FOR OUR DOCTRINE: AUTHORIAL INTENTION IN CHAUCER'S *LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN*

by

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For Oure Doctrine: Authorial Intention in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women.

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ABSTRACT

Chapter One opens with a brief argument for authorial intention as the basis for interpretation of medieval literature. A concept of authorial intention is particularly pertinent to medieval aesthetics, which, rooted in didacticism, assume an author's conscious intent to convey moral *sentence*. Generally, however, critics of the Legend of Good Women have failed to perceive in the poem a serious moral purpose, understanding it as an occasional piece designed to curry court favour or as a "palinode", written to smooth courtly feminine feathers ruffled by Troilus and Criseyde. Others (ignoring authorial intention altogether) treat the Legend as a stylistically transitional piece, a sort of practice exercise for the Canterbury Tales. I argue, on the contrary, that the Legend of Good Women is a thematically coherent work which extends the *sentence* expounded in the "Epilogue" of Troilus and Criseyde. I view the Legend as essentially a restatement of its precursor's theme: that earthly love, when idolized rather than subordinated to the love of God, inevitably leads to tragic results.

In Chapter Two, I discuss briefly the critical milieu of the poem's reception. Then, in applying Aristotelian literary analysis (prevalent in medieval theory), I attempt to demonstrate that the poem's didactic purpose (*causa finalis*) determines and governs its structure (*forma tractatus*) and style

(*forma tractandi*), as well as the poet's selection of materials (*causa materialis*). This analysis of the poem's matter, style and formal relations, resolves many of the structural and rhetorical problems perceived by critics.

Finally, in Chapter Three, through a close reading of the individual legends (which I understand as ironic and subversive to the God of Love's demands), I attempt to interpret authorial intention--the poet's moral purpose--as it is revealed in the text.

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DEDICATION

For Mary, without whom
this would have been entirely too easy

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> For oure book seith, "Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine," and that is myn entente.

For some critical theorists, the concept of authorial intention is irrelevant to a text, or even in its implications sinister, while for others,a construct of authorial intention represents the only valid basis for interpretation.[1] It is not my intention to embroil myself in this theoretical dispute. I am willing to concede, with E. D. Hirsch, "that authorial intention is not the only possible norm for interpretation";[2] nevertheless, I would note that (in Chaucer studies, at least) it is undoubtedly the most widespread. Editorial defenses of problematic word choices or textual orderings consistently appeal to the "authority" of various manuscripts or the likelihood that a particular choice of textual variants represents the author's original intention; and even when the authority of manuscripts is deemed sufficiently questionable that editors have "felt free to draw upon any ... readings that seem intrinsically attractive",[3] the choice of presumed intrinsic superiority is implicitly justified on the same intentional grounds. Because a given reading is presumed to be the "best" reading, it is assumed to be the author's.[4] Editorial practices, then, have generally been based upon the assumption that authorial meaning, above all else, should be preserved.[5]

Similarly, most Chaucerian criticism, past and present, assumes the privileged status of the author. Not only the earlier or more conservative critics,[6] but even writers like Eugene Vance[7] and Richard Shoaf,[8] whose recent critical works incorporate

> ideas about language that would indeed render Chaucer's role as an "intentional, sentient centre" irrelevant to an analysis of his work, in practice ... assume a conscious intention on Chaucer's part. [9]

The "new wave" of Chaucer criticism anticipated five years ago by A. J. Minnis has yet to make much of a splash. [10]

There are sound reasons why Chaucerian criticism has remained relatively impervious to literary theory which would "banish the author", reasons which become evident if we focus upon what Hans Jauss has termed the "alterity" of medieval poetry. If we attempt to reconstruct, as Jauss advises, "the horizon of expectation of the addressees for whom the text was originally composed",[11] we immediately challenge some rather basic modern assumptions. The most fundamental assumption, I suppose, is the text itself; for it is likely that at least some of Chaucer's audience *heard* (rather than read) his works. But leaving this aside for the moment, we may note as even more pertinent distinctions between modern and medieval aesthetic expectations. For the post-Victorian reader, who assumes "poetry" falls under the category of "literature-as-art"[12] (thus automatically privileging aesthetic inquiry), to confront a medieval attitude which disdains even to distinguish a category for "poetry", classifying it instead as a sub-branch of ethics,[13] is to confront a "surprising otherness"[14] indeed. Not

surprisingly, not every reader is prepared to meet the medieval work on its own terms. Just how unprepared some modern readers (and editors) are to accomodate themselves to medieval aesthetics is elucidated by Robert Jordan's perceptive discussion of the Parson's Tale:

> As a treatise on penitence the Parson's Tale offers little that will please or instruct the modern reader. Just how little it offers is apparent in the fact that two excellent recent editions of Chaucer's works, Donaldson's and Baugh's, have found it expedient to omit the Parson's Tale. Economy is, of course, an important consideration in our cost-conscious age, but obviously there are more definitive reasons, aesthetic and moral, for omitting this tale rather than others. The fundamental reason seems simple enough and conclusive. The Parson's Tale is a prose tract, not a verse narrative, and therefore it is a sport among the Canterbury tales. Even the Melibeus, though in prose and very tractlike, follows a narrative line. But the simple observation that the Parson's Tale is not a literary work and is therefore more or less expendable conveys an important implication, namely, that there is a discrepancy in judgement between Chaucer and ourselves regarding the scope of art and the proper role of the artist in matters of belief and doctrine. Since it is plain that Chaucer took the Parson's Tale very seriously, both as doctrine and the culmination of his work of literary art, we are faced with some large questions. Assuming, as we tend to do, that a poem must not mean but be, are we able to invest with literary value a work which so manifestly means? [15]

On this last question hangs, to a considerable extent, our appreciation of Chaucer's work; for unless we can adjust to a conception of poetry which subordinates the aesthetics of fiction to the meaning that fiction subsumes, we will lose much of the essential quality of medieval writing.

Medieval authors wrote, as studies following D.W. Robertson[16] have shown, for an audience whose expectation was not only pleasure but instruction; indeed, poetic fiction was

viewed metaphorically as but a "veil" that clothed an internal hidden truth or profound moral doctrine.[17] As Boccaccio explains:

> Fiction is a form of discourse which, under guise of invention, illustrates or proves an idea; and, as its superficial aspect is removed, the meaning of the author is clear. If, then, sense is revealed from under the veil of fiction, the composition of fiction is not idle nonsense ... Such then is the power of fiction that it pleases the unlearned by its external appearance, and exercises the minds of the learned with its hidden truth ...[18]

Chaucer's poetry is not, of course, often allegorical in the narrowest sense of requiring translation into a parallel system of ideas. "But," as Jordan points out,

> to say that Chaucer does not customarily express himself allegorically is not to say that he transcends or revolts against the allegorical tradition and its conceptual framework of aesthetic directives.[19]

Rather, Chaucer's writings affirm these aesthetic directives. His "fiction is not idle nonsense", for it conveys a moral *sentence*; it was, indeed, "writen for oure doctrine", although Chaucer, like Boccaccio, was aware that his writing would be interpreted in a wholly different manner by the "wise folk" than by the "lewed".[20]

Indeed, this recognition of the possibility of misinterpretation is, in Chaucer's poetry, a constant theme. The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women is in part, as Payne points out, a mirroring of the "possible discrepancy between intention and effect in poetry";[21] and a concrete example of the fallibility of interpretation may be seen in the outrageous exegesis practiced by the Wife of Bath. But nowhere is Chaucer's

concern with interpretation more poignantly expressed than in the envoy to Troilus and Criseyde, where the poet utters a passionate prayer that his intention not be misunderstood:

> And for ther is so gret diversite
> In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,
> So prey I god that non myswrite the,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge.
> And red wherso thow be , or elles songe,
> That thow be understonde, God I biseche! (TC V, 1793-8)

Here Chaucer not only anticipates the problems of metre and scribal variations which modern editors face, but recognizes, like Hirsch, that "almost any word sequence can, under the conventions of language, legitimately represent more than one complex of meaning".[22] His plea is that his meaning be understood.

My point is that there exists in Chaucer's poems, as in most medieval works, a determinate meaning or *sentence* that the *auctor*[23] wishes to convey; and, for a medieval audience, this "message" subordinates the "medium" through which it is translated. Confronted with this aesthetic, the "learned" reader (medieval or modern) might be expected to pursue a fictive work beneath its "veil" in order to discover the *sentence* it embodies. In fact, the "decoding" of the *sentence* of a medieval work is, as Boccaccio suggests, part of its pleasure for the initiated audience. As I've previously suggested, however, not all critics are prepared to accord *sentence* a properly privileged status; and not in all cases is the cost of this neglect immediately obvious. Troilus and Criseyde can, after all, be read as a "psychological novel", and the Canterbury

Tales as a series of amusing, though disjointed, yarns; for the "chaf" of these works, to use the Robertsonian formula, is intelligible and entertaining in its own right. Difficulties arise, however, or at least become apparent, when the "fruyt" of the Legend of Good Women is ignored. For, if we fail to grasp the illuminating "spirit" of this latter work (its author's intention), the "letter" of the poem remains at best obscure, at worst, inane.

Indeed, for most readers, the Legend of Good Women remains an enigma, and it is this critical crux that prompts my present study. Generally, modern critics have failed to meet this challenge, ignoring the work altogether; and even in the early part of this century when the Legend was the subject of considerable critical attention, critics tended to concentrate on peripheral issues, avoiding interpretation of a difficult work by denying that it had deeper meaning. In ignoring "authorial intention", those who have not ignored the work entirely have done little to illuminate its obscurity or to redeem the poem from the obvious charge of triteness. Further, an unbalanced concentration on the poem's Prologue (at the expense of the legends) has led to a view of the poem as a structurally disjointed work which lacks any unifying theme. Contrary to this general perception, however, I will argue that the Legend of Good Women is an integral, thematically coherent work that extends the *sentence* expounded in the "epilogue" of Troilus and Criseyde. The poem is not, in fact, a "palinode" to

the Troilus but rather a restatement of its theme: that earthly love, when idolized rather than subordinated to the love of God, inevitably leads to tragic results. Once the Legend's thematic relationship with the Troilus has been properly understood and its moral purpose deduced, many of the difficulties with the poem's structure and tone can be resolved.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine briefly the Legend's critical history and discuss the inadequacies of the critical treatment it has received. I will then attempt to discover, through the Legend's thematic relationship with Troilus and Criseyde, the poem's unifying theme--the moral *sentence* which its author intended to convey. In Chapter two, I will apply Aristotelian literary analysis to show how the Legend's didactic purpose (*causa finalis*) determines and governs its structure (*forma tractatus*) and style (*forma tractandi*), as well as the poet's selection of sources (*causa materialis*). Finally, in Chapter three, through a close reading of the individual legends, I will attempt to interpret Chaucer's purpose as revealed in the text.

The earliest recorded criticism of the Legend was Lydgate's reference to the poem in the introduction to the Fall of Princes (c. 1430):

> This poete wrote, at the request of the queene,
> A Legende of parfite holynesse
> Of Good Women, to find out nynteene
> That did excell in bountee and fayrnes. (330-333)[24]

This suggestion of an occasional motive for the poem, though not

substantiated by any external evidence, has persisted, with various modifications, to the present day. As John Fisher points out, "occasional" criticism constitutes one of the two major streams of the poem's commentary:

> Discussions of the Legend since 1900 have turned upon various combinations and permutations of these two viewpoints: the Legend as an occasional poem motivated by royal command, and the Legend as a stage in Chaucer's poetic development. [25]

To these two major classes of commentary I would add a third--that of "source studies", which adds significantly to the bulk of the Legend's criticism. It is not my intention to examine closely each critical work, but rather to point out the general inadequacies in each of these critical approaches. First, then, I will consider the view of the Legend as an occasional poem.

"Occasional" criticism of the poem comprises a wide range of views, from a simple acknowledgement that the poem may have been written at the "request of the queene"[26] to fulfledged "historical allegory".[27] To the least contentious of these views there would not seem to be a serious objection, for as Fisher remarks: "a poem can be occasional and still be a genuine work of art".[28] But even in its mildest form, the notion that the Legend was generated by royal command (presumably to smooth feminine feathers ruffled by the Troilus) poses problems.

First, one might legitimately ask: where is the evidence? Without an elaborate allegorization of the poem's characters (the pitfalls of which I shall later discuss), the sole evidence

for assuming that the poem was written by royal decree is Lydgate's poetic statement, which, as Fisher observes,[29] may have been based on nothing more than two lines uttered by Alceste in the "F" Prologue:

> And whan this book ys maad, yive it to the quene
> On my byhalf, at Eltham or at Sheene. (F 496-7)

These lines constitute perhaps a dedication to the queen, but can hardly be construed as a royal command. And, in fact, the idea that an author might submit to such a decree is treated disparagingly in the Prologue, where Alceste uses this motive in defending Chaucer's translation of the Roman de la Rose and composition of Troilus and Criseyde. Perhaps, she says,

> ...hym was boden make thilke tweye
> Of some persone, and durste not it withseye...(G 396-7)

This defense is coupled with an alternative suggestion that perhaps Chaucer was just too simple-minded ("nyce": from the French *niais*: silly) to know what he was doing:

> Or elles, sire, for that this man is nyce,
> He may translate a thyng in no malyce,
> But for he useth bokes for to make,
> And taketh non hed of what matere he take,
> Therfore he wrot the Rose and ek Crisseyde
> Of innocence, and nyste what he seyde. (G 340-45)

Neither idea speaks highly of the author--and yet, these are very like the excuses critics make for the Legend itself! The boring subject matter of the Legend, we are told, is not Chaucer's responsibility, for "hym was boden ... of som persone, and durste it not withseye"; and his sloppy execution in the legends was due to inexperience (the Troilus behind him!) with narrative verse. It seems unlikely to me that our modern excuses

for the Legend are any more justifiable than Alceste's excuses for the Troilus, or, for that matter, any more necessary. Neither the Troilus nor the Legend (properly understood) require any fiction for their defense beyond that created by their author. And the genesis of the Legend of Good Women is carefully detailed in the fiction of the poem's Prologue.

In the Prologue, in a dream vision, the poet is condemned by the God of Love (not the women of the court) for having transgressed Love's laws:

> Thow art my mortal fo and me werreyest,
> And hynderest hem with thy translacyoun,
> And lettest folk to han devocyoun
> To serven me, and holdest it fole
> To truste on me. Thow mayst it nat denye,
> For in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose,
> Thow hast translated the Romauns of the Rose,
> That is an heresye ageyns my lawe,
> And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;
> And thynkest in thy wit, that is ful col,
> That he nys but a verray propre fol
> That loveth paramours, to harde and hote. (G 247-60)

And although the narrator denies the charge, his defense is intentionally evasive and ambiguous:

> But trewely I wende, as in this cas,
> Naught have agilt, ne don to love trespas.
> For-why a trewe man, withoute drede,
> Hath nat to parte with a theves dede,
> Ne a trewe lovere oughte me nat to blame,
> Thogh that I speke a fals lovere som shame.
> They oughte rathere with me for to holde,
> For that I of Criseyde wrot or tolde,
> Or of the Rose; what so myn auctour ment,
> Algate, God wot, it was myn entente
> To forthere trouthe in love and it cheryce,
> And to be war fro falsnesse and fro vice
> By swich ensaumple; this was my menynge ... (G 452-64)

In the Troilus, Chaucer does not merely "spek a fals lovere som shame", he counsels the young to turn away from earthly love (TC

V,1835-41); and although it may genuinely have been his intent "to forthere trouthe in love and it cheryce/And to ... war fro falsnesse and fro vice", this defense rests upon the ambiguity of the word "love", which can mean either "caritas" (love of God) or "cupiditas" (desire for worldly things). The kind of love Cupid encourages, cupidity, is the very "vice" Chaucer warns against in the Troilus. In short, Chaucer is guilty of Love's charge; and if his earlier writings did not condemn him, his attitude toward Love in the Prologue would certainly render him suspect.

Alceste observes that the narrator "lesteth nat a lovere be" (480); but it is obvious that this rejection of love is more than a mere matter of distaste. The narrator is terrified of Love; confronted, he cowers in "dred" (183), much as he did before the gate to Nature's Park in the Parliament of Fowls. His fear is undoubtedly fixed upon Cupid's arrows, those "two fiery dartes as the gledes rede" (167)--the power Cupid holds to punish the scofflaws and scorners of love by causing them to fall in love themselves. This is, of course, the power Cupid exerts against Troilus for the contempt he shows love; and the poet fears that for his sins against Love, he will, like Troilus, be brought "by Seynt Venus" (313) to this pitiful end. He therefore agrees to accept the "lytel penaunce yiven" (489), because he knows he has "deserved sorer for to smerte" (490). Indeed, when Alceste receives assurance that "[Love will] him nevere hurte in al his lyve" (424), his relief is evident:

For ne hadde confort been of hire presence,
I hadde be ded, withouten any defence,
For dred of Loves wordes and his chere ... (G 181-3)

When we reckon, then, with this poet-narrator's negative attitude toward love--expressed in past writings and implied in his stance in the Prologue--we should hardly be surprised to discover, in the legends, that the injunction to "spek wel of love" (480) has been undermined, that the poet, in adhering to the "letter" of his penance, has subverted the "spirit" of Love's demands. The God of Love, it becomes obvious, has served as a fictional foil for a disguised poetic purpose: the ironic rendering of the negative aspects of earthly love.

If, however, we understand the poem as deriving from a patron's command, any ironic reading of the poem becomes problematic; for it is one thing to subvert the dictates of a fictional tyrant and quite another to thumb one's nose at real and powerful royalty. Indeed, H. C. Goddard, the first critic to propose an ironic reading of the poem, held to the occasional thesis very gingerly--clearly uncertain whether those who were the butt were invited to share in the joke.[30] It seems to me that if, to retain an ironic reading of the Legend (for which I hope to show there is abundant evidence), we are required to abandon the occasional thesis (for which there is virtually no evidence), we are paying a small price. We have simply jettisoned an unnecessary critical fiction.

Even less necessary, as Huppé[31] points out, is the treatment of the poem as a full scale "historical allegory", the most prominent example of which is Margaret Galway's article on the Legend. At the outset of his argument, Huppé challenges Miss Galway's basic premise, that

> one cannot proceed far in the Prologue F (or B in Skeat) without suspecting that its characters represent historical persons. [32]

I would like to extend Huppé's criticism of Galway to underscore some serious ramifications of this method of interpretation.

Galway's basic allegorical designs are early on made clear: the God of Love = the ghost of the Black Prince (the deceased Edward, Prince of Wales), Alceste = Joan of Kent (Edward's widow, mother of his son, Richard II, and mother of John Holland, a son by a second marriage). She focuses especially upon Alceste's defense of Chaucer as the "element most readily suspected of allegorical significance":

> It occupies a little more than one-sixth of the poem [sic], develops into a lecture on the duties of a king, and in phraseology occasionally loses touch altogether with its professed subject...It would seem that another and more serious offence is here in question than a worm's maligning and hindering of lovers. If so, we may expect to find in our historical analogy a crime committed by some lord of the realm. (p. 147)

The crime Galway discovers, a crime presumably signified in the poem by Chaucer's literary offense, is a murder purportedly committed by Joan of Kent's son, John Holland. Consequently, Alceste's intercession is interpreted as Joan's veiled plea to one of her sons, Richard II (through the ghost of his father), on behalf of another son, John Holland.

More recently, however, Judson Allen has substituted in this passage an entirely different cast of historical characters; in his scenario, it is Queen Anne who petitions the Count of Arundel on behalf of Simon Burley.[33] Of course, the very possibility of such disparate identifications underscores the methodological problem: that such a method can be filled with <u>any</u> content. Indeed, one early identification of Alceste as Alice Chester (thought to be a lady-in-waiting of the Queen) was not discredited until evidence produced from household records showed that Alice was an elderly laundress.[34] Such historico-allegorical readings, then, should be advanced warily. As William of Ockham is reputed to have said in his famous *Razor*: "Pluralitas numquam ponenda est sine necessitate." [Plurality is never to be posited without necessity]. And here, as Huppé points out in his criticism of Galway's article, the allegory is not only not necessary, but obviates the more logical sense and tone of the passage:

> [the passage] is a mock serious address to the God of Love on a mock serious subject which gains its humour through being couched in terms realistically flavouring of highly serious political affairs ... Moreover, even if the passage is taken seriously, Miss Galway's interpretation does not seem accurate. If the lords are out of place in a defence of the worm, Chaucer, then the reverse is equally true. Holland's offence was of the utmost gravity; what except the most obdurate tactlessness, could have persuaded Chaucer to place the plea of a desperate mother in the context of such levity as the defence of a 'worm-like' sinner against Love?[35]

Yet logic does not appear to deter either Galway or Allen. To his credit, Allen maintains integrity in his reading; he finds Arundel in <u>every</u> passage--from the bird passage in the

Prologue (where he is the hated fowler), to the legends themselves:

> In the legends of the saints of love which follow this prologue description of Alceste, there are repeated allusions which fit Arundel. Of the men who betray in these stories, Antony, Aeneas, Jason, Theseus,Tereus, and Demophon are explicitly sailors, as was Arundel.[36]

Although this interpretation seems to me more ridiculous than sublime, I nevertheless applaud Allen's purpose, which is to show how "occasional poetry" is an "assimilation of the real world" and how the "types" thus assimilated (in this case, Queen Anne) become metaphors for ideal conduct. Where "occasions" indisputably exist (as, for instance, in the Book of the Duchess), this is indeed the strategy that Chaucer employs; he uses "occasion" to fulfill a more profound poetic purpose.

What I find so disconcerting in Galway's interpretation, is that for Galway, "occasion" is the purpose. She seems to feel that in aiding and abetting a patron's practical causes, a poet's poetic purpose is fulfilled; and that mythical allusion is no more than an opportunity to include, in disguise, various members of the court. Behind the figures in the Prologue's *Balade*, for example, Galway finds numerous "real-life" characters. Absalon is actually Richard II, who

> had not only unusually abundant hair, like Absalom of the Bible, but actually 'gilte tresses', like Absalom of the *Balade* . These he wore in his youth with seeming pride 'in broad masses on either side of his face'. He was also tall, handsome, and addicted to gorgeous apparel, as near as a king need be to meriting what is said of David's son: 'In all Israel there was none so much to be praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.' (p. 194)

Jonathas is Robert de Vere. (p. 195) Queen Anne is either Ester or Penelope (p. 197) (which, no doubt future scholarship will reveal!), etc., etc. And finally, it seems, the whole of Chaucer's poetry is written for the various purposes of Joan of Kent:

> We see Chaucer as a young court poet of twenty or thereabouts dedicating his pen to the service of the Princess of Wales, and from that time till her death faithfully composing most of his poems for her. (p. 197)

In attempting to clarify the distinction between the medieval concepts of "making" and "poetry", Glending Olson makes a pertinent comment upon these "limited" objectives of the "court maker":

> The court maker is essentially concerned with a limited goal, the perfection of his craft, which meets immediate social demands. Only when he goes beyond this function and writes wisely, too, may he be considered a poet.[37]

Chaucer certainly aspired to the status of "poet" and in his works we may expect to discover that "moral purposiveness that might be lacking in 'making'".[38] To find less, is, I believe, to trivialize Chaucer, to sanction the superficiality that, for critics like Galway, serves as interpretation.

Generally, then, I am skeptical of "occasional" criticism, of criticism which views a poem's occasion as an end in itself, especially when the understanding of that occasion is little more than conjecture. Certainly *all* poems stem from *some* occasion, but poems often outgrow (or even forget) their original impetus; and, in any event, in medieval poetry one may expect that "occasion"--the poem's immediate cause--will

ultimately serve the poet's moral purpose--the poem's "final cause".

A second stream of Legend criticism which I have identified is that of source studies, which became popular following the discovery by Henry Bradshaw in 1864 of a unique variant of the Legend Prologue, what is now known as the G Prologue. The existence of two distinct Prologues was first explained in terms of the occasional motive;[39] but it soon became apparent that Bradshaw's discovery afforded a unique opportunity to study a prolonged example of their author's methods of revision. There remained, however, the problem of which version was the original and which the revision.[40]

Basing his theory upon an extensive study of the French Marguerite poems, John Livingstone Lowes concluded that the B version (now known as the F Prologue) was the earlier:

> So far,then ... the examination of the two versions in the light of their relation to the marguerite poems affords strong evidence for the priority of B--evidence so strong, I think, as to be on grounds of technique and craftsmanship, conclusive.[41]

With Lowe's conclusion (which seems indeed to have been ratified by a general critical concensus) I have no problems; but with his critical methods I find myself at odds. So it seems did Goddard, who wrote:

> The fallacy in [his] reasoning--a fallacy which, in my opinion, runs through all Dr. Lowes' inferences from his French "sources"--rests on the attempt to judge each passage or situation as if it were an isolated poem instead of judging it in relation to the larger significance of the Legend as a whole.[42]

Lowes (apparently following Kittredge) regarded the Prologue as a response to Deschamps's complimentary balade to Chaucer,[43] and he makes no effort to understand the Prologue's French sources in relation to the poem's larger concerns. Prologue F, Lowes believes, is a sloppy compliment--

> a heaping up, in accordance with no definite order of time, of phrases borrowed from the *marguerite* poems...[an] utter shipwreck of grammar in piecing the gleanings together! (p. 659)

Prologue G is presumably a reconstituted, better integrated compliment. But there is no consideration given to how the Prologue's French sources relate to the poem's broader structures. Why, for instance, is a *cento* of French literary echoes introduced by a discussion of "olde bokes"? And what is the relationship of this burdensome borrowing of French poetry to the classical tradition which underlies the legends that the Prologue is ostensibly to introduce? What <u>meaning</u> can be understood from the relationship of these sources to the poem as a whole?

These are questions which neither Lowes nor any of the early source critics asks. Indeed Edgar Shannon[44] wrote the better part of a book on Chaucer's borrowings from Ovid, noting dutifully all of Chaucer's excisions and additions, without seriously questioning Chaucer's relationship to his classical forbear--without asking what essentially it means to be *Ovidian*. And in avoiding this question, he avoided questioning the relationship of the poem's sources to its broader significance. As with Lowes, the <u>purpose</u> behind Chaucer's selection of

materials is never explored.[45]

This "error of omission" is recognized by A. J. Minnis, who offers part of the solution:

> Study of Chaucer's sources in their entirety--not just the extracts that provide close literal parallels with Chaucer passages--is essential. The full context of the key passage in the source--what medieval commentators called 'the circumstances of the letter'--must be investigated fully ... From the 'circumstances of the letter' can be obtained information about the ideological structure within which the ideas in question functioned and took on their original meaning.[46]

This is only part of the solution, however, because a second step is necessary. Once having ascertained the 'circumstances of the letter' of the poem's sources, we must then ask how these sources serve their author's intention--how the poem's "material cause" serves its "final cause".

Commentary on the Legend of Good Women affords few examples of this critical methodology, but fortunately, some recent source studies have taken this tack. For example, in a thorough study of Ovid's influence upon Chaucer,[47] Richard Hoffman draws several conclusions regarding Chaucer's relationship with his primary classical source, among them:

> that Chaucer considered Ovid an ethical philosopher and not merely a teller of tales; that Chaucer was concerned with the *sentence* or moral lessons of Ovid's fables as well as with their *sense* or surface meaning ... that Chaucer, fully recognizing this manifold dependence upon his favorite Roman poet, seems to have enjoyed representing himself as an English Ovid.[48]

Likewise, Eleanor Winsor Leach's close study of the Heroides in relation to the Legend[49] discovers the essential parallels between the two poems--those of "spirit" as well as "letter".

Had Lowes approached the Prologue's French sources with a similar intention, he might have noted in the relationship between Chaucer and the French poets a distinct lack of such spiritual affinity,[50] and might thereby have understood the "heaping up" of imitative phrases for what it was--a parody of the sources which Chaucer mimicked. He might then have concluded, like Glending Olson, that Chaucer regarded this type of "making" as inferior to the "poetry" which he (alongside Ovid) aspired to write:

> But the "makyng" of the lovers in the *Legend Prologue* is clearly the social French sort, and Chaucer's portrayal of his relationship to that world--a world which could see the *Troilus* as one more antifeminist swipe, just as it and its French counterpart some dozen years later apparently saw the *Roman de la Rose*--is tactfully but unmistakably ironic.[51]

In any event, source critics[52]--unless they are willing to assent to Alceste's dubious claim that Chaucer could

> ... translate a thyng in no malyce,
> But for he useth bokes for to make,
> And taketh non hed of what matere he take ... (G 341-3)

must somehow account for the "matere" that he chose (and how he altered it); and the most intelligible way to account for that "matere" is to understand it in terms of its author's intention.

A third category of Legend commentary which has been identified is that which views the work primarily as a stage in the poet's development. One branch of this criticism observes the poet's development through his revision of the Prologue; a second sees the Legend as essentially a transitional piece, a sort of practice exercise for the Canterbury Tales. The first

group includes the criticism of J. L. Lowes,[53] D. D. Griffith,[54] and Robert Estrich;[55] the best example of the second type is Robert Frank's book,[56] the first monograph to discuss the Legend as a whole.

Of the first group, I have already briefly discussed one of Lowes's articles. His argument, simply stated, is that the revision of the Prologue was undertaken on aesthetic grounds--that the G Prologue, although perhaps less charming[57] than F, is better unified structurally, and therefore must be the revised version. In considering this argument, I am inclined to agree with Estrich, that "had Chaucer set about to unify a rather loosely constructed poem, he would have done a better job."[58] But my primary objection is aimed not toward the substance of the criticism, but toward the broader critical approach; for the general approach of each of the "revision" critics is, I think, seriously misdirected. Each argues that changes are wrought for purposes entirely extrinsic to the poem's meaning. Lowes maintains that the changes are "aesthetic"; Griffith attempts to demonstrate that the revisions are the result of the poet's personal transformation:

> It seems tenable that Chaucer in his maturer life became more formally religious and regarded the analogies between the service of the Roman church and the service of Cupid as blasphemous.[59]

Estrich argues that the revisions are motivated by the desire for greater independence from the courtly love convention:

> ... the key to that revision is not a desire for greater structural unity , nor a growing sense of reverence for established religion, but only the wish to cast off the

> out-grown shell of courtly love convention in both style and intellectual content.[60]

None of these critics, however, is prepared to understand the Prologue's revision in terms of the poem's ultimate purpose, its "final cause". The "horizon of expectation" of these modern readers simply does not include the medieval concept of *sentence*, and the effect of the Prologue's revision upon the poem's overall purpose is therefore overlooked. Nor are more recent studies exempt from this neglect of *sentence*.

Robert Frank bluntly denies that Chaucer had any such purpose in composing the Legend; it was, he claims, Chaucer's intent

> ... to tell a series of tales coming out of the classical pagan past and tell them for their own sake ... He eschews completely any moral or theological purpose and claims for his tales a purely secular intention.[61]

The tales are told, according to Frank, purely for their "emotional effect", "moral intention" being displaced by what he terms "lyric intention":

> The lyric intention provides a unifying element, a key to control his selection of materials and his development of the narrative line; it enables him to reject that other key to narrative control, both more conventional and more readily accessible, moralization ... Indeed, feeling or sentiment largely displaces the moral intention.[62]

In line with this thinking, Chaucer's relationship with Ovid becomes clear. Ovid is not a "moral teacher, but the master of poetic narrative" (p. 16), and Chaucer, his eager disciple. The poem is thus viewed as a study in rhetorical technique, and Frank's discussions of the legends are consequently couched in

terms of "the lessons learned" (the title of Frank's final chapter).

Needless to say, I differ with Frank's basic premise. Although I recognize in his work many useful insights--for example, his "excursus" on the subject of "Chaucer's Boredom"--I believe that, in denying "moral intention", his criticism often misses the mark entirely. Frank completely overlooks, for example, the irony in the God of Love's choice of Cleopatra as the subject for the first legend,[63] and views the parody on Love's call for *abbreviatio* (F 570 577) as an artistic defect.[64] Finally, his prosaic reading of the legends and his denial of their exemplary character compel Frank to conclude that they are a series of uneven performances, painfully wrought, which are ultimately redeemed only by "the lessons learned".[65] The implication of this criticism is clear: the Legend of Good Women must be explained in terms of the poet's artistic development because it is not worth considering on its own merits.

Such an assumption seems to me to account for the fact that the legend is most often understood in terms extrinsic to itself--in terms of its "occasion", or as a process of artistic development.[66] It also explains why the largest portion of the Legend is excluded from several important editions of Chaucer's poetry.[67] And indeed, even when the Legend is included in its entirety, it is spoken of disparagingly:

> The legends themselves, regarded as narratives, are much inferior to the stories of Chaucer's latest period. They lack the variety, brilliancy, and dramatic reality of

> the *Troilus* or the best of the *Canterbury Tales* ... The monotonous theme of the legend--the praise of faithful women--and its conventional treatment make the stories tiresome to the modern reader ... [68]

Everywhere, it seems, the poem is subtly or not so subtly maligned:

> The *Legend of Good Women* is not concerned with love either. The nine legends contained there are about women who fared badly at the hands of men, some being seduced, some raped, some deserted, and some killing themselves. Since no attempt is made to explain their misfortunes, none of these good women elicit any real sympathy nor the legends any critical concern. Why Chaucer never completed the work, writing all of the nineteen or twenty legends he once planned to, is less remarkable than why he persisted long enough to write the nine he did. Critical concern is now confined to the Prologue, a work to which Chaucer apparently gave exceptional care. Our only concern here is to note that, though the whole Prologue deals with love allegory in the sense that the god of love and his retinue are out in full force there, the allegory has no significance. Its sole function is to bring the trumped-up charge against Chaucer that he had violated the laws of this god and to fix the penalty for this, Chaucer being doomed to write the legends which follow. Thus, however admirably the Prologue succeeds in introducing the legends, it is clearly not a love poem nor was it intended to be.[69]

But the Legend is maligned, I believe, not because it is bad, but because it is misunderstood.[70] The real theme of the Legend is not, as Robinson suggests, "the praise of faithful women";[71] and the poem, despite Eliason's observations, is indeed about love. What lies at the root of the general misunderstanding, it seems, is the poem's relationship to Troilus and Criseyde. Regarded as a conventional "palinode" to the Troilus, [72] the Legend would indeed seem trite and tiresome. But the Legend is not a *palinode* to Troilus; rather, it is a restatement of its precursor's theme--the Legend, like the

Troilus, is truly a heresy against the law of Love.

This interpretation of the Legend entails a "moral" reading of the Troilus, in which the hero must be understood not as a faithful, starcrossed lover whose dire end results from the betrayal of his beloved, but as an autonomous moral agent who is ultimately responsible for his own demise. Troilus is an example, a tragic[73] example of the effects of unregulated passion; and as he himself suggests, fools are we on whom his example is wasted:

> O veray fooles, nyce and blynd be ye!
> Ther nys nat oon kan war by other be. (TC 202-3)

For the poem is not intended merely to deter "yonge fresshe folkes" (TC V, 1835) from "worldly vanyte" (1837); it holds a lesson for us all. We are invited, as Alan Gaylord suggests, to empathize with Troilus in order that we may come to a better understanding of ourselves:

> The lesson of the *Troilus* is related to the theme of exemplification and it is Chaucer's technique, using the affective mode of late medieval meditative 'realism', to invite the reader first to identify with the example, and then, gradually, to disengage from it--not by moralistic condemnation, but through a process of perfected understanding based upon self-examination.[74]

We are thus exhorted to examine, through a meditation upon Troilus, our own experience with love. "Yonge, fresshe folk" are entreated to avoid his sins; the rest of us are urged, as in the Parson's Tale, to repent our own: to turn away from "feynede loves" and to seek the love of him that "nyl falsen no wight" (TC V, 1845). The "lesson" of the Troilus, then, is not suddenly sprung upon us at the end of the poem, as some critics

suggest,[75] but may be read throughout.[76]

The Troilus, so understood, is not "about" the "falseness of Criseyde", as the God of Love charges (G 264-6). Nevertheless, in depicting the folly of Troilus, the dupe of passion and Fortune's fool, who in placing faith in earthly love brings about his own destruction, Chaucer has indeed committed an "heresye ageyns [Love's] lawe" (G 256). Ironically, however, the penance that Alceste imposes in atonement for this sin will only extend the heresy because the effect of the stories she prescribes (G 470-6) will be the same as that of the Troilus, the only difference in the stories being a reversal of gender.

The humour in the Legend stems from this basic irony: that the legends, intended (in the poem's fiction) as a corrective to the Troilus, in fact, reinforce its *sentence*. Indeed the whole of the Legend is a parody of the Religion of Love and "cupide's seintes." Its humour appeals more to our aspectus than to our affectus[77]--that is, for the most part, we are not intended to empathize with our exempla; rather, they are held up for our ridicule. But the complex effects of love illuminated in the Legend leave Troilus in the shade; for in the legends, we not only discover the logical effects of idolatrous love--treachery, heartbreak, etc.--but the many farther-reaching effects: suicide, murder, incest, rape, mutilation, cannibalism, treason and war.

Thus viewed in relation to Troilus and Criseyde, the Legend of Good Women finally begins to "make sense". The poem is no longer "idle nonsense", but reveals a distinct moral purpose. In the next chapter, I will elaborate upon this moral purpose by considering the poem in terms of its sources and formal relations, and by attempting to discover how each of these aspects of the Legend contributes to the poem's meaning. In Aristotelian terms, I will show how the poem's "final cause" is furthered by its "material" and "formal" causes.

NOTES

1. The "New Criticism", in demanding that the text "speak for itself", ignores authorial intention, privileging instead the status of the reader, while critics like Michel Foucault ("What is an Author?", in Textual Strategies, ed. Josue Harari, Ithaca, 1979: 141-160) are extremely wary of the implications of the author as "an ideological function" (p. 159). The most articulate exponent of authorial intention as the only valid interpretative norm is E. D. Hirsch Jr., Validity in Interpretation (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1967).

2. E. D. Hirsch, The Aims of Interpretation (Chicago & London: U of Chicago P, 1976):7. Hirsch goes on to argue, however, that authorial intention is "the only practical norm for a cognitive discipline of interpretation" (p. 7).

3. F. N. Robinson, introduction to The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (2nd edit., The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1957), xxxviii. All quotations from Chaucer will be taken from this edition.

4. This kind of reasoning, which , as Foucault (op. cit., p. 151) points out, dates back to St. Jerome , is not without its dangers. "Best" is a nebulous term which tends to reflect current aesthetic opinion. In terms of the New Criticism, for example, "best" means "most complex"; but the author may have intended a single determinate meaning.

5. If Norman Blake's recent article, "Chaucer's Text and the Web of Words", in Donald M. Rose, ed. New Perspectives in Chaucer Criticism (Norman, Okla.: Pilgrim Books, Inc., 1981), is suggestive of current editorial trends, we may expect even more stringent adherence to "authority". Some editors, however, while adhering strictly to "textual authority", are apparently less concerned with preserving authorial "meaning" than in preserving what they regard as the most aesthetically appealing of the author's work (see below, Chap. 1, n68). This is perhaps their editorial prerogative, but I would argue that their editorial principles should be made explicit.

6. See, for example, John Burrow, "The Alterity of Medieval Literature", NLH 10, (1979): 385-90. Here, Burrow explicitly aligns himself with Hirsch's hermeneutics.

7. Eugene Vance, "Mervelous Signals: Poetics, Sign Theory, and Politics in Chaucer's *Troilus*", NLH 10, (1979: 293-337.

8. R.A. Shoaf, "Notes on Chaucer's Poetics of Translation", Studies in the Age of Chaucer 1, (1979): 55-66.

9. Winthrop Wetherbee, "Convention and Authority: A Comment on some Recent Critical Approaches to Chaucer", in New Perspectives in Chaucer Criticism : 74.

10. A. J. Minnis, "Chaucer and Comparative Literary Theory", in NPCC:69. And neither Hans Jauss, "The Alterity and Modernity

of Medieval Literature", NLH 10, (1979): 181, nor Morton Bloomfield, "Contemporary Literary Theory and Chaucer", in NPCC, anticipate important gains from the application of most recent literary theory to medieval studies.

11. Hans Jauss, op. cit., 182.

12. See E. D. Hirsch, Aims of Interpretation , Chapter 8, for a discussion of how recently this exclusively aesthetic category was established. Hirsch finds "no example of the word in its present, aesthetic connotation before the 1850's" (p. 132).

13. This is the subject of Judson Boyce Allen's elaborately detailed study, The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: A decorum of convenient distinction (U of Toronto P, 1982).

14. Jauss, p. 181.

15. R. M. Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967): 228. The *Parson's Tale* is not, however, the only significant exclusion from the editions Jordan cites. See below, my Chapter 1, n68.

16. D. W. Robertson Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963). In general, I concur with Robertson's theory that Chaucer's art was largely based upon "Augustinian aesthetics". Since here I am principally concerned with audience expectation, I

would cite Judson Allen, The Ethical Poetic, and A. J. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages (London: Scolar Press, 1984), as evidence of the attitudes of medieval critics.

17. This idea of "fictional garment" or *integumentum*, fully discussed in P. Dronke, Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism (Leiden, 1974), is, of course, also the basis of the well known "fruyt/chaf" metaphor and its variants which Robertson so thoroughly exploits. The "nucleus/cortex" aesthetic derived originally from St. Augustine (De doctrina Christiana, III, 12). See Dominicus Gundissalinus (De divisione philosophiae, ed. L. Baur, Munster, 1903:140) who specifically equates the "kernel" of a work with authorial intention.

18. Boccaccio on Poetry, trans. Charles G. Osgood (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1930), reprinted in R. P. Miller, ed. Chaucer Sources and Backgrounds (New York: Oxford UP, 1977): 87.

19. R.M. Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation, p. 33.

20. See the LGW where this distinction in audience is suggested. Alceste argues on Chaucer's behalf, that "he hath maked lewed folk delyte/To serven yow [Love], in preysynge of your name" (G 403-4); while the God of Love is concerned that Chaucer has committed "heresye ageyns my lawe/And makest wise folk fro me to withdrawe" (G 256-7). Unless otherwise specified, my discussion of the Legend's Prologue will be

restricted to the G-version, which most modern critics believe constitutes a revision of the F-version. A recent dissenting opinion, however, is George Kane's, "The Text of the *Legend of Good Women* in CUL Gg.4.27", in Douglas Gray & E. G. Stanley, eds. Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis in Honor of his 70th Birthday (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983): 39-58.

21. Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1963): 110.

22. Hirsch, Validity of Interpretation, p. 4. For how this applies to Chaucerian studies, see E. T. Donaldson, "Chaucer in the Twentieth Century", SAC 2 (1980):7-13.

23. For a discussion of the medieval understanding of this term, see A. J. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship, pp. 1-2, 10-12, and throughout. I will further discuss the concept of Medieval authorship in Chapter two.

24. John Lydgate, Prologue to the Fall of Princes 4 Vols., ed. Henry Bergen (London: Oxford UP, 1924; rpt. 1967):Vol. 1, p. 10.

25. John H. Fisher, "The Legend of Good Women", in Beryl Rowland, ed. Companion to Chaucer Studies (Revised edition; Oxford UP, 1979):466. It is interesting to note that the first edition of Rowland's Companion (1968) included no chapter on the Legend.

26. This is perhaps the most common understanding of the Legend's genesis. Unlike Robinson (p. 839), however, I see nothing unlikely in Dr. Langhans' suggestion that the queen referred to by Lydgate was Alceste rather than Anne.

27. See Bernard Huppé, "Historical Allegory in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*", MLR, 43 (1948): 393-9.

28. John Fisher, op. cit., p. 466.

29. Ibid., 465.

30. H. C. Goddard, "Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", JEGP, 7 (1908), pp. 94, 96.

31. Huppé, op. cit.

32. Margaret Galway, "Chaucer's Sovereign Lady",MLR, 33 (1938): 145.

33. Judson Allen, The Ethical Poetic

34. See Robinson, 840.

35. Huppé, p. 395-6.

36. Allen, 268.

37. Glending Olson, "Making and Poetry in the Age of Chaucer", Comparative Literature, 31 (1979): 276.

38. Olson, 275.

39. Fisher, "The Legend of Good Women", 465.

40. For a full discussion of early treatments of this problem, see John C. French, The Problem of the Two Prologues to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (Baltimore, 1905).

41. J. L. Lowes, "The Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* as Related to the French Marguerite Poems and the *Filostrato*", PMLA, 19 (1904): 665.

42. Goddard, "Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", JEGP, 7 (1908): 124.

43. Lowes, op. cit., 641.

44. Edgar Shannon, Chaucer and the Roman Poets (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1929).

45. Lowes, of course, assumed (like Galway et al) that the "purpose" of the Prologue was "occasional", only he saw it not as a tribute to Queen Anne or Joan of Kent, but as a tribute to Deschamps.

46. Minnis, "Chaucer and Contemporary Literary Theory", p. 63.

47. R. L. Hoffman, Ovid and the Canterbury Tales (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1967).

48. R. L. Hoffman, "The Influence of the Classics on Chaucer", in Rowland, Companion to Chaucer Studies: 188.

49. Eleanor Winsor Leach, A Study in the Sources and Rhetoric of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and Ovid's *Heroides*, unpub. doctoral thesis (Yale, 1963).

50. The French sources were almost invariably linked with the topical and occasional matter which Olson identifies in "making". That Lowes did, in fact, note this topicality of Chaucer's French sources is evident in his discussion of Deschamps's work:

> "It may be said at this point that Deschamps' poems which deal with his experiences during his campaign in Flanders are well worth study, both for their own very great interest, and for the emphasis they place by contrast upon Chaucer's silence regarding similar experiences of his own. (p. 607, n. 2)

He does not, however, explore these contrasts any further.

51. Olson, p. 289.

52. The sample of "source critics" I've provided is admittedly very small. Fisher (p. 471) identifies over forty books and articles which deal with the sources of the legends alone; and I certainly do not mean by implication to disparage all these critical works. Marion Lossing ("The Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* and the *Lai de Franchise*", SP, 39 (1942): 15-35), for example, provides very valuable evidence that the Prologue is based not on a single French source but upon the more general French tradition; Stanford Meech ("Chaucer and an Italian Translation of the *Heroides*", PMLA, 46 (1931): 182-204) and Sheila Delany ("The Naked Text: Chaucer's *Thisbe*, the *Ovide Moralise*, and the Problem of

Translatio Studii in *The Legend of Good Women*", unpub. paper given at the 20th annual conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, Binghampton, Oct. 1986) suggest the importance of considering alternative variants of Chaucer's major sources; and similar scholarship has done much to illuminate the poem. Nevertheless, few critics have related Chaucer's selection of materials to the poem's meaning.

53. J. L. Lowes, "The Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* as Related tothe French Marguerite Poems and the *Filostrato*", cited above. Lowes has published several other articles on the Prologue, but his conclusions remain the same.

54. D. D. Griffith, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", in Manly Anniversary Studies (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1929): 32-41.

55. Robert Estrich, "Chaucer's Maturing Art in the *Legend of Good Women*," JEGP, 36 (1937): 326-37.

56. R. W. Frank, Chaucer and The Legend of Good Women (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1972).

57. "Charming" is the term most consistently applied to the Prologue; and this description usually precludes any further interpretative effort.

58. Estrich, p. 328.

59. Griffith, p. 40.

60. Estrich, p. 337.

61. Robert Frank, pp. 14-15.

62. Ibid., 174.

63. See Beverly Taylor, "The Medieval Cleopatra: The Classical and Medieval Tradition of Chaucer's *Legend of Cleopatra*", JMRS, 7 (1977): 249-269.

64. Eleanor Leach, op. cit., Chapter Two, Section 1, discusses this aspect of Chaucer's rhetoric as a parody on the formalized systems defined in medieval handbooks of poetic style.

65. Frank denies this (see the beginning of Chapter twelve); but it may nevertheless be inferred from his writing. His chapters on the individual legends are documents of their presumed shortcomings or outright failures ("the indecent haste of *Cleopatra*, the indecision of *Hypsipyle and Medea*, the truncation of feeling in *Philomela*" (p. 170), etc.) and the emphasis in the final chapter and throughout is on the "lessons learned" in preparation for the Canterbury Tales.

66. Not all criticism that sees the Legend in terms of the poet's artistic development is based on extrinsic evidence. R. O. Payne (The Key of Remembrance), for example, uses internal evidence in the poem's Prologue to conclude that

Chaucer's main concern in the Legend was the subject of art itself. The Prologue, Payne sees as essentially "a statement of a complex problem in the persuasive adjustment of language to truth"(p. 111). Following Payne, Lisa Kiser (Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the *Legend of Good Women*, Cornell UP, 1983) sees the Legend as a demonstration of the principles of rhetoric discussed in its Prologue. Both studies, however, in viewing the Legend as a self-conscious study of the poet's own art, ignore any further moral purpose.

67. Among the editions which exclude the entire Legend or the vast portion thereof are the following: A.C. Baugh, ed. Chaucer's Major Poetry (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963); E. T. Donaldson, ed. Chaucer's Poetry (New York: Ronald Press, 1958; revised, 1975); Kenneth Kee, ed. Geoffrey Chaucer: A Selection of His Works (Toronto: MacMillan, 1966); Nevill Coghill, ed. A Choice of Chaucer's Verse (London: Faber & Faber, 1972). I have argued elsewhere ("Auditing the Editors: Observations on Recent Editorial Treatments of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", unpub. paper to be given at the P.A.P.C. Conference, Riverside, Calif., Nov. 7, 1986) that such editorial exclusions have a negative effect upon the general perception of a poem's worth and the subsequent scholarship it receives. Others have noted that editorial treatments may reflect an editor's political orientation. See Stephen Knight, "Textual Variants: Textual

Variance", Southern Review, 16 (1983):44-54; and Stephanie Trigg, "Israel Gollancz's *Wynnere and Wastoure*: Political Satire or Editorial Politics?" in G. Kratsmann and J. Empson, eds. Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature (Boydell & Brennan, 1986).

68. F. N. Robinson, 481.

69. Norman E. Eliason, "Chaucer the Love Poet", in J. Mitchell and W. Provost, eds. Chaucer the Love Poet (Athens: U of Georgia, 1973): 12.

70. It is, of course, possible to believe that the Legend is simply a bad poem--even Homer nods. But not perhaps so often as his critics. It seems to me both unwise and unproductive to dismiss seeming inconsistancies in the poem as simply artistic failures, particularly before all other critical possibilities have been exhausted.

71. Rather, as Eleanor Leach (A Study in the Sources and Rhetoric) suggests: "...'good women' are the occasion not the subject of the poem."(p. 35).

72. See Robinson, p. 481.

73. In referring to Troilus as a "tragic" example, I do not mean to imply that the poem is, in fact, a "tragedy". Although Chaucer refers to Troilus as "myn tragedye" (TC V, 1786) , the mode of the poem is not strictly "tragic" in either a medieval or Aristotelian sense. Not only are there numerous

humorous and ironic passages within the poem, but the hero's demise is mitigated by the elevated perspective he achieves in the poem's "epilogue". Viewed from this "other-worldly" perspective, Troilus may be understood as a Christian comedy. Similarly, the Legend of Good Women, though a humorous parody of the "legendary" genre, embodies a serious moral. Neither poem, then, fits neatly into the stricter categories of comedy and tragedy.

74. Alan Gaylord, "The Lesson of the *Troilus*: Chastisement and Correction", in Mary Salu, ed. Essays on Troilus and Criseyde (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer--Rowman & Littlefield, 1979): 29.

75. For a survey of criticism which suggests the "surprise ending", see John P. McCall, "Troilus and Criseyde", in Companion to Chaucer, pp. 449-50.

76. Interpretation of the Troilus is, of course, a contentious issue. Sheila Delany ("Techniques of Alienation in *Troilus and Criseyde*", in A. P. Foulkes, ed. The Uses of Criticism, Frankfurt: Lang, 1976:77-95) demonstrates the variety of techniques Chaucer uses to distance his audience from the poem's hero. She suggests that "if we sympathize with Troilus throughout the poem it is despite Chaucer's best efforts to disengage us" (p. 82). Other critics who encourage the reader to read the Troilus from an objective and critical distance are H. R. Patch, "Troilus on

Determinism", Speculum, 6 (1931):225-43; J. L. Shanley, "The *Troilus* and Christian Love", ELH, 6 (1939):271-81; John Speirs, "Chaucer: (1) *Troilus and Criseyde*", Scrutiny, 11 (1942):84-108; and Roger Sharrock, "Second Thoughts: C. S. Lewis on Chaucer's *Troilus*", EIC, 8 (1958):123-37. D. W. Robertson ("Chaucerian Tragedy", ELH, 19 (1952):1-37) also notes the poem's coherence. He concludes that there is "a remarkable logic in the events of Chaucer's tragedy, an intellectual coherence that is rooted firmly in Christian doctrine and Boethian philosophy" (p. 36). Critics who emphasize the Christian aspects of the work and understand Troilus' mishaps to be the result of serious sin include Alan Gaylord, "The Lesson of the *Troilus*: Chastisement and Correction", cited above; "Uncle Pandarus as Lady Philosophy", PMASAL, 47 (1961):471-95; "*Gentilesse* in Chaucer's *Troilus*, SP, 61 (1964):19-34; "Friendship in Chaucer's *Troilus*", ChauR, 3 (1969):239-64; John McCall, "Five-Book Structure in Chaucer's *Troilus*", MLQ, 23 (1962):297-308; "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's *Troilus*", ELH, 29 (1962):263-73; John Adams, "Irony in Troilus' Apostrophe to the Vacant House of Criseyde", MLQ, 24 (1963):61-65; and R. E. Kaske, "The Aube in Chaucer's *Troilus*", in R. Schoeck and J. Taylor, eds. Chaucer Criticism II: *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Minor Poems (U of Notre Dame, 1961):167-79. Frank Whitman ("*Troilus and Criseyde* and Chaucer's Dedication to Gower", TSL, 18 (1973):1-11) has cast doubt upon the nobling effects of

Troilus' love; and Adrienne Lockhart ("Semantic, Moral and Aesthetic Degeneration in *Troilus and Criseyde*", ChauR, 8 (1973):100-18) has noted the lack of selflessness in his virtue. The "moral" reading of the Troilus, then, constitutes one of the poem's critical mainstreams, and recent criticism which reflects this view is too abundant to attempt to document here. Other major interpretations of the Troilus include the courtly love interpretations of critics such as C. S. Lewis, T. A. Kirby and Donald Howard, which understand the poem as a praise of love which is at odds with its pious Christian conclusion; and the sympathetic and dualistic interpretation of critics such as Talbot Donaldson, Dorothy Bethurum and Alfred David, which affirm both the earthly love of Troilus and the Christian love of the poem's conclusion, viewing these two kinds of love as complementary and harmonious.

77. For a discussion of these terms see Minnis, "Chaucer and Contemporary Literary", p. 66ff., or Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship, throughout.

CHAPTER II

A THEORY OF CAUSES

> How so it be that som men hem delite
> With subtyl art hire tales for endite,
> Yet for al that, in hire entencioun,
> Hire tale is al for som conclusioun. (TC II, 256-9)

A medieval work's "conclusioun" (purpose), as I have argued in the previous chapter, was its primary *raison d'être*; and we might therefore expect all aspects of the work to be subordinate to that end or *telos*. That this was indeed the expectation of the medieval reader is evident in the development of a method of literary analysis based upon the Aristotelian theory of causes, a critical method which was used to explicate the texts of various authorities, from scriptural to pagan *auctores*. The "Aristotelian Prologue",[1] as Minnis has termed it, provided a literary theory which ultimately understood a text--sacred or secular--in terms of its moral or ethical objectives, its "final cause":

> The final cause was the ultimate justification for the existence of a work, the end or objective (*finis*) aimed at by the writer; more specifically, the particular good which (in the opinion of the commentator) he had intended to bring about. In the context of commentary on secular *auctores*, this meant the philosophical import or moral significance of a given work; in the context of Scriptural exegesis, it meant the efficacy of a work in leading the reader to salvation.[2]

The remaining "causes" of a work--its efficient, material and formal causes--were described to explain how the author's ultimate purpose was achieved.

This method of analysis, which clearly privileges authorial intention, represented the culmination of a corpus of literary theory originally developed to meet the ends of theological inquiry. The interest of late medieval scholars in Aristotelian logic and epistemology resulted in more rigorous logical methods being applied in the study of the Bible. While the schoolmen continued to believe that scripture was divinely inspired, their emphasis in explication shifted from the Bible's allegorical to its literal sense;[3] and consequently more attention was paid to the role of its human *auctores*. Scriptual exegesis began to recognize a two-fold efficient cause (*duplex causa efficiens*): the Holy Spirit as principal efficient cause, the human *auctor* as instrumental cause.

Once the richly diverse literary aims and methods of scriptural authors were recognized, comparison with pagan writers was inevitable. Leaning heavily upon St. Paul's dictum (*Romans* xv.4) that "all that is written is written for our doctrine" (and largely ignoring the context of this statement: "that by steadfastness and by the encouragement <u>of Scriptures</u> we may have hope"), scholars rationalized the study of pagan authorities.[4] Not only were prose writers like Aristotle and Cicero studied for their technical expertise,[5] but the pagan poets ("Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" TC V, 1792) came to be revered for the wisdom they could impart.[6] The recognition of the distinctly "literary" activity of the "sacred *auctores*" seems to have rendered the similar activity of the Roman poets

more respectable; as Minnis observes:

> Something of the prestige, the new authority, which had been afforded to Scriptural poetry in particular, and to the poetic and rhetorical modes employed throughout Scripture in general, seems to have "rubbed off" on secular poetry.[7]

The degree of *auctoritas* which could be ascribed to pagan poets, however, differed from that accorded the sacred writers. Unlike scriptural authors, whose works, by virtue of their divine inspiration, were unequivocally regarded as revealed truth,

> The pagans who lived before Christ had a limited *auctoritas*... St. Paul did not say that all that is written is true: he said that all that is written is written for our doctrine. The onus is therefore placed on the discriminating reader.[8]

Indeed, poetry in general and pagan poets in particular had long been regarded with suspicion.[9] Commentators who wished to justify the pagan *fabulae*,[10] then, had necessarily to appeal to their *auctor's* good intention--to the particular good which the profane fabulist had presumably intended to bring about; the pagan texts had often to be "moralized" to bring them into line with Christian doctrine.[11] In such cases, the discussion of authorial intention--or the work's "final cause"--would seem, by modern standards, strained.

However, although such critical methods might not yield accurate interpretations,[12] their widespread application does indicate the major concerns of medieval "critics". The author's *meaning* was regarded as less important than his usefulness (*utilitas*).[13] All that is written was written for our doctrine

whether or not its original author intended this.[14] The privileged status of authorial intention was maintained, but the critical conception of authorial intention was bound by preconceived "moral" constraints. It may seem paradoxical to the modern reader that an author's moral intention had at times to be invented or reconstituted in order that it might be appealed to as the highest value in his work; but this paradox may be explained in the light of the medieval concept of *auctoritee*:

> In a literary context, the term *auctor* denoted someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed...To have "intrinsic worth", a literary work had to conform, in one way or another, with Christian truth; an *auctor* had to say the right things.[15]

Scriptural *auctores*, divinely inspired, could be accepted at the literal level,[16] while the *auctoritas* of the profane writers had at times to be buoyed by rather creative reading. It is important to note, however, that no writer could be regarded as an *auctor* unless his teachings either fit, or could be made to fit, conventional Christian dogma. This fact had obvious implications for Chaucer, as for all medieval writers.

This is not to suggest that the literature of this period was rigidly determined by its contemporary critical milieu; nevertheless, the effect of medieval literary theory upon its contemporary practice is, in many instances, demonstrable. Pierre Bersuire, in the prologue to Reductorium morale (ca. 1350), uses the Aristotelian formula to elaborate a justification for his work:

> I say that in this work the properties of things, figments of the poets and enigmas of the Scriptures constitute the material, while the application to mores constitutes the form; God then constitutes the efficient cause, while the cure of souls constitutes the final cause.[17]

Likewise, Thomas Usk appeals to his poem's final cause (comparing it to God's final cause) to justify and enoble the Testament of Love (ca. 1388). Usk attempts to identify the love that "stirs" him with divine charity:

> Every thing to whom is owande occasion don as for his ende, Aristotle supposeth that the actes of every thinge ben in a maner his final cause. A final cause is noblerer, or els even as noble, as thilke thing that is finally to thilke ende; wherfore accion of thinge everlasting is demed to be eternal, and not temporal; sithen it is his final cause. Right so the actes of my boke 'Love', and love is noble; wherfore, though my book be leude, the cause with which I am stered, and for whom I ought it doon, noble forsothe ben bothe.[18]

Osbern Bokenham, in Legendys of Hooly Wummen (ca. 1430), recites his work's literary causes as if this were a duty:

> Two thyngs owyth euery clerk
> To aduertysyn, begynnyng a werk,
> If he procedyn wyl ordeneelly:
> The fyrste is "what", the secunde is "why".
> In wych two wurdys, as it semyth me,
> The foure causys comprehendyd be,
> Wych, as philosofyrs vs do teche,
> In the begynnyng men owe to seche
> Of euery book; and aftyr there entent
> The fyrst is clepyd cause efficyent,
> The secunde they clepe cause materyal,
> Formal the thrydde, the fourte fynal.
> The efficyent cause is the auctour,
> Wych aftyr hys cunnyng doth hys labour
> To a-complyse the begunne matere,
> Wych cause is secunde; and the more clere
> That it may be, the formal cause
> Settyth in dew ordre clause be clause.
> And these thre thyngys longyn to "what":
> Auctour, matere, and forme ordinat.
> The fynal cause declaryth pleynly
> Of the werk begunne the cause why;
> That is to seyne, what was the entent

Of the auctour fynally, & what he ment.[19]

Chaucer himself was certainly aware of the Aristotelian causal scheme, as evidenced in the *Tale of the Melibee* (Robinson, 178). His discussion of authorial intention in the Legend of Good Women (G 458-64) and the *Troilus* (TC II, 256 ff.) demonstrates his familiarity with the terms and concepts of medieval literary theory.[20] By the late fourteenth century, then, it is safe to assume that both readers and writers had become somewhat conditioned by the "horizon of expectations" imposed by the current literary theory.

The purpose of this discussion is not to show that medieval writers were confined by the strictures of literary theory. Rather, I have tried to demonstrate that Chaucer could depend upon certain critical habits in his audience; and that his understanding of their "horizon of expectations" influenced his choice in the Legend of authorial role and literary form. I propose to examine the Legend of Good Women through a discussion of its literary "causes" not in order to point out the poem's anachronistic features, but in the hope that this method of analysis will reveal a coherence in the poem which most modern critics have found lacking. My interpretation of the work's final cause as the disparagement of idolatrous love (and thus a defense of the "morality" of the Troilus) represents my attempt to discover what Hirsch terms an *intrinsic genre*--"that sense of the whole by means of which an interpreter can correctly understand any part in its determinacy".[21] Of course, any such

hypothesis will be to some extent constitutive of the textual evidence which is discovered; for the interpretation of any part of a work, as Hirsch and other theorists point out, is dependent upon a preconception of the whole:

> ...we cannot perceive the meaning of a part until after we have grasped the meaning of the whole, since only then can we understand the function of the part within the whole. No matter how much we may emphasize the quasi-independence of certain parts or the priority of our encounter with parts before any sense of the whole arises, still we *cannot* understand a part as such until we have a sense of the whole. Dilthey called this apparent paradox the hermeneutic circle.[22]

My discussion of medieval literary norms (as well as the earlier discussion of Troilus and Criseyde) is an attempt to place at least one foot outside the hermeneutic circle by providing extrinsic evidence[23] which helps to confirm my choice of *intrinsic genre*.

Causa efficiens

Customarily, treatment of the efficient cause was very cursory and might involve no more than the mention of the author's name; but at times it became necessary to define more precisely the writer's authorial role. This was, of course, true in the case of scriptural *auctores* for reasons which have already been discussed; but secular writers also performed different literary tasks. St. Bonaventure, in his commentary on Peter Lombard's Libri sententiarum attempts to distinguish between these various roles:

> The method of making a book is fourfold. For someone writes the materials of others, adding or changing nothing, and this person is said to be merely the

> scribe. Someone else writes the materials of others, adding, but nothing of his own, and this person is said to be the compiler. Someone else writes both the materials of other men, and of his own, but the materials of others as the principal materials, and his own annexed for the purpose of clarifying them, and this person is said to be the commentator, not the author. Someone else writes both his own materials and those of others, but his own as the principal materials, and materials of others annexed for the purpose of confirming his own, and such must be called the author.[24]

It is not always clear, amongst these distinctions, where a writer like Chaucer stood. Certainly he would unequivocally be the author of his earlier works--The Book of the Duchess, The Parliament of Fowls, The House of Fame--and even the Troilus (although here he poses as a "translator of history"); but in the Legend of Good Women, his fictional pose as *compiler* of old tales (G 85-88) in the "makyng of a gloryous legende/of goode women..." (G 473-5) may be viewed as a fair representation of reality. Chaucer does, after all, compile a series of tales which are largely based upon the materials of others;[25] and even in the Prologue, which is generally regarded as the most original part of the poem, he admits to extensive borrowing:

> For wel I wot that folk han here-beforn
> Of makyng ropen, and lad awey the corn;
> And I come after, glenynge here and there,
> And am ful glad if I may fynde an ere
> Of any goodly word that they han left.
> And if it happe me rehersen eft
> That they han in here freshe songes said,
> I hope that they wole nat ben evele apayd,
> Sith it is seyd in fortheryng and honour
> Of hem that eyther serven lef or flour. (G 61-70)[26]

If, as Eleanor Winsor Leach suggests, Alceste has, in her dubious defense of Chaucer (G 340-352), ironically revealed the necessary conditions of art--originality and intention[27]--and,

if we are to take Alceste's defense seriously, as some critics appear to, then we may seriously question Chaucer's "authorship". If Chaucer bears no responsibility for the choice of materials he "translates"(G 340-345)--if these materials are not annexed for his own "original" purposes--or if his subject matter was imposed upon him("...hym was boden.../Of som persone, and durste it not withseye" G 346-7), he may not properly be considered the author at all. At best, in the Legend, he would share the role of "efficient cause"; and the *duplex causa efficiens* would necessarily include Queen Anne or Joan of Kent or whoever commissioned the work. But, in fact, under these circumstances, Chaucer's role in the Legend would be more accurately described as *compiler*.

Minnis argues, however, that Chaucer was an author who customarily hid behind the role of *compiler* for his own purposes:

> ...Chaucer was content to assume the role of compiler and to exploit the literary form of *compilatio*. Indeed, so deliberate was he in presenting himself as a compiler that one is led to suspect the presence of a very self-conscious author who was concerned to manipulate the conventions of *compilatio* for his own literary ends.[28]

I believe that this description accurately reflects the poet's stance in the Legend of Good Women. Chaucer was, I think, fully conscious of the "effect" of his selection--and manipulation--of materials; and it was to this effect (the poem's final cause or "conclusioun") that all his "subtil art" was directed. It is finally authorial intention which defines Chaucer as both author and efficient cause of the Legend. Let us briefly examine how

the poem's final cause is served by Chaucer's choice of authorial roles.

The Prologue to the Legend opens with a general statement which has no apparent relationship to the rest of the poem; it does not concern love or women, but seems rather to be about death and books:

> A thousand sythes have I herd men telle
> That there is joye in hevene and peyne in helle,
> And I acorde wel that it be so;
> But natheles, this wot I wel also,
> That there ne is non that dwelleth in this contre,
> That eyther hath in helle or heven ybe,
> Ne may of it non other weyes witen,
> But as he hath herd seyd or founde it writen;
> For by assay there may no man it preve.
> But Goddes forbode, but men shulde leve
> Wel more thyng than men han seyn with ye!
> Men shal nat wenen every thyng a lye,
> For that he say it nat of yore ago,
> God wot, a thyng is nevere the lesse so,
> Thow every wyght ne may it nat yse.
> Bernard the monk ne say nat al, parde!
> Thanne mote we to bokes that we fynde,
> Thourgh whiche that olde thynges ben in mynde,
> And to the doctryne of these olde wyse
> Yeven credence, in every skylful wyse,
> And trowen on these olde aproved storyes
> Of Holyness, of regnes of victoryes,
> Of love, of hate, of othere sondry thynges,
> Of which I may nat make rehersynges.
> And if that olde bokes weren aweye,
> Yloren were of remembrance the keye.
> Wel oughte us thanne on olde bokes leve,
> There as there is non other assay by preve. (G 1-28)

In this passage, the poet has simply advanced the abstract proposition that when personal experience is beyond our reach, we should accept the doctryne of old books; that is, we should believe the *sentence* passed on by old *autoritees*. The concrete sense of these opening lines becomes apparent only when we realize that Chaucer has once more adopted his familiar

narrative stance, that of a non-lover who intends to write about love.[29] It then becomes clear that it is the specific experience of love that the opening passage anticipates, an experience which is indeed beyond the poet's reach. As Leach observes, "Having had no experience in love, he is dependent upon books for information";[30] and he therefore intends to follow strictly his "autoritees":

> But wherfore that I spak, to yeve credence
> To bokes olde and don hem reverence,
> Is for men shulde autoritees beleve,
> There as there lyth non other assay by preve.
> For myn entent is, or I fro yow fare,
> The naked text in English to declare
> Of many a story, or elles of many a geste,
> As autours seyn; leveth hem if yow leste! (G 81 88)

In proposing to rehearse the "naked text" of his "autoritees"--that is, in proposing to retell a series of old love stories unencumbered by moralizing commentary[31]--Chaucer is not, however, disavowing a moral purpose on his own part.[32] As naive *compiler*, Chaucer will simply repeat the stories, inviting his readers to draw their own conclusions. "Leveth hem if yow leste!" he declares, invoking, as did other *compilers*, this principle of the reader's freedom of choice (*lectoris arbitrium*).[33] But, while abandoning the role of *commentator*,[34] Chaucer slyly retains his authorial role; for his <u>materials</u>, the love stories he presents, are all of his own choosing and ultimately serve a purpose at odds with that ostensibly imposed by the poet's <u>fictive</u> patrons.

Alceste, under the authority of the God of Love, has instructed the narrator to compose

> ...a gloryous legende
> Of goode women, maydenes and wyves,
> That were trewe in lovynge al here lyves...(G 473-5)

Her "purpose", it seems, is to redeem the reputation of womanhood, sullied in works like The Romaunt of the Rose and Troilus and Criseyde; and to castigate false lovers. The poet is to

> ...telle of false men that hem [women] betrayen,
> That al here lyf ne don nat but assayen
> How manye wemen they may don a shame;
> For in youre world that is now holden game. (G 476-9)

For the God of Love, though, this "Seintes Legende of Cupide"[35] has a further purpose: to provide exempla of Love's glorious martyrs, and thus to encourage readers to embrace the "religion of Love". "Spek wel of love" (G 481), the poet is commanded, but his response is surely subversive; for whatever else may be said of the poet's selection of stories, it certainly does not speak well of love (as I will show in Chapter 3).

Causa materialis

Essentially, the "matere" which constitutes the Legend is two-fold: that upon which the Prologue is based and that which comprises the legends themselves; and although the thematic relationship between the Prologue and the legends is not immediately apparent, it becomes so once the poem's material cause is understood in relation to its final cause. To explicate the relationhip between the Prologue and the legends, it is

first necessary to view the separate materials in isolation.

The Prologue opens with a discussion of the classical and medieval literary tradition ("olde bokes"), which the poet venerates for its efficacious role in the preservation of knowledge:

> And if that olde bokes weren aweye,
> Yloren were of remembrance the keye. (G 25-6)

In the absence of contrary experience, the poet argues, the "doctryne" of "olde bokes" should be believed (G 16-28). But immediately following this discussion of the "authority" of books is a digression in which the poet lays his books aside and goes off to seek the daisy (G-33ff.).

Broadly speaking, this juxtaposition of "argument" and *digressio* constitutes an opposition between "authority" and "experience". The "experience" of desire, aroused in the poet by the coming of spring, motivates him to seek a fulfillment which he later vicariously "experiences" in his dream-world of "nature". He is enchanted as he listens to the birds sing of love, and dreams for a moment that he understands their meaning: "This song to herkenen I dide al myn entente,/For-why I mette I wiste what they mente..."(G 139-40). But the birds, in the joy of love and the ecstasy of spring, soon forget the cruel betrayal of the fowler (G 117-126),[36] just as the earth forgets the bitterness of winter:

> Forgeten hadde the erthe his pore estat
> Of wynter, that hym naked made and mat,
> And with his swerd of cold so sore hadde greved.
> Now hadde th'atempre sonne al that releved,

And clothed hym in grene al newe ageyn. (G 113-117)

In the process of cyclic renewal, Nature forgets; but human consciousness stands outside the cycles of seasons. As John Fyler observes:

> The blithe unconsciousness of spring stands in poignant contrast to our human inability to forget that winter will come again.[37]

What inevitably must remind us are our books--the "key of remembrance", the record of human consciousness which no cyclic pattern can erase. "Experience," as Fyler notes,

> is partial and tendentious, and its meaning is fully apparent, if ever, only after the present has firmly become the past.[38]

Tradition, however, which embodies the collective experience (recollected in tranquillity), encompasses a much broader perspective. In electing to follow his "autoritees", Chaucer has adopted for his subject the broader perspective of tradition.[39]

On one level, then, the poet's observation of nature may be understood as a type of "experience" which is to be contrasted with "authority"; but on another level, his infatuation with the daisy represents no real experience at all, but merely reflects fashionable French literary practice. There is not a single line in the opening "daisy" passage which does not contain clear verbal echoes of the *marguerite* poems,[40] which the poet wishes he might emulate:

> This dayesye, of alle floures flour,
> Fulfyld of vertu and of alle honour,
> And evere ylike fayr and fresh of hewe,
> As wel in wynter as in somer newe,
> Fayn wolde I preysen, if I coude aryght;
> But wo is me, it lyth nat in my myght! (G-55-60)

Nevertheless, this shift from books to daisies to daisy-books"[1] does create a dialectic--not so much between authority and experience, but between "olde bokes" and "new books"--an opposition in conventional materials which the poet explicitly acknowledges in rejecting the contemporary literary fad of leaf vs. flower in favour of old books:

> For trusteth wel, I ne have nat undertake
> As of the lef agayn the flour to make,
> Ne of the flour to make ageyn the lef,
> No more than of the corn agen the shef;
> For, as to me, is lefer non, ne lother.
> I am witholde yit with never nother;
> I not who serveth lef, ne who the flour.
> That nys nothyng the entent of my labour.
> For this werk is al of another tonne,
> Of olde story, er swich strif was begonne. (G 71-80)

The remainder of the Prologue is a subtle parody of courtly love conventions. The month is May, although the poet very nearly misses it (89); and after a romp through the "grene medewe.../Upon the freshe dayseie to beholde" (91-92), the poet lies down upon a flower-strewn bed, closes his eyes and falls asleep--"withinne an hour or two" (103)! This humorous undercutting of courtly convention continues to occur throughout. In the "dream vision" that follows, the birds, in observance of the season, sing songs of love in "preysyng of hire make":

> Some songen [layes] on the braunches clere
> Of love and [May], that joye it was to here,
> In worshipe and in preysyng of hire make;
> And for the newe blysful somers sake,
> [They] sungen, "Blyssed be Seynt Valentyn!
> For on his day I ches yow to be myn,
> Withoute repentynge, myn herte swete!"
> And therwithal here bekes gonne mete,
> [Yelding] honour and humble obeysaunces...(G 127-135)

But like the less courtly fowls in the Parliament, they are not content merely to praise; they also *do*:

> And after diden othere observaunces
> Ryht [longing] onto love and to nature;
> So ech of hem [doth wel] to creature. (G 136-8)

In the F-text, the innuendo behind "observaunces" is underscored by the poet's jaunty aside: "Construeth that as yow lyst, I do no cure" (F-162). Later, the poet encounters the God of Love and is surprised to discover that this deity's legendary blindness is not literal:[42]

> And al be that men seyn that blynd is he,
> Algate me thoughte he myghte wel yse;
> For sternely on me he gan beholde,
> So that his lokynge doth myn herte colde. (G 169-72)

And the "court of love" becomes the scene of an actual trial, where charges brought against the poet by the God of Love are heard.

This "judgement" scene is a skillful and amusing parody,[43] for as Payne points out:

> ...the choice of language by which Alceste and the God of Love are presented, suggest[s] constantly to the reader that this *paradis d'amour* might, by a different interpretation of "Love," become a Christian heaven.[44]

This concept of "parody" will be further developed in the discussion of the poem's *forma tractandi*. For the present, it is only necessary to note that a parody of the "religion of love" is what bridges the gap between the Prologue and the legends which follow. The poet is condemned for his sins against love, and ordered, for his penance, to write a legendary of "Cupide's seintes". While he fulfills the letter of this order, his

exemplary "martyrs" serve an entirely different spirit: as *exempla* of the negative effects of unregulated passion.

That the Legend's heroines may seem to serve simultaneously two diametrically opposite functions is due to the contrasting literary conventions that the poet employs. Within the courtly tradition, the heroines are, as Lowes observed, "stock *exempla* of fidelity in love";[45] but in the Christianized version of the classical tradition, they serve as *exempla* of *fol amor*. In his earlier rejection of the courtly tradition ("new books") in favour of the classical tradition ("olde bokes"), Chaucer has made clear which meaning he intends.

The materials of the legends, then, represent a clear break from the "courtly" materials of the Prologue; as Frank observes:

> Rape, suicide, abandonment, despair, callous abuse, and cynical seduction are the matter of the legends. The lady's Mercy and Pity and Danger have nothing to do with the world Chaucer is about to unfold. The rose garden has vanished...[46]

In what becomes a monotonous stream of repetitious material, the effects of idolatrous love are reiterated. The narrator strives gallantly to draw from the legends morals fit for the penance he has been assigned (the praise of good women, the honor of "Cupide's seintes"), but the effect of this gallantry is comic as is the narrator's attempt to expurgate material not suitable to his assigned theme.[47] Finally, it becomes apparent that the materials the author has chosen[48] represent a very willful neglect. "Why," Goddard queries,

> did the author choose to write of Cleopatra but neglect the account of Penelope? Why did he give the tale of Dido but leave out the story of Alceste?...How peculiar that he should have passed over... Laodamia to write of Phyllis and Medea.[49]

The answer, I would suggest, lies in authorial intention. The materials Chaucer selected do not serve well the interests of the God of Love, but they serve very well their author's didactic purpose. The legends, like the Troilus, are intended as a warning to the wise to turn away from "feynede loves" (TC V, 1848).

Some would argue that the Legend is incomplete; and perhaps this is so.[50] Nevertheless, I believe that the thematic direction of the Legend is so clearly established that almost no counter-trend could reverse it.[51]

Causa formalis

The formal cause of a work was the pattern an author imposed on his materials. Explication of the formal cause focused upon two very distinct facets of the work: the *forma tractandi* (the form of treatment) and the *forma tractatus* (form of the treatise). The former dealt with aspects of style; the latter with a work's structure. I would like to consider first the Legend's structure, and later its style, in relation to the poem's final cause.

The *forma tractatus*, alternately refered to as the *ordinatio partium* (ordering of parts), was essentially the division and arrangement of a work's parts. This *divisio textus* was

particularly useful in the textual organization of scripture because it facilitated reference;[52] but, as Minnis points out, it also aided the explication of texts:

> A master would proceed from a general division by chapters or parts; these components would in their turn be subdivided into smaller sense-units. Thereby, an elaborate framework was provided for precise *explication de texte*. Students were invited to follow the twists and turns of their author's argument.[53]

Once a work was divided and subdivided, its parts could be examined in relation to each other, but more important, in relation to the intent of the work as a whole:

> ...the parts of a text are mutually ordered to each other, but this order of the parts among themselves exists because of the order of the whole text to the *finis* intended by its *auctor*.[54]

With these objectives in mind, let us consider the various parts of the poem.

The Legend of Good Women is divided into two principal parts: the Prologue and the series of legends which follow. To say that the primary purpose of the Prologue is the introduction of the legends would seem to be stating the obvious; however, not all critics would agree. Lowes and Kittredge, as I have earlier noted, believed the Prologue to be intended primarily as a compliment to Eustace Deschamps;[55] "occasional" critics who understand the poem as an historical allegory have discovered in the Prologue various and sundry pragmatic and extrinsic purposes;[56] Robert Frank views the Prologue as essentially a bone thrown to pacify the popular appetite for courtly love convention, while the poet pursues his real purpose:

> ...the green meadow of the Prologue will win by its illusory art the pardon that he needs to escape over the garden wall from what has threatened to become a prison...Having shown how well he could do the old soft shoe number, Chaucer goes on to...the kind of material he wishes to be free to work on.[57]

And Robert Payne treats the Prologue as a self-enclosed discussion of art.[58] Nevertheless, despite its admitted complexity, the Prologue is best understood as elaborating a justification for the legends it introduces.

The central issue in the Prologue is the charge of heresy brought by the God of Love against the poet:

> Thow art my mortal fo and me werreyest,
> And of myne olde servauntes thow mysseyest,
> And hynderest hem with thy translacyoun,
> And lettest folk to han devocyoun
> To serven me, and holdest it folye
> To truste on me. Thow mayst it nat denye,
> For in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose,
> Thow hast translated the Romauns of the Rose,
> That is an heresye ageyns my lawe,
> And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;
> And thynkest in thy wit, that is ful col,
> That he nys but a verray propre fol
> That loveth paramours, to harde and hote. (G 246-260)

What is of principal concern, however, is not the truth of Love's charge against Chaucer (Chaucer is, as I have earlier argued, clearly guilty), but the "truth" of Chaucer's charge against Love: Is it indeed folly to serve and trust in Love? Should "wise folk withdrawe"? Is he (or she) but a "verray propre fol,/That loveth paramours, to harde and hote"? These questions are among the concerns of the Troilus; and they are being raised once again in the Legend. On the poem's simplest terms, then, the Prologue poses the questions; the legends are offered as answers. "Cupide's seintes" are *exempla* of the

consequences of the worship of Love, examples which we are left to interpret for ourselves.

Once this central issue is clarified, the peripheral parts of the poem may be better understood. The opening argument for the authority of books (1-28) is part of a dialectic posed to discover where the "inexperienced" (read "objective") observer should turn to find the truth about love. "Experience" is considered in the "nature/bird passage" (104-140), but is rejected as transitory and subjective; and the "authority" of tradition, which offers a broader and more stable perspective, is accepted instead. "Olde bokes" are also contrasted with the current literary fad, the *marguerite* poems (40-80), and again are finally retained as the source of materials appropriate to the poet's subject (81-88). This choice is ironically confirmed by the God of Love in the "book passage" (270-310) which follows Cupid's charge.

Each and every part of the Legend may thus be understood in relation to the poem's final cause. Alceste's defense of Chaucer (317-431) is not merely humorous, but isolates the essential ingredients of literary art. As well, this passage, which exposes Alceste's devious and manipulative character, parodies her role as intercessor before the throne of the God of Love; and the elaborate description of the court of love and all the courtly retinue (141-202) extends this parody. Cupid's discussion of books (270-310) reveals his ineptness as a literary critic, and prepares the reader for *his* short-sighted

(but *Chaucer's* ironical) choice of Cleopatra as the first of the Legend's heroines. And the legends themselves, through the deleterious effects of love they recount, admonish the wise to withdraw from the idolatrous worship of Love.

The understanding of the poem's parts, however, is to a large extent contingent upon the understanding of the poem's style and tone--its *forma tractandi*. This aspect of the poem (discussion of which is sometimes confusing[59]) demands the finest of critical distinctions because it ultimately determines which of several possible meanings the poem's various word sequences are intended to convey.[60] Discussion of the "form of treatment" therefore brings one very near the heart of authorial intention.

The *forma tractandi* of the Legend of Good Women is comic, ironic, parodic and exemplificative. Each of these aspects of the poem will be further detailed in Chapter three; here, I will primarily establish the critical vocabulary and the broad pattern of its application. The first of these distinctions, the poem's comic aspect, is generally recognized, but the purpose of the work's comic nature is seldom clarified. Of course, it is often difficult to determine to what end (*finis*) a joke is told--generally the teller is quite pleased just to get a laugh--but in comedy there may inhere a serious intention; and in the Legend, I believe, the final cause of comedy is a very conservative social control. As Wylie Sypher observes:

> Usually the comedian will address us with most assurance when he is conservative, when he affirms the security of any group already unsure of itself...the comic artist often reassures the majority that its standards are impregnable or that other standards are not "normal" or "sane". Then the comedian banishes doubt by ridicule...[61]

The nature of the audience for whom Chaucer originally composed his works remains a matter of conjecture.[62] If however, as seems likely, he wrote principally for men like himself (a privileged class of conservative Christians), his subject matter--sexual love--was potentially threatening. Threatening socially, because unregulated sexual passion could erode Christian values, the underpinning of medieval social structure; threatening spiritually, because it could lead to mortal sin and eternal damnation; and threatening psychologically as well.[63] Far from championing liberal sexual mores, Chaucer in the Legend seeks to defuse the socially and personally disruptive power of sexual passion by placing it in a comic context. Perhaps on an unconscious level, such comedy affords both author and audience not only comic but vicarious sexual pleasure, for as Freud in his discussion of the comic notes:

> ...the spheres of sexuality and obscenity offer the amplest occasions for obtaining comic pleasure alongside pleasurable sexual excitement; for they can show human beings in their dependence on bodily needs (degradation) or they can reveal the physical demands lying behind the claim of mental love (unmasking).[64]

On a conscious level, however, the purpose of Chaucer's comedy is repression. His ridicule of sexual love reinforces what Freud calls the "antithesis between civilization and sexuality"[65] and, with its underlying Christian emphasis, redirects the sexual instinct toward Christian "caritas". Indeed, Freud recognizes

such "love" as one means of displacement of sexual instincts: it is possible to

> ...avoid the uncertainties and disappointments of genital love by turning away from its sexual aims and transforming the instinct into an impulse with an *inhibited aim*. What [is achieved] in this way is a state of evenly suspended, steadfast, affectionate feeling, which has little external resemblance any more to the stormy agitations of genital love, from which it is nevertheless derived.[66]

In reaffirming tradition, by holding up "Love's fools"[67] for ridicule, Chaucer uses comedy to emphasize these goals, to reinforce the norms of his patriarchal Christian society.

The mode of the Legend is also ironic. Its ostensible purpose--the praise of good women and the honour of "Cupide's seintes"--conceals a subversive and final purpose: the disparagement of idolatrous love. But irony exists not only on this broader level; it may be detected throughout. It is ironical that the narrator's "experience" in the daisy passage proves to be not a real, but a literary, experience; and there is irony in the narrator's uncritical emulation of a poetic convention which the poet ultimately rejects. Indeed, in the Legend, as in so many of Chaucer's works, the "naive narrator" provides the vehicle for much of the irony. He consistently fails, as I have pointed out, to recognize the difference between literal language and figurative meaning, mistaking, for example, the significance of the daisy, both in his wakeful moments and in his dream-vision. Even after the long "trial" scene, the identification of the daisy with Alceste comes as a surprise to him (G 486 ff). And the narrator's naively comic

efforts to stick to theme and topic in the legends provide one of the surest indications of the poet's subversive intentions.

But the narrator is not the only character whose inability to perceive significance is used for ironic effect. The God of Love is also exploited for a similar critical ineptness. Although Cupid correctly surmises the danger of Chaucer's heretical writings, he ascribes it not to authorial intent but to a poor choice of "matere":

> Hast thow nat mad in Englysh ek the bok
> How that Crisseyde Troylus forsok,
> In shewynge how that wemen han don mis?
> But natheles, answere me now to this,
> Why noldest thow as wel han seyd goodnesse
> Of wemen, as thow hast seyd wikedness?
> Was there no good matere in thy mynde,
> Ne in alle thy bokes me coudest thow nat fynde
> Som story of wemen that were goode and trewe? (G 264-72)

Troilus and Criseyde, as Payne suggests,

> would obviously offend a courtly God of Love, but again ironically; it would do so precisely because it is clearly and insistently moral. And it measures the morality of the God of Love against the morality of the Christianity which is at once suggested and parodied by the dream world of the Prologue.[68]

But the God of Love does not appear to apprehend this subtlety. He seems to feel that Chaucer might amend his errors by a simple shift in subject matter. Ironically, he recommends Jerome's treatise "ageyns Jovynyan"(281)--one of the harshest anti-feminist tracts ever penned--as a source of "women that were goode and trewe"(272)--apparently without pausing to consider the ramifications of citing, as an authority on sexual love, an ascetic who champions virginity.

Nor is this the only indication of Cupid's critical ineptitude. He twice employs Augustine's famous metaphor of the chaff and corn (312, 529) in a context which reveals his total misunderstanding of Augustine's message. St. Augustine is writing about figurative language, about the *sentence* that may be extracted from figural texts. The "chaff" to which he refers was the letter of a text, the *integumentum* which concealed the "corn", the spirit or *sententia* of the work. To the literal-minded God of Love, however, "chaff" and "corn" represent a much more simplistic equation: chaff = bad women, corn = good women. It is easy to perceive, through such careless reading, how Chaucer may have at once made "lewed folk delyte/To serven [Love]" (403-4), and yet, caused "wise folk to withdrawe" (257). And it is finally the God of Love's "lewedness"[69] which determines his choice of Cleopatra as the first of the Legend's heroines (542). The irony of this choice is noted by Goddard, who observes that

> ...most infelicitous of all is the singling out of Cleopatra to stand first among the models of ancient virtue, a choice, which, coming from Cupid himself, constitutes further evidence, perhaps, of the questionable character of his literary education.[70]

Love, already shown to be tyrannical ("...Love ne wol nat counterpletyd be" 466) and capricious, is ironically revealed to be illogical and ignorant--figuratively "blind". In various subtle and less subtle ways, then, irony is used to convey the poem's *sentence*.

As well as being ironic, however, the poem is parodic, in the sense of parody discussed by Edmund Reiss. Parody, in Reiss's terms, is not derogatory of the ideal it calls to mind; rather, the ideal becomes a foil against which the "given" can be judged or measured:

> [In parody] We see just how inadequate the given is, and in this awareness lies the creation of humor. But parody does not, like satire, just make fun of the given: it insists that we see it in terms of something that is adequate. In having us call up this corrective, this ideal, the given necessarily brings into being an additional frame of reference.[71]

Reiss, for example, believes that the Wife of Bath

> represents not so much a satire on women or wives as a parody of the ideal of woman, which for the Christian Middle Ages was represented by the Virgin Mary.[72]

And he offers subsequent examples of how the Wife's shortcomings are revealed through a network of corresponding features she shares in some measure with the ideal she calls forth. Using a similar methodology, R. E. Kaske suggests how a parody of the *Song of Songs* in the Miller's Tale operates to a similar end.[73] In the Legend, however, the parody is much more obvious than in these examples.

The central sequence of the Prologue is set in a dream vision of the *Paradys d'Amour*; and the God of Love, simply by virtue of his deity, must call to mind his Christian counterpart. Likewise, Alceste, through her intercession on Chaucer's behalf, parodies the Blessed Virgin--"mediatrix of all graces"[74]--and even, in her self-sacrifice, Christ himself:

> She that for hire husbonde ches to dye,
> And ek to gon to helle rather than he...(501-2)

But a glance at this king and queen of Love's heaven reveals, in Reiss's terms, "just how inadequate the given is". The Cupid of the Legend is not only imperious and vindictive (316), but has rightly been termed a "blockhead";[75] while Alceste is portrayed as a conniving, manipulative creature, quite prepared to use the flattery she condemns (328) to further her own interests. Nevertheless, the real force of the parody is reserved for "Cupide's seintes".

In what at times resembles more a Rogue's gallery than a Saints' legendary, "martyrs for love" are presented for the edification of the faithful adherents of the "religion of love"; but their sordid tales make clear to any Christian auditor the poverty of the values they cherish. And ultimately, this is the purpose of the parody: to draw a clear distinction between two types of love--*cupiditas*, the love exemplified by Cupid's saints and *caritas*, the ideal Christian love that the parody calls to mind.[76]

Finally, the treatment of the poem is exemplificative. I do not wish to dwell on this aspect of the poem here, since the poem's *exempla*--the legends themselves--are the principal topic of the next chapter. However, it bears repeating that the "exemplum form"--strained to meet the hagiography demanded by the God of Love[77]--serves very well the poet's subversive purpose: that is, the poem's final cause.

Causa finalis

All aspects of the poem, then, serve, and are subordinate to, the poem's final cause, which I have identified as the disparagement of idolatrous love and which needs no further elaboration here. While I have spent considerable effort in demonstrating how the poem's Prologue anticipates this didactic purpose, however, I have yet to show how this central aspect of "authorial intention" is incorporated in the legends themselves. In the following chapter, through a close reading of the legends, I will attempt to discover how the author's didactic purpose is revealed in his text.

NOTES

1. A. J. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic literary attitudes in the later Middle Ages (London: Scolar Press, 1984):28. The Aristotelian Prologue was the most advanced of several "types" of scholastic prologues, all of which, however, stressed the same aspects of a work. See R. W. Hunt, "The Introductions to the *Artes* in the Twelfth Century", Studia medievalia in honorem R. M. Martin, O.P. (Bruges, 1948):85-112; and Minnis (above) throughout.

2. Minnis, M.T.A., 29.

3. Evidence that in the Middle Ages there was a growing interest in the literal sense of the Bible may be adduced from Christian writers' increased use of a particular stream of Jewish exegesis, which emphasized the literal aspect of scripture. See Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1952); H. Hailperin, Rashi and the Christian Scholars (Pittsburg, 1963).

4. One of the best examples of the use of this passage from *Romans* as justification for the compilation of pagan tales is provided by the anonymous compiler of the Ovide Moralisé (Ovide Moralisé, ed. C. de Boer, Amsterdam, 1915):Vol i, 61:

> Se l'escripture ne me ment,
> Tout est pour nostre enseignement
> Quanqu'il a es livres escript,
> Soient bon ou mal li escript. (1-4)

[If the Scriptural passage does not lie to me, whatever is written in books is all for our doctrine, be the writings good or ill.]

5. Pagans were often upheld as authorities in the arts and sciences (poetry, at this time, would not fall within these categories, falling more properly under "Ethics": see Chap. 1, above, p. 2). Aristotle, for example, was regarded as an authority on natural science; Cicero (The Rhetorica ad Herennium) in rhetoric; Galen and Hippocrates in the field of medicine. Their status as authorities was not under contention, as was that of the poets.

6. St. Augustine, in his allegorical interpretation of *Exodus* iii, 22; xi,2; xii, 35, unwittingly laid the groundwork for the study of the pagan poets (De doctrina Christiana, II,40). It was not Augustine's intent to specify the works of poets as "gold from Egypt", treasure the Christian might use in teaching the gospel. Rather, Augustine was recommending that certain ideas of the Platonist philosophers might be adaptable to Christian teaching. In the later Middle Ages, however, teaching of the classics was justified in part by Augustine's text. For the English history of *translatio studii*, see B. Smalley, English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century (Oxford, 1960).

7. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship, 142.

8. Ibid., 205.

9. This suspicion of poetry stretches back into antiquity, probably stemming from Plato's discussion of poetry in The Republic (X,604-7) where the philosopher speaks of poetry as "lies" which "inflame the passions".

10. See Steven Manning, "The Nun's Priest's Tale and the Medieval Attitude Toward Fables", JEGP, 59 (1960):403-16.

11. The Ovide Moralisé and the "Ovidius Moralizatus" (Pierre Bersuire, Reductorium morale, liber xv) are two of the best examples of this type of "moralization". For a history of Ovidian moralization, see H.C. Mainzer, "John Gower's Use of the *Medieval Ovid* in the *Confessio Amantis*", Medium Aevum, 61 (1972):215-229; L.K. Born, "Ovid and Allegory", Speculum, 9 (1934): 362-79.

12. Medieval moralizations would, according to Hirsch (Validity in Interpretation) be an example of critics confusing a poem's possible significance with the author's meaning. It is easy to see how invoking presumed "authorial intention" to support a given ideology can be construed as dangerous; as can of course, invoking legitimate authorial intention for similar purposes.

13. *Utilitas* was usually defined in terms of the author's moral didactic purpose. See John of Garland, for example, The *Parisiana Poetria* of John of Garland (ed. T. Lawler, New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1974): 20-21:

> *Ad Quid Inuenitur*. Qvia dicitur in premissis "ad quid", attendendum est quod per hoc denotatur finis inuentoris, scilicet vtilitas et honestas...(327-329)
>
> (*To What End One Invents*. Since "to what end" is mentioned above, let us notice in passing that this denotes the inventor's purpose, which is of course to promote what is both useful and right...)

But Glending Olson ("The Medieval Theory of Literature for Refreshment and its Use in the *Fabliau* Tradition", Studies in Philology, 71 [1974]:291-313) discusses a different *utilitas*: that of recreational literature for the purpose of relaxation. (See also Olson, Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages, Ithaca & London, 1982). Olson's discussion, however, though grounded in classical literary theory, does not specifically include the reading of the classics, but is centred in the French *fabliau* and *roman* traditions.

14. This attitude is exemplified by Chaucer's defense of his "translations" (LGW: G 469-73) as well as by other classical redactors. As Manning ("Fables") remarks:

> Apparently the moralist was concerned with making falsehood subservient to truth whether it wanted to be subservient or not. (p. 410)

15. Minnis, M.T.A., 10. The M.E.D. (ed. S. M. Kuhn, Ann Arbor: U of Mich P, 1981):515, defines *auctor* in similar terms:

> 2(a) a source of authoritative information or opinion, an authority; a teacher...
> (b) a writer, an author; min , my source for this story; ?also my authority (hard to distinguish from 2a).

16. That is, the New Testament was read literally. Allegorical

readings for the Old Testament were often retained (e.g. Origen's *Commentarium in cantica canticorum*), particularly when, as in this case, the literal reading would have scandalous implications.

17. Pierre Bersuire, Reductorium morale, ed. J Engels (Utrecht, 1966): Prologus, 1, quoted in Minnis, M.T.A., 163. In defining God as the efficient cause, Bersuire is invoking the concept of *duplex causa efficiens* and is implicitly defining himself as instrumental cause.

18. Thomas Usk, *Testament of Love* in W. W. Skeat, ed. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, vol. vii: Chaucerian and other pieces (Oxford, 1897):49.

19. Osbern Bokenham, Prologus to Legendys of Hooly Wummen (ed. M. S. Serjeantson, Oxford, 1958):1. Osbern later specifies the final cause of his first legend:

    The fyrst cause is for to excyte
    Mennys affeccyoun to haue delyte
    Thys blyssyd virgyne to loue and serue,
    From all myscheuys hem to preserue...(127-130)

20. Many writers of this period, while not specifically referring to the terms of the "Aristotelian Prologue", nevertheless demonstrate a thorough familiarity with medieval literary theory. See, for example, Minnis's discussion of John Gower, "John Gower, *sapiens* in ethics and politics", Medium Aevum, 49:2 (1980):207-229. See also Minnis, M.T.A., Chapter 5, "Literary Theory and Literary

Practice", 160-210.

21. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation, 86.

22. Ibid., 258-9.

23. See Ibid., 240-1.

24. Prooemii qu. 4, conclusio (*Bonaventurae opera*, i: 14-5), ed. F. Stegmuller, Repertorium commentariorum in sententias Petri Lombardi (Wurzburg, 1947), quoted in Minnis, M.T.A., 94.

25. For the Legend's sources, see Robinson, 839-854.

26. Chaucer's admission of borrowing is verified by studies of the Prologue's French sources (Lowes, op. cit., *et al*). Following this passage in the F-version (F 84-96), Chaucer launches into a translation of the Filostrato (See Robinson, 842). Indeed, much of the Prologue, particularly the F-version, is a pastiche of contemporary French (and to a much lesser extent, Italian) poets. The image of "gleaning" (G 63) was commonly used to suggest the act of compiling. Ralph Higden, in his Polychronicon, cites the story of Ruth gleaning the corn (*Ruth* ii) as a metaphor for *compilatio*. For other examples of the relation of "gleaning" to compiling, see Minnis, M.T.A., 256 n142.

27. Eleanor Winsor Leach, p. 32. As Ms. Leach suggests:

> We may do well to keep in mind the principle that Alceste has formulated: intention and originality

constitute the greater portion of any literary act.

28. Minnis, M.T.A., 210.

29. In the F-version, the narrator represents himself as a "lover": "Al swere I nat, of this I wol nat lye;/Ther loved no wight hotter in his lyve" (F 58-59). He addresses the daisy as his "lady sovereyn" (94); and is impassioned at the sight of her:

> To seen this flour so yong, so fressh of hewe,
> Constreyned me with so gledy desir
> That in myn herte I feele yet the fir
> That *made me to ryse, er yt were day*...(my italics, sexual pun?) (F 104-107)

His passion, in good courtly form, leaves him "withouten slep, withouten met or drynke" (177). But if the narrator in F is a lover, he is only a "poet-lover", for his sexual ardor has no real referent. He longs, like his French sources, to "praise the daisy"; but his literal understanding of their allegorical poems, constitutes a parody of the *Marguerite* poems.

In the G-Prologue, all these passages are dropped or altered so that the narrator is presented as an observer, a non-lover who, in fact, scorns love (G 258-60).

30. Leach, 33.

31. "Naked text" may have a number of meanings other than that which I propose. It may mean, for example, "direct translation"; or one faithful to moral meaning; or, a text devoid of rhetoric. See Sheila Delany, "The Naked Text:

Chaucer's *Thisbe*, the *Ovide Moralisé*, and the Problem of *Translation Studii* in *The Legend of Good Women*", p. 18.

32. As Robert Frank contends. See my Chap. 1, above, 22.

33. See Minnis, M.T.A., 201.

34. Chaucer does, in fact, inject in the legends commentary suitable to his ostensible purpose (the praise of good women)--but commentary invariably unsuitable to the text upon which he is commenting. His inane and inappropriate commentary reveals the irony of his choice of texts. See, eg., lines 703ff; 916-23; 2559-61.

35. The Man of Law's Tale, l. 60. (Robinson, 62).

36. See B. G. Koonce, "Satan the Fowler", Mediaeval Studies, 21 (1959):176-184.

37. John Fyler, Chaucer and Ovid (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1979):74.

38. Ibid., 23.

39. That this tradition is unquestionably a "male" tradition will become relevant in my interpretation of some of the specific legends in Chapter 3. I mention this here as a corrective to my description of literary tradition as a "record of human consciousness". I believe that Chaucer would have understood tradition as such, but as various critics point out, literary tradition incorporates not a

record of undifferentiated "human" consciousness, but a record of specifically "male" or "female" experience. The mainstream of literary tradition, however, embodies masculine ideals, anxieties and fantasies. Cf. Sheila Delany, "Rewriting Woman Good: Gender and the Anxiety of Influence in Two Late-Medieval Texts" in J. Wasserman and R. Blanch, eds. Chaucer in the Eighties (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986); Arlyn Diamond,"Troilus and Criseyde: The Politics of Love" in Wasserman (cited above); Elaine Tuttle Hansen, "The Feminization of Men in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", paper given at New Chaucer Society, Philadelphia, 1986, and forthcoming in an anthology edited by Sheila Fisher.

40. See Robinson, 841.

41. Leach, 51n1.

42. The literal-minded narrator also has difficulty in recognizing the daisy as figurative.

43. It is a parody of its sources--principally Froissart's *Paradys d'Amours* and Machaut's *Jugement dou Roy de Navarre*--but ultimately a parody of the whole concept of the "religion of love". Edmund Reiss ("Chaucer's Parodies of Love", in Chaucer the Love Poet, pp. 27-44) discusses this type of parody; and my later discussion of parody is based to a large extent on his ideas.

44. Payne, Key of Remembrance, 107. The ambiguity of the word

"love" (caritas or cupidity) is discussed in Chapter 1.

45. J. L. Lowes, "Is Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* a Travesty?", JEGP, 8 (1909):546.

46. Frank, 26.

47. Many of the lurid details in the stories of Chaucer's heroines are omitted despite the fact (or because of the fact) that his audience would notice this suppression. I will deal with this expurgation of sources in the next chapter. With regard to "suppression" as an intentional rhetorical ploy, Alice Miskimin (The Renaissance Chaucer [Yale UP, 1975]:45) quotes Roger Ascham's *Scolemaster*: "This and that he leaueth out, which he doth wittelie to this end and purpose".

48. Six of the ten legends are largely based upon Ovid's Heroides; and as Leach, in her illuminating discussion of the Legend's relationship to this major source, concludes:

> Chaucer has either recognized the [satiric] tone of the Heroides or else he has boldly and independently parodied his source" (p. 472).

Leach also notes the problematic relationship of some of Chaucer's other sources to his presumed theme:

> Guido's Historia gives the most condemnatory account of Medea which Chaucer could have found. The Aeneid makes Aeneas a hero so firmly that Chaucer must ultimately free himself from the text and continue his story alone. Ovid's Fasti gives a basis for Lucretia's canonization, but mocks her Roman legend through ludicrous exaggeration of her sense of decorum and her love for morals and the state. Of the legends from the Metamorphoses, Thisbe is a

> harmless and silly story, and Philomela a tale of bloodshed and revenge containing no examples of virtue, either masculine or feminine. (pp. 207-8)

49. Goddard, 89.

50. Many critics believe that the Legend is "unfinished" but complete; among these are Goddard, Leach, and Elaine Tuttle Hansen, "Irony and the Anti-feminist Narrator in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", JEGP, 82 (1983):11-31. I tend to agree with this conclusion. It seems unlikely to me that Chaucer would initiate a major revision of the Prologue, while leaving the Legend of Hypermnestra just one or two verses short of completion. It is also possible, though not certain, that the Legend was published (in manuscript) and circulated during Chaucer's lifetime--which, if true, would seem to argue that the poem was as complete as he intended it to be.

51. Even critics who deny an ironic reading of the Legend, recognize the pattern of the legends' *exempla*. See Ruth Ames, "The Feminist Connections of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", in J. Wasserman and R. Blanch, op. cit., who writes:

> The legends themselves illustrate, again like the *Rose* condemned by the God, the folly of those "that loveth paramours to harde and hote". (p. 71)

52. Uncritical modern readers of scripture may take this intricate dissection of the bible into chapter and verse pretty much for granted, but it stems from this particular critical practice.

53. Minnis, M. T. A., 149.

54. Ibid., 148.

55. See Chap. 1, 18.

56. See Chap. 1, 13 ff.

57. Frank, 26-7.

58. R. O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance and "Making His Own Myth: The Prologue to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", Chaucer Review, 9 (1975):197-211. The Prologue has also recently been understood as a "self-contained dream poem" by Michael D. Cherniss, "Chaucer's Last Dream Vision: The Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*", ChauR, 20:3 (1986):183-199.

59. I am thinking particularly of Judson Allen's discussion of the *forma tractandi* (Ethical Poetic, pp. 67-116) which I think tends to obscure more than illuminate. I am aware, however, that my own discussion of this aspect of the poem may not accurately represent what medieval commentators had in mind. Nevertheless, I wish to be absolved of the consequences of this possibility by appealing to my own "authorial intention"--which is not to discuss medieval theory *per se*, but rather to use this aspect of theory to aid in the explication of the poem.

60. See Chap. 1, p.5.

61. Wylie Sypher, "The Social Meanings of Comedy", in W. Sypher, ed. Comedy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956):214.

62. Paul Strohm ("Chaucer's Audience", Literature and History, 5 (1977):26-41) identifies Chaucer's "actual" audience as "the lesser gentry--the knights, esquires, and women of equivalent rank, and especially those closely connected with the court" (p. 31). In this he receives general support from R. T. Lenaghan, "Chaucer's Circle of Gentlemen and Clerks", ChauR, 18:2 (1983):155-60; and R. F. Green, Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages (U of Toronto P, 1980)--although Lenaghan makes no reference to women in his discussion of Chaucer's audience, and Green, elsewhere ("Women in Chaucer's Audience", ChauR, 18:2 (1983):146-54) argues specifically that women constituted an insignificant proportion of Chaucer's audience. It seems likely, then, that Chaucer's "actual" audience was predominantly composed of "gentlemen" of his own rank. Chaucer's "implied" audience (this terminology is borrowed from Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Audience(s): Fictional, Implied, Intended, Actual", ChauR, 18:2 (1983):137-45) has also been the subject of much discussion. Both Edmund Reiss ("Chaucer and His Audience", ChauR, 14:4 (1980):390-402) and Dieter Mehl ("The Audience of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*", in Stephen Barney, ed. Chaucer's *Troilus*: Essays in Criticism, Archon Books, 1980) argue that the nature of Chaucer's poetry is such that an

"implied" audience (what Mehl terms a "fictional" audience) can be extrapolated from the text. Both critics argue that this "implied" audience is, in its sophistication, independent of any "actual" audience. As Mehl concludes:

> Even if we did not know anything at all about Chaucer's audience, the poem would still give us a very lively and precise idea of the quality of mind it wants to appeal to ...

Also "implied" in Chaucer's writing, however, is the assumption that he may well be misunderstood (see Chap. 1, 4-5). This assumption is dramatized by his "fictional" audience, many of whom (e.g. The God of Love, the Man of Law, the Wife of Bath, Harry Bailey) are either misguided or have very limited critical capacities. Chaucer's "implied" audience, then, may represent quite accurately his "actual" audience (both his *primary* "actual" audience and his *secondary* "actual" audience--see Strohm in ChauR, cited above, p. 142) which undoubtedly included (and includes) a wide range of critical abilities. When speaking of Chaucer's "intended" audience, however, we may be making a meaningful distinction. The nature of this group can only be inferred from the names of those Chaucer actually addresses in his poetry--Bukton, Scogan, Vache, Gower, Strode--and from his close associates (Clifford, Clanvowe, etc.); but the inference is not farfetched. These men were literary men, conservative men of a privileged class--men, in short, like Chaucer himself--and it seems reasonable to assume that this was the "audience" to whom he addressed himself with most

confidence. That Chaucer's "intended", as well as his "actual", audience was predominantly male is not central to my present discussion; but this fact, if true, would probably color his discussion of love. It would also challenge the notion that Chaucer wrote the Legend to placate women offended by Troilus and Criseyde.

63. In developing this last point, Elaine Tuttle Hansen ("The Feminization of Men in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*") explores the conscious and unconscious masculine insecurities she believes the author of the Legend was attempting to allay. It is possible, too, that a more specific personal experience informs Chaucer's negative attitude toward sex. If P. R. Watts ("The Strange Case of Geoffrey Chaucer and Cecilia Chaumpaigne", Law Quarterly Review, 63 (1947):491-515) is correct in his conclusions, Chaucer, five years prior to writing the Legend, may well have committed rape--an event which undoubtedly would color his thinking about the effects of passion.

64. Sigmund Freud, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905) in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960; rpt. 1981): Vol. 8, p.222.

65. Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, edited and translated by James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961):55.

66. Ibid., 48-9. It is strange to see the writings of Freud so closely aligned with the teachings of the Church fathers,

although undoubtedly Freud would have balked at the extremes of Origen, who is said to have taken the biblical injunction concerning the offence of bodily members (Matthew 5:29-30) literally--castrating himself. (See J. Delaney and J. Tobin, eds. Dictionary of Catholic Biography [Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1961]:879).

67. See June Hall Martin, Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover (London: Tamesis Books, 1972).

68. Payne, Key of Remembrance, 109.

69. M.E.D. (op. cit.):

> Lewed: 2(a) (Of persons)--lacking judgement or sense; stupid, foolish, misguided.

70. Goddard, 58. See also Beverly Taylor, "The Medieval Cleopatra". cit.

71. Reiss, "Chaucer's Parodies of Love", 27. See also Reiss, "Biblical Parody: Chaucer's 'Distortions' of Scripture", in D. L. Jeffrey, ed. Chaucer and Scriptural Tradition (U of Ottawa Press, 1984):47-61.

72. Reiss, "Chaucer's Parodies of Love", 28.

73. R. E. Kaske, "The *Canticum Canticorum* in the Miller's Tale", Studies in Philology, 59 (1962):479-500.

74. Alceste's description in the Legend follows very closely the

description of the Blessed Virgin in Chaucer's An ABC. She, like the virgin, is described as "of alle floures flour" (G 55; ABC -4) and as the "verray light" (F 84; ABC 105). Alceste is a "kalender" (F 542; G 533) and the Virgin, the illumination of kalenderes (ABC 73). Without either lady the poet has no "confort" (G 181; ABC 17), etc. The parallels are certainly sufficient to suggest that they are conscious.

75. Goddard, op. cit.

76. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Preface to Chaucer) is the most notable exponent of the distinction between these two types of love. He, of course, is elaborating upon the distinction made by St. Augustine in De Civitate Dei and elsewhere.

77. See Lisa Kiser, Telling Classical Tales, Chap. 4, for a discussion of the humourous process entailed in attempting to make classical heroines fit a hagiographic mould.

CHAPTER III

CUPIDES SEINTES

> ...what so myn auctour mente,
> Algate, God wot, it was myn entente
> To forthere trouthe in love and it cheryce,
> And to be war fro falsnesse and fro vice
> By swich ensaumple; this was my menynge. (G 459-63)

The same didactic purpose which Chaucer specifies as his "entente" in Troilus and Criseyde informs the Legend of Good Women, where once again, the poet admonishes "by...ensaumple" against falseness and vice. Unlike the moral of Troilus, however, which is finally explicitly revealed, the Legend's *sentence* is conveyed solely through the ironic portrayal of its *exempla*. This odd assortment of classical heroines is ostensibly intended to represent a *legendary* of "Cupides seintes", which Chaucer is ordered to compose by way of penance for his earlier transgressions against Love: namely, his portrait of Criseyde and his translation of Le Roman de la Rose. The net effect of the legends, however, is subversive; for many of the women portrayed are not "goode women" (474), nor even women that "were trewe in lovynge al here lyves" (475), and their stories certainly do not "spek wel of love" (481). Hints of the poet's subversive intention gleaned from the earlier parts of the Prologue are soon ironically confirmed by the God of Love's choice of Cleopatra as the first of the Legend's heroines:

> At Cleopatre I wol that thow begynne,
> And so forth, and my love so shalt thow wynne. (542-3)

Cleopatra

For critics who fail to grasp the poem's irony, of course, the choice of Cleopatra as the first of Cupid's saints is utterly baffling. As Lounsbury remarked:

> The selection of her at all is, to say the least, singular... While much can be conceded to the exigencies of fiction, it is of a nature to startle the reader to find an addition to the lives of the saints made by representing Cleopatra as a martyr for love. The Queen of Egypt presents peculiar difficulties to him who attempts to make her course of conduct serve as a lesson to faithless man of the beauty of feminine devotion.[1]

Cleopatra, however, is the perfect medium for Chaucer's subversive message because it so plainly depicts the destructive effects of excessive passion. And, as Beverly Taylor points out, it is to the effects of unregulated passion that our attention is repeatedly drawn:

> What is developed [in *Cleopatra*] is the consequences of her actions as a lover: she disrupts order in marriage bonds and in political relationships; she embroils others in warfare motivated by sensuality and greed; and, finally, she causes two suicides. Her story broadens the realm of love to include both personal relationships and functions of society. Chaucer's audience is forced to focus not on the lovers as lovers, but on the results of the love relationship, its consequences to individuals and to human society.[2]

Of course, Antony is equally responsible for the tragic effects of the relationship. His "fall" is not an accident of Fortune, as the narrator naively suggests ("So fil it, as Fortune oughte him a shame"(589))[3], but the direct effect of an obvious cause:

> ...love hadde brought this man in swich a rage,
> And hym so narwe bounden in his las,
> Al for the love of Cleopataras,

That al the world he sette at no value. (599-602)

Antony had become so ensnared by passion that he held nothing else of value. For "love", he would abandon his country and his marriage vows:

> Rebel unto the toun of Rome is he.
> And over al this, the suster of Cesar,
> He lafte hire falsly, or that she was war,
> And wolde algates han another wyf;
> For which he tok with Rome and Cesar stryf. (591-5)

For "love", he was prepared to sacrifice his men in senseless "stryf",[4] and ultimately, his own life.

If Antony's death seems a pity ("ful gret damage" (598)), it is because Chaucer's presentation "echoes the bias of the Roman writers who saw in Antony"s death the waste of a potentially good Roman",[5] not because Antony is deserving of less. The half-hearted attempt to depict Antony as a chivalrous knight (596-612) is indeed ludicrous. As a citizen (moreover, a "senatour") of Rome, his acts are traitorous; as a husband, his infidelity is treacherous; as a military leader, he proves wanting in "discrecioun" (611) by placing his men in jeopardy for personal gain. His actions clearly belie his courtly, chivalric description (597, 610-12). Antony (like Troilus) is not a knight enobled by love, but a fool debased by lust.

"Blynde lust" (TC V,1824) is what compels Antony to act dishonorably; "blynde lust", what subverts his reason. This latter process is symbolized again, as in the Troilus,[6] in the image of female dominance: "[Cleopatra] hadde hym as hire leste" (615). The symbolic significance of male submission to female

dominance would be immediately apparent to a medieval Christian audience conditioned by allegorical interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve, one example of which may be read in the *Parson's Tale*:

> There may ye seen that deedly synne hath, first, suggestion of the feend, as sheweth heere by the naddre; and afterward the delit of the flessh, as sheweth heere by Eve; and after that, the consentynge of resoun, as sheweth heere by Adam./ For trust wel, though so were that the feend tempted Eve, that is to seyn, the flessh, and the flessh hadde delit in the beautee of the fruyt defended, yet certes, til that resoun, that is to seyn, Adam, consented to the etynge of the fruyt, yet stood he in th'estat of innocence. (PT, 330-331)[7]

In Christian allegory, the male represented reason, the female, the flesh. Submission of reason to sensual passion was a re-enactment of original sin, a disruption of the intended hierarchal order.[8] A medieval reader might thus view Antony's rebellion against Octavian (who "was generally regarded as an ideal earthly ruler and also a partial prefiguration of Christ"[9]), as but an outward sign of his inner transgression, a perversion of the natural order stemming from his libidinous sin; for in the medieval interpretation of the classics,

> ...carnality is no longer the enemy of plain sanity or of the state, but of philosophy and of the spiritual pursuit of salvation in the service of the City of God.[10]

Finally, a medieval audience would recognize Antony's terminal (and irredeemable) sins--his "dispeyr" and consequent suicide (660-61)--as the inevitable compounding of his "original" sin.

Antony, then, is the author of his own demise, but his story is sufficiently tragic that we might still retain for him a little sympathy (although this would be counter to the effect

desired by Alceste, who wants stories in which men are painted as villains (476 ff)). But this sympathy will hardly extend to his partner-in-crime, whose actions seem motivated less by passion than by political self-interest, and in whose death we may see, as did the Roman writers, "only the end of a public nuisance".[11]

In the opening reference to "Tholome" (580), those familiar with "storyal soth" (702) will be reminded of Cleopatra's brother-husband, whose murder she procured in order to secure sole power.[12] Chaucer (having already drawn the matter to our attention) is required, out of deference to the aims of his fictive patrons, to suppress this detail; for this is hardly the sort of behavior expected of "goode women" (474). Indeed, throughout the legends, such suppression becomes a necessary habit because many of the heroines are what Goddard describes as "women with a past".[13] But for those of Chaucer's audience acquainted with the sources, Chaucer's belated expurgation[14] and rhetorical evasion of historical details only enhance the poem's irony.

This reliance upon the readers' recognition of suppressed material may seem too subtle a technique to be effective; and one might argue on this basis that such irony was not Chaucer's intention. I would counter this, however, by noting that *Cleopatra* (whose story, as Taylor points out, was widely known) is the only legend in which Chaucer's sources are not specifically identified. From this I would conclude that Chaucer

wants us to--indeed, at times, insists that we--check his legends against the authorized versions he cites. For a medieval courtly audience, much more familiar than modern readers with Chaucer's classical and medieval sources, this process would be almost automatic. Thus while Chaucer must on many occasions suppress, evade or falsify his sources in order to fulfill his penance, the suppressed material is always straining to break through the fabric of his stories. This is particularly true in *Cleopatra* where the heroine's story requires such extensive laundering.

By employing the *abbreviatio* demanded by the God of Love (F 570-7) in the discussion of the couple's courtship (614-5), for example, Chaucer evades Plutarch's suggestion that Cleopatra counterfeited love in order to secure her ascendancy over Antony's wife.[15] In using *occupatio* to hasten description of the wedding feast (616-23), he hints at, but glosses over, the Egyptian Queen's notorious excess, a feature which Boccaccio obliquely recounts in his own *occupatio* describing the event: "Et ut arabicas unctiones et odoratos sabee fumos et crapulas sinem" [I shall not discuss the Arabian ointments, the perfumes of Saba, and the drunken revels].[16] In telescoping the events following Antony's death (deftly, if falsely, bridging the historical hiatus between lines 662 and 663), Chaucer renders more plausible the declared motive for Cleopatra's suicide. Chaucer's display of rhetorical sleight-of-hand, however, is not likely to deceive his more perceptive readers, nor is it

intended to do so. Rather, the attempted "cover-up" is meant to be humorous.

Neither are we intended to take seriously the rubric "martiris", appended to the legend's title. Cleopatra was no martyr; she committed suicide, a sin unequivocally condemned by the Church and one which Augustine in De Civitate Dei (I, 21) equates with murder. And she certainly did not die for love. Indeed, as Leach notes, the motive for Cleopatra's death, uncontested in historical accounts, was fear of ignominy:

> Concerning the death of Cleopatra herself...all Chaucer's sources, or probable sources, are in complete agreement. The queen feared that Octavian would carry her to Rome to march in bonds in his triumph.[17]

Cleopatra's claim, then, that her suicide is evidence that there "was nevere unto hire love a trewer quene" (695) is patently ridiculous. In fact, after Antony's death, she attempts unsuccessfully to seduce Octavian (she "coude of Cesar have no grace"(663));[18] and we may be reminded, in this attempted seduction, of her legendary affair with Octavian's adoptive father.[19] Indeed, her repertoire of lovers is so extensive that, in her dramatic apostrophe to her dead lover (681-95), she finds it expedient to clarify the subject of her address: "I mene yow, Antonius my knyght" (684). Cleopatra, then, is hardly the ideal wife, but rather, as Taylor suggests, "a parody of the ideal of 'wyfhod'",[20] just as Antony is a parody of the ideal knight.

That we are not meant to take the legend seriously, but rather are intended to appreciate its comic aspects, is evident

throughout: in the narrator's naive misunderstanding of cause and effect (589), in the suddenness and triteness of courtly clichés (613), in the humorous disruption of the rhetorical "highstyle" (684), in the hapless appeal to "storyal soth" (702), in the arbitrary and inappropriate moral which the narrator draws (703ff), and finally, in the levity of the poet's closing prayer (705). Throughout, the tone is mocking. But the legend's humour does not detract from the seriousness of its effects. Treason, adultery, war, despair and suicide are the fruits of this sordid affair; and in its negative effects the *Legend of Cleopatra* sets the pattern for the legends which follow.

Thisbe

In introducing his discussion of the *Legend of Thisbe*, James Spisak writes:

> Of all Chaucer's tales in the Legend of Good Women, scholars agree that the *Legend of Thisbe* adheres to its source, Ovid's Metamorphoses, IV, 55-166, most faithfully. This must be, at least in part, the reason so little attention has been paid to the way Chaucer uses Ovid. But his close rendition is deliberate, and what he kept is as important as what he changed. Chaucer's choice of the Pyramus and Thisbe myth is especially significant in the new context he provides for the story.[21]

Although, as has been shown, not all the changes in this "translation" from the Metamorphoses are original to Chaucer,[22] Spisak is certainly correct in ascribing authorial intention to Chaucer's relatively close adherence to his primary source, as well as to the slight but significant alterations he makes. He

is also undoubtedly accurate in noting "context" as one of the most salient variables in the two stories.

It is social context, for instance, that radically changes the significance of the tale's setting. That the Roman writer sets his tale in the city of Semiramis (Met. IV,58) is insignificant--a mere historic detail--but in a medieval rendition of the tale, the opening reference to "Babiloyne"[23] (706) and "Semyramus" (707) acquire symbolic significance. Babylon, in New Testament interpretation, is not a location, but an "eschatological symbol of satanic deception and power",the

> ...contemporary realm which, as the realm of the devil, contains all blasphemies and idolatries. The ancient Babylon is here understood as the archetypal head of all entrenched worldly resistance to God...As such, she is the antithesis of the virgin bride of Christ, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the kingdom of God...[24]

And Semiramis, by Chaucer's time, had also attained symbolic stature:

> Toward the end of the Middle Ages Semiramis became a symbol of dissolute womanhood and fleshly lust, and because of her licentiousness, Dante consigned her to everlasting torment in hell. There (in Canto V of the *Inferno*) she resides in the Second Circle, which is reserved for those who abandoned themselves to carnal passion...[25]

These opening allusions to person and place, then, while seemingly innocent, should, in their social context (medieval Christian society) and in their literary context (immediately following the heavily ironic *Cleopatra*) alert us to the legend's moral purpose. And it is to further this moral purpose that the subsequent changes from Ovid are wrought.

Chaucer, for instance, follows the twelfth-century lai of Thisbe (inserted in the fourteenth-century Ovide Moralisé), rather than Ovid, in providing a social background for his tale (710-20) as well as motivation for parental constraint:

> For in that contre yit, withouten doute,
> Maydenes been ykept, for jelosye.
> Ful streyte, lest they diden some folye. (721-3)

In Chaucer's legend, Thisbe's parents prevent her from seeing Pyramus to protect her; they are solicitous of her welfare, anxious that she might avoid "folye". Thus, as Delany observes, "Chaucer begins to shape our judgement here about the dangers of impetuosity."[26] Despite parental interference, however, the couple's love grows in accordance with their age: "...as they wex in age, wex here love" (727). Here, in the parallel construction (wex...wex...)--not found in Ovid--Delany hears echoes of the Old French lai: "Croist lor aiez et croist lor sens.../Croist lor amour, croist lor aez" (p. 7). This line, however, also brings to mind a line in the Troilus (V, 1836), the context of which is certainly pertinent to a moral reading of this tale:

> O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
> *In which that love up groweth with your age,*
> Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte,
> And of youre herte up casteth the visage
> To thilke God that after his ymage
> Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
> This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.
>
> And loveth hym, the which that right for love
> Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
> First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;
> For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
> That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.
> And syn he best to love is, and most meke,
> What nedeth feynede loves for to seke? (TC, V, 1835-48)

Indeed, throughout Chaucer's legend, the immorality of this pagan love is subtly stressed. We may note, for example, in an early passage not found in Ovid, that the young lovers had already become a source of gossip: "The name of everych gan to sprynge/By women that were neighebores aboute" (719-20). This incipient breach of social law is compounded in the image of the "shryfte"[27] (745:confession), which subtly suggests a breach of moral law--an illicit confession of love, we are reminded, may lead to a need for a confession of sin. That the lovers must practice deceit to further their ends (753), Chaucer reminds us where Ovid doesn't. "Maryage" (729), which might legitimize their passion, is forbidden; but their love, restricted, only increases in intensity and madness: "As, wry the glede, and hotter is the fyr;/Forbede a love, and it is ten so wod" (735-6). Indeed, it is the urgency of Thisbe's passion, Chaucer (in an addition to Ovid) concludes, that sends her early to the scene of her demise: "This Tisbe hath so gret affeccioun/And so gret haste Piramus to se..." (793-4). Thisbe herself confirms the narrator's opinion in her express conclusion that it is <u>love</u> (not parental constraint) which is the root cause of the lover's demise: "Sith *love* hath brought us to this pitous ende" (904). This line is not found in Ovid, but recalls, once again, a line in <u>Troilus</u>--"Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love" (TC V,1828)--a line which immediately precedes the address to "yonge, fresshe folkes" quoted above. Chaucer's message in *Thisbe*, then, though more subtle than in *Cleopatra*, is nevertheless consistent. When passion is unrestrained, dire

consequences follow--in this case, two more suicides.

Chaucer, however, does not rely wholly on subtlety to carry his message; as in *Cleopatra*, he denigrates the lovers by introducing into the legend a comic mocking tone. Neither Thisbe nor Pyramus are such obvious targets of scorn as were Cleopatra and Antony, but Ovid's tale is nevertheless well suited to Chaucer's purpose. One example of Ovid's comic potential is his abundant use of apostrophe. As Delany observes:

> Ovid uses apostrophe no fewer than ten times in his brief narrative, including address by his characters to the wall, the lion, Thisbe's cloak and the mulberry tree. Though Ovid's narrative economy prevents wholesale abuse of apostrophe, it is nonetheless prominent and lends a slightly comical aura to the piece, forming a verbal analogue to the lovers' self-indulgence.[28]

"Chaucer," she remarks:

> maintains more or less the Ovidian number, type and order of apostrophe. Interestingly, though, he expands just the two places most likely to provoke a laugh: the lovers' address to the wall and its parts (from five to eleven lines), and Piramus to the wimple (from one to three lines). (p. 13).

In both instances the expanded apostrophe is also accompanied by the dramatic expletive "allas!", an addition to Ovid which is used in the legend nine times, and which tends to shift the borderline tale from dramatic narrative to melodrama.

Immediately following the address to the "wymple" (847-9), Pyramus stabs himself, and the image Ovid uses to describe the resultant bleeding is startlingly comic:

> ut iacuit resupinus humo, cruor emicat alte,
> non aliter quam cum vitiato fistula plumbo
> scinditur et tenui stridente foramine longas
> eiaculatur aquas atque ictibus aera rumpit.

> [As he lay stretched upon the earth the spouting blood leaped high; just as when a pipe has broken at a weak spot in the lead and through the small hissing aperture sends spurting forth long streams of water, cleaving the air with its jets.][29]

In Ovid's context, the comedy is functional: Piramus has to bleed in such a manner in order that his blood may reach the mulberry's fruit, changing its colour from white to deep purple and thus providing the tale's "metamorphosis". Chaucer, however, who has excised the "metamorphosis", can only have retained the grotesque image (850-51) for its humorous effect. A similar grotesque effect is achieved in Chaucer's description of Pyramus "Betynge with his heles on the grounde,/Al blody..." (863-4), a detail borrowed from Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia and obviously inserted here for comic effect.[30]

To describe Thisbe's woe at the discovery of this scene, Chaucer uses *occupatio* which extends into an interminable use of *anaphora*, another instance of what Delany terms "sentimental *amplificatio* gone wild"[31]:

> Who coude wryte which a dedly cheere
> Hath Thisbe now, and how hire heer she rente,
> And how she gan hireselve to turmente,
> And how she lyth and swouneth on the grounde,
> And how she wep of teres ful his wounde;
> How medeleth she his blod with hire compleynte;
> How with his blod hireselve gan she peynte;
> How clyppeth she the deede cors, allas!
> How doth this woful Tisbe in this cas!
> How kysseth she his frosty mouth so cold! (869-78)

It was undoubtedly such rhetorical excess that alerted Shakespeare to the comic possibilities in this tale.[32] Here, the melodramatic tone undermines the genuine seriousness of young love, robbing it of its dignity.[33]

Thus Chaucer, in amplifying the comedy inherent in Ovid's tale, leads us to conclude that these are not tragic lovers, but silly, impetuous youths, whose overactive hormones have led them to a sinful and tragic end. That both the narrator and Thisbe struggle desperately to extract from the story a more noble *sentence* (or at least morals that better accord with Alceste's intention: 799-801; 910-11; 916-23) only adds to the legend's irony.

Dido

The story of Dido is aptly summed up in the Book of the Duchess:

> ...Another rage
> Had Dydo, the quene eke of Cartage,
> That slough hirself for Eneas
> Was fals. Which a fool she was! (BD, 731-4)

Chaucer's portrayal of Dido in the Legend does little to revise this unflattering conclusion. Dido is, of course, a pattern of the heroine suggested by Alceste: a woman true in love betrayed by a false man--in short, a female counterpart to Troilus. But, like Troilus, she is a "fool for love", a dupe of passion.

Like Troilus, Dido "falls" in love in the conventional manner described by Andreas Capellanus:

> Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace.[34]

First, she is taken through the eye:

[She] saw the man, that he was lyk a knyght,
And suffisaunt of persone and of myght,
And lyk to been a verray gentil man;
And wel his wordes he besette can,
And hadde a noble visage for the nones,
And formed wel of braunes and of bones.
For after Venus hadde he swich fayrness
That no man myghte be half so fayr, I gesse...(1066-73; compare TC,I 272ff)

Then, she continues to engage in "excessive meditation":

This newe Troyan is so in my thought,
For that me thynketh he is so wel ywrought,
And ek so likly for to ben a man,
And therwithal so moche good he can,
That al my love and lyf lyth in his cure. (1172-6; compare TC,I 361-6)

The result is that she, too, like her male counterpart (TC, I, 432-3) resigns her "estat roial" into her lover's hand: "She hath hire body and ek hire reame yiven/Into his hand..." (1281-2).[35]

Unlike Troilus, however, Dido's physical promptings are never disguised. Before the end of the first day's "pleye" (1155),

...ther gan to breden swich a fyr,
That sely Dido hath now swich desyr
With Eneas, hire newe gest, to dele,[36]
That she hath lost hire hewe, and ek hire hele. (1156-9)

Compelled by this desire ("rage" is a more fit description), she lavishes Aeneas with gifts:

There nas courser wel ybrydeled non,
Ne stede, for the justing wel to gon,
Ne large palfrey, esy for the nones,
Ne jewel, fretted ful of ryche stones,
Ne sakkes ful of gold, of large wyghte,
Ne ruby non, that shynede by nyghte,
Ne gentil hawtein faucoun heroner,
Ne hound, for hert or wilde bor or der,
Ne coupe of gold, with floreyns newe ybete,
That in the land of Libie may be gete,

That Dido ne hath it Eneas ysent...(1114-24)

This gift-giving, the extravagance of which is heightened by the use of *anaphora*, is not found in Virgil (where Aeneas is the gift-giver); but Frank suggests that this passage is included as a means of further characterization:

> The lavish outpouring of [gifts]...shows us not merely the largesse of a truly noble queen, "she that can in fredom passen alle"; it represents objectively that cascading emotional involvement of Dido, her heedless giving of self.[37]

Yet before we regard this generosity as an example of virtue, we should perhaps consider the Parson's pronouncement:

> And certes, if it be a foul thyng a man to waste his catel on wommen, yet is it a fouler thyng whan that, for swich ordure, wommen dispenden upon men hir catel and substaunce./This synne, as seith the prophete, bireveth man and womman hir goode fame and al hire honour; and it is ful plesaunt to the devel, for therby wynneth he the moost partie of this world. (PT, 848-9)

We might also remember that this is only the first day of the lovers' acquaintance.

Later (though how much later, as Frank observes, is unclear because the time scheme is deliberately obscured in order that Dido be "saved from a charge of unseemly haste"[38]), Dido finds herself unable to sleep: "She siketh sore and gan hyreself turmente;/She waketh, walweth, maketh many a breyd" (1165-6). "And at the laste, unto hire syster Anne" (1168) she goes, complaining of her lovesick condition (1168-81). Her sister, it seems, is less than enthusiastic about this sudden love (she "somdel it withstod" (1183)), although Chaucer cuts out altogether Anne's "sermounynge" (1184) because "it were to long

to make rehersynge" (1185). In any event, Dido presses on, as "Love wol love, for nothing wol it wonde" (1187).

In the next day's hunt scene (1189-1217), the linguistic atmosphere is so sexually charged that, when the lovers finally arrive at their "litel cave", the audience, as well as the protagonists experience relief! The physical urgency, if not the haste, of the affair is a little "unseemly"; and Dido's role as pursuer makes it difficult to view her as a victim.

Chaucer, had he chosen to do so, might have relieved Dido of the responsibility of her actions by following the Aeneid and blaming Venus for making her fall in love. This, however, he refuses to do, explicitly rejecting the epic version of events:

> ...oure autour telleth us,
> That Cupido, that is the god of love,
> At preyere of his moder hye above,
> Hadde the liknesse of the child ytake,
> This noble queen enamored to make
> On Eneas; but, as of that scripture,
> Be as be may, I take of it no cure. (1139-45)

He might also have tactfully neglected to mention Dido's former spouse, "Sytheo" (1005), to whom, both of his sources agree, Dido had sworn eternal truth. He might, in fact, as Leach points out,[39] have avoided all such difficulties by abandoning Virgil and Ovid altogether and following Boccaccio's account in De Claris Mulieribus (chap. 40). In Boccaccio's peculiar revision of the story, Dido does not meet Aeneas at all, but, prior to his arrival, dies on a funeral pyre to preserve faith to her dead husband, Sychaeus, and to escape the amorous pursuit of her suitor Iarbus. Chaucer might have chosen these alternatives but

he did not. He avoided them, I suggest, because he intended to portray the Carthaginian Queen not as a woman "true in loving all her life", but rather as figure of lustful dalliance.

In leaping into Aeneas's arms, Dido demonstrates her lack of "trouthe" to Sychaeus, and even, Chaucer hints, to Iarbus:

> And whan the kyng, that Yarbas highte, it wiste,
> As he that hadde hir loved evere his lyf,
> And wowede hyre, to han hire to his wyf,
> Swich sorwe as he hath maked, and swich cheere,
> It is a routhe and pite for to here. (1244-9)

Indeed, Dido's rejection of local lovers in favour of Aeneas seems to be dictated by little more than a taste for novelty:

> And, for he was a straunger, somwhat she
> Likede hym the bet, as, God do bote,
> To som folk ofte new thyng is sote. (1075-7)[40]

In short, Dido is not an unequivocally "good woman". Nor is she a victim: she initiates the affair and she pursues it. Her story may be sad, but her final predicament (like Antony's) is one of her own making; and her outcome is altogether too predictable. She is another "fool for love" whose folly leads to sin, sorrow and suicide.

Hypsipyle-Medea

Because in this legend Chaucer concentrates much more upon the male antihero than upon his heroines, it has been alternately entitled the "Legend of Jason".[41] Curious as the poet's focus may first appear, however, it can be logically explained.

In the first place, Jason offers the first real opportunity "to telle of false men that...betrayen" (476). "Antony" and "Pyramus" were, by Love's standards, "true" men; and Aeneas (at least according to Virgil) had a divine mission. Jason, however, is clearly a philandering scoundrel: "There othere falsen oon, thow falsest two!" (1377)--and the narrator, conscious that he must fulfill the letter of his penance, in depicting the falsity of men, seizes upon Jason as a means to this end. Having found, at last, a suitable object for his contempt, the poet unleashes it without restraint, with humorous effect. As Frank observes, "The rascal is amusing; the archrascal is comic" (p. 85); and the humorous treatment of Jason establishes in the legend a comic tone:

> The opening lines introduce a comic view of Jason; the indignation Chaucer expresses is not deeply felt, but hovers between a moderate condemnation of the seducer and mock indignation. There is an extremity of language and an exaggeration in the attack which suggests posturing rather than genuine feeling. Coupled with this is a certain overfamiliarity in the treatment of Jason inappropriate for true seriousness: "Have at thee, Jason! now thyn horn is blowe!" (1383). Some of the language and imagery deflate whatever serious tone has developed, by associations with the vulgar rather than the courtly...The image of the devouring fox and the tender capon [1389-1391] picks up the image of Jason and his victims in the opening lines: "Thow sly devourere and confusioun/Of gentil wemen, tendre creatures" (1369-70), and reduces any *O altitudo* effect of the opening to the music of the pratfall. Jason the devourer of women becomes a hungry, prowling fox, and the tender women become juicy capons. The courtly associations of the hawking images ("thy recleymyng and thy lures" [1371]) are similarly reduced by the fox-capon image to barnyard level. The possibility of tragedy is destroyed by equating Jason's falseness with the crime of chicken stealing, a reprehensible action, but comically, not tragically so.[42]

In reducing dishonesty in love to a crime equatable with chicken

stealing, Chaucer undermines the seriousness of sexual love, effectively ridiculing its practitioners.

More disturbing, however, is the reduction of "honest" sexual relations, through the images of bourgeois commerce to a commodity which can be bought and paid for:

> But certes, it is bothe routhe and wo
> That love with false loveres werketh so;
> For they shal have wel betere love and chere
> *Than he that hath abought his love ful dere*
> Or hadde in armes many a blody box.
> For evere as tendre a capoun et the fox,
> Thow he be fals and hath the foul betrayed,
> *As shal the good-man that therfore hath payed.*
> Al have he to the capoun skille and ryght,
> The false fox wol have his part at nyght. (1384-93; my italics)

In this passage, the narrator laments that men like Jason, though false, are sexually successful (1386), while honest men who have "purchased" their women (1387)--presumably through matrimony--and ought thereby to own the rights to their bodies (1392) are less successful in love and apt to be cuckolded (1393). This problem, though here treated comically, is part of a broader problem, recognized by Elaine Tuttle Hansen as a serious concern:

> In this poem, heterosexual union is clearly presented not as a good or even attainable end, but as a serious and even insuperable problem... what is most dangerous about heterosexual desire, according to the Legends, is the more or less feminine position--vulnerable, submissive, subservient and self-sacrificing, on the one hand; crafty and duplicious, on the other--that men in love or lust for a woman seem forced to assume.[43]

The problem is that "feminine position" appears to enhance the heroes' erotic appeal, which is then used to its fullest advantage.

Jason, Aeneas, Theseus, Demophon, Lynceus are all in vulnerable positions. Jason is first a guest of the Lemnian Queen (a precarious position) and later in "Colcos" finds himself, because of his "aventure" (1614), "in moche doute" (1613). Aeneas is stranded in Carthage because of the "tempest" which threatens his ships (962-3). Demophon is shipwrecked and "enfamyned" (2429); Theseus, imprisoned; Lynceus (though unwittingly), under sentence of death. Aware of their precarious positions, the false lovers tend to play up their vulnerability through "feminine" behavior. Aeneas weeps and threatens suicide (1032-4), thereby wringing from Dido the desired reaction:

> Anon hire herte hath pite of his wo,
> And with that pite love com in also;
> And thus, for pite and for gentillesse,
> Refreshed moste he been of his distresse. (1078-81)

Jason, in seducing Hypsipyle, answers "mekely and stylle" (1491), "loketh pitously" (1549), and is "as coy as is a mayde" (1548). In this obvious role reversal, men use "feminine wiles" and "erotic attractiveness" to futher their interests. But this perversion of cultural norms is readily explainable in terms of sexual politics: at the basis of these relationships is an overwhelming power imbalance. The antiheroes recognize that the heroines hold over them the power of life and death; and this recognition prompts their subservient and duplicitous behavior.

Such an imbalance of power, as Chaucer elsewhere observes, always corrupts sexual relations and denies the possibility of love; for love, as the Franklin recognizes,

...wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon! (FT, 764-6)

Yet this problem defies easy solution; for the "honest" sexual relationships which the culture approves are rooted in a similar (though gender-reversed) power imbalance: the "honest man", having "abought his love ful dere", owns the woman. The impasse in the poem is clear. Neither the "courtly love" the poem depicts, which extends greater power to women, nor Christian patriarchy, which insists upon the power of men, allows for satisfactory sexual relationships. Chaucer, though undoubtedly more aligned with Christian patriarchal forces, is uneasy with the sex in either camp. Perhaps this is why the narrator (in the company of St. Paul, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, *et al*) "lesteth nat a lovere be" (480). If we are intended to interpret the effects of love portrayed in the poem as a warning (as I believe we are), it may be that celibacy is the condition that the poet recommends.

Jason, then, is an "ensaumple" (1394) of the false lover in more than a superficial, formulaic sense; but Chaucer's concentration upon the legend's hero has a further and more obvious motive: it is a diversionary tactic. In attending to the falseness of Jason, the poet may neglect to some extent those "trewe" lovers--those "gentil wemen, tendre creatures"--whom Jason betrays. And, as we shall see, in the case of Hypsipyle, and even more so of Medea, the less said the better.

The narrator's attempt to suppress the unflattering details of his heroines' stories is bungled once again, however, as he "inadvertently" directs attention to his damaging sources. Before we even meet Hypsipyle, for example, we have already been sent off (1457)

> ...to consult Valerius, not, of course, concerning Hypsipyle, but in order to discover what heroes sailed in the Argo, a piece of information quite irrelevant to the story...[44]

But what we discover in Valerius (Argonautica II)--the grisly story of the Lemnian women's slaughter of their men--lends particular irony to Chaucer's account of Hypsipyle's welcome of Jason and his crew:

> Under a banke anon aspied she
> Where that the ship of Jason gan aryve.
> Of hire goodnesse adoun she sendeth blythe
> To witen if that any straunge wight
> With tempest thider were yblowe a-nyght,
> To don him socour, as was hire usaunce
> To fortheren every wight, and don plesaunce
> Of verrey bounte and of curteysye. (1471-78)

Hypsipyle's crimes, however, pale in comparison with those of her rival.

To present Medea as a "goode woman", Chaucer strains his editorial prerogative well beyond reasonable limits. He is utterly unconscionable in the wilful suppression and manipulation of his sources. In the opening of *Medea*, he paraphrases Guido delle Colonne, an acknowledged source (1396):

> As mater apetiteth forme alwey,
> And from forme into forme it passen may,
> Or as a welle that were botomles,
> Ryght so can false Jason have no pes.
> For, to desyren, thourgh his apetit,
> To do with gentil women his delyt,

This is his lust and his felicite. (1582-88)

But here Chaucer applies to Jason a characteristic (insatiable lust) which Guido ascribed to Medea, specifically, and to women, generally:

> For we know the heart of woman always seeks a husband, just as matter always seeks form. Oh, would that matter, passing once into form, could be said to be content with the form it received. But just as it is known that matter proceeds from form to form, so the dissolute desire of women proceeds from man to man, so that it may be believed without limit, since it is of an unfathomable depth...(Historia Destructionis Troiae, II, 247-54)

In Chaucer's source, then, the insatiable appetite for sex is not the property of the hero, but of the heroine.

Lust, however, is the least of Medea's sins. For Jason's "yelwe her" (1672) she betrays her father and murders and mutilates her brother. Later, to avenge Jason's falsehood, she cremates alive his new consort, Creusa, and ruthlessly murders her own children. All of these incidents are omitted from Chaucer's account; but there can be no doubt that, despite this suppression, Chaucer intended that this material should surface. First he directs us to "Ovyde" (1678), where these incidents are recorded.[45] More blatantly, however, (and more conclusively in terms of his intention) the suppressed material is displaced to the end of the previous legend. Here, Hypsipyle, in an incredible revenge fantasy, prophesies Medea's future crimes:

> [She] preyede God, or it were longe while,
> That she, that hadde his herte yraft hire fro,
> Moste fynden hym untrewe to hir also,
> And that she moste bothe hire chyldren spylle,
> And all tho that sufferede hym his wille. (1571-5)

Hypsipyle prays that Medea ("she that hadde his herte yraft hire fro" (1572)) will also find Jason untrue (1573) and that she will kill both her children (1574) and Creusa, as well (1575).

On the one hand, this revenge fantasy serves as an indication of the bitterness of Hypsipyle's jealousy (another negative effect of love); but more importantly, this displacement of Medea's story represents the author's subversive inclusion of material that his imposed subject matter forbids. One way or another, the poet ensures that the effects of love will out; and in this legend, these effects range from Jason's deceit to Hypsipyle's jealousy, and finally, to Medea's medley of crimes.

Lucrece

The story of Lucrece, the narrator explains, is told

> ...for to preyse and drawe to memorye
> The verray wif, the verray trewe Lucresse,
> That, for hyre wifhod and hire stedefastnesse,
> Nat only that these payens hire comende,
> But he that cleped is in oure legende
> The grete Austyn, hath gret compassioun...(1685-90)

Here, Chaucer alludes to Augustine's discussion of Lucrece in De Civitate Dei (I, 19); but immediately we are faced with contradiction. Augustine does not countenance Lucretia's action; rather he equates her suicide with murder, a crime for which, he suggests, she should, were she still alive, be punished:

> Si ergo ad vestrum iudicium quisquam deferret hoc crimen vobisque probaretur non solum indemnatam, verum etiam castam et innocentem, interfectam esse mulierem, nonne eum, qui id fecisset, severitate congrua plecteretis? Hoc fecit illa Lucretia; illa, illa sic praedicata

> Lucretia innocentem, castam, vim perpessam Lucretiam insuper interemit. Proferte sententiam. Quod si propterea non potestis, quia non adstat quam punire possitis, cur interfectricem innocentis et castae tanta praedicatione laudatis?
>
> [If, therefore, anyone should bring this charge to your tribunal, and it should be shown you that a woman, not only uncondemned, but even chaste and innocent, had been put to death, would you not punish the one who had done this with fitting severity?
> Lucretia did this, that Lucretia so famous; when Lucretia was innocent and chaste and had suffered violence, Lucretia added death over and above. Pronounce sentence. But if you cannot, because she is not in attendance before you to be punished, why do you praise with such eloquence the murderess of an innocent and chaste woman?][46]

And in considering Lucretia's reaction to her rape, Augustine even hints that she may have enjoyed it:

> Quid si enim (quod ipsa tantummodo nosse poterat) quamvis iuveni violenter inruenti etiam sua libidine inlecta consentit idque in se puniens ita doluit ut morte putaret expiandum?
>
> [What if--but she herself alone could know--she was seduced by her own lust and, though the youth violently attacked her, consented, and in punishing that act of hers was so remorseful that death seemed to be due expiation?][47]

Chaucer, of course, takes pains to deny this possibility by having Lucrece faint *before* she is ravaged:

> She loste bothe at ones wit and breth,
> And in a swogh she lay, and wex so ded,
> Men myghte smyten of hire arm or hed;
> She feleth no thyng, neyther foul ne fayr. (1815-8)

Yet this explicit denial has only the effect of planting in the reader's mind a seed of doubt. The possibility that Lucrece enjoyed her experience would not occur to most readers (Augustine notwithstanding), but by raising the prospect (if only to deny it), the poet brings the matter to our attention.

As E. T. Donaldson has noted, Chaucer uses this technique elsewhere to secure this very effect.[48]

Chaucer also follows closely Ovid's description (Fasti, II, 833-4) of the fastidious care Lucrece takes to preserve her modesty, as she falls, dying from her self-inflicted wound:

> And as she fel adoun, she kaste hir lok,
> And of hir clothes yet she hede tok.
> For in hir fallynge yet she had a care,
> Lest that hir fet or suche thyng lay bare;
> So wel she loved clennesse and eke trouthe. (1854-60)

Ovid, as Leach points out,[49] is parodying the ideals of modesty and chastity ascribed by his literary forbears to Roman matrons. Chaucer's intention in this passage is less certain; but unless he intended to follow Ovid's burlesque, he would have done well to have modified his heroine's modesty.

Taken as a whole, Chaucer's treatment of Lucrece is puzzling. He draws attention to Augustine's censure, when instead he might have cited Jerome or other Christian authorities who approved of her act.[50] He obliquely suggests, through his explicit denial of the possibility, that she might have enjoyed being raped. He follows Ovid, when to do so is to risk a comic response to an obviously tragic situation. In short, he trifles with Lucrece; which is puzzling because, by any standards less exacting than those of Augustine, Lucrece is indeed a "goode woman". She is certainly one of the most innocent of all of Chaucer's heroines. Chaucer's callous attitude may perhaps be explained by reference to his personal experience of rape.[51] This is, of course, a less than certain

biographic detail; but it would help to account not only for the poet's callous attitude toward the poem's victim, but also for his peculiar sympathy with her rapist.

Deviating from his sources (and hagiographic tradition[52]), Chaucer is careful to detail the motivation of Lucrece's ravisher; and the process of sin, from suggestion through excessive meditation to consent, is outlined exceptionally clearly:

> Tarquinius, this proude kynges sone,
> Conceyved hath hire beaute and hyre cheere,
> Hire yelwe her, hire shap, and hire manere,
> Hire hew, hire wordes, that she hath compleyned
> (And by no craft hire beaute nas nat feyned),
> And caughte to this lady swich desyr
> That in his herte brende as any fyr
> So wodly that his wit was al forgeten.
> For wel thoghte he she wolde nat ben geten;
> And ay the more that he was in dispayr,
> The more he coveyteth and thoughte hire fayr.
> His blynde lust was al his coveytynge.
> A-morwe, whan the brid began to synge,
> Unto the sege he cometh ful privily,
> And by hymself he walketh soberly,
> Th'ymage of hire recordynge alwey newe:
> "Thus lay hire her, and thus fresh was hyre hewe;
> Thus sat, thus spak, thus span; this was hire chere;
> Thus fayr she was, and this was hire manere."
> Al this conseit hys herte hath newe ytake.
> And as the se, with tempest al toshake,
> That after, whan the storm is al ago,
> Yit wol the water quappe a day or two,
> Ryght so, thogh that hire forme were absent,
> The plesaunce of hire forme was present;
> But natheles, nat plesaunce but delit,
> Or an unrightful talent, with dispit--
> "For, maugre hyre, she shal my leman be!..." (1745-72)

The narrator's concern in this long passage is not for Lucrece: she becomes merely an occasion for sin. His concern is rather for the effect of passion upon Tarquinus, with whom his creative energies are much more proximate. Indeed, Chaucer addresses his

rapist in what is evidently a mournful tone:

> Tarquinius, that art a kynges eyr,
> And sholdest, as by lynage and by ryght,
> Don as a lord and as a verray knyght,
> Whi hastow don dispit to chivalrye?
> Whi hastow don this lady vilanye? (1819-23)

However, whatever else might motivate the poet to ask these questions, their answer reveals the conscious (and constant) moral message behind the Legend. Why has Tarquinis thrown away his right to the throne? Why has he dishonored himself? "Blynde lust"! (1756)--the flesh asserting itself over reason and turning the sinner's world up-so-doun. This is the real "cause" (1684) of the tale, the *sentence* which underlies all of the legends.

Ariadne

Ariadne is a dirty little tale. Its setting is steeped in perverted lust; its characters are petty and contemptible; its diction vacillates between the vulgar and the obscene; its tone is one of jaded contempt. There is nothing in this most unromantic tale to suggest, however remotely, the edifying effects of love.

The legend opens with a long historical background to the main tale. We are told how Minos, out of vengeance for the death of his son, had the city of Alcathoe under siege (1894-1902). The city, however, under King Nysus, was well fortified and not seriously imperilled (1903-6),

> Til on a day befel an aventure,
> That Nysus doughter stod upon the wal,

And of the sege saw the maner al.
So happed it that, at a scarmishyng,
She caste hire herte upon Mynos the kyng,
For his beaute and for his chyvalrye,
So sore that she wende for to dye.
And, shortly of this proces for to pace,
She made Mynos wynnen thilke place,
So that the cite was al at his wille,
To saven whom hym leste, or elles spille.
But wikkedly he quitte hire kyndeness,
And let hire drenche in sorwe and distresse,
Nere that the goddes hadde of hire pite;
But that tale were to long as now for me. (1907-21)

Presumably one purpose of this prelude is to demonstrate Scylla's "trouthe in love" and Minos' subsequent ingratitude. "She made Mynos wynnen thilke place" (1915); "But wikkedly he quitte hire kyndenesse" (1918). One need not read too much between the lines, however, to grasp the much more obvious moral of this passage: Lust once again is the cause of treachery. In an action reminiscent of Medea, Scylla, out of lust for Minos (described in length in Chaucer's source: Met., viii), has betrayed her father, causing his defeat and death. Further, the language Chaucer uses to describe Minos' rejection of Scylla--"wikkedly he quitte hire kyndenesse"--is ironic. "Kyndenesse" can mean either "kindness" or "filial affection";[53] and ironically, here, Minos rejects Scylla not for her "kyndenesse" (kindness) but for her "unkyndenesse" (her unnatural betrayal of her father). As Frank, summarizing the accounts in Ovid and the Ovide Moralisé, explains: "Minos recoils in horror at her unnatural act and righteously spurns her."[54]

Scylla's "unnatural act", however, is not the only act motivated by perverted lust that lingers in the legend's background. Although Chaucer specifically suppressed the motif of bestiality (1928) which may be read in his source (Met., viii, 131 ff), his readers would be familiar with this well-known tale. The "mynotaur" (2104) is the monstrous creature--half-man/half-bull--that resulted from Pasiphae's lust for, and bestial relations with, a bull. Minos, Pasiphae's husband, tries (like Chaucer) to suppress this shameful story by barricading the beast in the labyrinth, where it guards against Theseus' escape. The plot thickens, however, if we pursue familial relationships; for Pasiphae is the mother of both the "minotaur" and the legend's heroines. Thus, Ariadne and Phaedra, in aiding Theseus' destruction of the monster, are not only (like Scylla) betraying their father, but are conspirators in the death of their half-brother! It should be clear that, in reaching the main narrative, those familiar with the legend's background are forced to wade through some pretty seamy stuff.

One's hope that hereafter a more dignified tone will be taken is quickly squelched, however, by the introduction of a "foreyne" (1962)--that is, an outhouse or privy--as the initial channel of the imprisoned hero's communication. "The 'foreyne'", as Frank observes, "clearly seems intended to deny romantic possibilities to the relationship which follows."[55] And, indeed, romance has nothing to do with the development of relationships in this legend.

Self-interest, pure and simple, motivates each of the legend's characters. Theseus' courtly declaration of love, arising as it does out of nowhere, is utterly laughable:

> For now, if that the sothe I shal yow say,
> I have yloved yow ful many a day,
> Thogh ye ne wiste it nat, in my cuntre,
> And aldermost desired yow to se
> Of any erthly livynge creature.
> Upon my trouthe, I swere, and yow assure
> This sevene yer I have youre servaunt be. (2114-20)

Before this moment, he has never laid eyes on her! Obviously his real interest is self-preservation: "Ye, lady myn," quod he, "or ellis torn/Mote I be with the Mynotaur to-morwe!" (2103-4); and he views the story's heroines as little more than avenues of escape ("queynte[56] weyes for to go" (2013)). But neither is there any altruistic motive behind the heroine's actions. Ariadne, who proposes marriage rather than accepting knightly service (2080-2101), clearly has, as Paull Baum suggests, "her eye on the main chance".[57] Indeed, one can almost see her rubbing her hands together as she whispers to her sister "al softely":

> ..."Now, syster myn," quod she,
> "Now be we duchesses, bothe I and ye,
> And sekered to the regals of Athenes,
> And bothe hereafter likly to ben quenes..." (2126-2129)

In the light of her obvious greed, the later picture of Ariadne as an abandoned lover on a desert isle, apostrophizing an article of household furniture (2210 ff) becomes all the more ludicrous. There is moreover a certain justice in the story. It is Phaedra who, in hatching the escape plot (1985-2024), delivers Theseus "from cares colde!" (1955); and it is Phaedra

who makes off with the booty--that is, Theseus--at her sister's expense. The reader by this time, however, has lost sympathy for all of the legend's protagonists and the outcome of the story is therefore of little concern.

Philomela and *Phyllis*

Philomela repeats the rape theme of *Lucrece* with the added theme of mutilation (2334) and the suppressed themes of infanticide and cannibalism, present in Chaucer's source (Met., vi) but omitted from his tale. The sisters' grisly revenge upon Tereus--serving him his child for dinner--is simply bypassed by cutting the tale short: "The remenaunt is no charge for to telle..." (2383). But the suppression of the heroine's vengeful deeds does not render her a fit exemplar for Love. Lounsbury notes that

> The tale of Philomela is really a tale of man's infidelity and brutal cruelty. It is not in any sense one of woman's devotion or her martyrdom for love.[58]

As an *exemplum* of the virtues of "love", the story falls short; as an example of the effects of lust, however, this legend, like those which precede it, is once again most effective.

The effects of sexual passion are indeed so predictable that in *Phyllis*, the narrator's boredom with the repetitious pattern breaks through the story:

> But, for I am agroted herebyforn
> To wryte of hem that ben in love forsworn,
> And ek to haste me in my legende,
> (Which to performe God me grace sende!)
> Therfore I passe shortly in this wyse. (2454-8)

This narratorial intrusion[59] is, of course, rhetorical; we are intended to sigh with the narrator at the repetitious effects of love. We are also invited to share, through the subtle syntax, the poet's undisguised contempt for his gullible heroine:

> And doth with Phillis what so that hym leste,
> As wel coude I, if that me leste so...(2169-70)

Demophoon has his way with Phyllis, but so could I--so could anyone for that matter!--the syntax seems to suggest, before fading into the innocuous conclusion of the sentence:

> As wel coude I, if that me leste so,
> Tellen al his doynge to and fro. (2470-71)

Indeed, the whole legend demonstrates the poet's increasing impatience with Love's fools, an attitude I believe the audience is intended to share. The contemptuous tone which results from the narratorial intrusions, the ironic syntax, and the flippant conclusion ("And trusteth, as in love, no man but me" (2561)), detracts from the seriousness of the story's outcome--Phyllis' suicide (2557)--and suggests that by this juncture, the "wise" reader should have come to expect such predictable ends.[60]

Hypermnestra

The last of the legends, *Hypermnestra*, deviates most radically from the established pattern. To be sure, we have what have become conventional items: Danao (2565) and Egistus (2570) are labelled as false lovers; and the story's traditional ending--Lynceus' rescue of Hypermnestra--has, for obvious reasons, been omitted. But the legend is by no means a conventional love story; and the poet's purpose in the tale is

far from clear.

In the first place, there is no suggestion of real feeling between the two betrothed; their marriage is arranged by their fathers: "It lykede hem to make a maryage/Bytwixen Ypermystre and hym Lyno..." (2603-4). The story, then, can hardly demonstrate "trouthe in love". Hypermnestra might conceivably serve as an *exemplum* of "wifly honeste" (2701)--she does afterall refrain from killing her husband--were it not that Chaucer specifically removes from her any choice in the matter:

> ...Ypermystra dar nat handle a knyf
> In malyce, though she shulde lese hire lyf. (2594-5)

Her destiny is so shaped by astrological forces (2580-2599) that she is <u>incapable</u> of the violent act demanded of her by her father; and by thus rendering her incapable of moral choice,[61] Chaucer robs her of any real virtue.

What, then, is the point of the story? The legend can best be understood, I would suggest, by ignoring the relationship between the "lovers" and focusing on what is clearly a more significant one: the relationship between Hypermnestra and her father. In their interplay, I believe, Chaucer has introduced a suppressed motif around which the whole story logically coheres: incest.[62]

The poet treats this theme overtly in the consanguinous marriage which the fathers have arranged:

> To Danao and Egistes also--
> Althogh so be that they were brethren two,
> For thilke tyme was spared no lynage--

It lykede hem to make a maryage
Bytwixen Ypermystre and hym Lyno...(2600-04)

Although here he dismisses incest as a pagan custom--"For thylke tyme was spared no lynage"--its mention may be intended to signal Egistus' intent.

The pace of the tale picks up as the day of the arranged marriage draws near. The shift to the present tense in describing the wedding night heightens the drama: "The aray is wrought, the tyme is faste by" (2607). The atmosphere is frankly sensual:

The torches brennen, and the laumpes bryghte;
The sacryfices ben ful redy dighte;
Th'encens out of the fyre reketh sote;
The flour, the lef is rent up by the rote
To maken garlondes and crounes hye.
Ful is the place of soun of minstralsye,
Of songes amorous of maryage...(2610-16)

"The frendes taken leve, and hom they wende" (2621); the moment for the marriage rites has arrived. But where is Lyno? He does not show up for another sixty lines (2676). Who *is* there, however, is Egistus:

The nyght is come, the bryd shal go to bedde.
Egistus to his chamber faste hym speede,
And prively he let his doughter calle. (2622-4)

At first, Egistus addresses his daughter in terms of endearment ("my ryght doughter, tresor of myn herte" (2628)), and speaks words of love:

So nygh myn herte nevere thyng ne com
As thow, myn Ypermystre, doughter dere...
For alderfirst, doughter, I love the so
That al the world to me nis half so lef...(2631-6)

But ultimately, Egistus will compel his daughter's submission by

mortal threats:

> ...but thow do as I shal the devyse,
> Thow shalt be ded, by hym that al hath wrought!
> At shorte wordes thow ne scapest nought
> Out of my paleys, or that thow de ded,
> But thow consente and werke after my red;
> Tak this to thee for ful conclusioun...(2641-6)

The bottom line of his jealous rage is that he shall have her exclusively: "I nele", quod he, "have non excepcioun" (2653). He therefore instructs Hypermnestra to kill her husband and she momentarily submits to him: "She graunteth hym; ther is non other grace" (2665).

The predicament of Hypermnestra, the victim of this vicious power relationship ("...this was in the paleys of Egiste/That in his hous was lord, ryght as hym lyste" (2618-9)), is treated sensitively; her initial inability to resist her father's perverted will is psychologically realistic. So, too, is her ultimate imprisonment, if we understand this to be a psychological, as well as a physical, condition. Given the tone of many of the legends, Chaucer here seems surprisingly sympathetic; but his sympathy only enhances the viciousness of the planned crime. Through perverted lust, Egistus would, like Tereus and Tarquinis, impose his will upon an innocent victim; only here, the depravity of the crime is increased because the victim is his daughter. Passion is again the cause of shameful sin.

Conclusioun

Throughout the legends, then, we see the net effect of all the variants of earthly love. The emotional effects are jealousy, heartbreak, remorse and despair. The personal consequences are infidelity, desertion, adultery, incest, rape, revenge, suicide and murder. Finally, the social consequences are treachery, political disruption and war. The picture is hardly edifying. And yet, this picture is consistent with that we are given in Troilus and Criseyde, where in the end Love defaults on the early promise of joy, leaving the hero to die in despair. The message is plain: earthly love is but "worldly vanyte" (TC, V, 1837), "the blynde lust, the which that may nat laste" (TC, V, 1824); and the heedless pursuit of this love, like the pursuit of all worldly delights, can lead but to a tragic end.

Afterword

As I. A. Richards has observed: "Successful interpretation is a triumph against odds". Language is an elusive means of communication. Interpretation of medieval works which speak across centuries would indeed be a hopeless task were it not for the efforts of so many: editors, scholars, teachers. But though one may stand on the shoulders of giants, one may still miss the show. If my interpretation is, in its broad design, accurate, it should have some value. Generally, it should help to provide an

indication of the poet's world view, one more inkling of his beliefs, aspirations and anxieties. Specifically, it should confirm the "moral" interpretation of Chaucer's earlier work, Troilus and Criseyde, and therein help to integrate the Legend of Good Women (which has most often been treated as an anomaly) back into the Chaucer canon. I recognize, however, that *my* "final cause"--an understanding of authorial intention--is not necessarily the "final cause" of literature; and am therefore most happy to welcome the forces and techniques of deconstruction. Feminist and Marxist criticism perhaps offer most when they define the limits of the writer in terms of social and sexual politics, thereby expanding the horizon of the possible. But if the author is a construction of the text (the weaving of words, the interplay of social forces), the text is also a construction of the author. Before we can deconstruct (and realize the utmost social relevance), we must first reconstruct the text: we must, I think, construe authorial intention. In any case, that was myn entente.

NOTES

1. T. R. Lounsbury, Studies in Chaucer: His Life and Writings 3 Vols. (1892; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1962):II, 185.

2. Beverly Taylor, "The Medieval Cleopatra: the classical and medieval tradition of Chaucer's *Legend of Cleopatra*", JMRS, 7 (1977):269.

3. As Taylor (op. cit.) points out, however, this Boethian echo is not entirely misplaced:

> The narrator is ridiculously naive when he blames Antony's rebellion on the workings of Fortune, yet the speaker does give an appropriate Boethian warning which prepares us to evaluate Antony's reaction to his fall. He shows himself to be the pawn of Fortune, the man who is so much concerned with prosperity in this world that its loss devastates him. He is not a martyr, but a victim of his own misplaced values. (p. 263).

4. For a discussion of the medieval expectations of leadership, see Hans Schnyder, "Aspects of Kingship in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*", English Studies, 40 (1959):289-94.

5. Eleanor Winsor Leach, A Study, 113.

6. In the Troilus, this process is symbolized in courtly terms:

> For myn estat roial I here resigne
> Into hire hond, and with ful humble chere
> Bicome hir man, as to my lady dere. (TC I, 432-4)

This is only one of many instances in Troilus where the language of "courtly love" is employed ironically. Often, as I have pointed out, courtly terms have a religious referent

(which leaves them particularly susceptible to parody: see Delany, "Techniques of Alienation in Troilus and Criseyde", cited above) or, at the other extreme, may constitute obscene puns (see Thomas Ross, Chaucer's Bawdy, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972). Words like "grace" may incorporate all three meanings. Eugene Vance ("Mervelous Signals") discusses the corruption of signs in the poem's courtly language. He sees the action of the Troilus on two levels--the downfall of Troilus ("little Troy"), a microcosm of the greater action on the poem's periphery (the Trojan War)--and notes the militaristic metaphors which dominate "courtly love" imagery.

7. This process of sin--from suggestion to delight to consent--is discussed extensively in D. W. Robertson, A Preface To Chaucer, particularly in Chap. II, "The Principles of Medieval Aesthetics".

8. In Genesis (3:16), God specifically declares that woman shall be ruled by her husband. Where this order is turned "up-so-doun" (as through the uxoriousness of Adam, Troilus and Antony) the type of upheaval that Augustine describes (De Civitate Dei, XIII, 13) is, in the medieval Christian view, bound to occur.

9. Taylor, 255.

10. R. P. Miller, ed. Chaucer Sources and Backgrounds (New York: Oxford UP, 1977):402.

11. Leach, 113.

12. Robinson, 846.

13. Goddard, 64.

14. John Fyler (Chaucer and Ovid) describes this process:

> When his sources have anything scurrilous to say about his heroines, the narrator resorts to silence or, more often, to an *occupatio* that comes just a little bit too late. (p. 99)

This belated "closing of the barn door" provides for the reader an additional element of humour.

15. Leach, 113, n1. Both Plutarch and Boccaccio are cited by Robinson (p. 846) as probable sources for *Cleopatra*.

16. Quoted in Fyler, op. cit., 101. An example of Cleopatra's *demesure* which Chaucer does not suppress is her preparation of Antony's tomb (672-77).

17. Leach, 111. These sources include Dio Cassius, Florus, Boccaccio, Plutarch and Vincent de Beauvais.

18. That here the term "grace" carries its sexual meaning (see Ross, Chaucer's Bawdy) is confirmed by Chaucer's sources. Both Vincent de Beauvais and Boccaccio record Cleopatra's attempt to seduce Octavian (see Fyler, p. 100).

19. Taylor, 253. Reference to Cleopatra's wantonness was a commonplace in medieval writing. Dante condemns her for her lechery to the second circle in hell (*Inferno* V. 63).

20. Ibid., 268. Taylor explicitly has Reiss's concept of parody in mind. (268, n52.)

21. James Spisak, "Chaucer's Pyramus and Thisbe", ChauR, 18 (1984):204.

22. Sanford Meech ("Chaucer and the *Ovide Moralisé*--A Further Study", PMLA 46, (1931):182-204) and Sheila Delany ("The Naked Text: Chaucer's 'Thisbe', the *Ovide Moralisé*, and the Problem of *Translatio Studii* in *The Legend of Good Women*") both note Chaucer's use of the Ovide Moralisé in the *Legend of Thisbe*. The *lai de Tisbe* in the OM, Delany suggests, amplifies enthusiastically both the obscenity and humour latent in Ovid's tale; and often "Chaucer follows the lead of the French intermediary while trimming its rhetorical exuberance to a more classical norm." (p. 7)

23. The city is not named in Ovid, but is mentioned in the opening line of both the French lai and Chaucer's *Thisbe*.

24. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. G. A. Buttrick (New York: Abington Press, 1962):338.

25. Johnstone Parr, "Chaucer's Semiramis", ChauR, 5 (1970):59-60.

26. Delany, "The Naked Text", 6.

27. The term "shryfte" (confession), which is, of course, not found in Ovid, is used in LGW only here, and is scarcely

used outside the *Parson's Tale*, where it is employed only literally.

28. Delany, "The Naked Text", 13.

29. Met. IV, 121-4; translated by F. J. Miller, Loeb Classical Library Edition (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1921).

30. See Sheila Delany, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*", forthcoming in Chaucer Review.

31. Delany, "The Logic of Obscenity", unpub. paper given at New Chaucer Society Conference, August, 1984, p. 7.

32. Indeed, it is likely that Shakespeare consulted a derivative of the "rhetorically exuberant" French lai for his playlet in A Midsummer Night's Dream. See Wolfgang van Emden, "Shakespeare and the French Pyramus and Thisbe Tradition, or Whatever Happened to Robin Starveling's Part?", Forum for Modern Language Studies, 11 (1975):193-204.

33. One need not imagine how this tale might be seriously and sensitively treated. In Romeo and Juliet, a work based in part upon this myth, Shakespeare has provided an immortal example.

34. Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. J. J. Parry (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1959):28.

35. This three-stage formula, a convention of courtly love, finds a strong parallel in the three stages of

sin--suggestion, delight, and consent--which Robertson has documented so extensively. See above, my Chapter 3, n7.

36. The sexual meaning of "dele", here, cannot be misconstrued.

37. Frank, 68.

38. Frank, 66.

39. Leach, 149.

40. This "fondness for 'newfangleness'", Frank concedes, "suggests a weakness, a flaw, but the comment is hardly a censure." (Frank, 67). I disagree. I see it as a censure.

41. Leach, 173. Others who have noted this concern with male heroes are R. M. Lumiansky, "Chaucer and the Idea of Unfaithful Men", MLN, 62 (1947):560-62; R. W. Frank, op. cit., 80-81; and Elaine Tuttle Hansen, "The Feminization of Men in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*".

42. Frank, 85-6.

43. Elaine Tuttle Hansen, "Feminization", 4.

44. Leach, 170.

45. These incidents are recorded in part or in whole in Metamorphoses, vii; Heroides, vi; Boccaccio's De Gen. Deorum, all of which are cited by Robinson as sources for Chaucer's legend. As well, all of these incidents are mentioned in De Claris Mulieribus, xvi, with which Chaucer

was also likely familiar. Chaucer's main source, Guido's Historia Destructionis Troiae neglects the latter part of Medea's history; but that Chaucer was familiar with Medea's slaying of her children is evidenced by his reference to this event in The Book of the Duchess (726-7) and the *Man of Law's Tale* (72-4).

46. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, I, 19. The translation is by George McCracken, in the Loeb Classical Library Edition, Harvard UP, 1966.

47. Ibid., I, 19.

48. E. T. Donaldson, "Criseide and Her Narrator" in Speaking of Chaucer (New York: Norton, 1970):65-84.

49. Leach, 125.

50. Kiser, 106-7.

51. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Watt's long article (op. cit.) suggests that Chaucer committed rape.

52. Kiser, 106-7.

53. The M. E. D. offers this definition of the second meaning:

> 2 (a) Natural affection due to kinship... also an action motivated by such affection. (p. 518)

54. Frank, 118.

55. Ibid., 115.

56. I believe the obscene meaning of this word is here intended. Indeed, as Delany ("The Logic of Obscenity") notes, this tale is fraught with obscene language.

57. Paull F. Baum, "Chaucer's Glorious Legend", Modern Language Notes, 60 (1945):381.

58. T. R. Lounsbury, Studies in Chaucer :Vol III, 337.

59. This tale is over-freighted with narratorial intrusion (eg. 2456-7; 2490-5; 2513-6) and *occupatio*, the effect of which is to disrupt any empathetic response which might be mounting.

60. Leach notes, however, that the conventional ending of the story (which Chaucer omits) throws a different light on the legend's characters. Chaucer, although half-heartedly, has depicted Phyllis as a faithful woman betrayed by a false man. But it seems that in the traditional story, Demophon actually returns:

> Although he delays his return owing to circumstances, back he does come only to find that Phyllis has hanged herself in an excess of doubt. Demophoon's return would seem to be a traditional feature of the story. Consequently, the tale of Phyllis is really a story about a woman's lack of faith. (p. 194)

61. The whole astrological passage, as Robinson notes (p. 854), is original to Chaucer.

62. Elaine Tuttle Hansen ("Feminization") is, to my knowledge,

the only critic who has noted the "strong suggestion of incest" (p. 12) in the tale. She does not, however, elaborate upon her observation.

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