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THE TALE OF BERYN AND THE SIEGE OF THEBES:
ALTERNATIVE IDEAS OF THE CANTERBURY TALES

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It is safe to say that few people have read John Lydgate's Siege of Thebes or the anonymous Tale of Beryn, two fifteenth-century attempts to continue the journey and tale-telling of Chaucer's unfinished masterpiece.¹ Yet in a real sense very few people have read the Canterbury Tales. What they have experienced is a modern fabrication by Skeat, Robinson, Baugh, Fisher, and other editors who offer the poem as a coherent work, albeit marred by gaps and rough edges, but nonetheless recounting what was said on a one-way trip from Southwerk to the outskirts of Canterbury. This is technically a fabrication because no surviving manuscript arranges the fragments in an order which gives perfect geographical support to this design -- not without the notorious Bradshaw Shift -- and no single manuscript, not even Ellesmere, contains all the tales and links to be found in a modern edition with its scholarly conflations.

To recognize and investigate a recoverable "idea," as Donald Howard has done so brilliantly, really means to grant priority to the idea of the scribe-editor of Ellesmere, though let me say that I have no objection to any reader's wish to invest confidence in this careful

attempt to give order to the poem at some time during the decade following Chaucer's death.² The goal of this paper is rather to investigate the ideas arrived at by two other fifteenth-century readers, who perhaps understood Chaucer's intentions a great deal better than most of us, or perhaps a great deal worse. Nonetheless they understood the Canterbury Tales collection differently from Ellesmere and Howard, and their efforts as continuators represent editorial decisions and critical responses which are nearly contemporary and therefore deserve more recognition than has hitherto been granted.

I

The impulse to perceive an esthetic unity in the Canterbury Tales goes back at least as far as Ralph Baldwin's pioneering study of 1955. This argument and those that followed are based on the belief that Chaucer's final intention was not the round-trip design announced by Harry Bailey in the General Prologue, with each of the thirty pilgrims telling four tales apiece, but rather a one-way journey ending just outside Canterbury, where the Parson becomes the last pilgrim to tell a single tale and is granted, therefore, the privilege of concluding the work.³ This assumption was given impressive support by Robert A. Pratt, who studied the earliest manuscripts and decided that Ellesmere, by virtue of its date, its completeness, the correctness of its text, and the (perhaps) authorial glosses in its margins, also

preserved an order of the groups which, despite the misplacing of Fragment VII, in all likelihood derived from Chaucer's original. While Pratt is careful to add that his argument is valid only "if Chaucer had a definite intention," this qualification is quickly lost in the assiduous examination of internal evidence which is calculated to bring such an intention to light.⁴ Yet there is a degree of circularity in most of these attempts to reconstruct the proper sequence of the tales. The argument begins with the assumption that there is an orderly and careful arrangement of details in the frame-narrative, proceeds to set Ellesmere's time and place references in a naturalistic order -- leaving the pilgrims unnaturalistically outside Canterbury, without a return to the Tabard as planned -- and then concludes that the Canterbury Tales does indeed have an orderly and careful arrangement which gives it an esthetic unity.⁵

Arguments of this sort, however persuasively constructed, proceed with the confidence that something resembling an authorial arrangement of fragments was preserved by the poem's earliest scribe-editors, who had privileged information from Chaucer's family and friends, perhaps direct access to the poet's own copy as it was left in a neat pile on his work table, or at least the keener insights of contemporaries with more authentic instincts about how such a work should be compiled. This confidence was not shared, however, by an earlier generation of scholars who were busy investigating the full range of surviving manuscripts. Brusendorff not only considered the work so incomplete that it could hardly have been more than a rough

draft, but also rejected the time and place references as the poet's "touches of local color, which he did not trouble to fit into a careful scheme of topographical and chronological landmarks." He concluded that modern critics would need to accommodate themselves to the unfinished state of the text, since any artificial arrangement of the tales, even the most attractive, was wholly without support.⁶

Tatlock also found that the early manuscript authorities, rather than preserving an original order, bore witness to the chaotic condition of the poem at the time of Chaucer's death. Believing that the tales circulated separately during the poet's lifetime and that the collection was left mostly in informal drafts upon his death, Tatlock concluded that "none of the manuscripts, however good, has any authority whatever in determining the order of the groups."⁷ In surveying the commentaries scattered throughout the volumes of the great Manly and Rickert edition, Germaine Dempster found that Manly was in complete agreement with Tatlock by repeatedly stressing "the editorial and unauthoritative character of the arrangement of the tale blocks in all manuscripts."⁸ More recently, Larry Benson has returned to the same body of manuscript evidence and reached the conclusion that Ellesmere does indeed represent Chaucer's own final arrangement, although his argument runs counter to the position of Blake and the consensus of scholars working on the Variorum Chaucer, who, while disagreeing on particulars of production, concur that Hengwrt and Ellesmere were copied by the same scribe, that Hengwrt is the older of the two manuscripts, and that the Ellesmere arrangement is derived from

Hengwrt.⁹ While Benson's argument combines the virtues of intellectual thoroughness and speculative zeal -- "Anything is possible," he writes -- he is finally left with the paradox of having a single scribe produce a good text with a muddled order, then a worse text with a definitive order. Rather than perfectly preserving Chaucer's structural intentions, then, these earliest manuscripts (and even more so their descendants) might better be seen to represent the enterprise of proto-editors who came to terms with the challenge of collecting fragments which may have circulated separately and, in any case, arranging a work which, when all the pieces were put together even in an order perhaps derived from the poet himself, was still painfully incomplete.

For over three decades now, a case for rejecting the authority of Ellesmere and the design which it implies has been steadily argued by Charles Owen. Returning to the manuscript evidence in his most recent article, he demonstrates how the early editor, while showing considerable critical effort and ingenuity, produced a book whose fullness of materials, rubrics, learned marginalia, interlinear glosses, and restored links -- not to mention its great beauty -- give a deceptive appearance of completeness which is all the more convincing because it so meticulously reflects medieval conventions. This investigation concludes, among other things, that "the text of the Canterbury Tales nowhere supports the theory so popular with critics that Chaucer abandoned the homeward journey."¹⁰ In reaching this position, not only is Owen returning to the viewpoint held by earlier scholars such as Root and Manly, but he is emphasizing the original

intentions of the work as they were announced in the General Prologue, which was probably written after the collection was well along in its composition, and in any case was not revised to reflect any new set of formal intentions.¹¹ If we find this announcement of 120 tales so ambitious that it cannot be taken seriously, or consider the final product so short of the advertized scope that it must represent a fully altered intention -- as indicated by the Host's reference to a single-tale format in the Parson's Prologue (X, 25) -- we are substituting personal preferences for hard facts if we also conclude that the new design of a one-way trip formed part of that altered intention.

While the Ellesmere manuscript gives aid and comfort to these preferences, The Siege of Thebes and the Northumberland MS, which contains the unique copy of The Tale of Beryn, offer testimony that two other capable readers, also working in the first decades after Chaucer's death, took the announced plan of the General Prologue much more seriously, if not in the actual number of tales told, then in a narrative outline which would have the pilgrims turn their backs on Canterbury and set off toward London.¹² The Beryn-poet brings the pilgrims to their goal in the cathedral, allows them an overnight stay during which the Pardoner has a misadventure with a local tapster, and then puts them back on the road to Southwerk. In the Prologue to The Siege of Thebes, Lydgate places himself in Canterbury as a pilgrim who falls in with Chaucer's merry band. As they set off toward London the next morning, the Host invites him to go tell a tale, and the monk of Bury complies with 4500-line version of the ancient romance of Thebes.

Because evaluating these two critical responses is obviously complicated by their efforts to supplement the text itself, we are left wondering what sort of literature these two authors -- not to mention the writers of spurious links and tales -- conceived that they were dealing with.

The appeal of Ellesmere to modern editors is partially explained by its undeniable appearance as a book in the modern as well as medieval sense. Parkes and Doyle have recently broken new ground in exploring the processes by which such a book was produced, finding that Ellesmere most nearly resembles a compilatio or compilation, a genre developed in academic and legal circles during the thirteenth century for bringing together authorities in a systematic and accessible format. While a compiler was constrained in what he could add, he was free to rearrange his materials by imposing a new ordinatio. Rather than transmitting Chaucer's own structure and apparatus -- though including glosses which are perhaps the poet's own -- the Ellesmere editor emerges as an intelligent person who preserved a good text while developing the inchoate structure of Chaucer's unfinished work in the conventional form of the compilatio. While it is "an ingenious solution to the problem of presentation afforded by such a collection of fragments,"¹³ it is a self-consciously bookish solution arrived at by a scribe or group of scribes who were preparing an elegant volume for some customer.

It is worth noting that the scribal colophon at the end of the Ellesmere manuscript reads, "Heere is ended the book of The Tales of

Caunterbury compiled by Geffrey Chaucer. . ." Yet in the catalogue of his works in the Retraction, the poet himself uses the word book to describe all of his writings except the Canterbury Tales.¹⁴ Was this a careless oversight by a poet who was perhaps on his deathbed? Does it suggest that Chaucer realized that the sum of all the fragments did not equal a total book? Or is there a latent sense that divers tales by diverse tellers, though written down, had a different literary status? The opening line of the Retraction itself hints at what this status might have been: "Now preye I to hem alle that herkne this litel tretys or rede. . . ." While other Chaucerian works even as non-entertaining as his Tretys on the Astrolabe (41) were designed for a listening as well as a reading audience,¹⁵ the Canterbury Tales conveys an almost maddening insistence on having it both ways. The narrator says in the Prologue to the Miller's Tale, for instance: "And therefore, whoso list it nat yhere, /Turne over the leef and chese another tale" (I, 3176-77). While the Ellesmere editor clearly inclined toward the alternative of book-product, this ambivalence of status might invite others to see the work as a narrative free-for-all into which any new tale-teller might enter and raise his voice, as the Canon's Yeoman does so unexpectedly when the band is nearing Canterbury.¹⁶

The oral nature of medieval literature no doubt accounts in part for a sense of artistic property wholly different from the one prevailing in the modern world. Minstrels freely adapted works that came their way, and rather than exercising exclusive rights over his

property, a poet might take it as a compliment that another poet should translate or rework his material.¹⁷ Donald Howard has suggested that a valuable study could be written on the esthetics of unfinished medieval poems, and, indeed, so many works were left incomplete that one wonders whether that esthetic actually included an open invitation for later writers to take up where his predecessor left off.¹⁸ Certainly this was an invitation accepted often enough, though with widely differing results. Godefroi de Leigni provided a modest but satisfactory conclusion to the story of Chrétien's Chevalier de la Charrette, while Jean de Meun's continuation of Le Roman de la Rose dwarfs Guillaume de Lorris's modest beginning. In regard to the Chaucer canon, Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid knits up the narrative strands of a work which shows no signs of being incomplete, whereas unfinished pieces from the Canterbury Tales were given make-shift conclusions or were replaced altogether -- twenty-five manuscripts contain the Tale of Gamelyn as well as, and often instead of, the aborted Cook's Tale -- while anonymous scribes mended gaps in the frame-narrative by providing spurious links.¹⁹

What we find, then, is an impulse that goes beyond what we would consider the proper duty of an editor: not so much the desire to assemble the book as to finish the story. While a clerkish editor might look upon the General Prologue as a "table of contents" for what was to follow, it is also the colorful start of a frame-narrative which is never really finished. If giving this narrative a more fully realized structure meant adding a quantity of new verse, the medieval poet did

not hesitate. What is worth exploring, once we have grudgingly accepted the grafting of inferior poetry on to a work of literary genius, is the way in which the individual continuator looked at his donnée and, as editor and critic as well, understood the story which he chose to extend.

II

The Beryn-poet was a scrupulous, discerning reader of the Canterbury Tales fragments which came down to him. Though lacking his master's gifts as a versifier, he had a fine ear for colloquial dialogue, as well as real talents for inventing and staging comic action. Unlike Chaucer's own brief, sometimes very sketchy links, his continuing frame-narrative of 732 lines has a sophisticated structure which alternates episodes featuring various pilgrims with scenes comprising the Pardoner's fabliau adventure with a local tapster and her paramour. Even without the Pardoner interludes, however, the Prologue to the Tale of Beryn is more eventful than even the General Prologue, which constitutes over a quarter of the entire frame-narrative but in which the pilgrims actually do very little besides dine, talk in a friendly manner, and agree to the Host's diversion of tale-telling. My review of that invented action in the following paragraphs is designed not so much to document the Beryn-poet's ingenuity as to illustrate his grasp of the characterizations and the narrative strategies of the larger poem into which his continuation is

fitted.

The poet shows a thorough understanding of Chaucer's original characterizations in the General Prologue as well as the Links. The Monk has a "manly chere" (138), and the lecherous Friar wants to sprinkle holy water on the pilgrims so that he will have a chance to get a better look at the Nun's face (141-44). The Prioress behaves "as womman tauȝt of gentil blood & hend" (287), while the pious Knight takes charge of leading the procession to the shrine in the cathedral, where the Miller and other "lewde sotes" wander about as if they were gentlemen trying to identify coats of arms and interpret the images in the stained glass (147-56). After their religious duties are fulfilled, the Knight and his son change their clothes, since the Knight had set out wearing a humble tunic soiled by his coat of mail and the fashion-conscious Squire would need little encouragement for showing off his stylish wardrobe. Father and son then go out to study the city's fortifications, which would be of professional interest to men of arms, and the Squire pays careful attention to his father's long-winded lecture, while his thoughts are constantly fixed upon the "lady þat he lovid best" who kept him awake at night (231-50).

The Beryn-poet also recalls prior altercations from the Links. The Summoner is still stinging from the tale told at his expense by the Friar, whom he plans to repay in kind "yf it hap[pen]e] homeward þat ech man tell his tale" (184-90), and the Pardoner takes pains to avoid the Host, who had so roundly cursed him after his tale of the three rioters (19-21). Where characters appear inconsistent with their former

selves, the poet seems to be poking fun rather than betraying carelessness.²⁰ When we are told that the Wife of Bath is so tired that she prefers to sit in the kitchen garden with the Prioress, and later in the parlor with the innkeeper's wife, surely we are meant to smile at this middle-aged woman who had talked a good show earlier but has now run out of steam. Her lustiness was all verbal, and this woman who claimed to know wandering by the way now has "no will to walk" (281-86).

In a far more pointed manner, a recollection of Chaucer's original description of the Pardoner changes a slap-stick fabliau into a savage farce. The Beryn-poet shows too much familiarity with the other pilgrims not to know that the figure who plays the major role in his addition was described in the General Prologue as "a geldyng or a mare" (I, 691). Whether this means that he was a eunuch or a homosexual -- or both²¹ -- he is certainly a candidate foredoomed to failure in his pursuit of an amatory conquest with a barmaid.

Almost the instant that the pilgrims arrive at their inn in Canterbury, the Pardoner makes an unambiguous pass at Kit the tapster, who presents herself as a young widow coyly leading him on. After visiting the cathedral, he returns to the inn and surprises Kit in her bedroom, not leaving until he has won her permission to return that night after the others have gone to bed. When he does contrive to sneak back after the candles have been extinguished, Kit is in bed with her real lover, who proceeds to beat the Pardoner over the back and head with the pilgrim's staff which he had left behind earlier. (The

symbolism of the dismembered phallus turned back upon its original owner should not be missed.)

If the Pardoner is meant to be seen as a homosexual posing as a lady's man, he comes off as the same sort of ineffectual fop as Absalom kneeling outside Alison's window in the Miller's Tale (cf. 493-507). But if he is indeed a recognizable eunuch, whose appearance and temperament conform to the medieval pathology as it has been explored by Walter Curry, then medical treatises help to explain his compulsive behavior. One medieval physician described the eunuchus ex nativitate as "a man beardless by nature [who] is endowed with a fondness for women and for crafty dealings, inasmuch as he is impotent in performing the works of Venus."²² Curry notes that our anonymous poet has successfully incorporated the Pardoner's peculiar physical and psychological impairments into a darker comedy than it at first appears:

He sings and brags like a real man; but one suspects that most of his affaires d'amor result in chagrin and disappointment like that in which he engages with Kit the Tapster in the Tale of Beryn. It is significant that in this pseudo-Chaucerian story the "Pardoner" appears in his true colors.²³

What is most important for our purposes, however, is the reliance of this comic complexity upon a prior understanding of how the Pardoner had been portrayed by Chaucer. Thus his bitter experience with Kit and her lover cannot be truly appreciated as an independent piece. The

Prologue has been fully integrated into the whole of the frame-narrative as it was understood, and well understood, by a skillful story-teller attempting to fill the central gap in the design which Chaucer had originally announced.

Another indicator of the Beryn-poet's capability of adapting his skills to Chaucer's narrative strategy shows in the way he has paired the teller with the tale -- the Merchant with the adventures of young Beryn. While Chaucer was masterful in the prologues and tales devised for the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner, for example, other instances are less impressive, and the assignments of tales to the Shipman and the Second Nun are notoriously make-shift. Nothing in the General Prologue's description of the Merchant prepares the reader for the sardonic tale of January and May which he offers, and the Prologue to the Merchant's Tale itself, with the unhappy man's lament over his two-month marriage to a shrew, comes off as a lackluster introduction probably added in rough-draft fashion following "Lenroy de Chaucer" at the end of the Clerk's Tale.²⁴ The tale of the young merchant Beryn, however, is very nicely suited to a pilgrim whom the General Prologue had described as "sownynge alway th'encrees of his wynnyng" when actually he had fallen into debt. It incorporates the lurking anxieties which a merchant must have felt whenever his ships set sail for a foreign port -- that they might be shipwrecked along the way, that they might arrive safely only to fall victim to local regulations, or that the citizenry might conspire to cheat him of his vessels and cargo. The story ends with a wish-fulfilling victory on the part of the young

merchant, who thwarts the schemes of the locals, redeems his five ships, doubles his investment, and ends up marrying the king's beautiful daughter.²⁵ This outcome is doubly appropriate for this Merchant, since Northumberland (fol. 71^r-71^v) follows the practice of Hengwrt and other manuscripts of the d-order in substituting the Franklin's Prologue for the original Merchant's Prologue.²⁶ The resulting view of the Merchant not as a shrew-ridden husband but as a father upset by his son's misconduct makes almost poignant his interest in the young Beryn, a prodigal son who causes his father much grief before the trials of his mercantile adventures succeed in reforming his character. Though the tale itself offers no competition to the brilliance of Chaucer's performance in the Merchant's Tale, it lends itself admirably to the hopes and desires of the teller, while Beryn's difficulties with the people of Falsetown also complement in normal diptych fashion the Pardoner's bitter experiences as a stranger in Canterbury.

While the Beryn-poet fully grasped the narrative strategy of Chaucer's tales as accesses to the personalities of the tellers and as digressive commentaries on the frame-action, he was also alive to the realism of the "roadside drama" which critics earlier in our own century perceived as the unifying principle in Chaucer's work.²⁷ The arrival of the pilgrim band in Canterbury is not transformed into an ascent to the Heavenly Jerusalem. It is the arrival of thirty-two merry travelers in the medieval equivalent of a tourist town, one which would have been known as a solid secular reality to the poet who, the colophon leads us to believe, was himself a Canterbury monk.²⁸ A

"mydmorowe" entry into town (13) allows the action to follow smoothly from the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, which was begun "in the morwe-tyde" at Broughton-under-Blean and was meant to last until the pilgrims reached Canterbury (VIII, 588, 556, 623-23). Harry Bailey goes off to secure lodgings for the night, religious duties are quickly followed by various forms of relaxation -- as befitting a narrative more concerned with game than erdest -- and early the next morning the group starts its journey back to Southwerk.

Only at this point, with the start of the return half of the trip, does the poet allow himself an imitation of the springtime opening of the General Prologue (683-97). As a clever twist, this description of twittering birds and a flowering landscape is put into the mouth of the Host, who ends by insisting that they turn again to the tale-telling competition which had enlivened their outward voyage:

Now, sith almy₃ty sovereyn hath sent so feir a day,
 Let se nowe, as covenant is, in shorting of þe way,
 Who shall be the first that shall vnlace his male,
 In comfort of vs all, & gyn som mery tale?

(lines 699-702)

The Host decides that they should not draw lots this time, because the cut might fall to someone sleepy or half drunk -- perhaps recalling how badly this selection process worked before, when the drunken Miller shouted down the Monk in following the Knight -- and so he calls for a volunteer instead. The Merchant speaks up, known by the Host to have retired early the night before, and the 3300-line tale begins.

We cannot say with any certainty how the Beryn-poet first came in contact with the Canterbury Tales, whether as scattered pieces which he or an acquaintance had collected from a variety of sources, as an existing collection which had been tossed together in some hopelessly chaotic sequence, or as a compilation having the careful elegance of Ellesmere yet still without satisfying the formal intentions stated in the General Prologue. The situation is particularly clouded because the Northumberland MS is a mutilated descendant of the "edition" in which the Tale of Beryn first appeared.²⁹ Yet it is hard to imagine that the poet himself did not have a hand, probably a very strong one, in arranging the fragments in an order which suited his concept of a round trip:³⁰

I(A):	Gen Pro - KT - L - MilT - L - RvT
II(B ¹):	MLT
V-IV(F ^a -E ^b):	SqT - L - MerchT
III(D):	WBT - FrT -L - SumT
IV(E ^a):	L - ClT
V(F ^b):	Short MerchEL - FrankT
VIII(G ^a):	2ndNT
VII(B ^{2b}):	PrioressT
VI(C ^a):	PhysT
VII(B ^{2ac}):	ShipT - Thopas - L - 2-line addition to Thopas-Mell
VI(C ^b):	PardT
VIII(C ^b):	L - CYT

Prologue and Tale of Beryn

[SumT, III(D), 2159-2294: misplaced conclusion]

VII(B^{2def}): Mel - L - MkT - L - NPT

IX(H): MancT

X(I): L - ParST

The geographical references in the outward-bound links chart a linear movement from Deptford and Greenwich (I, 3906-3907) to Sittingbourne (III, 847) to Boughton-under-Blean five miles from Canterbury (VIII, 556), and the three time references fit into the scheme of a two-day trip with an arrival on the morning of the third.³¹ What is more, events which are implied to have taken place before the band reaches Canterbury -- notably the flyting tales of the Friar and Summoner, and the altercation between the Host and the Pardoner -- do indeed occur in fragments assigned to the first leg of the trip. What is more, if the same scrutiny were applied to Northumberland as has been focused on Ellesmere, many other signs of critical insightfulness could be found, as in the scribe-editor's decision to have the Second Nun's Tale followed by the Prioress's Tale and the Physician's Tale, forming what might be called "The Martyrdom Group."

The fragments assigned to the homeward ride seem to confirm the poet-editor's care for geographical references, though also raising questions as to the degree of corruption in the Northumberland MS. The last 135 lines of the Summoner's Tale have quite clearly been inserted out of place following the Tale of Beryn.³² What, then, are we to make

of the second part of Fragment VII which comes next? Is this another scribal blunder? Far more likely the original editor, searching for homeward tales, decided to separate Melibee from Thopas so that Chaucer the pilgrim, like the Merchant in the continuation, would tell one tale going and another tale returning. If so, the editor has also eliminated the geographical inconsistency which would otherwise have resulted if the Host's reference to Rochester (VII, 1926) had come after the Summoner's mention of Sittingbourne (III, 847). And since this manuscript lacks the Manciple's Prologue³³ with its troublesome reference to "Bobbe-up-and-down" (IX, 2-3) -- if this has been correctly identified as the Harbledown less than two miles out of Canterbury -- then the "Northumberland Shift" of the second half of Fragment VII solves all of the geographical problems of the frame-narrative for the return as well as the outward journey.

With the deletion of the Manciple's Prologue and its allusion to the Cook sleeping "by the morwe" (IX, 16), Fragment X with its afternoon setting follows smoothly after Fragment IX, as the first line of the Parson's Prologue indicates: "By that the Maunciple hadde his tale al ended." Four o'clock in the afternoon is a credible time to begin a tale which will last until the pilgrims reach Southwerk at sunset, and the "thropes ende" which they are approaching (X, 12) could be any of several villages on the outskirts of London, whereas no such thorp seems to have existed at the Canterbury end of the road.³⁴ Indeed, Harbledown (IX, 2) is the village where pilgrims normally dismounted to continue humbly on foot, in a practice not observed by

Chaucer's travelers, because it was so close to Canterbury that the towers of the cathedral were within easy view -- and so close too, that no intervening thorp, if there were room for one, would be worth mentioning by the Parson.³⁵ The appearance of Libra overhead and the Parson's promise "to knytte up al this feeste and make an ende" (X, 47) suggest Harry Bailey's weighing of the best tale and the final meal which the pilgrims had agreed to share before disbanding.

Yet despite the Beryn-poet's proven talents for inventing scenes of human comedy, he does not appear to have composed an end-frame for the pilgrimage narrative, although this is far from certain because the manuscript itself breaks off before the conclusion of the Parson's Tale (X, 989). Perhaps there once was a marvelously funny resolution to the story. Perhaps the wily Host found a way to render his verdict without offending his other twenty-nine paying customers, while his wife Godelief, wielding a medieval rolling pin, came elbowing her way to center stage. Or perhaps the Parson's long sermon had such a sobering influence on the pilgrims that they by-passed the Tabard and returned directly home filled with the piety and resolve described as appropriate by Zacher.³⁶ It is not likely that we shall ever know. The manuscript pages missing from the last quire of Northumberland were sufficient to contain the remainder of the Parson's Tale as well as the Retraction, but this does not foreclose the possibility that an additional quire, or perhaps more, once followed at the end.

Taken as it survives, without any supplementary close-frame,

the narrative of a return to London does not nullify the Parson's intent:

To shewe yow the wey in this viage
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage
That highte Jerusalem celestial.

(X, 49-51)

The classical expression of this peregrinatio image had appeared in the Knight's Tale, in which old Egeus stated that "we been pilgrymes passynge to and fro" (I, 2848), in accordance with the Christian commonplace that man is "bondon to goye here is þis world and not to rest but to traveyll . . . for here to stonde is to vs impossible."³⁷ Because the pilgrimage of man's life is temporal rather than spatial, and therefore it does not matter if the tale-tellers are moving toward or away from the city of Canterbury, the eschatological implications of the Parson's Prologue would remain undiminished. Indeed, there is an aptness in having the Parson return to this theme while the band approaches London, as if to say that the physical trip is over but the true pilgrimage goes on.³⁸ And as Knapp has remarked, "it seems to me that if a redirection of piety by the Parson was to close the world of tales — and to my knowledge no one contests this — such a redirection would have had more force if made after the shrine than if made before."³⁹ It would also be apt, esthetically as well as geographically, for the peregrinatio image to be raised again on the same stretch of highway where the Knight had introduced it at the start of the journey.

Manuscripts of the family to which the text of Northumberland belongs normally end with the Retraction, taking up as it does the themes of "verry penitence, confessioun, and satisfaccioun" from the Parson's Tale. If this is the conclusion which the Beryn-poet accepted,⁴⁰ the Host is deprived of the privilege of judging the tale of best sentence and most golaas as Chaucer proceeds to his own verdict, which gives a sense of closure to the Canterbury Tales by dismissing them as "enditynges of worldly vanitees." While we cannot be certain, given the mutilated condition of the manuscript, Northumberland probably did offer the same ending as Ellesmere, leaving audiences to decide whether the Parson spoke for Chaucer and whether the poet's formulaic disavowal in his Retraction should be read as ironic or sincere -- but leaving the pilgrims outside London instead of Canterbury.

III

In the Prologue to The Siege of Thebes, the fifty-year-old poet John Lydgate is giving thanks for his recovery from a recent illness by making a pilgrimage to Canterbury, where he falls in with Chaucer's band of pilgrims who have been lingering there, as it were, like unquiet spirits for the two decades since the death of their creator. The Host invites him to join the company and provide a merry tale when they set off the next morning for London, and he obliges by offering an account of the ancient city of Thebes from its founding Amphion to its

destruction by Theseus.

As one of the great Chaucerians of the early fifteenth century, Lydgate proved himself a devoted imitator of literary forms in works such as The Temple of Glas and A Complaynt of a Loveres Lyfe, but he otherwise professed a reluctance to cover the same material which his master had already treated. In The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man, for example, he chose to graft Chaucer's lyric "Of Our Lady the ABC" to his text rather than to undertake his own translation of these lines from Deguilleville.⁴¹ Permission to exercise this and any other manner of artistic license may have come directly from Chaucer himself, as The Troy Book implies: "For he þat was gronde of wel seyng / In al his lyf hyndred no makyng."⁴² Yet rather than usurp the historical materials or foreign sources which Chaucer had already used, Lydgate seems to have preferred "to magnifie" or to "extende the goodlynesse"⁴³ of Chaucer's work, as he did by continuing the journey of the Canterbury pilgrims.

The manuscripts and early printed texts reflect the ambiguous claims of this work. Is it designed as an independent piece or as an organic continuation of the Canterbury Tales? Of the twenty-three manuscript witnesses from the fifteenth century, four attach The Siege of Thebes to Chaucer's poem.⁴⁴ In B.M. Additional 5140, the Canterbury Tales ends with a Latin explicit noting that this has been the last of the tales composed by Chaucer, but it is followed by an incipit announcing the final tale translata et prolata by John Lydgate while returning from Canterbury.⁴⁵ Whereas Christchurch 152 is careful to

introduce the work as "the monk of Buryys tale of the Sege of Tebes," the Ingilby MS contains no rubrics separating the two works, concluding only with a colophon that reads: "Heere endith the laste tale of Canterbury maad and told bi Dan John Lidgate Mon. . . ."46 If the Erdmann-Ekwall stemma is correct, the texts of these manuscripts descend from ancestors, or belong to family groups, in which Thebes survives as an isolated work.⁴⁷ This line of descent raises the possibility that some of these earlier specimens might also have been bound as continuations but, owing to their size and internal unity, were physically cut away for independent circulation.

Perhaps encouraged by such couplings in the manuscripts which came to them a copy-texts, the early editors Stow (1591), Speght (1598, 1602, 1687), and Urry (1721) followed their instincts as compilers, no doubt with an eye to commercial advantage, and printed the work along with the rest of the Chaucer canon.⁴⁸ In light of this steady testimony that Lydgate's poem claimed some legitimacy as a continuation to the Canterbury Tales -- whether or not the fifteenth-century poet expected a physical joining of the two works -- it is worth evaluating the "idea" that results from the new Lydgatian ending.

As a resurrection of the roadside drama, Lydgate's Prologue fails in nearly every way that Beryn succeeds. The poet had not read closely, did not remember clearly, or simply did not care about the details in the General Prologue and the Links that comprise the frame-narrative.⁴⁹ He has confused the description of his Pardoner with Chaucer's Summoner as well as with Symkyn the miller from the Reeves

Tale (32-34; cf. CT, I, 624 and 3935), and he mistakenly alludes to the Friar's altercation with the Pardoner instead of with the Summoner (35). Nor does he show a concern for the consistency of time and place references. The astrological setting in the opening of his Prologue does not accord with Chaucer's,⁵⁰ and later he states that the Knight's Tale was told as the pilgrims passed Deptford (4523) when in fact that locale was mentioned in connection with the Reeves Tale (CT, I, 3906). These blunders are all the more baffling when we consider that Lydgate knew his master's poetry so thoroughly that he seems under a divine decree to write only in echoes.

The verisimilitude of his own fiction is likewise frail. As the pilgrim-narrator, his stay in Canterbury is shorter than we would expect for a devout monk.⁵¹ He announces that his tale will last for seven miles of traveling time (324), but when they reach Boughton-under-Blean five miles along the road, he has finished only one-quarter of the story (1044-46).⁵² Yet if Lydgate's talents were not primarily brought to bear in creating a lively, credible fiction, this is not sufficient reason for dismissing the value of his enterprise. As C. S. Lewis once noted, "the stupidest contemporary, we may depend upon it, knew certain things about Chaucer's poetry which modern scholarship will never know,"⁵³ and John Lydgate was not, we may depend upon it, the stupidest of Chaucer's readers.

"The Prologue is not very merry and not very funny," Derek Pearsall has rightly observed; "the surprising thing is to find it being done at all."⁵⁴ Clues for discovering some of Lydgate's motives

are to be found, I believe, partly in his characterization of the Host and partly in his digressive homage to Chaucer. Harry Bailey is the shadow of his former self. Appearing as the sole member of the original cast with a speaking role, he is brought forward only as the agent of the tale-telling, a part which he performs with dull predictability. He is vulgar without charm, talkative without energy or life, his character emerging from the topics and tone of his conversation. He rattles away with recommendations for lodging and dining, which are the specialties of his profession, but he does so in a peculiar slang which must have been for Lydgate a calculated exercise in Chaucer's low style.

However sincerely this imitation was meant as flattery, outright praise is reserved for the twenty-line digression congratulating Chaucer as the "Floure of poetes thorghout al Breteyne" (40) and the "chief Registrer of his pilgrimage" (48). Not only does this intrusion have the odd effect of reminding us that we are reading a story altered by the absence of its original pilgrim-narrator, but Lydgate creates an additional paradox for his fiction by disrupting the story to commend its original fabricator, but also praising Chaucer as the man who remembered and rehearsed these tales as if they had actually been told along the road to Canterbury. This passage, however, points beyond itself to the true nature of Lydgate's indebtedness. Just as the Host's identity is established through his verbal style, the Prologue strives for its literary status as a network of verbal borrowings rather than a coherent fiction -- an artifact made from a Chaucerian artifact, not from real life.⁵⁵ Lydgate's concerns were

diverted by something insistently verbal, ultimately philosophical, and in any case different from the creation of a believable story. If the Prologue is badly done, it is probably because his interest was not fiction at all but history, which for him meant the lessons which could be drawn from the past and transmitted by writers.

It has long been noted that Lydgate wrote The Siege of Thebes without the sort of noble patron for whom he produced The Troy Book and later The Fall of Princes.⁵⁶ As such, this "poet's poem" can be viewed as an affectionate gesture to Chaucer, but it might also be regarded as a critical response to what Lydgate found most profitable in the kind of poetry compiled in the Canterbury Tales, and in particular the Knight's Tale. Robert Ayers makes the argument that Lydgate, while believing that his story was chronicle fact, offered his account of the rise and fall of Thebes as a speculum principis with the practical lesson -- which is also a moral lesson -- that a ruler can best avoid misgovernance if he is truthful and constant in his dealings with others:

The unity of the Siege of Thebes, then, centers in the moral idea, and no episode, no characterization, and no tonal feature of the poem is extraneous to this essential moral purpose of the plot pattern.⁵⁷

Far from some private commerce between a poet and his dead master, Lydgate's work fits Anne Middleton's description of a public poetry which is morally pious and yet whose "central pieties are worldly felicity and peaceful, harmonious communal existence."⁵⁸

It only remained for Lois Eben to draw attention to Lydgate's

self-conscious attitude toward poetry's "unique powers to bring concord out of discord, order out of disorder, civilization out of chaos" which is dramatized nowhere better than in The Siege of Thebes.⁵⁹ Departing from his sources, Lydgate recounts how Amphion founded Thebes through the sole power of language:

I take record / of kyng Amphyoun,
 That bylte Thebes be his elloquence
 Mor than of pride / or of violence,
 Noble and riche / that lik was nowher non,
 And thus the walles / mad of lym and stoon
 Were reised first / be syngyng of this kyng.

(286-91)

In another original stroke, the poet reports that the Muses refused to lend their presence at Edippus' incestuous wedding as they had at the nuptials of Mercury and Philology in the allegory by Martianus Capella (830-47). This immoral marriage, thus shunned by the high wisdom of poetry, sets off a political chain-reaction which leads to the utter extinction of the city, described in some of Lydgate's more touching verses:

But Theseus / myn Autour writ certeyn,
 Out of the feld / or he fro Thebes wente,
 He bete it downe / and the howsys brente,
 The puple slough / for al her crying loude,
 Maad her wallys / and her towrys proude
 Rounde aboute / euene vpon a rowe,

With the Soyle / to be laide ful lowe
 That nouȝt was left / but the soyle al bare.

(4554-61)

Refining the insights of Ayers, Eben finds that the conflicts of the poem are not so much between individual characters as between the word and the sword.⁶⁰ After Jocasta has failed to persuade her son Polyneices to reconcile himself with his brother Eteocles (3726-3821), the final victory goes to weaponry instead of words, and the siege continues until both sides are wasted.

When Thebes is finally leveled and its population slaughtered, the poet looks forward four hundred years to the founding of Rome, which of course will suffer its own decline and fall, and he ends with an appeal for "pees and quyet / concord and vnité" (4703), echoing the language of the Treaty of Troyes which England had recently signed with France. As Schirmer has noted, "while other poets wrote panegyric poems to Henry V, sang praises of the battle of Agincourt, or, like John Page in his poem The Siege of Rouen (1418-19), gave expression to his people's romantic and patriotic mood, Lydgate looked on the affair sub specie aeternitatis, in an epic seemingly valid for all time."⁶¹ The optimism of this plea for peace, however, veils the warning that his own state has the potential to follow the same tragic course as Thebes and Rome. Like a dutiful expounder of history, Lydgate insists that those who do not learn from the past are condemned to hear those lessons repeated.

Much more can be said about The Siege of Thebes as a separate

work, but it is of peculiar interest to explore the invitation, offered implicitly by Lydgate and accepted by certain scribe-editors as well as Renaissance printers, to see the poem as a completion of the Canterbury Tales. As mentioned earlier, the poet seems to have had a faulty recollection of the General Prologue, but his knowledge of the Knight's Tale is so thorough that the editor Ekwall theorizes that he retrieved a copy of Chaucer's poem by the time he was finishing his own, but without bothering to return to his Prologue and make the necessary adjustments.⁶² Affinities between The Siege of Thebes and the Knight's Tale should come as no surprise since both poems concern the destruction of the same Greek city, with Chaucer following Boccaccio's Teseida while Lydgate worked from a lost French redaction containing material closely related to the surviving Roman de Edipus and Histoire de Thebes.⁶³

In ten specific passages, however, Lydgate drew his material directly from Chaucer, even if he was not always recounting the same events. When describing how Adrastus stopped the duel between Polyneices and Tideus (1377-86), Lydgate used Chaucer's description of the bloody fight between Palamon and Arcite in the grove outside Athens (CT, I, 1704-13); when describing the funeral rites performed for those who died in the siege, he borrowed freely from the depiction of Arcite's funeral (CT I, 2949-61). Because of these borrowings as well as the interrelation of the two stories, Alain Renour has called Thebes a companion piece to the Knight's Tale, while Pearsall has characterized it as "a new and improved version" of Chaucer's first

Canterbury tale. More nearly contemporary in its response, Longeat MS 257 copies the Knight's Tale as a sequel to Thebes or, in current terminology, Lydgate's poem as a "prequel" to Chaucer's.⁶⁴

What has not been fully appreciated is the structural relationship of the two poems within the context of the Canterbury collection as it has been expanded and redefined. At the point in the action when Theseus intervenes at Thebes on behalf of the noble widows, the two narratives begin to run concurrently. Lydgate switches his sources and twice reminds his audience that he is repeating what was already heard in the Knight's Tale (4520-24 and 4531). Thus the stories dovetail with one another, as Lydgate uses narrative congruence and verbal echoes to knit up the end of his tale with the start of Chaucer's. This "retrospective patterning" gives a new but not wholly unexpected shapeliness to the enlarged work.⁶⁵ Lydgate has sought to remind his audience of the geographical setting where the Knight had told his tale, as if to say that this return to the first fiction of the series is parallel to the pilgrims' physical return toward London. Since The Troy Book speaks of following Chaucer's tracis or footsteps, Lydgate was probably familiar enough with the topos of a literary work as a via or journey to have used it at this earlier date.⁶⁶ The tale-telling, then, like the journey itself, has come full circle. The end is made to join with the beginning, and the new over-all structure suppresses the apocalyptic in an effort to assert the cyclical.

John Norton-Smith has observed that Lydgate was not normally gifted with "creative intuition," or what Geoffrey of Vinsauf had termed

archetypus,⁶⁷ and yet the ending of the Thebes suggests levels of significance which lie beyond the poet's conscious intention and therefore invite an application of the archetypal criticism of our own century. On the face of things, a journey into the Kentish countryside and a return to the English capital suggest the basic pattern for a quest romance, and indeed Lydgate's work conforms almost perfectly with what Northrop Frye has described as the last or penseroso phase of romance, which is characterized by "a tale in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story told by one of the members." The effect is to present through a leisurely contemplative haze a story which entertains its audience without unnerving them with the harsh confrontation of tragedy.⁶⁸ Social cataclysms assume reality only within the inner fiction, while the cozy audience in the frame-narrative can proceed to begin again their lives in some privileged spot. There is no close-frame, for the same reason that the circular return to the Knight's Tale bypasses the General Prologue whose colorful characters had been so carelessly reproduced in Lydgate's own Prologue, because these jangling pilgrims belong to the world of game which Lydgate dismisses in preference for the erdest of the kind of poetry for which he valued Chaucer (54-57). The hero who is exalted at the end is not the protagonist or the story-teller or even the audience, but rather the nation of the audience. This peculiar agnorisis or recognition of a communal heroism should come as no complete surprise, since the pilgrims who travel through the English countryside have been presented

from the beginning as a microcosm of the English nation. For the actual audience of readers, the death-struggle of the city of Thebes has taken place as a mental excursion, which also hints at the fates of Athens and Rome while leading back inexorably to the present reality, which is none other than London, the civitas of their origins -- "the nearest, in place and time, now and in England."

Frank Kermode has brilliantly demonstrated that the apocalyptic "sense of an ending," because it accords with the Judeo-Christian view of history as a rectilinear rather than cyclical movement of time, has stood as the dominant mode of literary closure prior to the twentieth century.⁶⁹ Western writers had found a pattern in historical events free from the repetitions of ritual. Putting behind the apocalyptic implications of the Parson's Prologue and Chaucer's Retraction -- the one public, the other private -- Lydgate asserts a moral inextricable from his story, which for him was part of an historical fabric composed of countless repetitions. To my knowledge, the Lydgateian Canterbury Tales is the only literary work which imposes on itself a circular structure for much the same purpose as Finnegans Wake. Each work's circularity reflects its author's nightmare of an historical past in which heroes and their civilizations constantly re-enact the ritual of rise and fall upon Fortune's wheel. Lydgate had learned this lesson in the Monk's Tale; later he would hammer away at it in his own Fall of Princes.⁷⁰

This circularity does not mean that the end of Lydgate's Thebes totally lacks apocalyptic features. The obliteration of a city and the

slaughter of its people certainly give a sense of absolute finality, and the concluding plea for love to awaken in men's hearts and for nations to live together in "pees and quyet / concord and vnytè" has strong millennial overtones. This epilogue, which is wholly of Lydgate's own invention, ends with a prayer to Christ through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, thereby creating a mixed ending of the sort predicted by Frye as the conclusion to a poetic symposium such as the Canterbury Tales. The reader reaches a point at which "the undisplaced apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature come into alignment," a point which might properly be called the epiphany.⁷¹ While God's help is called for, specifically through Mary as an intermediary between the divine and the human, the primary request is "to sende vs pes / her in this lyf present" (4713). Divine grace comes as the final reinforcement of practical wisdom. While some may view a return to London as a return to spiritual exile, in accordance with the romance pattern used by T. S. Eliot in "Journey of the Magi," the spiritual lessons taught by the poem form an ethical consolation, a rule for present conduct, and a standard for future judgment.

A return to the real world is, paradoxically, a return to fiction, because an enclosed form cannot avoid becoming a statement about literature itself. Several modern works end upon the promise to proceed to the point where they begin, although this Proustian paradigm is by no means exclusively modern. The Consolation of Philosophy, The Wanderer, and the Divine Comedy stand in a line of works -- including Chaucer's own Book of The Duchess -- in which the

hero-narrator undergoes a series of educating traumas which finally render him capable of writing the piece which the reader has just finished reading. Yet unlike these works, we must remind ourselves, the Lydgatian Canterbury Tales is really formed from two books, the second continuing and redefining the first. As a critical response, The Siege of Thebes almost instinctively repeats the performance of the New Testament as "a book which rewrites and requites another book," reaching concord with its intentions rather than assaulting its truths.⁷²

While there is no climactic scene in which Harry Bailey announces who has earned a free meal at the Tabard Inn, Lydgate renders his own judgment by way of the autonomous structure which his supplemental tale has created. The ending of his Thebes encourages the reader to begin the Canterbury Tales anew, for the simple reason that they are worth re-reading. Chaucer's characters have life, his histories speak, and the cumulative lessons of his poetry can and must be applied -- so long as we focus on poetry like the Knight's Tale, not the General Prologue and Links featuring the low-stlye, visceral Host. That Lydgate's poem feeds upon these same literary materials rather than immediate experience may seem sterilely esthetic to some modern readers -- again the paradigm is the New Testament, also a dense mass of quotations and allusions in which Jesus says over and over "as it is written"⁷³ -- yet for all its artistic self-containment, the Lydgatian collection offers hard-headed advice. The echoic property of his verse becomes a stylistic reflection of his inherent confidence, four

centuries in advance of Shelley, that poetry has the power to preserve past knowledge while offering renewal to the world which it serves. For all of the high praise bestowed upon Chaucer as the "Floure of poetes throrghout al Breteyne," Lydgate made a finer commendation by producing a conclusion which suggests that the reader turn back the leaves and begin again the journey.

ENDNOTES

1. John Lydgate, Siege of Thebes, ed. Axel Erdmann and Eilert Ekwall, 2 vols. 1911 and 1930, EETS e.s. 108 and 125, and The Tale of Beryn, with a Prologue of the Merry Adventure of the Pardoner with a Tapster at Canterbury, ed. F.J. Furnivall and W.G. Stone, 1909, EETS e.s. 105. Chaucer quotations and lineations, as well as abbreviations for titles, are from The Complete Poetry and Prose, ed. John H. Fisher (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977). Roman numerals designate the order of the fragments in Ellesmere, followed here for the sake of convenience; capital letters, where used, refer to the classification of the Chaucer Society.

2. Donald R. Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 212-13 et passim, accepts the Ellesmere order as the starting-point for his critical discussion. In his chapter "The Idea of an Idea," pp. 1-20, he distinguishes an idea as something different from the author's intention, genre, style, language, tradition, values, mental archetype, and cultural mythology -- yet including all of these: "This whole is an idea" (p. 19).

3. Major studies arguing for a completed esthetic unity on the basis of the Ellesmere order, sometimes with slight modifications, include Ralph Baldwin, The Unity of the Canterbury Tales (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955); Robert M. Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape

of Creation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); Alfred David, The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); and Christian Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). Arthur K. Moore, "Medieval English Literature and the Question of Unity," MP, 75 (1968), 285-300, launched a general but lucidly articulated assault against "the unchecked flow of unity studies" (300) in the field.

4. Robert A. Pratt, "The Order of the Canterbury Tales," PMLA, 66 (1951), 1141-67, with his proviso on Chaucer's intention, p. 1142. In more recent years, discussions of the arrangement of the fragments has paid scant regard to the possibility that certain tales, along with their time and place references, were designed for a homeward journey. Scholars who have entered into these discussions include Stanley B. Greenfield, "Sittingbourne and the Order of The Canterbury Tales," MLR, 48 (1953), 51-52; William Witherle Lawrence, Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales (New York: Biblo and Tanner, 1969), pp. 90-118; Donald C. Baker, "The Bradshaw Order of The Canterbury Tales: A Dissent," NM, 63 (1962), 245-61; Jun Sudo, "The Ordering of the Canterbury Tales Reconsidered," HSELL, 10 (1963), 77-89; Lee Sheridan Cox, "A Question of Order in the Canterbury Tales," ChauR, 1 (1967), 228-52; John Gardner, "The Case Against the 'Bradshaw Shift'; or, the Mystery of the Manuscript in the Trunk," PLL, 3 suppl. (1967), 80-106; E. Talbot Donaldson, "The Ordering of the Canterbury Tales," Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley,

ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 193-204; James H. Wilson, "The Pardoner and the Second Nun: A Defense of the Bradshaw Order," NM, 74 (1973), 292-96; James Paul, "A Defense of the Ellesmere Order," RLSt, 5 (1974), 118-20; and George R. Keiser, "In Defense of the Bradshaw Shift," ChauR, 12 (1977), 191-201.

5. Typical of this circular argument is Edward S. Cohen's "The Sequence of the Canterbury Tales," ChauR, 9 (1974), 190-95. It should be noted the even John M. Manly used the disarray of geographical references, based on the assumption of a one-way journey, as evidence that no surviving manuscript preserved Chaucer's own arrangement, although he did allow, at the end of his argument, for other possibilities: "1. That in spite of the careful systematization of his work as Comptroller of Customs -- perhaps as a reaction against it -- Chaucer did not lay out a general plan for the whole journey to Canterbury and return and assign each block of tales to its proper place in the plan . . . 3. That we cannot be sure whether any of the extant tales belong to the journey homeward. 4. That in making allusions to time and place he may have been guided by the needs of the moment . . . and not have considered carefully whether these allusions would fit into his general plan or would harmonize with one another." See The Text of The Canterbury Tales, Studied on the Basis of All Manuscripts, ed. John M. Manly and Edith Rickert (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), vol. II, "The Order of the Tales," pp. 475-94, with alternative possibilities, pp. 490-91.

6. Aage Brusendorff, The Chaucer Tradition (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925), pp. 119-20 and 125-26.
7. J. S. P. Tatlock, "The Canterbury Tales in 1400," PMLA, 50 (1935), 105-06 and 131-33.
8. Germaine Dempster, "Manly's Conception of the Early History of the Canterbury Tales," PMLA, 61 (1946), 384 and 386-89, alluding to Tatlock, pp. 106 and 131.
9. Larry D. Benson, "The Order of The Canterbury Tales," SAC, 3 (1981), 77-120, with a response (101-10) to N.F. Blake, "The Relationships between the Hengwrt and Ellesmere Manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales," E&S, 32 (1979), 1-18, and Doyle and Parkes in The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, intro. Donald C. Baker, and by A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), pp. xix-xliii.
10. Charles A. Owen, Jr., "The Alternative Reading of The Canterbury Tales: Chaucer's Text and the Early Manuscripts," PMLA, 97 (1982), 237-50, esp. 243 and 247. His prior studies include "The Plan of the Canterbury Pilgrimage," PMLA, 66 (1950), 820-26; "The Development of the Canterbury Tales," JEGP, 57 (1958), 449-76; "The Earliest Plan of the Canterbury Tales," MS, 21 (1959), 202-10; "Transformation of a Frame Story: The Dynamics of Fiction," Chaucer at Albany, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (New York: Burt Franklin, 1975), pp. 125-46; and Pilgrimage and Storytelling in the Canterbury Tales (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), esp. pp. 10-47.

11. Support for assigning certain fragments to the return to London came from Robert K. Root, "The Manciple's Prologue," MLN, 44 (1929), 493-96; John M. Manly, "Tales of the Homeward Journey," SP, 28 (1931), 613-17; James A. Work, "The Position of the Tales of the Manciple and the Parson on Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrimage," JEGP, 31 (1932), 62-65; and Manly and Rickert, vol. II, p. 493. In a more recent article arising from his work as an editor, John H. Fisher, "Chaucer's Last Revision of the Canterbury Tales," MLR, 67 (1972), 241-51, has made the case that the Parson's Prologue, with its evidence of a reduced scheme of tale-telling, belongs to an earlier stage of composition, while a wholesale revision late in the poet's life gave rise to the General Prologue (after line 540) with its design of 120 tales and a return to Southwerk. These modestly proposed conclusions confirm the earlier work of Eleanor P. Hammond, Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual (1908; rpt. New York: Peter Smith, 1933), p. 254; and Carleton Brown, "The Man of Law's Head-Link and the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," SP, 34 (1937), 8-35.

12. Most forceful among recent exponents of the pilgrims' one-way journey, Donald Howard, pp. 28-30 and 67-74, draws upon 526 accounts documented by Reinhold Röhricht in Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestinae: Chronologisches Verzeichnis der von 333 bis 1878 verfasster Literatur über das Heilige Land mit dem Versuch einer Kartographie (1890; rpt. Jerusalem: Universitas Booksellers, 1963) and upon Henry Snowden Ward's The Canterbury Pilgrimages (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1905), as well as critical analyses such as Edmund Reiss, "The Pilgrimage

Narrative and the Canterbury Tales," SP, 67 (1970), 295-305; Charles P. Tisdale, "The Medieval Pilgrimage and Its Use in The Canterbury Tales," DAI, 30 (1970), 4958A; Daniel Knapp, "The Relyk of a Saint: A Gloss on Chaucer's Pilgrimage," ELH, 39 (1972), 1-26; and Christian K. Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage, pp. 87-129. One important response to Howard has come from Alastair Fowler in his review, "Patterns and Pilgrimage," TLS, 12 (Nov., 1976), 1410-12, while Siegfried Wenzel narrows the discussion of categories in "The Pilgrimage of Life as a Late Medieval Genre," MS, 35 (1973), 370-88. D. J. Hall, English Mediaeval Pilgrimage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 17, notes that the significance of a journey to a native holy place was very different from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, thus undermining Howard's reliance upon guidebooks and diaries concerning these special Jerusalem pilgrimages. That tale-telling would be most appropriate for the trip back to Southwerk, and beyond, one can consult Piers Plowman: The B Version, ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: The Athlone Press, 1975), p. 35 (Prol. 46-49), and William Thorpe's complaint about pilgrims who returned home to become "great ianglers, tale-tellers, and liers;" The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe, ed. Josiah Pratt (London: Religious Tract Society, 1887), vol. III, p. 268. As Howard himself concedes, pp. 134-58, Chaucer the narrator speaks as a returned pilgrim who relates the marvels he has heard and remembered, and Howard also allows, p. 72, that the homecoming phase became relevant later in the fifteenth century as a tendency toward "secularization," perhaps under the influence of

romance form.

13. A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, "The Production of Copies of the Canterbury Tales and the Confessio Amantis in the Early Fifteenth Century," Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts, and Libraries, ed. M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London: Scolar Press, 1978), pp. 163-210, esp. pp. 190-92. This continues the work of M. B. Parkes in "The Influence of the Concepts of Ordinatio and Compilatio on the Development of the Book," Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 115-41. Quick acceptance of these concepts has come from Janet Coleman, Medieval Readers and Writers, 1350-1400 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 197-202. The glosses of Hengwrt and Ellesmere, which have been attributed to Chaucer since Brusendorff (p. 127), give these manuscripts a bookish appearance specifically appealing to an audience of readers, not listeners; see Graham D. Caie, "The Significance of the Early Chaucer Glosses (With Special Reference to the Wife of Bath's Prologue)," ChauR, 10 (1975), 350-60. In a somewhat related discussion, B. A. Windeatt, "The Scribes as Chaucer's Early Critics," SAC, 1 (1979), 119-41, demonstrates how copyists could respond intelligently and insightfully with the "equivalent of literary analysis" (121) to the texts they confronted.

14. Howard, pp. 56-67, has his own intriguing account for why the collection was excepted from the category of "book." In a separate study, "The Genesis of the Chaucer Apocrypha," SP, 48 (1951), 461-81,

Francis W. Bonner believes that the vagueness of the poet's catalogues of his own works "left the door wide open for the very sort of wholesale attributions which swelled the volume of spurious works in the sixteenth-century editions," including works such as The Tale of Beryn and The Siege of Thebes.

15. The fact of oral delivery and its effect on the kind of poetry which Chaucer produced have been examined by a number of critics over the years: Samuel Moore, "General Aspects of Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages," The Library, 3 (1913), 369-92; George P. Wilson, "Chaucer and Oral Reading," SAQ, 25 (1926), 283-99; Ruth Crosby, "Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages," Speculum, 11 (1936), 88-110, as a preamble to "Chaucer and the Custom of Oral Delivery," Speculum, 13 (1938), 413-38; Bertrand H. Bronson, "Chaucer's Art in Relation to His Audience," Five Studies in Literature (Berkeley: University of California Publication in English, 8, no. 1, 1940), 1-53; Mary Elizabeth Griffin, Studies on Chaucer and His Audience (Hull, Canada: Edition l'Eclair, 1956); V. A. Kolve, "Chaucer and the Visual Arts," Writers and Their Background: Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Derek Brewer (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975), 290-320; Dieter Mehl, "Chaucer's Audience," Leeds Studies in English, 10 (1978), 58-73; Anne Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," Speculum, 53 (1978), 94-114; and Edmund Reiss, "Chaucer and His Audience," ChauR, 14 (1980), 390-402.

16. The Canon's Yeoman's late entry into the frame-narrative and his telling of an additional tale were used by Francis Thynne in defending his father's decision to print "The Pilgrim's Tale," by which

he probably meant The Plowman's Tale; Animadversions (1598), ed. F. J. Funivall (London: The Chaucer Society, 1876), p. 8.

17. Albert C. Baugh discusses the liberty exercised by minstrels in altering their source-materials in "The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Preservation," Speculum, 42 (1967), 1-31, esp. 29-30, while the plagiarizing habits of writers throughout the medieval period are examined by Robert K. Root, "Publication Before Printing," PMLA, 28 (1913), 417-31; and H. J. Chaytor, From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1945), esp. pp. 115-37.

18. As if to take up part of Howard's challenge that "the history -- and esthetics -- of unfinished works would furnish an ambitious author with a promising topic" (p. 27), Anne Crehan Stolz has produced The Artifice of Temporality: A Study of Unfinishedness in Chaucer, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1978, in which she concentrates on the "terminally unfinished poems" and proposes that "in part, his work is unfinished because . . . he assigned a collaborative role to his audience" (pp. 13-14), although she devotes only modest attention to the continuators as significant members of that audience (pp. 60-68). As we shall see, readers might extend their collaborative function to the point of finishing, in writing, what the poet had asked them to imagine finishing.

19. The entry of Gamelyn into the manuscript tradition is discussed by Manly and Rickert, vol. I, pp. 95-96 and Vol. II, pp. 169-72, and by Franklin R. Rogers, "The Tale of Gamelyn and the Editing of

the Canterbury Tales," JEGP, 58 (1959), 49-59. Tatlock, "The Canterbury Tales in 1400," 112, remarks on the unblinking acceptance of the apocryphal tale by scribes "not much exercised about questions of authenticity." Spurious links are recorded throughout vol. II of the Manly and Rickert edition and in Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion, 1357-1900, ed. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), vol. I, pp. 50-54. Besides recording two brief continuations of the Cook's Tale and the Squire's Tale (vol. I, p. 260), Spurgeon also notes a two-stanza link used in MS. Christchurch 152 to incorporate Hoccleve's Legend of the Virgin as the "Plowman's Tale" (vol. I, p. 53); see also Manly and Rickert, vol. I, pp. 89-90.

20. E. J. Bashe, "The Prologue of The Tale of Beryn," PQ, 12 (1933), 1-16, has great praise for the poet's consistency in back-reference to Chaucer -- 90% according to his reckoning (p. 11) -- but without appreciating the possible humor intended when a pilgrim appears inconsistent with his or her former self.

21. The case for eunthood is made by Walter Clyde Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 54-70 ("The Pardoner's Secret"), while another view is presented by Monica E. McAlpine, "The Pardoner's Homosexuality and How It Matters," PMLA, 95 (1980), 8-22, with generous documentation of all studies relevant to the issue of his sexuality. For example, the claim that he is actually a "testicular pseudo-hermaphrodite" has been made by Beryl Rowland in "Animal Imagery and the Pardoner's Abnormality," Neophil, 48

(1964), 56-60, and again in "Chaucer's Idea of the Pardoner," ChauR, 14 (1979), 140-54, while an interpretation more patristic than physiological has been voiced by Robert P. Miller, "Chaucer's Pardoner, The Spiritual Eunuch, and The Pardoner's Tale," Speculum, 30 (1955), 180-99. Howard, pp. 333-87, devotes some of his most stimulating discussion to the grotesqueries of the Pardoner. In Beryn, the Pardoner's sexual failure seems to reflect complementarily his nature as a spiritual eunuch totally alienated from the sacral dimension of pilgrimage, as the alternating episodes make clear by isolating him in the web of his own gross folly.

22. Curry, p. 58.

23. Ibid., p. 68. After reviewing Curry's argument, Bashe decides that the Pardoner's priapic posturing, rather than intensifying the comic effect, is merely another instance of the Beryn-poet's inconsistency (pp. 12-14).

24. Manly and Rickert, vol. II, pp. 266-67. For conjecture on Chaucer's earlier intention to give the tale to the Friar, see Albert C. Baugh, "The Original Teller of the Merchant's Tale," MP, 35 (1937), 15-26.

25. For an examination of the tales as entries into the psychologies of the tellers, see Wolfgang E. H. Rudat, "The Canterbury Tales: Anxiety Release and Wish Fulfillment," AI, 35 (1978), 407-18. The hazardous livelihood of a fourteenth-century merchant is suggested by Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, 2nd. ed. rev. (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp.

146-54; and Kenneth S. Cahn, "Chaucer's Merchants and the Foreign Exchange: An Introduction to Medieval Finance," SAC, 2 (1980), 81-119.

26. Manly and Rickert, vol. VI, p. 569; the origin and significance of this transposed link have been discussed in careful detail by Benson, 102-06.

27. Esteem for the dramatic unity of the frame-narrative came from George L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915), pp. 154-55; John L. Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), p. 164; and more recently R. M. Lumiansky, Of Sondry Folk: The Dramatic Principle in the Canterbury Tales (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955), pp. 15-28. Important opposition to this approach was launched by Robert M. Jordan in "Chaucer's Sense of Illusion: Roadside Drama Reconsidered," ELH, 29 (1962), 19-33, and continued in Chaucer and the Shape of Creation, pp. 111-31.

28. The Tale of Beryn, pp. vi and 137, offers Furnivall's comments on the colophon (p. 120): "Nomen Autoris presentis Chronica Rome / Et translatoris / Filius ecclesie Thome."

29. The best account of the Northumberland manuscript is offered by Manly and Rickert, vol. I, pp. 387-95. They state that the entire text is written in "one stiff book hand, ugly and awkward" (p. 388), although I detect the entry of a second hand, smaller and neater, commencing with Sir Thopas (fol. 158^r).

30. The contents of the manuscript are most easily surveyed in Manly and Rickert, vol. II, in "Chart II" on the second unnumbered page

following p. 494. Gaps in the manuscript have resulted in the loss of I, 1-156; I, 3217-83; I, 4228-4324 and II, 1-316 (or I, 4228-4422 and II, 99-316, depending on whether the text once included the ML headlink, II, 1-98); IV, 57-142; V, 328-672; X, 142-275; and X, 332-959. Manly remarks that the Northumberland scribe "was certainly not the author or translator of Beryn" (vol. I, p. 389).

31. A variety of time-schemes are examined by John S.P. Tatlock, "The Duration of the Canterbury Pilgrimage," PMLA, 21 (1906), 478-85, but Manly and Rickert, vol. II, p. 493, insist upon two days of journeying each way, based on Miss Rickert's extensive collection of records on travel in the fourteenth century. Such a schedule for a five-day round trip, with the third day spent in the cathedral town, has been explored by Owen in "The Plan of the Canterbury Pilgrimage." While Hall laments that "no complete diary of a pilgrimage in England has yet come to light" (p. 17), there are expense records such as the one kept by Nicholas Harewode in 1415, which is intriguing because all of his stopping places are mentioned also by Chaucer: dinner at Dartford, supper at Rochester; dinner at Ospringe, supper at Canterbury; dinner at Sittingbourne, supper at Rochester; dinner at Dartford, supper at London -- see Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrimage, ed. F. J. Furnivall and R. E. G. Kirk (London: The Chaucer Society, sec. ser. 36, 1903), pp. 5-6. Manly and Rickert, vol. V, p. 387, note incorrectly that I, 3906, with its reference to Deptford has been omitted from Northumberland (fol 50 v).

32. Manly and Rickert, vol. VI, p. 173, note that there is a

complete family of manuscripts which lacks this final episode (III, 2159-2294), a fact that suggests an earlier Chaucerian version of the Summoner's Tale which ended with the donation of the fart. The N1 scribe seems to have received the account of the fart's division too late to insert it in its proper place.

33. Manly and Rickert, vol. VIII, p. 142.

34. Manly, "Tales of the Homeward Journey," 613-14.

35. Ward, The Canterbury Pilgrimages, p. 280.

36. Zacher, p. 49, draws upon the researches of Edward L. Cutts, Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages, 5th ed. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1925), pp. 189-90.

37. Middle English Sermons, ed. Woodburn O. Ross, 1940, EETS, o.s. 209, p. 74.

38. A similar sense is registered by Raymond S. St-Jacques, "Conscience's Final Pilgrimage in Piers Plowman and the Cyclical Structure of the Liturgy," Studies in Medieval Culture, 4 (1974), 387.

39. Knapp, "The Relyk of a Seint," 23.

40. Interpretations of Chaucer's ending are reviewed by James Dean, "The Ending of the Canterbury Tales: 1952-1976," TSSL, 21 (1979), 17-33, with recent contributions coming from Georgia R. Crampton, "Other Senses of Ending," Spenser: Classical, Medieval, and Modern, ed. David A. Richardson (Cleveland: Cleveland State University, 1977), pp. 132-42; and Michael Holahan, "'Swich fyn . . . swich fyn': Senses of Ending in Chaucer and Spenser," Ibid., pp. 116-31. Those interested in the continuation of the Squire's Tale in The Faerie Queene (IV, 2,

34 ff.) should also examine John Lane's Continuation of Chaucer's Squire's Tale (1616; rev. 1630) ed. F. J. Furnivall (London: The Chaucer Society, sec. ser. 23, 1887), which is a continuation of Spenser's continuation.

A study especially valuable for its review of prior criticism is Lee W. Patterson's "The Parson's Tale and the Quitting of the Canterbury Tales," Traditio, 34 (1978), 331-80. Commentary on the Retraction and its sincerity can be examined in James D. Gordon, "Chaucer's Retraction: A Review of Opinion," Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Albert Croll Baugh, ed. MacEdward Leach (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), 81-96; and in Olive Sayce, "Chaucer's 'Retraction': The Conclusion of the Canterbury Tales and its Place in Literary Tradition," MAe, 40 (1971), 230-48.

41. Spurgeon, vol. I, p. 35: "In thys booke I wyl hym sette, / And ympen thys Oryson / Affter hys translacion." In excluding Chaucer's tragic histories from The Troy Book, Lydgate remarked, "To take on me it were but hiȝe foly / In any wyse to add more þer-to" (Vol. III, p. 3).

42. Spurgeon, vol. I, p. 25.

43. These passages from The Troy Book and The Courte of Sapvence are quoted by Spurgeon, vol. I, pp. 25 and 16, respectively.

44. Since publication of the full Erdmann-Ekwall edition, a new manuscript of the Thebes has been unearthed by A. I. Doyle and George B. Pace, "A New Chaucer Manuscript," PMLA, 83 (1968), 25. Not

mentioned here is the fourth manuscript, Longleat 257, in which the Knight's Tale follows as a sequel to Lydgate's poem.

45. Thebes, vol. II, pp. 36-37. The Canterbury Tales end on fol. 257^v: "Explicit narracio Rectoris et ultima inter narraciones huius libri de quibus composuit Chauucer cuius anime propicietur deus. AMEN." The Thebes begins on fol. 258^r: "Incipit ultima de fabulis Cantuarie translata et prolata per Dompnum Iohannem Lidgate monachum in redeundo a Cantuaria."

46. The Christchurch MS. is described in Thebes, vol. II, pp. 211-17. The Ingliby MS. (vol. II, pp. 47-48) has found its way to the British Museum and has been re-named Egerton 2864. It is described, with slightly different foliation, by Manly and Rickert, vol. I, pp. 143-47. Royal MS. 18.D.II., though not physically connecting the two works, contains two rubrics acknowledging the fictive relationship: "In this preamble shortly is comprihendid A Mery conseyte of Iohn lydgate Monke of Bury declarynge how he aionyde þe sege of Thebes to the mery tallys of Caunterburye" (fol. 147^v); "Here begynneth the Segge of Thebes ful lamentably tolde by Iohn lidgate Monke of Bury anneynge it to þe tallys of Canterbury (fol. 148^r). See Thebes, vol. II, p. 56.

47. Thebes, vol. II, pp. 94 and 213.

48. Eleanor Prescott Hammond, "Lydgate's Prologue to the Story of Thebes," Anglia, 36 (1912), 361-62.

49. In Thebes, vol. II, p. 96, the editor Ekwall remarks upon Lydgate's "confused and faulty remembrance" when writing his Prologue.

50. Ibid., p. 95.

51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., p. 107.
53. C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 163.
54. Derek Pearsall, John Lydgate (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), pp. 66-67.
55. Ibid., pp. 85-86. Hammond, p. 361, comments that "it were an exercise for the student of Chaucer to trace this prologue, phrase by phrase and idea by idea, to its sources in the Canterbury Tales."
56. Ekwall (ed.), vol, II, p. 9; Pearsall, p. 151; Walter F. Schirmer, John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century, trans. Ann E. Keep (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 65; and Alain Renou, The Poetry of John Lydgate (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 111.
57. Robert W. Ayers, "Medieval History, Moral Purpose, and the Structure of Lydgate's Siege of Thebes," PMLA, 73 (1958), 474 and generally 464-68; see also Schirmer, pp. 63-64.
58. Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," 95.
59. Lois Ebin, "Lydgate's Views on Poetry," Annuaire Mediaevale, 18 (1977), 97.
60. Lois Ebin, "Chaucer, Lydgate, and the 'Myrie Tale'," ChauR, 13 (1979), 331-32.
61. Schirmer, p. 62. Using this allusion to help date the poem, Ekwall, vol. II, p. 8, quotes from the twenty-fourth paragraph of the

Treaty of Troyes concluded between England and France in May of 1420: "Item, ut Concordia, Pax, & Tranquillitas inter praedicta Franciae & Angliae Regna perpetuo futuris temporibus observentur." Mindful of the vulnerability of even the world's greatest empire, around 1400 Lydgate had written a work entitled The True History or Mappe of Rome's Querthrowe, during which he was reminded of Chaucer's compendium of tragic falls in the Monk's Tale; see Spurgeon, vol. I, p. 14.

62. Ekwall (ed.), vol. II, pp. 96 and 134.

63. Ibid., pp. 6-7, and Alain Renoir, "The Immediate Source of Lydgate's Siege of Thebes," Studia Neuphilologica, 33 (1961), 86-95.

64. Renoir, pp. 113-14; and Pearsall, p. 153. Longeat 257 is described by Manly and Rickert, vol. I, p. 339.

65. I am indebted for this term to Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 212. Baldwin, p. 15, remarks that the formal circularity proposed by Chaucer (and produced by Lydgate) would give the work the "englobed and polished ratio lauded by the medieval literary theorists."

66. Spurgeon, vol. I, p. 25.

67. John Lydgate, Poems, ed. John Norton-Smith (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966), p. x.

68. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 202-03.

69. Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 3-31.

70. Spurgeon, vol. I, pp. 36-37, quotes Lydgate's acknowledgement of the Monk's Tale as a model for his Fall of Princes, as well as his use of roadway imagery -- "this world is a thurghfare ful of woo" (p. 36) -- to describe the tragic patterning of history.

71. Frye, Anatomy, p. 203.

72. Kermode, p. 59.

73. Morton W. Bloomfield, "Allegory as Interpretation," NLH, 3 (1972), 302. Northrop Frye, The Great Code: The Bible and Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981), p. 79; the implications of these verbal back-references are explored throughout the latter half of this volume, as well as in the second volume promised by the author.