Leeds Studies in English

THE CANTERBURY TALES AS FRAMED NARRATIVES

By MORTON W. BLOOMFIELD

Robert Jordan in his interesting book has made the point that "the
Canterbury Tales . . . invites piecemeal criticism; it also invites
the total view. In the equality of these two claims on our atten-
tion lies much of the critical problem."[1] Jordan tends to see the
historical explanation of this paradox in the Gothic nature of
Chaucer's art, the dominant aesthetic mood of the period, wherein
"the total form is determined by the accumulation of individually
complete elements."[2]The whole can be regarded as a collection of
complete parts which involve varying perspectives and unusual
juxtapositions, the very opposite of modern "organic" art wherein
the parts are at least theoretically subordinate to the whole.

     Although I think that the notion of modern art as organic
must be qualified and questioned, there is a certain force and
validity to Jordan's distinction between medieval and modern art.
Modern art expects the parts to be somewhat subordinate to the
whole. The dominant stress of New Criticism was on the organic
nature of art. This principle applies mainly to certain poets and
novelists of the Renaissance and later periods but certainly not
to all. The Victorian novelists did not write organically. Many
of the 18th century poets did not. On the other hand, some
medieval literature is organic - *Gawain and the Green Knight*, for
instance, and some of Chaucer. We do not, therefore, have to
relate the individual Canterbury tales to the frame in any psycho-
logical, symbolic, or dramatic manner, but we can treat them as
separate units. We can look at the frame separately as at another
part of the poem, as well as a unifying device. We need not be
concerned with the dramatic unity of the *Canterbury Tales*. I do
not, however, deny that some relation even if not an organic one,
exists between the frame and the tales. The former is at least
causative and authenticating. As we shall see, it provides the
narrative cause for the other narratives, and it attempts to
authenticate the stories, that is, to help make the reader or
audience suspend their disbelief. This is the usual procedure in
most collections of tales. We shall here examine the rather com-
plex background of the frame and its numerous aesthetic functions
to see what light this knowledge may throw on Chaucer's general
intention. It may help us to learn how Chaucer himself regarded
his great masterpiece.

     There is a sense, it must, however, be acknowledged, in which
the tales - or most of them - are also reflections of their tellers,
and this relationship adds another dimension to their complexity

of perspective and meaning. This aspect has, however, been much overstressed by early twentieth-century criticism, an emphasizing which has blurred the structure of the units in their own right. Chaucer is a great psychologist, but he was not the exclusive psychologist-realist and prober of the human heart that modern critics and scholars prodded by early twentieth-century interests have made him out to be. Modern criticism, with its strong mimetic bias, has tended to emphasize character and dramatic incident at the expense of structure and sequence, and it is time to redress somewhat the balance. Chaucer was influenced by the literary and rhetorical tradition as much as by life.[3]

There were many possible precedents for a collection of tales more or less unified in some way, and before we proceed further we should glance briefly at some of these collections. As Nevill Coghill has pointed out,[4] Chaucer's idea of a collection was novel and original, but he could also have been indebted to predecessors. He certainly would have relied in some way, no matter how original his idea was, on the tradition of a collection of tales to interest readers. We must then look at several possible exemplars.

Before we go into some detail, it is important to note the religious and moral suggestions which a collection of tales would connote to readers in fourteenth-century England. Not all of Chaucer's models are religious, but the really popular collections of tales had a didactic purpose. Collections of saints' lives, of fables, of miracles of the virgin, and of exempla for sermons certainly provided the fundamental exemplars for Chaucer and even Boccaccio. These collections had a practical purpose and came into existence for the convenience of religious teachers.

I do not wish to deny that early secular collections like *The Seven Sages* and other Oriental collections may have influenced Chaucer in some way. I think, however, the English audience, even a court audience, would have normally expected a didactic and religious purpose in any collection of tales presented to them inasmuch as these didactic assemblages were the most common type of narrative collections in the period.

The twelfth century for the first time in the West saw the development of collections of tales, tales primarily for the convenience of preaching and devotional purposes. The earlier collections such as the *Vitae patrum* and some hagiographic collections were essentially for monks, making provision for communal and spiritual readings in the monastery. The Moslem world, though these were mainly secular and entertaining, did have collected and framed tales dating from before the twelfth century - notably the *Arabian Nights* (in some of its forms) and *The Seven Sages*. Among Oriental fable collections the Arabic *Kalilah and Dimnah* or *Fables of Bidpai* are also of early date. Nevertheless *The Seven Sages* and *Kalilah* were not translated into Western languages before the twelfth century. Aesopic collections made in classical times and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were, however, known. The latter at the beginning of book 4 even has three daughters of King Minyas carry on discussions between their tales.

The great upsurge in collections dating from the twelfth and

thirteenth centuries is due, as might be expected, to a demand for moralizing stories as literate and religious audiences increased in size. Collections of tales were useful for preaching friars who turned increasingly to sermons to win over urban audiences. Stories and anecdotes have always been used in teaching but the notion of an organized collection of such, if not new in the West, at least received a new attention. The later Middle Ages is a great period of collected stories - the legends of the Virgin[5] began to appear in the twelfth century, and proliferated until the Reformation; exempla books are very numerous indeed in the same period;[6] great legendaries, especially Jacob of Voragine's *Golden Legend*, flourish; even works on other subjects, like Peraldus' *Summa virtutum et vitiorum*, are infiltrated by exempla; older collections like those of Valerius Maximus and the *Vitae patrum* take on, as their MSS show, a new life in this period. We also find collections of a *De casibus* type wherein tragedies or strictly speaking falls are told, or of a *De illustribus* type wherein brief biographical lists of great people are provided.

It is possible that the Gothic spirit was responsible in part for the efflorescence of an older genre, but there is probably a more prosaic reason at the bottom - sheer convenience. These collections were useful for preachers. The authorities on preaching emphasize the importance of illustrating homiletic points by concrete stories. There is perhaps no "clear-cut treatment of the exemplum"[7] in the *Artes predicandi*, those rhetoric books for preachers, but that its use was strongly urged there can be no doubt.

This passion for collecting also extended to anthologies of poetry and dictionaries of various sorts. Traditionally, in the medieval period, we find classical poetry introduced by the *accessūs ad auctores*[8] in which the circumstances of the composition of the work presented are often given, sometimes in terms of four Aristotelian causes. St Jerome applied what the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De inventione* had recommended, an introduction to the beginning of each of his commentaries on the books of the Bible he translated. His example was very influential. We sometimes find brief biographies embedded in *accessūs*. Medieval literary history was conceived of as introductions to particular literary works. This passion extended to the Provencal *razos*, discussions of the external circumstances of composition of poems preceding them in a number of Provencal manuscripts.[9] These are also *accessūs* of a sort. Biographies of these poets, usually separate from the *razos*, abound. The prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, if not all parts of the frame, can be regarded in part as an *accessus*. It exists in part to describe the fictitious authors and the "causes" of the tales themselves.[10]

A distinction should be made between collections of tales with a prologue from the author as a real person and framed tales with a prologue which is also a fiction and which may have, as the *Decameron* and *Canterbury Tales* do, framing interludes. The *accessus* is from the author as a real person. The prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* is an artistic, made-up *accessus*, not a real one.

A frame, besides justifying the tales or collected stories, also exists for authenticating purposes. Most stories pretend to be real, to be "historical" in some sense. Part of the pleasure of a story for a reader or hearer lies in the suspension of disbelief engendered by the claim, open or implied, that the story is true. If the magic of art is to work, it must be true. This feeling that what is told really happened is a very old tradition, almost certainly going back to early oral societies. The host when he describes the Canterbury scheme says that each pilgrim will tell four tales "of aventures that whilom han bifalle" (I, 795), each tale to be about things and matters which really happened. One of the major purposes of the frame, then, is to authenticate the tales - to play the game that the stories are real. Here, as I have elsewhere written, "Chaucer has moved from dream and past history [in his earlier poetry] to a report on the contemporary world and present history . . . We are given a social world in the frame, not an individual's problems or attitudes."[11] The "realism" of the *Canterbury Tales* which lies in great measure in the frame rather than the tales themselves, however, does not arise out of a desire to give us a "true" picture of fourteenth-century life as a medieval Zola might wish to do but to an important degree out of a well-known literary purpose - authentication. The attempt to show the truth of a tale; "it really happened", is its indirect theme. Besides this aim, the genre of collected tales - not only the Gothic spirit - demanded a prologue and sometimes a total frame.

Then, further, the frame is in the form of a supposititious pilgrimage to St Thomas' shrine in Canterbury. This imagery suggests, on a literary level, the pilgrim's report, which is told in the first person, presumably of a personal experience. The *pilgrimage notion, besides its obvious religious symbolism*, serves as a literary authenticating device for the Chaucer persona. We are all pilgrims on the way to our different Canterburys. Life is a journey to our final homes; and besides, this governing image helps us to suspend our disbelief and listen to a pilgrim's tale, of one who has just made a voyage. A good more or less contemporary report in English is that of Margery Kempe who, in her *Autobiography* tells *inter alia* of her journey to Palestine in Chaucer's period. Most pilgrim's tales are in Latin, but by Chaucer's time, vernacular reports were beginning to appear.[12]

It is also significant for the understanding of the framed tales of the period that the single-centered narrative of early Arthurian romance began to give way in the thirteenth century and even more in the fourteenth to the Arthurian prose cycle type of narrative which is formed by rambling digressions having a common Arthurian background but introducing a vast number of what seem to and may actually be irrelevant stories. The story within the story goes wild and multiplies in a bewildering way. The collections as well as the *Canterbury Tales* are held together by a recognizable purpose or plan, the prose cycles are not. Yet the urge to proliferate tales is there and may also be explained by this later medieval drive to create collections. It is so urgent that Chaucer makes one of his tales, the Monk's Tale, a smaller collection of tales - "little tragedies" - within a larger collection.

All this may be seen in some great late medieval collections. In the fourteenth century, three remarkable men, Juan Ruiz in Spain,[13] Boccaccio in Italy[14] and Chaucer in England took the religious or moralizing genre of collected tales and infused it with new life and vitality in a way that few early secular collections were able to be animated. This is not the place to go into a detailed comparison, but each author had a complex artistic vision, and however different in aims and form produced masterpieces. They diversified their narratives by "retrospection and anticipation",[15] and by subtle shifts in perspective they gave us several worlds held together in a most subtle articulation.

None of Chaucer's predecessors, however, use exactly his device. Nor does any combine the religious and secular attitudes and subjects to the degree he does. Chaucer gives us a spiritual vision both directly and indirectly.

The *Decameron* has no interludes except at the beginning of the whole work and between days. As Robert Pratt and Karl Young point out, "it is clear that the frame of the *Decameron* could not be regarded as Chaucer's model in any precise or thorough-going sense".[16] The *Ameto* and *Filocolo*, both by Boccaccio, especially the *Ameto*, are somewhat closer to the *Canterbury Tales* but even they differ from the latter in significant ways. Sercambi, whose collection of tales used to be considered the closest Italian source of or analogue to the *Canterbury Tales*, now seems out of the running because of a correction in his assumed dates.[17] The *Libro del buen amor* is even less like the *Canterbury Tales* than the Italian examples I have named. We must not forget, of course, Ovid's great collection of tales, especially because Ovid was so popular in the later Middle Ages, but the *Metamorphoses* is fundamentally different in structure from the *Canterbury Tales*.

Art traditionally teaches and amuses. These three masterpieces, the *Libro del buen amor*, the *Decameron*, and *Canterbury Tales*, stress these two aims differently. Chaucer teaches most of all. They all make some use of circumstantial realism for literary ends, but they are all pictures of life only in the most profound sense. They are also partly true to life because the religious tradition out of which they come is true of life. The sermons and penitential books of the Christian tradition are realistic.

Chaucer's notions of dialogue and the elaboration of the role of the persona are too varied in origin to trace here, but they no doubt are part of the complex sense of the world which Chaucer delighted in. Wyclif, Chaucer's great contemporary, said that "pulcra alternacio delectat animam" and that "multi delectantur in loquela dialogi".[18] Chaucer knew too that debate and dialogue delighted the soul. Many of the religious collections of tales had prefaces, but they were written by the author as author, commenting on his collection, praising God and possibly offering reasons and uses for the tales that follow. What Ruiz, Boccaccio, and Chaucer did was to make the prologues and frames linking the tales part of the artistic creation (a very rare device indeed in religious collections, and usually confined to titles). The tales themselves were pushed to a secondary level so to speak. The prologue and

framing links became the setting out of which the tales came. Neither Ruiz nor Boccaccio used the links in as complete a way as nor to the same extent that Chaucer did. An imitation of reality, not an opinion of the author or presumed author speaking in his own person, provided, however, the rationale of the collection for all three.

Chaucer and his Mediterranean colleagues used circumstantial detail of time, place and description in their prologues and frames, and following an old tradition, descriptions of characters and lively dialogue. The circumstantial detail of the frame we have already discussed elsewhere.[19] It is especially presented for its purpose in authenticating. The portrait goes back to the classical world as a literary genre[20] and was recommended by medieval writers on rhetoric and poetics.[21] Dialogue was considered, as we have seen, a proper form for medieval writers to use to increase the delectation of their audiences.

In making something of this genre, these writers then used dialogue, debate, and circumstantial realism to make a complex perspectivism and a rich ironical self-aware sense of life. Each was a maker of a world or worlds. Each "thickened the mixture" and made their audience see the bitter-sweetness of existence.

The frame of the *Canterbury Tales* serves many functions and is not there, as some think,[22] only to serve as an introduction to some attractive tales. It sets the tone for the richness and complexity of human experience presented to us. It authenticates, prepares us for morality and entertainment in various subtle ways. It offers another level of experience, another world out of which the ideal, that is the unreal, world of the tales come. It introduces us to characters of extraordinary range; it universalizes, in a religious sense, the stories; it satisfies the Gothic urge for wholes within wholes; it gives a sense of completeness and plenitude such as suggests on a very small scale God's activity within the world. The practical purposes of an introduction to stories are there, of course, but above all a real act of creation is suggested in which a new world appears made out of the stuff of the old.

The spring setting of the prologue continues the notion of creation, for God was supposed to have created the world in this season. Chaucer, following the medieval rhetoricians, is less concerned with describing spring than with emphasizing its powers (*vires*). The beginning of the poem then suggests creation just as the end suggests the ultimate end of man the pilgrim, and finally of the world. The world of *Canterbury Tales* moves from its own genesis to its final revelation in the Parson's tale and Chaucer's palinode.[23]

The great character of the frame is the host. He is both the speaker for Chaucer and Chaucer's great critic. He is the supposed creator of the scheme of the tales and is the sole judge of it. He is therefore a Chaucer surrogate and at a great remove a surrogate for God. Yet he lacks complete freedom to impose his will as he quickly learns.[24] God also in a mysterious way is limited by his creation, but it is a voluntary limitation for man's good.

When Dryden wrote of the *Canterbury Tales* in his *Preface to the Fables*, "Here is God's plenty", he no doubt had the notion of divine plenitude in the back of his mind as an enlightening metaphor, but he built better than he knew, for the creation (both *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*) of the *Canterbury Tales* with its encompassing and richly variegated frame is really an artistic parallel to God's creation. Traditionally the variety of the world (its plenitude) has always been taken as evidence of God's goodness which overflows into his creation in a variety of ways and manifests itself in as many forms as possible.

Just as secondary causes operate in the world below, all ultimately dependent on God, the primary cause of all, so secondary causes in the forms of Chaucer's many characters create their own stories. But we who observe the whole scene, who read the tales and frame are aware of a mind behind it all, the controlling guide and spirit, to whose goodness we are indebted - Chaucer the man.[25]

As Charles Owen writes, "the embracing fiction [of the pilgrimage] not only gives a value to most of the narratives more important than any they inherently possess, but it manifests itself frequently within the stories influencing their form, their ideology, their style, their language".[26] The prologue and frame is Chaucer's tribute to and imitation of God's creative activity. Because it is set, unlike Chaucer's other works, in the "real" world, it suggests that we too are characters in a pilgrimage and that we have our little flurries of creation, our narratives as we pass by the way.[27] As Owen has said above, the frame penetrates the stories by creating their form and their rationale. We are then both free and determined, masters and slaves, and our lives are the parameters of innumerable variables in a multidimensional continuum.

A further parallel between Chaucer and the Divine is the retrospective stance, the telling of events after they have occurred. As R. Baldwin pointed out a number of years ago, the scheme of the *Canterbury Tales* demands a Chaucer who has already made the journey to Canterbury and is telling it in retrospect.[28] The pilgrim Chaucer as he tells us of the first meeting of his fellow pilgrims describes them fully, something which could only have been done after he had got to know them. The tale of *Canterbury Tales* is being told after the events, even if not in tranquillity. It is cast in the shape of an autobiographical reminiscence. In this, Chaucer is following a very common tradition in art which uses a retrospective teller - perhaps the best known example to him was the *Divine Comedy*. Dante has already completed or pretended to have completed his whole journey as he sits down to relate it to his audience. Paradise has already been reached before Dante the author sits down to write of hell. Chaucer too must have pretended to have reached Canterbury and even to have returned to London before he turned to write

> Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
> The droghte of March hath perced to the roote.

In at least this sense then the end is the beginning and the

beginning is the end in a tale in which the teller is an active
character. The motto "En mon commencement est ma fin" and its
converse are the truth which Christianity and life give us. This
kind of reminiscence then in which the whole work is cast into
retrospect is a paradigm again of God's creation and the divine
attitude to existence. As in life, the end hovers over every act
and all is cast in a perspective of double time. The potential
pastness of the present continually being forced upon us by the
conditions of this act is what gives the present its edge and its
tragedy. We can forget this great truth most of the time, just as
we do when we read the tales in the *Canterbury Tales* or as the
pilgrims do as they tell their tales, but at times the warning bell
clangs as the voice of the narrator, of this elvish man Chaucer,
is heard above the clamour in measured tones giving us his report
of this journey to Canterbury.

The prologue and frame then of the *Canterbury Tales* inter-
penetrate the tales in many and varied ways and set the conditions
for the complex worlds which are revealed. The tales are in
another time than the time of the pilgrimage for the pilgrimage is
given to us in the persona's retrospective time, *in illo tempore*.
In a sense the tales then are lyric interludes or perhaps lyrico-
narrative interludes, especially because we are strongly aware of
most of the tellers. We are held down by the forces which control
us, and yet these forces allow each one of us to tell his tale, to
open up for a little while the sequence of something that has
happened.

Explanations of the function of the prologue and frame of the
Canterbury Tales which fall back on the Gothic nature of the late
medieval period may to some extent be right. Obviously in some
sense the spirit of the later medieval period with its preference
for framed painting and framed doorway has some relation to the
popularity of the framed collection of tales in the same period and
with what Jordan calls "nonorganicist sensibility" so characteristic
of Gothic art. Jordan himself is well aware of the difficulties in
making precise such parallels. The dispute over whether we can use
the term "baroque" or how to use it in discussing seventeenth-
century literature is instructive in this matter. Jordan writes,
"I do not press the analogy very far".[29]

It is perhaps more helpful in our goal of understanding the
function of the frame and prologue in the *Canterbury Tales* to
stress what Chaucer was doing in his concept of the tales; how he
conceived his own masterpiece. I think the analogy of creation
and God was before him deliberately and often. If we like, we may
also interpret Gothic cathedrals thus - remembering though that
romanesque and baroque cathedrals also aimed at creating God's
house on earth and a replica of the creation and its results in
salvation history. It is better to think of Chaucer as a divine
surrogate in his task than only as a Gothic artist, though certainly
no one can object to these analogies if they are helpful.

The poetic world created by the poet is not really *ex nihilo*,
as Chaucer would surely not wish to put himself on a level with the
real God. He is, however, analogously creating a world or several

worlds, even if using already existing materials. He is creating,
to use an expression of M.H. Abrams, a heterocosm,[30] and is suggest-
ing a parallel to the divine activity. The notion of artist as God
is implicit in his greatest poems. The idea of the poet as creator
only became explicit in the Renaissance. Yet the poet as *vates*, as
prophet who is divinely inspired, is very old, older than Homer.
But the notion of the prophet-poet as a god probably had to wait on
Christianity and the development of Western thought, especially in
the Romantic period.

The idea that the poet is a kind of god is implied in the very
subject matter of *The Divine Comedy*. The fact that such a journey
should be granted to him as it was to St Paul who visited the third
heaven was a sufficient guarantee that Dante was specially favoured
and was by precept and example made a special imitation of God, who
in the form of Jesus made a journey similar in some respects to
what his was to be.

With Chaucer the evidence is less clear but none the less
impressive. His characters carry their heavens and hells about
with them. They are on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem and are
fortuitously joined by Chaucer just as we fortuitously join our own
contemporaries at our birth. Chaucer is withdrawn and different.
He is called upon by the Host twice, is poked fun at by the Man of
Law, tells a dull story. All this gives us a sense of his reality
and helps to guarantee his artistic truth. He gives us a world
which reflects a real world and in which we find new worlds. It
presents its own truth. Its epistemological guarantee is Chaucer's
own retrospective report.

We can, if we wish, look upon these two narrative levels - the
level of the world of fact and the level of imaginative creation -
as an imitation of life itself as it is lived. We live in time
punctuated by events which take us out of time, our dreams, some of
our contacts with others, our hearing stories, our introspective and
imaginative moments. The *Canterbury Tales* reflects these two basic
levels of life. It lets us enjoy and lament over our scattered
introspective and neighbourly moments as well as keep us aware of
the pilgrimage, the *via* we are all bound on. We are the pilgrims,
the *viatores*, but just as the Canterbury Pilgrims could get away
from their journey carried by the wings of narrative, so we can
temporarily forget the serious and fundamental passage to Canterbury
we are all engaged upon. The relation between the two levels, then,
need not be purely psychological, as Professor Kittredge, Lumiansky
and many others have thought, but religious and humanist.

Thus, the *Canterbury Tales* with its elaborate frame and its
prologue is a prologue to a prologue - our earthly life in its
plenitude, variety and multitudinousness. We recognize our world in
Chaucer's world and cross in reading it another bridge in "thilke
parfit glorious pilgrymage / That highte Jerusalem celestial" (X,
50-1).[31]

We must remember that the pilgrims do not reach Canterbury.[32]
It is possible that this failure is due to the accident of Chaucer's
death or it may be deliberate. I tend to the latter explanation.

Chaucer may very well have decided before he reached the Parson's or Manciple's Tale not to finish his work as he had originally planned and reduced it to fewer tales, perhaps even as few as one-quarter of the number. Perhaps not. But the cessation of the work before Canterbury is reached is certainly a happy circumstance or notion in terms of the spiritual function of the Prologue and frame, and the necessity of the return to London. The heavenly Jerusalem is certainly not yet reached by the pilgrims, nor indeed us.

The heavenly Jerusalem is the ultimate goal of earthly man and until the end of time will be for all human beings still *in via*. Even more important, only because more immediate, is the emphasis in the *Canterbury Tales* on the journey of life which all who read it must still be on, with its double aspect of the travelling and the experiences within that journey which seem to take us, even if only momentarily, out of time.

NOTES

A somewhat different version of this paper was given, as one in the series of
Memorial Lectures in Memory of Elizabeth Salter, at the University of Connecticut,
Storrs, on the night of September 10, 1981.

[1]   *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic
       Structure* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967) p.112.

[2]   P.130. Cf. . . . "The late Gothic ability to maintain contradicting
       attitudes and to derive aesthetic pleasure from the tension of unresolved
       conflicts", Larry Benson, "*The Alliterative Morte Arthur*: Medieval
       Tragedy", *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 2 (1966) p.75.

[3]   On Chaucer and the rhetorical tradition, see Richard Lanham, *The Motives
       of Eloquence* (New Haven, 1976) pp.65-81; and Robert Payne, *The Key of
       Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics* (New Haven and London, 1963).

[4]   See *The Poet Chaucer* (London, 1950) pp.113ff.

[5]   See H.L.D. Ward in *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts
       in the British Museum* (London, 1893) II, pp.586-740, especially pp.586-94,
       and J.H. Mozley, "The Unprinted Poems of Nigel Wireker, An Examination of
       M.S. Cotton Vespasian D xix, fols.1-53", *Speculum* 7 (1932) pp.398-423.

[6]   See J.-Th. Welter, *L'exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique
       du moyen âge*, Thèse . . . de l'Université de Paris (Paris and Toulouse,
       1927), especially pp.214ff.

[7]   Harry Caplan, "Rhetorical Invention in some Medieval Tractates on Preach-
       ing", *Speculum* 2 (1927) p.294.

[8]   On the medieval *accessus*, see Edwin A. Quain, "The Medieval Accessus ad
       Auctores", *Traditio* 3 (1945) pp.215-64.

[9]   See the edition by Jean Boutière and A.H. Schutz, *Biographies des
       Troubadours* (Toulouse and Paris, 1950). (A revised and augmented edition
       with translations into modern French exists (Paris, 1964).)

[10]   "Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer", *Thought* 39 (1964)
       pp.335-58. On the four causes as applied to literary works, A.J. Minnis
       presented an important paper at the 1980 meeting of the New Chaucer
       Society in New Orleans. See also his essays, "Discussions of 'Authorial
       Role' and 'Literary Form' in Late-Medieval Scriptural Exegesis", *Beiträge
       zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 99 (1977) pp.37-65; and
       "Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Rôle of the *Compilator*",
       ibid. 101 (1979) pp.385-421.

[11]   *Ibid.*, p.348.

[12]   See Donald Howard, *The Idea of the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley, Los Angeles
       and London, 1976), and his *Writers and Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage and
       Their Posterity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1980), to both of which
       I am indebted.

[13]   Chaucer may have known Ruiz since we now know that he probably visited
       Spain in 1366. On their possible relations to each other, see Thomas Jay

Garbáty, "The *Pamphilus* Tradition in Ruiz and Chaucer", *PQ* 46 (1967) pp.457-70. Ruiz may have been influenced by Arab and Hebrew models. The title of his work is *El Libro del buen amor*, a book much less known to the Anglo-Saxon world than the *Decameron*.

[14] See Vittore Branca, "Coerenza dell' introduzione al *Decameron*, Rispondenze Strutturale Stilistiche", *RP* 13 (1959-60) pp.351-60; Joan M. Ferrante, "The Frame Characters of the *Decameron*: A Progression of Virtues", *RP* 19 (1965-66) pp.212-26; and E. De'Negri, "The Legendary Style of the *Decameron*", *RR* 43 (1952) pp.166-89 for attempts to analyze the prologue and frame of the *Decameron* as structure. On framed tales in general, see Hans Lucas, "Zu den Milesiaca des Aristides", *Philologus* LXVI (1907) pp.29ff. (in the ancient world), Otto Löhman, *Die Rahmenerzählung des Decameron, Ihre Quellen und Nachwirkungen, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Rahmenerzählung*, Romanistische Arbeiten 22 (Halle/Saale, 1935).

[15] Samuel Johnson, "Life of Milton", *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birbeck Hill (Oxford, 1905), I, p.170.

[16] See *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago, 1941) p.20. The article on the sources and analogues of the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* by Pratt and Young is valuable though brief. I am indebted to it in many ways. See also W.H. Clawson, "The Framework of *The Canterbury Tales*", *U. of Toronto Quarterly* 20 (1951) pp.137-54 and Edmund Reiss, "The Pilgrimage Narrative and *The Canterbury Tales*", *SP* 67 (1970) pp.295-305.

[17] See G. Sinicropi in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 191 (1964) pp.548-64 and his edition of G. Sercambi, *Novelle*, 2 vols., Scrittori d'Italia 250-1 (Bari, 1972) (in II, p.801), and Lucciano Rossi, ed. Sercambi, *Il Novelliere* (Rome, 1976), xix-xx.

[18] From prologue to his *Speculum ecclesie militantis*, ed. Alfred W. Pollard (London, 1886) p.1.

[19] See note 10 above for "Authenticating Realism".

[20] See E.C. Evans, "Roman Descriptions of Personal Appearance in History and Biography", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 46 (1935) pp.43-84.

[21] See comments by Robert Armstrong Pratt and Karl Young, *op.cit.*, pp.3-5.

[22] W.H. Clawson, *op.cit.*, p.137 ("a framework or framing story is to be understood as a narrative . . . composed for the primary purpose of introducing and connecting a series of tales, which are the *raison d'être* of the whole work.").

[23] Perhaps this palinode, although a literary convention, echoes somewhat Augustine's words at the end of *De Trinitate* (15, 28), "O Lord, the one God, God the Trinity, whatever I have said in these books that is of thine, may they acknowledge who are thine; if anything of my own, may I be pardoned both by thee and by those who are thine".

[24] Charles Owen, "The Problem of Free Will in Chaucer's Narratives", *PQ* 46 (1967) p.453.

[25] See Donald Howard's fine article "Chaucer the Man", *PMLA* 80 (1965) pp.337-43.

[26] *Op.cit.*, p.451.

[27] As Edmund Reiss, *op.cit.*, p.301, suggests, the real pilgrim is the audience to whom the work is addressed.

[28] *The Unity of the Canterbury Tales*, Anglistica 5 (Copenhagen, 1955) pp.54-7. This retrospection is characteristic, of course, of many tales and stories.

[29] *Op.cit.*, p.xi. The preceding quotation from Jordan is taken from p.241.

[30] See *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York, 1953) pp.272ff.

[31] I don't think it has been pointed out that there is a certain syntactic or semnatic confusion in these lines. The pilgrimage is not, but the goal is, the heavenly Jerusalem. I do not know why Chaucer (apparently) writes thus. Note the parallel at the end of Augustine's *Confessions* 9.

[32] I am indebted to Scott Kennedy of the University of Connecticut, Storrs, for his making me aware of this inconclusive conclusion. Since then, I have become aware of Reiss's article (see note 16 above) p.301 where the point is also made. Reiss also equates the Tabard Inn with Babylon, but there I think he is pushing his allegory too far. Nor does it fit into the general movement of the *Canterbury Tales*. There is no approach to Jerusalem in the progress of the frame or Tales. Appeals to "liminality" don't explain it either.