to expand the meaning of allegory to include the work of such writers of recent times as Melville, Hawthorne and Kafka, sees a similar personal, psychological value in allegory for the reader:

> In the cluttered playground of fantasy an arena of the absolute is disclosed where relationships between agents, agent and action, and action and purpose may be subtilized in ways that few other fictional artifices permit. Transcending customary qualifications, the introduction of the artifice immediately declares that moral identities--dream impulsions dominated by conscious experience--have a life of their own. For the attentive reader, this declaration translates itself into the exclamation, 'This could be me!' or 'This is me!' It is what one senses at the beginning of The Divine Comedy....[30]

Psychological interpretations can prove just as limiting as interpretations ex cathedra or interpretations based on a secular code of courtly love. Freud and Jung have provided critics with dangerously tempting sets of systems for interpreting mental phenomena, and their psychological language applied to medieval art can produce barrenness in some cases. For example, Angus Fletcher in Allegory: the Theory

of a Symbolic Mode, approaches allegory as a form of ritual and is constrained to declare its imagery "daemonic" and to see the figures in a story as psychological emanations of "the conceptual hero":

> ...the heroes seem to create the worlds about them. they are like those people in real life who 'project', ascribing fictitious personalities to those whom they meet and live with. By analyzing the projections, we determine what is going on in the mind of the highly imaginative projector. By the same token, if the reader wants a sketch of Redcrosse in Spenser, he lists the series of adventures and tests undergone by Redcrosse, not so much for the pleasure of seeing how Redcrosse reacts in each case, as to see, literally, what aspects of the hero have been displayed by the poet.[31]

But surely one's sense of Redcrosse's character comes exactly from "the pleasure of seeing how Redcrosse reacts." By reducing art to psychic phenomenon, one can lose some degree of the delight it is meant to inspire. Spenser, after all, is writing a story, not a psychological treatise.

From a brief survey of the history of allegory, it becomes evident that the debate over the nature of allegory owes part of its existence to an inherited complex of multiple meanings put in the term by early writers. It would also appear that the allergy to allegory perceived by Louis MacNeice may be caused by the difficulty of reconciling today's aesthetic attitudes, in which artistic images should be concrete and mimetic of sensory experience, with the claim reality of medieval allegorical images plainly based on intellectual exp- ence. The question of in what manner mimetic images can be also allo- al, and vice versa, is an important one for students of Chaucer. Chauce- s often praised for his "realism." However, it will be suggested l-t- in the thesis that his narrative art owes at least as

much to the allegorical tradition as to the more mimetic traditions such as fabliau. It will be suggested that allegorical images can be interesting, even "fully-rounded" characters in narrative.

Some defenders of allegory meet objections to claims for realism in its images with basic questions:

> Such personified agents are of course intended to represent ideas, not real people; they could not, like the characters in a young author's first novel, be traced to their particular 'originals.' This point can be easily misunderstood--allegorical images are real enough, however ideal their referents may be, however 'unlike ourselves' they may appear. They have what might be called an 'adequate representational power'.... What constitutes reality? Is it accuracy of representation? Then what constitutes accuracy? Or representation?[32]

Fletcher directs these questions at critics who identify allegory only with personification and who feel its ulterior meaning precludes true artistry, a position Robert Hollander takes when he says:

> Now, as then, those who work from idea to representation necessarily deal with a more limited form of expression. In order to create, an allegorist must have thought through what he is going to create. What he imitates has no primary life of its own.[33]

W. T. H. Jackson betrays a similar bias in his guide to medieval literature:

> Formal allegory--that is, a long work, usually in poetry, whose characters are personifications of abstract qualities--flourished during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Although such works contained passages of great poetical merit, the aim of their authors was undoubtedly didactic and the allegory was felt to be the most effective and also the most accurate method of imparting ideas....[34]

Because Boethius holds his conversation not with a philosophizing human being, but with Philosophy herself; because Alain de Lille gives us his thoughts on sensual love not from his own mouth but from the "mouth" of Nature; because the lover in the Roman de la Rose pursues not a woman but a rosebud, these stories are felt to be contrived and didactic rather than true to life. When outright personifications are employed as actors in narrative, they are disparaged for didacticism more often than other allegorical images with some semblance of imitation of sensible existence (like Dante's Beatrice) who can at least claim by virtue of their mimetic qualities some "primary life" of their own. In this vein, Erich Auerbach refuses to admit mimetic images are allegorical, saving "allegory" to apply to personifications, and giving mimetic images the title of "figura":

> ...a figural schema permits both its poles--the figure and its fulfilment--to retain the characteristics of concrete historical reality, in contradistinction to what obtains with symbolic or allegorical personifications, so that figure and fulfilment--although the one 'signifies' the other--have a significance which is not incompatible with their being real. An event taken as a figure preserves its literal and historical meaning. It remains an event, does not become a mere sign....[35]

Auerbach's division is a persuasive one, especially since it seems to echo the Venerable Bede's distinction between allegory of fact and allegory of word; however, to deny a mimetic function to allegorical figures by saying that no mimetic figure may be allegorical is to narrow allegory too far. It necessitates saying that Boethius is not allegorical although Lady Philosophy is; that the Lover is not allegorical although the Rose is; that Alain is not allegorical although

Nature is. The constant juxtaposition of mimetic features with idealized features in medieval allegory makes Auerbach's distinction a difficult one to use without splitting apart these works and killing them for the sake of their kernels of realism--an act at least as painful as killing them for their kernels of doctrine. One is drawn to conclude with Charles Muscatine that the literature of the Middle Ages "requires our understanding that the experience of the idealizing imagination is no less varied than that of realistic observation, and no less true."[36] As Scholes and Kellogg have said in The Nature of Narrative, for medieval audiences

> ...the Psychomachia, the de Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii, and the Anticlaudianus were confrontations with reality, not reality as it might be dimly perceived through the confusion of sensory experience, but reality as it had been clarified by the reason and refined by philosophical tradition. The modern reader must strain his historical imagination to understand that the essential action of primitive allegories is almost purely intellectual and that the patterned movement of ideas can be both beautiful and exciting without bearing any relationship to the empirical data of sensory experience whatsoever.[37]

It is helpful at this point to look at a philosophical debate fought in the Middle Ages over the question of the existence of abstract concepts. Boethius himself, in his commentary on the Isagoge of Porphyry, takes note of the issue: whether genera and species are subsistent entities or consist in concepts alone. He distinguishes two ways in which ideas may be formed so that their content is not found in extramental objects as it is in the ideas. The first way, composition, joins together things "nature does not suffer to be joined together"; for example, adding the idea of man to the idea of

horse to produce a centaur; compositions, says Boethius, produce false ideas. However, true ideas are produced by abstraction, by a consideration of likenesses in objects. Thus, the concepts of geometric line, of genera and of species, are all true in that although they do not exist outside of the idea, objective reality has in it the likenesses which produce the idea.[38]

The problem of universals produced a debate stretching from the 9th to the 13th century between realists who held that concepts existed outside as well as inside the mind, and nominalists who held that there are no universals or general concepts, but only particular existences. The debate is put to uneasy rest by Abelard and St. Thomas Aquinas. Abelard returns to the Boethian solution, arguing that universal concepts are formed by abstraction in the mind and that through these concepts we conceive what is in the object, although we do not conceive it as it is in the object. Taking the idea of humanity as an example of a universal concept, he explains that by means of abstraction human nature is set free from all individuality and is considered in such a way that it bears no special relation to any particular individual but can be predicated of all individual men.[39] Finally, St. Thomas states that although it is incorrect to think of a form as actually existing as an abstraction, the form does exist in that from which it was abstracted. However, distinguishing essence from existence, he acknowledges that the mind can contemplate essences in a state of abstraction from their existence in particular objects.[40]

To bring the philosophical debate nearer to the literary issue of realism in personification imagery, one can quote Bartholomew Anglicus:

> Form maketh matter known. Matter is cause that we see things that are made, and so nothing is more common and general than matter. And natheless nothing is more unknown than is matter; for matter is never seen without form, nor form may not be seen in deed, but joined to matter.[41]

Just as form and matter must unite to make God's creation apprehendable by man, so they must unite in a poet's creation for the same reason. Although universal concepts can be contemplated in the abstract, to be communicated artistically they must be joined to matter if they are to be seen "in deed." Thus Nature in de Planctu Naturae must be given brightly shining hair and smiling eyes to be "realized" in the artist's creation--"matter is cause that we see things that are made." Concepts in allegory are, it is true, more essential than existential. Allegorical images are often not mimetic of existences, but of essences. So, in order to make those images communicable to, and perceivable by, a reader, an artist invests them with some material elements--body and voice, for instance--and sets them moving in a narrative frame. The concept may not have a particular body in the sense that each human being has, but it is definitely embodied according to the necessity of art. It may not be particularized to the point of being a human character; it is nonetheless formally true, actively and essentially alive.

To justify further allegorical imagery, including personifications, as lively and true art (though not necessarily naturalistically mimetic), it is necessary to go one step beyond philosophy into the psychology of such imagery. How does the artist form an image of a concept? How are essences describable? A. D. Nuttall admits, in

Two Concepts of Allegory, that concepts are logical but not sensible, while images are imaginings linked to the sense world; however, since both writers and readers of allegory are interested in how ideas exist, with the life of ideas, he says a thing emerges from a poet's balance of idea and perception which he calls "the instantially-viewed universal." He notes that many concepts call up a vague vision of qualities in one's mind; one can "see" yellow or red or green without necessarily imagining a yellow or red or green objects. Similarly, the idea of pride is somehow proud, and the idea of anger is somehow angry, he argues. This seeing of the unseeable, although illogical and indefensible against philosophical arguments, is a common mental activity; Nuttall maintains:

> I have argued that this entity(the instantially-viewed Universal) can enjoy a logically spurious existence as long as confusion of concept and image prevails.... Grant me this confusion and I can provide in the 'non-specified image' something which can be thought of as general and at the same time envisaged as a mysterious individual; in Plato or in allegory, Pride itself is proud....[42]

He concludes that allegory is "not so much the decoration of thought as its vehicle...."[43]

Once an allegorical writer has an image, an idea that "looks like" something dimly sensible, why does he not make it more particular and, as the naturalist writers do, locate the idea in an image with the characteristics of an individual human being? Why does Boethius call the lady in his cell Philosophy when he could have created a character as human as himself and let that character speak the words

of wisdom? Why do allegorists sometimes choose to use personifications rather than personages as characters in their action? Bertrand Bronson offers some reasons:

> The bestowing of a self-explanatory label is a device of great efficiency and economy. It obviates the inconvenient necessity of an initial reading to discover significance. It anticipates and prevents doubt of intentions. It makes for a clarity of statement more precise than can be achieved by undenominated symbols. It advances upon and occupies the positions of an argumentative or expositional statement or series of propositions with a suddenness never approached by naturalistic methods, and clinches these with the force of logic.[44]

Although these arguments would not find favour with a writer interested primarily in human emotions--Lewis' "passions"--they are undoubtedly appealing to a man with a point to prove as well as a story to tell. And such men are Prudentius, Boethius, Alain de Lille, and the authors of the Roman de la Rose.

However, not all allegorical images are personifications. There are still those images, like Beatrice in Dante and Duenna in the Roman, who embody concepts while bodying forth particular existences. Their mimetic aspects do not deny them an allegorical function, as Auerbach would have us believe. There may be differences in the quality of imagery involved, but both mimetic and non-mimetic images participate as actors in allegory. As the next chapter will attempt to show, it is the actions of an image which clarify its meaning, no matter if it has the name of a concept or the name of a character within the narrative. It is in the narrative action that both personifications and mimetic images can be said, in spite of their frame of the allegory's ulterior meaning, to have "a life of their own."

Too often the action of an allegory, the narrative progression of it, is halted in its tracks by the type of analysis that attempts vertical, static explanations of "levels" of meaning; the very word, levels, is a metaphor for verticalness, for architectural, building-block reading. A preferable metaphor would be "sequences" of meaning, so that the idea of progression, the idea of action, can shape the interpretation of the allegory under study. Medieval allegory benefits when given the same kind of listening that should be given to early polyphony in which different melodies, each dependent on the other for completion of the work's total beauty, move forward in individual patterns of progression. Medieval musical harmony involves not the spaces between the melody lines in a ballade or rondel, but the patterns of on-going action and response among them; medieval allegorical harmony involves not the spaces between image and meaning but their mysterious conjunctions in a narrative process that lets one see ideas alive. As E. Talbot Donaldson has remarked:

> In allegory the equation is not merely a equals b, the literal statement reanalyzed equals the suggested meaning, but it is something more like a plus b equals c, the literal statement plus the meaning it suggests yield an ultimate meaning that is an inextricable union of both.[44]

Having surveyed briefly a few historical and critical aspects of allegory and noted the importance of narrative form to the medieval genre, the thesis offers the following as an operative definition of allegory. Although it does not encompass all the possible meanings of the word, it works well with the literature to be examined here:

allegory, n. Narrative description of a subject under guise of another suggestively similar.[45]

CHAPTER II

THE ACTIVE IMAGE

A good allegory, says Edwin Honig, "beguiles the reader with a continuous interplay between subject and sense in the storytelling, and the narrative, the story itself, means everything."[1] In the case of medieval allegories, such an emphasis on "the story itself" is a healthy counterbalance to the many critical approaches which view allegory as primarily didactic and concentrate on tracing philosophical systems under its fictive surfaces.

The didactic approach is summarized by D. W. Robertson, who carefully notes St. Paul's warning that the letter kills, but the spirit gives life to Biblical trope. Taking the warning to apply also to secular allegory, he searches for the spirit beyond the literal story and says of the Roman de la Rose:

> Just as a cathedral is not 'organized space' provided as an area for men to act as free agents, but an organization of lines in space constructed to emphasize certain ideas and to facilitate certain symbolic actions, in the same way the organization of the Roman is not a framework for literally conceived action, but a vehicle for the development of ideas. The story is of value to the poem only as it permits exemplification, not as a thing in itself.... The significance of the actions described is driven home by the iconographic descriptions, without which the poem would be reduced to a simple statement of a very commonplace idea.[2]

This treatment of allegory begs a question: if allegory exists only as a vehicle for the development of ideas, and if the story has no value in itself, why is allegory written at all? If Robertson's

opinion is to be accepted, writers interested only in the development of ideas would seem to be better advised to spend their time as philosophers handling the straightforward fabric of ideas rather than as poets fiddling with the lace of exemplification. The fact that allegories are written as they are, as artfully composed stories rather than philosophical treatises, argues more strongly for the importance of narrative than critical judgements can argue against it. Without the story, the poem would be worse than "reduced to a simple statement of a very commonplace idea;" it would be non-existent.

All the possible significances of the poem depend for realization on what Dante called the "beautiful lie" of the narrative.[3] In allegory, meaning is bound up inextricably with the action of the tale. Meaning cannot be torn from the story without leaving its life behind, no matter how philosophically respectable the meaning may appear when stated baldly as a principle. As Honig says, "Although the idea may be extricated from the work and evaluated, its existence as a recipe for action or a pious hope has little to do with the existential role it plays in the allegorical work."[4] Discovering an apt simile, he adds, "The intangible quality is not separable from the object but suffuses it as motion in a stream...."[5] Allegorical thought and allegorical image are interfused by the narrative in which they act; they get their being as art through their doing in the story. To reiterate St. Thomas, essences can be contemplated in abstraction but they cannot exist except within individual existences. It is this shared life of idea and image that ensures allegory is more than a set of soulless similitudes. As Rosemonde Tuve says:

> Allegoria does not use metaphor; it is one. By definition a continued metaphor, allegoria exhibits the normal relation of concretion to abstraction found in metaphor, in the shape of a series of particulars with further meanings. Each such concretion or sensuous detail is by virtue of its initial base already a metaphor.[6]

An examination of the normal relation of idea and image in allegory demonstrates how allegory is not extended simile or personification but rather extended metaphor. It is true that sometimes an allegorical figure can be "like" its referent; the Rose is like a lady in some of her attributes such as youth and beauty. It is also true that one does not attempt to say the Rose is the lady; rather, the tendency is to say that the Rose represents or is an image of the lady. Questioning what is meant, however, by this kind of representation leads to the conclusion that the figure and figured are alike in their actions more than in their attributes. The Rose is like the lady not so much in her being as in her doing, not so much in her qualities as in her actions of attracting the lover, not so much in her existence as in her essence. Ellen Leyburn expresses the distinction in this way:

> The proliferation of personified abstractions in medieval works is probably responsible for the gradual linking of personification with the definition of allegory. This has been one of the most confusing developments in the usage of the word, for there is nothing inherently allegorical about personification.... Allegory begins only when the quality is set in motion. Abstractions cannot act except metaphorically; thus in the medieval wars of the vices and virtues, it is the battles which are allegorical. The inactive capitalized abstractions of much 18th-century poetry are not allegorical at all.[7]

Thus there is no better guide to the full meaning of an allegory than the process of its narrative. Attempting to formulate an allegory by tracing equations between images and ideas is not as effective because such equations are static and allegorical images do not work statically; if they did, every aspect of the image would have to find a correlation in its ideal referent; the lady would have to have petals, or the rose hair. By placing his image in action in a narrative process, the allegorist frees himself from the constraints a symbolist experiences when creating images. The symbolist must ensure that his correspondences are all fitting; he cannot, to use a Coleridgean example, describe his sunsets as "lobster-red" because the common quality of redness is not enough of a sharing to unite the lobster with the sun in satisfactory metaphor. However, the allegorist can present a human being falling in love with a citizen of the plant kingdom because the momentum of the poem's action has an appeal, through both the implied boy-meets-girl process and the presented man-meets-flower process, which overcomes a reader's hesitancy over any realistic impossibility in the man-flower fiction. The ideas and images in allegory have a symbiotic relationship; "unrealistic" images manage to live because they are recognizably related to a thought-process, which rings true when approached through the action of the images. The reader accepts the images acting because he can see the idea behind them becoming clarified in their narrative activity.

So, in concentrating on narrative action, one is brought to an awareness of an allegory's pattern of meaning in the same way one is brought to an awareness of a polyphonic piece of medieval music. By reading the action as a story of ideas as well as a story of characters,

one sees the allegory; by listening to all the melodies moving at once, rather than by analyzing the chords, one hears the music. Allegory is polysemous only when it is read on the move. Rosamonde Tuve describes such reading:

> ...instead of personality giving the abstractions life, the figure often works the other way around; the excitement comes when we "conceive" the idea, the person suddenly then becoming charged with meanings of very great depth and extension.... The curious inner revolution experienced, as gestalt replaced gestalt, came from moving out of the area of imitated literal life into an area where universals rather than particulars seem to be met, into an area where ideas themselves confront one or interact.[8]

Given such a reading, an allegory can have as acting images within it any variety of personified abstractions, human characters or mythic figures. The degree of their "realism" becomes only a question of style because they are being brought to life through action rather than through mimetic detail and naturalistic depiction. To take Aristotle out of context, "As far as poetic effect is concerned, a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility."[9] Evil Tongue in the Roman is preferable to some "well-rounded character" named Merv or Rodney. Similarly, as Angus Fletcher notes:

> There is no important difference between a very real, human, semi-abstraction (Moloch, Belial or the like) and a very unreal, non-human abstraction (a Gluttony, a Fever, or the like), since as long as they take part in total forms that are ritualized or symmetrically ordered, the ritual form of the whole will determine the final effect of each agent.[10]

The degree of physical being belonging to an allegorical image is therefore not a proper indicator of an allegory's art. One should rather examine the action of the narrative to see if it is always com-

patible and resonant with both the fictional life of the images and the ideal life of the broadened meanings. Thus, allegory demands that the reader suspend his distinctions between the realistic perceptual realm and the unrealistic conceptual realm. If our post-Romantic age can pass by these distinctions when a poet says, "She walks in beauty, like the night,"[11] it should not be much more difficult to handle them when a poet says, "Her name was Beauty.../And she possessed the finest qualities...."[12]

To demonstrate how action is the key to meaning in much medieval allegory, one can begin by studying some examples of iconography and typology. At first glance, stasis and stylization would seem to be the characteristics of the art in stained glass of great cathedrals. When the artists depict various scenes in the windows, seldom do they communicate the straining of muscles and the natural flow of a garment around a moving body. However, the viewer soon becomes aware that the images often have their significances only in their actions. A good example of such signification, useful because it is not only clear but conventional in conception, can be found in a window from the Gothic cathedral at Le Mans (pictured in Emile Mâle's The Gothic Image).[13] The central medallion of the window shows Christ crucified. In the upper left corner of the window, a pelican is seen striking her breast and drawing blood with her beak so that it flows over her nestlings. (Medieval scientific lore had it that pelicans quickened their offspring in this manner.) Moses is depicted striking a rock and drawing forth water. Viewed alone, the actions of these two images have no depth and little meaning beyond their appearances. Juxtaposed with the crucifixion, the images still have little meaning if viewed statically,

for they are singularly lacking in any romantic symbolic resemblances appealing to the emotions. Read in action, their meaning becomes clear. Both Christ and the pelican are offering their blood to bring life to their kind; both Christ and Moses pour water, the first from his lance-pierced side, the second from the rock, the first to slake the spiritual thirst of men, the second to slake the physical thirst of the Jews wandering in the desert.

To give a further instance of how the action of images gives them their meaning, the Good Samaritan window in the Cathedral of Sens (also pictured in Mâle) can be cited.[14] The window is tall and narrow, topped by an image of the temple of Jerusalem, with three pieces of diamond-shaped glass placed down its axis depicting the story of the Good Samaritan. Each side of each diamond has a Biblical image resting by it. The first diamond, which shows the traveller set upon by robbers, is surrounded by medallions showing the creation, the temptation, the judgement and the expulsion from Eden of Adam and Eve. Reading the action, one sees that just as the traveller is despoiled of his goods, so Adam and Eve are despoiled of their grace by sin. The second diamond shows the unfortunate traveller lying beaten in the road and receiving no succour from a priest and Levite passing him; it is surrounded by scenes from the Old Testament--Moses raising the brazen serpent on a beam, pleading before the hard-hearted Pharoah, throwing down the golden idol and finally receiving the law of God from the burning bush. Read actively, the failure of the priest and Levite to rescue the traveller reflects the failure of the Old Law to bring spiritual travellers into the salvation of the New Law, the heavenly Jerusalem. The final joyous diamond paints the traveller welcomed

into the inn in the company of the Samaritan; it is surrounded by scenes of Christ's condemnation, scourging, crucifixion and resurrection. The Samaritan and Christ both bring travellers to harbour, reads the window, its conclusion a reflection of the Jerusalem in its crown.

Interpreting on the basis of action can also be a help to the enjoyment of medieval manuscript illumination. Robertson's Preface to Chaucer, valuable for its clear reproductions and its enlightening discussions of medieval iconography, provides in illustrations 93, 94 and 95 some material for an example.[15] These pages from a 14th century psalter and horae tell of the seduction of Thamar by Amnon. The manuscript illuminations depict the action of the plot; however, the ancillary images are interesting for their active comment on the basic illustrations. In fig. 93, while the illustration within the major initial shows Thamar bringing a bowl of food to Amnon who is bed-ridden with feigned sickness, figures painted around the initial depict a gaudily-dressed, peacock-plumed person offering a bowl of food to a monster; read actively, the images are the feeding of two different appetites. While Thamar feeds Amnon's legitimate, natural appetite, Amnon's spiritual pride and egotism is feeding his monstrous lust as he plots to rape Thamar. In fig. 94, where Amnon is seen throwing Thamar onto the bed, the artist paints himself beside the initial as a figure turning his head in shame while at the base of the page a vicious hybrid animal with a man's face on both top and bottom of the body is seen cavorting. Here, the action of the artist-image is a counterpoint rather than a parallel to that of the initial; his turning away in shame is an opposite of Amnon's turning toward vice, and the opposition adds depth

to both actions. Finally, the cavorting of the monster comments on the cavorting of Amnon, since both transgress a law--the monster, the law of nature; and Amnon, the law of fit morality. Fig. 95 shows Amnon, with mouth open in shouting rejection, sending Thamar from his chamber. In the upper left corner, an ass blows a trumpet; the shared action of the images is a common braying. Similarly, a figure with a man's body and a lion's head, its mouth open in a roar, shares Amnon's act of anger and seems to remark that the lion of anger has now overcome his head. Robertson frequently notes that small animals or creatures half-beast, half-man, are familiar apparitions in illuminations of texts on vice. A man with a goat's foot and tail, for instance, can appear as an image of lechery. Such lively little beings partake of the allegorical, active kind of similitude; the illuminator is not saying that a lecher is a goat, nor that lechery makes a human being look like a goat, but rather that lechers act like goats.

Approaching the allegory of Scripture by way of action can disclose the sense beneath a parable when the parable may be resistant to more congenial emotional interpretations. Such parables as the Good Shepherd and the Prodigal Son are much-beloved because they offer affective images of God to the beholder; there is a romantic, emotional appeal to Christ as a loving shepherd and the Father seen as a forgiving parent. But other parables, approached in a sentimental vein, are nothing but puzzling and troublesome, while they yield a happy meaning once analyzed according to their narrative. For instance, the Gospel of Luke gives this parable of the unjust steward which, interestingly enough, immediately follows the two affective parables mentioned above:

> There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. And he called to him and said to him,'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses, when I am put out of the stewardship.' So summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' .... The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence; for the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light.[16]

Here, there is no affective comparison, no equation, between the master and God the Father, between the steward and the man seeking heaven. How can the master be offered as an admirable and exemplary figure when he commends the steward who is dishonest? How can the steward be exemplary when he has feathered his nest at the expense of his master? The answer can be found in the allegorical direction Christ gives when he says the sons of "this world" are wiser than the "sons of light." This comment provides two contexts in which to read one action: in the context of this world, the prudence of the steward is in his looking to the future and storing favour where he wants to be sheltered eventually; in the context of "the light" or the eternal world, men should act like the steward and look to their spiritual futures, taking care to prepare a welcome for themselves among the houses of heaven. In the same way, the action of Abrahám is the action of God when St. Paul says his casting out of the slave's son is an allegory of the fate of the Old Law. Only the context shifts, from secular disinheritance to spiritual disinheritance; the action of choosing the

"fruit of the promise" remains consistent with both the narrative story and the implied idea-event. That the Middle Ages read allegory in this way can be seen in the sermons, the bestiaries and the scriptural glosses of the period. The affective qualities of allegorical images did not intrude on the primary indicator of their meaning, which was their narrative action.[17]

Reading narrative action can be the key not only to allegorical iconography and scriptural allegory, but also to medieval secular allegories. Some critics object to seeing important action in these allegories, arguing that it takes characters to have narrative action while these allegories have none. Angus Fletcher states this concern:

> While it may have been convenient to label these abstractions 'agents,' it was recognized that they were not theoretically free enough and rich enough in 'character' to be equated with the agents in a normal mimetic representation of action.[18]

Allegorical action may not be "normal mimetic representation," but its effectiveness does not suffer for that. The lack of naturalism enhances rather than diminishes the importance of narrative line in the works about to be studied: the Psychomachia by Prudentius, the Complaint of Nature by Alain de Lille, and the Roman de la Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. As Charles Muscatine has noted:

> Less fully articulated symbols--'type characters' to the modern reader--find their meaningfulness through enmeshment in patterns of relationships, in consequential actions, in themes which are themselves articulated fully enough to figure forth significant human concerns.[19]

Two other defenders of the importance of narrative to allegory are

Scholes and Kellogg who argue from a viewpoint based on the form of narrative:

> As characters move in a narrative plot their meanings change, just as the meanings of words change in different grammatical situations and in different contexts...[20]

> Allegorical narrative is a mode of thought and a mode of story-telling, and there is inevitably a healthy tension between these two modes. One of the main qualities which differentiates narrative from other, 'purer' modes of thought is the inevitable interplay among the various attributes of a narrative work. The esthetic exigencies driving the author toward the provision of a satisfying shape for his tale will operate so as to modify and possibly enrich its intellectual content.... the esthetic and representational qualities of narrative serve to subject ideas to a kind of tempering they cannot be subjected to in a merely discursive or philosophical mode of thought.[21]

Two aspects of action in allegory can be gleaned from these comments: (1) the interaction of images with each other in the story, and (2) their interaction with the idea pattern behind the allegory and with the narrative pattern framing their motion. Both these aspects of action are important qualities of any allegory's art, and both can be used as points of examination for particular works.

In the first allegory to be considered, the Psychomachia of of Prudentius, the narrative frame is that of military battle. Jackson calls this seminal work of the early Middle Ages the first known full-length work in which the action is "carried on by personified abstractions who behaved as human beings."[22] Robert Hollander has a word of praise for the work:

> Since Christian life was to be understood as having one of its climactic moments in conversion, Prudentius had perfected a literary treatment that allowed such a momentous event (which is, after all, internal) to be displayed externally ....Prudentius' peculiar

> contribution was to make the war in the mind or soul a fit subject for poetry...[23]

Robertson, on the other hand, argues against any identification of the battle of vices and virtues with the internal action in an individual's mind:

> The Psychomachia of Prudentius may be thought of as typifying a pattern of individual experience in which the virtues triumph over the vices so that a condition of beatitude results. But the virtues and vices involved are not the personal virtues and vices peculiar to any given individual; they retain their generalized forms and serve as exemplary types with reference to which actual individual manifestations may be judged. Their struggle, whether it is viewed as a struggle among personifications having a sort of independent ideal existence or as a struggle within an individual is hardly dramatic (in the sense of strong motions of the soul manifesting themselves in will or action)...[24]

The "soul" in which the Psychomachia occurs is an individual soul in the sense that its process is essentially private; when a man is dealing with his conscience, he is alone. On the other hand, the poem manages, by talking of "the Soul," to imply simultaneously all souls and each soul as a scene for its action--an achievement of being both general and particular at once which, as has been noted above, is a distinguishing characteristic of allegorical imagery.

Studying the action of Prudentius' images proves fruitful. When one asks what happens in Psychomachia, the strengths and weaknesses of the work come to view. One interesting feature is allegorical action in the Preface, allegorical action involving Biblical images rather than personifications as in the main body of the poem. The Preface employs some Bibilical history on the tropological level by rehearsing an action of an Old Testament character, Abraham, which

later is seen to [illegible] the action of the Soul in the main story: Abraham, trying to free his imprisoned kinsman, Lot, wages bloody war against the host holding Lot in thrall, fre[illegible] Lot, and then receives food from the priest, Melchisedech. A triad of angels visits him, and his wife conceives in her old age through a miracle. Prudentius concludes his Preface by making his allegory explicit:

> This picture has been drawn beforehand to be a model for our life to trace out again with true measure, showing that we must watch in the armour of faithful hearts, and that every part of our body which is in captivity and enslaved to foul desire must be set free by gathering our forces.... Then Christ himself, who is the true priest, born of a Father unutterable and one, bringing food for the blessed victors, will enter the humble abode of the pure heart and give it the privilege of entertaining the Trinity...[25]

Such overt matching of imagery with thought, although it clarifies the preaching, oversimplifies and reduces the allegorical art which should be based on actions of its images rather than on stated equivalences of images and concepts. As Rosemonde Tuve has remarked, "Good allegory never tells in so many words."[26] With admirable organization but lamentable thrift, Prudentius uses the statement of moral lesson in the Preface as a blueprint for the main action of his work. Thus a reader begins the poem proper having already met the plot twice in the Preface--once in the images of Abraham, Lot and cohorts, and once in the moralized resumé. This fixing of the idea-pattern detracts from the allegorical action's power of definition and discovery, tending to reduce the story to the level of a prophetic picture.

Still, the art of this poem contains some interesting features: its personification of ideas and occasional extension of images in

complex action produces important literary progeny.

The opening of the poem introduces the metaphor of battle to the struggle of the soul to expel sin, extends the metaphor, then moves into narrative at a clearly delineated point--the moment the virtues receive personification. In other words, the moment when the elements of metaphor turn into active images is the moment when the story really begins. The shift is also marked by a sudden expansion of visual effect:

> For, O kind leader (Christ), Thou hast not exposed
> the followers of Christ to the ravages of the Sins
> without the help of great Virtues or devoid of strength...
> The way of victory is before our eyes if we may mark
> at close quarters the very features of the Virtues, and
> the monsters that close with them in deadly struggle.
> Faith first takes the field..., her rough dress
> disordered, her shoulders bare...[27]

But Prudentius does not sustain his narrative to the close of the poem. He retreats once more into variegated metaphor, speaking of the victory as the time when Christ "orders all the jewels of the virtues in a pure setting, and where sin formerly reigned builds the golden courts of his temple, creating for the soul, out of the trial of its conduct, ornaments for rich Wisdom...."[28] The effect of this metaphor is to set all the vivid story of battle for naught as sword-wielding Virtues are transformed into inactive, decorative gems. Prudentius' artistic weakness is his lack of respect for the "story itself."

The basic problem is found once again when one examines the interaction of his images with themselves, with the idea pattern and with the narrative frame. As characters supposedly locked in deadly struggle, the images are rather uninteresting, generally speaking,

because their struggles are frequently concluded as soon as they begin. Faith takes the field and, only eighteen lines of Latin verse later, has conquered. The actual battle is described:

> Lo, first Worship-of-the-Old-Gods ventures to match her strength against Faith's challenge and strike at her. But she, rising higher, smites her foe's head down, with its fillet-decked brows, lays in the dust that mouth that was sated with the blood of beasts, and tramples the eyes underfoot, squeezing them out in death.[29]

Similar "battles" are interspersed throughout the Virtues' train of victorious self-praises; although the gore and battle garments are often described with much detail, there is an embarrassing lack of real struggle. Exceptions to this lack are notable. Pride's speech is vivid because it offers active opposition by the Vice to the Virtues. There is an understandable flow to Pride's actions because she is reacting to the lowliness of her opposition; because her deeds are believable, motivated by her role in the narrative rather than by meanings imposed from outside, she is a vitalized image. Similarly, Greed is an interesting character rather than a static image because she is allowed to act with some degree of individuality and coherence:

> 'Tis said that Greed, her robe arranged to make a capacious fold in front, crooked her hand and seized on every thing of price that gluttonous Indulgence left behind, gaping with mouth wide open on the pretty baubles as she picked up the broken bits of gold that had fallen amid the heaps of sand. Nor is she content to fill her roomy pockets, but delights to stuff her base gain in money-bags and cram swollen purses to bursting with her pelf, keeping them in hiding behind her left hand under cover of her robe on the left side, for her quick right hand is busy scraping plunder and plies nails hard as brass in gathering the booty.[30]

In the actions of these two images, the Psychomachia nears story-telling finesse.

At the same time, it is actions such as these which place strain on the narrative frame and the idea pattern, neither of which is designed to accommodate more than shallow, one-dimensional images. For much of the poem, the images only recite the idea-pattern, embodying it but weakly in their deeds. When they turn from recitative to the harmonic motion of interaction with each other, they seem to become too lively for Prudentius to handle. Because he allows active licence to Indulgence and Greed, they manage to sway the Virtues momentarily so that the Virtues themselves are in need of virtue. Prudentius' predilection for one-to-one correspondences cannot admit such interesting figural complications for too long, and he summarily kills off the vices to get rid of the problem. It becomes apparent that rather than finding symbiosis in shared action, the images and ideas in Prudentius' work tend to oppress each other. Because the ideas are too fixed to permit a narrative process of growth and change, the plot is also fixed then devalued at the close of the poem. Prudentius seldom lets image activity occur, preferring to deal with emblems rather than characters. When he does reach into the potential of the allegorical form by occasionally letting his images actualize themselves through their doings, his work finds its narrative nature and its best moments.

The Psychomachia dates from the late 4th or early 5th century. Between it and the De Planctu Naturae (The Complaint of Nature) of Alain de Lille, which R. Bossuat estimates saw the light of day between 1179 and 1182,[31] stretches a steadily maturing allegorical tradition numbering among its landmarks the Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius.

By the time of Alain, allegorical imagery had also matured from the determinedly shallow Virtues and Vices of Prudentius. One finds the Complaint distinguished by greater attention to the action of the story and more lavish rhetorical embellishment to the figures and the discourse. The Complaint is more self-consciously poetical and literary, opening with classical allusions and a series of puns on the rules of language, then taking shape in alternating verse and prose divisions. Where Prudentius was writing at the beginning of a tradition, Alain was writing in its flowering. M. Bossuat describes his work as a uniting of earlier elements in that tradition:

> ...l'oeuvre authentique d'Alain de Lille apparaît comme le fruit précieux d'une vaste culture religieuse, philosophique et littéraire. L'auteur, dont l'originalité n'est pas niable, se révèle moins comme un constructeur de doctrine que comme un habile adapteur de la pensée d'autrui, moins comme un philosophe que comme un érudit, surtout comme un poète abreuvé aux sources antiques et capable d'utiliser ses souvenirs livresques pour en vêtir ses idées parfois confuses et parer d'un éclat brillant les trouvailles de son imagination.[32]

M. Raynaud de Lage notes Alain's indebtedness to Prudentius and Boethius whose poetic habits and very language he borrows in his own production.[33] The Complaint bears some similarities to the Psychomachia: excepting the narrator, its images have the names of abstractions; as in Prudentius and Boethius, the images tend to recite philosophical positions. The Complaint also bears differences from the earlier work: Alain engages in no lengthy opening metaphor, and no explanatory disclosure beforehand of the action mars his narrative; he pays more attention to his story, beginning it immediately, and delights in giving his images some freedom of action. His narrative line evolves

with a degree of interesting consistency.

The poem opens with a verse complaint by the author about his sorrow at seeing men turn from natural to unnatural activities, a complaint that discusses sodomy as a synecdoche for vice. It is followed by the first prosa which places the complaint in narrative time by turning it into an extended quotation from one of the characters in the narrative--Alain himself. He says, "While I with sorrowful lament was repeating these elegies over and over again, a woman glided down from the inner palace of the impassable heavens..."[34] The woman's surpassing beauty, although tear-stained, is described with rhetorical flourish and the narrative becomes entangled in the folds of her garments as Alain details the glories of creation covering her from head to toe. Although this lengthy digression halts the narrative's forward motion, it does not suspend allegorical action, for the clothing of Nature is itself active, itself allegorical. Reading its action, one sees that as the image, Nature, clothes herself with garments decorated by pictures of creation, so the idea of nature (which is behind the image, Nature) comes to man beneath the garment of the visible world.

There is a return to the framing story line as Alain falls in a swoon before the beauty of Nature, and Nature revives him with a chaste kiss. There follows a dialogue in which Alain asks Nature why she is sorrowful, and Nature outlines how mankind has transgressed her laws by perverting the purpose of sexuality and by turning toward other vices as well. Nature emerges as the handmaiden of God created to keep the processes of creation moving, to regenerate the species that would die off if no young were born, to teach all beings to love according to rational order rather than according to lust. At the hand of the poet,

she becomes the mediatrix between body and spirit, the governess of the moral realm. Through her dialogue with Alain, an idea of the right order of the world begins to shine forth. As M. de Lage has remarked:

> ...c'est justement l'originalité d'Alain de Lille d'avoir associé en Nature ces deux fonctions, puisqu'elle est à ses yeux la règle de la vie morale en même temps que la source de la vie physique.[35]

Prosa VII marks the end of Nature's discourses to Alain and the entry of Hymen, Chastity, Temperance, Generosity and Humility, all of whom are sorrowful and seeking Nature's consolation for the way mankind has abused and ignored them. Nature decides to send Hymen to fetch her priest, Genius, so that excommunication may be pronounced against those who transgress her laws. Genius arrives, assisted by Truth, and utters an anthema against the practitioners of vice. Alain watches the fire of the tapers held by the Virtues grow dim, and he falls into sleep as the tapers are extinguished.

The way the images work together here is vivid and complex. They move, express feelings, and are influenced by each other. Significantly, one of the characters is Alain himself, who achieves at the end of the narrative a calm mind most different from the sad state he knew at the opening. His meeting of the other images is on his own level of realism so that the reality of the author as a person transfers to his image and from it to the other images sharing the narrative stage with him. The realism of the author-image thereby contributes to the convincing quality of all the images' activities. Furthermore, the images behave in "natural" ways; Nature's kiss is an understandable response to Alain's swoon, and the teacher-pupil dialogue the two have is leavened by her

occasional displeasure with him when he asks silly questions. Alain is not just an ear into which philosophy is poured; he is a character in active discussion with another character, his naivete approaching that of Geoffrey in conversation with the Eagle in Chaucer's Hous of Fame. The other images respond to each other, as well, and the complexity of their actions serves to illuminate the idea-pattern behind the allegory. This finely handled narrative action can be seen in Nature's lecture to Generosity. In it, emotional power is transferred to the idea behind the exchange, making the idea more striking and powerful. Nature complains against those who are brought up to be magnanimous but who turn to wasting the gifts of Nature. Her complaint hurts Generosity.

> Now when Generosity saw this censure aimed at her foster-child, she did not dare to adorn his faults with the cloak of a defense, but, with low bending of her humbled head, sought the relief of tears. But Nature, who considered what the bowing of the head and the flow of tears stood for, spoke to Generosity gracious words, saying: 'O virgin....he who abuses the gifts of Nature in the waste of ungoverned prodigality...falsely profess(es) the honourableness of Generosity.... I am wearied with surprise why, at a condemnation of him who tries more destructively than the others to ruin us, thou art not able to check the flood of tears.'
>
> Then Generosity, drying and removing the river of tears from her countenance,... said: '...although he (who sells his nature to ruin) believes that he is serving among my train, and although men who are lured by the flashy appearance of Prodigality smell the footsteps of Generosity there, yet they are anathematized from our favour and friendship to long banishment. But, inasmuch as it is ours to sympathize and condole with warped and straying error, I cannot be unmoved at the fatal sin of his irrational will.'[36]

This interaction of the images is engrossing on its fictional level; read allegorically, the action also bodies forth a relationship among ideas, for just as the image of Prodigality angers the image of Nature

and calls forth pity from the image of Generosity, so the idea of waste is inimical to the preservation of nature and those who unwittingly waste body and spirit deserve natural justice as well as pity. This is the message of Alain--but to state the theme behind the action is to weaken it; it becomes apparent even more in good allegory than in weak allegory that images alone, or ideas alone, cannot be expressed as movingly when separated as when joined in an action. Not only does the vitality of images communicate the ideas of allegory more powerfully, it strengthens the aesthetic appeal of the narrative frame and makes the total work of art an active unity.

Alain's poem also shows how, when images are personified abstractions, their actions create their being. The name of a personification such as Generosity or Nature may transparently connote a sequence of ulterior meaning behind the narrative. However, personifications are seldom as transparent in action as they appear to be when identified standing still. Within the work of art, their fictional actions are as "true" as their ideal being; actually, their fict[illegible]e and ideal life are one and the same in an allegory. Thus, a good allegory can act like a set of mirrors, reflecting itself within itself into infinity; a reader, for example, delightedly discovers in Boethius the ladylikeness of Philosophy, then the philosophy of her ladylikeness, then the ladylike philosophy of Philosophy, and so on. This continual indirection and inversion of sense becomes richer as the tradition of allegory develops and the images or figures come closer and closer to the appearance of independent action within the narrative frame.

This near-independence of images is found often in the pages of the last narrative allegory to be considered in this chapter, the

Roman de la Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Begun by Guillaume about 1237 and concluded about 1277 by Jean, its images fulfill the promise of the allegorical form and point the way toward increasingly mimetic, meaningful narrative such as that practised by Chaucer.

It is useful at this point to cite an observation by Erich Auerbach:

> It appears to me that the first elevated style of the European Middle Ages arose at the moment when the single event is filled with life. That is why this style is so rich in individual scenes of great effectiveness, scenes in which the gestures and speeches of a brief occurrence come out in sharp relief. The characters, facing one another at close quarters, without much room for movement, nevertheless stand there as individuals clearly set off from one another.[37]

Although Auerbach makes this statement in connection with later medieval romance, it is also appropriate to the evolving liveliness in the narrative allegories. Certainly in the Roman confrontations of characters, gestures and speeches seem more consistently vivified than in earlier examples of the genre. This vivification is partly due to the way the two authors handle the interaction of their images, and partly due to their views of narrative. Each has his own style and each is effective.

Guillaume, as did Alain de Lille, introduces the narrator as an image in the story, directing this human image into relationships with other images which bear the names of concepts. Once more, the right of other images to act like human beings is strengthened by virtue of their sharing the stage with the narrator. Also, Guillaume often introduces an image and describes its person long before he names it, letting

the physical vision of the image become established before its emblematic aspect. This technique is evident in his description of the Garden of Mirth, where the gate keeper appears before the reader first and foremost as a fair young woman believably engaged in opening the garden door for the Dreamer; only after she is "seen," well-clothed and coiffured, and the Dreamer has given a brief character sketch of her to the reader, is she announced as "Idleness"--and she does the announcing herself, speaking "pleasantly and without disdain." Guillaume's image-characters seldom stand still; he dislikes stating everything about them, prefering to let his meaning be revealed through the actions of the images. Guillaume's highly developed art of imagery can also be seen in his choice of a rose to body forth the central idea of femininity in his poem. He lavishes the standard lyric attributes of broad forehead, rosy complexion, grey eyes and shining hair on the ladies in Mirth's garden; to present the Lover's beloved he must therefore surpass the standard accolades already awarded. This he achieves by declining to present the image as a woman at all, choosing instead to let perfect floral beauty imply, through the allegorical relation of image to idea, that the beloved's human beauty is also perfect. An analogy between two sets of meaning-patterns is at work in the one rose: the Lover, in loving the Rose, loves an image of perfection as well as an image of a lady, while the Rose figure delicately and obliquely insinuates that both ideals are indescribable. The allegorical activity of the Rose is her very existence as focus of ideality in the poem.

The actions in which Guillaume's images engage, while they are conventional actions, are still engaging because they are presented

with particular clarity and liveliness. The Dreamer laces his sleeves on the run; the images in the garden dance and sing; the God of Love stalks the Dreamer with stealth. The action has another source of appeal in its relation to the idea of the story: the Dreamer and his Rose share their movement with the allegorical idea-frame, ever-appealing, of the boy-meets-girl story. Guillaume brings a wide stage to the action usually played in the private theatre of the heart. But in spite of the vitality of his images, they do not step outside the garden wall. They do not turn to question the conventional love ideas moving behind them. Quite the contrary; they are there, as the Dreamer declares, to explain the mysteries of love as old authors did, only better:

> Por la graine qui fut semee
> Fu cele fontaine clamee
> La Fontaine d'Amors par droit,
> Don plusor ont en maint endroit
> Parlé en romanz e en livre;
> Mais jamais n'orroiz miauz descrive
> La verité de la matere
> Quant j'ai espons le mistere.[38]
>
> (By reason of the seed sown thereabout
> This fountain has been called the Well of Love,
> Of which full many an author tells in books
> Of old romance; but never will you hear
> Better explained the truth about the place
> Than when I have exposed its mystery.)[39]

Jean de Meun, on the other hand, tests this idea of love. In his hands, the concept of love shifts and changes, chameleon-like, as each image makes its own comment about the subject. Because Jean's images are either personifications or representatives, like the Duenna,

of particular kinds of experience, each is conveniently partisan in his viewpoint. Their debates and dialogues which make up the action of the latter part of the Roman create a kaleidescopic impression of meanings in flux. Reason accuses the Lover of blindness to true love and slavery to inferior love; Friend supports the love maligned by Reason, then instructs the Lover in the use of falsehood to win his beloved; the God of Love chastises the Lover for even listening to Reason; the Duenna says love is for gain so that one's old age is secure; Nature says love is for propagation of the species and urges the Barons of Love onward; Genius warns them that Love's garden is false compared to the heavenly Shepherd's Park; the Barons charge forward under the holy banner of natural procreation more in contemplation of its means than its purpose, and finally the Lover declares he finds bliss in the plucking of the rosebud. But nowhere can be found an image of complete, perfect love; even the bliss of the Lover is ambiguous, for he admits it has no Reason in it. To come to an idea of love in the Roman, one must read all the images as acting parts in a dramatically evolving definition. Miss Tuve notes that "Jean's favorite function for allegorical figures" is the creation of varied views of a theme in "the dialectic dramatically presented by his acting and speaking 'abstract' personae."[40] She discusses the Roman as a comic work with its message in what it omits:

> It might be claimed...that Jean fully intended as one of his points the one great and shocking omission from his book: any character who loves anyone.... The world of the Roman is quite loveless, lacking markedly its multitudinous common forms of disinterested affection, kindness, generosity, kept faith, good will. Self-love and self-interest are anatomized time and again. There is no attempt whatsoever to portray caritas.[41]

One might argue that Reason's discussion of true friendship offers a form of caritas, but it must also be admitted that friendship alone could not answer all the needs of the Lover.

To demonstrate the value of action-based reading with a full explication of the Roman de la Rose would be too lengthy a task for this thesis. The complexity of the Roman keeps extending itself, for its images are active not only as characters in the narrative and as manifestations of concepts; their actions tend to become allegorical within themselves, within the dialectic of interchange mentioned by Miss Tuve. Many images provide action-echoes to the moving of their fellow-images. Jean uses action in this way to comment obliquely on figures in the section by Guillaume. Perhaps a brief study of one of these patterns of action-echo will indicate how helpful the "story itself" is in interpreting the Roman. The repeated action of loving an image is a fruitful echo to choose.

A key moment in Guillaume's section occurs when the Dreamer looks into the Mirror of Narcissus which causes any man to love what he sees within. In the Greek myth, Narcissus saw only his own face, and died of unrequited love for that image. The action of the Dreamer in looking into the fountain is Narcissus' action; however, the Dreamer sees the bounty of the world, "Cent mile choses qui pareient," where Narcissus saw only his own features. The two clear stones in the fountain, which together reflect the world (including the Dreamer's face) when lit with the sun, suggest the action of the eyes of a beloved person which reflect a transfigured world when lit with love (and which also give a lover a view of himself). C. S. Lewis equates the stones only with a lady's eyes,[42] but this does violence to the

allegorical action of reflection which is shared by many things other than the lady's eyes--the Lover's eyes among them. The strength of the allegory lies in its power to convey many thoughts with one action. Frederick Goldin points out further echoes of the image-love action. He places the Narcissus myth as told by the Dreamer in the Roman into a context of the myth as a commonplace in courtly love lyrics. There Narcissus' pain is interpreted as his punishment for loving himself when he should have loved another being like Echo who was capable of being responsive. Goldin notes how the Dreamer, too, sees his own reflection:

> ...and thus finds himself squarely in the footsteps of Narcisus (sic), whose death in isolation and despair the Dreamer knows so well. It is the genesis of object-love that is represented in this episode; the story of Narcisus has shown the Dreamer how to save himself. He is able to turn his love upon another person, ideally beautiful, alive and unattainable.[43]

To add more possible meaning to the Well of Love action, it is interesting to note that the "story itself" says the Dreamer selects an image as most desirable of the thousands in the fountain. He first desires the image of roses before the actual Rose; it is his act of desiring what he sees in the image that enables the God of Love to shoot the golden arrows which deprive a man of reason. Jean de Meun picks up this action of image-love often in his section. At one point, Nature expounds the properties of mirrors and glasses in what appears at first glance to be an unjustified digression in her confession to Genius. She lists the many ways in which mirrors can deceive men, allowing there isn't a man on earth so fine of eye who is incapable of being deceived and remaining utterly convinced of the truth of his deception.[44] Genius

offers another action-parallel to the Lover's experience at the Well of Love: he describes another fountain in the Shepherd's Park where whoever looks in sees all the things contained within the park and recognizes each for what it is:

> E puis que la se sont veü,
> Jamais ne seront deceü
> De nule chose qui puisse estre,
> Tant i devienent sage maistre.[45]

> (...He who has seen
> Himself reflected there at once becomes
> So wise a master that he nevermore
> Can be deceived by aught that may occur.)[46]

This well enhances a man's reason; the Well of Love deprives him of it, showing only "fables" and vain imaginings. Then the Barons storm the Tower of Shame, and Jean tells the reader that what they most want to win is a sanctuary in the centre of the tower which contains a "maiden form"--another image. Here Jean interjects a long digression on Pygmalion's love of an image, and, to ensure the allegorical point of that myth is driven home, he has Pygmalion mention his own likeness to Narcissus: they both love unattainable images. The inference is inescapable that Pygmalion's actions are also the actions of the Lover. What saves Pygmalion from the fate of Narcissus is his promise to Venus that he will start loving real women instead of only art's images if she will turn his favorite image into a woman. He receives his heart's desire. Jean then whisks the reader back to the Barons assaulting the Tower of Shame and shows the Lover winning the shrine and consummating his love with the maiden image. This is an interesting point about the conclusion of the Roman: the Lover first makes love to an image,

and then to a real woman. The description of the conquest of the image is described by coy puns about genitalia and is devoid of any fulfilment beyond the storming of the door; image-love, for Pygmalion, Narcissus and the Lover, is empty of response and full of only itself. But by using the image as a direction to the being it reflects, Pygmalion and the lover find happiness. The love of the Rose, of the image-source, of the being Narcissus never sought, whom the Lover and Pygmalion move away from images to find, proves as fruitful as Nature and Genius could have wished. Thus, a tracing of only one action in the allegorical figuring of the Roman de la Rose can throw some light on meaning within its narrative.

For Jean de Meun, the narrative life of his poem is important. He is never caught degrading his active images as Prudentius does by reducing them into nothing but static elements of metaphor. One particular passage points up the contrast between the techniques of Jean and Prudentius, a passage which indicates how close Jean came to granting objective life to his figures: he has the God of Love take time to explain to the assembled Barons how well Guillaume is serving in love's cause, and predicts Guillaume's beginning of the Roman, his untimely death, and the taking up of the tale by Jean Clopinel of Meun. Then comes a statement by the God which shows scrupulous adherence to complex relations of time within and without the poem:

> Puis voudra si la chose espondre
> Que riens ne s'i pourra repondre.
> Se cist conseil metre i peüssent,
> Tantost conseillié m'en eüssent:
> Mais par cetui ne peut or estre,
> Ne par celui qui est a naistre,
> Car il n'est mie ci presenz.[47]

Then he'll the allegory so expound
That nothing shall remain unmanifest.
If these two (Guillaume and Jean) coud give me their advice,
They'd do so promptly; but the one cannot
The other is not here; he's not yet born.[48]

The God of Love goes on to hope for Jean's safe birth, so that the important book may be completed. He concludes:

...jamais cil qui les orront
Des douz maus d'amer ne morront,
Pour qu'il le creient seulement;
Car tant en lira proprement
Que trestuit cil qui ont a vivre
Devraient apeler ce livre
Le Mirouer aus Amoureus,... [49]

(Then those who hear (Jean's words) will never die of love
And its sweet woes , for they'll believe in him;
And, rightly read, his book shall have such worth
That all men living should give it the name
Mirror for Lovers.[50]

In this passage, an image has the temerity to turn its eyes to the author who creates it and the idea-frame of the allegory which gives it life, then to comment at length upon the poem as a poem. In so doing, the God of Love demonstrates Jean's supreme confidence in the strength of his narrative fiction. Prudentius would never have trusted his images with such a delicate task, which, handled wrongly, tears the very fabric of the art. Because his images have such active independence as characters in the narrative, Jean can use their liberty as he does in the above passage to leave readers aware that the whole book is a Well of Love in its own right. What, then, are we to make of the images in it? This Mirror reflects its own reflections; this Well deepens the more one looks into it.

Jean is the summit of the tradition of active allegorical imagery that grew from Prudentius' militarist Virtues and Vices into a genre that, at its best, offered not stasis but growth and development to characters and ideas within it. The God of Love's speech demonstrates how medieval allegory, through the action of "unreal" characters rather than through anything approaching a naturalistic technique, can come as close as any mimetic work to a conjunction of fictional with existential reality.

In the museum of medieval allegory, the images in the exhibits gradually give up standing still, declare themselves to be interesting, alive characters, and finally grasp the horizon of the picture frame to climb out and join the crowd in the gallery. The thesis will look now at how Chaucer treats these escapees of allegory.

CHAPTER III

TRADITIONAL ALLEGORY AND CHAUCER

Chaucer has an ability, nearly six centuries old and still effective, to escape from those who seek to explain him. Continually dodging in unexpected directions, he refuses to be "formulated, sprawling on a pin," and leaves critics hoisted on their own points. As W. P. Ker has remarked of interpreting Chaucer:

> No task is more dangerous for a critic who has his own private device for the solution of all problems. The problems in Chaucer are continually altering, and the ground is one that calls for all varieties of skill if it is to be tracked out and surveyed in all its changes of level.[1]

Therefore, although an allegorical approach is being suggested for the writings of this crafty man of customs, the apprcach is not advocated as an exclusive system of interpretation; rather, it is put forward as a way of reading supplementing the other aids to interpretation which can be gleaned from the rich scholarship always active around Chaucer. Also, it sometimes may serve the auxiliary purpose of providing a balance in which to weigh various critical views.

Grounded in the attitude to medieval allegory adopted in the previous two chapters, the approach can be called "allegorical," but it is not the allegorical approach of Robertson, Huppé, Miller and others who interpret on the codified basis of iconography. Some practitioners of iconographic allegorical reading base their interpretations of Chaucer on medieval doctrine, finding in the patristic distinction between earthly and heavenly love a key to Chaucer's

general poetic intention. Others, like Miller, are not so strictly doctrinal although they still refer to patterns of meaning outside the poetry for their illumination of Chaucer:

> Inherited from late classical antiquity, the allegorical habit, particularly as it contributed to methods employed for the interpretation of Scripture, was fostered in the medieval schools, where the development of a complex but highly coherent library of "authority" provided what became its characteristic "language." Allegorical imagery--that is, language carrying correspondences and associations codified or standardized within this tradition--may be managed in a variety of ways. Thus allegorical expression in The Canterbury Tales need not be exclusively dogmatic or doctrinal, as has sometimes been held.[2]

In both the strictly doctrinal and the more general iconographic styles of allegorical interpretation there are major difficulties. First, there is a danger of over-standardization of imagery by the interpreter in his process of measuring poetic images against a formulated code of meanings. Robertson seems to step into such danger when he reads the Wife of Bath's words on the need for both gold and wooden vessels in a house as an echo of the second Epistle of Paul to Timothy. His gloss on Timothy says wooden vessels represent the Church's useless members, and he proceeds to carry the correspondence to the Wife of Bath: "The wife's reference to vessels thus puts her firmly among the evil who are in the Church but not of it."[3] At a wave of the code, lively Alison is subsumed within her larger tropological nature--a dirty kitchen crock.

Another difficulty arises in the tradition itself, where the correspondences and associations of imagery are actually not as standardized as they need to be to constitute Miller's consistent

language. Robertson notes that many medieval images have "good and bad" associations, depending on their use in context. In practice, the iconographic allegorist must select from many more than two possible meanings, for he may be contending with fine ambiguity in the poetry (ambiguity easily destroyed, as is the Wife, by reduction to formulae) and also with a complex of different usages of one image by authorities. In such cases, the authority of the poem must be discovered and given precedence over the authority of the Fathers and earlier poetic tradition.

This is not to deny that Chaucer uses allegory and often employs conventional images, nor to argue against seeing Chaucer within his traditions. What the difficulties of iconographic reading do indicate is that iconographic associations of images cannot be applied to Chaucer until the most fruitful method of their application has been determined. To decide which of an image's associations are most relevant and which should be left in abeyance when reading any parts of Chaucer, one can follow St. Thomas' advice on interpretation:

> ...all the allegorical senses are founded on one--the literal--from which alone can any argument be drawn.... The parabolical sense is contained in the literal, for by words things are signified properly and figuratively. Nor is the figure itself, but that which is figured, the literal sense. When Scripture speaks of God's arm, the literal sense is not that God has such a member, but only what is signified by this member, namely, operative power.[4]

In other words, a conventional allegorical language of imagery is not the first place to go in search of an image's meaning. The primary indicator of meaning is the narrative, the story itself. Any

allegorical interpretations of Chaucer should spring more from inside than outside his work.

Accordingly, it is useful to assume that in Chaucer, as in the conventional allegories studied in Chapter II, one key to the meaning of his narrative is the action of images and figures within it. This approach avoids depending on a singular meaning in interpreting an image because narrative motion is dynamic and developmental, encouraging multiple associations of meaning around a figure, rather than static and grammatical, based in the fixed meaning of a "standardized" language of association. Rather than moving toward codification, the allegorical tradition caused the evolution of ever more active images, images which had a life of their own in the flexibility and ambiguity of their actions within the story. Their vitality was of a sort unrelated to Auerbach's questions of "realism" and "mimesis," for it could be possessed equally by human images and images of concepts. A static system of correspondences may help to interpret Prudentius, but it proves inadequate to the challenge of Jean de Meun's images; matched against them, any language of associations becomes treacherous and equivocal because the images do not stand still but shift with the flux of the narrative. In the same way, iconography alone is inadequate for full interpretation of Chaucer because his images are even more active within the narrative dialectic than those of the authors of the Roman de la Rose. As Scholes and Kellogg have noted, when constituent figures "move in a narrative plot their meanings change, just as the meanings of words change in different grammatical situations and in different contexts."[5] Thus Januarie's garden may bear resemblances to the hortus conclusus of the fin'amor tradition,

but its meaning is more of a modulation or perversion of the traditional sense attached to the image. And this modulated meaning can be discovered only through the actual events of the narrative.

Respected critics hold widely divergent opinions regarding the vitality of Chaucer's images and figures. Prof. Robertson's stand--that in Chaucer the activity of literary figures on the story level is entirely secondary to their ulterior, iconographically significant meanings--prohibits any emphasis on images as active in themselves. He says that although the characters in Chaucer

> ...have an undeniable verisimilitude, consistent with the increasing interest in verisimilitude in the visual arts, they are in no sense "realistic." The function of verisimilitude is, first of all, to attract attention, and, ultimately, to show the validity of the underlying abstractions as they manifest themselves in the life of the times.[6]

He rejects the idea that Chaucer's images are totally conceived beings, arguing that "the word characterization is...somewhat misleading, since the aim is not to delineate character in a psychological sense but to call attention to abstractions which may manifest themselves in human thought and action."

Other critics praise Chaucer's human images--his "characters"--for being true-to-life, radical departures from the allegorical tradition. G. L. Kittredge finds the characters to be so realistic that he looks for psychological motivations behind their actions; H. R. Patch wonders with which of the pilgrims Chaucer would have most enjoyed passing the time of day; J. L. Lowes and many others refer to The Canterbury Tales as a "human comedy"; John Matthews Manly, in Some New Light on Chaucer, points to once-living individuals of

Chaucer's time as the models of the pilgrims. Linked with such assumptions of Chaucer's realism, one often finds mention of allegory as something he left behind him. R. W. V. Elliott maintains that by the time Chaucer wrote Troilus and Criseyde

> ...he had discovered...the superfluousness of allegory and the limited appeal of its abstractions and artificialities as well as, by corollary, an interest in people and the importance of personal observation of people.[8]

Similarly, Nevill Coghill makes a judgement on the extent of Chaucer's allegory:

> [illegible]logues to The Legend of Good Women are the [illegible]his allegorical writing, as they are his farewell to allegory. They are also his first attempt [illegible]ew shape of poem, the shape that was to grow [illegible] The Canterbury Tales.[9]

And F. N. Robinson, editor of the standard edition of Chaucer's works, allows:

> In a sense Chaucer was unfortunate in the models which the prevailing fashions of his youth forced upon him. For allegory was really foreign to his genius, and he had to work slowly out of it to find the more natural expression of his later years. His greatest and most representative work was undoubtedly in the realistic vein.[10]

It is true that Chaucer does not appear allegorical. His images often have the solidity of daily life about them and do not lend themselves to abstraction as easily as the usual images of Love, Nature and Virtue moving in traditional allegories.

But the abandonment of personifications for "real people" may not be an abandonment of allegory; on the contrary, it may be a method

of heightening allegorical effect. As defined earlier in the thesis, allegory is "narrative description of a subject under guise of another suggestively similar." Chaucer's kind of imagery, although it is often intensely "imitative" of actual physical existence and therefore different from much imagery in the older allegories, may not be necessarily a rejection of allegory itself, but only another kind of guise behind which an allegorical sense can hide.

The Middle Ages read the Bible as true history and figurative allegory at the same time; therefore, Chaucer had a model to hand for linking verisimilitude with allegory: the Bible itself would have taught him that the presence of ulterior meaning in a narrative in no way prohibits realism in the story, mimesis in the art; rather, allegory benefits from the aesthetic impact of such a mimesis. The more convincing the literal sequence appears to be, the more true and important seems any allegorical sequence within it.

On the other hand, it is important to remember Chaucer's images never were "real people." While persons may have existed who inspired Chaucer to verbal portraiture, the verbal portraits are always literary figures, creatures of the poet's creation, who have no life away from his shaping hand any more (and perhaps less) than Faith and Greed had life away from the puppet strings of Prudentius. Chaucer could never have had a drink with the Clerk or listened to the Wife's gossip because they have no real existence outside his poetry. Personifications and "true-to-life" characters are equally unreal in that both are art, not flesh; it is only on the level of imaginative existence that they make claims to reality, albeit to different kinds of reality, and attempt to convince the reader of their rights to

narrative life. Thus it can be seen that Chaucer's use of human beings rather than personified concepts for images is a shift in style of imagery without being necessarily a turning away from polysemous narrative. His images are given more scope for action than they had in the allegorical tradition, all the scope open to living, breathing humanity--but they are not living, breathing humanity, only images of it. Therefore, they are not limited to signifying only particularized bits of body, blood and feeling; rather, they are as free as any other kind of image to participate in as many meanings as their creator can give them. Chaucer does not abandon allegory; he only lets fall into disuse some of the less fruitful images available to him and creates new, more productive figures to give wider horizons to his art. His images become characters and assume natures imaginatively possessed of free will; once this happens, the source and scope of their actions become much deeper than the source and scope of actions available to single-dimensional personifications. Chaucer could have observed this aesthetic phenomenon in its infancy when he was a student of the French allegories, especially of the Roman de la Rose which Patch believes was his favourite reading.[11]

It is also noteworthy that many of Chaucer's images are a long way from being as true-to-life as the celebrated pilgrims to Canterbury. Morton Bloomfield points to the different degrees of mimetic realism to be found within Chaucer's works, arguing that in The Canterbury Tales most of the much-praised realism occurs in the frame and links between tales as "authenticating realism" lending credibility to the poem; the tales themselves include a wide variety of relatively unrealistic images populating fantastic stories from romance to moral exemplum.[12] Even

within the frame and links, signs of the old style are detected by Robertson:

> Influences of the Roman de la Rose, of more recent French poetry, and of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch are obvious in his work; and, although he gave the materials he borrowed a distinctively English flavor, there is no ground for the assumption that he created a radically new set of stylistic conventions that was characteristic of the art and literature of the period.[13]

John Speirs also observes Chaucer's debt to allegory:

> Allegory and personification provided Chaucer's observation with an initial guiding method and his judgement with an initial scale of values which his observation gradually clarified and which clarified his observation. Underneath Chaucer's presentation of the human comedy remain the mediaeval allegorical and moral patterns. The poems gain in profundity and variety from the mutual enrichment of these multiplex layers of meaning,...[14]

Charles Muscatine, finally, points out the particular influence on Chaucer of Jean de Meun: "The French poet for the first time clearly outlines the configuration of styles that Chaucer was to find most congenial.... This configuration--the juxtaposition of realism and courtly convention in a meaningful relationship to each other--implies a broadness of spirit characteristic of both poets."[15]

Yet all the influence of allegorical tradition in Chaucer's creations does not make them conventional allegories. Nor are they consistently allegorical in a didactic sense, in a sense of existing to demonstrate a point first and foremost. Chaucer's writing bears little resemblance to that of Prudentius, in which the significance of images is so apparent and fixed as to be overbearing. Chaucer is an artist, not a preacher, and his concern is in uniting beauty with

wisdom--in attending to the whole effect of his creation rather than in placing anterior sentence within a solely vehicular solus. His obvious delight in "literal veil" and narrative design accompanies his oft-stated desire to "beth fructuous" and modulates literary conventions that are mannered and didactic in other hands into the most gentle and subtle of allegorical tenors. This subtlety can be seen in the way he seldom identifies his images as anything but their literal selves where he may allow occasionally his narrative persona to draw a lesson from the events of the tale. If and when he has allegorical intentions, he provides few overt warnings of them. Rather, in the old spirit of "other-speaking" he gives covert directions toward meaning such as those used by Jean de Meun in his action-echoes. Often both English and French poets prefer to let one action-pattern be shared in whole or part by different images until a complex of meanings evolves from the implicit comparisons. Beryl Rowland perceives t technique at work in Chaucer:

> At times his imagery has a hyper-relevance which creates patterns. The method is antiphonal: the figures set up a series of responses, related by contrast or similarity, which are crucial to the poetic meaning of the whole. The imagery may seem simple but it demands a kind of intellectual response which is not simple at all.[16]

It is not enough to read Chaucer for the delightful characters in his work, although the characters are an important part of his art. Along with emotional response, it is helpful to practise a more formal allegorical response, an awareness of narrative patterns of active imagery. Chaucer sometimes lets these patterns speak for themselves, trusting his images to bring his meanings forth free from authorial

intrusions. At other times, he will draw a moral but refrain from back-tracking over its development in his narrative, letting the reader make his own gloss, so to speak. This method of allegory is described by Wolfgang Clemen:

> By putting different elements together without comment, simply by sequence or juxtaposition of his episodes or symbols, he can convey a definite way of interpretation, a train of possibilities, a line of choice. The reader is always left to draw his own conclusion. The 'significance' however lies in the realm of imaginative, poetic logic, in the 'logic of imagination' rather than on the plane of mere logical deduction.[17]

This allegorical method can be traced in many of Chaucer's works, both early and mature. In line with Frye's advice--that one must be cautious about what one calls allegory--only those works are selected here which have in them a direct claim to meanings beyond the literal, either through such conventional signs of allegory as a dream-vision frame or through the very words of a narrator demanding allegorical interpretation for what he has put forth. This chapter will study one work, The Book of the Duchess, in which ties to allegorical tradition are apparent and in which the imagery is not as realistic in a naturalistic sense as it can be in other parts of the Chaucer canon. The chapter following will study allegorical action-patterns in three of the Canterbury Tales: the first, the Clerk's, has a more abstract narrative surface, while the last pair, the Prologues and Tales of the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner, are generally acknowledged to contain imagery as representational as any to be found in the writings of Chaucer. The Book of the Duchess has been chosen over the other dream-visions because, besides being Chaucer's earliest extant composition of major

importance, it clearly shows his reliance on, and debt to, the allegorical tradition for his method of developing meanings through narrative action. The tales were selected for different reasons: "The Clerk's Tale," although often interpreted allegorically, is generally allegorized statically; its figures are made to "stand for" concepts. The analysis in this thesis will attempt to read the figures as they "move like" things themselves, emphasizing the development of the tale's allegorical meanings through action and juxtaposition in the narrative rather than through iconography. The latter two tales have been picked because they are seldom viewed as having allegorical structures; they lend themselves to a demonstration of how even mimetic figures and dramatic narrative can have typical allegorical qualities. Other works, such as the Prologues to The Legend of Good Women, "The Tale of Melibee" and "The Man of Law's Tale" may have responded easily to the kind of allegorical reading being developed here, but explications of them would not point out so effectively the extent to which allegorical method permeates the narrative art of Chaucer.

The Book of the Duchess

A tradition about The Book of the Duchess says it was occasioned by the death by plague in 1389 of Blanche, young wife of John of Gaunt. Supported by allusions in the poem to the names of the noble couple and by Chaucer's mention in The Legend of Good Women of his poem called The Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse, this tradition establishes the book as one of Chaucer's earliest, probably written in late 1389 or 1390. It has been shown to be derivative in many of its parts, with large sections borrowed almost without alteration from Ovid and from French allegories; the main antecedents are traceable in the Paradys d'Amours of Froissart and in many of the works of Guillaume de Machaut, most notably the Jugement dou Roy de Navarre, Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne, and Remede de la Fortune.[18] These borrowings leave some readers with a feeling the poem was written piecemeal; Bertrand Bronson, before coming to the book's defence, notes the prevalence of a "critical impatience" with it: "Critics have found the poem tedious, disconnected, and ill-proportioned, languid in its beginning and abrupt in its conclusion, ...deficient both in humor and in self-fulfilment."[19]

It is true that The Book of the Duchess displays little unity in the sense of balanced plot development. Rather lacking in over-all dramatic tension, it appears to be disorganized, with long opening digressions delaying by hundreds of lines the central elegiac speeches of the Black Knight. It seems to conclude without achieving any "high seriousness" of purpose beyond the Dreamer's eight-word exclamation of pity for the bereaved Knight; the poet has fulfilled his resolve to put his dream into rhyme without admitting clearly his reasons for

doing so.

But his theme is not missing; it is only hidden within the allegorical pattern formed by the actions of his images. Read with an emphasis on the role of imagery within the narrative structure, The Book of the Duchess emerges as a unified system of meanings, and its digressions become coherent elements of a whole allegorical sequence. The poem has much of the art which conceals art, the essence of good allegory; beneath its disjointed, dream-like surface, the actions of its images disclose repeating patterns of comforting "ynly swete."

Constance Hieatt has suggested that the disjointedness is a deliberate artistic effect intended to emphasize the dream nature of the central elegy of White. For one thing, she argues, the standard form of a literary dream vision "...took the pressure off the poet. He could not be held personally responsible for the contents of a dream, something quite beyond his conscious control...."[20] This effect of the dream-vision convention probably would have attracted Chaucer; he was faced with eulogizing the lady of his patron and had to find a way of appearing both intimate with, and respectfully distant from, his subject. By placing his allegorical praise of Blanche within the dream-frame and letting it be a speech of the Knight who allegorically images her husband, Chaucer succeeded with delicacy in his task. Hieatt also notes a tendency for the medieval dream-vision to make use of blending, fusion and double-meaning, effects "highly characteristic of most medieval allegory and symbolism."[21] She concludes that the dream-vision form was ideally suited to be a vehicle of allegory. Alain de Lille and Guillaume de Lorris had demonstrated this suitability before Chaucer followed with his dream-vision; he acknowledges his debt

to his older masters by beginning his dream in a room lit by sunshine streaming through prismatic windows depicting scenes from Guillaume's Roman de la Rose and by later emphasizing the healing power of Alain's beloved Nature. They had shown him how the dream-vision could be made to carry many meanings in its story-telling. He turned the convention's accommodation of echoing action and mirroring of identities to the service of his own allegorical intention.

Chaucer hides his admission that he is writing allegory behind a seemingly innocent remark from his apparently guileless narrator:

> Me mette so ynly swete a sweven,
> So wonderful, that never yit
> Y trowe no man had the wyt
> To konne wel my sweven rede;
> No, not Joseph, withoute drede,
> Of Egipte, he that redde so
> The kynges metynge Pharao,
> No more than koude the lest of us;
> Ne nat skarsly Macrobeus,...
> (BD, 276-284)

Behind this naive tone is Chaucer's sophisticated indication that his "sweven" requires interpretation. Also masked here is a compliment to the patron who commissioned the elegy: the famed interpretive skills of Macrobius and Joseph could not unlock the hidden meaning of this poem, says Chaucer; but John of Gaunt would succeed where the greatest interpreters failed--since he had known his own "White", he would be able to enter effortlessly into the inner sweetness of the dream.

The dream-vision convention is not the only traditional allegorical frame in The Book of the Duchess. As Michael Means has pointed out, the literary practice of offering consolation was a genre of the age with recognizable roots in the De Consolatione, a genre marked by

a certain process: "In an essentially philosophical or eschatological dialogue (or series of dialogues) with one or more allegorical instructors, the narrator is reconciled to his misfortune, shown how to attain his goal, or enlightened and consoled in a similar way."[22] Chaucer's dialogue between the Dreamer and the Black Knight may be more colloquial than the fine discourse of Dame Philosophy with Boethius, but its form retains vestiges of the philosophical disputation in the Dreamer's demands for exact analysis of the case. It is also an interesting modulation on the traditional process: the Dreamer, far from being an austere and wise instructor like Philosophy, is a humble, naive questioner of the Black Knight who often acts the part of tutor himself. Yet the Dreamer does succeed in reconciling the Knight to Fortune's theft of the lady. Furthermore, in an allegorical way the poet's own dream acts like a philosophical instructor; it shows Chaucer the inner sweetness of things and, in an action-echo of itself, reconciles the poet to life and puts an end to his melancholy by inspiring a poem.

Chaucer's use of conventions from established allegorical styles has been well-documented and is easily recognized in The Book of the Duchess. But a more important aspect of his allegorical achievement in the poem is the original way he weaves the conventions together to create a story of his own. Even though the portrait of White is full of standard description, the speech of the Knight mostly borrowed from French sources, and the narrative placed in a conventionally idealized woodland, what Chaucer makes happen in his poem is a series of events born in his own imagination. His images are traditional, but his narrative structure is not--so that it is in his narrative structure that one can look for the allegorical meanings which were

the first movers of his art.

Chaucer begins his poem by presenting an image of himself--a sorrowful man made sleepless by melancholy, wondering how long he can live without rest. So careless is he of whether he lives or dies that his survival is "agaynes kynde"; physically and spiritually paralyzed by grief, he is dying:

> Al is ylyche good to me--
> Joye or sorowe, wherso hyt be--
> For I have felynge in nothyng,
> But, as yt were, a mased thyng,
> Alway a poynt to falle a-doun;
> For sorwful ymagynacioun
> Ys alway hooly in my mynde.
> (BD, 9-15)

More foreshadowings of the poem's concern with death creep into the early lines:

> ...drede I have for to dye.
> Defaute of slep and hevynesse
> Hath sleyn my spirit of quyknesse...
> (BD, 24-26)

Phantasms are spinning through the Poet's head so that he does not know "what is best to doo." The cause of this melancholy is left deliberately vague; the poet declares that it is unclear even to himself, although he guesses it is a sickness he has "suffred this eight yeer" with his healing never in sight. Chaucer adds ambiguously:

> For there is phisicien but oon
> That may me hele; but that is don.
> Passe we over untill eft;
> That wil not be not nede be left;
> (BD, 39-42)

This passage has attracted the attention of several scholars. One

school of thought holds the eight years' sickness to be an autobiographical mention of some personal love-longing of Chaucer, with the object of his devotion--the one physician--variously identified as Princess Joan of Kent, Blanche, some unknown woman, or his wife, Phillipa. Huppé and Robertson suggest the malady is a reference to the eight years' paralysis of Aeneas told in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 9. 32-35.), a malady cured by St. Peter's preaching on the healing power of Christ; they point out that Aeneas' malady was "elaborately glossed" in the Middle Ages as humanity's delight in earthly things which is cured only by Christ the Physician.[23] Arguing from a different authority, R. S. Loomis finds the eight years' sickness to be "just one more of the poet's obligations to his French models," and convincingly quotes a passage from the Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne in which Machaut specifically mentions "seven or eight years" as the duration of his central character's dedication to Bonne Amour. Chaucer uses part of the same passage for a speech of the Knight about his long loyalty in Love. Says Loomis: "Here, then, Chaucer might have got his notion of eight years as a specific time for the service of love."[24] Although Loomis seems to have the more immediately logical explanation for the specific mention of eight years' sickness, the possibility of additional allegorical senses should not be discounted. Aeneas' paralysis was cured by Peter bringing him the vision of the resurrected Christ; this action-pattern of paralysis and curing is useful to recall when the Black Knight, too, appears paralyzed by grief.

The Poet, resigned to another sleepless night, reaches for a book of romances written when "men loved the lawe of kinde" and discovers in it the story of Seys and Alcyone. Taking about 160 lines

to recite the Ovidian tale, he outlines it only to the point where drowned Ceyx appears before his troubled widow in a Morpheus-inspired vision, informs her gently but firmly of his death and begs her to forget her sorrow; Alcyone, heedless of his consolation, dies of her grief. Chaucer's Poet overlooks the obvious applicability of the tale to his own stubborn persistence in grief and turns instead to the secondary event of the tale--the gods of sleep responding to the pleas of the sleepless. The Poet makes the whimsical offer of a feather-bed to Morpheus or Juno if only they can bring him, as they did for Alcyone, some rest from grief; his game bears fruit and he soon is nodding on his book. Here the narrative preliminaries to the dream end. It is apparent from their length and complexity that Chaucer attached some importance to them.

The dream is a sudden stream of sunshine, a burst of life-renewal, as the Dreamer "awakes." As G. R. Crampton puts it, "There is an upthrust of mood, a release from the drained, colorless, vaguely anxious atmosphere pervading the poem's opening..."[25] After rising in a room windowed with stained glass paintings of the old romances (the law of Nature governs the room as it governed the tales in the Dreamer's book), the Dreamer joins in a royal hunt for a hart, but the hart evades the pursuers. He next meets a friendly young whelp which acts lovingly toward him and gambols into the forest; the Dreamer follows but loses the pup. These two incidents seem casual enough occurences until they are juxtapose ith the elegiac purpose of the total poem; in their own small way they are a double reflection of the poem's central concern--the pursuit of one who will not return. The Dreamer's actions in pursuing hart and hound mirror the Knight's grieving pursuit of the love

of dead White, but the Dreamer, unlike the Knight, knows when to cease hunting. Both kindly beasts have escaped from him, and the Dreamer accepts their loss, able to turn his attention to the beauty of things about him--an action prophetic of the consolation to be discovered later by the Black Knight. In a green glade, bedight with flowers, the Dreamer finds time to meditate on the earth's renewal of itself:

> Hyt had forgete the povertee
> That wynter, thorgh hys colde morwes,
> Had mad hyt suffre, and his sorwes,
> All was forgeten, and that was sene.
> For al the woode was waxen grene;
> Swetnesse of dew had mad hyt waxe.
> (BD, 410-415)[26]

The passage recalls the wise advice of Seys to stubborn Alcyone: "Awake ! let be your sorwful lyf!" The Dreamer seems to have forgotten his grief; the earth has forgotten the death of winter. Will the Black Knight and his allegorical referent, John, be able to do the same? In the glade, made happy by flowers, birds and beasts, the Dreamer-Poet has passed from a mental state completely contrary to Nature (his melancholy was "agaynes kynde") into an awareness that the world is teeming with life over which Nature is reigning. He seems to have abandoned his old expectations of imminent death in the joy of discovering how all things are being renewed.

In the centre of the glade, strangely at odds with his resurgent surroundings, sits a Knight dressed in black composing a woeful lay. So sorrowful is he that

> Hit was gret wonder that Nature
> Myght suffre any creature
> To have such sorwe, and be not ded.
> (BD, 467-469)

This repetition of a description applied to the Poet in the opening lines is more than a casual effect; it is an indication of an allegorical relationship between the Dreamer and the Knight. Later the Knight himself echoes the Poet's pre-dream bewilderment:

> "For al my wille, my lust holly
> Ys turned; but yet, what to doone?"
> (BD, 688-689)

By so clearly giving to both figures the common action of bearing deep sorrow, Chaucer opens the way for other action-correspondences between them. Just as the Dreamer's curiosity is aroused by the morose young nobleman, so the reader's interest is awakened by the action-echo hint of hidden meanings to come in the revealing of the Black Knight's story. The Knight has the potential to provide a key to the cause of the Poet's old melancholy, while the Poet's grief begins to appear as an anticipation, an allegorical type, of that of the Knight.

The Knight murmurs his complaint:

> "I have of sorwe so gret won
> That joye gete I never non,
> Now that I see my lady bryght,
> Which I have loved with al my myght,
> Is fro me ded and ys agoon..."
> (BD, 475-479)

The cause of his grief, unlike the Poet's, is immediately made clear for the reader: he is still feeling the winter-blight of his loved one's death, although spring has come to the rest of the world.

The usual interpretation of the Black Knight is that he represents John of Gaunt. Recently, however, some critics have argued that he is more than a portrait of the mourning patron: Huppe and Robert

maintain that he is definitely not John of Gaunt, citing age and appearance discrepancies between the image and the man, and arguing that the Knight is in fact the alter ego of the Dreamer;[27] Bertrand Bronson concurs to an extent:

> By a wonderful leap of psychological insight, and in strict accord with truth rediscovered in our own century, his private grief has been renounced by the Dreamer, to reappear externalized and projected upon the figure of the grieving knight..... The Knight is the Dreamer's surrogate;...[28]

This dilemma of the Black Knight "being" either John or a dream-surrogate can be resolved by reading allegorically: the Dreamer and the Black Knight are primarily that--dreamer and knight, as the literal level presents them; the story is theirs, first of all. Secondly, their shared action of grieving and their shared search for peace creates an allegorical reflection of identities so that, in a sense, when Knight and Dreamer converse, each one is "talking to himself." Alcyone, too, is a grieving being who participates in the allegorical archetype of the love-lorn sorrower which begins to emerge within the narrative pattern. Also, the images of Dreamer and Knight indicate plainly their correspondence to Geoffrey Chaucer and John of Gaunt; Chaucer says the dream is his, and there are puns on the name of John and his titles when the Knight departs at the end of the dream. All these identities and meanings exist within the images, mutually supportive rather than contradictory, because of Chaucer's allegorical method: the way the images behave, their <u>story</u>, is also the story of their allegorical identities. Thus, the fact John of Gaunt was twenty-nine at the time of Blanche's death, while the Dreamer converses with a twenty-four-year-old, barely bearded youth, does not rule out identification with

John; it only emphasizes the individual being of the image of the Black Knight whose appearance is made emphatically his own. The allegorical congruence between John and the Knight is found not in appearances but in actions. Read in this context, the Dreamer's friendly words to the Knight resound with meaning when they are interpreted simultaneously as Chaucer speaking to his lord, with the hart a figure for Blanche:

> "Sir," quod I, "this game is doon.
> I holde that this hert be goon;
> These huntes komne hym nowher see."
> (BD, 539-541)

The Dreamer determines to relieve the Knight's sorrow and, pretending not to have heard the song of the lady's death, he invites the stranger to unburden his heart:

> "But certes, sire, yif that yee
> Wolde ought discure me youre woo,
> I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo,
> Amende hyt, yif or I kan or may.
> Ye nowe preve hyt be assay;
> For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool,
> I wol do al my power hool."
> (BD, 548-554)

These words are a common enough speech of a friend to a troubled man, but here they have an allegorical importance beyond their immediate context: they hark back to Chaucer's words about the possibility of his own cure (there was but one physician who could cure him, and that physician seemed far away when the Poet fell asleep). The Knight demonstrates the same "incurable" symptoms which affected the Poet at the beginning of the poem--but now the Poet-Dreamer is offering himself as a physician able to amend the disease, indicating that the

mysterious "one physician" is an allegory rich in associations. Traditionally, for the love-lorn the physician is an earthly love-healer (a merciful lady or faithful lover); scripturally, for the spiritually paralyzed it is a heavenly healer (Christ); narratively here, for the grief-stricken Knight it is a friend, an echo of Friend in the Roman de la Rose; allegorically and most broadly, for the allegedly paralyzed Poet, the physician may be his inspiration and art (the dream and poem it engenders) which, once created, accomplishes all the other healings within itself.

But the Knight is blind to the healing powers of the Poet; he warns his visitor that the remedies of neither poetry nor science are capable of curing his absolute pain: "For y am sorwe, and sorwe is y." But he eventually begins to speak of the loss of his lady--metaphorically at first, as the loss of a "fers" in chess to the traitorous goddes Fortune, a loss which has caused him so much suffering that he longs for death. The Dreamer remonstrates with him, arguing that the grief is unnatural if caused only by the loss of a chess-piece; thus feigning ignorance of the allegorical truth behind the chess game, he succeeds in making the Knight begin to face his loss more directly. The Knight admits he has lost not a chess-piece but a lady whose beauties of body and spirit were so perfect as to have been coined by Nature herself. The Knight becomes engrossed in the description of the good, fair White, dwelling happily on his memories of her until he exclaims:

> "...for be hyt never so derk,
> Me thynketh I se hir ever moo."
> (BD, 912-913)

Like Alcyone, he is beginning to see a vision of his departed love. He describes her as not only the fairest but also the best of ladies, comparing her to Penelope and Lucrece, classical gems of womanly virtue (and also good wives, significantly for the biographical allegory). The Knight remembers how the very thought of her would drive sorrow from his heart and how he never let his mind dwell on anything but her. The Dreamer chides him gently, reminding the Knight that he has, in fact, now let sorrow overcome him and drive the lady from his thought:

> "How, by my trouthe, sir!" quod I,
> "Me thynketh ye have such a chaunce
> As shryfte wythoute repentaunce."
> (BD, 1112-1114)

But the Knight misunderstands and angrily vows he will never repent loving the lady White.

Then, at the Dreamer's pacifying request for the history of their love, he tells the tale of his courtship. Brightening, he remembers his first attempts at the composition of love songs:

> "And, lo! this was the althorferste,--
> I not wher hyt were the werste.
> 'Lord, hyt maketh myn herte lyght,
> Whan I thenke on that swete wyght
> That is so womanly on to see;
> And wisshe to God hit myghte so bee
> That she wolde holde me for hir knyght,
> My lady, that is so fair and bryght!'"
> (BD, 1173-1180)

This hopeful lyric marks an important step in Chaucer's design of consolation, for it stands in allegorical contrast to the woeful, tuneless rhyme the Knight was enditing when the Dreamer first came

upon him. Slowly the Dreamer has brought the Knight into a happier, more natural state of mind.

The Knight continues his story, recalling that although the lady turned down his first request for mercy, he continued to serve her faithfully until she saw he meant no harm.

> "So whan my lady knew al this,
> My lady yaf me al hooly
> The noble yifte of hir mercy.
> Savynge hir worship, by al weyes,--
> Dredles, I mene noon other weyes.
> And therwith she yaf me a ryng;..."
> (BD, 1268-1273)

Questions have been raised as to whether or not the Knight is talking of a wedding ring or a love-ring, and whether or not this passage implies that the lady accepted the Knight only as a spiritual lover rather than a partner. These questions about the nature of the Knight's fulfilled love do not arise from a lack of clarity in the poem so much as from deliberate allegorical ambiguity which, like the Poet's "sicknesse," must accommodate many meanings: in the context of John's love for Blanche, the fulfilment is marital; in the context of the Black Knight's love for White, the fulfilment is unrelated to the issue of marriage, with love the sure element and its legal circumstance undescribed; in the hidden context of allegorical identity-reflection uniting the images of Poet and Knight and all they stand for, fulfilment for the grieving Poet is his continued service of the lady including his elegiac eulogy of her. The ring is a pledge of truth, whether a wedding ring or a symbol of other relationships, and it seals perfect happiness:

"Al was us oon, withoute were.
And thus we lyved ful many a yere,
So wel, I kan nat telle how."
(BD, 1295-1297)

The Knight has forgotten his great grief in the joy of remembering White; the goodness of her is with him still so that, caught up in his vision of her, he forgets to long for death and unconsciously begins turning his language toward life-giving figures:

"But if myn [illegible] was ywaxe
Glad, that is no nede to axe!
As helpe me God, I was as blyve
Reysed, as fro deth to lyve,..."
(BD, 1275-1278)

Consolation has crept up on the Knight without his realizing it, just as the Dreamer crept up earlier in the glade. Knowing his time to be right, the Dreamer now asks a question that swiftly brings the Knight face to face again with his grief: "Sir," quod I, "where is she now?" (BD, 1298). At these words, the Knight "wax as ded as stoon." But at last he admits frankly, without recourse to rhetoric, the fact he had briefly forgotten: "She ys ded!" Here is the moment of truth in The Book of the Duchess: will the Knight, like his allegorical foreshadow, Alcyone, fall to death under the burden of full realization of how much and how finally he has lost? Or will he, like his other allegorical foreshadow, the Poet, find instead the release of acceptance and rest, moving out of mourning toward life again? The Knight, strengthened by his vision, accepts the fact of White's death:

And with that word ryght anoon
They gan to strake forth; al was doon,
For that tyme, the hert-huntyng.
  With that me thoghte that this kyng
Can homwardes for to ryde...
(BD, 1311-1315)

The Knight's heart has been searched by the Dreamer and has healed itself in the act of renewing love's sweetness; he turns homeward, becoming again a member of society, a huntsman of life rather than death, his action at the close of the dream echoing the Dreamer's joining of the hunt at the beginning. At this point the allegorical resonances unite: the Knight's act of re-entering the flow of life, of finding joy in his lady's memory then moving beyond her death and out of his pain, becomes Chaucer's hopeful wish for John of Gaunt.

Allegorically, "that word" has many senses: it is, most obviously, "routhe," the message of the Poet in his elegy; it is also the "word" of Ovid's romance from which came Alcyone and her imitation of the poem's mirroring of grief; the "word" is the narrative creation of Chaucer within which the "word" is the Knight's unburdening of himself in talk with the Dreamer; in a literary sense, the word is simultaneously the whole Book of the Duchess as a verbal composition and the structure of that composition, allegorical amplification or interpretatio. In letting "that word" act as the healer awaited in the poem, Chaucer shows the depth of his self-awareness as a writer of words, a physician of language. His consciousness of the literary nature of his own allegory is also seen in the way he suspends his book between two others--Ovid with his narrative material and the Bible with its model of allegory. His poem is daring in its very reliance on rhetoric and authority; these elements of convention, rather than stultifying

the book, encourage and strengthen Chaucer's young originality.

Further, the vision of White is a vision of Blanche, and her praise comes from a Knight who allegorically reflects her husband. These allegorical participations of the patron in the action of the poem are the intended therapy, the source of consolation, given by Chaucer to John--the conversation with the Dreamer "hunts" the "herte" of John as much as it does that of the Knight. Beyond this consolation of the patron, however, is another consolation hidden in the second allegorical action-pattern in the book: Chaucer's continual mirroring of his own condition in that of the Knight. In his sympathy, Chaucer, too, has suffered grief and been in need of healing because of Blanche's death; Chaucer, too, finds the visions of the dream inwardly sweet and resolutely puts his grief behind him when he awakens from the "sight" of White. He, like Gaunt, is healed by an image of Blanche. Here is the final allegorical sequence of the "physician": both Gaunt and Chaucer are healed by Chaucer's art which, "be processes of tyme," is able to turn into poetry the near-unbearable reality of Blanche's death so that it becomes an approachable and understandable part of life's great pattern. As Dorothy Everett has remarked:

> ...Chaucer's reorganization of this poem could, I think, be regarded as a special application of Geoffroi de Vinsauf's first means of amplification, interpretatio, of which he writes, 'let the same thing be covered in many forms; be various and yet the same' (multiplice forma dissimuletur idem; varius sis et tamen idem').[29]

Gaunt, Chaucer, Alcyone, the Poet-Dreamer, the Black Knight--they all move in and out of each other's being through the transforming power of allegorical narrative action and find in each other the reflections of true rest from pain.

CHAPTER IV

ALLEGORY IN THE CANTERBURY TALES

The Book of the Duchess makes its allegorical nature obvious. As a framed dream-vision, it exemplifies a genre whose traditions are linked inextricably to allegory. Its narrator informs his audience clearly that the dream has inner meaning, and transparent puns identify human beings allegorized in the images of the book. But these characteristics which make the early poem so recognizably allegorical disappear as Chaucer matures in his craft. He moves out of the dream-vision to begin testing a variety of literary shapes from fable to fabliau. At the same time, his habitual authorial pose becomes that of the jovial but slightly dim-witted narrator discernible in adolescence in The Book of the Duchess and in middle-age in The Canterbury Tales. One of this narrator's distinguishing characteristics is modesty; in introducing the demonstrably complex and artful Canterbury collection, he humbly warns his audience, "My wit is short, ye may wel understonde." (A, 746) Retreating in such wise behind his narrative persona, Chaucer often takes his intentions into hiding with him; seldom again after the elegy for Blanche is he so ingenuous about what he is about in his poems. These two developments of his later art--preference for forms less traditionally allegorical, and deliberate masking of creative method--have led some critics to believe Chaucer outgrew allegory along with allegorical conventions. Nevill Coghill says as much:

> Every gift of tradition and genius that he had already shown, except two, achieved their perfection of clarity and fullness in the tales and tellers of The Canterbury Tales. The two exceptions are his gifts in allegory and tragedy; the dream-vision was at last abandoned, the sustained and intimate pathos of Troilus and Criseyde never again reached....[1]

But the dream-vision is not a necessary vehicle for allegory; any narrative supports allegory as long as it suggests a sequence of meaning similar to but beyond the literal progression of the story. Allegory is a cumulative effect of the way agents and images in a narrative work together and reflect each other, as shown in the readings given above of three early medieval allegories and The Book of the Duchess. If Chaucer abandoned anything, it was the lyric, as he became ever more absorbed in developing the potential of narrative. The Canterbury Tales constitute his great experiment in this direction in which he planned, apparently, to use as many story types as were available to him within an over-all narrative frame.

Interested in mastering narrative in all its kinds, Chaucer could not have ignored the allegorical capability of the form, especially not after his early exploration of that capability in The Book of the Duchess. His tales are fascinating enough as tales--but the possibility deserves investigation that they may mean more than their literal senses, if only because the complex structure of the Canterbury story is so suggestive of allegorical juxtaposition and reflection of action among images. Paul Rug[illegible]s sees such patterning as the governing principle of the "great middle" of the Tales:

> ...given the variety of persons speaking and the variety of the literary types uttered, the pattern of contrast and quarrel, of debate and discussion, prevents in advance the ascendance of one view over another within the great middle and assures that the whole truth, whatever it may be, can arise only out of the juxtaposition of the various views with each other.[2]

The variety of literary types includes some tales derived directly from allegorical sources and others in which allegorical action is present in notably realistic, "true-to-life" stories. Robert Miller suggests that these types should be differentiated as "either 'formally' or 'informally' allegorical." He explains: "I do not suggest this as an official distinction, only that some of The Canterbury Tales make deliberate, traditional use of the conventions, and that others use allegorical materials in less formal ways."[3]

This chapter considers allegorical patterns in three of the tales. The first--"The Clerk's Tale"--fits the "formally allegorical" category. Its origins are in the traditional allegories whose images can be emblems or personifications of concepts rather than inwardly motivated characters. The other two pieces--"The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" and "The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale"--could be called "informally allegorical." In the first of these, Chaucer begins to explore the uniting of allegorical concept with character in his image of Dame Alison, producing a style of allegory more sophisticated than that of the Clerk but not yet as deep as that of the Pardoner. With the Pardoner, he reaches the apex of his allegorical creation; but his allegorical achievement is made possible only through a final union of polysemous narrative with realism. In the Pardoner, Chaucer creates "true-to-life" allegory.

The Clerk's Tale

The story told by Chaucer's Clerk has provoked a variety of interpretations, some of them so conflicting that one wonders how the same story could engender them all. Paul Ruggiers reads the tale as a "spiritual vision, the limits of which can be approached on the highest level of medieval literary interpretation, the level designated as quo tendas."[4] For him, the Clerk's words have a "grave serenity," and he includes them among the anagogically intended tales whose

> ...odor of sanctity, their insistence that this life is ineluctably implicated with another, their opposition of personal purity to worldly accommodations of the flesh offers us, as the prose Parson's Tale cannot do, the apex of wish-fulfillment romantic statement in the Canterbury Tales.[5]

Donald Reiman, another respecter of the tale, claims it "emerges as one of the most subtle and skillful"--but only when Griselda is seen not as a saint but as an idolater.[6] James Sledd defends the tale's humanity:

> Chaucer proceeds...to make [illegible] some situations; but he does not push Walter's cruelty beyond the limits of humanity, and Griselda's rather stylized grief is neither agonizing nor insipid. In this way, when the folk tale has passed under three pairs of skilful hands, it has been transformed as successfully as it could be; its monsters remain rare birds, but no longer monstrous.[7]

Yet for John Speirs, "It is, of course, a grotesque and quite unbelievable tale,"[8] and Bertrand Bronson argues: "Chaucer has...proceeded, almost involuntarily, to render it unacceptable not only to us but possibly even to himself."[9] One begins to wonder if critical difficulty with the tale arises mainly from its hybrid nature. The Griselda story was not originated by Chaucer; his is but the third poet's hand mentioned

by Sledd, the first two belonging to Boccaccio and Petrarch. Before Boccacio, the story belonged to the oral tradition; J. Burke Severs has traced its antecedents to a "special class of folk tales which have been denominated the Patience Group of the Cupid and Psyche genre."[10] He suggests Chaucer had both Petrarch and an intermediary French translation at hand during composition of the tale, noting that Chaucer follows the two sources carefully in wording, narrative structure and allegorically moralized conclusion. The originality of Chaucer's treatment is not so much in any altering in his expanding of the sources through interpolations of vivifying detail in the narrative. Severs concludes:

> His own chief contribution seems to have been a heightening and intensification of the contrasts which it offered: a crueler sergeant, a more unfeeling marquis, a more submissive (though not less real) Griseldis; greater splendor in the equipage of the nobles, starker realism in the hut of Janicola. So the essential qualities of character and setting were heightened; so they were brought into more vivid contrast; and so the successive situations developed into a more effective, more arresting plot.[11]

In other words, Chaucer took a piece of literature which was already a moral allegory in both his originals, and tried to characterize the images more vividly in the narrative at the same time as he kept its allegorical design. Before studying the artistic success or failure of his handling of Griselda and Walter, it is helpful to define more fully the allegorical pattern in "The Clerk's Tale."

The Clerk glosses his own tale as he concludes it:

> For, sith a womman was so pacient
> Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte
> Receyven al in gree that God us sent;
> For greet skile is, he preeve that he wroghte.
> But he ne tempteth no man that he boghte,
> As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede;
> He preveth folk al day, it is no drede,...
> (E, 1149-1155)

A consultation of James' epistle as recommended by the Clerk produces more than an amplification on God's manner of testing his creatures. It also provides a key to the allegory of the tale in its pattern of contrasting steadfastness to inconstancy:

> Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing .... he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord.
> (James 1. 2-8.)

When examined in the light of the epistle, the tale shows this juxtaposition of steadfastness and inconstancy thrown into high relief by the actions of two images--Griselda and Walter. As much as Griselda is continually patient and steadfast, Walter is fickle and prone to act one way while thinking another way; his actions are those of "a double-minded man, unstable in his ways."

A number of critics have balked at "The Clerk's Tale" because in comparing Griselda to the virtuous soul tested by God, it also seems to imply a concomitant identification of Walter with the Divine Master. As Bertrand Bronson objects,"...all the effort to turn the story into a religious parable splits on the rock of Walter's too too solid flesh."[12] It is true that Walter's actions in testing

Griselda reflect the action of God in testing men's souls, but this remains reflection and not identification. The image of Walter reflects many more meanings than one, a quality found often in allegorical images. It is incorrect to say Walter "stands for" God the Father when he only acts like Him sometimes. The primary being of Walter is in the narrative where, as the Clerk emphasizes at his conclusion, he is but "a mortal man" guilty of a mortal fault: excessive wilfulness.

Walter's most frequent allegorical reference is as an image of Fortune rather than God; like Fortune, he is inconstant in his actions and subject to change in his disposition. Introduced as the all-powerful ruler of Saluces, his power is immediately associated by the Clerk with the mutable strength of the goddess rather than the unchanging strength of God:

> And obeisant, ay redy to his hond,
> Were alle his liges, bothe lasse and moore.
> Thus in delit he lyveth, and hath doon yoore,
> Biloved and drad, thurgh favour of Fortune....
> (E, 66-70)

Although Walter possesses the courtly virtues of fairness, youth, courtesy and discretion, he is shown to lack the more spiritual virtues of prudence and patience:

> I blame hym thus, that he considered noght
> In tyme comynge what myghte hym bityde,
> But on his lust present was al his thoght,
> As for to hauke and hunte on every syde.
> Wel ny alle othere cures leet he slyde....
> (E, 78-82)

The early allusion to Fortune appears to be nothing more than decorative convention until it is read in juxtaposition to the

description of Walter in the lines immediately following. Like Fortune, he is powerful, fickle, and unpredictable. Just as Fortune gives no warning of her movements, Walter refuses to disclose his intentions to anyone.

In contrast to Walter, whose inclinations govern his soul, Griselda is described as rich in virtue rather than in fortune, a person whose soul governs her inclinations. She lives in natural poverty, chastity and obedience, serving her aged father "with everich obeisaunce and diligence" just as she is later to serve Walter. The riches of the Marquis proceed from the mutable goddess, but the riches of Griselda's "ripe and sad corage" proceed from a different source: "But hye God somtyme senden kan/ His grace into a litel oxes stalle;..." (E, 206-207). This explanatory remark of the narrator conveys a narratively allegorical allusion to the sinless woman--the Virgin Mary: just as God sent his grace to Mary, so he can send it to Griselda. It is narratively active in that its allegorical character foreshadows Griselda' words to the sergeant when later her child is taken away:

> And thus she seyde in hire benigne voys,
> "Fareweel my child! I shal thee nevere see.
> But sith I thee have marked with the croys
> Of thilke Fader--blessed moote he be!--
> That for us deyde upon a croys of tree
> Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake,
> For this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake."
> (E, 554-560)

The narrative which develops Walter and Griselda as separate, contrasting images of inconstancy and steadfastness also serves to bring them together. The plot is set in motion when the people of Saluces ask Walter to marry and continue the ruling line of the

county; without an heir, all is uncertainty in the land. They remind Walter that he is a mortal man bound to die some day and beg him to prevent the civil war that would result from a break in the royal lineage. In essence, their request is for steadfastness in the governance of the county.

Inconstant himself, Walter still demands absolute constancy and adherence to his will from other human beings. While agreeing to his subjects' request that he wed and produce an heir, he makes them swear to worship his wife, whoever she may be, and to rest content with his choice of mate no matter what occurs. The people of Saluces swear the oath of total obedience to Walter's "choys," and in doing so engage in an action allegorically prophetic of Griselda's wedding oath; the meaning of Griselda's promise to surrender all her will to the Marquis is broadened by its foreshadowing in the feudal obedience of the populace.

Walter notices Griselda one day while he is hunting and, "Commendynge in his herte hir wommanhede," determines to make her his bride. Preparing nuptial garments and jewels for her in secret, he waits until the appointed wedding day then descends upon her cottage with his puzzled retinue. Griselda's father hears Walter ask to marry his daughter and promise to keep her "unto hir lyves ende." But while ostensibly asking permission of the old man, Walter reminds Janicula of his feudal bondage--"Thou lovest me, I woot it wel certeyn,/ And art my feithful lige man ybore...." (E, 309-315) Janicula must assent; he is governed by Walter's whims as much as Walter is, and his words echo the servile oath sworn earlier by the populace:

..."Lord," quod he, "my willynge
Is as ye wole, ne ayeynes youre likynge
I wol no thyng, ye be my lord so deere;
Right as yow lust, governeth this mateere."
(E, 319-322)

Walter also makes a pretence of asking permission from Griselda, but she is bound in obedience to both him and her father, and so has less free choice in the matter than Janicula. Walter's wedding proposal assumes her consent:

"Grisilde," he seyde, "ye shal wel understonde
It liketh to youre fader and to me
That I yow wedde, and eek it may so stonde,
And I suppose, ye wol that it so be."
(E, 344-347)

He demands, when she consents to be his bride, that she swear never to oppose in deed or thought anything he should happen to desire. Griselda, blessed by God, is now blessed for a time by Fortune. Walter orders that she be stripped of her rags, and "this mayde bright of hewe/ Fro foot to heed they clothed han al newe." The populace, influenced by her "richesse" and nobility of bearing in the palace, do not recognize her for the same peasant girl who lived in Janicula's cottage and believe her to be changed. But Griselda, although her clothes are new, is not changed inwardly by the shifts in Fortune: "evere virtuous was she."

At this point, one recalls more words from St. James of relevance to the Clerk's allegorical plan: "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1. 16-17.) The narrative design of the tale contrasts two kinds of gifts: the gifts of

perfection (the virtues) which Griselda possesses in her heart by the grace of God; and the gifts of Fortune (earthly wealth and power) which have been given to Walter. The action of God and the action of Fortune are further juxtaposed in their effect on the figure of Griselda for whom the virtues show "no variation or shadow" while good fortune arrives and departs with treacherous suddenness. One of the allegorical points of the tale rests in Griselda's act of recognizing each gift for what it is and attaching her soul not to her new-found riches but to her moral humility. Yet Griselda is more complex again when emphasis is put on her actions and her relationships with other images in the tale. Although she appears to be a simple emblem of constancy in her possession of perfect virtue, she does more than stand for patience or steadfastness; she makes possible a play of emblem against narrative design when she marries Walter. Iconographically, Walter and Griselda "are" inconstancy and steadfastness--two absolutely opposed concepts. Yet the narrative action of the story brings them into a unity just as complete as their emblematic opposition:

> ...of hem two
> Ther nas but o wyl; for, as Walter leste,
> The same lust was hire plesance also.
> (E, 715-717)

To find an analogue for this schizophrenic allegorical structure, one can recall Prudentius who treated a unified thing--the action of conscience in a man--as a process of interaction among opposing forces--a battle of vices and virtues. The allegorical significance of the marriage of Walter and Griselda is indicated in its effect on

the people of Saluces. When the "o wyl" of the couple moves virtuously and peacefully, the county is at peace:

> Nat oonly this Grisildis thurgh hir wit
> Koude al the feet of wyfly hoomlinesse,
> But eek, whan that the cas required it,
> The commune profit koude she redresse.
> Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse
> In al that land, that she ne koude apese,
> And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese.
> (E, 428-434)

The action of Griselda on Walter and the people is the action of grace in the soul: "...she from hevene sent was, as men wende,/ Peple to save and every wrong t'amende."

But no sooner has grace come to Saluces through the influence of Griselda, than Walter with his fallible human will succumbs to temptation. After the birth of Griselda's first daughter, he "in his herte longeth so/ To tempte his wyf" away from her vow of absolute submission to his will that he puts on a false face of sternness, he lies to Griselda: the people, he says, do not wish to be ruled over by the child of a peasant woman. Ostensibly to maintain peace in the county, he takes the daughter away to what Griselda believes is death. The Marquis expects change in her behaviour toward him, but there is none: "But natheless she neither weep ne syked,/ Conformynge hire to that the markys lyked." (E, 545-546) In obedience to her oath, she unites her will with his will so capable of unpredictably blessing and persecuting. Griselda, an image of obedience, is bound by her very obedience to an image of Fortune through an allegorical irony, the same irony which makes her obedience into a form of rebellion: Walter, with his sins of falsehood and parental irresponsibility, comes face to face with

Griselda and her sinlessness. In rejecting the temptation he has offered her, Griselda stands before him as Patience stood before the Vices of Prudentius--perfectly virtuous, absolutely obedient. Thus, the tale of the Clerk becomes through narrative action even more allegorically suggestive of a psychomachia.

Six years pass, Griselda has a second child, and the pattern is repeated:

> Whan it was two yeer old, and fro the brest
> Departed of his norice, on a day
> This markys caughte yet another lest
> To tempte his wyf yet ofter, if he may.
> O nedeless was she tempted in assay!
> (E, 617-621)

The boy is taken as his sister was, and the people who once swore the same oath of absolute obedience as Griselda, begin to murmur against their Marquis. But Griselda remains steadfast to her vow; the defection of the populace is a reverse-image of Griselda's constancy.

Walter's final temptation of Griselda is another allegorical reversing-mirror: he shows himself as inconstant in his marriage vow--to keep her until her life's end--as she has been constant to hers. Obtaining falsified papal dispensation, he sends Griselda back to her father's cottage poorer than when she left and announces his intention to wed a young girl of more noble blood. Stripping her of the rich clothes he gave her on her wedding day, he allows her only a shift to cover her body, and piously lectures her as he sends her off:

> "No man may alwey han prosperitee
> With evene herte I rede yow t'endure
> The strook of Fortune or of aventure."
> (E, 810-812)

Not even this masked hypocrisy--the uneven heart admonishing the true one--can draw Griselda to anger. Her response is the response of another allegorical image of patience and steadfastness, the Biblical Job, when he was tested by God:

> "Naked out of my fadres hous," quod she,
> "I cam, and naked moot I turne agayn.
> Al youre plesance wol I folwen fayn,..."
> (E,m 871-873)

The people follow after her, weeping and cursing Fortune; Griselda, in contrast, speaks no word against Walter or her lot, content to live again with her father in unchanged humility. When the new bride arrives, the people, "ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a fane," jubilantly welcome her and praise Walter's judgement; Griselda, steadfast as ever, only prays for God's blessing on Walter and the girl, and asks the Marquis to be truer to his new wife than he has been to the old. Then Walter plays the role of Fortune once more. Having raised Griselda to worldly heights and thrown her down, he raises her again by announcing that the bride and her brother are in fact Griselda's long-lost children. He ends his testing of her and takes her back as his wife, and once again she is stripped of rude array, clothed "al newe!" The changing of outward appearance, an act with allegorical implications throughout the tale, is here brought to a conclusion. Griselda's outer bearing has changed with the rise and fall of Fortune, her clothing an image of worldly

mutability. Walter, too, has changed his outer appearance many times, often wearing a mask of sternness when he felt pity in his heart, or putting on the array of a bridegroom when he had no intention of being one. The tale ends with Griselda finally "honoured as hire oghte" and Walter at last leaving his masks and deceptions behind to speak the truth about himself and Griselda. He has "put on the New Man" of grace mentioned in St. Paul, brought to steadfastness himself by the power of virtue acting through his wife. The tale's conclusion in enduring marital bliss becomes, allegorically, the outcome in salvation of a psychomachia between constancy and change which has been moving behind the actions of images throughout the story.

The Clerk, aware that his tale may appear to be offering Griselda on a moral level as a model of wifely obedience, emphasizes that this is not his allegorical sentence:

> This storie is seyd, nat for that wyves sholde
> Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,
> For it were inportable, though they wolde;
> But for that every wight, in his degree,
> Sholde be constant in adversitee
> As was Grisilde;...
>
> (E, 1142-1146)

As an analysis of the tale's image-action has indicated, the simple allegorical connections of Griselda to steadfastness and Walter to inconstancy are maintained throughout the narrative development. Kittredge urges readers to accept the tale as a "plain and straightforward piece of edification" in which a moral lesson is developed to a great length:

> It is, then, absurd to censure a fourteenth-century Clerk for telling (or Chaucer for making him tell) a story which exemplified in this hyperbolical way the virtue of fortitude under affliction. Whether Griselda could have put an end to her woes, or ought to have put an end to them, by refusing to obey her husband's commands is parum ad rem. We are to look at her trials as inevitable, and to pity her accordingly, and wonder at her endurance. If we refuse to accept the tale in this spirit,...we miss the pathos because we are avidly intent on discussing an ethical question that has no status in this particular court, however pertinent it may be in the general forum of morals.[13]

Yet, even ignoring deeper ethical questions, one must acknowledge the imperfect quality of this tale as art. The problems with it arise not from the rather simple allegory, but from Chaucer's attempts at partially humanizing Griselda and Walter. Griselda, in Chaucer's version, shows more motherliness than in earlier versions; she begs the sergeant who takes away her children at least to provide their bodies with decent burial, she holds her children to her breast before giving them up, and she swoons with joy when they are returned to her.[14] While she is a relatively quiet figure in the source stories, Chaucer gives her life through direct discourse, so that at moments such as her departure from the palace she seems a deeply realized character. Walter, too, is made more vivid when Chaucer tells his inner thoughts and shows him hiding his pity beneath a false sternness.

In this tale, the realization of allegorical images as characters works against rather than in favour of a more satisfying aesthetic effect. The story as originally structured was designed only to carry a simple allegorical pattern to conclusion in a moral; Chaucer tries to make it a better story but is hindered by the

original structure which did not aspire to the sophistication of vividly human, coherent characters as images. The images in the sources were only figures--images more of concept than character, unmotivated in themselves. The old story made little pretence of verisimilitude, letting the justification for narrative action come from the allegorical sense rather than from the literal process of the narrative itself--the interplay of the images. Chaucer, in touching up the images to make them into more sentimentally moving creations, has made them more personalized but less coherent; more than shallow allegorizations of a theme, but still less than understandably motivated human beings. It becomes apparent that, even for Chaucer, life-likeness cannot be imposed on images in an allegory, any more than a system of meanings can be so imposed, without harming the artistic unity of the piece of literature. To be successful, allegorical design and allegorical imagery must originate and grow together in a single act of poetic creation.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

The Wife of Bath is both beloved and maligned by critics of Chaucer. Many have interpreted her as an example of perfidious womanhood, citing as proof all the "typically feminine" faults she displays in her autobiographical prologue. Robert M. Jordan describes her self-proclaimed enjoyment of the marital bed as "the kind of candid self-revelation which so endears the Wife to us, but at the same time it is the germ of her womanish disease (as St. Jerome would diagnose it), the disease of concupiscence." He believes her to be "every bit as abandoned to carnality as St. Jerome might have expected,"[15] and reads her speech as "cumulative damnation of the lady by her own tongue."[16] Howard Patch admires the Wife but attributes basic flaws to her: "She has the print of Saint Venus's seal without the beauty of the goddess; she is the eternal feminine but not that which leads upward to the celestial. In other words, she is sheer energy without any of the more poetic or spiritual qualities which might attenuate it."[17] When G. L. Kittredge reads the Prologue and Tale, he sees:

> ...the lust of the flesh and the pride of life in the person of a woman who flouted chastity and exulted that she had 'had her world as in her time.' Nor was this all. The woman was an heresiarch, or at best a schismatic. She set up, and aimed to establish, a new and dangerous sect, whose principle was that the wife should rule the husband.[18]

D. W. Robertson judges her to be "firmly among the evil who are in the Church but not of it," and reads her iconographically: "She does her best to subvert the traditional hierarchy of husband over

wife as it reflects the hierarchy of Christ over the Church and parallels the hierarchy of the spirit over the flesh, or the 'newness of the spirit' over the 'oldness of the letter."[20]

These views of the Wife of Bath, consistent to a degree with each other, are inconsistent with the spirit of the Wife's Tale; Dame Alison, in spite of the earth-bound mentality ascribed to her by critics on the strength of her Prologue, manages to recite a well-composed romance containing much spiritual wisdom: its section on the nature of true nobility is unsurpassed in high moral sentence and beatitude of expression by anything from "holier" pilgrims during the entire Canterbury excursion. In the face of apparently co-existent sinful and saintly themes in the Wife's Prologue and Tale, a reassessment of the nature of Alison is in order. And a reassessment must start at the beginning--in the narrative of the Prologue.

The Prologue is distinctive for its colloquial, conversational drift; the Wife proves to be one of the most interrupted speakers in The Canterbury Tales, with no fewer than four characters intruding into her preamble to offer their comments on it, usually in a slightly disparaging way. The give and take among the pilgrims not only contributes an authenticating naturalism to the Wife as a character; it also emphasizes, perhaps more than in any other contribution except that of the Pardoner, the presence of an audience to which the speaker is playing. The Wife's words are located not in vacuuo but within Harry Bailly's game of story-telling, a game whose main purpose is to entertain the pilgrims on their way. Bailly, in the General Prologue, asked the company for "tales of best sentence and moost solaas," (A, 798) and the Wife wittily attempts to satisfy

both requirements: beneath what she says "in pleye" is an allegorical design indicating a more serious sentence than is found in the jovial, literal sequence of her contribution.

One aspect of the Wife's contribution is its jocularity. She opens with an allusion to a subject of arcane, abstract philosophy--the debated relative merits of experience and authority--then proceeds to bring the abstract down to the level of her actual experience (a neat allegorical irony she effects many times in her Prologue):

> "Experience, though noon auctoritee
> Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
> To speke of wo that is in mariage;
> For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age,
> Thonked be God that is eterne on lyve,
> Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve,--"
> (D, 1-6)

The experience-authority debate is her keynote; but having proclaimed the grounding of her views in experience, she first rattles out a humorous defence of marriage based on authority. She includes some of the very texts used to praise virginity, texts which she twists cleverly to support her dialectical position in favour of marriage's duties and delights. Alison's allegorical transposing of authority and experience continue as her Prologue develops. She ostensibly describes from experience her life with her husbands, but once more authority hides under the experiential voice: her speeches to the aged husbands are amalgamated and in some cases directly transplanted from remarks of the Duenna, Jalousie and Nature in the Roman de la Rose; her love of fine clothing, her gossiping, her wandering and her proverbial statements are often dramatized borrowings from St.

Jerome, Walter Map and other anti-feminist writers well-known to the Middle Ages. Chaucer's art is in his ability to make authoritative material appear to be the product of the Wife's individual experience. As John L. Lowes notes, Chaucer strikes the delicate balance

> between the character, in the technical, Theophrastian sense of the word, and the individual--a balance which preserves at once the typical qualities of the one and the human idiosyncracies of the other.[21]

The Wife of Bath is an example of an allegorical figure both typical and individual. She harks back to the traditional allegorical personification in the way she "acts out" the concept of Woman as some men of the Middle Ages wrote of her; in other words, she derives her nature from the authority, the allegorically implied concept, behind her image. Yet the Wife is also pre-eminently herself, vivid and lively and brilliant in red hose, an individual if ever one existed in literature; and it is her detailed, realistic recitation of her "experience," ironically authority-born though it is, which gives this literary image a life of her own. To this accomplishment, Chaucer adds a further sophistication: he has his image point to the allegorical dualism of her own nature. Alison, though constantly treating the authority-experience construct as a tension, an opposition, manifests it as a creative fusion in her very way of moving back and forth between the two concepts. The Wife is a more self-aware figure than critics credit her with being. Once she is read as the active creator in her self-portrait rather than an image ignorantly spouting revealing, self-damning opinions, an aesthetic (and allegorical) harmony, an artistic unity, emerges

from the Prologue-Tale unit.

Granting the image of Alison some self-consciousness, one finds her less problematic. Such a reading lets the Wife dwell happily on the subject of the conjugal debt and its "sely instruments," without her apparent absorption in the physical side of marriage convicting her of "the disease of concupiscence." Her outrageous statements are too outrageous to be taken seriously, especially in light of the sensitivity and morality in her tale. Critics who fall into moral indignation over the Wife's performance forget it is, literally, a performance rather than a confession, and as such is intended not to offend but to amuse. It is self-caricature rather than self-characterization. In this vein, the Wife's "lechery" becomes much less culpable. One notes that although she boasts of her "quoniam" and wishes she could be "refresshed" half so many times as King Solomon was with all his wives, she also takes care later in her Prologue to say she is not a fornicator; although she made her fourth husband jealous by her public flirtations, she was never physically untrue to him. Furthermore, although her famous horoscope makes her Venus' servant so that she "koude not withdrawe/ (Her) Chambre of Venus from a good felawe," (D, 617-618) she relates this Venerian confession to her wedding with the clerk, Jankyn, rather than to out-of-wedlock adventures. Unlike the Samaritan woman, she had all her husbands "at chirche dore." It becomes clear that her self-proclaimed lustiness has been described rather hyperbolically for the sake of entertaining the company. The Wife herself points this out:

"But that I praye to al this compaignye,
If that I speke after my fantasye,
As taketh not agrief of that I seye;
For myn entente is nat but for to pleye."
(D, 189-192)

The Wife's contradictory self-portrait seems to shift ground with the whim of her wit, indicating that she is amplifying the tyrannical aspects of her wifehood more in game than earnest.

Similarly, the critics who see the Wife as an arch-shrew crudely manipulating what little she knows of Scripture to justify wedded lechery seem to take her parodies of "arguments from authority" more seriously than the pilgrims hear them or the Wife intends them. For parodies they are: the Wife takes commonplace examples and citations that could be found in any pulpit-word on marriage, and skilfully introduces them into a "sermon" the likes of which would never be heard in church. Her humour is appreciated by that noble ecclesiastic, the Pardoner, who enters into the spirit of her game when he interrupts her in the middle of one of her high-flown distortions of Scripture; she has incorrectly cited the Gospel of Mark in her recitation of the miracle of the barley-loaves and fishes, and the Pardoner cleverly names the correct evangelist (the only one who specifies barley bread) in an oath: "Now, dame," quod he, "by God and by seint John!/ Ye been a noble prechour in this cas." (D, 164-165) Then, like the Wife, he talks about himself for the sake of a joke: patently unfit to marry by nature and by calling, he claims he was about to wed but has changed his mind on hearing the Wife's description of women's rights to tyrannize their husbands' bodies.

Yet the Wife's deliberate abuse of Scripture rests in something more complex than her humour, and not at all in any moral ignorance of which she is sometimes accused. Her one slip in citing Mark for the barley-loaves proves on examination to be an understandable and slight error, indicative more of her Biblical learning than of ignorance. While all four Evangelists have some version of the loaves-and-fishes miracle, her two prior major references--to a man leaving parents for a wife, and to Christ's call of the rich man to perfection--occur together in Mark. 10 only and in no other gospel. The Wife, therefore, is not quoting bits of text at random; that she had Mark on her mind proves she knew the sources for her quotation. She makes no slips with St. Paul, quoting extensively from 1 Corinthians. 7., especially the following verses:

> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does.
> To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.
> (1 Cor. 7. 3-9)

Many critics point out how deliberately the Wife omits Paul's words on wifely submission, while including his preaching on a husband's duties, in order to support her argument for woman's mastery in marriage. The Wife's omissions cannot be denied, but are they necessarily sinful and heresiarchical in intent? It is useful to recall that the Pauline text, a particularly popular one for preachers, would have been familiar to her listeners only in its totality. The Wife knows as well as anyone that her "arguments" will evoke the

full text with its whole meaning much sooner than they will convince any of her listeners of scriptural sanctification for hen-pecking. The pilgrims would have recognized immediately, steeped as the age was in textual exegesis, the Wife's consciously slanted presentation of the "authorized" version of structure in marriage. Robertson and others see her omissions as schismatic and heretical, an allegorical reflection of the inversion of proper government in a soul overthrown by sin.[22] It is possible, however, to attribute more consciousness of intention to the Wife's use of Scripture and see her as hiding some sentence behind it. She could hardly be unaware that her partial citation will necessarily elicit in her audience a remembrance of the full text; but for the sake of her self-caricature, she pretends to be ignorant of Paul's moralitas, so that the mutual marital love he speaks of effectively counterpoints, without overtly intruding on, her humourous acting-out of the anti-feminists' worst fears about womanhood. In other words, Chaucer lets the Wife make herself into an allegorical figure; she deliberately presents herself as the embodiment of characteristics traditionally associated with the type of the medieval shrew. At the same time, the exaggerating in her self-portrait hides a more earnest purpose than her one-sided sophistry about woman's mastery; while seeming to call for mastery, her learned allusions are allegorically working against her sense, implying a different meaning. The Wife's militant single-mindedness on the question of which marriage partner should be dominant must be read in its indicated juxtaposition to the complete text of St. Paul where, in contrast to her literal argument for female dominion, the argument of the spirit is seen to be dominance by neither party,

but rather mutual governance. Man and wife, says Paul, should surrender dominion to each other.

The presence of Paul's message--mutual governance through love--seems to stand small chance of recognition from the Wife. But it is there in her talk, hidden under her "game." It surfaces in her description of her fifth marriage; she entered this union, she says, only for love of Jankyn the Clerk and not for love of riches. The story of their relationship unites all the allegorical dimensions of the Prologue within one dramatic piece of narrative action: Jankyn delights in needling his "experienced" wife with barbs from his "authority" by reading aloud to her the anti-feminist descriptions of shrewishness (descriptions which Alison comically embodied in her anecdotes of earlier marriages). But once she has married for love, she rejects any kinship with the "wikked wives," finding them so hateful that in a fit of anger she rips three leaves from the book and strikes her husband on the cheek. He in turn knocks her to the floor. Then, seized with repentance, he promises to let her do as she wishes with herself and the estate, and burns the anti-feminist book. Here there is no theoretical authority exemplified; the battle over the book produces the one piece of wisdom that the Wife derives solely from experience: "But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,/ We fille acorded by us selven two." (D, 811-812) From the rough-and-tumble realism of the Prologue's conclusion emerges the peace of St. Paul's mutuality--"us selven two." And the Wife uses the "maisterye" she obtains in the contest of the sexes only as a tool to create a better marriage:

> "After that day we hadden never debaat.
> God helpe me so, I was to hym as kynde
> As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde,
> And also trewe, and so was he to me."
> (D, 822-825)

Charles Muscatine comments on the allegorical chords of the Prologue's narrative conclusion:

> In the context of the Prologue's doctrinal material, we behold not only a magnificently natural creature in domestic squabble; she is also the embodiment of experience ripping out the pages of the book of authority, and of militant feminism fetching traditional masculine domination a healthy blow on the cheek. The symbolism of her position could not have been made secure without the naturalistic style whereby Chaucer creates and then protects it.[23]

Alison's mastery gives her the wisdom to forego using it for domination--a conclusion taught her by experience and not by authority. Ironically, in telling her Prologue, what she has learned from experience is set down as authority. Alison, the image of experience, is also the image of the other side of the debate. Beaten for a book, she becomes one.

The Wife's Tale at first appears to be a fairy story completely removed from the autobiographical Prologue, or related to it only as an exercise in wish-fulfilment by the supposedly love-starved and aging Wife. Given an allegorical reading, however, it emerges not so much as a working out of the Wife's character as a rhetorical and allegorical expansion of the matter introduced at the Prologue's conclusion: the issue of free will and governance in marriage. To summarize the narrative action: a Knight found guilty of raping a maiden- imposing his will on an unwilling woman--is sentenced to

die but is saved by the intercession of Queen Guinevere. The King "yaf hym to the queene, al at hir wille/ To chese whether she wolde hym save or spille." (D, 897-898) The Queen gives him a year in which to discover what thing women most desire, and the Knight wanders fruitlessly through the land unable to learn the answer. On the last day of his allotted year, he meets an ugly old woman who first makes him promise to grant her a wish, then tells him the secret--women most desire mastery over their husbands and their lovers. This reply wins the Knight his life in the Queen's court, but it loses him his freedom, for the old woman demands that he marry her. Once abed, when he complains he will not love her because she is old, ugly, poor and low-born, the old dame speaks to him of the nature of true nobility, which comes from Jesus Christ, and proves that what he sees as faults in her are really, in an allegorical sense of extension, wifely virtues. Then she offers him a choice: to have her ugly and faithful, or beautiful and untrue. In a quandary, the Knight humbly asks the dame to do as she wills. He is rewarded by the dame's magical transformation of herself into both a beautiful and true young woman.

Although the narrative seems but old romance, the Tale has allegorical echoes of the Prologue in its action. Some of the faults of women cited in the Prologue--love of rich clothes, love of flattery, love of wandering about--reappear in the Tale as answers to what women most desire; but these things are rejected as shallow attributes not touching woman's deepest wish at all. Another relationship occurs in the interplay of authority and experience once more. The truth of authority--the Old Woman's word--is not

enough for the Knight; he must be taught his lesson through experience, as well. Like Jankyn, he learns through marriage that woman must be given freedom to do as she pleases, must be released from the power of man's over-riding will, before she is free to love truly and without constraint. The dilemma placed before the Knight is an old debate touched on by the Wife in her Prologue: whether it is better to have an unlovely but true wife, or a beautiful wife assailed on every side by suitors to whom she will eventually give in. The debate is a classic anti-feminist construct demonstrating that woman in essence is nothing but pain for man. Here, in the Wife's Tale, the one-time oppressor of women is asked to choose between two sides of a question that images in its basic assumptions the whole anti-feminist position. The Knight retreats before the conundrum, and leaves a decision relating to the hag's soul as well as to his happiness finally up to the will of the woman. In doing so, he reflects Jankyn's action with the Wife. Like Jankyn, the Knight finds marital bliss his reward; the hag and the Wife reflect each other in their use of "maisterye":

> And she obeyed hym in everythyng
> That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng.
> And thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende
> In parfit joye;...
>
> (D, 1255-1258)

The Tale thus shows itself to be more than an outgrowth of the Wife's character; it is a working out in narrative of both the literal, "woman-power" position the Wife appears to espouse in her Prologue and the allegorically implied Pauline position of mutual governance in marital love. The Prologue and Tale become allegories of each

other through their shared narrative actions. In an allegorical reading, authority and experience are also illuminated as more than allusions and even as more than themes in the Prologue and Tale. They become structural principles, the concepts which inform and activate the being of the Wife and her doing within the narrative.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

The Pardoner is one of Chaucer's most complex and original images. He may owe a filial debt to False-Seeming of the Roman de la Rose, the double-tongued creature enlisted by the God of Love in the war against the tower of Chastity, in that False-Seeming provides an analogue and source for much of the Pardoner's shameless boasting of his own powers of deception. But in the developing tradition of allegorical art, the Pardoner is as far ahead of False-Seeming as False-Seeming is ahead of Pride and Avarice in the Psychomachia. Jean de Meun took the concept of deceit, clothed it in monk's robes and gave it a voice in which to describe itself as Jean wished it described; False-Seeming explains himself with intellectual detachment, almost unaware of and uncaring toward his audience. The Pardoner, on the other hand, brags about his sins theatrically, with an eye on his listeners; where False-Seeming recites his sins simply to convey the information and characterize himself, the Pardoner is every moment playing to the gallery, manipulating the effects of his speech on his listeners. Like the Wife, he uses a gamey earnestness in his self-portrait.

While many of the other Canterbury tale-tellers are relatively vague voices with little characterization outside of what they receive in the "General Prologue," the Pardoner stands as a fully-realized character whose actions as a narrator seem to have an understandable origin within his nature. He is a more developed image than other Chaucerian creatures. Griselda, for instance, has but a single source of being in the concept she embodies; because she is a

shallower image not created with the reach of character necessary to imply free will, her narrative activity is dependent for motion on more than her own literal being; that is, she acts, but a reader must look beyond the image to the allegorical sense to discover the whole cause of her actions. The Wife of Bath is neither so characterless an image as Griselda nor so self-motivated an image as the Pardoner. Her actions are born not so much in her psychological make-up as in her allegorical composition, her inner suspension between authority and experience. Her life is in her making "the book" of allegory into her individualized experience. Her allegorical import is more to the fore than her psyche. The Pardoner, however, is another kind of image, an image Chaucer approached in the Wife but did not wholly develop.

The Pardoner represents a radical shift in allegorical imagery; with him, motivation enters and becomes immanent in the image, and Chaucer succeeds in bridging the gap between allegory and realism. So realistic is the Pardoner that many critics have attempted to analyze the psychological impetus behind his actions. A debate has arisen about what the Pardoner is thinking when he invites Harry Bailly to purchase his wares at the Tale's ending. Kittredge suggests that the Pardoner, carried away by his own preaching, momentarily utters a sincere wish for Christ's pardon on the pilgrims and is then confused by his own sincerity: "The reaction comes instantly and is to the extreme of reckless jesting."[24] G. G. Sedgewick imagines that a hush falls over the pilgrims at the end of the sermon and the Pardoner, seeing the power of his own preaching, rudely stretches it too far by jibing at the Host.[25]

Having placed his true tale in the frame of his own falsity, the Pardoner returns to the ironies he so clearly developed in his Prologue. There is one remaining allegorical pattern in need of conclusion--the identification of the pilgrims with the ignorant listeners who usually form the audience for his preaching. To finish with this irony, the Pardoner first reminds the pilgrims that they have not heard a "real"sermon, but only a demonstration of a sermon:

> "...And lo, sires, thus I preche.
> And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche,
> So graunte yow his pardon to receyve,
> For that is best: I wol yow nat deceyve."
> (C, 915-918)

These lines, which appear to be a disclaimer of the Pardoner's earlier implied comparison between ignorant folk and pilgrims, are actually the setting up of the allegorical trap in which they find themselves caught: his offering of the admittedly spurious relics to the pilgrims as efficacious objects worth their money. The lines are the Pardoner's "game," his fulfilment of the Host's command to be both entertaining and moral in telling a tale. It is not just the exemplum, not just the sermon-tale, but the whole narrative self-revelation, beginning Prologue and concluding sales-pitch, which the Pardoner offers to the company as a diverting thing. In his spiritual pride, he can think of nothing so entertaining as himself. To make clear how all the morality has been but game within the frame of the Tales, the Pardoner ties up his contribution by handing it jokingly to the arbiter of the story competition--Harry Bailly.

Speirs sees a serious sales attempt: "Presuming his tale to have awakened in the company the full terrors of death and damnation, the Pardoner loses no time in producing his bulls and relics and offering them as a kind of insurance policy against accidents on the journey..."[26]

Yet the existence of psychological impetus in the Pardoner does not preclude an equally important allegorical impetus. In iconographic associations alone, the Pardoner has been revealed as a richly allegorical image: A. L. Kellogg has noted how the actions or the Pardoner follow St. Augustine's description of how a sinful soul tortures itself so that sin itself punishes sin;[27] Clarence Miller and Roberta Bosse trace allegorical echoes of the Mass in the Tale;[28] Robert Miller describes the Scriptural reflections of the Pardoner's physical and spiritual eunuchry.[29]

What will be attempted here is a reading of the internal allegorical action in Prologue and Tale, according to the indications of meaning given by the narrative structures. Such a reading does not disclose the whole meaning of the Pardoner, but it does offer some clarification of what happens in the Pardoner's preaching of "som moral thyng."

It is apparent from the "Introduction to the Pardoner's Tale" that the narrator begins his speech in a sarcastic tone:

> But right anon thise gentils gonne to crye,
> "Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye!
> Telle us som moral thyng, that we may leere
> Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere."
> "I graunte, ywis," quod he, "but I moot thynke
> Upon som honest thyng while that I drynke."
> (C, 323-328)

His "moral thyng" originates in tavern ale, an ironic source for a prologue and tale which prove to be both moral and immoral at once. A description and imitation of the Pardoner's usual holy sermoning "in chirches," the Prologue also exposes the unholy area of the Pardoner's greed. Furthermore, it is an allegorical anticipation of the exemplum which also begins in a tavern, a tavern depicted as full of sin. The allegorical relationship between the tavern in which the tale is told--the tavern "outside" the Tale--and the tavern of the sermon "inside" the Tale is heightened by the Pardoner's description of the fictional inn and its habitues:

> They daunce and pleyen at dees bothe day and nyght,
> And eten also and drynken over hir myght,
> Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifise
> Withinne that develes temple, in cursed wise,
> By superfluytee abhomynable.
> (C, 467-471)

The Pardoner, by his narrative action, also turns the tavern of the pilgrims into an ambiguous sort of temple. It becomes the locale of a sermon; yet in it, the holy words are shown to carry forward the unholy deed of extortion in the Prologue, while the unholy deed of the three riboters carries forward the good word of a call to penitence in his Tale. The Prologue becomes a structural allegory of the Tale, and the Tale a reflex of the Prologue. Literary forms themselves begin acting like allegorical images in the Pardoner's creation.

The Pardoner has but one theme for his memorized sermon--Radix malorum est cupiditas--which he introduces at the very outset as medieval preaching rhetoric demanded. But rather than immediately

beginning the body of his sermon, he has a space of time in which to vend his relics. He tells the company how he is wont to bring out before trusting peasants his "longe cristal stones,/ Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones," (C, 347-348) and recite their miraculous qualities--they cure worms, and other animal diseases, increase the fertility of cattle herds and rid men of jealousy. This review of his sales pitch appears to be a digression until the Pardoner suddenly relates his practice to his theme:

> "By this gaude have I wonne, yeer by yeer,
> An hundred mark sith I was pardoner.
> ...
> For myn entente is nat but for to wynne,
> And nothyng for correccioun of synne."
> (C, 389-404)

He makes his purposes perfectly clear:

> "But shortly myn entente I wol devyse:
> I preche of no thyng but for coveityse.
> Therfore my theme is yet, and evere way,
> Radix malorum est Cupiditas.
> Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice
> Which that I use, and that is avarice.
> (C, 423-428)

The Pardoner boasts of being, as it were, an allegory of himself. He brags of taking money from poor widows and starving children on behalf of their salvation and his avarice. With the money he makes from urging folk away from sin, he says, he sins himself--living lecherously, eating and drinking gluttonously and enjoying a "joly wenche in every toun." In this narrative Prologue of self-exposure, not only does the Pardoner introduce himself as a thorough practitioner of the very vices against which he preaches; he also insinuates an allegorical likeness of situation between the "lewed people" enthralled by his

empty preaching, people for whom he has nothing but scorn, and the "gentils" of the pilgrimage who, like the ignorant folk, expect a moral matter from the immoral Pardoner; at the close of the Prologue, he has brought the pilgrims into a situation which identifies them with the usual silly victims of the Pardoner: the pilgrims, he says, are about to be prodded by the very sermon he uses to sell his relics:

> "But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun;
> Your likyng is that I shal telle a tale.
> Now have I dronke a draughte of corny ale,
> By God, I hope I shal yow telle a thyng
> That shal by reson been at youre likyng.
> For though myself be a ful vicious man,
> A moral tale yet I yow telle kan,
> Which I am wont to preche for to wynne.
> Now hoold youre pees! my tale I wol bigynne."
> (C, 454-462)

As he promises, the tale proves to be a morally moving thing in spite of the viciousness of its narrator. It is also an allegorical amplification of the vices mentioned by the Pardoner in his Prologue. It opens in a Flanders tavern in which young people gamble, riot, fornicate and make gluttons of themselves, a place ripe with sins for the Pardoner to pluck out and develop according to the method of the traditional medieval sermon. Many of the faults against which he inveighs are shared, significantly, by the revellers and the pilgrims alike--oath-swearing, indulgence in fine food and drink, lechery and love of money make one think immediately of the Miller, the Host, the Summoner, the Friar and the Physician. The Pardoner next focuses on three rioters who, drunk on wine, see one of their former companions being carried in funeral procession past the tavern to his grave. Angered at this intimation of their own mortality, they form a pact to kill the "privee theef men

clepeth Deeth." Going out in search of "Deeth," they encounter an old man shrouded in a cloak who says he wishes for the very Death the rioters propose to kill; weary of life, he wants only to die and be buried, yet in obedience to God's will he endures his old age. The old man has been variously interpreted as Death or Elde, a figure of the Old Law and the Old Adam, and, as W. J. B. Owen reads him, just an old man.[30] Read allegorically, he has many associations: he is Death in that he sends the rioters to their doom by pointing out the tree where Death lives; he is Old Age personified in his symbolic relationship with Mother Earth, whom he continually begs for admittance, a figure of what would become of the young men if they succeed in winning everlasting physical life from their adversary; he is also a human being whose actions make him a reverse-image of the rioters, for his humility stands against their pride, his respect for Holy Writ stands against their oaths. Finally, his welcoming of physical death and spiritual life is the reverse of the rioters in action: the rioters desire to slay physical death, win eternal bodily life and ignore the life of the spirit. The Old Man has met spiritual death under the tree and is walking away from it; he has conquered; the three youths want to meet and welcome the kind of death the Old Man disdains. This distinction is not apparent to the rioters, however, and they refuse to let the stranger go until he has directed them to death. Truthfully, he points out the "croked wey" to a grove where stands a tree with death at its foot--an allegorical echo of the tree in the Eden Garden with the snake at its base.

Discovering a hoard of golden florins under the tree, the

three young men forget that the money must, allegorically, "be" death. Blinded by their own cupiditas which is reflected in the brightness of the florins, they plan to hide the wealth at nightfall, becoming themselves "privee theefs" in their encounter with Death in his golden disguise. The youngest runs to town for bread and wine--a perverted echo of the spiritual sustenance of the Mass--and prepares poisoned wine for his two fellows so that he might have the gold all to himself. The two rioters guarding the gold plot to kill the youngest and split their loot only two ways instead of three. Both plots succeed in an allegorical mirroring of the sin of murder; all three rioters lie dead beneath the tree at the close of the Pardoner's exemplum. For them, it becomes the tree of knowledge with its roots in their sin of avarice.

With the end of his exemplum, the Pardoner recalls his listeners to their ironic situation: the admirably moral tale has come from the mouth of a self-confessed sinner who intends to stay firmly in the path of the sin he has just depicted as death-dealing. Allegorically, his sermon acts like the Old Man for the Pardoner; like the rioters, he refuses to hear what wisdom there is in the old message. Warning his listeners to "ware yow from the synne of avarice," he simultaneously revels in it himself:

> Myn hooly pardoun may yow alle warice,
> So that ye offre nobles or sterlynges,
> Or elles silver broches, spoones, rynges.
> Boweth youre heed under this hooly bulle!
> Cometh up, ye wyves, offreth of youre wolle!
> (C, 906-910)

"I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne,
For he is moost envoluped in synne.
Com forth, sire Hoost, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse the relikes everychon,
Ye, for a grote! Unbokele anon thy purs."
(C, 941-945)

But the admiration he proudly expects for his creation is not forthcoming, so allegorically interwoven is the good and evil, the sentence and falsehood, of what the Pardoner has put before the company. Bailly, especially, cannot disentangle the various directions of meaning given by the Pardoner and, unable to match the Pardoner's sudden shaft of wit at him, descends to below-the-belt insult. The other pilgrims can do nothing but laugh self-defensively in the face of the Pardoner's overwhelming moral ambiguity. They ride on, leaving unpraised the complexities of his allegory.

Like the Roman de la Rose, the Pardoner's Prologue and Tale grow through their own story-telling into allegorical images of themselves. Not only are there reflections of wider meaning between images in the sermon; there are reflections of the Pardoner in the rioters, reflections of the pilgrims in the Pardoner's common dupes, reflections of iconographic associations within the exemplum and, in a larger dimension, reflections of good in the Pardoner's evil, and evil in his good. Structurally, the Prologue and Tale set up an allegorical resonance between them. One is led at last to the largest level of theme and form, where allegory is the trope permitting meaningful interplay between the moralitas of the Pardoner's "word"--the necessary basis of allegory--and the evil of his narratively-developed character. The height and depth of human existence stand juxtaposed in Chaucer's most realistic and most allegorical creation.

Conclusion:

Allegory was a method of literary creation which Chaucer found well-developed by his forbears. But he was not content with established traditions of allegory; even in The Book of the Duchess, perhaps the most derivative of his early allegories, he was experimenting with reflections between images, juxtapositions of actions, echoes of narrative function and other action-based indicators of meaning traceable in the works of his masters in the genre. Chaucer began testing how much farther allegorical technique could be taken, moving it beyond the achievement of even the Roman de la Rose. Gradually, his images became less the usual allegorical personifications and more the characters whose models he saw on the London streets--images which grew to have the appearance of free will and opened up much more potential for complex action in his narratives. In their new depth, these images gave him effects not readily available to earlier allegorists: he could bring comedy and tragedy simultaneously into a poem, as he did in Troilus and Criseyde; evoke a complex solution to human problems while seeming to discuss only one side of the argument, as he did in the Prologue and Tale of Dame Alison; develop a narrative structure with self-mirroring sequences of ironic meaning, as he did in the Prologue and Tale of the Pardoner; tell a series of ribald stories then include them in a larger narrative frame of spiritual pilgrimage, as he did in The Canterbury Tales. Far from being a habit of his literary adolescence abandoned in favour of "realism," allegory matured with Chaucer's art and flexibly adapted to the shift from the conventionally beautiful White to the raucous Alison, from the one-sided Griselda to the prismatic Pardoner. By developing allegorically active images into characters, Chaucer made allegory come "on lyve."

FOOTNOTES

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1 Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1965), p. 2.

2 Louis MacNeice, Varieties of Parable (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965), p. 1.

3 John MacQueen, Allegory (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 11-17. MacQueen makes the point that allegory from its earliest origins was associated with narrative in that the myths were a series of tales of events in progression.

4 This quotation is from an excerpt of the Orator in Readings in Classical Rhetoric, Thomas W. Benson and Michael H. Prosser, eds., (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969), p. 237.

5 Quoted by Paul Piehler, The Visionary Landscape (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1971), p. 21.

6 Quoted by MacQueen, p. 49.

7 MacQueen, p. 49.

8 Holy Bible (Revised Standard Edition), Gal. 4. 2-26.

9 MacQueen, pp. 50-53.

10 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica: "Treatise on God," question 1, article 10 (Toronto: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), pp. 9-10.

11 For a critical survey of the debate, see Morton Bloomfield's study, "Symbolism in Medieval Literature," Modern Philology, 56, no. 2 (Nov. 1958), pp. 73-81.

12 D. W. Robertson Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 296.

13 Emile Mâle, The Gothic Image (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 145.

14 F. P. Pickering, Literature and Art in the Middle Ages (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 285-307. His discussion of the harp and the bow traces one example of how visual iconography often alluded to literary allegory in its attempts to depict the typology behind a subject as well as the subject. He suggests the frequent presentation of Christ crucified with his body in a curve alludes to a standard sermon-image of the bow as Christ, both image and referent having been drawn taut on a piece of wood.

15 Robertson, pp. 337-340.

16 Robert Hollander, Allegory in Dante's Commedia (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 3-4.

17 Jean Pépin, Dante et la Tradition de l'Allégorie (Montréal: l'Institute d'études mediévales, 1970), pp. 13-15.

18 C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 48n.

19 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Complete Works (New York: Shedd, 1875), vol. 1, p. 247.

20 Coleridge, vol. 1, pp. 437-438.

21 Lewis, p. 45.

22 Lewis, p. 48.

23 Barbara Seward, The Symbolic Rose (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), p. 3.

24 Seward, p. 20.

25 Robertson, p. 300.

26 Bertrand Bronson, "Personification Reconsidered," ELH, 14, no.3, (1947), 167-168.

27 Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 54.

28 Frye, pp. 89-90.

29 Piehler, p. 18.

30 Edwin Honig, Dark Conceit: the Making of Allegory (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1959), p. 70.

31 Angus Fletcher, Allegory: the Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 35-36.

32 Fletcher, p. 32.

33 Hollander, p. 9.

34 W. T. H. Jackson, Medieval Literature (Collier Books, 1966), p. 13.

35 Erich Auerbach, Mimesis (New York: Doubleday, 1953), p. 171.

36 Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1964), p. 175.

37 Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 141.

38 Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy: vol 2, Medieval Philosophy (New York: Doubleday, 1962), pp. 158-159. Copleston gives a clear summation of the long debate on universals, showing points of similarity and difference among the various positions.

39 Copleston, p. 172.

40 Copleston, p.175.

41 Quoted from a collection of Bartholomew Anglicus' writings, Medieval Lore, ed. Robert Steele (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1957), p. 22.

42 A. D. Nuttall, Two Concepts of Allegory (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 71-72. Nuttall provides in his first three chapters a stimulating and far-ranging discussion of a number of essential psychological and philosophical "difficulties" with allegory as a mode of thought.

43 Nuttall, p. 105.

44 E. Talbot Donaldson, "Patristic Exegesis: The Opposition," in Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1961), p. 24.

45 The Concise Oxford Dictionary, p. 32.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1 Honig, p. 5.

2 Robertson, p. 196.

3 R. H. Green discusses Dante's concept of fictive surface in "Dante's 'Allegory of Poet ' and the Mediaeval Theory of Poetic Fiction," Comparative Literature, 9 (1959), 118-128.

4 Honig, p. 14.

5 Honig, p. 16.

6 Rosemond Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago: University of Chicago Pres, 1947), pp. 105-106.

7 Ellen Leyburn, Satiric Allegory (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1956), pp.3-4.

8 Tuve, Allegorical Imagery (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 26.

9 Aristotle, excerpted from Poetics in Classical Literary Criticism, ed. T. S. Dorsch (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 73.

10 Fletcher, p. 198.

11 George Gordon Lord Byron, Poetical Works (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 77.

12 Guillaume de Lorris, Le Roman de la Rose (The Romance of the Rose), trans. Harry Robbins (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1962), p. 21 (lines 151-152).

13 Mâle, p. 145.

14 Mâle, p. 197.

15 Robertson, p. 223.

16 Holy Bible, revised standard edition; Luke 16. 1-9.

17 A commonplace example of how natural science went hand in hand with medieval allegory is this quotation from a 12th-century bestiary: " ...when a lioness gives birth to her cubs, she brings them forth dead and lays them up lifeless for three days--until their father, coming on the third day, breathes in their faces and makes them alive." (The Book of Beasts, trans. T. H. White, London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), p. 8. See also Le Bestiaire Divin de Guillaume, Clerc de Normandie (Géneve: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), p.75, for a French version of the same bit of lore. The studies of G. R. Owst on medieval preaching style provide further discussions of how preachers used the natural world as an allegory.

18 Fletcher, p. 87.

19 Muscatine, p. 41.

20 Scholes and Kellogg, p. 104.

21 Scholes and Kellogg, p. 109.

22 Jackson, p. 101.

23 Hollander, p. 7-8.

24 Robertson, pp. 34-35.

25 Prudentius, "The Psychomachia" in Prudentius, trans. H. J. Thomson (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1949.), p. 279.

26 Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 290.

27 Prudentius, p. 281.

28 Prudentius, p. 343.

29 Prudentius, p. 281.

30 Prudentius, P. 311.

31 R. Bossuat in his introduction to the Anticlaudianus of Alain de Lille (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955), p. 13.

32 Bossuat, p. 12.

33 Raynaud de Lage, Alain de Lille (Montreal: Institut d'etudes medievales, 1951), pp. 101-117.

34 Alain de Lille, The Complaint of Nature, trans. Douglas Moffat (New York: Henry Holt, 1908), p. 5.

35 de Lage, p. 10.

36 Alain de Lille, The Complaint of Nature, p. 90.

37 Auerbach, p. 105.

38 Guillaume de Lorris, Le Roman de la Rose (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1912), lines 1595-1602 (vol. 1, p. 83).

39 Guillaume de Lorris, The Romance of the Rose, trans. Robbins, p. 32-33.

40 Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 326.

41 Tuve, ibid, p. 261.

42 Lewis, p. 128.

43 Frederick Goldin, The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1967), p. 58.

44 Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose, lines 18243-18246 (vol. IV, p. 221).

45 Jean de Meun, lines 20575-20578 (vol. V, p. 49).

46 Jean de Meun, trans., p. 436.

47 Jean de Meun, lines 10603-10609 (vol. III, p. 167).

48 Jean de Meun, trans., p. 215.

49 Jean de Meun, lines 10644-10651 (vol. III, p. 169).

50 Jean de Meun, trans., p. 215.

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1 W. P. Ker, Essays on Medieval Literature (London: Macmillan, 1905), p. 82.

2 Robert Miller, "Allegory in The Canterbury Tales," Companion to Chaucer Studies (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 270.

3 Robertson. p. 327.

4 St. Thomas Aquinas, pp. 10-11.

5 Scholes and Kellogg, p. 104.

6 Robertson, p. 247.

7 Robertson, p. 248.

8 R. W. V. Elliott, "Chaucer's Reading," Chaucer's Mind and Art (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), p. 61.

9 Nevill Coghill, The Poet Chaucer (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 77-78.

10 F. N. Robinson, ed., The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961),p. 267.

11 Howard Patch, On Rereading Chaucer (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1939), p. 37.

12 Morton Bloomfield, "Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer," Thought, 39 (1964), 335-58.

13 Robertson, pp. 241-242.

14 John Speirs, Chaucer the Maker (London: Faber, 1964), p. 26.

15 Muscatine, p. 96.

16 Beryl Rowland, "Chaucer's Imagery," Companion to Chaucer Studies (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 118-119.

17 Wolfgang Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 10.

18 James Wimsatt, Chaucer and the French Love Poets (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 103 ff.

19 Bertrand Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-opened," PMLA, 67 (1952), p. 863.

[20] Constance Hieatt, The Realism of Dream Visions (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), p. 103.

[21] Hieatt, p. 103.

[22] chael Means, The Consolatio Genre in Medieval English Literature (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1972), p. 3.

[23] Bernard Huppé and D. W. Robertson, Jr., Fruyt and Chaf (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 33-34. However, they also admit, "On the one hand, the image of the lady as the only physician to heal lovers' discomfort is traditional."

[24] R. S. Loomis, "Chaucer's Eight Years' Sickness," MLN, 59 (1944), 179.

[25] Georgia Ronan Crampton, "Transitions and Meaning in The Book of the Duchess," JEGP, 62 (1963), 485.

[26] In this and following discussions, all quotations of Chaucer's work are from the New Cambridge Edition of The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F. N. Robinson (second edition). The Book of the Duchess is identified in citation as BD, and the matter from The Canterbury Tales is identified in citation by line numbers of manuscript fragments.

[27] Huppé and Robertson, in their chapter, "The Book of the Duchess."

[28] Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-opened," 870-871.

[29] Dorothy Everett, "Chaucer's Art Poetical," Essays on Middle English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 113.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1 Coghill, p. 95.

2 Paul Ruggiers, The Art of the Canterbury Tales (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 170.

3 Miller, p. 279.

4 Ruggiers, p. 170.

5 Ruggiers, p. 241.

6 Donald Reiman, "The Real Clerk's Tale; or, Patient Griselda Exposed," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 5, no. 3 (autumn 1963),356.

7 James Sledd, "The Clerk's Tale: The Monsters and the Critics," Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (London: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1969), p. 235.

8 Speirs, p. 152.

9 Bronson, In Search of Chaucer (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 108.

10 J. Burke Severs, The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 4

11 Severs, pp. 247-248.

12 Bronson, In Search of Chaucer, p. 108.

13 G. L. Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," Modern Philology, 9 (1911-1912), 435-76, rpt. in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht, p. 189.

14 These remarks make use of Severs' comparisons between sources of the tale and Chaucer's treatment.

15 Robert Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 217.

16 Jordan, p. 222.

17 Patch, p. 162.

18 Kittredge, p. 193.

19 Robertson, p. 327.

20 Robertson, p. 330.

[21] John L. Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1958), p. 163.

[22] See Robertson, p. 317 and following, for a lengthy development of this interpretation of the Wife.

[23] Muscatine, p. 213.

[24] Kittredge, "Chaucer's Pardoner," Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, p. 123.

[25] G. G. Sedgewick, "The Progress of Chaucer's Pardoner, 1880-1940," rpt. Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, pp. 126-158.

[26] Speirs, p. 177.

[27] See A. L. Kellogg, "An Augustinian Interpretation of Chaucer's Pardoner," Speculum, 26.(1951), pp. 465-481. Kellogg suggests that "the portrait of the Pardoner, so often appreciated for its consistency of dramatic development, may be viewed as possessing another and deeper consistency--that of a spiritual degeneration conceived in Augustinian terms, the history of a mind averted from God, suffering and struggling against the penalty of its own evil." (p. 465)

[28] See Clarence H. Miller and Roberta Bux Bosse, "Chaucer's Pardoner and the Mass," Chaucer Review, 6, no. 3 (Winter 1972), pp. 171-183. The authors note the consistency with which the Pardoner is associated with the Mass in both "The General Prologue" and his tale. They also note allusions to the Mass in the imagery and structure of his contribution, concluding: "Because he is thoroughly steeped in his perversion, the mass has become the central fact of his existence, as, indeed, it should be for the good Christian. The Pardoner, however, uses it for evil and not for good, for damnation rather than salvation." (p. 183)

[29] See Robert Miller, "Chaucer's Pardoner, the Scriptural Eunuch and the Pardoner's Tale," in Chaucer Criticism: the Canterbury Tales, ed. Schoek and Taylor, pp. 221-244. Miller distinguishes between the Biblically anathematized "false eunuch" who is "impotent to produce spiritual fruit," and the "eunuchus Dei" who is the deliberately chaste priest productive of good works. He believes the Pardoner's eunuchry is an outer sign of his character as a false ecclesiastic.

[30] W. J. B. Owen, "The Old Man in The Pardoner's Tale," rpt. in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, p. 161.

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