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City University of New York

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DIALOGIC DISCOURSE IN

THE CLERK'S TALE

by

William T. McClellan

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in English in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACTDIALOGIC DISCOURSE IN THE CLERK'S TALE

by

William T. McClellan

Advisor: Professor Robert O. Payne

The dialogic principle of Mikhail Bakhtin's discourse theory provides a more comprehensive and flexible theoretical foundation for a reading model of The Canterbury Tales than does G. L. Kittredge's principle of dramatic persona. Because Kittredge employs only the mode of a fully developed character/narrator, many of the heterogeneous elements of Chaucer's complex and fragmented narrative escape his readings. Bakhtin not only enumerates a much wider range of discourse modes, but he develops a larger theoretical framework to describe the relations between them.

Bakhtin's fundamental concept of dialogism provides an account of the intentional structures of the various discourse modes focusing upon their transformational characteristics. His theoretic gives us a powerful analytic tool for examining the inner semantic structures

of the tales. The different types of discourse in Bakhtin's typology range from the mode of an almost fully objectified narrator, as in The Pardoner's Tale, to a mode of multiple narrative voicings, as in The Clerk's Tale, where several voices collectively and oppositely narrate and comment upon the tale. Bakhtin's principle of dialogism makes it possible to construct a reading model which accounts for the radical heterogeneity of The Canterbury Tales.

Nowhere is Bakhtin's dialogic mode of analysis more useful than in reading The Clerk's Tale, a tale which has paradigmatic status because its double-voiced discourse is explicitly declared in its prologue. My analysis of the intranarrative commentary and framing material shows that there are three voices involved in the tale's narration: the Petrarchan voice of moral allegory, the Clerkly voice of humanistic pathos and the parodic voice of grotesque realism. Throughout the narrative proper, the Clerkly voice engages the Petrarchan voice in a hidden polemic while empathetically identifying with the tale's heroine, Griselda. In the second ending, the voice of grotesque realism parodically mocks the serious worldview of Petrarch and Clerk and subjects the idealized figure of Griselda to debasing ridicule. My analysis of The Clerk's Tale points towards a new general reading model for The Canterbury Tales by

demonstrating how an approach based on Bakhtin's dialogic principle can more effectively integrate heterogeneous elements into the tale's major thematic.

For Dina

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INTRODUCTION

Just as Chaucer wrote experimentally in virtually every known literary genre of his time and invented a whole ensemble of character narrators to diversify the narratorial voices in The Canterbury Tales, so too, he experimented with the various means of implementing a narrative voice in a text. The ways in which Chaucer voiced these tales range from projecting a voice through an almost fully objectified dramatic persona, such as the Pardoner, to merely identifying a voice with a type, i.e. the Second Nun. But I will argue in this dissertation that Chaucer's experimentation was not confined to these relatively simple variations. In some tales, such as The Clerk's Tale, the narrative voicing is more complex. There a simple narrative voice has been split into several different voices; thereby producing a contradictory, heterogeneous discourse.

The complex narrative structure of this tale calls into question the adequacy of G. L. Kittredge's "dramatic" model that has been used to read The Canterbury Tales for most of the twentieth century. An implicit argument of this dissertation will be that some revision of this traditional model of "dramatic persona" is necessary. The warrant from the General Prologue to

read the tales with this model is limited and exerts no absolute control, especially since The Canterbury Tales is a fragmentary and unfinished poetic narrative. Although the dramatic model is appealing because of its elegant simplicity, this very simplicity is misleading. Either it forces us to ignore the more heterogenous elements of some tales, or it encourages us to resolve away difficulties these disparate elements present through an appeal to individual psychology.

The construction of a full fledged critical model applicable to all the fragments we call The Canterbury Tales is beyond the scope and ambition of this dissertation. My most immediate concern and purpose is to generate a model sufficiently elaborate to allow us to comprehend the dialogic structure of The Clerk's Tale. I selected this tale for analysis primarily because the double-voiced quality of its narrative discourse has been radically foregrounded and so it can be usefully viewed as a paradigm of the double-voiced discourse in The Canterbury Tales. My analysis of this tale should be seen as a first step, a contribution towards the realization of that more general reading model. Such a model is based on dialogic principles, which M. M. Bakhtin, the Russian semiologist, views as intrinsic, not only to a rhetorical poetic, but to other forms of discourse as well. The concept of dialogism occupies a

central place in Bakhtin's theory of discourse which he developed in the 1920's, most specifically in his work on Dostoevsky.¹

Bakhtin's theory of discourse is essential to my analysis of these tales because it provides a critical model that is both comprehensive and flexible. Bakhtin places all discourse, fictional or otherwise on a single continuum, distinguishing different categories of discourse by the way an author projects a voice into a text. The means by which an author implements his "voice" or other "voices" in a text ranges from a directly voiced text such as a journalistic essay to the very complicated indirect projections of fictional discourse. The remarkable scope of Bakhtin's discourse topology makes it possible for an interpretative model based on his theory to subsume both Kittredge's more traditional concept of dramatic persona and the antithetical concept of multiple narrative voices. The concept of dramatic persona projects a single narrative voice of an almost completely objectified character narrator who controls the narration of a tale; whereas the concept of multiple narrative voices projects two or more voices who collectively narrate a tale from different viewpoints and whose objectification is considerably less. The flexibility of such a reading model is of inestimable value, especially for a poetic narrative as varied as The Canterbury Tales.

The almost fully objectified narrator and multiple narrative voices are polar extremes of the possible ways of implementing a narrative voice. If they occupy antithetical positions on a continuum of the permutations of narrator's narration, these two ways of projecting a narrative voice should not be seen as the only two possibilities, for there are others; they are just the most radically different. More importantly, they should not be viewed as exclusionary but complementary modeling concepts because neither critical mode alone is sufficient to describe the complex narrative structures of The Canterbury Tales. As Robert Jordan has shown us, a fundamental principle of medieval aesthetics emphasized the heterogeneity of the various parts comprising the whole.

In this dissertation I will not attempt to examine all of the implications arising from the concept of split narrative voicing; nor will I attempt to adjudicate the relationships between the different modes of narrative voicing. What I will demonstrate is how a model of multi-voiced narration can give a more comprehensive and better accounting of the heterogeneous elements in Chaucer's poetic fiction as seen through The Clerk's Tale.

In the first chapter I will present a critical overview by evaluating the Kittredgean model of dramatic

persona and by proposing the framework for an alternative reading model based on Bakhtin's theory of double-voiced discourse. In the second chapter I will briefly characterize the critical discussion of The Clerk's Tale and delineate the attitude and argument of the Clerkly voice through an analysis of the intranarrative apostrophic commentary. In the third and fourth chapters I will examine the way in which Chaucer enunciates in the framing material of the prologue and first ending the dialogic character of the tale's narrative discourse. These chapters will demonstrate how Chaucer explicitly differentiates the Petrarchean and Clerkly voices. Finally, in Chapter Five, I will argue that the second ending comprising the "Lenvoy de Chaucer" and two introductory stanzas constitutes yet a third parodic voice of grotesque realism. This parodic voice offers a radically different worldview which mockingly critiques the two earlier voices.

Notes

¹Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minn: Univ. of Minn. Press, 1984). See esp. Chapt. 5.

CHAPTER ONE

Critical Overview: From a Model of
Dramatic Persona to a Model of Dialogic
Narrative Discourse

First enunciated and made famous by G. L. Kittredge early in this century, the dramatic model has been the dominant critical model employed to read The Canterbury Tales. In an attempt to construct a larger structure for the "...fragments, which no one has ever succeeded in fitting together," Kittredge developed the thesis that The Canterbury Tales was a play and its various narrators dramatic personae:

The Prologue itself is not merely a prologue; it is the first act, which sets the personages in motion. Thereafter, they move by virtue of their inherent vitality, not as tale-telling puppets, but as men and women. From this point of view, which surely accords with Chaucer's intention, the Pilgrims do not exist for the sake of the stories, but vice versa.¹

In Kittredge's model the tales were seen as "merely long speeches," which functioned primarily to provide material for character revelation.

Focusing on the brilliant portrait gallery in the General Prologue and the often contentious interchange between the "pilgrims" in the fragmentary "outerframe," Kittredge projected a controlling Chaucerian "intention"

which, he insisted, determined the context for any reading of the tales. He asserted that the tales were not told in a neutral, disconnected fashion, but were part of an engaged social discourse:

Thus the story of any pilgrim may be affected or determined--in its contents, or in the manner of the telling, or in both--not only by his characters in general, but also by the circumstances, by the situation, by his momentary relations to the others in the company, or even by something in a tale that has come before.²

Kittredge recognized and foregrounded an essential aspect of The Canterbury Tales; that is, the dramatic and dialogic character of its narrative discourse.

This explains, in large measure, why his approach has maintained its dominance as an interpretative model. In his model he emphasized the context presented in the framing material by stressing the "dramatic interplay" between the narrators. More importantly, he attempted to ground the work within an ecology of human motivation, giving such a rationale not only for the represented dialogue in the outerframe but also the tales themselves. For example, his identification of a marriage theme in several of the tales gave an added coherence and interest to the work. However, there are important aspects of this poetic narrative that Kittredge's approach excluded.

One crucial aspect Kittredge neglected was the formal or stylistic features of the tales. As the "new critics"

were to argue later in the century, it is precisely the stylistic features which determine an artwork's meaning. Kittredge virtually ignored the formal qualities of the tales in his eagerness to mine them for insights into the psychological dynamics of the character narrators. Ultimately his refusal to consider the stylistic aspects of The Canterbury Tales was the result of a naive view of Chaucer's art as "realistic" fiction which presented a picture of verisimilitude. This is also what led him, I suspect, to view the work in the terms of a naturalistic play.

While I do not want to deny the very marked dramatic quality that is an important structural feature of this poetic narrative, I do not think The Canterbury Tales can be accurately or usefully described as a dramatic play. What we have are a substantial number of fragments of a long narrative whose structures have more affinities to a novel than a play and whose ruling poetic has more to do with rhetorical discourse than with "realistic" modern fiction. None of the narrators can be placed on the same plane of fiction as a Henry James character, even those, such as The Pardoner, who are almost fully objectified; or, as we might say, a fully "developed" character. Kittredge overemphasized one aspect of this poetic narrative by promoting the "dramatic" to a dominant or controlling structural feature. As Kemp Malone

and others have pointed out, Kittredge based his model on the General Prologue and six or seven of the "best" tales.³

A major result of the dramatic model was to reduce the structural complexity of The Canterbury Tales to the conventions of a play, attributing the rather sparse dialogue in the outer frame a greater importance than any of the tales. In accord with this conception, all of the narrators were placed on the same plane of fictional "reality" and all were regarded as fully developed characters who interacted with each other and whose tales were seen as extended monologues. An immediate consequence of this reductio was to direct much of the critical discussion towards character analysis or some form of psychological analysis. Although regarding the narrators, "...not as tale-telling puppets, but...men and women" has made for some very interesting creative literary gossip, it has also produced some very bad literary criticism as well.⁴ In short, a single aspect of a complex narrative discourse, the narrator, was overvalued and has received most of the interpretative analysis and commentary.

A further consequence of the dramatic model's focus on the narrator was that the social dimension was virtually ignored. By social I mean the different socio-ideological worldviews the various narrators or narrating

voices represented or embodied. Kittredge's overly psychological approach viewed the pilgrim narrators not only as "real" men and women but as isolated individuals. All of the "realistic" details Chaucer adds to their portraits and commentary Kittredge construes as revealing the idiosyncracies of "inner" character. The anti-social bias of his model, his tendency to view them as isolated individuals derives in large measure from the Freudian foundations of his approach.

The effect of this psychoanalytic approach was to ignore the larger politico-social context that the tales were refracting, at least in part. For example, Kittredge saw the Wife of Bath as a "real" character whom he thought exemplified a type of aggressive, man-eating woman who could misquote the Bible at will and whose arguments Chaucer ironically undercut. However, if the Wife of Bath's discourse were refracted through a larger politico-social context, she might be viewed as conducting a polemical discourse against the patriarchal, anti-feminist clerkly class, those ideological policemen whom she saw as proscribing her social-sexual independence. Her "misreading" of the Bible could be seen not only as a contradictory attempt on her part to appropriate their authoritative text to support her arguments that present experience is more valuable than past

tradition, but her appropriation could be seen as representing the contradictory interpretations, on this most authoritative text which the social discourse of the time was generating.

Within this second approach, the Wife of Bath would be viewed as a powerful oppositional voice in the social discourse of late 14th century England that was being refracted in The Canterbury Tales, and not merely as a half-literate, manipulating character, interesting as this conception of her may be. This second approach, which places her dialogue and tale in the context of a social discourse, gives a greater depth and seriousness to her discourse than the dramatic model is capable of doing because of its more narrow focus on the psychological dynamics of individuals. As Jill Mann has amply demonstrated, the evaluations of the pilgrims in the General Prologue are made largely on the basis of professional and social standards. The high percentage of vocabulary from professional and work worlds shows that this social dimension was an intrinsic part of narrators' characterizations.⁵

Kittredge's dramatic model was an attempt to see a larger design or intention behind the various fragments comprising The Canterbury Tales and to see the tales themselves as motivated and engaged discourse. As well

as viewing all the pilgrims as fully developed characters in a play, Kittredge viewed the tales through a lens of "realistic" modern fiction. Consequently he did not "see" their artifice, nor could he analyze or see how the formal structures were determinate of the work's meaning. In his attempt to grasp the whole, Kittredge promoted one aspect of Chaucer's poetic--its dramatic quality--and made it the dominating structure of his model. A positive consequence of Kittredge's promotion of the dramatic aspect is that any interpretative reading of The Canterbury Tales has to acknowledge the inter-relatedness of the different tales and the various levels of discourse. A fundamental limitation of his approach is the denial of the work's structural heterogeneity and concomitantly, a reduction of the larger social dimensions of its narrative discourse to a more narrow foundation of individual psychology.

About a decade after Kittredge promulgated his dramatic model, a great textual scholar, John Manly, published the results of his investigations of the historical records regarding the supposedly real-life models upon whom Chaucer based his character narrators.⁶ Apparently he took Kittredge's remark about real men and women in very literal terms. One result of this zeal to find specific real-life figures was that Manly ignored any of the larger socio-ideological ramifications that

might be deduced from this particular collection of pilgrim narrators in The General Prologue. In conjunction with his literal-minded search for character models, Manly also proposed a theory of Chaucer's poetic development which was characterized by:

...the gradual replacement of formal rhetorical devices by methods of composition based on close observation of life and the exercise of creative imagination.⁷

Manly valorized the "slice-of-life," journalistic naturalism he construed Chaucer's style to be.

Manly's attribution of historical models for the narrators and Kittredge's model of "dramatis personae" reenforced each other, just as Manly's description of Chaucer's mature style as naturalistic dovetailed very neatly with Kittredge's heavily psychologized model. The influence these two scholar/critics, especially Kittredge, have had on Chaucer criticism has been profound. Although there has been some substantial revision regarding the nature of Chaucer's poetic and stylistic development, our readings of The Canterbury Tales still remain under the aegis of Kittredge's dramatic model, as a glance at Donald Howard's or Alfred David's books will attest.⁸

About thirty-five years ago a group of scholar/critics began in several ways to reevaluate the Kittredge/Manly notion that Chaucer's mature poetic

style had close affinities to modern "realistic" fiction. They also challenged Manly's neat genetic scenario of Chaucer's poetic development which had him progressing from a heavy dependence on creaky rhetorical language and forms to a more subtle, artistic and "modern" method of composition based on "direct observation" and the creative imagination. This group of scholars, which includes E. T. Donaldson, Charles Muscatine and Robert O. Payne, can be conveniently called the "new critics" because they focused upon the formal or stylistic aspects of Chaucer's poetic works and they emphasized close textual readings in their critical practice.

An important assumption behind their practice was that style was a function of the meaning of a poetic text. In other words, the formal features of a literary work of art are determinate of its meanings. Since the work of these new critics has provided a foundation and point of departure for this dissertation it will be useful to review how the models they constructed of Chaucer's poetic challenged and revised the earlier Kittredge/Manly conception of the principles underlying his poetic narratives. It should be recognized at the outset that although their work goes a long way in revising Manly's notion of Chaucer outgrowing his artificial rhetorical beginnings, the new critics never directly or seriously challenged Kittredge's model of

the "roadside" drama. So, for example, we find E. T. Donaldson multiplying Chaucerian personae in an attempt to explain the complex interplay of narrative viewpoints in The Canterbury Tales.⁹ Donaldson's model seems to have one persona to many and, moreover, he seems to be confusing who is controlling whom. Be that as it may, his explanation remains firmly within the Kittredgean framework of a dramatic model. Donaldson, for the most part, operated in an ad hoc fashion and this was one of the few times he attempted to explicitly enunciate the critical principles he employed in his readings. However, both Charles Muscatine and Robert O. Payne created more comprehensive theoretical models to define and analyze Chaucer's poetry.

Charles Muscatine's book, Chaucer and the French Tradition, was a comprehensive challenge to the Kittredge/Manly formulation of the medieval-modern conflict in Chaucer's poetry.¹⁰ Muscatine reformulated this dichotomy in stylistic terms, identifying two master styles in Chaucer's poetic repertoire: the "conventional" or courtly style exemplified by the romance genre and the "realistic" or bourgeois style exemplified by the fabliau. Muscatine argues that Chaucer invented neither style, but that both styles were conventional and traditional ones Chaucer learned from his French predecessors such as Guillaume de Machaut and Jean de

Meung. Muscatine asserts that each of these two master styles defined different worldviews and that Chaucer's originality lay in the manner in which he combined them. Chaucer's juxtaposition of these conventionalized styles in The Canterbury Tales sometimes produced a mixed style and subsequently a third perspective that is neither fish nor fowl; but a perspective which cannot be reduced to either of the opposing stylistic worldviews.

Muscatine's study not only goes a long way in examining Chaucer's poetic in more properly analytic terms, but it also acknowledges the diversity of poetic styles contained in his work. Unlike Manly's rather facile and linear idea of Chaucer's development from a rhetorical to naturalistic art--which selects and values only one aspect of a complex poetic--Muscatine constructs an approach that attempts to account for the essential heterogeneity of a work like The Canterbury Tales. Muscatine's basic insight was that Chaucer's originality as a poet lay in his skillful and varied combination of whole styles. Muscatine's idea points towards Payne's emphasis of the formulaic nature of rhetorical structure's and Jordan's notion of the self-contained parts of a whole. Muscatine persuasively argues that Chaucer produced his most novel effects and structures through the employment of this principle of juxtaposition; and that such effects cannot otherwise be immediately accounted for by the

rhetorical and literary tradition. So, with this model of combinatory principles Muscatine was able to assert Chaucer's originality while, at the same time, he argued for Chaucer's continuity with the poetic traditions of his time.

Although Muscatine identifies the combining of conventionalized styles as the master principle of Chaucer's poetic, he does not pursue the implication of this argument very far. While he admits that, "...virtually all the tales in The Canterbury Tales have some mixture of styles[,] " he argues that in most of the tales, one of the master styles dominates the narrative discourse, or that any conflicts arising from the stylistic differences are miraculously resolved as he does, for example, in the conclusion of his commentary on The Prioress's Tale:

The poems of dominantly religious inspiration have a realism which, if the poem is successful, as I think The Prioress's Tale is, melts symbolically into the conventional frame without conflict or irony. This peaceful stylistic mixture has some of the quality of the religious paradox itself; naturalism and the supernatural make peace in the miracle.¹²

Muscatine is very anxious to resolve any conflicts that may arise from this mixing of styles partly because it threatens his sense of unity. He may argue that The Canterbury Tales are constructed with the "gothic" principles of juxtaposition but in his readings of the tales

he appeals to the classical ideal of a harmonious resolution of all the parts within a seamless whole.

While Muscatine's classification of the tales by master styles constituted a major step in the right direction in the criticism of The Canterbury Tales, I think his denial of the semantic implications arising from the variations of the predominate style in individual tales points to a basic flaw in his interpretative readings and in his critical model. He seems at times to contradict his own axiom that formal features are determinate of meaning. Muscatine's denial of the semantic force of such stylistic variations ultimately renders his approach as problematic. He conceives of a conventional style in the broadest of strokes, insisting that for a set of stylistic devices to configure a particular meaning or affect the semantic weight of the discourse that these features have to be emphatic, heavily outlined and thoroughly conventionalized. Muscatine, who wanted to demonstrate the traditional aspect of Chaucer's poetic, placed too much stress on the conventional and unchanging aspects of poetic discourse.

A major problem of Muscatine's approach, then, arises because he did not realize the extent to which in a rhetorical poetic minor stylistic variations determine intonational values and therefore carry much of the semantic weight of the discourse. The main reason why such

slight stylistic fluctuations are more easily visible and consequently semantically significant in a rhetorical poetic resides in the homogenizing tendency of rhetorical language. A second problem with Muscatine's critical model is that he attempts to account for all the complexity and conflicting points of view in The Canterbury Tales as generated by two master poetic styles. Actually what he has described are what M. M. Bakhtin has defined as stylizations--that is, the development of a set of stylistic devices in a direction similar to the original, or conventionalized intention.¹³ While much of what occurs in the fragments of this poetic narrative can be accounted for in terms of such stylizations, intentions are projected in the work by other means as well--by vari-directional discourse, such as polemic or parody. This kind of discourse introduces within a single set of stylistic devices two opposing intentions. Muscatine's model ignores these more complicated variations of voicing a narrative text.

The critical model Muscatine constructs, then, is limited in two ways: in its comprehensiveness and in its flexibility. He attempts to describe a very complicated, difficult narrative poem employing a concept of stylization which is only one way, albeit an important way, authorial intentions are projected into the discourse. But the narrative discourse of The Canterbury

Tales is more varied and complex than the relatively simple concept of stylization will allow us to see. Second, Muscatine tends to emphasize the conventional static aspects of the stylizations he otherwise so accurately describes. Hence he tends to ignore those minor fluctuations that are the real determinate factors of a tale's meaning. Consequently, his readings lack a certain richness and confirm only the most conventional interpretations. The reason, partly, for the limitations of Muscatine's theoretical formulation is that he accepts the dramatic model without question even though the weight of his own stylistic analysis begins to argue against such a simplistic formulation. In fact, the structural simplicity of the dramatic model can be seen as covertly influencing Muscatine to attribute reductively all the intonational variations in The Canterbury Tales as due solely to the differences between two master styles.

While Muscatine was most immediately concerned with affiliating Chaucer's poetic practice to the French Tradition exemplified by Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meung and Guillaume de Machaut, Robert O. Payne set out to demonstrate the rhetorical principles underlying all medieval poetry, especially the poetry written after the twelfth century when the fairly distinct Aristotelian categories of poetry and rhetoric became inextricably

conflated.¹⁴ Payne argues that there were commonly held assumptions about the methods and telos of poetic practice and these assumptions were shared by such temperamentally diverse poets such as Dante and Chaucer. The poets who wrote in the vulgar languages, he asserts, assimilated the rhetorical principles from the poetic practitioners and teachers of the Latin poetic tradition. In support of his thesis, Payne points to a number of rhetorical treatises, such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova, which reveal this hybrid, rhetorical poetic.

An outstanding feature of these 13th century rhetorical treatises was their almost exclusive focus on the elements of style and the procedures of amplificatio and abreviatio which constituted only a single aspect of classical rhetorical theory. Unlike Manly, who attributed this focus on the nuts and bolts of poetic composition to a lack of theoretical and artistic sophistication, Payne argues that it was due to the peculiar conditions under which classical rhetorical theory and literary tradition were assimilated into a Christian culture. In fact, the strength of Payne's whole discussion lies in his insistence that medieval poetic and rhetorical texts be viewed within the context of a Christian cultural ideology. Seen from this angle, for example, the Aristotelian category of inventio, the search for a

theme or topic, became superfluous in a cultural environment where the master theme of man's salvation had already been revealed through the highest authoritative source. The rhetoricians did not concern themselves overly much with teleological questions, Payne insists, because they were largely settled questions.

Payne's attack, then, on Manly's genetic thesis was twofold. First he argued that the mode of composition of medieval poetry was intrinsically rhetorical, much as, say, the mode of Old English poetry was inherently alliterative. The stylistic devices, such as descriptio or apostrophe codified in the rhetorical manuals as structural devices were habitually and routinely employed by poets to construct their poems. Rhetorical tropes and procedures were the building blocks of Chaucer's narrative poems as they were for poets throughout the middle ages. The idea that The Canterbury Tales were written in a more "artistic" and "realistic" mode is based upon a limited and partial evaluation, Payne asserts. Kittredge and Manly only analyzed the outer frame and selected tales to construct their thesis. Even there, Payne suggests, they incorrectly promoted one part of a complex poetic to a position of the dominant mode. The second argument Payne makes is that the rhetorical theory of poetic discourse which elaborated the

principles of poetic composition was part and parcel of a widespread cultural ideology.

This cultural ideology, which was constituted in part by the rhetorical tradition, valorized the past. More precisely, this ideology valued the past for its collective wisdom that was contained in a more or less well defined body of texts, both Christian and pagan. Although Payne sees Christian religious ideology as composing an outer limit on poetic possibilities he does not, like D. W. Robertson, insist that all medieval literary texts must be strictly interpreted through a reconstructed master code; that is, read as allegorical permutations in a neo-Augustinian theologicon.¹⁵ Payne views the function of the poet in this cultural scheme as inventing ways of unlocking this treasury of past wisdom to make it available for present edification:

Poetry is a process of manipulating language so that the wisdom evolved in the past will become available, applicable and operative in the present.¹⁶

Payne places this moral and aesthetic imperative under the sign of "remembrance" and asserts that this master trope most properly identifies Chaucer's deepest motivation for writing his poems. Payne also argues that it was this aesthetic and moral problematic that Chaucer most consistently reflected upon and wrestled with in his poetic practice.

The critical model Payne constructs to read Chaucer's poetry is based in his understanding not only on the ethical imperative encoded in the rhetorical tradition but from certain epistemological assumptions derived from the traditional as well:

Post-Augustinian rhetoric, then, assumes on the one hand a constant human psychology and on the other a constant supra-human order of values. It is the business of the rhetorician-poet to choose from the variety of possible inconsistent linguistic means the ones which will successfully connect the two.¹⁷

In Payne's model there are two unchanging constants, human psychology and an order of value, the "tradition," as well as the variable, "inconstant" language. These epistemological categories determine the governing principles of Chaucer's poetic whose operation can be seen as the adjustment of the one variable language, between the two absolutes of revealed truth and unvarying human nature. Payne gets a lot of mileage from the contradictions such a model inevitably produces in his analysis of Chaucer's earlier poems, especially The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women. There he conducts an argument which shows Chaucer's poetic practice undermining the certainty of those absolute categories that are posited at the beginning of the poems. Payne considers this movement from certainty to paradox, ambiguity and

contradiction--all values dear to the "new critics"--as the hallmark of Chaucer's poetic practice.

Payne recuperates these epistemological assumptions for other reasons besides the ready made set of contradictions they provide him. Most importantly, they allow him to assert, like Muscatine, the primacy of past tradition as the motivating angel and subject of Chaucer's poetry. With them, he can argue against Kittredge/Manly that epistemological limits made it impossible for Chaucer to write a poetry of personal or "original" experience, as we moderns understand the term. Poetic experience was defined ipso facto almost exclusively as an encounter with the tradition. While this may be a useful description of the poetic intention controlling the earlier narrative poems, it clearly is not, as Payne claims it to be, an accurate description of the poetic situation governing The Canterbury Tales.

These epistemological assumptions allowed Payne to place Chaucer's poetry in the context of medieval poetic theory and practice and to effectively counter the Kittredge/Manly polemic of Chaucer's rebellion against an artificial poetic. But they also prevented him from recognizing just how radical a departure The Canterbury Tales were in Chaucer's poetic experimentation. Payne's undervaluation of the novelty of The Canterbury Tales is largely the result of his idealized and static conception

of history. The "tradition," as it was understood in the rhetorical tradition and as Payne eagerly recuperates it, was an abstract form of history, one that was divorced from any orientation towards a concrete socio-historical context. The "tradition," Payne suggests, was the "...preserved record of what is constantly meaningful to all men in all times and places..."¹⁸ With this conception of history there may be some variation and even change, but there is no sense of development. This static conception of history is reflected in Payne's critical model. He sees Chaucer's poetic dilemma as remaining essentially the same, poem after poem, including The Canterbury Tales. Against Manly's overly simplistic notion of a linear, progressive development, Payne offers the Sisyphean idea of no development at all.

Although Kittredge/Manly fairly much ignored the ideological environment and the traditional poetic forms and styles that were the context of Chaucer's poetry, they sensed that The Canterbury Tales was a significant departure from Chaucer's previous poetic production. And although Payne more properly placed Chaucer's poetry within the context of medieval poetic theory and practice, he refused to acknowledge just how radically new a poetic experiment this last work was, tentative and fragmentary though it is. Payne's assumption that The

Canterbury Tales was essentially a repeat of past experiments had a negative effect on his valuation of this complex narrative poem. He saw it for what it lacked more than for what it was. So he notes its incompleteness and absence of a central organizing principle. While he thinks the outerframe "...is a truly impressive stylistic achievement[,]"¹⁹ he points to the uneven quality of the tales themselves. In short, he criticizes The Canterbury Tales for not being the completed, conventional, if great, edifice the Troilus is and he gives no more than a preliminary and cursory review of what is unarguably Chaucer's greatest work.

The work on Chaucer's poetic by Payne, Muscatine and other of the "new critics" had a lasting effect on the critical discussion of The Canterbury Tales. Their work forced a revision of earlier assessments regarding the aesthetic principles underlying his poetry. This was, in the main, a very positive development even if they did tend to overvalue the traditional and conventional aspects of it. However, their work on Chaucer's stylistics had no immediate or direct effect on the dominance of Kittredge's dramatic model; even though some, like Payne, suggested that the appropriateness of tale to teller was inconsistent and that the conventions of a naturalistic play just wouldn't hold up to any serious review. Yet the "new critics" made no sustained argument

against the model of dramatic persona. They made no attempt to construct a more adequate overview of the work. A major reason for this lack, I suspect, lies in the fact that both Kittredge and the "new critics," whatever their differences regarding poetics, shared the same epistemological assumption about human psychology, the second "constant" in Payne's critical model.

The underlying assumption of an unvarying eternal human psychology which both Kittredge and the "new critics" shared precluded any serious challenge by them to Kittredge's model of dramatic persona. Although both employed this assumption, they did so in different ways. For Kittredge, with his more positivistic orientation, the concept of an individual "inner" psychology allowed him to read the tales as a psychological drama. He and Manly regarded Chaucer's stylistic development towards a "realistic" fiction as a step towards achieving psychological verisimilitude which, in turn, reflected the "truth" of an artwork. With Kittredge's naive psychologism, "stylistic" analysis was not in and of itself important. What was important was to recognize the ways in which "realistic" fiction more closely reflected universal psychological realities.

For the "new critics," with their more idealistic tendencies, the epistemological assumptions of an eternal psychology did not play as immediately a direct role in

their analyses. It was more of a background or facilitating assumption. In fact, they tended to mystify or deny the connection between an artwork and human psychology. However, the concept of an individual who remained the same no matter what the social context or historical situation underwrote their ideology of secular humanism and helped the "new critics" to ignore the context of an artwork. This assumption allowed them to concentrate their analysis on a hermetically isolated, idealized text. As a consequence they developed a sophisticated set of techniques for concrete textual analysis, but they never attempted to revise Kittredge's positivistic, psychologized model, even though their analyses potentially offered the means to do so. Instead, the "new critics" confined their criticism of the dramatic model to pointing out the discrepancies between some of the tales and tellers, appealing with unconscious irony to the court of psychological versimilitude.

Two other critics, D. W. Robertson and Robert Jordan, who challenge the adequacy of Kittredge's dramatic model, both argue that medieval aesthetics and the assumptions behind them were radically different than modern aesthetic assumptions. Robertson refutes the idea of an eternal human psychology, asserting that social change is "...a determining factor in man's psychic constitution."²⁰ He sees the romantic revolution as a great

watershed of change in psychological and aesthetic sensibility, suggesting that even such a common conceptual category as "dramatic" constituted a different set of expectations for medieval and modern writers and readers. Although I think Robertson's assumption that socio-historical changes effect both psychological and aesthetic principles is a sound and useful epistemological principle, I think the way in which he employs this insight in his critical practice is both abstract and contradictory.

In an attempt to cross over the radical medieval/modern divide he has created, Robertson deploys the master code of theology as a way of gaining access to the meaning of medieval poetry. For some reason, he believes that theological values and categories are impervious to change by the same social forces that effect aesthetic values. Another assumption of Robertson's is that abstract theological principles are sufficiently explanatory for the events and productions of all ideological spheres, poetic as well as political. Robertson subsumes all medieval poetic theory and practice under the aegis of theology, thus destroying any distinction between these two ideological spheres. In the process he denies, among other things, the special status a work of art possesses: that of representing or refracting ideological

material of a given socio-ideological context, as well as being a part of that context itself.²¹

Unlike Robertson, Robert Jordan does not conflate theology and aesthetics in the critical model he develops to read Chaucer's poetry.²² He is able to avoid this conjuncture partly because he derives his model of "inorganic" art in large measure from his analysis of the secular, pagan tradition, drawing primarily on Plato's Timaeus, a text he believes was important for medieval poetic theory and practice. Jordan's basic argument is that Chaucer's poetry has been misread and misunderstood by us because we have mistakenly read it with the aesthetic assumptions governing modern literature. These modern formulations, exemplified by the work and theory of Henry James, presuppose a continuity between life and art as well as an "organic" unity between the various elements of a literary artwork. Hence the valorization of psychological realism. However, Jordan argues that reading The Canterbury Tales with such naturalistic, "organicist" assumptions as Kittredge does with his "dramatic" model makes it impossible to appreciate or even see the radical heterogeneity of the work, a heterogeneity which Jordan believes is the most important hallmark of medieval poetry.

Rather than the modern aesthetic principles of "organic" construction, Jordan asserts that medieval

poetry was written under the aegis of an aesthetic governed by "inorganic" principles. These aesthetic principles were determined by the epistemological assumptions of "Pythagorean rationalism." A basic assumption of this aesthetic was that there was a radical discontinuity between life and art. Jordan points to Chaucer's habit of interrupting his "fictions" as symptomatic of this assumption. Its principles of construction were quantitative and formulaic. Whole completed parts were juxtaposed against one another without regard to the disparate and heterogeneous qualities of each. Since there was an implicit and overwhelming confidence that all parts were contained in a universal order, there was no concern about covering up the seams between them or demonstrably creating an organic "seamless web." Finally this "gothic" aesthetic valorized the rational and deductive as over against the intuitive and empathic.

An essential aspect of Jordan's argument is his assertion that the medieval aesthetic was more complex than its modern counterpart. The naturalistic and illusionist aspects of art, which constitutes the whole of a modern aesthetic are only a pole in the medieval one. Medieval aesthetics can be said to contain both symbolic and mimetic moments. Jordan sees Chaucer maintaining this doubleness of viewpoint in his poetic practice, a doubleness of attitude that incorporates the mimetic and

symbolic, the intuitive and rationalistic, the "dramatic" and the "static." In fact, Jordan sees the aesthetic governing The Canterbury Tales as a dynamic between the principles of the dramatic and the static:

We can say that the links of the framework at many points strain toward a naturalistic and dramatic ordonnance; however, the aesthetic character of the poem is determined by the dissonance between the dramatic and the static, not exclusively, or even mainly by "drama."²³

Jordan's statement captures, in essence, the doubleness, the ambivalence of the aesthetic imperatives that governed Chaucer's poetic practice.

Jordan's work represents the most determined argument that has been made against the oversimplification of Kittredge's dramatic model. He shows how the dramatic "trope" which was only an aspect of the medieval poetic was promoted by Kittredge to the status of the whole, complete poetic. Jordan's work can be seen as an attempt to provide an alternate model to Kittredge's dramatic one, as well as the development of a vocabulary to describe the heterogeneity and sophistication of Chaucer's poetry. Jordan should be seen as a pivotal or bridging figure in Chaucerian criticism. Like the "new critics", he shares a preoccupation with the formal aspects of Chaucer's poetic narratives. He agrees with Muscatine, that the most fundamental principle of a medieval poetic

is juxtaposition of heterogenous elements or styles. And like Payne he views its mode of composition as essentially formulaic: the suturing together of completed structural blocks called figures of amplification. Unlike the "new critics" he stresses, like Robertson, the radical discontinuity between medieval and modern aesthetics and sensibility.

But unlike Robertson, he does not locate the cause of this change in aesthetic sensibility in the social or historical sphere. Nor does he, like Payne, flatly assert an eternal and unchanging human psychology. Jordan equivocates on the matter. Although he posits differences in medieval and modern aesthetic theories, he never clarifies or explains the cause of this difference. In fact, Jordan suggests at one point that aesthetic differences do not reflect or effect underlying epistemological assumptions:

Regarding his poems as finite limited illusions, the medieval poet developed modes of formalism which in the light of modern theory will seem mechanical and artificial but which in truth express assumptions--about both art and life --which are fundamentally and enduringly human.²⁴

Jordan's theoretical equivocation causes some confusion in his reading of The Canterbury Tales. While he promotes a model of "inorganic" construction, he seems to read at least some of the tales with an "organic"

viewpoint. For example, he criticizes The Clerk's Tale with the standard of character development. Jordan's theoretical dilemma reveals some of the unresolved problems that have characterized the best criticism of Chaucer's poetry up to the present time.

It goes without saying that my analysis of The Clerk's Tale and the reading model of The Canterbury Tales which this analysis points toward incorporates critical ideas and insights from the work of the scholar/critics I have just evaluated. However, the most substantial debt for the theoretical foundations of my approach I owe to the work of M. M. Bakhtin whose discourse model I mentioned earlier in the introduction. Now I should like to give a fuller exposition of some of his basic concepts, beginning with his topology of discourse.²⁵

Bakhtin establishes three basic categories for his discourse typology. The first category contains that kind of discourse which expresses a direct authorial intention such as in an expository essay. The second category Bakhtin designates as represented or objectified discourse. An example of this type of discourse would be the speech of a character in a play. In this instance the author manipulates the represented discourse from the outside; that is, the integrity of the character's utterance is maintained. Both of these categories constitute what Bakhtin calls monologic discourse. In monologic discourse all other "voices" or utterances which are presented within that discourse are rigorously subordinated to the authorial intention of that discourse.

For example, in an academic essay such as the one I am writing, quotations or utterances of other scholars are compositionally marked off and identified as another's discourse. Although a certain decorum is maintained and the property boundaries of the quoted discourse are respected, this appropriated discourse is placed in the new context of my essay and subordinated in a straightforward fashion to the needs of my argument or intention. In monologic discourse the author's relationship to another's discourse is defined by these two essential characteristics: the boundaries of another's discourse are clearly marked but the objectified discourse is subjected to the direct dominance and control of authorial intention. This is not the case with the third category of Bakhtin's discourse topology which consists of "double-voiced" or dialogic discourse.

An essential characteristic of Bakhtin's definition of double-voiced discourse resides in the fact that such discourse in addition to its orientation toward a referential object, is oriented as well toward another's utterance. In comparison, monologic or single-voiced discourse is oriented primarily towards its object of reference and contains a single dominating intention. If monologic discourse incorporates another's utterance it subsumes it under a single overriding intention. On the other hand, double-voiced discourse has two semantic

intentions, or two "voices" residing and conflicting within the utterance. The second intention, the authorial "voice" infiltrates the utterance from within redirecting but not obliterating the original intention. One way of doing this is to conventionalize the utterance creating a distance between the two voices. Another characteristic of double-voiced discourse is its absence of any clear compositional markers, except for what we normally call "dialogue" which is only a minor category of this type of discourse. Bakhtin insists that dialogic discourse is constituted by a semantic relationship, not a linguistic or grammatical one. He asserts that such discourse can only be perceived and understood at a metalinguistic level; that is, at the level of literary or rhetorical convention.

Before continuing my exposition of Bakhtin's discourse typology, I should like to amplify briefly some important aspects of his concept of dialogism. First, as I have already stated, for Bakhtin a dialogic relationship is a logical or semantic relationship which is oriented towards a object of reference. Second, these different semantic intentions that meet within the utterance are of equal rank or weight; that is, neither subsumes or controls the other. An essential characteristic of Bakhtin's concept is that the different semantic

intentions are not just free floating, abstract or impersonal ideas but are "authored." In order for an utterance to become dialogic each relatively autonomous "voice" in the utterance must represent an author who holds a definite semantic position or world view.

Bakhtin does not equate this idea of an author to a "real" author:

Of the real author, as he exists outside the utterance, we can know absolutely nothing at all.²⁶

Nor is Bakhtin's concept of "author" limited to a single individual. In a dialogic reaction, a "voice" can personify a person, a collective or a whole generation. Dialogic relations are even possible between language styles, social dialects or literary genres if they are perceived as representing different semantic positions or world views. All of the points I have been discussing here follow as a consequence of an idea which is central to Bakhtin's concept of dialogism: that all discourse is engaged or motivated.

Besides the idea of motivated discourse, another important assumption underlying Bakhtin's theory of dialogic discourse is the concept of personification. Bakhtin sees the tendency towards personification as an inherent characteristic of all emotionally charged discourse.²⁷ Ideas, objects and figures are addressed

and responded to as if they were animated agents or had active agents behind them. It is here that Bakhtin's dialogic theory reveals a correlation with rhetorical theories of discourse. I plan to discuss this point of contact more fully once I finish delineating Bakhtin's discourse topology. As Chaim Perelman states in his book on rhetorical argumentation, this movement towards personification produces a certain vividness and coherence to an argument:

...whenever one wishes to make a group or an essence stable, concrete and present, personification will be used. This argumentative figure makes it possible to stabilize the boundaries of the group and to give it coherence.²⁸

Personification operates through condensation and gives a certain density and weight to the semantic intentions residing in an utterance. The movement towards personification enhances the liveliness and force of an argument. In the same passage which I just cited, Perelman points out that personification is animated through the use of two other rhetorical figures: apostrophe and prosopopoeia. Apostrophe can be employed to address whatever is personified while prosopopoeia gives the personification a "voice." Both figures enhance the movement of personification towards the status of a listening and speaking subject. Underlying Bakhtin's

concept of dialogism is an attempt to capture the movement and animation of living discourse.

Bakhtin distinguishes between two basic modes of dialogic discourse: those in which the different intentions are moving in the same direction and those in which the intentions move in opposite directions. Stylization and narrator's narration are two kinds of doubled-voiced discourse that fall into this first category of unidirectional double-voiced discourse. Bakhtin defines stylization as the appropriation of a set of stylistic devices which constitute an attitude or worldview; that is, the particular collocation of devices express a point of view, a definite way of looking at the world. An author appropriates this combination of stylistic devices and following in the same general direction as the original style, injects his own intention from within; not by manipulating the utterance from without as he does, say, with a character's speech. The author achieves this stylization by slightly objectifying or conventionalizing the style. This movement towards objectification creates a distance between the original voice or intention and the author's voice.

Bakhtin points out that stylization is very close to imitation; but with imitation the particular devices comprising a style are slavishly copied and there is no voice differentiation. The voice of the imitator is

subsumed by the original voice. With stylization, however, the author, in his adaptation of a style, goes creatively beyond the original style. Going creatively beyond the original style is another way of saying that he injects his own voice and creates a stylization. Bakhtin's definition of stylization resembles Muscatine's conception of a conventional style. One difference between their conceptualizations is that Bakhtin stresses the aspect of creative manipulation involved in a stylization more than does Muscatine. More importantly, Bakhtin focuses his theoretical discussion and analysis more sharply on the differences between the original style and the stylization than does Muscatine. Bakhtin insists that the difference between style and stylization constitutes a difference between two voices, two intentions, two worldviews. Bakhtin's approach is a more thorough going attempt to parse out the semantic implications of stylistic differences.

Bakhtin also places narrator's narration in the same general category of uni-directional double-voiced discourse. In fact, he sees narrator's narration as analogous to stylization. Only in this instance an author appropriates a set of stylistic devices--another's verbal manner--for the specific purpose of narrating a story from a certain point of view. Bakhtin states that in

narrator's narration this movement towards objectification is greater than in the case of stylization. This objectification can be more conventionalized, i.e. the verbal manner of a type such as a lawyer, or the objectification can be more individualized. Bakhtin is quite emphatic that a narrator's discourse can never be completely objectified the way in which the speech of a character in a play is objectified or represented. Bakhtin even specifies here a third category within the general category of uni-directional, dialogic discourse.

This third category consists of discourse that alternates between the discourse of a character and the discourse of a narrator. While the characters remain objectified characters, their speech is also fully objectified and manipulated by the author from without. But once a character assumes the function of narration, carrying out in part the intention of the author, his objectification is decreased. The author no longer manipulates his speech from the outside but, as in a stylization, exerts control of the verbal style of the narrator from within. The author creates and maintains a greater or lesser distance from the narrator's voice by the extent to which he objectifies or conventionalizes the narrator's discourse. All styles of uni-directional, double-voiced discourse I have been describing can collapse into single-voiced discourse. If the author

decreases the conventionality or objectification of the other voice sufficiently the form of the discourse becomes directly intentional immediate authorial discourse, the first category in Bakhtin's topology. As Bakhtin asserts, such an alternation between different kinds of discourse often occurs within a single literary work of art.

Here, I think, we can begin to see that even if this first category of uni-directional, double-voiced discourse constituted the whole of Bakhtin's discourse topology it would offer us a theoretical model for reading The Canterbury Tales that is immeasurably more sophisticated and flexible than Kittredge's model of dramatic persona. Kittredge takes one aspect of dialogic discourse--the tendency towards personification--and reifies this movement into a fixed and absolute structure of dramatic characterization. Subsequently, Kittredge promotes this discourse mode--the objectified utterances of the pilgrim characters--into the ruling discourse form for The Canterbury Tales in their entirety. Yet this discourse form of "dramatic dialogue" constitutes only moments--albeit important moments in the outerframe--in the whole of a complexly differentiated poetic narrative.

On the other hand, Bakhtin's discourse theory allows us to develop a reading model that can not only describe the different discourse forms that comprise The

Canterbury Tales, but a model that can account for the transformational changes in the work's discourse modes. As might be expected, the form of double-voiced discourse that is most applicable for reading The Canterbury Tales is Bakhtin's category of narrator's narration. Even here, a modeling based on Bakhtin's conceptual framework is more flexible than Kittredge's. His model of dramatic persona enforces the idea that all the pilgrim narrators received the same treatment: all are fully developed characters who are liable to psychological analysis. As we know, this clearly is not the case. Bakhtin's modeling incorporates the idea of uneven development of narrators. While none of the narrators are fully objectified as Kittredge assumed, some are more objectified than others. For example, the Pardoner is a more objectified, that is individualized, narrator than the Physician or the Second Nun. This same principle governing the uneven development of narrators reveals itself in a different way in the General Prologue where Chaucer leaves some of the pilgrim portraits relatively undeveloped.

Bakhtin's category of double-voiced discourse provides us with a theoretical basis for distinguishing two fundamentally different kinds of discourse in The Canterbury Tales. On the one hand, there is the monologic, fully represented "dramatic dialogue" of the pilgrim

characters that occurs for the most part in the outer-frame. On the other, there is the partially objectified, dialogic discourse of the pilgrim narrators narrating their stories. The monologic discourse of the characters is controlled by the author from the outside; the dialogic discourse of the narrators is controlled from within. A very important aspect of Bakhtin's discourse theory lies in the attempt to give an account for the inflections or changes in form that discourse frequently undergoes. This sensitivity to the transformational aspects of discourse goes a long way in accounting for the sophistication, refinement and power of Bakhtin's theoretic. It is nowhere more evident than in the special category of double-voiced discourse Bakhtin creates for characters in a narrative discourse who become narrators. The change of their status is reflected in the form of their discourse. In fact, this category of character-become-narrator might be a more accurate description for at least some of the Canterbury narrators than the more general category of narrator's narration.

Bakhtin's modeling, then, emphasizes the fluidity of discourse categories. They are not the inflexible, absolute or ontologized categories that have been associated with Kittredge's dramatic model. The different forms of discourse are perceived as possible permutations along a continuum and the movement from one to another

form of discourse happens more frequently and easily than we have heretofore been aware. Although this first category of dialogic discourse--that of uni-directional dialogic discourse--explains much of what occurs in The Canterbury Tales, Bakhtin's second and third categories of dialogic discourse provide explanations for even more complex forms of narrative voicing.

As I mentioned earlier, Bakhtin insists that the basic difference between the first category of double-voiced discourse and the second and third categories consists in the direction in which the author's voice is moving in relation to the original voice or intention. In the first category of uni-directional discourse the semantic intentions of the authorial voice and the original voice are both moving in a similar direction. However, Bakhtin's second and third varieties of double-voiced discourse are vari-directional; that is the semantic intention of the original voice and that of the authorial voice are moving in opposite directions. Such is the situation with parodic discourse. In parodic discourse, as in a stylization, a set of stylistic devices are appropriated by the author, but in a parody the author injects an opposing semantic intention, one that is moving in a direction opposite the original intention. An obvious example of parodic discourse--more specifically parodic narration--in The Canterbury Tales

is The Tale of Sir Thopes where Chaucer parodies the style and plot motifs of the metrical romance.

Bakhtin suggests that parody can operate in many diverse ways ranging from the parody of a style or particular genre to a parody of an individual's manner of seeing or thinking. But parody can also go beyond the level of verbal forms to a parody of the principle's governing a worldview. An example of a parody that offers a critique of ideological principles would be the second ending, "Envoie de Chaucer" to The Clerk's Tale where the religious ideals of silence and submission are mocked and derided. Bakhtin also regards irony as analogous to parodic discourse because, in like manner, the direction of the second authorial voice is different than the original voice or intention. There are other varieties of vari-directional double-voiced discourse that are analogous to or combined with parodic discourse. Virtually any expression that injects a new or different value or accent onto a previous statement such as doubt, indignation, irony, mockery, ridicule can be considered in this category of vari-directional discourse. Bakhtin theorizes that this second type of double-voiced discourse is relatively passive because the original utterance is subjected to extensive manipulation and control by authorial intention. However in the third kind of double-voiced discourse which is also vari-directional

the original intentional is more active; that is, the original voice is more resistant to authorial manipulations and control.

Although there are several different varieties of the third kind of vari-directional, double-voiced discourse, Bakhtin argues that there is a principle of doubling underlying all these variations. This doubled intentional structure characterizes this kind of discourse as a "discourse with a sideward glance at someone's word." To a greater or lesser extent the other's discourse exerts an influence from without. Unlike stylization or parody, the form of the original discourse is not reproduced with the new intention but the other discourse effects the semantic structure of the author's discourse. Bakhtin regards hidden polemic as the most important variation in this third category of double-voiced discourse. In hidden polemic the author's discourse is not only directed at its own referential object as in all discourse but, in addition, the authorial discourse is polemically directed towards another's discourse about the referential object. Bakhtin insists that this double direction of the authorial discourse has a fundamental effect on the semantic intention of the discourse.

Bakhtin holds that the semantic differences between open and hidden polemic are fundamental even though it

may be difficult at times in practice to distinguish between the two:

Overt polemic is quite simply directed at another's discourse, which it refutes, as if at its own referential object. In the hidden polemic, however, discourse, is directed towards an ordinary referential object, naming it, portraying, expressing and only indirectly striking a blow at the other's discourse, clashing with it, as it were within the object itself.²⁹

Unlike open polemic, which is direct and single-voiced, hidden polemic is indirect, implicit and double-voiced discourse.

What is perhaps the most significant quality about hidden polemic is the active influence another's discourse has upon authorial discourse:

As a result, the other person's discourse begins to influence authorial discourse from within. For this reason, hidden polemical discourse is double-voiced, although the interrelationship of the two voices here is a special one. The other's thought does not personally make its way inside the discourse, but is only reflected in it, determining its tone and its meaning. One word acutely senses alongside it someone else's word speaking about the same object, and this awareness determines its structure.³⁰

While fully developed hidden polemic comprises a specific category in Bakhtin's discourse topology, he sees the tendencies constituting hidden polemic fairly widespread in literary discourse.

Bakhtin considers hidden polemic to have enormous style shaping significance because virtually all literary

utterances contain an element of internal or hidden polemic. Under the aegis of hidden polemic Bakhtin places the critical valuation an author exercises when he creates a stylization; otherwise he would end up producing an imitation. Or, hidden polemic can be seen to encompass the anticipatory tendencies of discourse, especially rhetorical discourse; that is the anticipation and consequent answer to the response to one's utterance. Hidden polemic is the critical factor that an author employs to reshape another's discourse and, as well, the influence another's discourse has on authorial utterances.

While comprising a widespread tendency in literary discourse, hidden polemic, as a distinct and fully developed discourse mode, can combine with other kinds of discourse such as narrator's narrator or parody. In the description of his topology Bakhtin stresses the capacity for almost all the distinct types of discourse to form combinations with each other. But besides this principle of combination Bakhtin enunciates a principle of changing discourse modes. Single-voiced discourse can become double-voiced and vice versa. Parody can become polemical and then resume a parodic mode. And these changes or shifts in discourse modes can and often do occur within the space of the same utterance or literary work. These two principles--the combinatory

and the transformational give Bakhtin's discourse theory great flexibility and make his model an invaluable nuanced analytic tool.

Bakhtin's concept of hidden polemic is especially useful for my dissertation because hidden polemic is an important mode of discourse in The Clerk's Tale. As I will presently argue the clerkly voice conducts a limited or hidden polemic against the Petrarchan voice of moral allegory. Bakhtin's notion of the active influence the other's discourse exerts on authorial discourse is especially pertinent in this instance because the monumental force of Petrarch's utterance profoundly affects the discourse of the Clerk. While the basic discourse mode of The Clerk's Tale is, of course, narrator's narration, this discourse type is combined with open polemic and parody as well as the already mentioned hidden polemic. As I will further argue, the polemical and parodic elements in the tale are aimed not only at the stylistic features of the tale's narration, but constitute a critique of the world view enunciated by the Petrarchan voice and the ultimately, the Clerkly voice as well.

Before concluding my description of Bakhtin's discourse typology, I would like to discuss one of its most important transformational aspects. Earlier when explaining uni-directional double-voiced discourse, such as narrator's narration, I mentioned that Bakhtin held

that if there were a decrease of objectification, the double-voicing would collapse into a single voice, that of the author. Theoretically the narrator's voice merges with the authorial voice and the narrator becomes simply a compositional device. However, with vari-directional double-voiced discourse, such as parody or polemic, a decrease in objectification has an opposite effect in the double-voicing. In vari-directional discourse, when there is a decrease in objectification in the voicing, that is, for example, when there is a movement away from a fully realized narrative persona, the tendency is for the double-voiced discourse to split into two separate discourses or two relatively autonomous voices. Bakhtin sees this internal dialogization, this tendency towards voice-splitting as a theoretical possibility or limit that is rarely achieved.

While double-voiced discourse is rarely transformed completely into separate, independent voices, one effect this tendency towards voice-splitting has is to emphasize the differences in the voicings; they become more distinct and pronounced from each other. Another effect this tendency towards splitting has upon vari-directional discourse, is that the authorial voice loses its absolute control over the other voice; it does not completely or oppressively dominate the other's voice. This is the case in The Clerk's Tale where the Clerkly voice is

internally dialogized because of the decrease in objectification in the narrative voice. While the Clerk's voice & Petrarch's voice are not completely split and independent of each other, for the most part, this double-voiced narrative is very close to the outer limit of voice splitting. In fact, at the end of the tale this limit is broached with the introduction of a third parodic voice which is completely independent of the other two voices.

Although complete voice-splitting into separate and autonomous voices or discourses is unusual, The Clerk's Tale is not the only tale in The Canterbury Tales where this phenomenon occurs. In at least two other tales, The Nun's Priest's and The Merchant's, the double-voiced discourse is split into distinct and independent voices. What I should like to emphasize here is that Bakhtin's theoretical description of voice-splitting in vari-directional discourse provides the sophistication and flexibility we need to begin to comprehend the complexity of narrative voicing in The Canterbury Tales. As I mentioned earlier, Kittredge's dramatic model only describes one possibility--that of an almost fully objectified narrator--in a wide range of narrative discourse forms. Bakhtin's discourse theory places on a continuum both the Kittredgean concept of an objectified narrator as

well as the most opposite formulation--that of independent different voices narrating the same tale. Bakhtin's theory also allows for the many permutations in between these limits of discourse forms that Chaucer quite clearly was experimenting with.

This concludes my description of Bakhtin's discourse typology. Before moving to my detailed analysis and interpretation of The Clerk's Tale, I should like to briefly touch upon two other points of theoretical interest. The first pertains to the points of contact between Bakhtin's discourse theory and the earlier rhetorical theory. The second matter has to do with where Bakhtin locates the source of value in his theory. Bakhtin's discourse theory, which has as its centerpiece the concept of dialogism, can be properly viewed as an extension and deepening of the fundamental principles of classical/medieval rhetorical discourse theory. There are some very important differences, to be sure, but both theoretical frameworks employ the same model of speaker/utterance/listener or writer/text/reader. Not only do they share the same discourse model, but Bakhtin describes basic tendencies in language and discourse in rhetorical terms. As I mentioned earlier, he ascribes the tendency towards personification as a fundamental characteristic of all discourse.

Not only are the principle concepts of Bakhtin's discourse theory cast in rhetorical formulations but Bakhtin recognized the essentially dialogic character of rhetorical discourse and enunciated the importance of rhetorical principles for the study of linguistics, the philosophy of language and literary theory:

Once rhetorical discourse is brought into the study with all its living diversity, it cannot fail to have a deeply revolutionizing influence on linguistics and the philosophy of language. It is precisely those aspects of any discourse (the internally dialogic quality of discourse, and the phenomena related to it), not yet sufficiently taken into account and fathomed in all the enormous weight they carry in the life of language, that are revealed with great external precision in rhetorical forms...³¹

An important aspect of rhetorical discourse that Bakhtin finds particularly pertinent to a general theory of discourse is the orientation rhetorical discourse has towards the listener. For Bakhtin this orientation towards the listener implies the full range of anticipatory calculations that can be brought to bear in a discourse.

In fact, much of Bakhtin's theorizing can be seen as exploring the implications of these anticipatory measures in discourse. He regards this orientation towards the listener as effecting the very construction of rhetorical discourse. The listener in this sense is a co-partner in the creation of the discourse:

It is highly significant for rhetoric that this relationship toward the concrete listener, taking him into account, is a relationship that enters into the very internal construction of rhetorical discourse. This orientation toward an answer is open, blatant, and concrete.³²

Bakhtin suggests that sometimes this orientation towards a listener is so intense that it overshadows the objective of the discourse; that is, this focus on the concrete listener interferes..."with the word's creative work on its referent."³³

This focus and theoretical elaboration upon the listener's role in the creation of rhetorical discourse is a major difference between Bakhtin's discourse theory and the earlier, classical/medieval theory. According to Robert O. Payne, medieval rhetorical theory did not attempt to demonstrate a causal relation between poetic (rhetorical) structures and their effect upon the reader; much less speculate upon what effect a reader's response might have upon the poetic construction:

The analysis made in the rhetorical treatises is an analysis of causes in the structure of poetry, rather than of effects in the reader. Its ultimate aim was, of course, to instruct in the art of producing a poetry which would move its readers, and it is no doubt a limitation in the instruction that it has so little to say about how those effects follow from the causes listed, or what effects may follow.³⁴

Although medieval rhetorical theory provided a system of procedures for analyzing and constructing poetic

structures, this body of theory presented no thoroughgoing rationale regarding the affective aspects of poetic discourse. For Bakhtin, however, the affective aspects of discourse became the center and focus of his theoretical enterprise.

Just as Bakhtin focused upon the effects the listener produced in the construction of rhetorical discourse, so he emphasized the way rhetorical discourse changed another's utterance in the process of transmitting that utterance:

Rhetorical genres possess the most varied forms for transmitting another's speech, and for the most part these are intensely dialogized forms. Rhetoric relies heavily on the vivid re-accentuating of the words it transmits (often to the point of distorting them completely) that is accomplished by the appropriate framing context. Rhetorical genres provide rich material for studying a variety of forms transmitting another's speech, the most varied means for formulating and framing such speech.³⁵

The particular emphasis Bakhtin places on the transmission of prior utterances points again to a difference between his theoretic and medieval rhetorical theory. Medieval theory elaborated a set of procedures under the headings of amplificatio and abreviatio which were identified as the principal means a rhetor/poet had of imposing his intention upon known material or utterances. The theory focused upon changing the structure of the utterance in some fashion, either by shortening it or

extending certain aspects of it. Bakhtin, as the above citation shows, stressed the reaccentuation of the prior utterance or text, either by an internal dialogization or by the placement of the utterance in a new framing context. I should like to add, that Chaucer employed all of these procedures regularly in his poetic practice. Yet while the procedures of amplificatio and abreviatio have received some attention in the critical discussion, notably from R. O. Payne, the aspects Bakhtin stresses have so far received very little.

Most of the differences between Bakhtin's theory and the earlier rhetorical theory boil down to Bakhtin's sharp focus upon the intentional aspects of discourse. Whereas the earlier theoreticians either ignored or rarely alluded to this essential aspect, Bakhtin made it the central principle, the heart of his whole discourse theory. Certainly his discourse topology can be seen as an attempt to rationalize or explain the effects that the semantic or intentional aspect has on formal structures. Bakhtin's theory can be seen as an attempt to describe how and why discourse is motivated. Bakhtin's theoretics and Kittredge's dramatic model have a point of contact here, at least to the extent that Kittredge's model attempts to see The Canterbury Tales as representing motivated, engaged, living discourse. However, as I've mentioned before, Bakhtin's discourse theory is not

grounded in an ontological model of an individual psychology and so has a much wider range and flexibility than Kittredge's.

With the question of intentionality sooner or later the related question of value arises. Here again Bakhtin differs with the model underwritten by the earlier rhetorical theory. As R. O. Payne has described, rhetorical theory in the middle ages grounded the value of their discourse in an idealized, abstract sphere of prior texts. It was the job of the poet/ rhetoricians to recuperate the truth contained in his collected body of texts and reformulate it in a language that enabled their audience to gain access to these truths. This procedure was deemed possible because, along with a constant body of truths, the individual was understood to have an eternal, unvarying psychology. The one variable in this model is fungible language. Bakhtin constructs a model that is radically different from this rhetorical one.

Bakhtin's modeling is different than the early theory because he defined the constituent parts of his model differently. First, Bakhtin conceives of language, or, rather, verbal discourse, differently than did the earlier rhetorical theorists. These rhetoricians regarded the abstract linguistic forms of language--what Saussure calls langue--to be the bearer of meaning; consequently, they stressed the formulaic nature of poetic structures.

Just as language forms could be matched to eternal "truths" in this ideal realm, so words could be matched to a stable set of meanings. For Bakhtin, however, the aspect of language that contains meaning or intentionality is not this abstract, linguistic aspect but the concrete utterance, speech--what Saussure called parole. Language as an abstract system of formal markers carried no meaning per se. Only when it becomes living discourse, a communicative exchange, does it achieve a semantic force.

Although Bakhtin does not ground the meaning or the "truth" value of discourse in an abstract system of linguistic forms, nor in a body of abstract axioms, he does not à la Ockham ground the meaning of discourse in the individual. An individual may place his distinctive accent on a concrete utterance, but in no sense can an utterance be regarded as his private property, as originating wholly with the individual. An individual may partially determine the meaning of a word or utterance but never completely control the meaning of that utterance. Bakhtin does not ground the meaning of the concrete utterance in the individual, as Saussure does, but in the exchange, in the social sphere.

For Bakhtin, verbal discourse is first, last and always a social phenomena:

Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon--social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning.³⁶

Discourse, the concrete utterance is given meaning and value through the agency of "social evaluation," not the dictionary nor the individual. The source of meaning for a word or utterance may be located beyond or outside the individual, but the semantic intention of the utterance is not located in an abstract, generalized order of value.

"Truth," then, for Bakhtin is not an eternal given, but a socially and historically determined evaluation; one that is subject to change. These valuations, while historically determined, are not all "flashes-in-the-pan." Some acquire and maintain a deepness and stability in the socio-ideological sphere that made them appear eternal. Some social valuations acquire this stability because of their appeal to large social groupings. Some evaluations maintain their force for whole historical epochs. While Bakhtin sees the social sphere as grounding verbal discourse with its valuations, he also argues that these "social valuations" act to organize poetic constructions:

In literature, assumed value judgements play a role of particular importance. We might say

that a poetic work is a powerful condenser of unarticulated social evaluations--each word is saturated with them. It is these social evaluations that organize form as their direct expression.³⁷

As well as providing an ultimate standard of meaning, social evaluations play a more immediate and active role; they also organize or motivate the form of verbal discourse. Yet poetic discourse can be said to bring to a realization or articulation such evaluations, and, in this sense, can be said to participate in the creation of such social evaluations.

Just as Bakhtin sees discourse as mediated by social evaluations, so he sees the "individual" as a product of social mediations. Bakhtin regards the self as a border construct, one that is created in the verbal-ideological interaction with the other:

The individual, as possessor of the contents of his own consciousness, as author of his own thoughts, as the personality responsible for his thoughts and feelings--such an individual is a purely socioideological phenomenon. Therefore, the content of the "individual" psyche is by its very nature just as social as is ideology, and the very degree of consciousness of one's individuality and its inner rights and privileges is ideological, historical, and wholly conditioned by sociological factors. Every sign as sign is social, and this is no less true for the inner sign than for the outer sign.³⁸

The self should be viewed as the end product, the result of verbal interactions of the individual with his

socio-ideological environment. The self, the individual is not a preformed, original construct, one that has a predetermined character and ahistorical, asocial, ontological status.

For Bakhtin, the romantic/positivistic conception of the self as a construct that is radically separated from society is a logical contradiction:

The structure of the utterance is a purely sociological structure. The utterance, as such, obtains between speakers. The individual speech act (in the strict sense of the word "individual") is contradictio in adjecto.³⁹

The self, the "individual" is a social construction just as is language. In fact, the self is first and foremost constituted by discourse, by the social exchange Bakhtin calls the utterance. Bakhtin's notion that the self is constituted through verbal discourse is very close to the Aristotelian notion of ethos. Aristotle held that the ethos or character of a speaker was not a pre-existing quality, but was generated from the speech at hand; that is, the discourse or the text created the character of the speaker.⁴⁰ The difference between the two conceptions lies in their differing views of the nature of discourse. Aristotle's is a monologic view of discourse while Bakhtin's is a dialogic one. For Aristotle, the speaker created his own ethos; for Bakhtin, however, both

the speaker and listener participate in the creations of the speaker's ethos.

This concludes my explication of Bakhtin's discourse typology and brief overview of some of the basic concepts underlying his discourse theory. I think Bakhtin's theory offers us the opportunity to construct a more comprehensive and flexible reading model for The Canterbury Tales, one that more adequately helps us to comprehend the variety and structural heterogeneity of the work's narrative discourse. Employing a Bakhtinian theoretic, which grounds a discourse theory in social praxis, should help us avoid both the abstract idealism that the "new critics" fell prey to and the naive psychologism of Kittredge's more positivistic approach. Bakhtin's view of the self as a product of discourse and therefore a sociohistorical construct is significantly different from the Kittredgean assumption that the self is a pre-existing, psychologically unified entity. Kittredge's model grants a metaphysical status to the construct of the self, which, in turn, makes a psychological reading of the tales an inevitability.

Unlike in Kittredge's model, the poetic construction of an almost fully developed character/narrator in a reading model based on Bakhtin's theoretic is only one among several possibilities. Although Bakhtin sees the tendency towards personification--and hence towards

objectification of a narrator--as a dominant tendency in verbal discourse, he insists that this tendency does not always result in a full-fledged objectification of a narrator. As a consequence of this realization, Bakhtin asserts that there are a multiplicity of forms in which discourse is conducted. Bakhtin's typology is an attempt to map out some of the major categories of these discourse forms.

As I have stated at the outset of this introduction, The Canterbury Tales embodies many of the different ways a narrative voice can be implemented--the objectified narrator/character being only one possibility, and perhaps not even the most common one at that. At any rate, virtually all of the fragments of this diverse, heterogeneous poetic work can be accurately characterized as double-voiced, internally dialogized discourse. Further, as I have argued earlier, there are at least several tales where the narrative voice has been split into two or more narrative voices. The Clerk's Tale is one of those tales where the combination of vari-directional discourse and the decrease in the objectification of the narrator has resulted in several different narrative voices which participate in the tale's narration. These heterogeneous voices of moral allegory, hidden polemic and grotesque parody represent different ideological

viewpoints and consequently conduct a debate or dialogue about the narrated story of Walter and Griselda.

The gaps that this heterogeneous discourse produces reveal contradictions on at least two levels. First, these gaps point to the internal contradictions present in the discourse itself: in the official Petrarchan version of the tale and, to a lesser extent, in the other voices as well. Second, these aporias point to external contradictions as well; that is, they reveal the ambivalent status or function of artistic discourse in late fourteenth century England. Although I do not intend to pursue in my dissertation an intensive analysis of the nexus between artistic discourse and the larger realm of social practice, it should not be forgotten that artistic discourse in the late middle ages had a social function as it does in all ages. Such discourse influenced and was affected by the general social development. Suffice to say, I will resist the temptation to make any easy correspondences between the content of The Clerk's Tale and the larger social context. I do not mean to deny that such relations exists, nor that it is not of the utmost importance to parse out these connections, but such a task is too complex for my present project.

My dissertation has a more limited and narrower scope: to analyze and describe the radical heterogeneity

of discourse in The Clerk's Tale and provide a more adequate explanation for this heterogeneity than the previous critical discourse has heretofore accomplished. In the process, I hope to point towards a different theoretical modeling for approaching The Canterbury Tales and to show how this modeling will "open" the poetic text to the larger socio-ideological environment in which it is situated.

An important reason I chose The Clerk's Tale for analysis is that, of all The Canterbury Tales, this tale most openly declares its heterogenous character. Although, as I stated earlier, all of the tales, in these fragments should be considered double-voiced or dialogized discourse, none so emphatically calls attention to this status as does The Clerk's Tale. In the Prologue to the Tale, the Clerk attests to its paradygmatic status by repeatedly stating that it is another's tale--Petrarch's--he is about to tell. By foregrounding this quality of otherness--with all of the ambivalent feelings of strangeness and familiarity, respect and abuse that such a process entails--Chaucer enunciates through the Clerkly voice the essential dialogic quality of all living discourse.

Notes

¹George L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1915), pp. 146, 154.

²Kittredge, p. 156.

³Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer (Balt: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), Chaps. 10 & 11.

⁴Kittredge, p. 155.

⁵Jill Mann, Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 10-16.

⁶J. M. Manly, Some New Light on Chaucer: Lectures Delivered at the Lowell Institute (1926; rpt. Gloucester, Mass: P. Smith, 1959).

⁷J. M. Manly, "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," British Academy Proceedings, Vol. 12 (1926), 95-113.

⁸Donald Howard, The Idea of The Canterbury Tales (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1976).

Alfred David, The Strumpet Muse: Art & Morals in Chaucer's Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976).

⁹E. T. Donaldson, "Chaucer The Pilgrim," PMLA Lxix (1954), 928-936.

¹⁰Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1969).

¹¹Muscatine, p. 223.

¹²Muscatine, p. 223.

¹³Bakhtin, Dostoevsky, p. 189.

¹⁴Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (1963; rpt. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1973).

¹⁵D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962).

¹⁶Payne, p. 89.

¹⁷Payne, p. 46.

¹⁸Payne, p. 46.

¹⁹Payne, p. 150.

²⁰Robertson, p. viii.

²¹M. M. Bakhtin and P. M. Medvedev, The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics, trans. Albert Wehrle (1978, rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 16 and 17.

²²Robert Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967).

²³Jordan, p. 130.

²⁴Jordan, p. 8.

²⁵Bakhtin, Dostoevsky, Chapt. 5.

²⁶Bakhtin, Dostoevsky, p. 184.

²⁷[M. M. Bakhtin] V. N. Volosinov, "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art", Appendix I in Freudianism: A Marxist Critique, trans. I. R. Titunik, eds. I. R. Titunik and Neal Bruss (New York: Academic Press, 1976), p. 103. Under the title, "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry," the essay is in Bakhtin School Papers, Russian Poetics in Translations, no. 10, trans. John Richmond, ed. Ann Shukman (Oxford: RPT Publications; Cochester: Univ. of Essex, 1983). The question of Bakhtin's authorship or collaboration concerning works under the names of V. N. Volosinov or P. M. Medvedev has been much discussed. The present scholarly consensus is that Bakhtin either collaborated or singly wrote these other-named works. Following this consensus, I will consider the works signed by Volosinov and Medvedev as Bakhtin's, even though they were not originally published under his name. For further discussion of this intriguing aspect of Bakhtin's work, you may consult the following: Ann Shukman in Bakhtin School Papers, cited above. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 146-170.

²⁸Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 331.

²⁹Bakhtin, Dostoevsky, p. 196.

³⁰Bakhtin, Dostoevsky, p. 190.

³¹M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel" Chapt. in The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press) pp. 268, 269.

³²Bakhtin, Discourse, p. 280.

³³Bakhtin, Discourse, p. 283.

³⁴Payne, p. 50.

³⁵Bakhtin, Discourse, p. 354.

³⁶Bakhtin, Discourse, p. 259.

³⁷Volosinov, Freudianism, p. 107.

³⁸[M. M. Bakhtin] V. N. Volosinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (New York: Seminar Press, Inc., 1973), p. 34.

³⁹Volosinov, Language, p. 98.

⁴⁰Robert O. Payne, "Chaucer's Realization of Himself as Rhetor," in Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric, ed. James Murphy (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1978), p. 274.

CHAPTER TWO

The Intranarrative Commentary: The
Enunciation of the Clerkly Voice

One of the major problems in the interpretative readings of the Clerk's Tale has revolved around the question of what the proper critical approach to the tale should be. Kittredge, with his focus on the dramatic interplay in the outer frame, viewed the tale in terms of its contribution to the marriage debate. Because he used the lens of realistic fiction, he concluded that Walter and Griselda were monstrous and the tale flawed. A generation or so later, Cate and Griffin traced the folkloric origins of the tale in order to explain what was considered to be its grotesque or fantastic elements. Employing this genetic approach in a more limited way, J. Burke Severs made a detailed comparison of the tale with its two immediate sources: Petrarch's Latin verse version and a French prose translation of Petrarch's rendering. One of the major conclusions he draws from the study of these texts is that Chaucer intensified the contrasts in the tale, especially the contrast between the characterizations of Walter and Griselda. One consequence of such a heightening of contrasts is "...a more effective, more

arresting plot."¹ But Severs never explains just how this occurs.

James Sledd was the first critic who attempted to sort out the tangle of critical issues surrounding the tale and to insist upon applying aesthetic criteria to its evaluation.² He insisted that an interpretative reading should be based on an analysis of the tale's narrative structure which, he suggests, rests on different premises than those of realistic fiction. He agrees with Severs that to destroy the extremes in the story would be to destroy its effect; however, he regards the tale as a "middling" sort of yarn, not especially good. Although Sledd shifts the critical discussion from the moral realm to a more properly poetic terrain, he pays no attention to the complex narrative structure of the tale.

A few years later Charles Muscatine cites the tale as an exemplary instance of the conventional style, comparing its "thinness" with the rich tapestry of the Knight's Tale, another fine example of the conventional style.³ What a number of other readers have seen as a basic inconsistency or contrast in the narrative structure, Muscatine views as ripples in a plain style which features a "pathetic realism" and a style which subsumes all differences under its aegis. While I agree with Muscatine that the style is finely controlled, I do not

think that the tale is a singlevoiced stylization. What he has identified as the plain style of pathos is, in fact, only a single narrative voice in a complex, multi-voiced narrative structure. Perhaps it is the most important voice, but the other voices in the tale are not contained by it. Yet I do not agree with those critics, such as Elizabeth Salter, Robert Jordan, or Alfred David who see the tale as ultimately problematic and disunified.⁴

What is important with these three critics is that they refuse to ignore the radical heterogeneity of the tale's elements, a heterogeneity Muscatine attempted to homogenize under the aegis of conventional style. But they view its radical heterogeneity as a sign of failure, for they secretly wish to resolve the contradictions the tale presents to us. This is not possible without disregarding much of the tale's narrative commentary. Nor is it even desirable. If anything, the Clerk's Tale is a study of contrasts: Walter/Griselda, didactic/mimetic, symbolic/realistic, dominant/submissive, religious/secular, serious/parodic. With the exception of the last pair, all of these contrasting pairs have been offered at one time or another in descriptions of the tale. And, as we shall see later, the dominant mode of the narrative commentary is contrast and comparison.

While almost everyone has described or pointed to the presence of radical contrasts in the tale, no one has attempted an explanation or interpretation of them. What haunts most discussions of the tale is the implication that Chaucer somehow failed to bring off whatever he was trying to do. Elizabeth Salter, for one, views the unresolved dichotomy of secular/religious modes as a major weakness of the tale. Although Anne Middleton more sympathetically suggests there is some purpose behind Chaucer's "...crossgraining of originally smooth and unambiguous material...", she provides no reasons why he might have done this. More recently, Robert Burlin, in an attempt to resolve this interpretative dilemma, has suggested that there are three different perspectives in the narrative commentary. He sees the Clerk narrator orchestrating all three viewpoints and would have us resolve the contradictions produced by these different world views in terms of the conventional Kittredgean dramatic model.⁵

The narrative voicing of the Clerk's Tale, like that of the Merchant's Tale, is more complex than the model of a dramatic persona will allow us to see. This model forces a "false" unity on the tale through the personality of the Clerk. Not only does it enforce a pseudo closure of the debate created by the different voices, but the model distorts the true nature of the dialectic,

allowing the scope and richness of it to go unrecognized. Under the aegis of this "dramatic" model, the unresolved contradictions have been regarded as the mark of artistic failure. Yet, as we shall see, these "contradictions" are the means by which the tale's poetic strategy is revealed.

The "contradictions" in the Clerk's Tale are the results of its multi-voiced narrative structure. The tale contains three different and antagonistic narrative voices. These voices project different viewpoints or world views and consequently engage each other in a polemical debate. Their relationship with each other is discontinuous and dialectical rather than continuous and harmonious. The three voices can be identified as those of moral allegory, of pathos and of parody. The first, moral allegory, is the voice of tradition, origination, authority, and high seriousness. It is identified with Petrarch and can be heard, for example, in the first ending giving the "moral" of the tale:

...every wight, in his degree
Shode be constant in adversitee
As was Grisilde;

[E1145-1147]⁶

The second voice, the voice of pathos, can be characterized as the voice of immediacy, of feeling and common experience. Where the voice of allegoresis moves to the

abstract, the voice of pathos resides in the concrete. Its mode is mimetic, not symbolic. It promotes a rhetoric of the plain style delineating "ordinary" reality, not a "high style" revealing the mysterious and the invisible. It appeals to the common sense, not theological argumentation. The voice of pathos is identified with the Clerk narrator who refuses to accede to or justify Griselda's suffering: "I seye that yvele it sit/ To assaye a wyf when that it is no nede." [E460-461]

The third voice is the voice of parody and it is nominally identified with Chaucer. Where the other two voices are apologetic, "ernestful" and reverential, the voice of parody is irreverent, playful and antagonistic to both the moral appeal of the allegory and the emotional appeal of pathos: "Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille." [E1171] The voice of parody most immediately constitutes a radical critique of the worldview enunciated by the voice of pathos. A clearer understanding of how these different voices are implemented and how they interact can be gained through an analysis of the tale's narrative structure.

The Clerk's Tale can be divided into four parts: (1) The prologue, (2) The narrative proper, (3) The exegesis or first ending, and (4) The parodic envoy or second ending. The prologue and double ending constitute the framing context of the tale and are composed entirely

of apostrophaic commentary, accounting for about 100 lines or 9% of the tale. The narrative proper as well contains explicit apostrophaic commentary which accounts for an additional 9% of the tale's lines. So altogether, the narrative commentary comprises about one fifth of the tale with equal portions of it divided between the framing context and the narrative proper. Among the several differences between these two categories of commentary, the one that is most readily apparent is that the commentary in the prologue and endings is all of a piece, compactly presented; whereas the commentary in the narrative is dispersed.

One effect of the compactness of the commentary in the framing context is that the judgements and explanations made there are more readily accessible. They maintain a cogency that is not immediately apparent with the apostrophes interspersed in the narrative proper. Yet, in the Clerk's Tale, these comments intercalated in the narrative develop a consistent argument, reflect a certain point of view, and define a distinctive narrative voice, which in this case is different from the voices contained in the framing context.

Two defining characteristics of the apostrophes have been suggested in my discussion so far. One is that the apostrophes interject emotionally evaluative commentary about the narrative. A second is that these apostrophes

project or constitute a clearly identifiable narrating voice or voices. There is yet a third important characteristic, namely, that these apostrophes cause a radical rupture of the narrative. As such they create a special zone of discourse that is distinct from the narrative proper. Although they do not constitute direct discourse, the apostrophes in some sense are outside the narrative frame. It is this explicit commentary that provides the most immediate critique of the characters and events of the tale.

This body of commentary, in turn, defines a narrative voice with a distinct point of view. One might say that it is within the space of the apostrophes that the narrating voice emerges from the flow of the narration to declare itself, to define its otherness vis-à-vis the narrated material and, in this case, the previous narrator. In the Clerk's Tale the narrative voice defined by the apostrophes interspersed in the narrative proper enunciates a discourse of pathos engaging the Petrarchan voice of moral allegory in a polemical debate.

The terms and limits of this debate will be clarified with my rhetorical analysis of these narrative apostrophes. But before I proceed with this task, I should like to point out that the Clerkly narrator differentiates his voice from that of Petrarch's right at the beginning of the tale before the narration has begun.

In the Prologue the Clerk mentions three times that he "lerned" the tale from Petrarch. The repetition of this attribution in conjunction with a disparaging comment on the style in which Petrarch wrote the tale emphasizes a critical difference between the two storytellers. The Clerk wishes to make clear at the outset that it is another's tale, some one else's discourse he is about to relate. And his relationship to it is ambivalent and polemical. I intend to amplify these remarks later in a detailed discussion of the prologue after I have presented my analysis of the Clerk's intranarrative commentary.

There are about twenty explicit asides or apostrophes in the narrative proper of the Clerk's Tale. The apostrophes are distributed fairly evenly throughout the tale; every part of the six-part narrative has at least one. However, the second, third and fourth parts have the highest number of comments. This brief synopsis of line counts indicates, not surprisingly, that the frequency and length of the commentary is greater during the initial and middle phases of Griselda's testing.

Six of the twenty apostrophes can be classified as what G. Genette calls "directing" asides: for example, "And in the chambre, whil they were aboute/Hir tretys, which as ye shal after heere." [E330-331]⁷ The main function of these short apostrophes is to focus the

reader's attention from one aspect of the narrative to another, or, as in the example cited, to headline an upcoming event in the story. In the Clerk's Tale they serve mainly to remind us that a story is being narrated; that is, they provide a direct contact between the narrator and auditors. As such, they need no further analysis.

The other fourteen apostrophes interspersed in the narrative can be listed as follows:

1. I blame hym thus	E 78-84
2. No wonder is thogh that she was astoned	E 337-343
3. Of hire array	E 383-385
4. This new markysesse	E 393-399
5. He hadde assayed hire ynogh	E 456-462
6. Allas! hir doghter	E 543-546
7. I trowe that to a norice	E 561-566
8. O nedelee was she tempted	E 621-623
9. But now of wommen	E 696-707
10. No wonder is, for to the peples ere	E 727-728
11. The rude peple	E 750-753
12. No wonder is, for in hire grete estaat	E 925-938
13. O stormy peple!	E 995-1001
14. O which a pitous thyng	E 1086-1087

Although these fourteen apostrophes project a single narrative voice, they do not all perform the same

function. For the purpose of my descriptive analysis it is useful to distinguish two general categories: 1) Those apostrophes in which an addresser or addressee are specified and, 2) those apostrophes in which they are not. A primary function of the first grouping of apostrophes--those with specification--appears to be that of making a series of judgements, and of developing a line of explicit argumentation. The function of the second grouping of apostrophes--those without specification--is more varied and less explicit. Some of these apostrophes seem to perform a more meditative and reflective activity. At least one apostrophe within this grouping appears to act as a substitute for Griselda's inner thoughts and feelings. Although the specified apostrophes are more helpful in explicitly defining the narrative voice, those unspecified apostrophes provide a wide range of feeling and nuance. Both categories are necessary to establish the ontological status--the self definition--of the voice and both kinds of apostrophes contribute to the implementation of its rhetorical strategy.

The major rhetorical figures employed in the construction of these apostrophes are exclamatio, interrogatio, contrarium, comparatio, similitudino, and conduplicatio.⁶ In virtually every apostrophe a figure of comparison or opposition is used. The single most important rhetorical device used in these apostrophes is

the figure, contrarium. From this we can surmise that the rhetorical strategy of the narrating voice is comparative and dialectical. As we shall see, the dialectic is an important rhetorical structure in the Clerk's Tale. Not only does it govern the relationship between the several narrative voices, but it is reduplicated on other levels in the structure of the tale, most notably in the dialogue between Griselda and Walter.

Within these preliminary remarks, I should like to turn to my analysis of these apostrophes. I will first discuss the apostrophes in which the addresser or addressee is specified since these delineate the explicit argumentum of this narrative voice. As such, they will provide a context and focus for my later discussion of these unspecified apostrophes. The addresser is specified in eight or over half of the apostrophes in the narrative proper of the Clerk's Tale: Those I have numbered above 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11 and 13. In all of these, the addresser that is specified is "I." Although this repetitive enunciation of the "I" does not give a concrete description of the addresser, it provides a common marker for a body of commentary. In this way it serves to demarcate that commentary while helping to identify with the present narrator. And, in doing so, it emphasizes the difference between the present narrator and the previous "worthy clerk."

The first apostrophe within the narrative proper occurs virtually at the beginning of the narration. The initial three stanzas of the tale are taken up first with a descriptio of the tale's locus, then a descriptio of the people of the land, Walter's "liges" and, finally, a notatio of Walter himself.⁹ In the fourth stanza an apostrophe interrupts the narrative descriptions to make a censorious judgement against Walter. There are several unusual features to this aside. The first is the early placement of it in the narration. It is as if the narrator wanted to waste no time in making it clear what he thinks about Walter. The second striking feature is the length of the aside. One of the longer in the tale, this apostrophe is a complete stanza. Only three stanzas were given to all of the tale's introductory material. The accent was on brevity. Yet, here, a whole stanza is devoted to commentary on "...somme things that he was to blame." The amplification of this material emphasizes Walter's faults and seems contrary to an earlier statement which described him as, "A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,/And ful of honour and of curteisye." [E73-74] The variance of this statement in the narrative with the narrator's comments highlights the narrator's negative attitude towards Walter. In addition to the placement and length of this aside, its rhetorical form, as well, contributes to its negative force.

The apostrophe is constructed with a double contrarium, an elaborate amplification of its opening critical statement: "I blame hym thus..." The judgement achieves its significance and force partly because of its simplicity, and partly because it is the first narrative aside in the tale. The comment occurs, in fact, just after Walter is named in the previous line: "And Walter was this yonge lordes name." [E77] So he is blamed immediately following the invocation of his name. Furthermore, the initial position of the "I" in the apostrophe clearly specifies for the reader just who is making the judgement. It emphatically identifies this narrative voice as critical, if not hostile, to one of the tale's main characters.

The first contrarium in the apostrophe takes up just over half the stanza:

I blame hym thus, that he considered noght
 In tyme comynge what myghte hym bityde,
 But on his lust present was al his thoght
 As for to hauke and hunt on every syde.
 [E78-84]

The apostrophe moves from the general to the concrete. The first part of this contrarium states the charge in general terms: "...he considered noght... what myghte hym bityde," while the second part becomes more specific with "lust present" and more so with the example in the fourth line "...to hauke and hunte." So

the apostrophe appears to amplify and reinforce its general argument with concrete details. But because of the figure contrarium, it does so in a special way. Parr, extrapolating from Geoffrey of Vinsauf, defines the figure as "denying the contrary of an idea before affirming it. Presenting a thought first negative and then positive." [P101]

It would appear, at first, to be a figure of contrast employed for the purposes of embellishing a comparison. This is what the structure of the figure suggests. But with further analysis it becomes clear that the figure is more a figure of argument than a figure of style. Or perhaps I should say, that the figure of style contains the determinate form of an argument.

Parr's definition does not provide an adequate description of what is occurring in this narrative aside. The narratorial voice generates an argument based on what is called in the ad Herennium as "reasoning by contraries" or what Chaim Perelman calls a double hierarchy argument.¹⁰ In this kind of argument, an accepted hierarchy is used to support the establishment of another. The two hierarchies in this contrarium are: a qualitative one composed of "thought"/"lust", and a quantitative or sequential one based on "tyme comynge"/"present." If the figure was merely presenting a simple contrast--"the thought negative and then positive"--it

might have contrasted future considerations with present ones. Instead, what actually occurs is that the two hierarchies are conflated; a relation is established by this coexistence. Thoughtfulness is associated with the future and "lust" with the present. The more readily accepted hierarchy containing reason/lust supports a higher valuation of the future. Conversely, the collocation of "lust present" suggests a devaluation of the present. This apparent degradation of the present is a thematic motif in the tale.

It is precisely on the terrain of the "lust present" that the argumentum of the tale takes place. The matrix of meanings coalescing around the word "lust" ranges from desire or pleasure to instinct or will. If Walter's compulsive behavior can be seen as indulging "his lust present" so Griselda's incredible restraint can be seen as an exercise of the will. Here, Walter's preoccupation with "his lust" reflects, among other things, his problematic relationship to the future--and consequently the past. The second half of the apostrophe recapitulates this aspect of the argument in very specific terms:

Wel ny alle othere cures leet he slyde,
 And eek he nolde--that was worst of alle--
 Wedde no wyf, for noght that may bifalle.
 [E82-84]

Once again, the structural figure employed is a contrarium. It is linked to the previous one by a relation of

cause and effect. The first part of this figure states that the result of Walter's preoccupation "to hauk and hunte" was neglect of his duties, "cures." After the general charge of neglect concerning present responsibilities, the second half of the contrarium--the last two lines of the apostrophe--makes a more specific accusation against Walter: he refused to "wedde no wyf." This refusal is associated with the future and it is characterized by this narrative voice with a negative or inverted superlatio: "and that was worst of alle." Two qualities of this superlatio reflect the structure of the apostrophe as a whole.¹¹

The first is the tendency towards the use of absolute statement, especially in the second half of the aside: "al his thoght," "wel my alle," "worst of alle" and "for noght." These phrases give an emphatic quality to the critical pronouncements of this narrative voice. Although they foreshadow Walter's later obsessive and cruel behavior, here, these comments seem excessive. The second quality the superlatio shares with the apostrophe is that of inversion. The mirrorlike structure is created in the apostrophe by a reversal of the negative/positive poles in the second contrarium. the initial contrarium contains first a negative and then a positive statement which the second reverses. This inverted structure has several consequences.

One consequence of this structural feature is that the future is mentioned both at the beginning and the end of the apostrophe, emphasizing its importance. The future "encloses" the present and is a determinant factor in its valuation. The rhetorical structure reinforces the argument that Walter's refusal to consider the future affects his ability to think about the present. A second consequence of this inverted structure is that the initial and terminal positions are occupied with negatives. The first line contains "considered noght" and the last two lines vary a conduplicatio of three negatives: "nolde," "no" and "noght."

An obvious effect of his series of negatives is to intensify the criticism made against Walter. A less obvious result of this structural disposition associate the future with negation. This association is made specifically in the terminal clause, "for noght that may bifalle." The meaning of this idiomatic expression "for noght" can be rendered "no matter what." However, a slightly more literal variation of its meaning gives "for the nothing that may happen." This oxymoronic possibility moderates the valuation of the present as well as the future. It also suggests that the "argument by contraries" employed by this narrative voice reflects an underlying ambivalence.

To summarize: First, the criticism of Walter in this aside is harsh and emphatic. Its placement near the beginning of the narrative proper bestows a premature quality upon it and contributes to the sharpness of the comments. The criticism has a class orientation. It occurs during the enumeration of the aristocratic values of land, lordship, and lineage. The introductory material that precedes the apostrophe includes a brief descriptio of "this noble contree," "a markys," "alle his liges" and his "lynage." Walter is charged with neglecting one of the most important functions of his class: the insurance of its survival and continuity through marriage and the production of progeny. Walter is accused of negating the future. Later, in an ironical twist, Walter will use the future as a rationale for torturing Griselda.

Second, the rhetorical form of the apostrophe has a determinant effect on its argument. The purpose of the aside is explicitly stated at its beginning, "I blame hym thus," so that the critical intention of the commentary is clear from the start. The use of the figure, contrarium, as a structural device allows for contrast and, more importantly, establishes linkages between different hierarchies. Two major collocations that have thematic significance are: lust/activity/ present and reason/negation/future. In addition, the inverted

structure arising from the doubling of this figure places negatives at the beginning and end of the apostrophe. This effectively intensifies the criticism against Walter.

Thirdly, this initial apostrophe begins to define a narrative voice. The voice can be characterized at this juncture as assertive, emphatic in its judgements and comfortable with aristocratic values. The initial position of the "I" indicate an eagerness to assert ownership to the judgements expressed. The emphatic nature of the opinions betray an absolutizing tendency. This attitude, in turn, reveals an identification with the aristocratic values celebrated in the opening stanzas. However, the employment of the figure, contrarium, "reasoning by contraries" hints at an ambivalence underlying such explicitly enunciated attitudes.

The second and third apostrophes which specify an addresser (number 3 and 4 above) are uttered in the second part of the tale. This section introduces Griselda and narrates the events up to the birth of her first child, including her marriage to Walter and the spread of her fame. The two apostrophes are placed about three-quarters of the way through the section in fairly close proximity. They bracket the stanza in which the marriage and the festivities connected with it are narrated.

The first of the pair, occurring just before the stanza, follows a very brief narration of Griselda's change of clothing. The narrative voice interrupts what appears to be the beginning of a conventional effictio of a woman, evoked by the details of "heris," "corone" and "nouches." "Of hire array what sholde I make a tale?" [E383] The first line of this apostrophe consists of an occupatio cast in the form of an interrogatio.¹² The narrative voice curtly dismisses the idea of such an elaborate description, implying that this "tale" is not going to be about such conventional matters. The occupatio, however, by invoking this conventional model of amplification, suggests a basis for comparison which the next two lines in the aside capitalize upon: "Unnethe the peple hir knew for hire fairness,/Whan she translated was in swich richesse." [E 384-85] What the narrative voice suggests here is that the change in Griselda was so radical that "the peple" hardly recognized her. These lines are constructed with a superlatio or hyperbole. This superlatio is unusual because it does not operate by exaggeration: "fairnesse" and "richesse" while indicating an exalted status are not in and of themselves hyperbolic. The superlatio is attenuated or displaced; that is, it is hyperbolic because of the effect her appearance has upon "the peple."

The indirect or oblique strategy initiated by the refusal to continue the direct description of Griselda is continued with this attenuated superlatio. More is implied than is said. Such indirection stands in contrast to the direct and explicit strategy pursued earlier in the commentary on Walter where the narrative voice forthrightly claimed ownership of the judgements expressed. Here the effect of indirection is otherwise. First, it implies a shared judgement in the expressed opinion. Second, the brevity and obliqueness of the commentary shifts the focus from the object, i.e., Griselda, to the idea of change itself.

The verb, "translated," used to describe the change, is particularly rich and evocative. The meaning most immediately applicative here is the transformation effected by the alteration in Griselda's garments. It indicates a change in physical appearance. But in a more primary sense the word means to carry across or to transfer, and has strong religious affiliations. So, for example, it can mean to move an object from one place to another. More specifically it can mean the transfer of a bishop from one see to another. Or it can mean the direct conveyance to heaven without the usual requirement of death, as in the case of the Virgin Mary. In addition to these religious connotations, the word carries even more

fundamental linguistic meanings. It can mean to translate from one language to another or it can mean to transfer in a metaphorical sense: an implied relationship. Translatio was the medieval rhetorical term for metaphor.¹³

These secondary and tertiary meanings of the word, "translated," endow the change affecting Griselda with a special reverberation. The rhetorical and religious connotations suggest a fundamental transformation. The association of Griselda with a rhetorical figure is repeated in the second apostrophe. Only this time the figure is simile, not metaphor.

After describing how Walter "conveyed hire" to his palace the narrative voice once more interrupts the story to comment on Griselda's good fortune. This apostrophe is a full stanza and, like the first of the pair, contains an attenuated or displaced superlatio. In fact, the whole apostrophe is virtually an extended hyperbole structured with a contrarium and a simile. It opens with a reminder that the narration of the tale will continue "shortly." Then with a definitive, "I seye" the narrative voice attributes the radical change in Griselda as the results of God's grace: in short, a miracle.

And shortly forth this tale for to chace,
I seye that to this newe markysesse
God hath swich favour sent hire of his grace,
[E393-395]

Only the narrative voice does not quite say it was a miracle. Instead, the narrative voice seems to be saying that the extent of "his grace" towards her can be measured in the radical change in Griselda's appearance. This attenuated superlatio becomes an elaborate qualification extending through the last four lines of the aside. The principal figure of construction is a contrarium:

That it ne semed nat by liklynesse
 That she was born and fed in rudenesse,
 As in a cote or in an oxe-stalle,
 But norissed in an emperoures halle.
 [E396-399]

The first three lines of the contrarium present the negative of the idea: it didn't seem that she was raised in poverty. The third line contains a simile amplifying the meaning of "rudenesse." The fourth and last line reverses the direction and states the positive of the idea: But she looked like she was raised in an "emperoures halle." The contrarium generates a radical contrast which serves to intensify this displaced superlatio. The simile gives a concrete focus to the contrast: "oxe-stalle" with "emperoures halle."

In order to understand the last line of the contrarium the reader must return to the first line of it. There a certain ambiguity arises because the reader is forced to interpolate an implied "but [it seemed that

she was] norissed..." from a line containing a double negative and a word with multiple meanings: "That it ne semed nat by liklynesse." [E396] The word "liklynesse" has several possible meanings. Its most immediate meaning here would be "in all likelihood, in all probability," and an adequate reading of the line might be "that it did not seem in all likelihood." Yet other meanings hint at a greater complexity. The word can also mean "appearance, similarity, similitude or comparison." These suggest the possibility of a second reading, "that it did not seem by appearance or comparison..." This reading accords well with what follows in the apostrophe, especially since the third line contains a similitudino or simile. However, still a third possibility presents itself. The line could mean that it was not possible to perceive or measure Griselda's transformation through the mode of similitude or explicit comparison because of the absolutely radical inner nature of the change.

This narrative voice, I think, is pursuing an argument against the adequacy or relevancy of the "high stile." A summation of that argument might be stated as follows: that the high style which catalogues descriptive details, and similitudino which compares the most readily accessible aspects of appearance are unable to comprehend or express the profound inner change that

affected Griselda. The key elements or terms of this argument are present in these two preceding apostrophes. They include: translatio vs. similitudino, the implicit vs. the explicit, the inner vs. the outer and the "middle" vs. the "high style."

In the first apostrophe of the pair, the narrator refuses to continue a conventional set piece of the "high style," a descriptio or effictio of Griselda. Instead he suggests that she had become unrecognizable. The world employed to describe this change alludes to translatio or metaphor. Metaphor expresses an implicit inner relationship. Later in the tale this narrative voice presents a detailed notatio of Griselda, a description of her inner qualities.

In the second apostrophe of the pair the contrarium focuses upon the speculation of a past which is provoked by Griselda's appearance "by liklynesse." Her appearance, taken as a sign of God's grace belies her past. She "seemed" to be what she was not. I think it is possible to surmise from what the narrator says that the mode of simile, "liklynesse" can be misleading. It can comprehend the outward sign of things but not the inner connections. What this conflict of different modes, or stylistic levels represents is a difference in perspective, in world views. I suspect that one of the transformations occurring in the tale is precisely a

realignment between inner and outer qualities. The Clerk narrator is challenging the relationship between the outer form and inner meaning of the allegoresis.

Although this narrative voice states that God approves of Griselda, his own approval of and identification with her is not as clearly stated as it will be later in the tale. Yet the comments about her are distinctly different from those concerning Walter. In the next example of an apostrophe containing a specified addresser the adverse opinions regarding Walter's behavior are even more emphatic than they were in the first apostrophe I discussed.

This apostrophe, numbered five in my listing, is placed at the beginning of the third part of the tale, just before the first explicit testing of Griselda is narrated. In the initial stanza of this section we are told that Walter can't get it "...out of his herte... This merveillous desir his wyfe t'assaye." Once again, as in the first part of the tale, the narrator then interrupts his narration to pronounce a summary judgement against Walter. Immediately following this first stanza is an explicit condemnation of Walter's jealous testing of Griselda:

He hadde assayed hire ynogh bifore,
And foond hire evere good; what neded it
Hire for to tempte, and alwey moore and moore,
Though som men preise it for a subtil wit?

But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit
 To assaye a wyf whan that it is no nede,
 And putten hire in angwyssh and in drede.
 [E456-462]

Once again the figure, contrarium, is central to the structure of this apostrophe, as it is in most of the asides in the tale. What is remarkable is the variation achieved in the application of the figure. In this instance, instead of the displaced superlationes that were combined with it earlier the figure is used in conjunction with interrogatio.

The basic contrast presented by the contrarium in this apostrophe is "good"/"yvele." In the first half of the apostrophe, the narrative voice states that not only has Walter "assayed" Griselda but he has "foond hire evere good." Then the rhetorical question is posed, "What neded it"...to tempt her further. The "answer" given in the second half of the apostrophe which is also the second half of the contrarium, condemns the extended testing as wrong: "I seye that yvele it sit." This contrast is emphasized through the figure traductio, a repetition of the key words, assayed/assay and neded/nede.

The combination of interrogatio with the contrarium generates a contrast on another level. When the narrator raises a question, he raises the specter of disagreement. The effect is unlike that produced by the

displaced superlatiōnes in the earlier asides. In those, the hyperbole, by measuring the affect of a quality or action on others, creates the appearance of a consensus opinion, and appeals to a generally held agreement. Here, however, interrogatio promotes an effect of difference and contrast. The narrative voice distinguishes "som men" from "me," its own voice and opinion from others. The Clerk will pursue this rhetorical strategy of differentiating his voice from others, especially Petrarch, with the aim of establishing a new valuation of the story.

But if the clerkly voice of pathos regards Walter's testing as overdone, this voice still expressed the opinion that, "To assaye a wyf," is quite legitimate. And it is because the voice of pathos shares this same premise with that of moral allegory, the polemic conducted by this voice is ultimately subsumed under the aegis of the allegorsis. For this narrator, then, the problem of suffering becomes a matter of degree established and controlled by "nede." Perhaps the Clerk's special interest in, "Aristotle and his philosophie," [E295] has some bearing here. Yet the attempt to work out a compromise solution, to institute an emotional economy of the "golden mean" between the demands of an absolute principle and human suffering reveals the "lie" of pathos. The limited polemic conducted by pathos

brings no relief to the suffering and the only hope it offers is a release through death. The voice of pathos does reveal the extent of Griselda's suffering and quietly insists that her human "angwyssh" be calculated in the equation of ideals. And, so we shall see, it also lays the groundwork for the more forceful attack made by the voice of parody.

The four apostrophes I have just analyzed constitute the majority in this series of six asides in which the addresser "I" is specified. They comprise the largest single category of explicit commentary in the narrative proper. The enunciation of the "I" performs two major functions. Firstly, it gives the judgements or opinions expressed an emphatic quality; that is, it reinforces their ideological status. Secondly, this specification of addresser emphasizes the fact that it is the "present" narrator who is making these judgements. It sharpens the distinction not only between this narrative voice and those other voices of consensus opinion; but, more importantly, this repetitive enunciation serves to demarcate the Clerk's voice of pathos from the previous narrative voice, Petrarch's voice of moral allegory. In addition to this group of apostrophes, there are two which specify the addressee, as well.

These are the apostrophes numbered 9 and 13, "But now of wommen wolde I axen for you" and "O stormy peple." Just as the particularization of the addresser helps to define the worldview of this narrative voice, so the specification of the addressee helps to indicate its ideological purview. As we shall see later, the several narrative voices in this tale can be distinguished by the audiences they address. In this sense the addressee can be seen as a constitutive part of the narrative voice. The two specified addressee in these apostrophes are "wommen" and "peple." Of the many characteristics these two groups share, perhaps the most significant one is that both are ruled. The voice of pathos by addressing those who are forced to submit to domination and suffering, not only defines its own ideological orientation but, at the same time, points to the gender and class aspect of suffering.

The first of these two apostrophes, number nine, "But now of wommen....," is placed about midway through the fourth part of the tale. It follows Walter's ruminations "upon hir pacience" after Griselda has surrendered "hir sone" to the "ugly sergeant." In this passage a curious inversion occurs. The narrator states that if Walter "Ne hadde soothly known..." just how much Griselda loved her children, he might have thought that her "sad visage" disguised "some subtiltee" (trick or deceit) or

"cruel corage." What the narrator is hinting at is not only Walter's inability to fathom Griselda's incredible "paciencce," but also his momentary fear that she is deceiving him, that somehow Walter and the children might be victims of her composed acquiescence. After alluding to this possibility, the narrator quickly has Walter reassuring himself, "But wel he knew that next hymself, certayn,/She loved hir children best in every wyse." [E694-95] The narrator then turns to address one of his longer asides to "wommen."

The first half of the apostrophe is constructed with two interrogationes.

But now o wommen wolde I axen fayn
 If thise assayes myghte nat suffise?
 What koude a sturdy housbonde moore devyse
 To preeve hir wyfhod and hir stedefastnesse,
 And he continuyng evere in sturdinesse?
 [E696-700]

These questions are reminiscent of the question raised in the apostrophe at the beginning of part three, "...What neded it/Hire for to tempte." [E456-57] There, with the removal of the first child, what was questioned was the "nede" for the testing; here, with the removal of the second, it becomes a question of sufficiency. There the narrator, addressing a general audience, carefully emphasized the differences of opinion between "som men" and "me." Here the narrator, by inviting "wommen"

to evaluate Walter's performance, attempts to establish a special rapport with them. He does this by adopting an ironical attitude towards Walter's actions for it is quite obvious what answer he might expect from women on this matter.

The force of these interrogationes suggests that there isn't much "moore" Walter might "devyse" to test "hir stedefastnesse." This much is quite obvious. So what is the point in asking obvious questions? And why does the narrator characterize the manner in which he asks them as "fayn," that is, gladly, willingly, eagerly? One thing the narrator's repetition and characterization of his questions does is create a sense of urgency. More specifically, these questions are a way of raising the issue of Walter's motivation. But the second half of the apostrophe does not provide an answer as to why Walter is "...continuyng evere in sturdiness?" Instead, the second part indicates that there is no motive sufficiently explanatory for Walter's behavior. The explanation that is proffered boils down to "some people are like that." Walter has a special "condicion." The narrator even suggests that Walter may be a victim of his own compulsions.

The second part of the apostrophe is organized with the figures contrarium and comparitio. The first three lines present the "explanation" in general terms.

But ther been folk of swich condicion
 That whan they have a certein purpos take,
 They kan nat stynte of hire entencion,
 [E701-704]

Actually this is not a true contrarium in that it doesn't merely present the positive and negative of a single idea. It can be considered a "mock" contrarium in that the second and third lines contain positive and negative statements in succeeding clauses which qualify the first line, "But ther been folk of swich condicion." The relation of these two lines is that of cause and effect. "...whan they have a certein purpose...,/They kan nat stynte." The inability to "stynthe" is the result of a "certein purpos." Here the mock contrarium reinforces the compulsive, automatic aspect of the behavior.

The next two lines amplify this opening general statement with another "mock" contrarium which contains a comparitio: "But, right as they were bounden to a stake,/They wol nat of that first purpos slake." Here the "mock" contrarium carries the force of meaning "in spite of." They "wol nat...slake...", despite the fact that, "They were bounden to a stake." The contrarium places maximal will power next to maximal constraint. The concrete image of the comparitio, "bounden to a stake" depicts an extreme situation and suggests loss of freedom and victimization. The last two lines of the apostrophe is a comparitio equating "this markys" with

"folk of swich condicion." "Right so this markys fulliche hath purposed/To tempte his wyf as he was first disposed." [E706-707] The conduplicatio of "right as" and "right so" as well as "first purpose" and "first disposed" reinforce the comparison with Walter.

But the image, "bounden to a stake," in this comparison introduces an ambiguity that never quite gets resolved. It suggests that Walter, too, is somehow a victim; and in this tale such a suggestion is painfully ludicrous. Perhaps the narrator is suggesting that Walter is a victim of his own compulsive behavior and that he is incapable of controlling his obsession to "tempte his wyf." Yet the comparison also implies that what lies behind Walter's apparent homicidal mania is a disciplined behavior. It graphically reveals the force and extent of his obsessions, but makes no attempt to explain it. Just as the interrogationes at the beginning of the apostrophe insinuate that Walter has gone beyond the limit in his "sturdinesse," but avoids the question of motive, so too, the comparison presents an image of incredible compulsion but gives no explanation of its origin.

In short, the apostrophe emphasizes the cruelty and irrationality of Walter's actions, suggesting as well, that his behavior is not all that unusual. It is extreme but not unique. By specifying women as the addressees

the apostrophe focuses upon the viewpoint of the victim. Perhaps this is why Walter's motivation is presented as mystifying. The interrogationes establish the idea that Walter has transgressed even the most maximal limits in his torture of Griselda and that his "assayes" will be infinitely repeated. The second part of the apostrophe, the "answer," implies that there is not motive sufficiently explanatory for his behavior. However, it naturalizes such behavior by comparing Walter to other strong willed, inflexible "folk." Finally, the commentary suggests that Walter's cruel behavior is in some way beyond his control: "kan not stynte." By focusing upon the compulsiveness of his behavior the apostrophe forces the audience to contemplate one of the most horrifying aspects of the violence Griselda is subjected to.

The other apostrophe specifying an addressee, specifies an addresser as well; and one that is different from the Clerk narrator, complicating the narrative situation. In the Ellesmere MS, as well as others, the marginal notation, "Auctor," provides a hint to the special status of this aside. The Clerk attributes the addresser as the "sadde folk in that citee." The addressee is the "stormy peple." The apostrophe is placed in the first third of the last part of the tale, part six, just after Griselda's daughter arrives from "Boloigne" for the second "marriage."

We are told in the narrative that once the "peple" get a look at Griselda's daughter they decide: "That Walter was no fool, thogh that hym leste/To chaunge his wyf, for it was for the beste." [E986-87] Several lines later the apostrophe cuts loose. It functions as a choric commentary on the reaction of some of the people to Walter's "governaunce."

O stormy peple! unsad and evere untrewel!
 Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a vane!
 Delitynge evere in rumbul that is newe,
 For lyk the moone ay wexe ye and wane!
 Ay full of clappynge, deere ynogh a jane!
 Youre doom is fals, youre constance yvele
 preeveth;
 A ful greet fool is he that on yow leeveth.

[E995-1001]

As can be seen, the apostrophe disparages the stability, constancy and judgement of the "peple." In a series of accusatory exclamationes, they are compared to the changeableness of a weathervane, as well as the waxing and waning of the moon. The aside ends with the declaration that anyone who believes them is a "ful greet fool." It is a wholesale condemnation of the "peple." Or so it would seem. But then the attribution of the apostrophe by the Clerk narrator to the "sadde" or discreet, stable "folk" would indicate that only some of the "peple" are being condemned.

The attribution of an addresser other than the Clerk provokes a number of questions here. Foremost among them

are why the "folk" are specified at all? Why is their commentary reported at this juncture of the story? And why do they condemn other spectators and not Walter? Underlying these questions is the issue of the status and role of the "peple" in the tale. A brief digression on the issue of the "peple" is necessary to provide a framework for the answers to these questions.

The "peple," as well as their synonym, "folk," are mentioned no less than 44 times in the tale, so they play a prominent role in it. For the most part, though, they are not fully concretized but remain abstract. They are, however, not an undifferentiated mass. they are described, for example, as "gentil" [E480], or "rude" [E250], or "wisest" [E87] or as in this apostrophe "sadde" or "unsad." In the several instances the "peple" are given more individualized definitions. The representative of them, "...that wisest was of loore," [E87] who presents the case for marriage before Walter, is given a speech of 50 lines. There are realistic details added to the description of Janicula. And, of course, there is Griselda, whose characterization is more fully realized and who can be seen as an idealized representative of the "peple." All of these are positive characterizations of individuals representatives of the "peple." But for the moment I want to focus upon the

role the "peple" play as a collective agent in the prosecution of the story.

Virtually every major action Walter undertakes in the tale is represented as resulting from the influence or pressure from the "peple." The "peple" initiate the main action of the story by requesting that Walter marry [LL. 85 ff]. And when Walter finally decides to divorce Griselda, he declares in "open audience":

I may not doon as every plowman may
My peple me contreyneth for to take
Another wyf, and crien day by day;
[E789-801]

In between these two events, Walter invokes the will of the "peple" to sanction his testing of Griselda. In private conversation with her, Walter depicts the "peple" as a determinate influence on his decision to remove the children:

I moot doon with thy doghter for the beste,
Nat as I wolde, but as my peple leste.
[E489-490]

My peple silely berth oure mariage;
And namely sith my sone yboren is
Now is it worse than evere in al oure age.
[E625-627]

The "peple" appear to function in the tale as a legitimating agent; their sanction is presented as desirable by Walter.

More than that, Walter seems to "drede" their "sentence." In the fourth part of the tale, when Walter is about to have his "sone" removed, he tells Griselda:

Swich wordes seith my peple, out of drede,
 Wel ought I of swich murmur taken heede;
 For certainly I drede swich sentence,
 Thogh they nat playn speke in my audience.
 [E634-637]

So here we have Walter representing to Griselda the "voys" of the people as, among other things, a "murmur" which is both mysterious and threatening. A few lines earlier he described the devastating effect this "voys" has upon him:

The murmur sleeth myn herte and my corage
 For to myne eres comth the voys so smerte
 That it wel ny destroyed hath myn herte.
 [E627-630]

The "murmur," Walter insists, has the power to slay his will or volition. The meaning of the word "corage" extends from inclination, desire or courage to the locus (heart) of the emotion, affections and volition. The meaning of the word "murmur" in Chaucer always carries the connotation of complaint as well as threat: that of the "churls" rebelling. What Walter is alluding to here is perhaps a variation of the proverbial "vox populi, vox dei."¹⁴

In summary, we can say that Walter emphasizes the monolithic, unitary aspect of the people's "voys."

Further, Walter suggests that he must interpret "swich sentence" because "they not pleyn speke." Finally, he insists that he feels under an overwhelming compulsion to "heede" this "murmur." Walter consistently advances this argument to Griselda throughout the tale as his rationale for testing her. If he does not assert that his authority to rule is derived from the "peple," at least he alludes to the contractual, feudal aspects of his relationship with them. Yet when he addresses the "peple," he says otherwise.

When the representative of the people comes forward to ask Walter to marry, Walter consents but at the same time forcefully asserts: "Wherefore of my free wyl I wole assente/To wedde me, as soone as evere I may." [E150-151] Here Walter insists upon the unfettered voluntas of the prince. Here there is no hint of obligation or threat. The request is proffered with the utmost deference by the representative of the people: "And ye, my lord, to doon right as you leste." [E105] When the audience is concluded and Walter "graunted them a day....," they leave him: "Knelynge upon hir knees ful reverently." [E187] The attitude the people express towards Walter is one of humble deference. Walter is presented as exercising his princely prerogative to the fullest. Similarly, when discussing the marriage

"tretys" with Griselda, he demands that she obey him absolutely,

I seye this, be ye redy with good herte
To al my lust, and that I frely may,
As me best thynketh,

[E351-353]

Walter's assertion of his "free wyl" to the people's petition and his insistence of complete dominance over Griselda contradicts his later argument to her that he is constrained in his action by the will of the people.

What exactly is going on here? Can we assume, as some have done, that Walter is just using the Vox populi rationale to manipulate Griselda? Is he just lying to her for his own sadistic aims? In a sense, yes--Walter is beguiling Griselda. But perhaps this answer hides more than it reveals. What it glosses over are the political terms in which Walter's arguments are couched. The issue of sovereignty is woven into the texture of the tale, as the above citations amply demonstrate. And if the tale cannot be read strictly as a political allegory, at least it is obvious that some of the elements for such a reading are congealed in the tale's structure. As we shall see later, the clerk narrator pointedly rejects this "secular" allegoresis. What lies behind Walter's contradictions, I think, is more than a violation of a code of personal conduct. Or rather, I should

say that any reading of the Clerk's Tale should take into account the fact that while Walter's inconsistencies are equivocations of character, they also reflect two differing views of sovereignty. The issue of sovereignty is part of a complex cluster of ideas and oppositions that have thematic significance in the tale. It is an aspect of the tale's larger dialectic which includes the oppositions of public/private, supernatural/natural and inner/outer. Perhaps a brief discussion of these issues might be helpful at this juncture.

As Walter Ullmann has outlined, there were two fundamental ideas regarding sovereignty in the Middle Ages: the ascending and the descending theses.¹⁵ In the descending or theocentric conception, the authoritative relationship is between the prince and God. In this view the prince exercises his voluntas unimpeded and unconstrained by those he rules. In the other, the ascending or populist thesis, the primary relationship resides between the prince and his "peple." The prince is the personification of his "peple." The contractual aspects of sovereignty are emphasized and this implies a certain constraint on the activity of the prince, at least in theory.

The dominant idea that held sway for most of the Middle Ages was the descending thesis. The king or prince was responsible to no one but God. However, this

theocentric concept of kingship was modified by a feudal element, which, as Ullman points out, created a certain tension:

As ruler, the medieval king harboured in his breast two irreconcilable functions. The theocratic one, according to which his own voluntas created law, and which he exercised on the strength of his own considerations, unimpeded and independent as they were, and the feudal one, according to which it was not his voluntas alone that constituted the material force of law, but the implicit or explicit consent of the feudal tenants-in-chief to the law.

Elsewhere Ullmann suggests that where the feudal kingship established itself firmly--especially in 14th century England--populist themes gained ground and the feudal community came to stand for the populus.¹⁶ So we can see that the contrary viewpoints of sovereignty which are articulated in the tale have a socially objective existence independent of Walter's subjective manipulations.

Walter acts on these contradictory themes of sovereignty. On the one hand, he emphasizes the theocratic aspect of his rulership by insisting upon his "fre wyl" in granting his people's request that he marry. He also stresses this aspect of his sovereignty in his demands that Griselda submit readily and without complaint "to al my lust." On the other hand, the feudal aspects of his sovereignty are specified, for example, when Walter greets Janicula as "my feithful lige man." This follows

the description at the beginning of the tale where his people are described as "liges." "Lige" is a technical term defining a feudal relationship between lord and vassal. This contractual aspect of sovereignty is also pointed to when Walter repeatedly tells Griselda that he is "constreyned" by his people. These contrary theses can be seen as constitutive principles of Walter's existence defining a set of motives for his behavior.

Related to these conflicting principles of political sovereignty is a dual concept of man. One of the qualities ascribed to Walter by the representative of the marriage committee is his "humanitee": "O noble markys, youre humanitee/Assureth us and yeveth us hardiness." [E92-93] The word "humanitee" most likely means in this context, kindness, mercy or courtesy and graciousness; terms with which a vassal might address his lord. But the primary meaning of the word is human nature, human form. What the representative could be alluding to is the human, feudal aspects of their relationship; unlike Walter, who when he asserts his unconstrained voluntas, his "fre wyl," alludes to his relationship with God. As Walter Ullman points out, humanitas, in the human manner or human nature, is a key concept in Aquinas's synthesis of Aristotelian and Christian thought.¹⁷ Aquinas drew a distinction between natural man, and Christian man, homo and christianus. The two no longer coincided as

they did for an earlier Christian thinker such as Augustine. This distinction could be made because nature as such, the natural order was granted a relative autonomy with its own governing principles. There was no strict and absolute opposition between natural and divine; nature was not obliterated by divine intervention as in Augustine's universe. Instead, grace complemented and perfected the natural world. A new hierarchy between the two had been established and a duplex ordo consisting of the natural and supra-natural. Within this Thomistic framework the state, as well as man, was regarded as a natural entity. So the term "humanitee" signifies Walter as the natural man, the ruler exercising his natural reason and will.

I would not wish to suggest that the Thomistic framework can be applied as a blueprint to analyze the Clerk's Tale. However, I think that some of the categories Aquinas created can be useful in recognizing and understanding the kinds of distinctions that are made in the tale. For example, Aquinas's idea of grace complementing and perfecting an already existant nature provides a fairly good explanation of Griselda's identity and the changes she undergoes. Before her marriage to Walter she is described as having "vertu" and "vertuous beautee." After the marriage the narrator comments: "God hath swich favour sent hire of his grace." [E395]

As a result of this infusion of grace, Griselda's virtue is increased:

For though that ever vertuous was she
 She was encressed in swich excellence
 Of thewes goode, yset in heigh bountee,
[E406-408]

Griselda is presented as a natural being in a natural world that is enhanced by the supra-natural.

In this way The Clerk's Tale can be seen articulating the newly established status of nature in the scheme of things. The tale reveals the relative autonomy of the natural world and delineates partially the process of differentiation by which the natural evolves into a relatively self-sufficient entity. What the tale also demonstrates is that the penalty for this relative autonomy, this elevation in the status of nature, is suffering. Griselda can be viewed as a figure upon whom this dialectic of elevation and abuse is enacted. This probably accounts for the Christological allusions and overtones in the tale. Only for Griselda, the outcome is different. The end of her "passion," her testing by Walter does not result in death. Her children are restored to her; the natural cycle is allowed to continue. Perhaps on some level the tale is hinting at the end of the absolute thralldom in which the supra-natural has held the natural.

What I should like to emphasize here is that a new realm is being created, so to speak, by this process of differentiation. The natural world, by acquiring a positive value has, in a sense, received a newly defined existence. The natural falls under the sign of pathos because of the suffering generated in its differentiation. If before I said that in the vision of pathos the horizons are narrowed to the concrete and intimate, the realm of ordinary perception and feeling, now I would say that a space is being created for this zone of ordinary reality. Private zones of contact and discourse are being delineated in the tale. Chaucer, in fact, exploits the difference between the public and private realms.

This dialectic of inner and outer, public and private realms can be seen, for example, in the way the issue of the marriage is presented. The representative of the people requests that Walter marry in a "public" forum. Walter, in agreeing to marry, asserts his princely voluntas, and demands that they accept his "private" choice without question or complaint. This is more graphically enacted in Walter's private negotiations with Griselda. Their marriage agreement, "Hir tretys," is made between them, "in thy chambre" while the people "cam unto the hous withoute." [E332] This distinction between the two spheres is reenforced with the detail that only

after the private agreement is made is it announced to the people "...out at the dore." [E367] We can also see this motif of the public/private operating when Walter removes the children from Griselda: "He cam allone a-nyght, ther as she lay," [E464] that is, he discusses it in private, but he uses a "public" contract as a rationale: "Nat as I wolde, but as my peple leste." [E490] The "sergeant" who removes the children is described as "this privee man"--a confidential servant or officer of Walter's. Griselda, on the other hand, is a representative of the people and in this sense a public person: "The commune profit koude she redresse" [E431]. But she was also accomplished in the private area of domestic duties: "...Koude al the feet of wyfly hoomliness." [E429] So we can say that the interchange between these two spheres has a thematic significance in the tale.

Nowhere is this more evident than at the end of the fourth part where the narrator describes how Walter's obsessive persecution of Griselda has destroyed his reputation with his "peple":

For which, where as his peple therbifore
Hadde loved hym wel, the sclaundre of his diffame
Made hem that they hym hated therefore.

[E729-731]

Walter's "sclaundre" consisted in having a "cruel herte," marrying a "povre woman" and murdering his children.

Here we see the intersection of the inner/ outer dialectic: "Hath mordered his children prively./Swich murmur was among hem comunly." [E725-726] The key words here are, of course, "prively" and "comunly." What is implied here is that what a prince does privately does have public consequences. And this provides us with a hint as to why the tale gives such sharp definition to the private and public zones. What is involved with this distinction, as we can see, is the issue of sovereignty and behind the issue of sovereignty lies the issue of tyranny. Although the word is not used in The Clerk's Tale, some aspects of Walter's behavior fit the fourteenth century textbook definitions of tyranny.¹⁸ A fundamental distinction between a legitimate prince and a tyrant is that the prince acts or wills for the "commune profit," the tyrant for his own private interests. I think this brief synopsis gives an idea of how the public/private spheres are delineated in the tale and suggests their interconnection with the fundamental issue of sovereignty.

Summarizing, I would say that the "peple" play a much more significant role in the tale than is immediately apparent. Not only do they perform a "choric" function in the tale, but they constituted a motivating force for Walter's actions. This is not to say they constitute the motivation for his actions--that ultimately remains

obscure. More importantly, the "peple" refract different attitudes about the central issue of sovereignty, acting as a bellwether of contrary ideas regarding it. They are also intimately involved in the delineation of different zones of contact and discourse. All of this gives the "stormy peple" apostrophe an increased thematic importance. Before I conclude my discussion on this apostrophe, I would like to examine the few explicit comments the clerkly narrative voice makes about the "peple."

The first direct comment this narrative voice makes about them, although it appears to be objectively neutral, actually carries a negative valuation:

For thogh the peple have greet insight
 In vertu, he considered full right
 Hir bountee,

[E242-244]

The context of this casual assessment of the people is Walter considering Griselda as his marriage partner. Most likely the comment, which doesn't qualify as a full fledged apostrophe, is the narrator's because it seems to provide an explanation for Walter's decision to marry her. However, as I pointed out earlier, it could be Walter's quasi-direct speech or his inner thoughts. Or it could even be a cliché or commonplace without any forceful judgement. The remark that the "peple" have no

insight in "vertu" implies that they have no special claim or authority; that is, any special claim to political or moral authority. The word "vertu" has affiliations with the meaning of "gentillesse." Both carry different aspects of a cultural ideal and are part of an aristocratic ideology. Whether or not the comment is the shared opinion of Walter and the narrator or just that of the clerk, it reveals an anti-populist bias. Other explicit comments the clerkly voice makes confirms this orientation.

Again, although these two other remarks might be regarded as objective and neutral, they display a set of attitudes which one could call patronizing. Both remarks are apostrophes because they break the narrative flow, and both are placed towards the end of the fourth part just after Walter's "sclaundre" and loss of popularity are narrated.

The first apostrophe occurs just following the enumeration of the details regarding Walter's "sclaundre" which includes the murder of his children: "No wonder is, for to the peples ere/Ther cam no word, but that they mordred were." [E727-728] This short apostrophe opens with the phrase, "No wonder is," which gives an emphatic quality to the explanation and makes it appear almost self-explanatory. Chaucer employs this phrase in two other apostrophes in The Clerk's Tale. The first

instance is the other apostrophe I will be discussing. In the second instance the phrase is used, as here, to open the most important apostrophe in the tale. Here we find the clerkly voice not only offering an explanation as to why the "peple" believed Walter "mordered" his children but the comment offers a justification as to why, "Swich murmur was among hem comunly." [E726] As I noted earlier, in Chaucer's usage the word "murmur" means grumbling, complaining, usually with a threatening or rebellious attitude. What this remark suggests is that the Clerk believes there may be legitimate reasons for the "peple" to censure a ruler.

The second apostrophe near the end of the fourth part achieves the opposite effect. Instead of a consonance between the views of the "peple" and the clerkly voice, there is a contrast. The apostrophe follows the narration of the "popes dispensacion" which grants Walter the right to remarry:

The rude peple, as it no wonder is,
Wenden ful wel that it hadde be right so;
But when thise tidynges came to Grisildis,
I deeme that hire hert was ful wo.

[E750-753]

This apostrophe, as are most of the others, is structured with a contrarium. But in addition to expressing the positive and then the negative of an idea, this contrarium specifies who holds these contrasting opinions:

"the rude peple" and Griselda. This clause, "as it no wonder is," is an appeal to the reader for a consensus suggesting knowingly that's just what one might expect from "the rude peple." Here the word "rude" can mean unknowing as well as vulgar. Or as they are later called by the narrator "unsad" or "indiscreet." Actually, the narrator is contrasting the people's sense of appropriateness regarding the "new" marriage with his opinion of how she must have felt about it, not her directly expressed opinion. As is usual in the tale, Griselda's reactions and thoughts are rarely directly presented. As I will describe later, this representation of her inner thoughts and feelings is a function of certain narrative apostrophes in the tale. The purpose of this apostrophe is to emphasize the radical distance between Griselda and "the peple" at this point of the narrative.

The operative concept in the three explicit comments the clerkly voice makes about the people is that they have no special claim on "virtu." The second apostrophe is short and explanatory, giving a reason for the people's ignorance of the fate of the children and providing a rationale for their censorious complaints. The third apostrophe emphasizes the commonness of the people, their lack of insight and by implication, their inability to withstand "the adversitee of Fortune." Clearly the attitude or world-view that these comments constitute is

a conservative, aristocratic one, a mindset that is in complete agreement with a theocentric concept of rulership. Yet in this tale, Walter, the prince, seems to have a corruption of the will and Griselda, the representative of the people par excellence remains unblemished and a fount of wisdom, grace and, of course, patience.

Although Griselda comes from the "povre folk," it is not this fact that accounts for her wisdom and "virtu." The Clerk narrator makes clear right from the start that her specialness is the result of God's grace. This is alluded to when Griselda is first mentioned at the beginning of the second part of the tale: "But hye God somtyme senden kan/His grace into a litel oxes stalle;" [E206-206] The christological associations in this passage have been pointed out by other commentators. Later the narrator more explicitly states that Griselda's exceptionalness is due to God's grace: "That she from hevene sent was as men wende,/Peple to save and every wrong t'amende." [E440- 441] These two passages referring to Griselda confirm more completely the conservative, theocentric worldview of this narrative voice.

The fabric of the tale is interwoven with the issues of sovereignty and suffering or patience. The tale potentially is a political as well as a moral allegory which is why Giovanni da Lignano, an Italian jurist and

political theorist of the 14th century is mentioned in conjunction with Petrarch in the prologue to the tale.¹⁹ The Clerk narrator refuses both gambits, just as this voice refuses to raise the issue of tyranny although the descriptions of Walter's "slaundre" at the end of part four certainly would indicate that this might be the case. In fact, the condemnation of the people in the apostrophe, "O stormy peple! unsad and evere untrewe!," effectively relegates the issue of tyranny to the ashheap. Some people regarded Walter's "governaunce" as just fine: "the peple hath caught plesaunce,/Commendyng now the markys governaunce." [E993-994] The political allegory is presented and then withdrawn, it is suggested, and then denied as the occupatio to the "stormy peple" reveals:

Namoore of this make I now mencioun,
But to Grisilde agayn wol I me dresse,
And telle hir constance and hir bisynesse.
[E1006-1008]

The reason the clerk narrator attributes this apostrophe to the "sad" people is to destroy the notion of a single "vox populi" or unity of the people's will. As a political principle it is shown to have no validity because that unity, that single voice is illusory. The Clerk narrator, by attributing this apostrophe to the "sad" people at once represses and reveals his attitude

towards the people. He has the choric "peple" comment on the "peple" and represses the political content and context of his remarks and the tale. But with the adjectival "sad," the Clerk reveals his agreement with this strident condemnation of the people. The sovereign will may be distorted, but the Clerk insists, the popular will is distorted as well. By averting or denying the political allegoresis, the Clerk maintains the focus on the personal, human suffering of Griselda.

Griselda is not an illustration of an abstract ideal or a lesson in the woes of tyranny. As far as the clerkly voice is concerned, Griselda is the embodiment of restraint and human suffering. The insistence of the clerkly narrator on keeping the focus of the narrative on Griselda and "hir constance" reenforces the movement of pathos. It narrows the horizon down to the intimate and the individual, albeit an exceptional individual. The movement of pathos is an elaboration of sentiment, a creation of inner space and interiority. The last group of apostrophes in the Clerk's voice that I will discuss function to reveal Griselda's inner qualities. Through these apostrophes the narrator reveals Griselda's inner anguish.

This final group of asides in the Clerk's voice contains six apostrophes: those that I have numbered 2, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14 above. None of these apostrophes specify an addresser or addressee. They confirm, however, the point of view regarding Walter and Griselda that is enunciated by those apostrophes which specify an addressee or addresser. In fact, this last group demonstrates just how fully the Clerkly voice idealizes Griselda. The six apostrophes can be further usefully divided into two groups. The first grouping would be those in an explanatory mode, which are numbered 2, 10, 12 and which begin with the clause, "No wonder is." The second subgrouping would be those that begin with an exclamatio, the simplest and purest form of apostrophaic aside, numbered 6, 8 and 14. I should like to discuss this latter grouping first.

All of these apostrophes are short, the longest four lines long, the shortest, number 14, only two lines. The latter exclamatio is made after Griselda is re-accepted by Walter as his wife and after she learns that both her children have survived: "O which a pitous thyng it was to se/Hir swounyng, and his humble boys to heere!" [E1086-1087] There are two notable qualities about this exclamatio. This is the first time the word "pitous" is used in conjunction with Griselda. We can consider the previous stanza in which the word appears as part of the

same passage. It is employed after Griselda's testing and suffering have ended. The second notable feature is that the word is used in conjunction with Griselda's most demonstrative display of her feeling: "hir swounyng." Although some readers have criticized this passage for overly indulging the pathetic, I suspect that what Chaucer was attempting is to bring Griselda's experience within the orbit of "ordinary" human experience, and by doing so to provide a measure of the enormity of her suffering and bondage.

All of the feelings which were repressed and hidden during her ordeal are now released and Griselda, overcome by them, faints. Chaucer extends the "swounyng" passage and highlights with this apostrophe for two reasons. One is to suggest that Griselda does, in fact, experience ordinary human feelings. When she is released from the marriage "tretys," her bond of silence, those feelings overwhelm her. The second reason is to emphasize the extent of her sufferings: they were so great that they are beyond expression. The profoundly sad irony that is elaborated here is that Griselda cannot give "voys" to her suffering either because of the prohibition by external domination or the intensity of her inner feelings. The implied judgement this shortest apostrophe makes is that bound or not, Griselda remains unfree. No

further explanation is needed, the context of the narration determines such a judgement.

The second apostrophe in this group of apostrophes with exclamatio, numbered 8, expresses a more overt judgement. It is placed at the beginning of the fourth part of the tale, immediately after Walter's decision to test Griselda a second time is narrated: "This markys caughte yet another test/To tempte his wyf yet ofter, if he may." [E619-620] The apostrophe that follows echoes here the judgement expressed in an earlier aside when the first child was removed:

O nedeless was she tempted in assay!
 But wedded men ne knowe no mesure,
 Whan that they fynde a pacient creature.
 [E621-623]

The judgement is expressed here in a straightforward manner. The exclamatio which begins the apostrophe and which protests the excessive nature of Griselda's testing is also the first part of a contrarium. The second part of the apostrophe suggests an explanation for the "assay." Married men know no measure or restraint. The third and final line of the aside specifies the conditions under which married men lose their constraints: when they "fynde a pacient creature." This explanation, smudged with cynicism, tends to naturalize the action of Walter making it seem inevitable.

The third apostrophe in this grouping, number 6, which occurs earlier in the tale, has a different function than the two I have just discussed. This apostrophe occupies a marginal zone between the narrator and Griselda. The compositional form is in the third person, but the rhetorical situation is more of a hybrid, more like quasi-direct speech. What this apostrophe makes clear is the narrator's identification with Griselda. The aside occurs in part three just as the "sergeant" arrives to remove her daughter. Muscatine marks this passage as one of the three instances where the "heigh stile" is employed in the tale.

The narrative focuses upon the action of the sergeant and Griselda's reaction to those actions. He is described as brutal, "the child he hente/Dispitously" [E534-535] and he look as if "he wole han stayn it er he wente." [E536] Griselda, on the other hand, is depicted a completely passive, "as a lamb she sitteth meke and stille." [E538] In the stanza following this narration the narrative voice digresses to emphasize the unsavory character of the sergeant and to apostrophize on Griselda's reaction--or, I should say, her non-reaction. The first three lines focus on the sergeant:

Suspecious was the diffame of this man
 Suspect his face, suspect his word also;
 Suspect the tyme in which he this began
[E540-542]

They provide specific detailed reasons--if any are needed--why Griselda would be alarmed by the sergeant. The conduplicatio of "suspect" emphasizes a sense of danger and alarm. This whole passage is overdetermined by the rhetorical figuration which effectively narrows the range of reactions the reader might have. Although the forms of the statements are in the third person, they are presented from Griselda's perspective, which is an indication of the merging of her and the narrator's viewpoint.

Following these first three lines that focus upon the disreputable character of the sergeant, the narrator breaks into an apostrophe, although these three lines can almost be considered apostrophaic. Geoffrey of Vinsauf lists conduplicatio, their structural figure, as one of the embellishments under the category of apostrophe.²⁰ At any rate, midway through this stanza, the Clerk interrupts his description to comment on Griselda's reaction:

Allas! hir doghter that she loved so,
 She wene he wolde han slawen it right tho.
 But nathelees she neither weep ne syked,
 Conformynge hire to that the markys lyked.
 [E543-546]

The aside is constructed with an exclamatio and a contrarium. The exclamatio expresses the apprehension of the narrator while it reminds the reader that the child

about to be "slawen" was well loved by Griselda. Although the exclamation is cast in the grammatical form of the third person, it can be said to represent the feelings of Griselda as well as the narrator. This is confirmed by a comment made by the narrative voice a little later: "Wel myghte a mooder thanne han cryd, 'Allas!'" [E563] There the "Allas" is presented as Griselda's outward speech or cry. So we have a warrant to consider this exclamatio as representing her inner speech, an interior, suppressed monologue, you might say.

Chaucer has the narrator speak for Griselda, using the apostrophe to get around the rather awkward situation of a heroine who is unable either to show any overt reaction or to express her distress about her child's impending death. The contrarium is employed here to emphasize this dilemma. This hybrid apostrophe serves a double function, then. It reveals to the reader the intense inner conflict Griselda is experiencing, as well as her resolute willpower. It also demonstrates how completely the clerkly narrative voice identifies with her. In the movement of pathos Griselda's and the narrator's viewpoints merge, at times, and become a single entity. The apostrophe paradoxically reveals the repressed inner thoughts and feelings of Griselda. Rather I should say it reveals while at the same time it maintains or continues the repression of them. The movement

of pathos is itself revelatory but prevents or represses a countermovement against the source of the suffering.

The other subgrouping of three apostrophes with unspecified addresser/addressee are more in an explanatory, than an exclamatory mode. This is the case, at least, for the two shorter asides, numbered 2 and 10 above. What sets them off from the narrative flow is the initial clause, "No wonder is." The third apostrophe in this grouping, number 12, is the longest in the tale. It begins in this explanatory mode but quickly goes beyond it and builds into a powerful, polemical statement which defines and locates the ideological center of the clerkly narrative voice. Before I examine this final aside, I should like to look briefly at the two shorter ones.

Both of these are repetitions; that is, though they may be giving a further explanation of a situation, they are repeating information already given for the sake of emphasis. In the first instance, the aside "explains" why Griselda was "astoned" to see Walter in her father's hut. An explanation is given in the narration in the two lines preceding the aside: "But outrely Grisilde's wondre myght,/For nevere erst ne saugh she swich a sighte." [E335-336] In the next stanza, the clerk narrator breaks in with a second explanation which emphasizes the "naturalness" of Griselda's reaction:

No wonder is thogh that she were astoned
 To seen so greet a gest come in that place;
 She nevere was to swiche gestes woned,
 For which she looked with ful pale face.
 But shortly forth this matere for to chace,
 [E337-341]

The apostrophe is organized by a contrarium. First a positive statement is made: she was shocked to "seen so greet a gest," then the negative: she was not accustomed, "woned," to such guests. The contrast is contained in the two rhymed words, "astoned" and "woned." The purpose of the aside, then is to emphasize the normalness of Griselda's reaction. This contrasts later with her more restrained and unusual behavior when she is subjected to "assays" by Walter.

The second aside, numbered 10 above, and which I have already discussed, functions in a similar manner. This short, two-line apostrophe reiterates the main charge of Walter's "sclaundre": he "mordred booth his children." After enumerating the specifics of the "sclaundre" the narrative voice stops to explain: "No wonder is, for to the peples ere/Ther cam no word, but that they mordered were." [E726-727] So we can see that these two apostrophes repeat details already presented by the narration. The repetition as well as emphasizing selected details asserts the naturalness or normalness of the reactions of Griselda and the "peple." In the third apostrophe of the "No wonder" group, Chaucer goes

beyond the explanatory mode to have the Clerk make a powerful polemical statement.

This apostrophe, numbered 12 above, is the longest in the tale. It is placed at the very end of the fifth part, the turning points of the tale when Griselda is sent home to her father. The commentary is placed after Griselda's long, controlled dialogue with Walter which Robert Jordan, for one, considered the best part of the tale.²¹ Unlike the more emotional outbursts of the narrator, this apostrophe not only gives in measured detail a sympathetic and definitive opinion about Griselda, but makes a powerful statement about the status and treatment of women as well. The immediate context of the apostrophe is the description by the narrator of how "this flour of wyfly pacience" responds to her exile:

Ne showed she that hire was doon offence
Ne of hire heighe estaat no remembrance
Ne hadde she, as by hire contenaunce.

[E922-924]

A paraphrase of these lines would be that Griselda does not look like one who has been offended, nor does she even remember her "heigh estaat." The anaphora of "Ne" intensifies the statements that are made and prepares the reader for the explanatory commentary which follows.

The first stanza of this two-stanza apostrophe rehearses the outstanding qualities of Griselda:

No wonder is, for in hire grete estaat
 Hire goost was evere in pleyh humylitee;
 No tendre mouth, noon herte delicaat,
 No pompe, no semblant of roialtee,
 But ful of pacient benyngnytee,
 Discreet and prideless, ay honorable,
 And to hire housbonde evere meke and stable.
 [E925-932]

The opening clause, "No wonder is," picks up on the anaphora of "ne" as well as the "no remembraunce" in the preceding lines. The movement begins with the normative explanatory mode but quickly moves beyond that. Griselda's behavior now, the narrator insists, is not surprising because even "in hire grete estaat" she "was ever in pleyh humylitee." The rest of the stanza provides details confirming this statement.

Two series of qualities are enumerated and they are structured by the figure, contrarium. The first series leads off with a conduplicatio of "no" which not only states what she was not, but rejects once again the validity of the conventional "effictio" or description of appearance: "No tendre mouth, noon herte delicaat." This rejection is reminiscent of an earlier one the narrator makes when Griselda upon her marriage to Walter "translated was in swich richesse." Just as the narrator then rejected the moral significance of appearance, so he again does here. Only this time he contrasts and compares the effictio with a notatio or description of

her inner qualities. This second series of inner qualities is organized by the second part of the contrarium: "But ful of pacient benyngnytee,/Discreet and pridelees, ay honorable." [E925-930] This apostrophe puts any doubts to rest as to how the Clerk narrator regards Griselda.

In the next stanza, the Clerk's commentary becomes more polemical when he compares men and women:

Men speke of Job, and moost for his humblesse,
As clerkes, whan hem list, konne wel endite,
Namely of men, but as insoothfastnesse,
Though clerkes preise wommen but a lite,
ther kan no man in humblesse hym acquite
As wommen kan, ne kan been half so trewe
As wommen been, but it be falle of newe.

[E932-938]

This stanza opens with a comparison between Griselda and Job, her tropological exemplar. By implication the narrator suggests that Griselda is even more humble than Job. The rhetorical organization of the stanza is both convoluted and complex. Although the organizing figure is not, strictly considered, a contrarium, the movement of positive/negative essential to the form of a contrarium most closely approximates the movement of statement and counterqualification in this aside. It is a masterfully powerful statement, partly because of its understated quality. By the end of it the rather conservative Clerk has delivered a radically feminist statement.

The first two and one half lines compose the first half of the contrarium. Although the implicit comparison is between Job and Griselda, the explicit point is otherwise. The citation of Job's "humblesse" becomes here an instance of "clerkes" writing about men as opposed to writing about the other half of the human race, women. The force of this statement is not apparent until the last phrase, "Namely of men" which can be rendered "especially of men." The phrase "Namely of men" seems an awkward afterthought. Skeat, however, mentions the emphatic quality of this phrase.²² So this seemingly innocent phrase throws an ambiguous cast over the preceding "as" clause of manner: "As clerkes, whan hem list, konne wel endite." The implication is that "clerkes" write well of Job not only because he is a paradigm of suffering, but most especially because he is a man. The traductio of "men," which encloses the first movement of the contrarium, enforces the point. In addition, the impact of the statement is greater because it is delayed and because it seduces agreement up to and including the last moment.

In the second part of the contrarium, what was implicit becomes explicit statement. A paraphrase of the statements made in this part would be that "clerkes" praise women little even though men are not half as humble or true as women are. As forceful as this statement

may be, it gains even greater sharpness because of its rhetorical structuring. A large amount of repetition is used effectively to highlight contrasting comparisons. A list of the words employed at least twice in the stanza would include: "humblesse," "men," "clerkes," "wommen," "as" and "kan." A brief examination of the "as" clauses will reveal the rhetorical strategy in the stanza.

The second movement in the contrarium begins with a parenthetical "as" phrase: "but as in soothfastnesse"--but in truth. It is an appeal to another standard of reckoning, a "truth" standard, and contrasts with the "as" clause of manner given in the first movement of the contrarium: "As clerkes...konne wel endite." The repetition of these "as" clauses helps to focus the contrast between what clerks "endite" and "soothfastnesse." This rhetorical ruse effectively implies that what "clerkes" write may not be the truth, or, at least, it suggests that they have their own gender bias. In the next set of statements the comparisons are more explicitly made.

The first of these statements says merely that women are more humble than men: "Ther kan no man in humblesse hym acquite/As womman kan,..." The second of these statements specifies the degree to which men and women can be compared and by quantifying extends and emphasizes the disparity between them. Men are "half so trewe/As wommen been." Again the anaphoric "as" clauses

give a force and sharpness to these statements. The last two lines stand as an emphatic counterpoint to the beginning of the preceding line, "ther kan no man." The first, "As womman kan" refers to the present and future and the second, "As wommen been" encompasses the past. Women have always suffered more and will always suffer more. The understated quality of these hyperbolic statements regarding women is carried right through to the end of the apostrophe, "but it be falle of newe"--unless it has been very recently--retains the tone of modesty while effectively eliminating any serious objection.

By the end of this apostrophe, then, the Clerk has made a definitive polemical statement in defense of women and Griselda. The standard "moral" might have been that her suffering can be compared with Job. And, in fact, the second stanza begins with an implicit comparison of Griselda with Job. It ends, however, with Job occupying the lesser position in the comparison. Along the way the Clerk points to the gender basis of Griselda's suffering and critiques the ideological bias of his fellow "clerkes" who often ignore the sufferings of women, if only because they are women. If there was any doubts about the Clerk's attitude towards Griselda, this apostrophe lays it all to rest. Since the Clerk here, as throughout, focuses upon her inner qualities it should

be no surprise that he resists the moral allegoresis or discusses the political aspects of her story only so that he can focus upon the personal and intimate qualities of his heroine: "But to Grisilde agayn wol I me dresse,/ And telle hir constance and hir bisynesse." [E1007-1008]

In summary, I would say that the apostrophes interspersed in the narration of the tale project a single narrative voice, and that voice has been identified as the Clerk's, the voice of pathos. The worldview enunciated by this voice can be described as conservative and aristocratic, one that subscribes to a theocentric concept of sovereignty and a viewpoint that is anti-populist in outlook. However, in recounting the story of Griselda, the Clerkly voice revalues the allegoresis in a secular direction. The Clerk's voice focuses upon the sufferings of Griselda not only as an individual but as an individual woman, albeit an exceptional one. While rejecting the universalist symbolic aspects of the allegoresis, this voice also suppresses any explicit commentary on the political implications of the story. Truth resides in the concrete, earthbound and interior spaces that the pathetic mode begins to differentiate and create. While rejecting a populist political ideology, the Clerkly voice promotes a rhetoric delineating an "ordinary" reality, that is, a rhetoric that appeals to the communus sensus, common feeling.

The fourteen apostrophes in the Clerk's voice advance two basic arguments. The first asserts that men are irresponsible and will act like beasts if they "fynde a pacient creature." Translated into the terms of the tale the Clerkly voice charges Walter with being remiss in his princely or sovereign responsibilities. He states that Walter is lax about marriage and the production of an heir. Conversely, the Clerkly voice complains that Walter is too zealous in his "assaying" of Griselda. What lurks behind these criticisms of Walter is the political charge of tyranny. Both Walter's initial refusal to marry and his persecution of Griselda result from his private preoccupation of hunting in the first instance and a private obsession in the second. It is this private nature of his "lusts" that raise the possibility of such a charge--an accusation this narrative voice studiously avoids. The silence of the Clerk's voice on the subject of tyranny reflects the conservative worldview or horizon of this voice.

The second argument pursued in these apostrophaic asides constitutes the major theme of the tale: that women suffer more than men and are more faithful and responsible than men. Moreover, women are made to suffer by men and their suffering often goes unrecognized and unheralded. Part and parcel of the argument enunciated by the Clerk's voice is an insistence that Griselda, the

exemplar of woman's suffering, be viewed not only as an allegorical symbol, but as a human being. Although the Clerkly voice insists upon Griselda's specialness, this narrative voice asserts that her suffering and voicelessness are qualities she shares with women as a class. Griselda, the Clerk's voice suggests, is not a universal symbol of suffering humanity, but rather a representative of long-suffering woman. By focussing upon this gender distinction, this narrative voice not only corrects what he believes to be an imbalance in the historical record, but effectively derails the universal application of the Petrarchan allegoresis.

The rhetorical style embodying the Clerk's voice, the voice of pathos, comprises an aspect of this voice's argumentation. The argument against the monumentalizing, inhuman aspects of the allegory is made in conjunction with a restrained attack against the "heigh stile" which he regards as "impertinent" or inappropriate. The "heigh stile," as far as the Clerk's voice is concerned, focuses upon the outer appearance--effictio as opposed to notatio--and automatically and artificially equates descriptio with an inner intrinsic significance. The contrast made in the commentary between metaphor and simile demonstrates this polarity. Simile or "liklynesse" makes conventional and explicit connections while metaphor or translatio reveals novel, implicit and inner relations.

The Clerkly voice, concentrating upon Griselda's inner qualities and transformations, finds the "heigh stile" inadequate and misleading. This argument asserts that differences in stylistic levels represent differences in worldviews. Actually this attack against the high style is more consistently ideological than it is in the practice of the Clerk's voice's style because the rhetorical style of the tale modulates between the high and middle levels. As Muscatine has pointed out, the high style is effectively employed at key junctures of the tale; but, as I have pointed out, Chaucer often cuts short passages that ordinarily would be amplified.

Chaucer can be seen as pursuing a two-fold rhetorical strategy with this Clerkly narrative voice. On the one hand, the Clerk's voice sharply differentiates his opinion from others when criticizing Walter's behavior. On the other, this voice seeks a consensus opinion when extolling Griselda. The basic figure employed in these apostrophes is contrarium which allows for the affirmation and negation of an idea to be placed side by side--a figure par excellence for such a pedagogical voice. Employed in conjunction with the figures superlatio, interrogatio and exclamatio the Clerkly commentary reaches a high degree of complexity and sophistication. Because the figure, contrarium, allows two different

orders of reality to be placed side by side, it emphasizes the quality of complementariness. This tends to eliminate, or at least, minimize the notion of choice and so promotes the idea that choice is indifferent--i.e., Walter didn't choose to test Griselda, it just happened. This is contrary to the explicitly stated view that Walter is responsible. The idea of complementariness reenforces the notion that suffering is necessary and inevitable. No matter what Griselda does, she will experience both elevation and abuse. The idea of inevitability goes a long way in defining the ideological assumptions which constituted the voice of pathos.

This concludes my descriptive analysis of the apostrophes within the narrative proper which constitute the Clerk's voice, the voice of pathos. I would now like to examine and describe the other narrative voices, the voice of moral allegory and that of parody. Both can be clearly identified in the framing context of the tale. The voice of allegory is identified in the "Prologue" and first ending to the tale, and the parodic voice in the "envoy" or second ending. As we shall see, the "Prologue" of the Clerk's Tale prepares us for the polemic that is pursued by the voice of pathos.

Notes

¹George L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1915), pp. 193-202.

W. A. Cate, "The Problem of the Origin of the Griselda Story" Studies in Philology XXIX (1932), 389-405.

J. Burke Severs, The Literary Relationship of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale (1942; rpt. Hamden, Conn: Shoe String Press, 1972), p. 248.

²James Sledd, "The Clerk's Tale: The Monsters and the Critics," Mod Phil LI (1953-54) 73-82.

³Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1969), pp. 190-191.

⁴Elizabeth Salter, Chaucer: The Knight's Tale and The Clerk's Tale (Woodbury, NY: Barrons, Inc., 1962)

Robert Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Craton: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 198-207.

Alfred David, The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 159-169.

⁵Elizabeth Salter, pp. 38, 56-58. See also Patricia M. Kean, Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry, Vol. II (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) p. 128.

Anne Middleton, "The Physician's Tale and Love's Martyrs: 'Ensamles Mo Than Ten' as a Method in The Canterbury Tales," Chau R 8 (1973), 26.

Robert Burlin, Chaucerian Fiction (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 144.

⁶The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd Ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957). All quotations from Chaucer's works are from this edition.

⁷Gerard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, trans. Jane Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980), p. 255.

⁸I give explanatory definitions for the more important or obscure rhetorical terms in my text or notes. Short and accurate definitions for these rhetorical terms and other which I use can be found in the appendix to Roger Parr's translation of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Documentum de Modo et arte dictandi et versificandi (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 97-105. Parr bases his definitions in the appendix upon Geoffrey's Documentation and his Poetria Nova. Chaucer probably know one or both of these works by Geoffrey, a thirteenth century rhetorician, because he directly refers to him in The Nun's Priest's Tale: "O Gaufried, deese maister soveragn" [B² 4537]. I refer to these figures of amplification with their Latin designations partly to emphasize that these are formal, technical terms and partly because the English equivalents do not always capture the scope or range of meaning that the Latin does, especially their implications for argumentation.

exclamatio: an exclamation. A variation of apostrophe, a major figure of amplification.

interrogatio: a strong affirmation or denial of a point in the form of a question.

comparatio: a comparison, of which there are two types: overt and hidden. This figure was also considered a major figure of amplification.

similitudino: a simile.

conduplicatio: word repetition; a repetition of a word or several words for emphasis or for the evocation of emotion. This figure was also classified by Geoffrey as a variation of apostrophe.

⁹notatio: the description of the character or spiritual nature of a person. A description of his "inner" qualities, as opposed to effictio which is the outward or physical description of a person.

¹⁰ Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation, trans. John Williamson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), pp. 337-45.

¹¹superlatio: hyperbole, exaggeration, whether to enlarge or diminish.

¹²effictio: the outward or physical description of a person.

occupatio: mentioning a thing but pretending to leave it unnoticed.

¹³Parr, p. 100.

¹⁴George Boas, Vox Populi: Essays in the History of an Idea (Balt: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969). Chapter One traces the history of the phrase.

¹⁵Walter Ullman, Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1966), pp. 20-21 and passim.

See also Lynn Staley Johnson, "The Prince and His People: A Study of Two Covenants in The Clerk's Tale," Chau R Vol. 10 (1975), 17-29.

David R. Pichaske and Laura Sweetland, "Chaucer on the Medieval Monarchy: Harry Bailly in the Canterbury Tales," Chau R Vol. 11 (1977), 179-200.

John Dickinson, "The Mediaeval Conception of Kingship and Some of Its Limitations, As Developed in The Policraticus of John of Salisbury," Spec Vol. I (1926), 308-337.

¹⁶Ullman, pp. 150, 297.

¹⁷Ullman, pp. 243-261.

¹⁸Margaret Schlauch, "Chaucer's Doctrine of Kings and Tyrants" Spec Vol. 20 (1945), 133-157.

¹⁹See John P. McCall, "Chaucer and John of Leguano" Spec Vol. 40 (1965), 484-489.

A. S. Cook, "Chaucer's 'Linian'" The Romanic Review Vol. 8 (1917), 353-382.

²⁰Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Documentum, p. 50.

²¹Jordan, p. 203: "Indeed, Part V of the Clerk's Tale, especially Griselda's speech to Walter (814-89), is one of the great moments of Chaucerian poetry; the rhetoric, tone and imagery are perfectly attuned to the pathos and exaltation of the action."

²²Walter W. Skeat, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer Vol. V, 2nd ed. (1900; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 349.

CHAPTER THREE

The Prologue: The Announcement of
Double-Voiced Discourse

Before I examine the "Prologue" in detail, it might be useful to outline a paradigm of a late medieval literary prologue that A. J. Minnis has provided us. What he has called an "Aristotelian prologue" was developed by both secular and religious academics in the late 13th century.¹ This type of prologue was a structural simplification of a more elaborate kind developed a century or so earlier, that was used to introduce academic commentaries on the "auctores." Minnis's thesis is that in the later Middle Ages those prologues were adapted by vernacular writers to provide introductions to their own work. The "Aristotelian prologue" based on Aristotle's "four causes" can be briefly summarized:

1. Causa efficiens: The auctor or author
2. Causa materialis: The material, subject or book under discussion
3. Causa formalis: The duplex form of the work; the forma tractandi, the mode or style, and the forma tractatus, the order or division of the work
4. Causa finalis: The intention or *raison d'être* of the work.

Minnis argues that these prologues constituted literary criticism of a sort and that Chaucer was knowledgeable about them and the literary/technical terms employed in them. Among other examples, he cites Chaucer's frequent use of the term "mateere," his extended discussion of "entente" in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women and his listing of Aristotle's four causes in The Tale of Melibee. Since we can assume that Chaucer was familiar with conventional literary prologues, a comparison of this model with the Clerk's "Prologue" will be helpful in revealing just what aspects Chaucer is emphasizing.

A closer look at the Clerk's "Prologue" shows that the second and fourth causes, the subject matter and the intention or *raison d'être* of the tale are not mentioned. These omissions in and of themselves do not, at first, seem that unusual for these aspects will receive their due in other parts of the tale. The causa finalis receives some discussion at the end of the tale in the exegetical first ending and the causa materialis receives quite a bit of attention in the narrative proper. However, it is only after we discern the critical edge to this introduction that we realize more fully why these two aspects are omitted, especially the final cause which has scriptural sanction.

Chaucer has the Clerk introduce his tale by focussing upon the causa efficiens, i.e., the author and the causa

formalis, i.e. the style in which this "auctor" wrote. As Minnis has pointed out, under the rubric of "auctor" in traditional prologues, the issue of authenticity was often raised as well as the identity of the author. Sometimes a short vita autoris was given.² As we shall see, the Clerk raises the issue of the previous author's identity in an unusual way.

Turning to the prologue we see that it is 56 lines long, of which 35 lines are spoken by the Clerk in response to the Host's request that he, "Telle us som myrie tale..." [E9] After reassuring the Host that, "...wol I do yow obeisance," [E24] the Clerk narrator states that the tale he is about to tell is another's discourse: "I wol you telle a tale which that I LERNED at Padowe of a worthy Clerk." [E26-27] This in and of itself is not so unusual. In fact, it would seem that this would be fairly standard procedure. What is remarkable is that the Clerk repeats this attribution two other times in the course of the prologue:

But forth to tellen of this worthy man
That taughte me this tale, as I bigan.
[E39-40]

But this his tale, which that ye may heere.
[E56]

The third citation is the concluding line of the prologue. So the first and last comments the Clerk offers

about the tale focuses upon the authorship of it. More precisely, all three statements note the otherness of the discourse--this repetition has several consequences.

One consequence is structural; the repetition is the causa formalis of the prologue, you might say, providing its larger, rhetorical structure. Before I analyze this structural disposition more closely, I should like to mention the second, thematic consequence resulting from this disposition. The repetition emphasizes the otherness of the discourse. By foregrounding this quality of otherness, the Clerk grants it a thematic valence. This in turn can be seen as a preparation, a first step for the Clerk's revaluation of the tale and Petrarch's treatment of it. Such a reorientation of another's discourse M. M. Bakhtin regards as an essential and defining characteristic of all rhetorical speech:

Rhetorical genres possess the most varied forms for transmitting another's speech, and for the most part, these are intensely dialogized forms. Rhetoric relies heavily on the vivid reaccentuating of the words it transmits (often to the point of distorting them completely) that is accomplished by the appropriate framing context.³

By emphasizing this quality of otherness, the Clerk narrator prepares the way for his limited polemic against the tale's allegoresis. This will become more apparent once we examine the structural features of the prologue in greater detail.

The first time the Clerk narrator mentions the previous author of the tale, he does so without naming him. In fact, the first section can be seen as a abbreviatio of the material presented in the prologue:

I wol yow telle a tale which that I
 Lerneþ at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
 As proved by his wordes and his werk.
 He is now deed and nayled in his cheste,
 I prey to God so yeve his soule reste!
 [E26-30]

In addition, to his status as "auctor," there are three qualities the narrator notes of the yet unnamed Petrarch. The first is that he is a "worthy clerk." The second that this was "proved by his wordes." And the last, that he is "now deed." Focusing upon the first two qualities for a minute, we see the Clerk makes an explicit connection between "worthy clerk" and "his wordes." He establishes a causal relationship between an ethical category and the act of writing. Later this will be specified as a particular rhetorical style, the "heigh stile." If the word "worthy" is not precisely an ethical category, at least it is one expressing value. The Clerk, by linking a hierarchy of value with a hierarchy of style, is conflating the causa efficiens with the causa formalis and in the process asserting their intrinsic interconnection. The writer is "worthy" specifically because of his writing style.

This point is reinforced in the next paragraph of the prologue which is both a repetition and amplification of these lines:

Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete
 Highte this clerk, whose rethorike sweete
 Enlumpyed al Ytaille of poetrie,
 As Lynyan dide of philosophie,
 Or lawe, or oother art particuler;
 But deeth, that wol not suffre us dwellers heer,
 But as it were a twynklyng of an ye,
 Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle shul we dye.
 [E31-38]

The "worthy clerk," now named, "Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete," is identified as a famous poet whose writing, "rethorike sweet" has illuminated, "enlumpyed" all of Italy. Although the MED assigned the tertiary meaning to the word "enlumpyed" here, "to make famous or glorious," E. T. Donaldson's attribution, of the primary meanings, "to shed light upon, to illuminate or to give spiritual insight, to enlighten," seems more appropriate.⁴ I am interested, not in eliminating meanings but in presenting a sense of the word's richness. Another meaning of "enlumpyed" is "to describe or depict in a certain style, especially to adorn or embellish." Once again the interconnection between the hierarchies of style and value are made in the several meanings of the word, "enlumpyed." Amplification is enlightenment. Or are there other meanings that can be adduced for "rethorike sweet"?

The comparison with which the Clerk amplifies his statement about Petrarch and his poetry might clarify matters. The figure in the comparison is Giovanni de Lignano who, according to A. S. Cook, was a famous 14th-century jurist and professor who taught in Bologna.⁵ Giovanni wrote books on virtually everything, from astrology and common law to theology and ethics. He personally knew three popes and had established an international reputation on the basis of a legal brief he wrote defending the election of Urban VI entitled De Fletu Ecclesiae. As John McCall points out, he was the one major apologist mentioned by name in the only schism dispute heard before Richard II.⁶ So we can assume that his reputation was comparable to Petrarch's and in English might even be greater than Petrarch's. However, more than just the reputation of the two men are being compared in this amplification.

It is Petrarch's and Giovanni's methods of illumination that the Clerk compares. Petrarch's "rhethorike sweet" and "poetrie" are compared with Giovanni's "philosophie/Or lawe or other art particuler." The comparison in this "as" clause of manner does not operate on an exclusionary or contrastive principle, as A. S. Cook seems to think, but on an inclusionary one.⁷ The enlightenment the Clerk is referring to is a kind of moral

wisdom and the particular disciplines or arts he mentions, the different specialities of the two men are different ways of gaining access to examining and revealing such wisdom. If rhetoric and poetry are not strictly subsumed under the aegis of moral philosophy, they are shown to be intimately connected. That this most likely is the common principle linking these subjects becomes clearer when we examine the meanings of the terms in the second series, those of Giovanni's. Although "philosophie" can mean learning or scholarship in the most general sense, or rational speculation, or even sophistry, it can also have a narrower meaning of a specific discipline or body of knowledge such as natural science or ethics.

One very good reason that "philosophie" has a specific rather than a general meaning here is because the last term in the series is specific, "art particuler." The primary meaning of "particuler" is "pertaining only to a part, partial, not general." The meaning the MED assigns Chaucer's usage here is "special, specialized" and for "art particuler" it specifies, "a particular science, a specialized branch of learning." In like manner, the second term of this series, "lawe," can carry a more specific meaning as well as a general one. It can mean a particular body of law, such as common law,

or can mean ethics. So we can assume that here "philosophie" has a specific as opposed to a generalized meaning. This would more or less rule out dialectics, which refers to a general method of logical reasoning, and leaves natural and moral philosophy as possibilities. Cook chooses "natural" philosophy mainly because of Giovanni's interest in astrology.⁸ However, if one were to choose, I think that "moral" philosophy would be the most appropriate meaning for the term. And I think that the best candidates for "oother art particuler" would be either ethics or political science.

My conclusions are based on the reception and use of Aristotle's Rhetorica, some of the treatises Giovanni de Lignano was known to have written, the political language employed earlier in the prologue and, finally, the subject or theme of the tale itself which involves the question of sovereignty. We should remember that Chaucer specifically notes that the Clerk was a serious student, "Of Aristotle and his philosophie" [A 295]. So the manner in which 14th century scholastics employed the Rhetorica might offer a helpful hint as to the context of the Clerk's comparison. James Murphy, in his Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, points to the dominating manuscript collocation of Aristotle's Rhetorica, Ethica and Politica where he argues that Aristotle's Rhetorica was a "...treatise useful in the study of moral philosophy."⁹

The Rhetorica was not primarily utilized as a text in the theory of discourse--for that, Cicero remained the primary "auctor." But Aristotle's treatise was associated with the scientiae speciales (art particulier) dealing with human actions--politics and ethics. It is precisely this association that obtains in the Clerk's comparison. Such a connection seems even more obvious when we realize that Giovanni wrote works on moral and political philosophy, at least two of which were about Aristotle's Politics.¹⁰ I don't think it is necessary or even desirable to speculate as to which works of Giovanni's Chaucer knew, or knew of, if any. That the Clerk seems to be following a well known pattern of a certain collocation of Aristotle's work is sufficient reason for my hypothesis. But the fact that we know Giovanni wrote such commentaries reinforces the plausibility of such a pattern.

The language the Clerk employs earlier in the prologue and the qualification the host adds with his request for a tale reenforce this contextual pattern as well. The host, when urging the Clerk to forgo the "heigh style," alludes to this association between rhetorical style and politico-ethical import:

Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,
 Keepe hem in stoor til so be that ye endite
 Heigh style, and whan that men to kynges write.

[El6-18]

The high style should be reserved for the high matters of statecraft, "...as whan that men to kynges write." Here, then, is an explicit correspondence between the rhetorical and axiological hierarchies. Another instance where Chaucer notes such a correspondence is in the Nun's Priest's Tale:

And if a rethor koude faire endite,
He in a cronycle saufly myghte it write
As for a sovereyn notabilitee.

[B²4396-4399]

The association of these two hierarchies, if not exactly commonplace, was not that unusual.

The Clerk's response to the host's request and caveat humorously employs the language of political discourse:

"Hooste," quod he, "I am under your yerde;
Ye han of us as now the governaunce,
And therefore wol I do yow obeisance,
As fer as resoun axeth, hardily.

[E22-25]

The Clerk's answer to the host is structured with the rhetorical figure of interpretatio, which is the repetition of an idea using different words. He first states that he is under the host's rule, "yerde." In the following line he varies this with "governance" and extends its application from the singular "I" to the more general "us." The third line can be seen as a variation of this repetition as well as a consequence of the first two statements: "And therfore wol I do yow obeisance."

However, the Clerk, good Aristotelian that he is, does not grant the host absolute "governance," but only, "As fer as resoun axeth."

It is significant, I think, that the first four lines the Clerk speaks contain an interpretatio on the tale's major theme of sovereignty. If these lines do not fully summarize a theory of sovereignty, at least they present a definite attitude towards the question of governance. The repetition grants the Clerk's statements an emphatic quality and allows him to insert an important qualification concerning obedience of the governed: "resoun" imposes limitations upon such a contract. This attitude towards sovereignty stands in sharp contrast to what later will be revealed as Walter's and Griselda's more absolutist understanding. The use of the words "governance" and "obeisance" here foreshadows their use in the tale itself where, as can be seen from this example, a completely opposite attitude is revealed:

She seyde, "Lord, al lyth in youre pleasaunce
My child and I, with hertely obeisaunce,
Been youres al, and ye nowe wave or spille
Youre owene thyng, werketh after youre wille.
[E501-504]

The interpretatio on sovereignty establishes a standard by which to measure the events and statements in the tale itself. More immediately, the reprise begins to define

the Clerk's worldview and to reveal his attitude towards the tale.

The Clerk's attitude towards Petrarch and "his tale" is more fully revealed in his characterization of Petrarch as "now deed" and in the negative comment the Clerk makes about the "heigh stile" in the third and final paragraph of the prologue. Before I comment further on the first matter, I should like to examine the implications of the latter. The third paragraph begins with a repetition of the Clerk's initial comment of the tale's previous teller and develops into a critique of his style:

But forth to telle of this worthy man
That taught me this tale, as I bigan,
I seye that first with heigh stile he enditeth,
Er he the body of his tale writeth
A prohemye...

[E39-43]

Again the attribution, "worthy" is used for Petrarch. His "rhetorike sweet" of the second paragraph is now specified as the "heigh stile," which, the Clerk notes, is employed in "A prohemye" preceding the "body of his tale." He then proceeds to give a nine line paraphrase of this prologue which involves a descriptio of the tale's locus: "Pemond and of Saluces the contree[.]"

Following this summary, the Clerk then comments:

The which a long thyng were to devyse.
 And trewely, as to my juggement,
 Me thynketh it a thyng impertinent,
 Save that he wole conveyen his mateere;
 But this his tale, which that ye may heere.
 [E52-56]

In these last lines of his prologue, the Clerk manages to mention a few essential features of a rhetorical poetic while polemicising about the "heigh stile." First he says the high style is prolix, "a long thyng to devyse." Then after explicitly claiming ownership to the following opinion, "as to my juggement," he suggests the "heigh stile" is "a thyng impertinent." The meaning of the adjective, "impertinent" is given in the MED as "not to the point, irrelevant" or "inappropriate, unsuitable." Now I grant that the Clerk is criticising most immediately the length and appropriateness of the style of the "prohemye." Minnis mentions that it was considered good form by fourteenth century academics to keep their prologues short; abbreviatio rather than amplificatio was considered desirable, but often ignored.¹¹ However, the host's commentary grants a warrant to extend the Clerk's comments on the prologue to a more generalized critique of Petrarch's rhetorical style. The host, we should remember, requested that the Clerk not use, "Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures," [E16] which, he insists, should be reserved, "in stoor," for the "heigh stile." He demands, rather,

that the Clerk, "Speketh so pleyn.../That we may understoude what ye seye." [E19-20]

Earlier I had noted the relationship that obtained between the hierarchies of style and value. Now I would like to point out the learned and abstruse qualities associated with the "heigh stile." Interpolating from the host's remarks, we can say that the high style may be serious and lofty but it is also difficult. It acts to limit accessibility of meaning and inhibits easy communication. By characterizing the "prohemye" and consequently Petrarch's use of the "heigh stile" as "a thyng impertinent," the Clerk appears to agree with the host's assessment regarding its relevance or appropriateness for the tale. Yet in the following line the Clerk qualifies his criticism with the exception: "Save that he wole conveyen his mateere[.]" [E55] Although this qualification appears to be an outright contradiction of the Clerk's previous statement, more accurately it can be said to express a paradox underlying all rhetorical discourse. It should be noted here that the Clerk is virtually equating the "heigh stile" with rhetorical discourse.

What is involved in this paradox is that while the circumlocution and prolixity of rhetorical speech can obfuscate or block immediate understanding, such procedures of amplification can create, contribute to and

enhance meaning. These rhetorical procedures can provide, as the prologue can, a structure and a guide to help "conveyen his mateere." The meaning of the word "conveyen" ranges from "to escort or accompany or to guide, lead or take" in its primary meanings and "to communicate something or compose verses" in its more figurative sense, which more immediately applies here. With his qualification the Clerk suggests that rhetorical amplification is necessary to create meaningful discourse. In this he seems to follow Lydgate who writes in the Troy Book: "Evene lik as rethorik doth teche,/He gan his tale so by crafte conveie."¹² Rhetorical discourse is seen as craft which is necessary for the proper conveyance of meaning.

The Clerkly narrator criticizes Petrarch's rhetorical style from a different angle than would the Host. The Host regards rhetorical figuration as almost incommensurate with understanding. The Clerkly voice, on the other hand, has a more measured view of rhetoric. This voice fears the danger of obscurity which can result with an excess of figuration in a system of discourse that makes meaning possible. The Clerk with his Aristotelian perspective chooses the golden mean, the middle way. The Clerkly voice recognizes the necessity of rhetorical structuring to create meaning, yet he also realizes that an excessive amount of amplification can overload the

system and defeat that objective. In the process of criticizing Petrarch's poetic style, the Clerk has presented in a nutshell a theory of rhetorical/poetic discourse just as earlier in his prologue he gives a brief synopsis of political theory.

The Clerkly narrator's mention of these two arts is significant, I think, for at least two reasons. The first is that such specification reveals his orientation towards the tale he is about to relate. As A. J. Minnis has pointed out, a conventional prologue often included a discussion of the place in the scheme of human knowledge occupied by the art or science relevant to one's text.¹³ By including statements on political theory and rhetoric rather than on theology or scriptural exegesis, the Clerk is claiming a more immediate relevance for the tale of the practical human or natural arts. This seems to be a rather unusual assertion to make about a tale which is supposedly the vehicle of a moral allegoresis.

I think this is one indication of the reorientation that the tale undergoes with the Clerkly narrator. As I have pointed out earlier in my analysis of the Clerk's narrative commentary, such a reorientation is towards viewing the events of the tale in the context of ordinary human experience which defines the rhetoric of the voice of pathos. The "particulier" arts concerning human

action and utterance are more immediately relevant than those concerning ultimate or divine matters. The movement of pathos affirms the legitimacy of the natural world, which can be said to be one of the legacies of Aristotle for the late medieval world. In terms of the tale, this movement accounts for the increase in the mimetic elements in the Clerk's narration, such as a greater amount of dialogue, the delineation of emotional expression and other "realistic" details. This increase in mimesis, in turn, produces a mixture of high and low rhetorical styles. The voice of pathos introduces an equivocation which infiltrates and changes the allegory from within. It does so by granting a new status to the allegory's vehicle, that is, by dwelling upon Griselda's sufferings as human sufferings.

The second reason why I think the Clerk's comments on these "particulier" arts is significant is that his discussion of them in common construes an intimate connection between them. Rhetoric as a theory of discourse is implicitly associated with a theory of moral behavior. As I have pointed out above, this achieves an explicit enunciation with the Clerk's comparison of Petrarch and Giovanni de Lignano. This relationship between these respective arts goes beyond the rather pat Ciceronian acknowledgement that rhetorical discourse has a political dimension. One consequence arising from this construal,

which I have argued earlier, is that stylistic markers imply certain values judgements or are determinative of a certain worldview. The Clerkly voice, by critiquing Petrarch's literary style, is by extension questioning his "moral" judgements. I do not mean to suggest that the Clerkly narrator is ignoring or rejecting the allegorical moral out of hand. His polemic is much more measured and limited than that, which is both its weakness and its strength. The Clerk's voice, the voice of pathos, always betrays an awareness of the moral authority of Petrarch's allegorical tale. What the Clerk resists is the easy relegation of Griselda to abstract symbol. In this way, the clerkly voice of pathos offers a challenge to the formulaic moral of the tale. The remark about Petrarch's style is not inconsequential but one that indicates the Clerk's ambivalent attitude towards Petrarch and "his tale."

Besides demonstrating a critical attitude towards Petrarch, the Clerk's statements regarding composition and governance reveal an essential feature of his rhetorical style and method of argument. These, in turn, begin to define his particular worldview. In both instances, the Clerk makes a general statement which he subsequently qualifies with a counterstatement. This second statement is almost the complete opposite of the first, which imposes a limitation for the general

principle: "...I do yow obeisance,/As fer as resoun axeth,..." and "Me thynketh it a thyng impertinent,/Save that he wole conveyen his mateere." In the tale proper, this rhetorical strategy is pursued with great finesse and refinement, as evidenced by the presence of the rhetorical figure contrarium in virtually every apostrophe. It is a style and method of argument that quite befits the academic Clerk. It is part and parcel of the limited polemic which he conducts against the excesses of the Griselda story. Just as he grants "obeisance" to the Host within the limits of reason, so too, he accepts a moral to the allegory but only within the limits of mimesis. There is a standard implied in the economy of his discourse.

A hint of the Clerk's ambivalent attitude towards Petrarch and "his tale" can be discerned even in his introductory remarks. As I have described earlier, when the Clerk first refers to the previous author of the tale he is about to tell, he mentions three details regarding him. The first two items are clearly laudatory. The Clerk gives him the epithet of "worthy," a status, "...proved by his wordes and his werk." The third detail the Clerk provides, referring to Petrarch's present status, is a little more ambiguous: "He is now deed and nayled in his cheste,/I prey to God so yeve his soule reste!" [E27-30] At first the comment on Petrarch's

death appears to be merely one notable fact in a series summarizing his life. What strikes me as bold, however, is the fact that this item receives the longest initial comment. The peculiarness of the Clerk's specification is heightened further when we remember, as A. J. Minnis has pointed out, that it was the vita of an "auctor," not his death, which was frequently described in the prologue to a work.¹⁴ Here the Clerk inverts the usual hierarchy of life/death or, at least, gives death an equal billing. When in the following lines, the Clerk again comments on Petrarch's death, he invests the recitation of this commonplace fact of life with a thematic importance.

Before he comments upon Petrarch's death a second time, the Clerk first amplifies his remarks on Petrarch's worthiness and his "rethorike sweet" comparing him and his "art particuler." As I have discussed earlier, with this comparison the Clerk asserts an intimate, if problematic, relationship between poetry and governance, rhetoric and politics, art and ethics. With his amplifying remarks on death, the Clerk brings to bear another set of relationships and paradoxes, all of which point to the problematic nature of translatio, the hidden, unnamed term that not only determines his commentary but is the subject of his prologue. The most immediate of

these paradoxes is contained in the irony of death's personification:

But deeth, that wol not suffre us dwellen heer,
 But as it were a twynklyng of an ye,
 Hem bothe hath slayn, and all shul we dye.
 [E36-38]

Death comes alive to slay those who are alive. What gives this simple irony some force is the imagery employed by the Clerk. Death is humanized and even made to seem friendly with the phrase, "a twynklyng of an ye," while Petrarch is made to be, as it were, one more remove from us than death with the image in the previous passage, "deed and nayled in his cheste." One effect of this imagery is to monumentalize Petrarch, making him distant and inaccessible. It diminishes the possibility of communication to zero and certainly makes it less than appealing.

On the other hand, with the last line of his commentary on death, "Hem bothe hath slayn, and all shul we dye[,]" the Clerk affirms the universality of the experience which joins Petrarch, Giovanni and ourselves in a common bond. The effect of this statement is two fold. It asserts the possibility of communication and the creation of meaning while, at the same time it tends to undercut anyone's, namely Petrarch's, claim to special or privileged status. The statement does not directly

deny Petrarch's verbal power and moral wisdom but it places "his wordes and his werk" outside the zone of the sacred; hence it allows the possibility for a critical revision of his tale. I suspect one important reason why the Clerk leaves discussion of the tale's *raison d'etre* for the conclusion is because Petrarch, in giving his rationale for the tale, quotes a passage from the Epistle of St. James. The Clerk, who wishes to emphasize here Petrarch's fallible, human qualities, wanted to avoid even associating Petrarch's tale with the authoritative and unrevisable biblical text.

The connection between translatio and death is not as far fetched as it at first might seem. We must remember that Petrarch's death is mentioned in the context of his reputation as a poet and rhetorician. This information, in turn, is introduced by the Clerk apropos his remarks about his translation of Petrarch's tale. The assumption that translatio constitutes a major subject of the prologue can be deduced most immediately from the Clerk's statements that he learned the tale, "at Padowe" and that Petrarch had, "Enlummyed al Ytaille of poetrie." Underlying the Clerk's discussion is an etymological association between death and translatio.

The primary meaning of the word means, to carry across, to transfer, which includes the sense of translating from one language to another. The word was also

used as the technical rhetorical term for metaphor. In my analysis of its use in conjunction with Griselda, "Whan she translated was in swich riches[,]" [E385], I pointed out several specific religious meanings the word carried as well. The one most pertinent to this immediate discussion is its meaning as a technical term denoting the transference of exceptional individuals from this world to the next without the agency of death. As can be imagined, there are very few who have been so fortunate. Thus, for example, Mary, the Virgin Mother, was translated to heaven without first dying. I have only briefly given here a hint of the rich set of meanings carried by the word translatio. I think we can comfortably assume that the Clerk's pedantic remarks ironically presuppose a connection between translatio and death and that the concept of translatio frames the Clerk's contradictory remarks regarding Petrarch. Moreover, his remarks go beyond the merely practical problems arising from the translation from one language to another, but point to the essentially problematic nature of translatio itself.¹⁵

So, at the center of the Clerk's prologue, we find a number of paradoxes. The first, regarding death, I've just rehearsed. On the one hand, Petrarch's death is a distancing factor and threatens ultimately the severance

of all communication. On the other hand, his death reassures us of our common bond which makes communication possible. His experience, which authorizes his text, and our experience, however different, fall within the horizon of the human. A second paradox involves the reception of Petrarch's text. In order to confer value on the story he is about to relate, the Clerk praises Petrarch and his poetry, pointing to its monumental aspect; but in order to activate the set of meanings that inheres in Petrarch's tale, the Clerk must engage in some creative revision suggesting to us that the prior text is not carved in brass, so to speak. In Bakhtin's sense, he is reorienting Petrarch's utterance and in the process distorting his meaning. Even if the Clerk were attempting to translate Petrarch's story with a minimum of distortion, it would be necessary that he revise it. At the bottom of this paradox lies the fact that the Clerk is carrying the tale across a number of boundaries, among them linguistic, national, political and historic. Behind this view of translation is a commonplace of our contemporary idea of it: a "faithful" translation would involve an imaginative recreation of a text so that the dominant values of one context would be reflected in the new context. However, I think Chaucer reveals something quite different with the Clerk's retelling of Petrarch's tale.

The narrative voice of the Clerk projects a different set of values from the Petrarchan voice. The Clerk's voice enunciates, as I have argued before, a more humanistic, secular worldview. The Petrarchan voice represents Griselda as merely a symbolic counter in a moral allegory. In translating Petrarch's tale the Clerk reorients its hierarchy of values because the Clerk only partially agrees with Petrarch's point of view. The Clerk does not attempt to recover and re-present Petrarch's original meaning, but to show the shortcomings of that worldview. The ambivalence of the Clerk's voice towards the Petrarchan text is demonstrated in his rhetorical style and translating strategy. In the prologue he invokes the moral and poetic authority of Petrarch's reputation to confer value upon the tale he is about to tell while at the same time he suggests that Petrarch's style may be inappropriate. Furthermore, when he retells the tale he changes details in Petrarch's text, shifting the emphasis. More importantly, he interjects commentary about the characters and events all to the end of asserting a different set of values, another worldview.

The Clerk's polemic against the monumental and inhuman aspects of Petrarch's allegory is revealed, for the most part, by his translating style. To put it another way, the rhetorical situation that Chaucer

constructs calls attention to the otherness of the tale, i.e., its alterity, and explicitly presents the clerk narrator as a translator. The Clerk's translating style is his rhetorical style; that is, his rhetorical strategy is determined by this attitude towards the prior text. Translatio is a central concept for any interpretation of The Clerk's Tale, which can be seen as presenting one way the poet/clerk receives and transmits a prior text. Let me add hastily, that I don't think The Clerk's Tale is merely an illustration of this idea.

However, as others notably R. O. Payne, have already pointed out, translatio described in a sort of shorthand manner a complex set of relations that for Chaucer implicated him not only with the past tradition but with a future one as well.¹⁶ Translatio was the name given to that historicizing impulse that underlay most of Chaucer's "poetic" concerns. For Chaucer the idea was fraught with all of the pathos of the human condition. It was an issue in virtually every one of his major poems. Two of the most obvious examples that come to mind are his "mistranslations" of Virgil in the House of Fame [143-360] and the Troilus' narrator's frequent ruminations about "thise old bokes" and the changes language undergoes:

Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
Within a thousand yeer, and words tho

That haden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
 Us thinketh hem, and yet their spake hem so
 And spedde as wel in love as men now do;

[BK II, 22-26]

For Chaucer, the idea of translatio constituted the framework, the ground-of-being of his poetic activity. In fact, I might say that translatio is a key concept, if not the most important one, for understanding medieval poetry and poetics. For that matter, it is fundamental for comprehending any poetry or poetics.

Although, as I have just mentioned, translatio was an issue in all of his major poems, in The Clerk's Tale Chaucer presents the relationship between translator and auctor in a new and different way. If we remember in The House of Fame, Chaucer worries about the integrity of the transmission system and our inability to verify that integrity. A main concern of his was: how do I know that this is what Virgil said or even if this is Virgil's voice I hear. In The Clerk's Tale Chaucer gives us a translator/narrator who disagrees, if only partially, with the previous auctor. The relationship between the two is antagonistic, or at least, ambivalent. Disagreement with a previous source is not exactly new for Chaucer. In The Troilus, for example, the narrator blames "Dares" for Criseyde's "gilt" implying that he does not agree with his source. [BK 1771-1778] However, in The Clerk's Tale, Chaucer presents a more active kind

of disagreement and the possibilities of creative revision are developed in a more explicit mode.

You might say the Clerk narrator is engaged in what A. J. Minnis has defined as assertio as well as recitatio.¹⁷ Recitatio was translated into English as "rehearsed" and carried the force of meaning of "repeated" or "reported" while assertio means "asserted" or "affirmed." An auctor asserted; a translator or compiler merely reported what an auctor affirmed. An auctor accepted responsibility for the "truth" of his statements; that is, he stood behind his words, so to speak. A translator did not have this burden of "truth." Because the Clerk narrator is engaged in actively changing the meaning of Petrarch's allegoresis, he can be said to be affirming a different "truth." The relationship the Clerk narrator has to Petrarch's text more closely resembles the conditions M. M. Bakhtin describes as governing "reported speech" than it does our modern theories of translation.¹⁸ For Bakhtin, there is virtually no such thing as a "neutral" translation. Another's word or utterance comes to us loaded, overburdened with various meanings and contextual intonations. The reception and transmissions of another's utterance is almost always an ambivalent affair, especially so within a rhetorical poetic which devotes as much attention to

the manner of expression as it does to the object of the utterance.

In The Clerk's Tale Chaucer presents translatio as an active and discriminating reception of another's words which, in this instance, is shown to be part and parcel of the polemic the Clerk is conducting against the Petrarchan allegoresis. Translatio is both problematic and dialogic. One effect resulting from the dialogue with Petrarch's text is the undermining of any authoritarian claim to absolute "truth." It loosens the dogmatic bonds on meaning. Consequently, "truth" can be seen to reside not in any one voice or text but in the in-between, in the dialogue between the voices. It is, if you will, an argument of the present and future with the past. In this view "distortion" is seen as an inherent and essential aspect of the activity of translatio. In short, it is a very human activity. The Clerk's disagreement with aspects of Petrarch's story and his projection of a new set of values upon it are offered by Chaucer as a normative description of how past tradition and knowledge are actively assimilated into a new cultural context.

Translatio, then, is a process of selection and omission. It is an act of leaving behind as much as it is a transferring across. It is an agent of death as much as it is one of renewal. Translatio in this sense is

problematic and open ended as opposed to dogmatic and closed. Its essential activity is to reopen closed texts to new contexts helping to establish new hierarchies of value. By recontextualizing Petrarch's story, the Clerk shifts the intonation of his words, thereby changing their meaning. Part of the pathos of The Clerk's Tale results from the allegory's loss of meaning in the new cultural and political context. This loss of relevance, this "imperitence" is registered most immediately as an inadequacy of form. For the Clerk narrator, who is not entirely unsympathetic to Petrarch's worldview, translatio is a means of salvaging and renovating a positive meaning from the dated sensibility and judgement inhering in the Petrarchan text.

In conclusion, we can say that in The Prologue to The Clerk's Tale, Chaucer has the Clerk narrator not only introduce the tale but also outline a strategy for his retelling or translating of Petrarch's tale. The prologue itself is rhetorically complex and sophisticated, whose brevity belies the diverse terrain covered in it. First and foremost, Chaucer has the Clerk present, if not a full-fledged theory of political governance, then at least a definite attitude towards the subject of sovereignty, a major theme of the tale. His "Aristotelian" attitude might be summed up as, obedience towards authority within reason. Concomitantly, the Clerk ends

his prologue with a discussion of Petrarch's rhetorical style in which he suggests a connection between different rhetorical styles and worldviews and in which he reveals a critical stance towards Petrarch. The two major subjects introduced in the Prologue, politics and rhetoric, are tied together partly through the figure of Giovanni de Lignano, a popular teacher, rhetorician and jurist, with whom Petrarch is compared.

The Clerk's rhetorical strategy is developed with two methods, repetition and omission. The Clerk omits any discussion of the causa materialis, the story itself, and the causa finalis, the *raison d'etre* or intention of the tale. These constitute two of the four topics Minnis has described as routinely included in academic prologues. Instead, the Clerk focuses almost exclusively on the causa efficiens, the author, and the causa formalis, the formal structure or style. The Clerk, in fact, locates Petrarch's worth in "his wordes and his werk." By focusing upon those aspects of the text, the Clerk emphasizes the human and fungible qualities of the word; hence those qualities most susceptible to criticism and change. On the contrary, by omitting, for example, discussion of the causa finalis or the rationale for the tale, he avoids any immediate reference to biblical authority which would stress the monumental and unchangeable aspects of the tale.

The rhetorical structure of the Prologue to The Clerk's Tale underscores the relative importance accorded to the material introduced in it. The Clerk employs repetitio to highlight and emphasize his focus upon Petrarch and his style. The comments on Petrarch's writings go through two successive amplifications. First the Clerk introduces the topic of style with a brief statement. Then he enlarges the point by commenting upon Petrarch's substantial reputation in Italy, comparing him to Giovanni. Finally he paraphrases Petrarch's "prohemie" to the tale ending this series of amplifications with a criticism on Petrarch's style. This criticism of the high style in the closing lines of the Prologue point to the polemic the clerk will develop with the narrative asides in the tale proper.

The first hint of the Clerk's ambivalent attitude towards Petrarch comes earlier in the Prologue and is revealed in his use of repetitio. When discussing Petrarch's life, the Clerkly voice repeats a statement regarding his death; thus, in effect, giving his death and the concomitant distancing of his word an equal billing with his life and his word's proximity. The ambivalence in the Clerk's voice can be detected as a fundamental aspect of his rhetorical style. What will later become habitual, his use of the figure, contrarium, or statement, counterstatement, is employed here to the

effect that a second comment qualified the first. It is a highly pedantic and refined style which allows the Clerk to offer a measured yet forceful criticism of Petrarch's rendering of the tale.

Finally, we can say that the Prologue is written under the sign of translatio. That is, it points to the problematic nature of this concept. Ultimately we are reminded that a change in style effectively changes the meaning of a text because such a change establishes a new hierarchy of value. In the Prologue, then, Chaucer has the Clerkly voice construct a complex rhetorical situation to accomplish a paradoxical and difficult task. On the one hand, he praises Petrarch's poetry and reputation in order to give value to the tale he is about to relate. But, on the other hand, by overtly criticizing Petrarch's style, the Clerk opens the way for his infiltration of the allegory and his investment of it with a new and different set of meanings.

Notes

¹A. J. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages (Longon: Sclor Press, 1984), pp. 28-29.

²A. J. Minnis, "The Influence of Academic Prologues on the Prologues and Literary Attitudes of Late-Medieval English Writers" Medieval Studies Vol. 43 (1981), 345.

³M. M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), p. 354.

⁴E. T. Donaldson, Chaucer's Poetry (New Yoirk, The Ronald Press Co., 1958), p. 195.

⁵Albert S. Cook, "Chaucer's 'Linian'," The Romanic Review Vol. 8 (1917), 353-382. See pp. 353-356.

⁶John P. McCall, "Chaucer and John of Legnano," Spec 40 (1965), 484-489. See p. 487.

⁷A. S. Cook, p. 374.

⁸A. S. Cook, p. 374.

⁹James J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1974), p. 101.

¹⁰Thomas E. Holland, Introduction to Tractatus: De Ballo, De Represaliis et De Duello by Giovanni da Legnano, ed. by T. E. Holland (Wash: Carnegie Institution, 1917), p. xxiv.

¹¹A. J. Minnis, Academic Prologues, p. 342-383.

¹²Citation of Lydgate's Troy Book, l. 1403, 1404, in MED illustrating meaning of word "conveien," p. 581.

¹³A. J. Minnis, Academic Prologues, p. 368.

¹⁴A. J. Minnis, Medieval Theory, p. 20.

¹⁵See Bakhtin's discussion of the reception of another's word in The Dialogic Imagination, esp. pp. 280-282, 293-294 and 325-327.

¹⁶Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963, pp. 70-74).

¹⁷A. J. Minnis, Medieval Theory, p. 193.

¹⁸[M. M. Bakhtin] V. N. Volosinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titanik (New York: Seminar Press, Inc., 1973), pp. 115-123.

CHAPTER FOUR

**The First Ending: The Ironic Intonation of
the Petrarchan Moral by the Clerkly Voice**

If the Prologue to the Clerk's Tale has garnered relatively little commentary, the same cannot be said of the other framing material: the double endings of the tale. And, whereas no one has noticed the Clerk's ambivalence towards Petrarch in the Prologue, no one has missed the sharp contrast in tone and point of view between the allegorical first ending and the parodic "Envoy" or second ending. Most commentators, beginning with G. L. Kittredge, have seen the "Envoy" as an ironic reprise of the marital theme in the Griselda story as well as a good natured retort to the Wife of Bath.¹ Before I discuss the interpretative problems and thematic significant of the double ending, I should like to present a descriptive analysis of the first or exigetical ending.

The conclusion of the narrative proper proceeds very quickly once Griselda has been reunited with her children. It ends with both children successfully and happily married off "in reste and pees," and with Walter's "sone" succeeding him. The last line of the narrative proper is both a statement of fact and a reassurance:

"Al putte he nat his wyf in greet assay." The "sone" will not visit the horrendous trials upon the next generation; this cycle of suffering has ended. Walter's testing and Griselda's suffering is unique or, at least, not an intrinsic part of the providential order. Following this end of the narrative proper, the Clerkly voice, continuing a process of distancing, changes the focus from the past world to the present:

This world is nat so strong, it is no nay,
 As it hath been in old tymes yoore,
 And herkneth what this auctour saith therfoore.
[E1139-1141]

The first two lines seem to compare "This world" unfavorably with "olde tymes yoore." There may be an irony in residence here. The meaning of the word, "strong" in this passage most likely is "having great moral power for endurance." So the semantic force of the statement is that the present time has less of a moral capacity than the previous one. However, there is a possibility that the word "strong" means, as Robinson has glossed, "hard or difficult." This, in turn, could suggest a negative value judgement against "old times yoore." Given the opinions the Clerk has expressed in the previous apostrophaic commentary in the tale proper, he could very well be implying that the past world was harsher and more cruel than the present one.

Be that as it may, what I would like to focus upon for a minute is not the direction of the value judgement but the fact that there is a perceived difference between the two worlds. It is significant, I think, that the Clerk's voice promotes this difference between the two worlds as a rationale for the impending moral. It is because the world has changed that the Clerk insists that we listen to what Petrarch, "this auctour," has to say. The appended moral becomes necessary because of the radical otherness of Griselda's world and not merely because it is a convention of Christian literature. By emphasizing the heterogeneity of those worlds the Clerk is pointing to the datedness of the allegory and its subsequent inadequacy. Part of the pathos of the tale, as I have stated earlier, results from precisely this disjunction; since times have changed, the genre is felt to be less than a sufficient vehicle of moral/artistic expression. What the Clerk has suggested in moral and historic terms, Jan Mukarovsky more recently has described in aesthetic and theoretical ones: the intentionality of the artwork changes because the historical and cultural context undergoes change.²

But if the Clerk is explicitly measuring the distance between "this world" and "old tymes," that is, Griselda's world and his, he is also implicitly measuring the distance between Petrarch's world and his own, as well.

Just as the Clerk repeated several times in the Prologue that it is Petrarch's story he is about to tell, so here he specifically states that it is Petrarch's moral he will deliver: "What this auctour seith." Once again at a critical juncture of the tale the Clerk emphasizes the otherness of the discourse he is transmitting. Although virtually every modern commentator has mistakenly assumed that the moral interpretation that follows is the Clerk's, it manifestly is not. The distinction A. J. Minnis makes between recitatio and assertio can be of some use here.³ The Clerk, we can say, is only reciting Petrarch's moral commentary, he is not asserting or affirming the truth of its application. I do not mean to say that the Clerk is denying its truth value. In fact, the Clerk has no choice but to agree with the "truth" of the moral because it has biblical sanction. However, I think it is safe to say that he disagrees with the application of Petrarch's moral to the instance of the Griselda story. I am encouraged in this conclusion partly because of the Clerk's ambivalent remarks in his prologue and partly because he appeals to a different moral principle in his apostrophaic asides in the narrative proper.

The three stanzas that comprise the exigetical endings of the tale are presented by the Clerk, then, as a direct citation from Petrarch and, as such, explicitly

constitute what Bakhtin calls double-voiced discourse.⁴ Consequently, an important goal of my analysis of this ending will be to determine the Clerk's angle of approach to Petrarch's words. In other words, determining the intonational weight the Clerk gives to Petrarch's words is the key to understanding the passage. The first stanza of the commentary presents two morals; one is denied, the other accepted:

This storie is seyde, nat for that wyves sholde
 Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,
 For it were inportable, though they wolde;
 But for every wight, in his degree,
 Sholde be constant in adversitee
 As was Grisilde; therfore Petrark writeth
 This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth
[E1142-1148]

The major organizing rhetorical figure is the familiar one of contrarium. The first three lines comprise the first, negative half of the figure: Petrarch's denial of the secular moral of wifely obedience, "humylitee." The third line contains the reason for his rejection of this interpretation: "it were inportable." Just as the possible meanings of the word "strong" are pivotal in the interpretation of the lines introducing this passage, so here, the word "inportable" is of crucial importance.

The most immediate and primary meaning of the word is "unbearable, unendurable" and this is the meaning the MED assigns to the word in this passage. A second

meaning of the word has an economic valence meaning "impossible or very difficult to pay." A third meaning given for "inportable" is "unpardonable, insufferable, intolerable" which is how Baugh, Donaldson and Robinson gloss the word.⁵ This tertiary meaning of the word introduces the possibility of an ambiguity or an ambivalence into the reading of these lines. On the one hand, the meaning generally accepted is that it would be unbearable and therefore impossible for any woman to follow Griselda's extreme example of obedience. Her experience is perceived, in some way, to be of a different order, as beyond ordinary experience. So although the word "inportable" might register an effect of awe and admiration, it might very well suggest a negative valuation. Her example might be seen as "unpardonable" or unseemly either because Walter's testing was much too extreme or because Griselda's willingness to accept such testing was much too complete, or both. Indeed, the project of Petrarch's appended moral can be seen as an attempt to insulate his tale against the danger of such a negative or ironic reading. Before pursuing possible implications arising from this complex rhetorical situation, I would like to examine the second half of the contrarium.

Beginning with line 1145, the second half of the contrarium presents the preferred moral, the tale's spiritual or allegorical meaning: Everyone should be

constant in "adversitee" just as Griselda was. Two important features of this second, allegorical moral are its universalizing movement and the introduction of the idea of degree. The first makes the moral more abstract, the second proposes a relative standard. With the first, the shift from women to "every wight," Petrarch continues the distancing movement that Michael Cherniss argues began in the middle of the sixth part of the tale. This movement of transcendence attempts to empty the moral of its specific content and deny that Griselda's suffering may be of a different order because she is a woman. In other words, Petrarch, in extending the scope of the moral's application not only glosses over concrete aspects of Griselda's suffering but also ignores the gender-bound quality of that suffering.

The second notable feature of this spiritualized moral is the phrase, "in his degree." With this qualification, Petrarch imposes an important limitation on how Griselda's example should be perceived. We might say today that he is inviting everyone to follow her example as far as they are able; that is, within the normal limits of their capacity. But I think the phrase carries much more freight than that in this passage. The MED lists a wide range of meanings for the word, "degree," from a step or platform in a theater to a stage in development, or the rank in social or church

hierarchy. It can mean, as well, an honor, prestige or reputation, or a particular condition or manner of being. The word even has, of course, a specific astrological denotation. This synopsis is far from exhaustive. The basic concept underlying its various meanings describes a number of discrete steps or gradations in a series. "Degree" implies a principle of order that defines the relation qualities, persons, or things have with each other. It is a measure of identity. The concept of degree was a deeply ingrained "habit of mind" or method of thinking in the medieval world. From celestial hierarchies to social ones, from philosophical distinctions to ethical categories, the concept was employed in an explicit and habitual manner. In The Clerk's Tale, the word is used five other times. In three instances degree most immediately refers to social rank, for example: "And for he saugh that under low degree/Was often vertu hid." [E425-26] And here, we can see, a social category is conflated with an ethical one. In another, the word pertains to manner or a particular way of being: "Yow for to serve and plese in my degree." [E969] Although this last stated sense of "manner" probably is the meaning most immediately pertinent for this passage, the social, ethical and even political contexts have an active bearing as well.

The qualification, "in his degree," introduces an Aristotelian economy of means. In a way, it is reminiscent of the Clerk's qualification in his response to the Host in the Prologue: "As fer as resoun axeth, hardily." [E25] There the Clerk appealed to the classical ideal of proportion and reasonableness in reference to a theory of governance. Here, Petrarch asserts this Aristotelian ideal of decorum and conventionality in a more explicitly axiological realm. And there are other more important differences between the two situations. There the Clerk's citations of "resoun" was a means of setting limits to the Host's claims of governance over him. Here, Petrarch is retroactively appealing to a normative principle to measure Griselda's radical behavior and suffering: It is part and parcel of a "moral" rescue mission to render the more disturbing and heterogenous aspects of the tale harmless or, at least, to muffle their disruptiveness. Perhaps a more sympathetic interpretation of Petrarch's project would suggest that his implied argument of degree is a belated attempt at making Griselda's extreme experience accessible and brought to bear on "normal" experience. According to Chaim Perelman, this is precisely how an argument based on degree operates:

When we are confronted with two realms of a different order, the establishment of degrees

within one of them is often for the purpose of diminishing the break between them. The way is thus prepared for reducing a difference of order to a difference of degree.⁶

Seen from this angle, the difference of degree argument proffered by Petrarch works to minimize the alterity of Griselda's example. But while this argument reduces the radical otherness of her experience, it also has the effect of denying the depth and extent of her suffering.

This summation leads us back to the question I raised earlier regarding the kind of intonation the Clerk casts on Petrarch's words. I should like to defer this question once again and first briefly address the related questions of the tale's double moral. The presence of the two morals has caused problems for most readers in this century, except those, like Bernard Huppe, who have neatly subsumed the secular, marital moral under the allegorical one, or those, like Kemp Malone, who agree with Petrarch and deny outright the applicability of the marital moral. However, most critics, beginning with G. L. Kittredge, have been uncomfortable with disregarding the secular moral, and they have sensed a conflict between the two.⁷ Kittredge thought that the "real" moral was the Petrarchan spiritual one and that the secular, marital one--at first denied and then ironically presented in the "Envoy"--was a brilliant dramatic strike in answer to the Wife of Bath. In other words,

there was a bifurcated moral. The allegorical moral was applied internally to the tale itself and the marital moral referred to the external dramatic situation obtaining between the pilgrim narrators. There are two significant weaknesses to Kittredge's position on this matter. The first is that he automatically assumes that both the Clerk's and Petrarch's voices are synonymous; that is, the Clerk is in complete agreement with Petrarch's moral conclusions. The second, that in order to perceive the secular moral, Kittredge has to apply it to the external frame and to read the "Envoy" as an ironic reprise directed at the Wife of Bath. I think there is sufficient textual evidence to demonstrate that neither assumption of Kittredge's is correct; consequently, his interpretation is misleading.

The question of the double moral can be more than adequately accounted for without an immediate appeal to the outer frame. Besides, the "Envoy" or second ending is a more complicated and substantial statement than an anti-feminist putdown of Dame Alice. The double moral presented in the first ending results from the unusual narrative structure of the tale. The double moral is a manifestation of the tale's double-voiced narrative structure and is not only an endgame dilemma. This double-voiced structure, present throughout the tale, organizes the tale's elements into polar opposites. It

is precisely this quality of doubleness, religious and secular, that both Bertrand Bronson and Elizabeth Salter point to in their readings.⁸ Although they view the contradictions resulting from this multi-voiced structure as a sign of failure, their descriptive analysis of the tale's heterogenous elements has been helpful in discerning the tale's complicated structure. Michael Cherniss, unlike Bronson and Salter, sees the doubleness in the tale as part of a consciously chosen artistic strategy. Summarizing the various issues regarding the ending, he comes to this conclusion:

Chaucer could certainly have discarded Petrarch's moral, had he wished to use the tale to exemplify the theme of marital obedience or, by the same token, he could have added material in order to make the tale more emphatically spiritual in its orientation, but in fact, he appears to have deliberately followed Petrarch closely enough to preserve the double moral.⁹

Not only do I completely agree with the above statement that the double moral is the result of a deliberate strategy but, as I have argued, the quality of doubleness permeates the tale even more thoroughly than Cherniss suggests.

The double moral reflects the special status of the Clerk's Tale as a double-voiced text. Overlaid and intercalated in the text or words of Petrarch are the Clerk's words and intonations. The secular, marital

world of wifely "humylitee," which is rejected by Petrarch, is the perspective through which the Clerk views the Griselda story. The Clerk can be said to be conducting a low key or hidden polemic against the "heigh" moralizing of Petrarch. Chaucer pursued this strategy of doubleness to enhance the conflict between these two moral viewpoints. Instead of harmonizing the two worldviews, subsuming the concrete, secular moral under the abstract, spiritual one, this poetic strategy intensifies and emphasizes the contradiction between them.

Even the form in which the double moral is presented reflects this poetic strategy. In the figure, contrarium, both sides of an argument are given. One result of this rhetorical presentation is that both morals are placed side by side to be explicitly compared and contrasted. The figure sharpens and emphasizes the difference between the two morals, stressing their alterity, so that the allegorical moral not only supercedes the secular one but is made to appear to be of a different order. Although, it is true, once the more openly polemical and parodic voice is introduced in the "Envoy," this alterity is reduced, here their otherness is emphasized.

Although I think the Clerk's voice established an ironic relation to the Petrarchan viewpoint, let me

quickly emphasize that I do not think that his voice displays an ironic stance towards Griselda, the heroine of the tale. As I have argued earlier in my discussion of the narrative commentary, his expressed attitude towards her is one of respectful sympathy which sometimes crosses the border to complete emphatic identification. In relation to her, the Clerk's voice is completely serious; it is the voice of pathos. Towards Walter his attitude may fluctuate between patronizing solicitation and outright criticism, but towards Griselda it remains relatively constant within the realm of sympathy. Unlike his feelings towards the heroine, the Clerk's attitude towards Petrarch can be best characterized as ambivalent. I have already described this complexly double attitude of respectful citation and polemical revision in my discussion of the Prologue. This same ambivalence is present in the first ending of the tale, and can be detected in the ironic intonation of the Clerk's voice.

I base my conclusion that the Clerk's voice stands in an ironic and polemic relation to the Petrarchan voice on the Clerk's explicit commentary in the framing material as well as the apostrophes interspersed throughout the tale. Here, in the first ending, after he presents the double moral in the contrarium, the Clerk concludes the stanza specifically linking the spiritual moral to

Petrarch's rationale for writing the tale: "therfore Petrak writeth/This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth." [E1147-1148] This explicit naming of Petrarch as "auctour" of the tale in tandem with his earlier injunction, "...herkneth what this auctour seith" [E1141] effectively brackets the statement of the two morals. This repetition is an emphatic reminder by the Clerk at a crucial juncture that both the tale and the official moral are not his but Petrarch's.

If we remember, the Clerk also emphasized the otherness of the tale's authorship in his introduction. There he repeated no less than three times that it was Petrarch's tale he was about to relate. Here, not only does the Clerk emphasize the alterity of the tale and its moral, but once again he specifies the style in which Petrarch wrote it as the "heigh style." Here the Clerk explicitly associates the high style with the allegorical or spiritual moral that Petrarch has appended. Yet in his introduction the Clerk asserted that the style in which Petrarch wrote the tale as "impertinent;" that is irrelevant, not appropriate. As Severs has so well documented, Chaucer has the Clerk move to a more "realistic" stylization in his retelling of the tale. If the Clerk regards the style of the tale as inappropriate, we might ask how he views Petrarch's official appended moral. I think we can assume the Clerk

regards this appended moral as inappropriate. Further, I think the Clerk views the first stated moral of wifely "humylitee" as more properly fitting the tale.

We can make these assumptions because the secular moral of wifely obedience is central to the dominant theme of the Clerk's intranarrative commentary. His commentary focuses upon the terrible dilemma and suffering that women sometimes must endure to maintain wifely "humylitee." There is no abstract moralizing in the Clerk's comments. He consistently views the events of the tale in the most immediate concrete terms of women's suffering within the context of marriage. Marriage is the subject of the Clerk's first apostrophe when he first criticizes Walter--"I blame hym thus"--because Walter refuses to "Wedde no wyf." The woe that is in marriage and the evilness of husbands who unnecessarily test their wives are a constant refrain in his commentary: "But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit/To assaye a wyf whan that it is no nede." [E460-461] The other theme that appears in his comments is his profound sympathy and admiration for Griselda.

These sympathetic feelings are given full enunciation and ethical force at the climax of the tale when, at the end of the fifth part, Walter sends Griselda back to her father. After delineating all of the qualities that comprise her "humylitee:"

But ful of pacient benyngnytee,
 Discreet and prideless, ay honorable,
 And to hire husbonde ever meke and stable.
 [E929-931]

The Clerk then turns to speak of the suffering of women.
 He begins the stanza referring to Job, Griselda's
 exemplar:

Men speke of Job, and moost for his humblesse,
 As clerkes, whan hem list, konne wel endite,
 Namely of men, but as insoothfastnesse,
 Though clerkes preise wommen but a lite,
 ther kan no man in humblesse hym axquite
 As wommen kan, ne kan been half so trewe
 As wommen been, but it be falle of newe.
 [E925-938]

I don't intend to repeat my earlier analysis of this encomium to Griselda and women, but I should like to make several remarks apropos my present discussion regarding the first ending.

First, in the comparison between Job and Griselda, who are representatives of their respective genders, Griselda is placed in a morally superior position. Later in the stanza in the comparison between men and women, this implicit expressed superior position of women is given explicit expression. Second, and this is very important, the Clerk does not attempt to transcend this difference between men and women. He does not argue that Griselda's suffering is a universal condition, as does Petrarch in his moral summation; but insists upon the

distinctive gender quality of her and women's suffering. The Clerk even takes an ironical swipe at the anti-feminism of clerks who, he says, have written more about the lesser sufferings of men. His comments, while pointing to a reason why the extent of women's suffering has been unacknowledged or actively suppressed, emphasize an ideological difference between the sexes. Here, otherness is perceived in terms of gender.

Third, and this is my main point, these two stanzas comprise what can be called the Clerk's "moral" reading of the tale. They are placed at the most important juncture of the tale, its climax, and they contain an explicit statement regarding Griselda, the tale's heroine. For the Clerk, the tale of Griselda's suffering does not, first and foremost, exemplify the abstract ideal of spiritual constancy but is an exemplum of wifely "humylitee": "And to hire husband evere meke and stable." It is through this optic that the Clerk sympathetically views the tale's heroine and it is with this purview that he ironically regards Petrarch's moralizing.

I think it might be helpful to make some comparisons between these two worldviews. The Clerk's "moral," unlike Petrarch's summation, does not urge any corrective action but only presents a sympathetic viewpoint. It is not prescriptive and hortatory, but descriptive and declarative. Its appeal, though immediate, is indirect

and implicit; it is, after all, the appeal of pathos. On the other hand, Petrarch's moral is an explicit injunction to be "constant in adversitee." There is no appeal, only a command. While Petrarch universalizes the moral application of the tale to include both men and women, "every wight," he specifically prohibits any emulation of Griselda as a wife and a woman because it is "inportable." On the other hand, while the Clerk compares the similarity of the intensity and extent of Griselda's suffering with a man, Job, he stresses the distinctiveness of her suffering as a woman. Yet while Petrarch chooses to see Griselda's example as unique--beyond the pale--and not repeatable, the Clerk suggests that though her suffering, like Job's may be exception, it is not unique. Griselda's experience may be of a different order than that of men's, but it is not so radically different than the experience and suffering of women. In fact, the Clerk asserts that Griselda's experience is representative of the universal condition of "wommen."

The Clerk's assertion that Griselda's suffering reenacts the pathos of woman's condition may strike us, at first, as a rather extreme statement; at best, inaccurate or, at worst, a gross exaggeration. How, we might ask, can the incredibly accepting and passive behavior of Griselda in the face of infanticide be representative

of the behavior of women. We all could rightly argue that this is exceptional, not ordinary, representative behavior. Yet even if we do not agree with the Clerk's unusual assertion, perhaps it provides us with a key for understanding the repetitive and extended nature of her suffering. Most readers have found the depiction of her experience, if not unbelievable, then overly melodramatic; and consequently sad and disturbingly repellant. But it is precisely this emphatic quality which the structural repetition gives to her suffering that I think is most significant. The amplification of the pathos foregrounds the suffering so that Griselda's experience as a wife and woman become equated with suffering. In this sense Griselda's experience can be seen as representative of women's condition, not because women suffer as much or as intensely as she, but because her example has made visible, so to speak, the extent of the suffering experienced by ordinary women within the marriage relationship.

The hyperbolic quality, the overkill of pathos has less to do with the quaint and morbid medieval fascination with suffering, as some have suggested, than with a deliberate poetic strategy. From the purview delineated by the Clerk's voice, the voice of pathos, this repetitive pattern of suffering reveals a fundamental inequity in the institution of marriage. The Clerk both

implicitly and explicitly pursues the argument that the structure of the marriage relationship inevitably produces this kind of suffering. As he states in one of his asides: "But wedded men ne knowe no mesure,/Whan that they fynde a pacient creature." [E622-623] The standard or ideal form of the marriage relationship as depicted in The Clerk's Tale established a hierarchy in which the husband would "rule" his wife, much as a prince ruled his people. The marriage metaphor was a commonplace for describing the prince's relation to his people. The fact that Walter is both husband and prince gives an emphatic quality to their marriage relationship. Not only did the husband have precedence in the relationship but he could demand complete obedience as Walter did of Griselda: "I seye this, be ye redy with good herte/To al my lust..." [E351-52] Obedience is presented as an ideal quality for a wife to possess. It was an important component in the ideological ecology of marriage. Yet Griselda suffered horribly for living up to this ideal of obedience.

Although the Clerk denies the larger social and political implications of his argument, he maintains a consistent argument about the shortcomings of the social structure of marriage. The Clerk suggests that Walter and Griselda are following an inevitable pattern, enacting an almost ritualistic drama of dominance and

submission which he regards as completely normative behavior within the marriage relationship. The structure of repetition of suffering in conjunction with the Clerk's commentary, then, effectively makes visible the inequality which is an essential quality in the structure of the marriage relationship. The Clerk's comments and the amplification of pathos foregrounds what had been heretofore hidden in the ideological assumptions regarding marriage. Whether we agree with the Clerk's argument about the destructive aspects of the social institution of marriage, this issue must be of secondary importance here. What is of primary significance is that the Clerk reads Griselda's story from first to last as a parable regarding the "woe" that is in marriage; not, as does Petrarch, as an allegory of spiritual constancy.

With a firm understanding that Petrarch and the Clerk are of two different minds regarding the moral that should apply to Griselda's tale, I will now briefly re-examine the first stanza of the exegetical ending with an eye towards the specific intonational cast the Clerk places on Petrarch's words. Certainly it should be clear by now why the Clerk goes out of his way to explicitly attribute the spiritual moral to Petrarch. He does so because he disagrees with Petrarch and wants there to be no possibility that their very different opinions will be confused. Before I review the Clerk's view of Petrarch's

moral surgical job, I think it would be useful to first specify the intonation the Clerk casts upon the word "strong" which he uses several lines before the statement of the moral.

These several lines constitute an introduction to the ending whose main purpose is to differentiate at least two worlds, Griselda's and the Clerk's: "This world is nat so strong, it is no nay,/As it hath been in olde tymes yooore[.]" [E1139-1140] Although it is possible to distinguish the story world of Griselda from Petrarch's world, for the purposes of the Clerk both Petrarch's and Griselda's worlds probably can be considered synonymous; they are not of "this world." Earlier I had posed two different possibilities for the meaning of the word, "strong." Either it could mean that the earlier "old tymes yooore" was more resilient and had a greater moral capacity than the present, or the opposite meaning could apply: the previous world was harsher and more indifferent, possessing a diminished moral capacity compared with the present one. After reviewing the Clerk's world view, I think that we can safely say that the tone behind the Clerk's use of the word "strong" is heavily ironic. Such an ironic intonation activates the second of the meanings cited above which depicts the previous world as harsher than "this world."

The Clerk's intonation can be said to qualify his statement in this manner: "This world" doesn't have the stomach to accept the spectacle of suffering as Griselda had to endure. This ironic meaning gives a positive valuation to the moral sensibility of "this world." What the previous world might characterize as "weak," "this world" would call "refined." The "strong" in "old tymes yooore" is viewed as barbaric indifference. The irony in the Clerk's statement extends to include an almost contemptuous inversion of that old saw about the good old days when men were men... However, not only is the Clerk drawing a distinction between the moral universes of past and present, but he clearly implies that these moral viewpoints are not comprehensible to one another. Consequently, for this reason, he urges us to listen to what the "auctour" who is from that past world --or, at least, has access to that world--has to say: "And herkneth what this auctour seith therfore." [E1141] Because the worlds of past and present are radically dissimilar, an explicit statement of a "moral" is necessary. Here, once again, the Clerk is pointing to the change in ideological assumptions which makes this statement of principles necessary.

In his recitation of Petrarch's moral summation, the Clerk also employs irony, especially when he gives Petrarch's reason for rejecting the secular moral of

wifely obedience. The key word in the passage, "inportable," upon which Petrarch's reason hinges, has several meanings. The meanings attributed to the word by virtually every reader have been straightforward, serious ones: they have taken the word to mean "unbearable," "unendurable," or "impossible." These meanings for the word, which are closely related, have a positive valuation vis-à-vis Griselda, the object of evaluation, and for Petrarch, the speaker who makes the value judgement. The word appears as an assertion of the self-evident, a confirmation of the obvious. Of course, it would be impossible for women to follow Griselda's example of "humylitee." Griselda's example, in human terms, is astounding, awe-inspiring, extreme. Therefore the secular moral of marriage does not apply; it would be impractical, to say the least. But there is another meaning to the word, "inportable," one which the Clerk's ironic intonation activates and which puts the lie to Petrarch's begging of the moral.

The other meaning of the word, "inportable" can be "unpardonable" or "insufferable" which casts a negative valuation on Griselda's example, and, more importantly, Petrarch's ambivalent response to it. The Clerk's ironic intonation of the word, "inportable," implies that Petrarch not only considers Griselda's experience as beyond the pale, but unseemly and "unpardonable."

Rather, we can say, the Clerk, through his irony, is suggesting that Griselda's experience provokes an overwhelming sense of disgust in Petrarch. Instead of overcoming his disgust by giving voice to a sense of outrage, as the Clerk has done, Petrarch merely switched moral viewpoints. In other words, Petrarch chose to view her story through the safe and mediated distance provided by the abstract categories of an allegoresis either because he was incapable of comprehending her experience in concrete "human terms," or, more than likely, because he realized the danger inherent in this project of mimesis. The Clerk's ironic intonation at this critical juncture, where Petrarch is surgically removing the secular marriage moral and suturing in the abstract spiritual one, effectively implicates Petrarch in a moral liability.

Once again, with the word, "inportable," the Clerk involves the concept of translatio, just as he had done in his prologue. This key word emphasizes what cannot be carried across the divide between the two moral viewpoints. With it, the Clerk points to what is lost in the transfer of morals. In order to reach the transcendent safety of the spiritual moral, Petrarch must deny the gender-bound aspects of Griselda's story and the radical otherness of her experience. For the concrete specificity of her example, he substitutes the principle

of universality attempting to mediate the otherness through the principle of "degree." This principle of "degree" establishes a hierarchy which subsumes her heterogeneity in an orderly fashion and which keeps her story comfortably within the purview of the official religious ideology. This ideology, i.e., specifically the marriage sacrament, sanctifies the structure of dominance and submission in the marriage relationship while it steadfastly refuses to acknowledge the suffering this has caused women. The word "inportable," then, not only points to the difference in Petrarch's and the Clerk's moral viewpoints, but it emphasizes the limitations of the Petrarchan viewpoint.

The Clerk's comment regarding the "heigh stile" following Petrarch's moral surgery in the first stanza of the exigetical ending links, as I have argued earlier, specific rhetorical styles with particular moral viewpoints. The "heigh stile" is identified by the Clerk with the abstract ideals of a moral allegoresis. For the Clerk stylistic levels effectively create generic differences which, in turn, reflect both stylistic peculiarities and moral expectations. The Clerk's pointing to Petrarch's style immediately following a discussion of the possible morals that apply to the tale recalls his remark in the prologue about Petrarch's style being "impertinent." For the Clerk the Petrarchan allegoresis is

morally inadequate because Petrarch considers Griselda as only a symbolic marker in an idealized world of abstract values. On the other hand, the Clerk, viewing Griselda through the lens of mimesis, views her as a sentient, suffering woman. You might say that, in a sense, Petrarch and the Clerk tell different stories because they tell their respective stories in different genres. These two genres have their own, very different sets of moral assumptions and distinctive modes of presenting "reality."¹⁰ In this sense The Clerk's Tale can be said to contain a double set of genre expectations and this complexity of voicing structure is another way in which it differs from Petrarch's tale of Griselda. The Clerk's Tale is double voiced, that is it contains both voices and both viewpoints; whereas Petrarch's, ostensibly at least, contains only his own voice. The double moral in the first ending reflects this generic difference between the two voices: The Petrarchan voice of official allegoresis and the Clerk's voice of mimesis.

In the next two stanzas of the first, exigetical ending, the Clerk presents Petrarch's amplification of the appended, spiritual moral. The translatio begun in the first stanza is continued. In this crossing over Walter and Griselda simply disappear from view because Petrarch shifts the rhetorical and moral focus to our relationship with God. Whatever is said of "testing," a

major thematic of the tale, is now posed in terms of "God" and "us;" consequently, the rest of this first ending provides a rationale and explanation of his "testing" of "us."

In the first of these two stanzas the ramifications of this moral begin to be revealed. The stanza is organized with a contrarium which functions, in part, to change the argument from an argument based on degree to one based on quality. As Michael Cherniss has pointed out, here the rhetorical argument is one of analogy, not example. When Petrarch set aside the moral argument which views Griselda as the exemplar of a "patient" wife, he moved to an argument based on analogy which is supported by the principle of "degree." As we see, the first half of the contrarium employs a comparison of degree:

For, sith a womman was so pacient
 Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte
 Receyven al in gree that God us sent;
 For greet skile is, he preeve that he wroghte.
 [El149-1152]

The amplificatio constructs an analogy which compares Griselda's "patient" to Walter's testing with our reception of God's testing. The comparative argument moves from lesser to greater: "wel moore." We are instructed to accept God's testing with an even greater degree of willingness than that with which Griselda submitted to

Walter, who was merely, "a mortal man." The severity of this injunction is mitigated by the following clause: "Receyven al in gree..." Although the second class of meanings for the word, "gree" given in the MED-- "favorably," "willingly," "in good spirit"--is the class that virtually all modern commentators agree most immediately applies in this instance, the first class of meanings also has some pertinence here as well. This other class of meanings introduces the idea of "degree," and recalls the invocation of this principle in the first stanza of the ending: "in his degree."

There the word "degree" introduced a concept which rationalized moral responsiveness with individual capacity. Here again, the word "gree" suggests a regulation of moral behavior to a standard, a hierarchy of behavior corresponding to natural capacity. We should respond to "...that God us sent....," to the extent we are able. Petrarch is not proposing a completely relativized moral, but one that escapes the absolute status of Griselda's example. The double meaning of the word "gree" conjoins these two basic concepts: moral responsiveness is combined with a hierarchy of restraint. The grounding for this restraint is reason.

Petrarch suggests this in line 1152, which follows his moral injunction, when he gives the reason why we should happily accept our testing: "For greet skile

is,"--it is most reasonable. While Petrarch cannot say that Walter's testing of Griselda was in any way reasonable, he can and does assert that God's testing of those "that he wroghte" is most reasonable. Here the Aristotelian concept of reason, of reasonableness is slipped into the argument and we have come full circle. We should respond to the "adversitee" of God's testing with a reasoned "paciencie" and restraint because it is reasonable for God to test us. No Christian could argue with that. But lurking behind the movement of his argument, or perhaps I should say, left behind, is the implication that Griselda's behavior was less than reasonable and, therefore, reprehensible.

Petrarch avoids this repugnant conclusion, partly, as I mentioned above, by couching his argument in abstraction and partly by changing the focus of it. The terms he employs are abstract: "woman," "mortal man" and "us." Walter and Griselda are extrapolated into generic terms, so that not even the suggested concreteness which a proper name bestows upon a subject remains. They are, as Petrarch promised in the first stanza of the ending, the universal "every wight"--though the gender differential is still intact. The focus of his argument moves from the question of what the proper moral perspective towards the Griselda story should be to the issue, in the form of a moral injunction, of our

attitude to God's testing of "us." Since a "woman" was so "patient" to a "mortal man," we "oghte" to receive even more willingly whatever "adversitee" God sends us. Petrarch has begun to capitalize on his generalized, abstract moral. But before he can move ahead he must deal with the disturbing potential problem of the comparison between Walter and God in the analogy he has constructed in the first part of the stanza, which is also the first half of the contrarium.

In the last three lines of the stanza comprising the second half of the figure, contrarium, Petrarch attempts to deflect potential problems with the comparison between God and Walter posed by Walter's rather malevolent behavior:

But he ne tempteth no man that he boghte,
As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede
He preeveth folk al day, it is no drede.
[E1153-1155]

In this conterstatement Petrarch assures us that God's testing does not involve evil. The first line, as we are told in the second, is a citation from the epistle of St. James. Through his quotation of Petrarch's quotation of the Bible, the Clerk emphasizes the importance of this qualification while, at the same time, he points to the potential danger of Petrarch's analogy. The purpose of Petrarch's invocation of biblical authority is

to remove any possible confusion or misunderstanding regarding God's motivation. Petrarch's argument, which in the first part of the contrarium had been based upon degree, now changes to an argument based on quality. Petrarch asserts indirectly an absolute difference between Walter and God. One way this absolute difference between God and Walter is conveyed is through the use of the words "preeveth" and "tempteth."

The passage in the Epistle of St. James from which the citation is taken clearly states, "For God cannot be tempted by evil, and does not himself tempt anyone."¹¹ God does not tempt with evil, that is, his tests of those he has created do not involve evil. The word used to describe his testing is "preeveth." In The Clerk's Tale, the word "preeveth" is only associated with God and Griselda, not Walter. In addition, in the MED none of the many meanings of the word "preeve" are associated with the idea of evil. This is not true of the word "tempteth" which in the specific biblical citation and in at least one of its common meanings is explicitly associated with the notion of evil. The word "tempt" is never used in connection with God. In fact, as we have seen above, it is emphatically denied that his testing can in any way be construed as a temptation to evil.

However, Walter's testing of Griselda might very easily be considered evil or a temptation to evil. The

Clerk certainly thinks so, for Walter's testing of Griselda is consistently and exclusively described with the word "tempte" as in the following line: "To tempte his wyf was set al his entent." [E735] The six other times the Clerk employs the word--nearly all in apostrophic asides--he does so to describe Walter's attitude and behavior towards Griselda. The Clerk clearly regards Walter's actions as the tempting of Griselda with evil: forcing her to submit to the "murder" of her children. Petrarch is less clear in his statements about Walter's behavior. He clearly wants to dissassociate God's testing with evil. But Petrarch never directly characterizes Walter's behavior; nor does he explicitly commend or condemn his actions. Petrarch studiously avoids any explicit commentary on Walter and his attitude towards him can be characterized as ambiguous. It is precisely this ambiguity in Petrarch's moral reasoning that the Clerk's irony points to.

We must remember that the Clerk has explicitly announced his citation of Petrarch's words and that the primary reason for his announcement, as I have argued above, is that he disagrees with Petrarch's moral conclusions. Or rather, the Clerk disagrees with Petrarch's supplementation of the concrete moral of wifely obedience with the abstract moral of spiritual constance. We should also be aware that the Clerk continues to cast an

ironic intonation on Petrarch's words in the second stanza. The Clerk's irony points to Petrarch's rhetorical sleight of hand which allows him to have it both ways. First the Clerk shows how Petrarch constructs an analogy which compares Walter and Griselda with God and "us." In order to accomplish this, Petrarch has to ignore the questionable status of Walter's extreme behavior and, concomitantly, the status of Griselda's "unreasonable" response. Once Petrarch has used this questionable analogy as a bridge to cross his moral Rubicon, he turns to deny any analogy between God and Walter and between Griselda and "us." The Clerk, by presenting Petrarch's reasoning in full, reveals how Petrarch deconstructs his own argument once he has taken up a new position which has been made possible by the same (now destroyed) argument. The Clerk's ironical intonation acts, you might say, to deconstruct this faulty Petrarchan analogy.

The major move that Petrarch makes to deconstruct his false analogy and which confirms for us its faultiness is his invocation of a biblical text. Such an invocation of biblical authority is significant for several reasons. First, the biblical text is not employed in supporting the major thesis of Petrarch's moral, i.e., we should all willingly accept whatever "adversitee" God sends us. Rather, the citation is made to reassure us of the purity of God's motivation, something that seems

quite extraneous. As a result, the focus of his argument moves from "us" to "God." This in turn shows how powerful were Petrarch's doubts regarding the legitimacy of Walter's testing and reveals how strongly Petrarch was rejecting his own implied, and false, comparison between Walter and God. After Petrarch has invoked Biblical authority to cover up his faulty reasoning and prevent a major rupture of his argument, he moves to re-domesticate the idea of God's testing.

In the last line of this transitional, second stanza of the exigetical ending, the Clerk has Petrarch characterize God's testing as an everyday commonplace affair: "He preeveth folk al day, it is no dred." [E1155] You might say this is the final humiliation visited upon Griselda; the implicit comparison with the testing of the "folk," her horrendous sufferings are reduced to the commonplace and the ordinary. The concluding half of the line, "...It is no drede," an idiomatic expression meaning, "without a doubt" reenforces the matter-of-fact, ordinary quality of these testings. However, the Clerk's use of the word "drede" in his translatio of Petrarch maintains his ironic intonation. The idiomatic meaning of the word "dred" results from the secondary or tertiary meaning of the word. The primary meaning of "drede" is "fear" or "terror." Once again, we see how a double meaning of a word provokes a memory of Griselda's

experience even as Petrarch is actively at work to smother it. The primary meaning of "terror" more closely approximates a description of Griselda's experience. Once again, the Clerk points to a contradiction of Petrarch's even as Petrarch is denying any comparison of God's testing of "us" with Walter's terrifying tempting of Griselda. For the most part, however, Petrarch's move towards abstract transcendence has accomplished its goal: the leaching out of all the unpleasant concrete details and nasty features of Griselda's impossible trial. In the last stanza of this exigetical ending Petrarch turns his full attention to lecturing "us" about our moral duty. In his conclusion, Petrarch attempts to impress upon "us" the value and necessity of "suffraunce." In the first three lines he argues that God's testing of "us" is to our advantage:

And suffreth us, as for oure exercise,
 With sharpe scourges of adversitee
 Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;
[E1156-1158]

He urges us to suffer the "sharpe scourges of adversitee" so that we might improve ourselves. The next two lines suggest that this suffering is gratuitous: "Nat for to knowe oure wyl, for certes he,/Er we were born, knew al oure freletee." [E1159-1160] The purpose of suffering is not necessary for God's evaluation of our "wyl"

because "al oure freletee" is known to him beforehand. Petrarch concludes his moral injunction with the reassurance that such suffering is exclusively for our benefit: "And for oure beste is al his governaunce./Lat us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce." [E1161-1162] Petrarch's closing injunction calling for "us" to "lyve in vertuous suffraunce" is one no Christian including the Clerk, could argue with. But it is a moral that is safely detached from any concrete reference to the Griselda story.

However, the memory of her "suffraunce" is not completely erased. Interspersed in this stanza are a series of key words that still reflect the aura of Griselda's suffering: "suffreth," "adversitee," "wyl," "govern-
aunce." It is significant and appropriate that the stanza begins and ends with a traductio of the world "sufferaunce," but all of these words are the bell knolls of the tale's major theme of "vertuous suffraunce." Even, or I should say, most especially at the conclusion of this moral discourse the phrase, "vertuous suffraunce" retains its double meanings. For Petrarch, who has rejected the moral of "wifely obedience," and negotiated his way to the transcendent universal, "every wight," the phrase describes our normative relationship with God and celebrates the beneficial interest that accrues from such suffering. For the Clerk, who refuses to deny the

gender bound aspects of Griselda's suffering, the phrase, "vertuous suffraunce," resonates the very sad truth regarding the profound suffering of women in the marriage relationship; a suffering made inevitable because of their inferior position. Further, for the Clerk, women occupy a superior moral position in relation to men, not only because they are forced to submit to the "wyl" of their husbands, but also because their suffering goes largely unrecognized and unrecorded.

At the end of this third stanza both Petrarch's voice and the Clerk's voice fall silent. And, as I will presently argue, Chaucer introduces a third voice, the parodic voice of grotesque realism to give an additional commentary on Griselda's tale of woe. Before I analyze this third voice, I should like to speculate on the question of why the Clerk, the voice of pathos, does not raise more strenuous or explicit objections to the Petrarchan viewpoint and conclusion. It might well be argued that the Clerk's irony is insufficient as a protest against Petrarch's rather heavyhanded rhetorical maneuvering or his outright denial of the marriage moral. There is more than a little truth to this charge. After all, given the grisly cataloguing of Griselda's marital experiences, we might well ask just how effective a counterstatement irony is. It certainly seems to have been an ineffectual response; a reason, I suspect, why

no one has ever even considered the possibility that the Clerk was actually casting ironic aspersions on Petrarch's words. But then, no one ever thought that the Clerk's characterization of Petrarch's "heigh stile" as "inpertinent" was that unusual or significant either. Yet there is something to the charge about the Clerk's lack of a strong rebuttal. There is something unusual about his oblique response.

The answer to the question of the Clerk's response lies, I think, in the ideological horizon constituting his voice, the voice of pathos. The Clerk's low key, ironic way of responding to the Petrarchan conclusion or "moral" has nothing to do with the Clerk's "personality;" unless you define "personality" as an aggregate of particular social evaluations. The Clerk's response is not only consonant with his socialideological purview; but it is determined by this purview. This ideological overview consisted of a socio-political conservatism, which placed a high valuation on the status quo and a religio-philosophical Aristotelianism which granted a greater respect for human capacities and sensibility. The Clerk reveals his conservatism, not only in his perjorative comments on the "peple" but also in his comments confirming the structure of the marriage relationship and the reasonableness of "assaying" a wife. However, he was no cold-hearted reactionary. From the

Clerk's purview such socio-political structures were natural and Godgiven and, as such, were to be carefully maintained. In fact, it was impossible for the Clerk to think otherwise. In this, both he and Petrarch shared a common viewpoint, or, at least, their viewpoints overlapped. In fact, it is precisely because the Petrarchan voice of allegoresis and the Clerkly voice of pathos share these fundamental assumptions that the critique the Clerk mounts against the voice of allegory remains a limited one.

The religio-philosophical perspectives of these two voices overlapped, as well; though, to be sure, not as completely as their social views did. Since they were both Christians, we can assume that they had similar assumptions regarding, for example, the sacrament of marriage, or the right of a prince to rule his people. Both had religious sanction. However, one way we know that their ideological purviews differed was in the Clerk's pronounced Aristotelianism. The Clerk was a man for whom "reason" was a ruling principle. The Clerk's voice, a voice that expresses the most profound empathy for the tale's heroine, always appeals to the court of reason to adjudicate differences of opinion, and of feeling, for that matter. The Clerk, for example, criticizes Walter for being unreasonable, first in refusing to marry and later in his "assaying" of Griselda. For

the Clerk, the Aristotelian notion of reason and reasonableness underlay the ethical concept of the "golden mean" and the more socio-political concept of "commune profit." The ideal of reason was consonant with and included a notion of equity in human relations; and, while it did not preclude hierarchies of value and power, reason placed the demand on those in power to act with judicious constraint, a quality completely devoid in Walter's relationship with Griselda. The Clerk's Aristotelianism, then, gave him a slightly different perspective from Petrarch's on the Griselda story.

My main point here, is not that the Clerk, who starts out from fairly much the same premises as Petrarch's, comes to very different conclusions from Petrarch. My main point is that the Clerk never explicitly states any conclusions, at least at the end of the tale. As I have pointed out earlier, the comments the Clerk makes throughout the narration of the tale form a consistent viewpoint. Indeed, his comments can be said to develop a full fledged argument. His sympathetic perception of Griselda's testing led him to conclude that there was something fundamentally wrong with the structure of the marriage relationship; and, analogically speaking, with the sovereign's relationship to the people. Only, the Clerk doesn't reach that conclusion. He avoids it. But to say that he avoids such a radical conclusion is

misleading because such a conclusion is not within the Clerk's ideological horizon of possibilities. In order to have reached such a conclusion the Clerk would have had to forego his training and ideological commitments as well as a significant amount of traditional authority that had biblical sanction. Not only would such conclusions seem unreasonable, but downright heterodox. So the Clerk hedges on drawing these conclusions, holding out, instead, for the possibility of the exercise of "reason" and fair play within a fundamentally unequal relationship. Yet despite this predilection for mediating irreconcilable contradictions, the Clerk's observations point to the "truth" he is unable to enunciate more explicitly.

The voice of the Clerk can be said to equivocate. On the one hand, the Clerk's voice, which senses the inadequacy of the abstract allegoresis, tries to recuperate that ideological position with an infusion of mimesis. In the process, this voice of pathos shows how "bankrupt" the ideology of the allegorical voice really is. This is confirmed by the fact that Petrarch has to ignore in his "moral," the human, marital aspects of the story. On the other hand, the Clerk's voice with its mimetic movement of pathos describes Griselda's suffering in concrete, human terms. But this viewpoint does not have sufficient ideological underpinning in the cultural

framework of late 14th century England. Since the Clerk has no independent "secular" position to retreat to which is not either unreasonable or heterodox, he resorts to irony. In a sense the Clerk's irony reveals the "lie" of pathos. Although he "sees" the human suffering, he refuses any explicit denunciation of the ideology and structures that promote and reenforce such a condition.

The Clerk's ironic intonation is the only weapon he possesses to register a protest against the indifference of the allegoresis towards "merely" human concerns. Although the Clerk under the threat of apostasy falls silent at the end of the tale, his irony serves as a sign that his ideological position is not the same as Petrarch's. His silence, then, does not represent the wholesale collapse of the voice of pathos, but, you might say, a tactical retreat in the face of overwhelming odds. Chaucer, I am convinced, projected a third, parodic voice into the text of this tale in order to present a perspective which goes beyond the sympathetic but limited pathos of the Clerk's voice. This third voice openly attacks not only the ideological assumptions of the voice of moral allegory, but also the "reasonableness" of the voice of pathos.

Notes

¹George L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1915), pp. 197-200. A sample:

Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1957), p. 197.

Bertrand Bronson, In Search of Chaucer (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 112.

Paul G. Ruggiers, The Art of The Canterbury Tales (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 224.

Donald R. Howard, The Idea of The Canterbury Tales (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1976), p. 259.

²Jan Mukarovsky, "Intentionality and Unintentionality in a Work of Art," Chapt. in Structure, Sign and Function: Selected Essays, trans. John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 89-128.

³A. J. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages (London: Scolor Press, 1984), p. 193.

⁴M. M. Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minn: Univ. of Minn. Press, 1984), pp. 185-186.

⁵Albert C. Baugh, Chaucer's Major Poetry (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), p. 438.

E. T. Donaldson, Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1958), p. 233.

F. N. Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd Ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. 957.

⁶Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 347.

⁷Bernard Huppe, A Reading of The Canterbury Tales (Albany: State Univ. of N.Y., 1964), pp. 141, 142.

Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer (Balt: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 223.

Kittredge, p. 199.

⁸Bronson, pp. 105-109.

Elizabeth Salter, Chaucer: The Knight's Tale and The Clerk's Tale (Woodbury, N.Y.: Barrons, Inc., 1962), esp. pp. 56 & 57.

⁹Michael Cherniss, "The Clerk's Tale and Envoy, The Wife of Bath's Purgatory and The Merchant's Tale," Chau R Vol. 6 (1972), 238-239.

¹⁰M. M. Bakhtin and P.M. Medvedev, "The Elements of the Artistic Construction," Chapt. in The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics, trans. Albert J. Wehrle (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 129-141. See esp. p. 131.

¹¹The Anchor Bible: The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude, trans. Bo Reicke (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 16.

CHAPTER FIVE

**The Second Ending: The Mocking Critique of
the Clerkly and Petrarchan Worldviews by
the Parodic Voice of Grotesque Realism**

Before I proceed with an analysis of the second ending, I would like to situate such an analysis within an interpretative framework. Earlier, when discussing the first, exigetical ending, I argued that the double moral was a result or manifestation of the tale's double-voiced narrative discourse. The two different voices, the Petrarchan voice of moral allegory and the Clerkly voice of pathos narrated the tale collectively. With few exceptions every commentator has argued that there is a bipartite moral and each have offered various explanations for their presence, but no one has suggested that the double moral implies two different voices and two different world views. While everyone has perceived a synonymy between the Petrarchan and Clerkly voicings, I have argued that there is a disjunctive opposition between these voices, and that, in fact, the Clerkly voice contradicts the Petrarchan voice, maintaining an ironic and critical distance from it. In the second ending of The Clerk's Tale a third parodic voice mockingly rejects both the abstract moral of spiritual constancy and the concrete moral of secular humility.

The second ending begins at line E1163: "But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go." Although virtually everyone agrees that this marks a significant change in tone from the preceding lines ending with, "Lat us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce," [E1162], most, following Kittredge, assume that the change in tone does not constitute a change in voice. Just as Kittredge conflated Petrarch's and the Clerk's voices under the gaze of the dramatic model, so too, under the agency of dramatic irony Kittredge has the Clerk uttering a "mock encomium" to the Wife of Bath in the "Lenvoy de Chaucer" or second ending. Kittredge sees, "this masterpiece of sustained and mordant irony," as an inversion of the secular moral of martial humility which had just been removed as the internal moral of the tale.¹ Although Kittredge's view on this matter has been influential, there have been contrary opinions that the change in tone constitutes a change in "character"; or, as I would prefer, a change in voice.

About the same time that Kittredge was resolving all the contradictions arising from the radical heterogeneity of the second ending, other scholars were coming to different conclusions. Walter W. Skeat in a note discussing the dating of the second ending suggests the unsuitability of the ending and the Clerk narrator:

From this point to the end is the work of a later period, and his best manner, though unsuited to the coy clerk.

John S. P. Tatlock, while disagreeing with Skeat's dating of the second ending, also suggests: "The Envoy is no doubt egregiously out of character for the Clerk"[]. And H. B. Hinckley asserts--in a footnote, of course--the most radical conclusion of all: "It is Chaucer and not the Clerk of Oxford whose voice we recognize in the Envoy." More recently Kemp Malone repeats this same argument that the second ending is "markedly inconsistent" with the Clerk's character.²

I cite these differing opinions not as "proof" of the interjection of a third, Chaucerian voice. Hinckley's interpolation of a Chaucerian voice from what could very well be scribal notations--the rubric "Lenvoye de Chaucer" and in one instance, auctor--is just not acceptable as evidence. However, these considered opinions do show that not everyone was willing to employ the glue of "dramatic irony" to gloss over the radical discontinuity in tone and voice. More recently Bertrand Bronson, Michael Cherniss and Robert Burlin's critical commentary has also pointed to the interpretative problems caused by this radical shift in tone, which further suggests the inadequacy of the Kittredgean formulation.³ I think Skeat, Hinckley et al. are right in arguing that

the change in tone in the second ending breaks whatever there was of a consistent characterization of the Clerk narrator.

I think Kittredge's concept of dramatic irony glosses over the sharpness and extent of the contradiction that the second ending was meant to produce. I would argue that a dialogized model of multiple voicings increases the scope and depth of the second ending. Such a conceptualization moves from the "reduced laughter" and "frivolity" of an irony directed at that hieresarch, the Wife of Bath, to a mockingly fierce critique of the indifferent, official allegory of the Petrarchan voice and the fledgling and impotent humanism of the Clerk's. Such a reading also moves the discussion from a focus upon the "urbane" cleverness of the Clerk and the wisdom of his supposed distinction between the ideal and practical realms to a reconsideration of the tale's most important thematic issue: sovereignty, specifically, the oppressive subjugation of women in marriage. It also gives a deserved recognition to the philosophical status of the ideology of laughter.

Before I present my analysis of the second ending, I should like to situate it in the context of the medieval tradition of folk humor. What stands behind the second ending with its mocking, debasing laughter is a tradition of grotesque realism, whose main source was folk culture.

According to M. M. Bakhtin this comic tradition led a semi-legal existence outside the sphere of official discourse and ideology.⁴ This unofficial folk culture survived in the public marketplace and in the space created by the many medieval festivals and fairs. The extensive body of medieval parodic literature was linked to this festive folk culture which provided medieval parody not only with a philosophically respectable worldview but with a system of grotesque imagery associated with the material bodily lower stratum.

The philosophical worldview of laughter, the grotesque imagery of the lower body and their connection with medieval parody are three aspects of folk humor most pertinent to any analysis of the second ending. In his book on Rabelais, Bakhtin argues that laughter constituted an independent, self-validating worldview, and a worldview that was distinct from a serious worldview. However, just as the comic was the counterpart to the official, serious religious aspects of all medieval feasts, so laughter complemented the worldview of the serious:

Laughter was as universal as seriousness; it was directed at the whole world, at history, at all societies, at ideology. It was the world's second truth extended to everything and from which nothing is taken away. It was, as it were, the festive aspect of the whole world in all its elements, the second revelation of the world in play and laughter.⁵

The philosophical worldview of laughter had a deeply ambivalent character. It was related to the idea of renewal and becoming; the death of the old and birth of the new. These were not separate elements in this worldview but were inextricably bound up with one another. This Janus-like view of the world and the body was reflected in the grotesque image of the body and in the emphasis on bodily functions.

The imagery associated with the grotesque body includes that of copulation, birth, death, dismemberment, eating, devouring, drinking, defecation, urination; all activities that are associated with the lower bodily stratum. This is because the grotesque body is not conceived as a completed or finished form but a "body in the act of becoming". So the main events of the grotesque body are seen as those acts which involve the body's interaction with the world and material bodily change:

It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world.⁶

In all the events of the grotesque body the beginning and end of life are closely interwoven. Besides the incomplete quality of the grotesque body, Bakhtin stresses its generic character as well:

In the grotesque body, on the contrary, death brings nothing to an end, for it does not concern the ancestral body, which is renewed in the next generation. The events of the grotesque sphere are always developed on the boundary dividing one body from the other and, as it were, at their points of intersection. One body offers its death, the other its birth, but they are merged in a two-bodied image.⁷

This ambivalent image of the grotesque body stresses the cosmic, ancestral element. The grotesque body's constant becoming, birth and death, is conceived as an ongoing, universal process.

Medieval parodic literature drew on this cultural tradition of festive folk laughter which had the ambivalent image of the grotesque body as its central principle. And just as laughter had a universal character, so too did medieval parody. Bakhtin argues that although there may have been specific works and ideas that were parodied, for the most part, parodies were directed at the ruling ideology of religious norms as a whole.

For the medieval parodist everything without exception was comic...medieval parody played a completely unbridled game with all that is most sacred and important from the point of view of official ideology.⁸

Nothing was exempt from medieval parody which had a generic, universal quality to it; the dominant cultural ideology was parodied as a whole and in all of its aspects.

Unlike modern parody, medieval parody had a more deeply ambivalent character. Modern parody, reduced in scope and depth, is predominantly negative in its movement. Medieval parody, based on an ideology of grotesque realism, had both positive and negative characteristics, a degrading downward movement and an upward renewing movement. However, as Bakhtin points out, the accent in medieval parody was on the downward movement. The downward movement could be presented as topographical: down, inside out, upside down; or the downward movement could be discerned in fights, beatings, trappings; or in curses and abuses. There were many varied forms of this movement to the grave. For example, the king's attributes are turned upside down in the carnival clown who later is "uncrowned", beaten and dismembered. Bakhtin sees debasement as the fundamental artistic principle of parody:

Finally, debasement is the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism, all that is sacred and exalted is rethought on the level of the material bodily stratum or else combined and mixed with its images.⁹

It is this tradition of grotesque realism and festive folk humor that stands behind the parodic second ending of The Clerk's Tale.

As I said earlier, the second ending begins after the clerkly voice finishes the recitatio of Petrarch's

moral: "Let us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce"
 [E1162]. Here a third voice, nominally Chaucerian,
 breaks in: "But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:"
 [E1163]. Although, at this point the voice can hardly
 be identified as a parodic voice of grotesque realism,
 the addressee, "lordynges", whom this voice specifies
 helps to identify the voice. At any rate the addressee
 does indicate a change. If we remember when the Clerkly
 voice specified an addressee in the intranarrative com-
 mentary, the addressee was "women". However, if the
 first line does not clearly identify this third voice,
 the subsequent lines in the stanza begin to do just that.
 After the announcement to the "lordynges" that this voice
 had something to say especially to them, the voice com-
 plains about the lack of quality in wives and coin. A
 complaint, I might add, that the Clerkly voice never
 made.

The extended metaphor in which the parodic voice
 compares Griselda with "coyne" is just the beginning of
 the downward movement of grotesque realism:

It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes
 In al a toun Grisildis thre or two;
 For if that they were put to swiche assayes,
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes
 With bras, that though the coyne be fair at ye,
 It wolde rather breste a-two than plye.

[E1164-1168]

The first sign that this discourse might not be serious and straightforward comes in the second and third lines of the stanza when the parodic voice complains that "now-a-dayes" it is not possible to find not one but "thre or two" Griseldas. What is odd about the complaint is the number specified. With the quantification of "thre or two" Griselda is removed from her unique and idealized state which the Clerkly voice had carefully cultivated, even favorably comparing her with Job. The use of the number "thre" makes the change in the status of her example all the more emphatic. It's not that there is the possibility of another who might have been as exceptional as Griselda, but several establishing a pattern of ordinary virtue. Griselda's unique status is being domesticated and debased.

This theme of debasement is developed and reenforced in the extended metaphor of the alloying of "coyne" in the second half of the stanza. The parodic voice jestingly suggests that "now-a-dayes" if wives were "put to swiche assayes" as was Griselda, they would break, "breste a-two", rather than comply "plye" in humility. The metaphorical terminology in which this argument is couched refers to the debasement of coinage: the noble metal "gold", being alloyed "so badde alayes", with the base metal "bras". Brass itself is an alloy of copper and tin; so, following the logic of ths metaphor we have

a doubling of debasement. As the MED notes, brass was referred to for its qualities of hardness and durability. The tertiary meaning of brass concerned its use for bells, gongs, trumpets or other "bras" instruments. This may have some bearing here especially because later in the envoy women are urged: "holdeth no silence" and "clappeth as a mille". Brass was also employed in making household utensils, such as pots and pans, giving this metaphor added resonance for parodic possibilities. As Bakhtin points out, kitchen utensils were often employed in the mock battles of grotesque realism.

The first stanza of the second ending, then, introduces the theme of debasement. It specifically links the theme of debasement to the major themes of The Clerk's Tale of sovereignty and testing. It playfully asserts that such "assaying" is no longer possible. This introductory stanza also alludes parodically to the introductory lines of the first, serious endings where the complaint was "This world is not so strong..." The predominating implication there, as I mentioned earlier, was that the world suffered a lapse in moral capacity. In the second ending this lament is mockingly counterpointed with the suggestion that the world "now-a-dayes" may not be "strong" but it is as "hard" and "badde" as "bras".

The next stanza, The Wife of Bath's stanza as it is called, is not, as Kittredge has claimed and virtually every critic since then has assumed, a dramatically ironic address to Dame Alice signalling the "mock encomium" of the envoy that is to follow. Although the envoy that follows may be mocking, it is not the Wife of Bath who is mocked, but the idealized figure of perfect humility, Griselda. This stanza stands as an invocation to the playful spirit of the Wife of Bath, the reigning muse of love and merriness:

For which heere, for the Wyves love of Bath-
 Whos lyf and al hire secte God mayntene
 In heigh maistrie, and elles were it scathe-
 [E1170-1172]

As well as any invocation of The Wife of Bath's spirit, these three lines are a blessing: may "God mayntene" her "in heigh maistrie". The Wife of Bath represents a complete inversion of the ideal of wifely humility and "paciencce". This reversal of woman's status from low to "heigh" is a motif of the envoy. Such reversals are a fundamental artistic principle of the parodies of grotesque realism. The clause "elles were it scathe", can be glossed according to the OED as, "it were a pity". However, other meanings suggest more serious consequences, such as to do harm, physical or otherwise. One

meaning of the word relates to pecuniary loss, a possible reference to the "coyne" metaphor in the previous stanza. Only here the meaning appears to be reversed, suggesting that it might be financially harmful if the Wife of Bath were not maintained in "heigh maestrie".

The Wife of Bath, that larger-than-life figure, is invoked by the parodic voice as a counter to the figure of the sovereign, dominating, testing husband. The sexually assertive, radical spirit of The Wife of Bath is invoked as an inspiration for the parodic "songs" that will follow:

I wol with lusty herte, fressh and grene,
 Seyn yow a song to glade you, I wene;
 And lat us stynte of earnestful matere
 Herkneth my song that seith in this manere:
 [E1173-1176]

Following this invocation of The Wife of Bath, the parodic voice announces the "manere" of song it will "seyn". Rather, the parodic voice describes the terms with which it will "seyn yow a song". The voice also explicitly declares the purpose of the song: "to glade you". The purpose is not for moral edification but is recreational, to amuse.

It is to be sung under the joyful sign of laughter whose worldview is now the governing intentionality. The song will be sung in the "manere" of a "lusty herte, fressh and grene". Along with the immediate reference

to youth and vigor, the predominate allusions of these words is to sexual passion and desire. The envoy, we are told, will be sung under the aegis of The Wife of Bath as a paeon to freedom, play and sexual passion. With the line "And let us stynte of ernestful matere" the parodic voice emphatically rejects the official seriousness which up to now has governed the Griselda story. The word "stynthe" according to the OED not only carries the meaning of desisting or stopping, but also to set limits in extent or scope. With this imperative statement the parodic voice not only announces the end of serious discourse but offers a description of the limits circumscribing the serious worldview.

These two stanzas, then, act as a transition between the serious, exegetical, first ending and the parodic second ending. They also provide an introduction to the "envoy" of the second ending. The first stanza has the idealized figure of Griselda. Her idealized image is travestied in the downward movement of debasement contained in the metaphor of debased coin. The parodic voice mockingly asserts that the ideal humility and subservience of Griselda no longer exists. The second stanza contains the figure of the Wife of Bath who represents the opposite virtues of sexual freedom and independence. Here the downward movement is reversed. The Wife of Bath is addressed, praised and raised to

"heigh maistrie". In the second stanza the parodic voice clearly enunciates that the "song" should be received under the sign of laughter, the philosophic worldview opposing the "ernestful" one.

The "Lenvoy de Chaucer" which follows these two stanzas is a reprise and elaboration of the argument outlined in them. A major difference, however, is that of the six stanzas of the "song" only one is devoted to Griselda and that only to bury her. Just as Petrarch was interred by the Clerk in the prologue, so is Griselda in the second ending, providing a symmetry of closure. The remaining five stanzas pronounce warning as to what will befall women who follow Griselda's example and give advice to them, recommending resolute independence from male domination and the cultivation of forceful attitudes and action. The envoy picks up the tale's major themes of "paciencie" and "sovereignty" and subjects these themes to an immersion and reorientation in the philosophic view of grotesque realism. Finally, the envoy also links the social, sexual, political and rhetorical horizons in the statement and imagery of its songs; complementing a connection that was established in the tale itself.

The first stanza of the envoy is devoted to Griselda and her "paciencie". The parodic voice announces in no uncertain terms the death of Griselda and her ideal of

humility. And, more importantly, proclaims the impossibility of reviving both Griselda and her ideal:

Grisilde is deed, and eek hire pacience,
 And bothe atones buryed in Ytaille;
 For which I crie in open audience,
 No wedded man so hardy be t'assaille
 His wyves pacience in trust to fynde
 Grisildis, for in certein he shal faille.
 [E1177-1182]

Griselda and her "pacience" are pronounced dead and buried. The specification of faraway Italy as the place of burial emphasizes the distance between Griselda and the "audience". The nameplace also establishes a connection between Griselda and Petrarch, who is the ordinary auctor of Griselda and her story and who is also dead and buried in Italy. Again, as with the doubling of debasement with "bras" in the coin metaphor, there is here a doubling of the image of death.

A slight ambiguity may be introduced in the next line with the word "crie." "Crien" can mean to lament or wail, so the parodic voice could be lamenting that there are no wives such as Griselda to "assaille". However the first meaning of the word is to cry out, shout, yell. The fact that it is employed with the phrase "in open audience" would tend to confirm this first meaning of a loud and clear announcement, especially because the difference between private and public discourse is a theme in the tale. The phrase "in open audience" is used four

other times in the tale, all with the stress on open and public, i.e., not hidden or secret discourse. The force of the line here in the envoy stanza is that the parodic voice is publically, openly, emphatically proclaiming that "no wedded man" will ever be able to find a wife as "patient" as Griselda. The negatives "no/faille" in initial and terminal positions of the sentence, as well as the rhyme "assaile/Faille" stress the absoluteness and inevitability of this failure. The initial stanza of the envoy is a summary and emphatic dismissal of Griselda and her humility.

Having addressed these first three stanzas of the second ending to the "lordynes", the Chaucerian voice of parody turns to address the wives themselves in the second stanza of the envoy:

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,
 Lat noon humylitee your touge naille,
 Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence
 To write of yow a storie of swich mervaille
 As of Grisildis patient and kynde,
 Lest Chichevache you swelwe in hire entraille!
 [E1183-1188]

The stanza opens with a direct address, moves to an injunction against certain behavior and closes with the dire consequences of not heeding such warnings. It contains specific allusions to The Clerk's Tale itself and contrasts the upward movement of praise and the downward movement of debasement initiated earlier in the second

ending. The first line is an address to the wives who are addressed as "noble" and "feel of heigh prodence". These epithets continue the upward movement of women's status that was introduced in *The Wife of Bath's* stanza. The superlative "heigh prodence" alludes back to the "heigh maistre" there. The word "heigh", with its connotations of class, privilege, status and quality is used in the tale in connection with rhetorical style, God and estate, among other things, but never in connection with women. The same goes for the word "noble" which also explicitly refers to class and status. "Noble" is used in the tale in conjunction with Walter, the children and the "noble array" that was present at his second wedding but never in reference to Griselda. In contrast to the tale, the words employed in the address of the second ending indicate a reversal in the status and position of women.

The instance of the phrase "heigh prodence" also reflects a change in the valuation of women's behavior as well. The second line of the stanza urges women to forego humility: "Let noon humility your tonge naille[.]" With such an injunction the parodic voice not only contradicts conventional wisdom but labels this behavior as highly prudent. This advice alludes to Griselda's modest behavior in a negative way. In the tale she is praised

for her prudence: "And worthily they preisen hire prudence." [E1022] Only, the context for this praise is the example of Griselda's efficiency and humility in helping with the preparations for Walter's second wedding. The epithets of women in the apostrophaic address of the stanza's first line initiates a series of specific allusions which link and construct images, figures and worldviews between the tale and the second ending.

In the second line of the stanza an even more powerful allusion is made to the tale with the word "naille". It is contained in a graphic metaphor of silence which the parodic voice urges women to reject: "Let not humility youre tongue naille." This image of mutilation and silence also becomes an image of death through its allusion to the death and internment of Petrarch, described in the prologue: "...deed and nayled in his cheste"[E29]. Here in the second ending, humility, the ideal of Griselda is equated with maiming, silence, internment and death. The last line of the stanza confirms this equation of humility and death in an even more graphic image; that of a devouring monster.

The next three lines of the second stanza contain another injunction in addition to the first. Here the parodic voice urges these "noble wyves" not to give any clerk, such as Petrarch, any chance of writing a story about patience like Griselda's. Here again, the parodic

voice makes a specific allusion to the tale by referring to the most important apostrophe the clerkly voice delivers in the tale. There the Clerk compares Griselda favorably with Job and then complains that although women suffer more and are better than men, clerks write mostly of men. This allusion provides an exemplary contrast between these two voices. Instead of lamenting the lack of reportage regarding women's suffering, as the Clerkly voice does, the parodic voice urges women not to follow an "ideal" such as humility, that causes them suffering.

A second specific allusion to the tale contained in these lines occurs with the word "mervaille". Here the word, which means a wonder, a miracle, is used to describe Griselda's extraordinary example. But the word "mervaille" also alludes to a passage describing Walter's unexplained desire to test Griselda: "This merveillous desir his wyf t'assaye[...]" [E451]. Here the contrast between the two contexts is even more pronounced. The parodic voice's reference to Griselda's behavior as miraculous links and contrasts with Walter's mysterious and unexplained desire to punish her. The use of the word in the second ending evokes some of the mysterious and brutal quality of the earlier context, giving an added force to the parodic voice's injunction.

In this stanza, as we have seen, there are specific acts and attitudes in the tale itself which the parodic

voice alludes to. An important aspect of the epithets and allusions is the contrasting movements of upward and downward. Through the epithets, the women's usual status is reversed, and in an upward movement they are placed "heigh". They are enjoined to reject the humiliating, conventional virtue of humility, idealized by Griselda. This virtue and Griselda's image are rejected and linked by a downward movement with silence, punishment, mystery and death. This downward movement of debasement is nowhere more evident than in the last line of the stanza: "lest Chichevache yow swelwe in hire entraille!" This last line explicitly spells out death and internment as the consequence for ignoring the earlier warnings.

The image of this devouring monster, Chichevache, is perhaps the most powerful one in the second ending, even rivaling that of the Wife of Bath herself. In fact, they should be seen as complementary figures: The Wife of Bath represents the positive joyous and merry aspects and Chichevache represents the negative debasing and destructive aspects of the worldview of grotesque parody. Here the parodic voice alludes not to the tale itself but to a figure from the folk tradition of grotesque realism. Skeat & Robinson gloss Chichevache as the lean cow who feeds on patient wives, which accounts for her meagre diet. She is a figure from folk fable and is sometimes contrasted with Bicorné, another fabulous

monster from folk legend who is fat because he feeds on patient husbands.

John Lydgate wrote a short narrative poem entitled "Bycorne and Chichevache", apparently borrowing from Chaucer's envoy. However, Eleanor P. Hammond, in her introductory notes to Lydgate's poem suggests a French source and notes numerous 13th and 14th Century French sources.¹⁰ Chichevache is a figure from folk culture. It is significant that the parodic voice chooses this monster from the tradition of grotesque realism as the figure of retribution. This image of retribution concretizes the underlying motif of silence, death, disfigurement and internment present in this stanza. While the positive aspects of the parodic worldview can be seen in the epithets addressed to women, the negative, destructive aspects of grotesque realism predominate. This downward movement of debasement culminates in the image of a devouring monster, a powerful image of the lower bodily stratum.

The next stanza, the "ekko" stanza, continues the horatory advice to women. Whereas the previous stanza only contained negative advice, this stanza alternates negative and positive statements. The first two lines have this alternation:

Folweth Ekko, that holdeth no silence,
 But evere answereth at the countretaille
 [E1189-1190].

These opening lines as well as the following two are constructed with contrariones, giving the alternating or echo effect. The parodic voice urges woman to emulate "Ekko" and hold "no silence" but ever "answereth". Here another figure of woman is introduced through the classical allusion to Echo. The parodic voice has constructed a trinity of independent assertative women consisting of the Wife of Bath, Chichevache, and Echo.

The word "answereth" as well as others in this stanza, has specific allusions in the tale itself where some form of it was used five times, once each to the Clerk and the Sergeant and three times to Griselda. The references to Griselda are the most pertinent here. In all three instances she is responding to a question or command of Walter's and in all three she is humble. In the first she "in humble cheere/answered," [E299- 300] Walter's question concerning the whereabouts of her father. The second is in response to Walter's reminder that their marriage contract required her total obedience to his "wyl". She, of course, answers that his command is her will, an "answer" with which Walter is "glad".

The third instance the word is used in reference to Griselda is when Walter tells her that he is divorcing her. "And she answered agayn in pacience." [E813] The addition of the word "agayn" indicates the normative

status of her answer; Griselda answers to her lord and master with humble "pacience".

The use of the word "answereth" in the second ending not only alludes to specific instances in the tale, but provides a contrast with the two contexts. The injunction here is directly opposite those in the tale: "evere answereth at the countretaille". The most immediate meaning of the word "countretaille" is the countertally, the other half of the tally employed in commercial exchanges. This meaning evokes the coin metaphor with the associated brass imagery used earlier in the second ending. Besides the commercial valences, the word also hints at sexual exchanges as the word *taille* more explicitly does in *The Shipman's Tale*, where the wife tells her merchant husband: "I am youre wyf score it upon my *taille*," [B1606]. The MED also glosses the word "countre" to mean, against opposite, counter to, so the semantic force of the injunction is to answer to the contrary, to oppose. Such advice stands in direct opposition to the behavior and attitude of Griselda.

The next two lines of the stanza repeat this pattern of negative, then positive advice:

Beth not bidaffed for youre innocence,
But sharply taak on yow the governaille.
[E1191-1192]

As well as alternating the form of advice this contrarium contains words that allude back to The Clerk's Tale: "innocence," "sharply," "governaille." The word "innocence" in the first line of the contrarium containing the negative exhortation echoes back to a description of Griselda: "Continuyng evere hire innocence overal," [E1048]. Again the parodic voice urges women not to be constrained or cowed, in this instance because of their innocence. With the word "bidaffed" this meaning may also extend to sexual restraint; the parodic voice probably urging women to forego sexual constraints, as well. The most immediate meaning of the word "bidaffed" is fooled and cowed, but it may also suggest a state of sexual ineptitude as it does in The Reeve's Tale. There John, who is alone in his bed while his fellow student, Alayn, is "pleying" with the miller's daughter, says to himself: "I sal been halde a daf, a cokenay." [A4208]. One of the meanings given by the OED for "cokenay" is an effeminate man, a "milksop". John is concerned about the reputation of his sexuality. Whether or not the reference is sexual, and I suspect it is, the parodic voice clearly once again is recommending a mode of behavior that is counter to the tale's heroine.

The second line of the contrarium employs the metonymy of a rudder to express the "lesson" that women should "sharply" assume their "governaille". The word,

"sharply," alludes back to the first ending where Petrarch, in his displaced moral states that God tests us: "With sharpe scourges of adversitee -" [E1156]. Again, the contexts in which the forms of the word "sharply" are used are quite different. There in the first ending Petrarch justifies suffering. Here in the second ending the Chaucerian, parodic voice urges women to take control. Here also the adverbial, "sharply," gives the recommendation an emphatic quality.

Needless to say, the word "governaille" alludes to the tale's theme of sovereignty or governance. The word "governance" is used four other times in The Clerk's Tale moving from the Clerk's playful response to Harry Bailly: "Ye han of us now, the governaunce" [E23], and to Petrarch's displaced piety in the first ending: "And for oure beste is al his governaunce." [E1161]. More immediately the word refers back to Walter's contemptuous delegation to Griselda the "governance of the chambres" just before his pretended second wedding: "That thyn were al swich manere governance." [E963]. Once again, the word's contexts contrast and conflict. The theme of the "Ekko" stanza, the "countretaille", states the theme of the second ending: counterpoint and opposition to both the ideologies of Petrarch and the Clerk.

The word "governaille" whose first meaning is rudder or steering device, provides a metonymy for women

assuming governance, authority, control. The word "governaille" possibly has sexual connotations as well. The OED cites Hawes' Pastime of Pleasure: "Let not thy lady of thy haste be rother". The sexual referencing in this stanza and throughout the second ending is not inconsistent with the other actions and attitudes the parodic voice proposes. In fact, the sexual assertiveness and independence that the voice suggestively recommends constitutes an important aspect of the socio-ideological viewpoint the parodic voice is polemically promoting. Sexual license and independence is not only consonant with the Wife of Bath and her "secte" but with the ideology of grotesque realism.

The final two lines of this stanza present the consequence of this argumentative and assertive attitude:

Emprenteth wel this lessoun in your mynde,
For commune profit sith it may availle.
[E1193-1194].

In the emphatic statement of the fifth line there is a faint echo of the coin metaphor in the first stanza. The word, "emprenteth," which means to fix in remembrance or to impress, also can mean the printing of money. Values are being exchanged. In the first stanza of the second ending the coin metaphor is employed to debase the image of patient Griselda. Here the remembrance of her negative, undesirable behavior is hinted at just at the

moment the consequence of an opposing set of behavior and attitudes is announced. The word "mynde" also has negative allusions to Griselda. It occurs in the passage where Walter tells Griselda she must return to her "fader's hous". Griselda in her response to Walter's demand reminisces their marriage day: "...it is well in my mynde" [E849]. This is certainly not the "lessoun" the parodic voice wants to impress upon women. Yet the stated consequence in the last line is more significant than these ironic allusions.

The parodic voice of grotesque realism in the last line of the stanza argues that assuming the "governaille" and pursuing the "countretaille" will "availle" the "commune profit". Such behavior will benefit all, is in the interest of all and is for the gain and well-being of all. Here is a clear enunciation of the socio-ideological viewpoint of the parodic voice. Again, with the word, "commune profit" there is an allusion to commercial exchange, an underlying motif of the second ending. More important, however, is the fact that the phrase "commune profit" provides the only allusion to Griselda that has a positive valence, at least a partial one. The phrase is used in only one other instance in the tale. It occurs in a passage in which Griselda's administrative and judicial qualities are described, just after her marriage has been narrated. Apparently at the

beginning of their marriage when "hire housbonde absent were anon," [E435] Griselda took over the duties and obligations of a ruler. And she exercised these with wisdom and equity: "The commune profit koude she redresse." [E431].. It is this "vertu" for judicious evaluation that makes Griselda's subsequent behavior and suffering all the more saddening. Yet while Petrarch and Clerk insist that Griselda attained the ability to "redresse" the commune profit" through God's grace and her husband's initial generosity, the parodic voice asserts just the opposite. The parodic voice insists that it is woman's independent, contentious and assertive behavior that results in the "commune profit".

The "Ekko" stanza, the third in the envoy, states the thematic of the second ending; it is the "countre-taille" to the ideological viewpoints of Petrarch's official brand of moral allegory and the Clerk's more humanistic, secular kind of pathos. It changes the movement initiated in the first two stanzas of the envoy from a predominately downward, negative and destructive one to an upward and positive movement. The first stanza of the envoy declares the death and internment of Griselda and her ideal of "paciencie". This movement of debasement continues in the second stanza. There, the parodic voice enjoins the women to forego Griselda's ideal of "Humylitee," and issues a warning to those who

do not. The last line of this stanza presents a powerful image of a devouring monster, chichevache, as the reward for patient wives. While the second stanza gives negative warnings, the third, the "Ekko" stanza, initiates a series of detailed positive recommendations. The final three stanzas continue this positive advice employing the hyperbolic style and imagery of grotesque realism.

The last three stanzas or second half of the envoy continue the argument explicitly stated in the "Ekko" stanza. The fourth and fifth stanzas contain battle imagery, a common locus for the parodic imagery of grotesque realism. The last stanza is organized with more domestic images. All three stanzas allude slightly less directly to the tale itself although the fifth stanza has an important allusion to rhetoric, a subject around which much of the tale's thematic material is intertwined. All three stanzas employ proverbs, a common, if not favorite device of the artistic mode of grotesque realism.

The fourth stanza introduces the thematic of battle with the words "defense", "offense", "bataille." It begins with an hyperbolic address, "Ye archewyves" and continues this parodic and hyperbolic imagery most especially with two similes which compare women's fighting ability with animals:

Ye archewyves, stondeth at defense
 Syn ye be strong as is a great camaille;
 Ne suffreth not that men yow doon offense.
 And sklendre wyves, fieble as in bataille,
 Beth egre as is a tygre yond in Ynde;
 Ay clappeth as a mille, I yow consaille.
 [E1195-1200]

The theme of the stanza is encapsulated in the recommendation for women to fight back: "Stond at defense." The implicit logic of the two similes comparing women with animals suggests that women are capable of doing this because they have greater than human powers. Women are as "strong as is a great camaille" and "egre as is a tygre". The last line recapitulates the theme of fighting with a simile that has proverbial status: "Clappeth as a mille[.]" Both the image of sound and the reference to commercial enterprize in this proverb allude back to the debasing image of brass in the first stanza of the second ending. The proverb reenforces the parodic quality of this passage by comparing the more serious imagery of battle with the mocking image of a noisy mill. The sound imagery of this stanza also anticipates the rhetorical metaphor in the next stanza.

The fifth stanza continues the battle metaphor, only now the imagery refers to details of equipment and weapons: "armed", "maille", "aventaille", "armes." The stanza opens with negative advice: "Ne dreed hem not, doth hem no reverence" [E1201]. In the next three lines,

in an elaborate metaphor, rhetoric is presented as a battle weapon:

For though thyn housbonde armed be in maille,
The armes of thy crabbed eloquence
Shal perce his brest, and eek his aventaille.
[E1202-1204].

A woman should not do any "reverence" to her husband, the parodic voice laughingly claims because even if he is "armed in maille", it is no "defense" against her lethal rhetoric, "crabbed eloquence". This mocking, high spirited image of a fully armed husband struck down by his wife's "crabbed eloquence" sets up a series of allusions to the tale itself and links the parodic discourse with a major thematic of the tale. In his note on these lines Skeat explains that an arrow piercing the aventaille (i. e. the throat) would be a mortal blow and he quaintly comments that the passage may be playful but it certainly is not silly.¹¹ I might add that although larger claims for rhetoric are made elsewhere in the tale, this is the most direct claim of its efficacy.

The most immediate allusion of "crabbed eloquence" is to the tale's heroine, Griselda, who is described early in the tale as:

And so discreet and fair of eloquence,
So benigne and so digne of reverence.
[E410-411].

Once again an explicit contrast is made between the ideally humble Griselda and the "archwyves" of the second ending. But the comparison being made here goes beyond Griselda and a counterfigure. "Crabbed eloquence" not only refers to different personal qualities and rhetorical styles but also refers to different worldview and ideology. It is the ideology I described under the heading of laughter and grotesque realism. "Crabbed eloquence" is a direct allusion to the argument the Clerk makes in his introduction to the tale when he calls the "heigh stile" of Petrarch "a thyng impertinent".

It is significant that the parodic voice valorizes the "crabbed style" and hyperbolically makes outrageous claims of its efficacy. This claim parodies the claim the Clerk makes about Petrarch's "heigh stile" in the prologue:

Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete
Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie.

[E31-33]

The Clerk, as I have argued earlier, is ambivalent about Petrarch's style, admiring it at a distance and in theory, but criticizing its applicability to the tale of Griselda's woe. The Clerk valorizes the "middle style". Each voice is accorded its own style which each, of course, valorizes over and above the other styles. The

reference, then, to different rhetorical styles is a referencing of different ideologies or worldviews which are enunciated by the several voices of The Clerk's Tale.

The final lines of this stanza once again reenforce its parodic aspects:

In jalousie I rede eek thow hym bynde,
And thow shalt make hym couche as doth
a quaille. [E1205-1206]

After metaphorically describing the husband's mock death the parodic voice addresses a more practical concern: how to "bynde" him in "jalousie". As in the previous stanza, the final line contains a proverb: "Couche as doth a quaille." The image of a quaking partridge in this comparison of man and bird is delightfully humorous. The "jalousie" motif also anticipates the theme of the next and final stanza of the second ending.

The last stanza is devoted to the practical means of a woman asserting and maintaining her independence, sexual and otherwise. An intrinsic aspect of this strategy involved keeping her husband jealous:

If thow be fiar, ther folk been in presence,
Shewe thow thy visage and thyn apparaille;
If thow be foul, be fre of thy dispence;
To gete thee freendes ay do thy travaille;
Be ay of chiere as light as leef on lynde,
And let hym care, and wepe, and wryuge and waille!
[E1207-1212]

Although the sexual theme is not explicitly announced, the words "dispence" and "travaille" in the third and fourth lines suggest such activity. In Chaucer's translation of the Romance of The Rose, "travaille" is used with "swynke": "To swynke and traveile he not feynith" [RR5685]. The word "dispence" is associated with Venus in the Wife of Bath's Tale: "And Venus loveth ryot and dispence" [D700]. The last two lines again contain a proverb: "as light as leef on lynde." The linden tree also has a longstanding association with lovers. This proverb provides a contrast between a carefree, sexually indulgent wife and the following line which mimics a subdued and unhappy husband.

The second ending, then, presents an ideological worldview that diametrically opposes both the official, Petrarchan ideology of religious allegory and the Clerk's more humanistic version of this worldview. This counter ideology is constituted under the sign of laughter and has a universal and philosophical status. The philosophical worldview of laughter has a deeply ambivalent character and is closely related to the idea of renewal and becoming: The death of the old and birth of the new. This worldview is most clearly enunciated in the image of the grotesque body--a double image--and in the artistic principles of grotesque realism. Its most characteristic mode is parody. Medieval parody, as I

argued earlier, is directed ultimately at the worldview of serious official religious ideology and does not always parody a specific text, form, person or event. The second ending of The Clerk's Tale does both, however; it parodies particular figures, events and attitudes in the tale and enunciates a "countretaille" to the values and worldviews valorized by both the Petrarchan and Clerkly voices.

In the second ending the idealized figure of Griselda is systematically travestied, debased and made to suffer a death. The values of humility and patience represented by Griselda are vanquished and dismissed by the mocking invocation of a series of counterfigures, such as the Wife of Bath, contrasting allusions and directly opposing recommendations. The parody of the second ending was meant to serve as a second "truth", another way of perceiving and being in the world. It should be seen as an opposing if complementary ideology, one whose legitimacy was not as secure as the official ideology but a worldview of deep and ancient vitality. M. M. Bakhtin argues that medieval parody was very widespread and subjected virtually every aspect of life, especially the most sacred, to its inversions and reorientations. He compares medieval parody to the ancient Greek "satyric" drama:

...a fourth drama, after the "tragic trilogy" of official Christian cult and theology to which it corresponded but was at the same time in opposition. Like the antique "satyric" drama so also the medieval culture of laughter was the drama of bodily life (copulation, birth, growth, eating, drinking, defecation).¹²

The second ending parodically rethinks, reperceives and re-presents the themes and figures of the Griselda story in terms of "the drama of bodily life".

This "drama" cannot even be glimpsed if we insist on seeing the second ending in the terms that Kittredge does: as the Clerk's ironic reprise to the Wife of Bath. Such a view reduces the mocking, debasing generic laughter to the frivolity and pettiness of a squabble between individuals. Kittredge's approach presumes at the outset that there was only one important or philosophically "serious" worldview; subsequently he never dreamed that Chaucer was parodically and polemically revaluating some of the most cherished ideals of the official religious ideology of his age.

M. M. Bakhtin's dialogic concept of multi-voiced discourse allows us to open up the text of The Clerk's Tale and to account for its radical heterogeneity; something Kittredge's concept of "dramatic persona" cannot ultimately do. Once we recognize the multi-voiced character of The Clerk's Tale, then what was heretofore regarded as quirks of character, or worse, ignored, can

be seen as the clash of several different worldviews. Such a conceptual framework gives an added depth and scope to such thematic subjects as sovereignty, the status of women, and rhetoric.

With the recognition and legitimation of the parodic voice and its worldview another drama comes into view. It is a drama that up to now has been hidden by Kittredge's "drama of individuals." It is the drama that Bakhtin identifies as "drama of bodily life":

But of course, it was not the drama of an individual body or of a private material way of life; it was the drama of the great generic body of the people, and for this generic body birth and death are not an absolute beginning and end but merely elements of continuous growth and renewal. The great body of satyric drama cannot be separated from the world; it is perfused with cosmic elements and with the earth which swallows up and gives birth.¹³

In the second ending of The Clerk's Tale Chaucer was inscribing this second, unofficial, joyful "truth".

Notes

¹Kittredge, G. L., Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge Harvard Univ. Press, 1915), p. 199.

²W. W. Skeats, Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Vol 5, 2nd ed. (1900; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 351.

John S. P. Tatlock, The Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works (rpt. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1963), p. 162.

H. B. Hinckley, Marriage in the Canterbury Tales, PMLA 32(1917), p. 299.

Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer (Balt: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p.222.

³Bertrand Bronson, In Search of Chaucer (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960) pp. 103--114.

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⁴Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, trans. Helene Iswolsky (1968; rpt. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1984), p. 71 and passim.

⁵Bakhtin, Rabelais, p. 84.

⁶Bakhtin, Rabelais, p. 317.

⁷Bakhtin, Rabelais, p. 322.

⁸Bakhtin, Rabelais, p. 84.

⁹Bakhtin, Rabelais, p. 371.

¹⁰Eleanor Prescott Hammond, Introductory note in English Verse Between Chaucer and Surrey, ed. E. P. Hammond (1927; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1965) p. 113-115.

¹¹W. w. Skeat, pp. 352, 353.

¹²Bakhtin, Rabelais, p. 88.

¹³Bakhtin, Rabelais, p. 88.

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