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<td>タイトル</td>
<td>チューカーの旅 行物語 ファルサイアーズの行者たち 人文科学審議部委員会報告</td>
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CHAUCER'S PILGRIMAGE DEVICE OF
THE FABLIAU TALES

TOSHINORI HIRA

Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem (i.e. the pilgrims), so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne.¹

Chaucer gives us the individual sketches of his happy company of the Canterbury pilgrims who represent almost every occupation and social standing. Their world is a world of the variety of the men and women whose interests and tastes, whose habits of mind and ways of thinking vary with the individual. He recounts what type of character every pilgrim belongs to,² what attire he or she is clad in, what cause he devotes his activities to, what livelihood he makes, and what she entertains a lively concern for. The "gentil parfit" Knight occupies himself with the active service in "Alisaundre," "the Grete See" and "Pruce" in campaigns against the infidels. His courteous son Squire behaves in a lover-like manner toward his lady in English campaigns in Flanders. The elegant Prioress takes pains to imitate the manners of polite society. The manly Monk enjoys the same prestige as a lay lord. Hubert the friar, wanton and pompous, is easy in penance when he knows that there is an allowance of food or a gift. The poor Parson follows the Christian ideal of parish priests, first of all, offering an example to others. The usurious Merchant sets his wits to work to make money. The newly rich Burgesses are all of them ambitious of distinction. Their wives like to precede everyone at the ceremonies. Likewise, Alice of Bath, skilled in weaving, to show her displeasure, is "out of alle charitee" if any of wives is the first to make her offering in church. The reserved Sergeant of the Law utilizes his legal knowledge in joining field to field. The wise Doctor of Physic also is a medical man whose learning and skill based on "magyk natureel" ensured material success to him, in particular, during the years of the pestilence. The Epicurean-minded
Franklin, who has held public offices in his county, is the kind of gentleman-farmer to have a mind to imitate court manners. His pleasure is in affected refinement. The stout Yeoman, less well-off than a franklin, who came from the yeomanry, gives up the plow for the arms. Equipped with a bow and arrows he serves as an attendant to the Knight. The good Plowman, contented with duties of peasants, engages in farm work as God ordains.

The bright world of the company of thirty pilgrims, diversified with the male and fair sexes, ordinary or splendid attire, selfish disposition and lofty moral sentiments, low and high stations of life, sincere attitude toward life and comfortable view of life, leads the reader to human understanding so far as the individual characters are concerned. Conspicuous is, to be sure, Chaucer in the “felde” of the poetry of the age by his characterizations of individual pilgrims. Almost every character is treated civilly, and with a distinct individuality. He or she, thus, wins the eulogy of his or her fellow pilgrim Chaucer. Chaucer is generous in praise of the Knight: “He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght”; in praise of the Friar: “Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous”; of the Parson: “A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys”; of Alice of Bath: “Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt (skill), / She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt”; of the Doctor of Physic: “He was a verray, parfit praktisour”: of the Franklin: “A bettre envynd man was nowher noon./ ....It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,” or “A shirreve hadde he been, and a contour. / Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.” He exaggerates the better side of the human nature of those pilgrims who represent knighthood, priesthood and peasantry. They may, the pilgrim Chaucer says, have put forcible emphasis on their moral duties to the community they were expected to discharge. Chaucer is in some sympathy with their sentiments. He never fails to have seen human fallibility in them. When the Host turns to him as a suitable personage to bring a series of tales to a finish, the Parson offered to tell a “myrie” prose tale suited for knitting up the holiday story-telling.

For Paul, that writeth unto Thymothee,
Repreeveth hem that weyven (depart from) soothfastnesse,
And telleth fables and swich wrencchednesse.
Why sholde I sowen draf (chaff) out of my fest (fist),
When I may sowen whete, if that me lest?
For which I seye, if that yow list to heere
Moralitee and vertuous mateere,
And thanne that ye wol yeve me audience,
I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence,
Do yow plesaunce leefful (permissible), as I kan.4

The other pilgrims, all of whom represent no social ideal of knighthood, priesthood and peasantry, are more human and less idealized; some are ambitious of gaining a higher position, some make a boast of professional skill and some convince themselves of their own ways of living or thinking; but all have a dull sense of social value. Chaucer sympathizes with these characters in their sentiments. He loves the individual pilgrims who are represented as affected by a variety of characters or occupations without emotions of indignation and condemnation. It appeals, to be sure, to our sympathetic understanding.5 We may well feel acquainted with the pilgrims. Is it sure, then, that we can regard every pilgrim's personality in the same light with the modern reader's personality?

Chaucer's characterizations of various pilgrims make an immediate appeal to our mind. Yet it needs to be studied with care by us that his various pilgrims belong to medieval society.6 The modern ways of thinking and feeling must be dismissed from our mind even if we read the General Prologue with a historical sympathy.7 We must find ourselves in a world different from our modern world, a world medieval in traditional beliefs and feudal institutions.8 At the same time, Chaucer's world, though classed under three fundamental social standings, was pointing toward the modern world; the middle classes, as represented by the merchants and craftsmen, the franklins and yeomen, were beginning to be of some importance and expand their influence.9

Various as they are, Chaucer's pilgrims, when viewed from the point of the fundamental framework of medieval society, are divided into three groups of men — knights, clergymen and peasants.10 To these groups of men may well be added a group of artisans and tradesmen. Thus, Chaucer's Merchant, anxious that "the see were kept for any thyng/Bitwixe Middelburgh (the wool staple) and Orewelle," is thought as one of staplers or adventurers who met the king's financial needs, loaned or contributed money, and were rewarded with governmental positions. Chaucer's every Burgess, whom he selected among the neutral guilds — the
haberdasher's, the weaver's, the dyer's, the tapicer's, or the carpenter's guild, is prosperous enough to be made for the aldermanry of London municipal council. The Burgesses's wives, big with pride, precede everyone on guild festivals. Alice of Bath and these wives would have found themselves kindred spirits if their husbands had been accompanied by the wives. Alice is self-assured; she convinces herself of knowledge acquired through her experiences with five husbands. Then, she insists on giving her fellow pilgrims a discourse on the female domination of a married life when the Pardoner butts in while she is telling her discourse.

whan that I have toold thee forth my tale
Of tribulacion in mariaghe,
Of which I am expert in al myn age,
This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe,—
Than maystow chese wheither thou wolt sippe (sip)
Of thilke tonne (tun) that I shal abroche.
Be war of it, er thou to ny approche;
For I shal telle ensamples mo than ten.
'Whoso that nyl be war by othere men,
By hym shul othere men corrected be,'
The same wordes writeth Ptholomee;
Rede in his Almageste, and take it there.11

The pilgrim Franklin, raised, presumably to knighthood, has served as justice of the peace, knight of the shire, sheriff and auditor. He is intent, it seems, on imitating the ways of living and manners of polite society, by which he betrays his origin. He lives on dainty food; he complains of his son's not behaving himself like a squire.

Chaucer's pilgrims cover almost every range of the callings they follow and the social standings they belong to. But they are not intended to mirror faithfully the social scene to which they belonged. There is no need for Chaucer to present vivid pictures of every part of his society, every type of men and women belonging to every class of medieval society.12 Tales of the romance type or "morality" type were enough for a court poet; they were expected by his court readers. Obviously Chaucer, as he himself says, has an intention of assigning to the pilgrim tellers
tales appropriate to their characters and social standings. The manners and ideals of gentlefolk were expressed by the Knight and the Squire; the Church precepts and instruction, though the Church had still a wide-spread influence over every person, high and low, young and old, by the Parson and the Prioress; the mind and habits of middle classes by the Merchant and the Wife of Bath. Of his Miller or Reeve who is of bad behaviour Chaucer says:

\[\text{this Millere}\]
\[\ldots\text{nolde his wordes for no man forbere,}\]
\[\text{But tolde his cherles tale in his manere.}\]
\[\ldots\ldots\ldots\]
\[\text{And therfore, whoso list it nat yheere,}\]
\[\text{Turne over the leef and chese another tale;}\]
\[\text{For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,}\]
\[\text{Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,}\]
\[\text{And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.}\]
\[\ldots\ldots\ldots\]
\[\text{The Millere is a cherl, ye knowe wel this;}\]
\[\text{So was the Reve eek and othere mo,}\]
\[\text{And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.}\]

It seems likely, therefore, that the social background of the pilgrims helps to introduce tales of nearly every type, especially those of the fabliau type. In the medieval society, classed under three fundamental groups of society, and not so much civilized, literature corresponded to the habits of thought and sentiments of the governing class its audience and readers belonged to. The romances were written primarily for polite society; the legends of saints, the homilies and books of morality and devotion served as literal mouthpieces for the Church. In this context the realistic fabliaux or fabliau-like tales which deal with the life of newly risen classes contrast strongly with the romances. Funniness and coarseness, sometimes satire are conspicuous traits in the fabliaux. As is shown by Chaucer's middle-class men the new class came to be influential; the sentiments of the new-class men could find expression in the fabliaux whose authors are, it is conceivable, writers inferior to Chaucer. Chaucer who has much love for the new class
characterizes many pilgrims of this class. The whole company of Chaucer's pilgrims belongs almost all of them to the middle class except for some pilgrims in a sense so wide as to include an average knight like the Knight and the so-called rascals, such as the Miller and the Reeve, among the company. The higher nobility and the lower peasantry or the vagabondage are not included. With the result of the rise of commerce and the progressive decline of knighthood common people grew to rank high in the social scale. This tendency was developed by the corruption of clergymen and the decline in influence of the Church and the gradual development of a national consciousness. Sir Robert Knolles and William Wykeham are known as individuals typical of the commoners who rose from rank and file and rose to distinction. The middle-class pilgrims number 8 in so far as bourgeois men are concerned. But the Merchant, Alice of Bath, and the Reeve who was "a wel good wrighte, a carpenter" tell the fabliaux. Alice's Tale, though suited to her character, is not in the same class as her Prologue of the fabliau type. And no tale is assigned to five Burgess at all. The fabliaux are out of keeping with their tellers. The fabliaux or the tales of the fabliau type are assigned to many other pilgrims of the higher and lower middle classes. To these fabliau-tellers are added even some clergymen, such as the Nun's Priest, the Friar and the Pardoner. The Friar or the Pardoner, as characterized as mercenary, is well suited to be a fabliau-teller. These clergymen themselves committed the sin of avarice which they should warn people against committing. The rise and material prosperity of bourgeois men wielded a great influence over men of every class of society. Their materialistic view brought about the progressive decline of the medieval ideals, both religious and chivalrous. Even clergymen tend to err on the side of mundane pleasure. The parson in the Reeve's Tale purposes to make the daughter of a miller heir to his property, and was captious about her marriage. Her mother belonged by origin to the gentry.

His purpos was for to bistowe hire hye
Into som worthy blood of auncetrye (ancestry);
For hooly chirches good moot been despended (spent)
On hooly chirches blood, that is descended.
Therfore he wolde his hooly blood honoure,
Though that he hooly chirche sholde devoure.
On the other hand, the Sergeant of the Law tells the tale of the romance type. He is one of the middle-class men of the same type as the Franklin who becomes more adapted to a good social position and behaves himself like a landed gentleman.

The Sergeant of the Law's Tale is a "thrifty" tale told of the single noble virtue of Constance, a pious daughter of the Christian Emperor of Rome. The Yeoman, less wealthy than the Franklin, who holds, presumably a land worth 40s. a year, tells no tale. Chaucer gives the pilgrim Chaucer two tales, the Tale of Sir Thopas and the Tale of Melibeus. It may be interpreted that Chaucer's irony lies in the presentation of the two Tales, one, the parody of the defects of the romances, and another, the edifying piece, which he wrote, to be sure, for his court readers, echoing their sentiments. Leaving this till later on, the fabliau-tellers of the company approach almost two-thirds of the whole tale-tellers. Thus, it may be understood, in a sense, that Chaucer's device of pilgrimage is adopted for the purpose of introducing many tales of the fabliau type which can reasonably be expected from the middle class pilgrims.

Chaucer is a court poet; his audience and readers reasonably expect the "storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,/And eek moralitee and hoolynesse" of him. He was well aware of where he was. This is explained from the apologies which he makes to his audience for his introducing the fabliau tales and their tellers. He sets a tale-teller from the middle class talking, apologizing for his being a "cherl" or a "burel man." Obviously such a tale, when judged according to the social type of medieval literature, does not meet with the high favour at court. Of course, excepted is the story told of the habits and manners different from those of fashionable society which court the laughter of court audience. The notice is contemptuous; the laughter is raised against the bourgeois mode of living. The fabliau like the Reeve's Tale is a funny story of a duped husband in a three-cornered romance of the middle or lower class, which the nobler audience can enjoy with their own social superiority. Even a lesson, according to the burlesque convention of truverere, can be derived, it may be interpreted, from a joke on the cheated miller. A butt of ridicule is a pretentious miller, Simkin; he is befooled by clerks, Aleyne and John, who made misconduct with his proud wife and daughter respectively. The Reeve retorts upon the Miller, saying that the Miller in ridicule of him insinuated that the aged carpenter of the Miller's Tale was mocked at by Alison, a young wife of the carpenter, who made illicit intercourse
with a clerk, Nicholas. The Reeve makes an end of his Tale with the concluding words:

Thus is the proude millere wel ybete (beaten),
And hath ylost the gryndyne of the whete,
And payed for the soper everideel
Of Aleyn and of John, that bette (beat) hym wee.
His wyf is swyved, and his doghter als.
Lo, swich it is a millere to be fals!
And therfore this proverbe is seyd ful sooth,
"Hym thar (He needs) nat wene (imagine) wel (success) that yvele dooth";
A gylour shal hymself bigyled be.

The Merchant's Tale or the Wife of Bath's Prologue is a variation on the familiar fabliaux. The aged husband of the Merchant's Tale is represented as an old knight named January, not as a well-to-do old merchant or a tradesman; in parallel with him his young wife's lover is not represented as a young clerk or a clergyman, but as his squire of the name of Damian. The theme is the favorite theme of a mocked husband. January is mocked at by his "fresshe" May who has been in love with his squire Damian. Satire is directed at the sinister design of the young wife May; it is the kind of the wiles which is appreciated as vicious by the audience. Sympathy is felt with January who, after having been argued down, is glad to have temporarily got May back.24

Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees (wiles)
In wommen been ! for ay as bisy as bees
Been they, us sely men for to deceyve,
And from the soothe evere wol they weyve (swerve);
By this Marchauntes tale it preveth weel.25

In the Wife of Bath's Prologue Alice always obtains the wife's headship of the husband through her wiles. She in regular succession has dominated over her husbands, both young and old. Her Prologue, confessed by herself that its theme
is "wo that is in mariage," is similar, in a sense, to the Merchant’s Tale in that it deals with the immodest womanly wiles of her successful domination.26

A wys womman wol bisye hire evere in oon
To gete hire love, ye, ther as she hath noon.
But sith I hadde hem (her husbands) hooly in myn hond,
And sith they hadde me yeven al hir lond,
What sholde I taken keep hem for to plese,
But it were for my profit and myn ese (pleasure)?
I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey (faith),
That many a nyght they songen 'weilawey!'
The bacon was nat fet (fetched) for hem, I trowe,
That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.
I governed hem so wel, after my lawe,
That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe (fain)
To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre (fair).27

It may be conceivable, however, that Chaucer adapts himself to his readers’ thought and feeling with the reverse of them. He may have gotten a reversal view of the anti-feminist attack on love-making as practiced in the middle or lower class, or the anti-clerical attack on abuses as perpetrated among clergymen. If so, it may be interpreted that Chaucer's satire28 is concealed in the anti-feminist attack on courtly love, or the anti-clerical attack on abuses by clergymen, which forms a feature of the fabliaux.29 A kind of the clericalism of the Reeve’s Tales (the favourism of Simkin and his wife to the church authority) seems to be exposed to the laughter of Chaucer although he never rebukes his fabliau-tellers and sympathizes with them. Sarcasm reaches its climax when the pretentious miller was frustrated in the attempt to make his daughter heir to some family of exalted lineage. As was usual with the miller of medieval village Simkin, who boasts himself of his cleverness and his wife's lineage, along with the parish priest, may be one of the most influential in the village.30 The miller’s proud wife and his heiress-daughter were “swyved” by John and Aleyn respectively.

"Ye, false harlot," quod the millere, "hast?"
A. false traitour ! false clerk !" quod he,
"Thow shalt be deed, by Goddes dignitee !
Who dorste be so boold to disparage
My doghter, that is come of swich lynage ?"31

The courtly feminist’s cant adds the same ironical effect to the social satire on the miller’s pretension. The “disparaged” heiress-daughter is addressed with a graceful but ironical courtesy. Aleyn says:

"Fare weel, Malyne, sweete wight !
The day is come, I may no lenger byde;
But everemo, wher so I go or ryde,
I is thyn awen (own) clerk, swa (so) have I seel (bliss) !"32

Decisively bitter is the Merchant’s satire on courtly love and the wiles of women. The satire on the aged husband cuckolded by his squire, which is the familiar subject matter of the fabliaux, is bitter all the more because the old knight January who decided to marry a “mayden” for her beauty takes marriage as the moral justification of his sensual appetite.

Which mayde, he seyde, he wolde han to his wyf,
To lede in ese and hoolynesse his lyf;
And thanked God that he myghte han hire al,
That no wight his blisse parten shal.33

Moreover, marriage is against the courtly love code. Courtly love is primarily illicit love. Andreas tells us: "Marriage is no real excuse for not loving."34 January is guided by self-interested thinking in getting married. He has a sordid idea of marriage. Thus he seems to have been a bourgeois man newly ranked with a knight.35 Here, the satire on the victim of his squire’s illicit love for his wife and her wiles is converted into a satire on courtly love.

thise bacheleris synge “allas,”
Whan that they fynden any adversitee
In love, which nys bnt childyssh vanyte.  

Chaucer seems to treat a satire proper to the fabliaux as a social-class criticism of courtly love, not as a criticism of the bourgeois men befooled. On the other hand, his treatment of January’s yearning for May is in accordance with the courtly love conventions.

He (i.e. January) was so ravysshed on his lady May
That for the verray peyne he was ny (wellnigh) wood.
Almoost he swelte (fainted) and swowned ther (where) he stood,
So soore hath Venus hurt hym with hire brond (brand).

The object of pleasure of the “coltissh” dotard as well as of that of the squire is represented as a lady-like woman.

He (i.e. January) purtreyed (portrayed) in his herte and in his thoght
Hir fresshe beautee and hir age tendre,
Hir myddel smal, hire armes longe and sklendre (slim),
Hir wise governaunce (demeanor), hir gentillesse (good breeding),
Hir wommanly berynge (bearing), and hire sadnesse (steadiness).

May belongs to the same class with Alison of the Miller’s Tale in the sense that May persuades his husband to agree to her proposal by her wiles. In this respect she is the same shrewd woman as the Wife of Bath who, with arrogant air, declares that she cheats simple men by deceit, weeping or adulation. Women are advised by her to:

“speke and bere hem wrong on honde;
For half so boldely kan ther no man
Swere and lyen, as a womman kan.

When a prudent wife “mysavyse (acts ill-advisedly)” she

shal, if that she kan hir good,
Bere hym on honde that the cow is wood.\textsuperscript{40}

Women of no standing stood on an equal footing with the ladies of position in the Middle Ages, taking consideration of the fact that women bore a relation of submission to men.\textsuperscript{41} Even the ladies are precluded from the class idea of medieval society.\textsuperscript{42} So the social position to which women, whether ladies or not, belonged was determined by the social status of their fathers or husbands. Men or women ultimately want to exercise their sovereignty over the others. Men do all they can in hope of engrossing women’s favour. Women also equal men in sovereignty. The relations of women and men, as the Wife says herself, are reduced to “sovereignty.”

\begin{verbatim}
Wommen desiren to have sovereignty
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
And for to been in maistrie hym above.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{verbatim}

A variation of the dominant Wife is Griselda who yields obedience to her husband. The dominant Alice representing the shrewd women as seen in the fabliaux makes a laughingstock of the audience and readers. The Manciple, in his Tale, tells of the submissive relations of men and women. The chivalrous young knight Phebus did all he could to please his wife, and thus he tried to have her love to himself, but he was cheated by the wife who “hadde/A man of litel reputacioun,/Nat worth to Phebus in comparisoun.” A criticism on courtly love underlies this anti-feminism. Phebus is a husband-lover; his wife is bound to him by the bonds of affection. At the same time, she is a woman with the characteristics of the fabliau heroine. This good, lady-like wife is the same faithless woman as the Wife who is of loose morals. There may be implied a satiric comment on the ladies.

\begin{verbatim}
I am a boystous (illiterate) man, right thus seye I,
Ther nys no difference, trewely,
Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree,
If of hir body dishonest she bee,
And a povre wenche, oother than this—
If it so be they werke bothe amys—
\end{verbatim}
But that the gentile, in estaat above,
She shal be cleped his lady, as in love;
And for that oother is a povre womman,
She shal be cleped his wenche or his lemman.44

The skilled weaver Alice is a self-centered woman who regards marriage as an institution favorable to such a wanton woman as she. Her married life is the justification for her passions and her theory on the “sovereynetee” of a wife over her husband. She knows well that unrestrained life is of course disapproved by the Church. And the Biblical figures referred to are the “auctoritée” useful to her theory. She has indulged her shrewdness to the full on the strength of “auctoritée.” She has acted on her own authority. Her conviction about her theory on female domination over men, both lover and husband, is based upon her “experience,” not upon “auctoritée.” She is satirized by the Pardoner soon after she began to tell about her “power” upon her husband’s “propre body.”

“Now, dame,” quod he, “by God and by seint John !
Ye been a noble prechour in this cas.
I was aboute to wedde a wyf; allas !
What sholde I bye it on my flessh so deere ?
Yet hadde I leve re wedde no wyf to-yeere !”45

But she confidently flings his criticism back at him.

It seems possible that the bourgeois men represented by the Merchant and the five Burgesses may have been included among the audience and readers of the Canterbury Tales. The Host refers to the relationship of a tale-teller to his tale.

Whereas a man may have noon audience,
Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence.46

To be sure, there are the literary works, lay or religious, which were written for literate bourgeois readers. One of the subject matter of these works is that of the wife as a household shrew. These must have been read at bourgeois circles, outside of court circles. Whether Chaucer’s tales of the fabliau type were read at
London bourgeois circles or not, men of the middle class are thought to have been included among Chaucer's real audience and readers. Chaucer's audience must have consisted of heterogeneous courtiers, high and low—the higher nobility and the lesser gentry. The prelates, regular and secular, were, without doubt, included among the audience. It seems likely that the lesser gentry are represented by not a few of the pilgrim-audience of the gentry class. As has been suggested the gentry class grew gradually to be of some importance as the feudal lords, lay or ecclesiastical, neglected their duties. Scutages had been a contributory negligence in the knight's retirement from knightly service since the twelfth century. In lack of knights, thus, the wealthy freeholders, franklins, were knighted by the Orders for distraint of knighthood Edward III issued. He took up arms against France. Burgesses had bought self-governing privilege, so to speak, with money. In the kings' needs and policies the leaders of craftguilds and trading companies represented their chartered towns in Parliament as in the case of the landed gentlemen representing their counties in it. Some rose to distinction; they were enriched with the development of the wool trade. Wool can certainly deserves to be called by such a name as a goddess of merchants, and an eminent merchant by such a name as a merchant prince.

There may have been men of the new class with whom Chaucer was personally acquainted among his real audience; the merchants like Gilbert Maghfeld; the important guildmen, whether victuallers or non-victuallers, such as Sir John Philpot, a leader of the grocer's guild and Sir Nicholas Brembre, a leader of the fishmonger's guild. How did Chaucer feel toward these men? He never betrays his feelings. It seems clear, however, that he gains a sympathetic understanding of the ideals and prejudices of the new class. He never reproaches his bourgeois characters. He feels a lively concern about their lives. His concern about the ways of the "newe world" increased as he grew old. In view of the result that he wrote such narrative as the Merchant's Tale it may be possible to say that the bourgeois ways of thought and feeling as represented in the fabliau tales gradually freed him of courtly conventions. It may be substantiated by a group of tales, Troilus and Criseyde and the preceding tales, the House of Fame and the Parliament of Fowls.

Unfinished are both the House of Fame and the Parliament of Fowls. The House has given rise to diverse interpretations. The plot never worked out; letting
slide the original plan of hearing all the tidings of love the eagle suggested to Chaucer seems to let in the tidings of fame or reputation.57

For truste wel that thou (i.e. Geoffrey) shalt here,  
When we be come there (where) I (i.e. the eagle) seye,  
Mo wonder thynges, dar I leye (bet),  
And of Loves folk moo tydynges,  
Both sothe sawes (sayings) and lesinges (lies);  
And moo loves newe begonne,  
And longe yserved loves wonne.58

My feeling is that Chaucer returned to the theme of the love tidings and wrote of a love-debate in the Parliament.59 Contrast is afforded by the goose's type of thought against the noble tercelet's mode of thought. The tercelet is contemptuous of the goose's practical view of love, which parallels the calculating view of the bourgeois men who take care of themselves. But the goose's speech suggests a satire on conventionalized love. The goose, unabashed but adapting herself to the thought of the noble fowls, such as the tercelet, falcon and sparrow hawk, addresses herself to the "gentil foules."

"...now tak kep every man,  
And herkeneth which a resoun I shal forth brynge !  
My wit is sharp, I love no taryinge;  
I see I rede (counsel) hym, though he were my brother,  
But she wol love hym, lat hym love another !"60

This speech appeals to the class superiority of the court audience the noble fowls represent. The goose certainly is dull of understanding of matters courtly, but, viewed from another angle, is sharp at business practice. The love-debate, also, is left unsolved. It may be interpreted, in a way, that the solution is found in Troilus and Criseyde. Ostentatiously Chaucer refuses to accept the conventionalized love. The story told about "the double sorwes" of Troilus, brave son of King Priam of Troy, who was deserted by his lady-love Crisseyde and was killed by the fierce Achilles. Chaucer describes Crisseyde as a court lady, and treats Troilus'
love for Criseyde with the courtly love conventions. But Chaucer betrays his disinterestedness in courtly love by Criseyde's inconstancy. Criseyde forms a love-relationship with a new lover, Diomed, the Greek Prince next to Achilles. She says: "To Diomede algate I wol be trewe." Chaucer knows about what he said in *Troilus*; so the god of Love denounces the fictitious Chaucer as a "mortal fo" in the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*. Chaucer is criticised by the god of Love:

> in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose,  
> Thow hast translated the Romauns of the Rose,  
> That is an heresy ageyns my lawe,  
> And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;  
> And thynkest in thy wit, that is ful col,  
> That he nys but a verray propre fol  
> That loveth paramours, to harde and hote.  
> Wel wot I therby thow begynnyst dote  
> As olde foles, whan here spiryt fayleth;  
> Thanne blame they folk, and wite nat what hem ayleth.  
> Hast thow nat mad in Englysh ek the bok  
> How that Crisseye de Troylus forsok,  
> In shewynge how that wemen han don mis?  

And Chaucer shows repentance for his sin against the laws of the god of Love in the form of writing the legends of the good women faithful in their love. In the revised version of the *Prologue* to the *Legend* Chaucer ironically reveals himself as a renegade. The Queen defends him by making a strained excuse:

> "I not wher he be now a renegat."
NOTES

1 CT, I(A) 38–41.
2 Manly, in Some New Light on Chaucer (New York, 1951), suggests that some characters have their counterparts in real life. On the other hand, Coghill observes that Chaucer uses his book knowledge of human nature, derived from rhetoric, medicine and astrology, for the descriptions of his characters. See N. Coghill, Geoffrey Chaucer, London, 1956, pp. 49f.
3 T. Hira, in ‘Two Phases of Chaucer, Moral and Mortal,’ Essays in English and American Literature: In Commemoration of Professor Shunichi Macnaka's Sixty-First Birthday, Tokyo, 1968, pp. 98–102, has pointed out the possibility of the pilgrim Chaucer's omitting the weak side liable to err of the idealized pilgrims, and of his emphasizing the moral sense of them.
4 CT, X(I), 32–41.
6 Chaucer's characterizations varied with individual pilgrims are rated by J. R. Hulbert in ‘Chaucer’s Pilgrims.’ Reprinted in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. E. Wagenknecht, pp. 23–29.
7 M. Bowden, in Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, New York, 1957, pp. 1–2, draws a parallel between Chaucer's England and our modern world and makes an appeal to our historical sympathy.
9 The present author observes that many of the Canterbury pilgrims are wealthy or influential enough to rank among the middle classes in the light of the social background of Chaucer's age. T. Hira, 'Chaucer's Gentry in the Historical Background,' Essays in English and American Literature in Commemoration of Professor Takejiro Nakayama's Sixty-First Birthday, Tokyo, 1961, pp. 31–38.
10 Chaucer's pilgrims, from the viewpoint of the medieval ideals of society, fall into three main groups — men of war, men of praying and men of labour. See, for example, D. S. Brewer, Chaucer, London, 1953, pp. 134f.
11 CT, III(D), 172–183.
A good illustration of historical realities is afforded by the literary description of medieval social scene; see, for example, G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, London, 1948 and D. W. Robertson, Jr., Chaucer's London, New York, 1968. A parallelism between the English court scene of the late fourteenth century and the court art and literature of the period is observed by G. Mathew in Court of Richard II, New York, 1968.

A discussion on the definition of the fabliaux as "associated with the gentler classes for which gravely literary poetry of medieval France was composed" is given in C.C. Williams, Jr., The Genre and Art of the Old French Fabliaux, Michigan, 1968, pp. 46-49. This view of the fabliaux which Per Nykrog advanced in 1957 contrasts with that of Bédier. The author suggests that tales told by Chaucer's Merchant, Shipman, Reeve, Miller and Summoner are in the fabliau line.


A classification based upon the literary features of the fabliaux is given G. Dempster, in Dramatic Irony in Chaucer, New York, 1959, pp. 27ff., classes the tales told by the Reeve, the Miller, the Shipman, the Friar, the Summoner, and the Merchant among the fabliaux. C. Muscatine, in Chancer and the French Tradition, Berkeley, 1957, classes the Reeve's Tale, the Wife of Bath's Prologue and the Canon's Yeoman's Tale under the name of the English version of the naturalism of French fabliaux, and the Miller's Tale, the Merchant's Tale and the Nun's Priest's Tale under the name of the mixed style.

A possibility of Chaucer's satirizing the decline of the English knighthood is realized in T. Hira, 'Two Phases of Chaucer,' pp. 113-114. It may be guessed that Chaucer satirizes the English knights by representing Sir Thopas as "a good archeer." The English yeomen archers were counted as national heroes in the battle of Crécy or Poitier.

G. Dempster observes that Chaucer's satire is directed at women and marriage. In contrast with Alison of the Miller's Tale May is thought to be a malign imp. See G. Dempster, op. cit., pp. 46-58. For the description of Alison of the Miller's Tale see C. Muscatine, op. cit., p. 231.

Satire appears in various forms; even "earnest" may be taken as "game." Chaucer's Knight, according to the medieval social ideal, is an ideal character, but, on the contrary, he, from the human point of view, is presented for our derision. See T. Hira, 'Two Phases of Chaucer,' op. cit., pp. 108-114.

C. Muscatine, op. cit., p. 69, pp. 197f., takes adverse views of Chaucer's fabliaux. On careful comparison with the traditional French fabliaux or fabliau-like stories to which
Chaucer refers or from part of which he derives his descriptions. Muscatine discusses Chaucer's fabliaux. The fabliaux, he says, are the funny stories featuring an anti-clerical or anti-feminist representation of clerical abuses, or animal love in men of the middle or lower class.

See CT, I(A), 3987-3988.

CT, I(A), 4268-4272.

CT, I(A), 4236-4239.

CT, IV(E), 1627-1630.


January behaves himself well in hope of befitting his degree as a king's. See IV(E), 2021-2033.

CT, IV(E), 1274-1276.

CT, IV(E), 1774-1777.

CT, IV(E), 1600-1604.

CT, III(D), 226-228, 231-232.


G. G. Coulton, in Chaucer and his England, London, 1952, p. 202, views the rights of women from the standpoint that women were unable to hold ground in the age of chivalry. See, also, J. Mann, Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire, Cambridge 1973, p. 121.

CT, III(D), 1038-1040.

CT, IX(H), 211-220.

CT, III(D), 164-168.

CT, VII(B'), 2801-2802.

From eight variant groups of the manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales, and the fabliau-like tales extant (The Good Wyfe wold a Pilgremage, for example) G. Mathew, op. cit., p. 72, 104, constitutes the theory that sections of the Canterbury Tales were read at London bourgeois circles. But he does not examine that Chaucer is a court poet and his fabliau tales are parts of the framing tales.

A list of men who sit at the knight table and at the squire table is given in The Babees Book, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS, OS 32, pp. 188-189. The present author, in 'Chaucer's Gentry;' pp. 31-38, makes an approach to Chaucer's pilgrims of the gentry class from their social background.

The present author, in 'Chaucer's Meagre Reference to the Variable World Part II,' Nagasaki University Annual Bulletin (Faculty of Liberal Arts), IV(1964), pp. 21f., examines scutages as the fall of knighthood.

The rise of the middle class was caused, in a way, by Orders for distraint of knighthood. See Ibid.


See E. Power, op. cit., pp. 104f.


See T. Hira, 'Chaucer's Framing Device of the Canterbury Tales Part I,' Nagasaki University Annual Bulletin (Faculty of Liberal Arts), XVI (1975), pp. 87-91.
K. Malone, *Chapters on Chaucer*, Baltimore, 1951, pp. 59-60, advances a theory that Chaucer may have had an intention of relating the matter of fame to that of his personal affairs.


57 *House of Fame*, 672-678.

58 Cf. C. O. McDonald, 'An Interpretation of Chaucer's Parlement of Foules,' in *Chaucer*, ed. E. Wagenknecht, pp. 309-327. He advances the suggestion that Nature who is the unifying factor in the poem reconciles the difference between natural and artificial love.


60 *Legend of Good Women*, AG, 254-266

61 *Legend of Good Women*, AG, 401.