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FORTUNE, NATURE, AND GRACE IN
CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Raymond Michael Haines, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1971

Approved by

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Department of English
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INTRODUCTION: POLEMIC AND OTHERWISE

In beginning any ambitious study, one is commonly at a loss. Especially when offering a new and untried thesis, one is tempted to launch out in medias res—to withhold the thesis until after the case has been forcefully presented, to build to a dramatic or climactic presentation of what the writer hopes is a radically new idea. But the dictates of efficiency and clarity demand an anticlimactic initial betrayal, removing some of the writer's hoped-for impact. And, besides, a writer can too easily become convinced about the "radical" nature of his thesis. Generally, then, one must admit, as I do now, that his thesis, just because new, is not necessarily radical, and he must set out at once what he plans to do. In offering a different approach to The Canterbury Tales, as I shall in this essay, I am not really offering up anything radical. In fact, though my reading is new (what I shall say has not, to the best of my knowledge, been said before), it is traditional (that is, within a well-founded tradition of Chaucer scholarship).

More particularly, what I shall do in this study is to suggest a new thematic reading of The Canterbury Tales. I hope to show that a hitherto unnoticed theme
runs through many of the tales and can be said to unify these tales. In this sense, my study is traditional (see below, pp. 3-12), and it is also traditional (as I shall show) in the choice of the theme under examination. But my study will offer some new ideas. First, the theme itself has never been studied. Second, it offers, as I have said, a new form of unity for the tales. And, finally, by examining the theme in detail as it operates in one Fragment, I hope to suggest certain new readings.

At this point, however, let me offer a disclaimer. In no way do I mean to suggest in this paper that my readings are the only readings, or that the theme I am examining is the theme of The Canterbury Tales, or that this theme is the only principle of unity in the tales. The older I get—perhaps it is, therefore, a form of crotchetiness—the less patience I have with the occasionally arrogant surety of some scholars, who offer their readings as some sort of divinely inspired final statements, especially when dealing with a work as complex as The Canterbury Tales. God forbid that my study should be read in such a manner. I offer my present interpretation merely as a reading.

Specifically, my reading involves the linking of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, particularly through the three kinds of gifts. I shall propose that the three, which are
linked together in The Parson's Tale, can be viewed thematically—as a topos, sometimes explicitly, more often implicitly, treated throughout the tales. The mere presence of this topos in many of the tales gives them, I think, a kind of thematic unity. My treatment of the theme centers on Fragment VI (The Physician's Tale and The Pardoner's Tale), which I view as a focal point; and, as I will show, the theme unifies this Fragment. My reading of these two tales in light of the theme reveals, I believe, new facets in these tales, and on the basis of these readings I shall offer some new suggestions about the tale-teller relationships. All this may seem a bit ambitious, but I offer it in a spirit akin to that of Chaucer's when he said,

And if ther be any thynge that displease
[my readers], I preye hem also that they
arrette it to the defaute of myn unkonnynge,
and nat to my wyl, that wolde ful fayn
have seyd bettre if I hadde had konnynge.
(X, 1082)¹

The Search for Unity

The search for unity in The Canterbury Tales is a well-established and long-standing tradition among Chaucer scholars, and the search has led these scholars into many areas. In one of the earlier forays into this field, Frederick Tupper, in a series of articles,² posits a kind of thematic unity resulting from an "architectonic use of the motif" of the Seven Deadly Sins; as he says,
I have recently discovered that The Canterbury Tales offers us yet another treatment of the Sins, not casual but organic; that in several of the stories the poet finds these familiar conceptions of medieval theology so serviceable a framework that he recurs often to the well-known formula as a convenient and suggestive device of construction.  

Tupper founds his reading on the "formal presentation of the Deadly Sins in the Parson's Tale, in due accord with the traditional demands of penitential sermons" and on the "casual references to each and all the Vices in the course of the Canterbury stories." Tupper even believes that The Parson's Tale "was certainly before Chaucer when he wrote many of his Sins narratives."  

But Tupper's views did not go unchallenged. In what is certainly one of the more interesting skirmishes in the history of scholarly combat, John Livingston Lowes, in "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins" (MLN, 30 [1915], 237-371), accepts Tupper's challenge, and he accepts, "without question, his [Tupper's] own choice of field and weapons" (p. 238). Lowes says he will confine himself "rigidly to an examination of his [Tupper's] argument on the basis of those authorities alone which he himself cites" (p. 238). A major part of Lowes's attack comes as a result of Tupper's assignment of a specific sin to a tale:

In a word, [in Tupper's view] we have to do with the branches of the Sins, as a series of indexes or exponents of the Sins themselves, and Mr. Tupper's uniform assumption
is that "every man of the Middle Ages must have recognized at once" the Sin by its exponent.

(pp. 241-42)

Then follows Lowes's long excursion through the sins and their branches or twigs in five of Tupper's sources (including The Parson's Tale), in which Lowes demonstrates that "The 'definitely fixed limits of variation' among the branches, which Mr. Tupper postulates, simply do not exist" (p. 250). That is, a particular branch, such as hypocrisy, is apt to sprout from more than one sin, and one cannot conclude—as Tupper does—on the basis of a branch what the root is, because

the categories of the Seven Deadly Sins are neither "rigid," nor "stereotyped," nor "strict." They overlapped and interwove, and the same specific Sin appears now in this group, now in that.

(p. 255)

After defeating Tupper's outer defenses, Lowes goes on to breach the inner: he disputes Tupper's notion that a story once used as an exemplum for one of the sins could create for it a Deadly Sins tradition (see p. 260). Tupper is utterly vanquished when Lowes disputes his readings of the tales, and Lowes concludes,

Chaucer makes abundant use of the Seven Deadly Sins. He dealt with life, and life, like the categories, is a labyrinth of the Vices and Virtues.

(p. 567)
But Lowes is unwilling to admit "a formal schematizing of the Seven Deadly Sins" (p. 368). Tupper did attempt to answer Lowes, but, I think, not terribly successfully.6

Some years later, George Lyman Kittredge suggested a different sort of unity.7 To Kittredge, "the Canterbury Tales is a kind of Human Comedy," and "the Pilgrims are the dramatis personae" (p. 188). Kittredge sees, for instance, The Wife of Bath's Prologue as beginning "a new act in the drama" (p. 191), and thus he sets out his discussion of the now famous "Marriage Debate." He includes in this debate the Wife of Bath, the Clerk, the Merchant, and the Franklin--the latter supposedly concluding the debate by representing Chaucer's solution (see esp. p. 215).

However, Kittredge is not without his challengers, one of the most articulate of whom is Henry Barrett Hinckley.8 Hinckley's summary of Kittredge is fair and his criticisms worth consideration. His objections are mainly these:

(1) The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale are not unified mainly in heresy, in schism, or in polemic (as Kittredge claims), but in her search for a new husband.

(2) The Clerk is interested more in matrimony as it typifies Christian life than in matrimony per se.
(3) The Clerk's Tale is uncoordinated with the Wife's talk until the casual allusion at the end; the Envoy was written to satirize the story of Griselda, not to caricature the Wife.

(4) The Merchant's Tale is out of character with the teller and the mention of the Wife is a lapse in dramatic propriety.

(5) Finally, there are complex and unsettled problems in the order of the tales.9

Others--myself included--would accept the basic premises of dramatic interaction and of Chaucer's interest in marriage but would add more tales to the basic core of four tales (if The Clerk's Tale, why not The Man of Law's Tale or The Nun's Priest's Tale?).

Another and fuller study of the dramatic frame is R. M. Lumiansky's Of Sondry Folk: The Dramatic Principle in the Canterbury Tales (Austin: University of Texas, 1955). Lumiansky's book is delightful reading and quite useful for putting all the tales within a dramatic framework and for relating tale and teller, but occasionally Lumiansky has to push rather hard (see, for example, his discussion of the Second Nun, for whom there is no portrait or dramatic link in the text of The Canterbury Tales).

Yet another kind of unity study is that of the patristic exegetes. The most notable of this sort is A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton: Princeton University, 1963) by D. W. Robertson, Jr. A simplified restatement (which must
perforce become a simplified view of a simplified view) of Robertson's approach would be to say that he considers all medieval literature—Chaucer's works included—as dealing with the Christian polarities caritas and cupiditas.

But Robertson, too, has his challengers—E. Talbot Donaldson, Robert O. Payne, Francis Lee Utley, and others. Utley's review of Robertson's book is probably one of the most devastating attacks on "Robertsonianism,"10 and he properly castigates Robertson for his reductionist views11 (as well as for his general tunnel vision which allows him easily to overlook contradictory evidence, both primary and secondary, and for the paradoxical nature of some of his criticism).

Two more recent attempts to find the unifying principle of The Canterbury Tales are Ralph T. Baldwin's The Unity of the Canterbury Tales (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955) and Paul G. Ruggiers's The Art of the Canterbury Tales (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965). Baldwin and Ruggiers have similar approaches, in that both attempt to fit the tales into the frame by using The Parson's Tale as a kind of literary shoehorn. To Baldwin, the pilgrimage is more than it seems: "This very pilgrimage to Canterbury is to be the spiritual, that is, anagogical figure for the pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem" (Baldwin, p. 91). Baldwin, then, postulates a
tripartite structure for this "analogical structure":

There are three critical sections in any medieval literary work: the beginning, middle, and end. In the unfinished but not wholly inconclusive work, The Canterbury Tales, the middle cannot be localized, but the work is carefully and artfully inaugurated. If we concede that Chaucer has staked out a conclusion as well as an introduction, we may assume that it will be just as cleverly worked out. And there is evidence in the text that he intended to end with the Parson's Tale, though whether his narration was to coincide with the arrival at Canterbury, or the return to the Tabard, cannot be said apodictically. . . . The ending's contravention of the beginning [one tale per Pilgrim instead of four] can be explained, if you will, by the literary difficulty of effecting the scheme originally projected, which may be attributed to the literal length of the journey, the sanguine character of the Host, or the author's overconfident creativity. . . . On a literary plane we may observe that it is in the nature of the construct that the Parson conclude the tales of a journey whose destination becomes thereby neither Southwerk nor Canterbury, but the Holy City of Jerusalem.

(p. 84)

To Baldwin, the beginning of this extended metaphor lies in the enlargement suggested by the reverdie in The General Prologue--a chant to spring which "was used to express psychological (and physiological), erotic, allegorical, and religious reawakenings, and the lover, the glossator, the allegorist, the mystic, even the satirist, again and again employ the counters of spring" (p. 24). The middle is, as he says, unfinished, but the end is carefully
articulated:

In "knitting up the feast" the Parson has to sum up, chapter and verse. The summation of the ideal Christian life has to be purveyed by an exemplar of that life, without any of the comedies, ironies, failbless, or maleficence such as, for instance, his antitype, the Pardoner. (p. 95)

For, most centrally, the Parson's Tale may be construed as a commentary on the action, and, in that context, a peroration of that sermon of which the tales and the connectives may be said, loosely, to constitute an exemplum. (p. 100)

The various oaths of the Tales are confronted with the Way; the many features of truth gaze on Truth itself; and the inner lights of the several pilgrims behold the Light. God is present throughout the CT, but nowhere is he so systematically presented as he is in the Parson's Tale. (p. 104)

Ruggiers's approach is, as I said, similar, but it is not nearly so schematized. In The Canterbury Tales, according to Ruggiers,

Our attention, not primarily concerned with "what comes next?" is focused upon centers of interest suspended between two poles: a fictive representation of mankind in all its variety governed simultaneously by the spirit of penance and of festivity; and at the close, a non-fictive examination of the vices to be avoided and the virtues to be pursued as the means of attaining the heavenly city. (Ruggiers, p. xiii)

Like Baldwin, Ruggiers sees the Parson's "non-fictive examination of the vices" as a commentary on The Canterbury
Tales as a whole, though he (like Baldwin) carefully avoids Tupper's earlier simplism:

The classical attempt to see the tales as an illustration of the sins is that of Frederick Tupper, who presented a stimulating and spirited essay which received an equally spirited and stimulating reply from John L. Lowes. It is, from my point of view, a totally unfounded assumption to maintain that Chaucer meant to cast over the entire work the enveloping scheme of the capital sins, or that he intended us to look back from the Parson's Tale and see in anything but a general sense that the tales have their final commentary in the various parts of the sermon. There is a certain antipathy between art and the codification of morals, however much morality may enter into art. As a matter of fact, if Chaucer at any time felt that his tales illustrate point by point the moral catalog, we have no indication of it. He was more concerned to depict men in comparatively few basic associations and to explore with what looks like infinite variety their actions and reactions. This is not to deny an easy conversance: they appear, for example, in the Pardoner's Tale; but he avoids a rigid schematism in favor of that more subtle pattern that may appear when men act--their actions being viewed by the poet without revulsion--and when by their very independence and individuality they assert and define the infinite variety of character and creation.

(PP. 251-52)

And though he like Robertson sees charity as a unifying motif, he avoids over-simplification:

...for the tutored soul there is a wisdom that grows out of the human condition and the passage of time: a bearing of the fruits of charity, resignation, a tempered joy in the natural order, and a final recognition of the relation of the goods
of this world to the Highest Good; in
dfact, a continuous negotiation of the
contract that redeemed man makes, how­
ever mysteriously, with God through the
intermediary Logos.

This is the underlying argumentum
of the Canterbury Tales. What emerges
from the juxtapositions, within the great
middle, of the varieties of truth, is a
continuing sense of the mystery, a sense of
charity towards the human beings involved
in it. At the end of the Tales, after
the double visions of man as fallen and
redeemed have been set forth for us to
see in the Parson's sermon, Chaucer makes
his own confession. He is, so to speak,
in the vestibule of the Most High. To
arrive there with him we must re-examine
the divided commitments of the tales
themselves.

(pp. 256-57)

These, then, are some of the more important hypotheses
of unity in the realm of Chaucer scholarship and criticism.
None of these is, I think, without fault; however, each
has something to add--another dimension, another point of
view. But, as I suggested earlier, no one point of view
can be right when one is dealing with something as complex
and infinitely variable as The Canterbury Tales, or any
other great work of literature. And, as with The Canter­
bury Tales themselves, so with the scholarship: here,
indeed, is "God's plenty."

A New Thematic Study

My own approach in this essay is within the tradition
I have described, in two ways. First, it is a kind of unity-
study, and more particularly, a study of a unifying theme;
second, it uses The Parson's Tale as a major keystone in its overall support. But let me say again that I have no desire to suggest my reading as the reading of The Canterbury Tales: I offer it merely as one more dimension.

My interest and involvement in the problem dealt with here began when I first set out on a study of The Pardoner's Tale, but I soon enlarged the scope of my problem to include the rest of Fragment VI. My intent was to show the unity of the Fragment and to fit this "floating" Fragment into the context of The Canterbury Tales. The key, I decided was a passage in The Introduction to The Pardoner's Tale, where the Host makes the following comment about The Physician's Tale before turning to the Pardoner:

"Harrow!" quod he, "by nayles and by blood!
This was a fals cherl and a fals justise.
As shameful deeth as herte may devyse
Come to thise juges and hire advocatz!
Algat this sely mayde is slayn, allas!
Allas, to deere boughte she beautee!
Wherfore I seye al day that men may see
That viftes of Fortune and of Nature
Been cause of deeth to many a creature.
Hirc beautee was hire deth, I dar wel sayn.
Allas, so pitously as she was slayn!
Of both viftes that I speke of now
Men han ful ofte moore for harm than prow.

(VI, 288-300--italics mine)

Harry Bailey, the peripatetic literary critic of the journey to Canterbury, sees The Physician's Tale as an exemplum on the gifts of Fortune and Nature. The Host, however, is
not always right on target with his literary judgments or criticisms, and he occasionally requires help (witness, for example, the Knight's interventions and the Parson's reprimand). The linking together of Fortune and Nature was not uncommon in the late Middle Ages (as I shall demonstrate), but according to orthodox Christian tradition, Harry Bailey makes a glaring omission, which is corrected by the Parson when he speaks of the gifts of Fortune, Nature, and Grace:

Certes, the goodes of nature stonden outher in goodes of body or goodes of soule./
Certes, goodes of body been heele of body, strengthe, deliverness, beautee, gentrice, franchise./ Goodes of nature of the soule been good wit, sharp understondynge, subtil engyn, vertu natureel, good memoric./ Goodes of fortune been richesse, hyghe degrees of lordshipes, preisynges of the peple./ Goodes of grace been science, power to suffre spirituuel travaille, benignitee, vertuous contemplacioun, withstandyng of temptacioun, and semblable thynges.

(X, 451-55)

In the orthodox Christian view, then, there are three kinds of gifts (all of which are under God's dominion), and the linking of the three seems reason enough to re-examine Fragment VI (and the whole of The Canterbury Tales) in light of this topos. And that is what I propose to do.

More specifically, in Part I, with its four chapters, I will survey the backgrounds of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, separately at first and then together as a medieval topos. Part II will include four more chapters and a conclusion. Chapter V will offer a reading of The Physician's Tale.
based upon the theme of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, and Chapter VI will do the same for The Pardoner's Tale. In Chapter VII, I shall offer a new way of linking tales to tellers for the Physician and Pardoner, based on my thematic readings of the two tales. Chapter VIII will be a survey of the possibilities of applying the theme of Fortune, Nature, and Grace to the remainder of the tales, and I shall then offer a brief Conclusion. I am also including an Appendix, which is a study of The Pardoner's Tale and some of its analogues.
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


2See the following articles by Frederick Tupper: "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," PMLA, 29 (1914), 93-128; "The Pardoner's Tavern," JEGP, 13 (1914), 553-65; "Chaucer's Red's Head," MLN, 30 (1915), 5-12; and "Chaucer's Sinners and Sins," JEGP, 15 (1916), 56-106.

3Tupper, "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," pp. 96-97.

4Tupper, p. 96.

5Tupper, p. 117.

6See Tupper, "Chaucer's Sinners and Sins."


9Paraphrased from Hinckley, p. 225.


PART I

FORTUNE, NATURE, AND GRACE
There are, as I have already indicated, good reasons for pursuing the Fortune-Nature-Grace topos in *The Canterbury Tales*. First of all, nobody has really done it before. Paul Ruggiers (*The Art of the Canterbury Tales*) suggests the value of pursuing such a topic; he also sees the Host's words (quoted above, see p. 13) as central to the problem of unity in Fragment VI—a decision Ruggiers and I reached independently. Ruggiers, though, sees *The Physician’s Tale* as a "demonstration of evil resulting from the gifts of fortune and nature" (p. 123); that is, he accepts literally what Harry Bailey says. *The Pardoner’s Tale*, according to Ruggiers, "subtly shifts . . . emphasis principally to an abuse of the gifts of grace, with the consequent death of the soul" (p. 123). Ruggiers comes close to what is central to my reading, but there are substantial differences (which I will discuss in detail in Chapter VI). And, besides, he does not really pursue this notion—the linking of Fortune, Nature, and Grace—at all.

Other scholars have treated parts of the theme, or have called attention to the linking of the three gifts, but no one gives the theme systematic treatment. Howard R. Patch thoroughly surveys Fortune in *The Goddess Fortuna* in
and in a series of articles, the most important of which are "The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Medieval
Philosophy and Literature," Smith College Studies in
Modern Languages, 3, No. 4 (July 1922), 179-235; and
Knowlton similarly surveys Nature in a series of articles, and there are also important studies on Nature by George D.
Economou and Aldo D. Scaglione, although the latter deals
almost entirely with Boccaccio. Barbara Bartholomew has
linked Fortune and Nature together in her study of three
of Chaucer's tales (including The Physician's Tale).
There is only one good study of Grace in Chaucer--Burke
O'Neill's unpublished dissertation, Certain Theological
Matters in Chaucer (Berkeley, 1937), but another disserta-
tion--Max H. James, Pre-Chaucerian and Chaucerian Concern
with Providence: The Question of Providence Examined in
Representative Theologians and Poets Before Chaucer and
as a Major Preoccupation in Chaucer's Poetry (Claremont,
1966)--deals with the problems of Grace and Free Will and
of Fate (Fortune) and Free Will. As I have said, though,
no one has really dealt with Fortune, Nature, and Grace in
Chaucer.

Another major reason for dealing with the three is
that the Parson links them together in his tale. The
Parson's Tale, as I have shown, has been used as a starting point for other unity studies, specifically those of Tupper, Baldwin, and Ruggiers. I realize that not everyone accepts such methodology; for instance, E. Talbot Donaldson says,

> The Parson's Tale seems a most inappropriate gloss for many of Chaucer's best poetic writings. It may be unexceptionable in its theological doctrine, but in literary terms it is ill-tempered . . . . I suspect that to reduce everything to the Parson's orthodox technicalities is to miss the point of poetry. Surely it would be more sensible and humane to use the rest of the tales as a gloss on the Parson's, counteracting its morbid negatives with a few of their healthy affirmatives.

Nevertheless, Donaldson notwithstanding, The Parson's Tale, if not a "gloss" for The Canterbury Tales, can at least be seen as Chaucer's intended conclusion (cf. Baldwin), and as such, the tale pulls together many disparate themes and ideas from the rest of the tales and serves as a kind of "final word" on these themes and ideas. And a careful reading of The Parson's Tale can shed light on the tales, even if it does no more than give the orthodox view (which may or may not be the same as Chaucer's) to counter a heretical view expressed by one of the other pilgrims.

The significance of the Fortune-Nature-Grace topos increases, however, when one realizes that it is not unique to The Parson's Tale. Other medieval sources also employ the topos, or at least give some indication of the tripartite division of gifts, but I shall return to these sources
later. First, I want to survey each of the three—Fortune, Nature, and Grace—separately, to show some of the historical and philosophical background before Chaucer and to comment briefly on Chaucer's traditional views on each of the three.
"O Fortuna"

Oh, Fortune, 
even as the moon, 
variable in condition,
always you increase
or decrease;
a detestable life
now persists,
and then (she) attends to,
in sport, the keenness of the
mind,
the poverty;
The power
(she) dissolves as ice.

Fortune, inhuman
and empty,
though turning wheel,
evil state (or mode of opera-
tion),
vain soundness.
always dissoluble,
overshadowed
and enveloped
from me also you fly,
now through sport
the naked back
of misfortune I display to
you.

Fortune of health (soundness)
and of worth,
to me now contrary,
has affected (me)
and defected
always in anger;
by this one in an hour,
without delay,
touch the beating of (my)
heart,
quod per sortem
sternit fortetm
meicum omnes plagite.
(Carmina Burana No. 1)\(^6\)

"Lady Fortune and her Wheel"

\[\text{Pe leucdi fortune is bo\'e frend and fo,}\]
\[\text{Of pore che makit riche, of riche pore also,}\]
\[\text{Che turnet\(\_\) wo al into wele, and wele into wo,}\]
\[\text{No triste\(\_\)no man to \(\_\)bis wele, \(\_\)be whel it turnet\(\_\) so.}\]

\[(\text{Camb. Univ. MS. Oc. 7. 32.)}\]7

[The Lady Fortune is both friend and foe, Of poor she maketh rich, of rich poor also; She turneth woe all into weal (joy), and weal into woe; No man trust to this weal, the wheel it turneth so.]

These poems--the first by a thirteenth-century Goliard poet and the second written on a parchment roll (ca. 1325) containing genealogies of English kings--are but two of many from a wide tradition of poems on Fortune. They bring out the most widely alluded to elements of the tradition: the duplicity and fickleness of Fortune, which lead to the kind of complaint uttered by the Goliard poet and to the lack of trust urged by the anonymous English poet. The tradition was long and widespread, and it has been thoroughly studied.

The Tradition of Fortune/Fortuna

The bulk of the study of Fortune has been done by one man, Howard R. Patch; the fullest of his studies is The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature. Consequently, of necessity, I will constantly refer to this study and to
other works by Patch, but I will complement what he says with other sources, both primary and secondary. I make no pretense to giving a complete survey of the subject of Fortune (or, for that matter, of Nature and Grace). Such a study is beyond the scope of this essay; besides, it is not really necessary. Chaucer himself never pursues the subject in depth; as he says of the related Fate/Free Will problem, "I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren" (VII, 3240). But I do want to give a sense of the tradition.

In his first chapter, "The Philosophy of Fortune" (Goddess, pp. 8-34), Patch shows the historical progression from pagan goddess (or, eventually, abstraction) through a Christian reaction to a kind of poetic compromise. In the pre-Christian era, according to Patch, the goddess Fortuna "was not at all times identical with the goddess of chance" but was instead identified with the notion of Fate as the bringer of destiny; it was only later that the term Fortuna "came to signify the one who performs that act in a capricious way" (Goddess, p. 10). But by the late classical period, this latter notion (of the capricious goddess) was in vogue, and the later period, "which rejected order and emphasized (at least from the human point of view) caprice, used the term [fortuna] to mean 'chance'" (p. 11). This development was paralleled by a similar one for the Greek Tyche (p. 10). Thus, in the Empire, Fortuna "flourished
with considerable power as the goddess of chance" (p. 12), and her popularity grew, especially in a period of growing skepticism (see pp. 12-14). But with the triumph of Christianity, Fortuna had to be dealt with. The easiest way to deal with her was to deny her existence:

It must be made clear that she had no actual existence, that her works were only illusory. Such a definite stand was taken by the Fathers, from Lactantius and St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas. . . .

The Aristotelian argument that chance is necessary in order to make room for free-will is adopted in a modified form by St. Augustine and St. Thomas. Both, however, are definite in refusing to accept the figure of the goddess, and they agree in pointing out that in the last analysis what seems to come from chance has really a proper cause of its own. Fortune may be useful as a name for the causa per accidens which Aristotle defined, but it will not be ultimately justifiable to delude one's self into thinking that the personified figure has a basis in fact . . . .

(Goddess, p. 16)

What these two major spokesmen of the Church had to say about the problem of Fortuna/Fortune (and of pagan figures in general) is significant. The triumph of the Church Universal, it is clear, was not really universal:

The Christians emerged from this conflict [with paganism] with new zeal and increased strength. Shortly after the last great persecution of Diocletian, the Edict of Toleration (313), whereby Christianity was officially tolerated, really marked the beginning of the ultimate triumph of Christianity in the Empire. It should be emphasized that paganism did not at once decline, nor was it crushed by the anti-pagan legislation of the immediate
successors of Constantine. In fact paganism still remained a formidable obstacle to Christianity for more than another century. . . . Paganism was intimately bound up with Roman tradition, Roman law and social order. In Rome, Alexandria, Athens, and other pagan centers, the public worship of the pagan gods went on much as before. Many of the old senatorial families of Rome clung tenaciously to their old pagan traditions, and the pagan worship was publicly practiced in the Capital down to the end of the fourth century. . . . In the poorer country districts paganism was left undisturbed in many cases for a long time.12

This tenacity which paganism had in Christian Rome was due in part to its complexity:

For a proper understanding of the great struggle between Christianity and paganism in the late Empire, a knowledge of the essential features of the paganism of the period is necessary. This late paganism differed in many respects from the polytheism of the Republic and early Empire. It was a curious syncretism of the old Roman religion, Oriental cults, Neoplatonism, and divination together with other superstitious practices. . . . Thus, the late paganism took on a philosophical aspect, and it is for this reason that its doctrines, as professed in intellectual circles, were so formidable for Christianity.13

But the foe was not too formidable for the indomitable St. Augustine:

The City of God was occasioned by the charges made against Christianity by the pagans following the sack of Rome by Alaric, which made such a profound impress on the Roman world. His purpose in this work was, on the one hand, to refute the pagan charges made against Christianity and, on the other, to show the justice of the Christian claims and the truth of the Christian religion. It is mainly an historical and philosophical
analysis of paganism, presented as a formal and systematic attack on the pagan worship as such and a refutation of the pagan charges against Christianity. The references in the City of God to contemporary pagan worship, except in its Neoplatonic phases, are relatively few.

In his other works Saint Augustine for the most part had to meet the practical problems as they developed in his career as a bishop in North Africa, where he came to be looked upon as the champion of Catholic Christianity against the pagans and heretics.14

For instance, here is one of St. Augustine's attacks on Fortune (from The City of God):

How is it, then, that the goddess Fortune is sometimes good, sometimes bad? Is it perhaps the case that when she is bad she is not a goddess, but is suddenly changed into a malignant demon? How many Fortunes are there then? Just as many as there are men who are fortunate, that is, of good fortune. But since there must also be very many others who at the very same time are men of bad fortune, could she, being one and the same Fortune, be at the same time both bad and good--the one to these, the other to those? She who is the goddess, is she always good? Then she herself is felicity. Why, then, are two names given her? . . . but fortune, which is termed good without any trial of merit, befalls both good and bad men fortuitously, whence also she is named Fortune. Now, therefore, is she good, who without any discernment comes both to the good and the bad? Why is she worshipped, who is thus blind, running at random on any one whatever, so that for the most part she passes by her worshippers, and cleaves to those who despise her? . . . For it profits one nothing to worship her if she is truly fortune.

(IV, 18)15

Here is another assault (from the same work), this one, like the last, also showing a touch of humor:
At all events, as I have already said, Fortune herself—who, according to those who attribute most influence to her, renders all things famous or obscure according to caprice rather than according to truth—since she has been able to exercise so much power even over the gods, as according to her capricious judgment, to render those of them famous whom she would, and those obscure whom she would; Fortune herself ought to occupy the place of preeminence among the select gods, since over them she has such pre-eminient power. Or must we suppose that the reason why she is not among the select is simply this, that even Fortune herself has had an adverse fortune? She was adverse, then, to herself, since, whilst ennobling others, she herself has remained obscure.

(VII, 3)16

As is true of many of the references to the pagan deities in St. Augustine, the mentions of Fortune "are for the most part merely incidental allusions"17--

Allusions made by Augustine to the pagan divinities and their rites are incidental to his primary purpose, which was to convince his contemporaries of the superiority of Christianity over paganism.18

The position of St. Thomas is similar to St. Augustine's. For instance, in his article "On Fate" in the Summa (Part I, Question 116, Article 1), St. Thomas says,

In this world some things seem to happen by fortune or chance. Now it happens sometimes that something is fortuitous or by chance, as compared to some higher cause, is directly intended.19

St. Thomas thus concludes,

Nothing hinders certain things from happening by fortune or by chance, if compared to their
proximate causes, but not if compared to the divine providence, whereby nothing happens at random in the world, as Augustine says. 20

To the orthodox and devout Christian, then Fortune presented a dilemma. The nature of God seems to allow no possibility for fortuitous events, but fortuity is also important. And, as Patch said above, both St. Augustine and St. Thomas adopt "The Aristotelian argument that chance is necessary in order to make room for free-will" (Goddess, p. 16).

But, as Patch shows, the problem was not so simply solved for many Christian writers who remain unsettled and who "retained both Fortune and the Christian God, without any precise attempt to reconcile the two conceptions" (Goddess, p. 17). One such writer, according to Patch (p. 18), was Boethius, and Patch gives full treatment to Boethius in this work and elsewhere.

At this point I believe it necessary to discuss in detail two of the more important probable influences on Chaucer's views on Fortune. While it is no doubt true that the ubiquity of the tradition of Fortune means that Chaucer could have picked up his notions almost anywhere, I think it would be a grave omission not to look a little more closely at The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius and the Roman de la Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun (the latter obviously strongly influenced by Boethius) and at the influence of these works on Chaucer.
Both of these works are, of course, tremendously significant not only throughout the Middle Ages but later. Boethius was translated by King Alfred, Jean de Meun, Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth; and Chaucer also translated the Roman. Extensive studies of the two works and their influence on Chaucer have been done: Bernard L. Jefferson, *Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1917), and Dean S. Fansler, *Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose* (1914; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965). Numerous other works also have a great deal to say about the influence of the Consolation and the Roman on Chaucer. For instance, Charles Muscatine's *Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California, 1964) shows how the two authors of the Roman are connected to the two stylistic traditions—the "Courtly" and the "Bourgeois"—in Chaucer's works. It is not my intention to summarize these studies, but to draw on them (as well as on others) and on the Consolation and the Roman themselves to show their similarity to (and probable influence on) Chaucer's views on Fortune. (I shall return to some of these sources in the next chapter.)

Of Boethius on Fortune, Patch says,

One of the most influential figures in medieval thought, the remarkable Boethius, of whose words echoes are found in literature
for a thousand years, sets forth a clear picture of the pagan goddess and, at the same time, obviously worships the Christian God, without showing us exactly how the two may exist together in one universe. While he gives a character sketch of Fortuna thoroughly in accord with that familiar in classical literature, and almost certainly based in large measure on his reading there, he only suggests a solution of the difficulty, taking his ideas in part from Aristotle. "Chance," we are told, allows for human free-will; fate is a servant of God; and chance, growing out of hidden causes, is also subject to Divine Providence [Goddess, pp. 17-18]:

[Wherefore, we may define chance thus: That it is an unexpected event of concurring causes in those things which are done to some end and purpose. Now the cause why causes so concur and meet so together, is that order proceeding with inevitable connexion, which, descending from the fountain of Providence, disposeth all things in their places and times.]21

Of these thousand years or so of "echoes," I am mainly concerned with those in Chaucer, about which Bernard Jefferson's detailed study is very instructive. Jefferson sees the influence of Boethius on Chaucer's thought in two major areas. The first, and most important, is that discussed above by Patch--"Providence"; the second, and not quite as important in this discussion of Fortune, is "Felicitee."

On "The Hierarchy of Heavenly Powers" in general, Jefferson says,

The system by which Providence controls the universe, according to Boethius, is complicated. Providence rules absolutely. Her chief minister is destiny. Under destiny are Fortuna, chance, and possibly other agencies . . . . Although the rule of
Providence is absolute, yet it is benevolent. This benevolence is poetically described through the figure of the "bond of love" which links all of the universe together in harmony.

(pp. 48-49)

What Patch says in his separate study of Boethius is comparable:

... down through the centuries ... scarcely anything occupied the attention of the philosophers more steadily than what is really the central problem of the Consolatio: chance in its relation to God and divine foresight, and in relation to man and his longing to shape his own destiny. ... Borrowing the Neoplatonic idea of the spiritual cosmos as an orb with God as centre and Fate in control of the circumference, Boethius suggested that Fate or chance—all that is apparently casual and changeable—is in the last analysis under the control of a rational God. This is the theme of the argument in the Consolatio, IV, pr. vi, 63 ff. ... How many times Fortuna appears in medieval literature in passages inspired directly or indirectly by Boethius no one can probably tell. ... As a logical consequence from the ideas in the Consolatio the proposition holds that the free will of man has some reality, without destroying the force of God's grace which is effected through external or internal circumstance. [I shall return to this subject later.] This the orthodox solution is found with variations from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas and still later. ... The answer adopted by Boethius is the answer of the Middle Ages as a whole and of Christianity. 22

Of the agencies in the hierarchy of Providence, "the one most frequently spoken of by Chaucer" is Fortune, and of Boethius specifically on Fortune, Jefferson says,
Boethius imagines Fortune concretely, as coming to him and herself arguing her case with him. His discussion of Fortune may be divided into three phases: (1) Her mutability (Book II). She plays with men, first flattering them with her gifts, then deceiving them, by taking those gifts away. Her gifts are riches, power, fame, and bodily pleasure. One day her face is bright; the next it is covered with a cloud. Her wheel always turns, bringing the proud to low estate, and the low to high estate, but the former process is the more frequent one. Men can be sure of nothing, for she plays just as she likes with free and bond. Absolutely without sympathy, she cares no more for one man than another. (2) Defense of Fortune by herself (2. p. 2). The gifts which I give are mine. If I favor men with prosperity for a while, I can take away again what I have already given. The world is my realm. I can do as I like therein. In taking my gifts a man thereby swears allegiance to me as his queen. Therefore he must abide by my laws. At death, it is true, he goes out of my reach, but until then, I can dispose of him as I like. Moreover I do one lasting favor for men even in deserting them. I show them who their true friends are, for the false friends always follow me. The true friends remain behind. (3) The deeper significance of Fortune, as dependent upon the deity (4. p7). Of a connection with Providence, Fortune herself does not seem to be aware, for she works blindly and wantonly. But behind her and governing her, is the all-wise Providence. Through the adversities of Fortune, Providence creates in men what we now call character. Through adversity they are made strong.

The purposes of Boethius, therefore, were highly serious, as in Fortune he saw the instrument of God. By her he attempted to make a logical explanation for the apparently illogical and unjust uncertainties of life. Boethius himself, however, did not dwell at greatest length upon the most important aspect of Fortune. He devoted far more time
to describing her fickleness, and her
picturesqueness. The description of
Fortune comes in the earlier part of
the Consolation, when Philosophy is con­
soling Boethius with what she calls her
"lighter remedies". In the latter part
of the Consolation, Boethius, though he
continues to speak of adversities, in the
main no longer does it through the alle­
gory of Fortune.

(pp. 49-50)

After this discussion of the Boethian view, Jefferson
surveys briefly the poetic history of Fortune and concludes
with a discussion of "those poets who follow the French
school, Gower, Chaucer, and Chaucer's follower, Lydgate."
"Of these three," says Jefferson, "Chaucer's discussion of
Fortune shows the most sympathetic understanding" of the
Consolation (p. 53).

Jefferson sees the "allusions to Fortune in Chaucer's
poetry" as consisting of "three rather long connected
passages and . . . many allusions, scattered pretty
generally" through the rest of his works (p. 54). The
long passages are The Book of the Duchess (11. 618-718),
Troilus and Criseyde (Book I, stanzas 121, 122, and 123),
and Fortune. The passage in The Book of the Duchess is
derived, according to Jefferson, from Machault (Romède de
Fortune), and from the Roman and is not, therefore, directly
Boethian. In this passage, Jefferson says, Chaucer "has
concerned himself primarily with the fickleness of Fortune,
rather than with her other attributes" (p. 55), and he
"was interested in the picturesque side of Fortune and in similes descriptive of her mutability" (p. 56). Jefferson adds, "The element of the excuse for Fortune, mentioned above as being found in Boethius' Consolation, is present in a shadowy form," when the Knight "says that after all she is not to blame" and that in her situation he would have done the same thing (p. 56 and 56n). But, according to Jefferson, "After this one extended attempt to describe through elaborate similes the fickleness of Fortune, Chaucer throughout the remainder of his poetry is content with very general charges of her falseness" (pp. 56-57).

The other two passages, says Jefferson, are "Boethian in origin" (p. 57). He sees the passage in Troilus as briefly summarizing the argument between Boethius and Fortune in the Consolation (Bk. II, pr. 2), with Troilus taking the part of Boethius and Pandarus that of "Fortune in defence of herself" (p. 57). Of the last of the three, the poem Fortune, Jefferson says,

The poem . . . contains all three of the elements: (1) the complaint, (2) the defence of Fortune by herself, (3) the deeper significance of Fortune. The complaint against Fortune and the defence of Fortune by herself are seen in the general plan of the poem. . . . Both complaint and defence, however, in addition to what has been discussed, contain deeper ideas which in the Consolation would proceed from the mouth of Dame Philosophy herself.
The poem, in its deeper significance, would seem to indicate a thorough assimilation of the Boethian Philosophy. The resemblances to the Consolation are not verbal. They, rather, are conclusions which result from a thoughtful reading of that work.

(pp. 57-58)

These "conclusions" include a sense of self-sufficiency—"a life independent of worldly cares and pleasures"—and a sense of the proper relation of Fortune to Providence (see pp. 58-59). Jefferson notes (p. 59) that sentiments akin to these are found in the Consolation and the Roman, but, he adds,

In the Consolation and the Roman, the ideas are scattered over many pages. It requires the close attention of a reader to fit the parts together in deriving the whole, for there is a little here and a little there, and much in between; but Chaucer has grasped the essentials, digested the whole, reduced it into compact form, and expressed in admirable poetry the entire teaching of Boethius on Fortune. . . . In a nutshell, [Fortune] contains much of the teaching of the Consolation, the turmoil of the world, the serenity of heaven, and the opportunity of men to escape from one to the other.

(p. 60)

Jefferson's first two elemental comparisons (that is, the complaint and the defense) are supported by verbal parallels; the latter point (the "deeper significance") is supported by his intelligent reading of Boethius and of Chaucer. It is clear, as Jefferson demonstrates, that the Chaucer passages are indebted to Boethius. For now, I shall leave the Chaucer passages and return to them at the end of this
chapter, at which point I shall look a little more closely at two of Chaucer's works to show the traditional elements.

A problem related to that of Fortune is that of Free Will. Jefferson discusses the relationship between Boethius's and Chaucer's views on this question, but I shall postpone discussing Free Will until I take up the subject of Grace.

Jefferson's examination of "felicitee" is also connected to the problem of Fortune. He suggests that "The object of Boethius in the Consolation is to teach what true happiness, or 'felicitee' as Chaucer terms it, is" (p. 48), and he notes that

Chaucer's whole conception of this fundamental question of the end of life or of "felicitee" . . . is unmistakably and to a large degree influenced by Boethius, . . . he discusses the problem in Boethian language, and . . . he reaches the same conclusions which Boethius reached.

(p. 81)

Jefferson demonstrates similarities between the two writers and their works. Those works by Chaucer which deal with false felicity, or reliance on the wrong kinds of happiness, are, according to Jefferson, The Monk's Tale, The House of Fame, The Former Age, and Lak of Stedfastnesse; those which deal with true felicity are about "gentilesse" (Gentilesse, The Wife of Bath's Tale, The Clerk's Tale, and The Franklin's Tale) or about truth (Truth and Lak of Stedfastnesse--
especially the former). The major significance, at this point of Jefferson's discussion, is that false felicity is, essentially, too much faith in the gifts of Fortune—honor, fame, position, reputation, riches, and so forth. (There is also, I think, a false felicity resulting from too much reliance on Nature's gifts, but I shall return to that subject later.)

In general, then, Jefferson piles up overwhelming evidence to show that the Boethian influence on Chaucer's views on Fortune is pervasive, that some of Chaucer's major statements on Fortune (and on significant subordinate and related topics) are indeed Boethian. It is possible, of course, that the Boethian influence is indirect, but the verbal parallels between the Consolation and the works of Chaucer are frequent.

What Chaucer did get indirectly from Boethius might well have come from the Roman de la Rose, a work which also had a profound impression on Chaucer. Dean Fansler (in Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose) notes that "although critics agree in the main on the extraordinary influence which the Roman de la Rose as a whole exerted upon Chaucer, they are by no means at one on the relative debt of the English poet to Lorris and Meung" (p. 6), and he adds,

Clearly, the work of each poet, unlike as Guillaume and Jean were, appealed to Chaucer for one purpose or another, as numerous unquestioned adaptations by the English
But the important part of the Roman, for my purposes here, is the long discussion of Fortune by Jean de Meun (Roman, pp. 105-42), and as Fansler notes, among the main sources for this passage are Boethius and Alain de Lille (see Fansler, p. 206). As Fansler states,

This long sermon of Reason's seems to have been one of Chaucer's favorite passages. The English poet made constant use of it and of other parts of Reason's discourse on kindred subjects, as appears from the parallels pointed out between the Roman and his work. The most elaborate treatment of Fortune occurs in the Book of the Duchess, Troilus and Criseyde, the Monkes Tale, and Fortune. (pp. 207-08)

Fansler then points out the parallels between the passages from Chaucer and those from the Roman. For instance, he compares the figure of Fortune's playing chess with the knight in the Book of the Duchess with the Roman (pp. 137-39 in the Robbins translation), "from which the English lines are clearly imitated" (Fansler, p. 208). After comparing the other passages, Fansler points out an important difference:

In his conception of Fortune, Chaucer differs from Jean de Meung in one important detail: the English poet sometimes represents Fortune as the executrix of God's will; e.g., T. iii. 617-23, v. 1541-47; Fortune, 65-72. In this respect, he is following Boethius. (p. 209)
Fansler then concludes,

But that Chaucer made liberal use of the Roman for his references to the fickle goddess no one can doubt. Probably many more short passages of his that have not been discussed owe either their form or their thought to Reason's sensible utterances. And on the whole, Chaucer's attitude appears to have been that of Jean's, as Pandarus's is that of Reason's: Defy Fortune, cease to worry about her gifts, do the work you were put here to do. And he even goes so far as to suggest that she can be made a useful ally:

Happe helpeth hardy man alway.

(L. 1773)

Thynk eek, Fortune, as wel thyselven wooste,
Helpeth hardy man unto his empryse.

(T. iv. 600-1)

--a more advanced, pragmatic attitude than Jean's entire disregard of Fortune.

(pp. 209-10)

Though I am not sure that Chaucer's attitude is that of Jean's I am sure that Chaucer knew and used the passage by Jean de Meun on Fortune.

It would be instructive, I think, to look at a few passages within this longer passage by Jean de Meun. In the beginning of the sermon on Fortune by Reason (who parallels Lady Philosophy), the Lover is advised that "more profitable / To man bad fortune is than easy lot" (p. 105). This is very close to Boethius (Consolation, ed. cit., p. 221): "For I think that Fortune, when she is opposite, is more profitable to men than when she is favourable." Both Boethius and Jean go on to explain that this is so because worldly prosperity deludes men into
security and because such prosperity leads men to ignore
the true felicity that lies within, the self-sufficiency
of the man whose love is properly directed. Reason then
advises the Lover,

You really own naught but what is within;
All other things are Fortune's property
Which she broadcasts or gathers at her will,
And gives or takes to make fools laugh or cry.
No wise man prizes aught that Fortune does;
Her turning wheel makes such nor glad nor glum.
Well may we doubt her instability.
Therefore the love of her is far from wise,
And most disgraceful in a man of wit;
Nor should it, easily eclipsed, delight.
By no means ought you set your heart on it;
Soil yourself never with so great a sin.
If ever you have called yourself a friend,
And yet have sinned in that you loved for gain,
You should be much disdained by all good men.
Believe me and be wise. The love I've named
You should renounce and leave as something vile.
(p. 114)

She advocates instead the proper love—"That [which]
springs from charity" (p. 117). Reason then delivers this
admonition against Fortune:

Take care, then, that you naught from her accept
Or help or honor; let her turn her wheel
Forever and a day without a rest,
Blindfolded, sitting in the midst of it.
She blinds the rich with honor and renown--
Others with poverty. But when she will
She takes back all her gifts. Great fool is he who
Who finds in anything delight or grief,
For certainly he can defend himself
By power of will alone. Another thing
Most certain is: men say she is divine
And raise her to the skies, which is not right.
Nor rhyme nor reason gives her heavenly home;
Her house is perilous instead of being blest.
(p. 124)
Here are some of the traditional characteristics of Fortune (the wheel, the blindfold, the notion of the gifts given without prevenient mercy, and the giving-taking quality); here is Reason's answer—"Don't pay attention to Fortune; ignore her"; and here, too, is the denial of her divinity. Reason then describes Fortune's home (see pp. 125-29; a description which obviously owes much to Alain de Lille), and she surveys Fortune's actions in history (using some of the same examples Chaucer uses in The Monk's Tale).

These two works—The Consolation of Philosophy and the Roman de la Rose—are two of the most important among Chaucer's numerous sources, and the treatment of Fortune in the two quite probably influenced Chaucer's own. But we cannot overlook the possible influence of Alain de Lille, who was influenced by Boethius and who, in turn, influenced Jean de Meun.

Alain's two major works—De Planctu Naturae and the Anticlaudianus—are more important to this study for their views on Nature; however, there are some interesting segments in Alain on Fortune. Little is said explicitly of Fortune in the Complaint, but Nature (who visits the poet in the manner of Lady Philosophy to Boethius) tells Alain that wisdom "is the true cure for error, the only solace for human misfortune, alone the morning-star of the night of humanity, the special redemption from thy
miser" (This is, of course, similar to Philosophy's "consolation" of Boethius in his misfortunes.) At one point, Nature seems to make Fortune the scourge of God:

He who abuses the gifts of Nature in the waste of ungoverned prodigality is stripped of the gifts of Fortune as a penalty for his lawless extravagance.

(p. 89)

This would suggest that the gifts of Fortune are not really fortuitous after all but rather are based in some sense on merit; however, Alain does not say much about this subject here, and I can find no further mention of this notion in Alain's two major works.

The Anticlaudian has much more to say about Fortune, who is one of the figures in the latter part of Alain's pageant. After Nature has created the perfect man, various personifications come to present gifts; Nobility, however, is unable to bring her gifts, "since she can do nothing except what Fortune provides." Thus, Nobility goes to visit Fortune, and Alain describes Fortune's isle and her home (pp. 139-41). The isle is "agitated by varying motions and shaken by continuous movement"; "it retains no form, separate disturbances change it into various alternatives." And on the isle, "a changing grove and an inconsistent tree spring forth"--"One flourishes, the many wither, and one blossoms, others lose their blooms"; "a various fortune changes them" (p. 139). In general, "Much
hazard is operative here through the fickleness of chance." Alain then notes that here "the nightingale rarely sings, or the lark makes [sic] music; more often the owl prophesies calamitous events, the messenger of adverse fortune and the herald of sorrow" (p. 140); next he describes the two rivers, one sweet and one unpleasant (pp. 140-41). Finally, Alain depicts Fortune's house, which "slopes downhill and suffers every fury of winds and undergoes the tempests of heaven" (p. 141). All of this represents Fortune's fickleness, her duplicity, her instability, and if this were not enough, Alain describes her explicitly:

Fortune is inconstant, uncertain, mutable, wavering, erring, unstable, vagrant, who, while she is thought to abide, falls, and feigns joys by a false smile. Unkind in her caresses, cloud-bringing in her brilliance, poor and rich, mild, ferocious, most sweet, gall-bitter, wailing in her laughing, wandering in her resting, blind in seeing, abiding in levity, firm in falling, faithful in falsity, fickle in truth and stable in her moving, preserving this alone steadfast— that she is never steadfast, retaining this alone faithful— that she knows not how to be faithful, trustworthy in this alone— that she is always proved false, stable in this alone— that she always errs inconstant. Her form seduces the beholder by its two-faced aspect. For the front part of her head is luxuriantly adorned with curls, while the other part bewails its baldness. One eye twinkles gaily while the other flows forth in tears; this is dull and listless, while that gleams. Part of her face lives, inflamed by a living color; part dies, which pallidness possesses, by which influence her countenance expires, her face languishes, and its form dissolves.
One hand gives, the other takes back the gift. This enlarges the present, this diminishes the contributions; that grants, this withdraws; this compresses, that relaxes. Her gait, uneven, varying, retrograde, erring, goes back as it approaches and recedes much in its progress, equally swift and slow in its going. Now Fortune glitters in a brighter toga, now she lies vulgarly in poor attire, now stands forth an orphan in dress and seems to bewail her former charms. She spins a rapidly turning wheel, and no rest concludes the labor of its motion, nor do leisure periods stay its movement. For when often the exertion tires her right hand, the left succeeds it and succours its fatigued sister and drives the motion of the wheel more swiftly. The rapacious whirling of this, the rapid, violent plundering, the hazardous vehemence, entangling men,—forces all to endure the jests of fate, and compels men to descend into various calamities. These it oppresses, these it relieves; casts down these, raises up those. While Croesus holds the summit of the wheel, Codrus clings to the lowest part; Julius ascends, Magnus descends, and Sulla lies low, Marius rises, but, the crisis turned, Sulla comes back, Marius is pressed down. Thus the rotation ravages in turn, and tumbling Fortune varies vicissitudes.

This is one of the fullest and best descriptions of Fortune in medieval literature; it pulls together many threads of the medieval tapestry of Fortune; and the character of Fortune gives free reign to Alain's penchant for oxymoron and for paradox in general. The passage is undoubtedly Boethian in origin (see for example Cornog's note [p. 183] on the Wheel, which he says "is almost certainly derived from Book II, Prose 1, Metre 1 and
Prose 2" of the Consolation, and the influence on Jean de Meun's description of Fortune's isle is unmistakable.

It was Dante, though, according to Patch, who gave "poetic reality to what is really implicit in the treatment in Boethius": to Dante (Inferno, Canto VII, II. 67-96), "the capricious goddess becomes a ministering angel entirely subservient to the Christian God":

She still appears to be arbitrary, she still receives the scorn and reproaches of mankind; but she has her own concealed method in her apparent madness, and to all blame she is serenely indifferent . . . .

(Goddess, pp. 18-19)

Here is what Virgil says in the Inferno when Dante asks about "Dame Fortune":

And he to me: "O credulous mankind, is there one error that has wooed and lost you? Now listen, and strike error from your mind:

That king whose perfect wisdom transcends all, made the heavens and posted angels on them to guide the eternal light that it might fall

from every sphere to every sphere the same. He made earth's splendors by a like decree and posted as their minister this high Dame, the Lady of Permutations. All earth's gear she changes from nation to nation, from house to house, in changeless change through every turning year.

No mortal power may stay her spinning wheel. The nations rise and fall by her decree. None may foresee where she will set her heel:

she passes, and things pass. Man's mortal reason cannot encompass her. She rules her sphere as the other gods rule theirs. Season by season
her changes change her changes endlessly, and those whose turn has come press on her so, she must be swift by hard necessity.

And this is she so railed at and reviled that even her debtors in the joys of time blaspheme her name. Their oaths are bitter and wild,

but she in her beatitude does not hear. Among the Primal Beings of God's joy she breathes her blessedness and wheels her sphere."28

And, thus, there arose a new tradition among the poets who wanted in some way to retain Fortune and, if possible, to formulate a compromise within a Christian framework. The early Petrarch, for instance, refers to Fortune many times but "counsels mankind to oppose Fortuna's wiles with wisdom and with spiritual devotion" (Goddess, p. 20); the later Petrarch, however, "takes the orthodox position of the Church Fathers, denying any existence to the goddess" (p. 21). Similarly, the early Boccaccio refers to her often (especially in his classical apparatus) but later moves to the Christian conception (see Goddess, p. 22).29 In general, Patch says, "Philosophy tried to annihilate her [Fortuna], but poetry was able to keep her, whether in a form agreeable to the Christian Church or not" (p. 26).

It is interesting to speculate, at this point, on what were the reasons for retaining this pagan concept in a thoroughly Christian age. Patch is not very helpful on
this subject. I would suggest that one good function Fortune fulfilled, especially for poets, was to act as a sort of scapegoat. After all, one could not blame God for his misfortunes—unless he were to accept the notion that his adversities were meted out as just punishment; consequently, the poets berated Fortune. (It would be interesting to study the history of complaints about Fortune in Old and Middle English poetry, including as a sub-topic the **ubi sunt** formula.)

In the Middle Ages, it is clear, the situation in England did not differ greatly from that on the Continent—"the pagan Fortuna survives," for

> wherever we turn . . . we find the same motifs, the same "remedies" for her onslaught . . . occasionally the Christian denied her existence, or retained her by means of a figure not unlike that which is found in Dante's *Inferno*.

*(Goddess, pp. 26-27)*

In the Old English period, Patch sees "the figure of a goddess of ruthless and inscrutable destiny in Wyrd, who, we remember, 'gēo $\tilde{a}$ . . . swā hīo scel' ["always goes as it must"; *Beowulf*, 1. 455]" *(Goddess, pp. 30-31)*. Alfred, in his translation of the *Consolation*, renders "Fortune the goddess by 'woruldsæld' ["worldly blessings"] and fortune in the abstract by 'wyrd' ["fate," "chance," "fortune"]" *(Goddess, p. 30)*. Of other English literary figures, Patch says,
John Gower, as we should properly suppose, annihilates the goddess, unless he takes her as a symbol for astrological influence; Piers Plowman presents her simply as the personified abstraction riches; many writers in English and Scottish keep her in the pagan figure.

(p. 30)

Patch has little to say here about Chaucer, but he does have a separate article on Chaucer and Fortune. I shall return to this subject at the end of this chapter, but now I wish to turn from the historical survey for a closer look at Fortune and her attributes.

The Character and Purview of Fortune/Fortuna

In the second chapter of his major study ("Traditional Themes of Fortune in Mediaeval Literature," pp. 35-87 in Goddess), Patch surveys the conception of Fortune as a goddess, the epithets and technical terms of her cult, the goddess's general appearance and character, the limits of her powers and the field of her activities, and the various literary formulas used in expressing these other topics (or, the "themes" of the tradition; see Goddess, p. 35). On the subject of Fortune as goddess, Patch suggests that some confusion exists:

Mere personification, or the attribution of a proper name, does not imply that Fortuna is strictly a goddess. She is a goddess only when she remains in power as such, that is, while she actually bestows. What she bestows, what we take as the abstraction 'fortuna,'--good fortune, wealth, riches, and the like,--is often personified, and this figure may easily be confused with
the divinity. This abstraction, when personified, is particularly marked by the qualities of the gifts. It is typical of persons endowed with these qualities, and hence may conveniently be called a 'type.' On the other hand, a symbol as a unit of allegory does not attempt to represent the original idea by reproducing its characteristics; the goddess should not require identification by these means. Fortuna is not particularly fortunate while she is meting out her gifts. In this way she is more easily distinguishable from a type than is such a figure as Justice, who to a certain extent must be just. Fortuna is, then, purely symbolic. She may not suffer what as a goddess she inflicts, whereas the type must continually suffer reversals of that kind.

Between the two figures of symbol and type, however, there is continual danger of confusion; and, when, it means that the author did not have a clear idea of the deity.

(pp. 36-37)

To Fortune as goddess a long series of adjectives and epithets apply, often contradictory: beautiful-ugly, good-bad, blind, double, fickle, uncertain, inconstant, invidious, perverse, traitorous, and so forth (see Goddess, p. 38; cf. the passage from Alain, quoted above, pp. 44-45); and as a goddess, she is often associated with Ventura or Aventure and with Eüre or Maleüre (see Goddess, pp. 39-42).

Fortune's physical appearance, as Patch shows, betrays her character:

Fortune sometimes has two faces, one beautiful, the other ugly. In Boccaccio she has great stature and a strange figure, her eyes are burning and seem to threaten, her face is cruel and horrible, her long thick hair hangs over her mouth. Elsewhere we find that she changes her countenance
toward us, and this change is figured in two separate faces, one of which may be black, the other white. The idea of Fortune's change of mood is symbolized in her smile or frown. When in bad humor she makes a face... at us. Fortuna is blind, or more often blindfolded, to show that she has no regard for merit. Yet sometimes her eyes appear, and very expressively, as when one of them weeps and the other laughs.

(Goddess, pp. 42-44)

Other characteristics include hands which, like the face, are divided in significance, a forelock and baldness or flowing hair, occasionally wings, and often the association with a ball or wheel; her garments include a robe of many or changeable colors (see Goddess, pp. 44-46; cf. these details of appearance with the passage by Alain). More specifically concerning her character, Patch says,

In character she is proud, subject to wrath, and consequently vindictive and malign. In effecting her will she is deceitful and dishonest. Does she ever feel shame and pity? She sometimes flatters, but she is in general such an envious creature that authors are fond of dwelling on this idea. She envies any man's prosperity and deprives him of it. In satisfying her desire she is thoroughly unjust and favors the undeserving. She is therefore quite irrational. Inconstant she is of course; this trait is made so much of, indeed, and is treated in a variety of ways...

(On this last trait, inconstancy, Patch spends a great deal of time [pp. 49-57], in order to demonstrate that this is indeed her primary trait.)
The power of Fortuna extends into many fields (see Goddess, pp. 57-80): occasionally she has complete control over human life, but more often over the secular areas of world and court. On the nature of the gifts she bestows, Patch says,

Fortuna is, of course, primarily the giver. She gives, but, we must remember, she takes away again; and yet she does no injustice, for, after all, the possessions are hers. These possessions are of various kinds; but first and foremost there is a general notion that Fortune deals in the mundane, the temporal, in goods of mortal concern. These we may subdivide appropriately as (1) dignities—honor, fame, glory, and the like; (2) riches, which are of course the mundane gifts par excellence. Our abstract "fortune" of to-day is in some uses dominated by this latter idea.

Fortune, as Patch says, not only bestows gifts. She can also take them back, and thus we move into the realm of medieval tragedy:

Of course the greatest injuries one can receive from Fortune nearly all consist in the fall from a high position, from a state of happiness in general, as well as from a state of honor. "High to low" is the great theme in the middle ages as well as in classical times. Since this change in man's fortune is what really constitutes the medieval ideal of tragedy, we may call this the "tragic theme."

Although this bringing of men from high to low is one of Fortune's major activities, she has others (see pp. 80-85): she is often associated with lots or "sortes" and with
games in general, especially dice and chess; she frequently makes a prey of man, catching him either in a net or on limed twigs; and she is often associated with a continuing warfare (with man).

Patch's third chapter--"Functions and Cults" (Goddess, pp. 88-122)--surveys more of Fortuna's activities by relating various ancient cults of Fortuna to specific areas of control in the later Middle Ages. The Fortune of Love was very active in the Middle Ages:

She is mentioned explicitly as taking a particular part; she aids the bold; she gives the guerdons of love; she guides the lovers; she brings them together and makes them fall in love; she brings about the consummation of their love; and she causes the birth of their children.

(p. 94)

In general, "Fortuna actually does or undoes the work of the God of Love" (p. 96), but, we must remember, "This identification of the two figures of Fortune and Love only means that they had very much in common, and that in one aspect Fortune was certainly regarded as concerned with the affairs of love" (p. 98). Fortune the Guide is "the conception of Fortune as leading mankind on a way of her own choosing, and so giving men the various adventures they experience" (p. 99). Then there is the Fortune of the Sea:

The sea-figure, comparing life to a sea and one's career to a vessel of which Fortune is in charge, is used with such
frequency in discussions of the work of Fortuna that it becomes a theme of unusual importance. . . . Life is, therefore, a sea of trouble stirred up by Fortuna, and with our light skiff we venture on its waves.

(p. 101)

There is also the Fortune of Combat:

Fortune brings enemies together to provoke a fight. She shows herself completely unfavorable, and sometimes causes the downfall of one particular side; but she is famous for changing sides and may return to us. She is often in doubt herself, but she may again show her smiling face to our hosts; she aids us, and increases our expectations; she bestows victory, and she brings peace. In these ways Fortune lives up to her reputation of having particular power in warfare and combat.

(pp. 108-10)

The Fortune of Fame is closely connected to this last:

Since Fortune sends victory in warfare to one side or the other, since her gifts include dignities most conspicuously, and since on her depends success in various kinds of achievements, she is therefore much concerned with the bestowal of fame. She and Fame are at all times closely associated, but sometimes she appears actually doing the work of Fame.

(p. 110)

Two more distinct cults include the Personal Fortune, responsible for one's own state of affairs, and Fortuna Publica, responsible for the affairs of city and state (see pp. 112-14). The Fortune of Time and the Fortune of Death are associated with Atropos (as the others are associated with Lachesis; see p. 89): Fortune, like Time, is often associated with a glass or a scythe (p. 115);
she is also frequently connected to Death (that is, with the causing of death), especially in medieval elegiac poetry (see pp. 117-20). In general, then, as Patch says,

To all intents and purposes Fortune has become the goddess of love, of the sea, of combat, of fame, the deity of the individual, of the city and of the state, of time and of death. She is the bestower, and she is sometimes kind and sometimes unkind.

(p. 121)

Thus, though the cults may not be so specifically named as in Roman times, there is in the Middle Ages the suggestion of survivals of older cults (see p. 122).

In Chapter IV, "The Dwelling-Place of Fortune" (Goddess, pp. 123-46), Patch sets out the various abodes of the goddess. Frequently, she dwells on a remote and inaccessible island, mountain, or both; she is often enclosed in a sumptuous garden and associated with a tree whose fruit suggest the gifts of Fortune; and finally, the richness of her abode is often suggested by a palace or court. (Some of these elements we have seen in Alain—see p. 43 above.)

Chapter V Patch devotes to a long dissertation on the tradition of "Fortune's Wheel" (Goddess, pp. 147-77). Patch sees the Wheel as "a symbol with an almost limitless significance":

At one time or another the circular form has been used to typify speed, travel, guidance, the endless round of monotonous
existence, changeableness, the sun, the earth, God, and eternity. . . .

In order to suit the character of Fortune most appropriately, the wheel must in some way represent the idea of variation and change. It must do so even in the case of the Christian figure, for she too is outwardly a variable creature. This idea the wheel can present in at least two ways: (1) it would seem untrustworthy enough merely in its function of turning, and (2) it would form an insecure footing for the goddess.

(p. 147-48)

Patch traces the figure of the Wheel from classical art and suggests that the main tradition from classical literature is the figure of Fortune turning her wheel, on which mankind and the estate of man depend, and that this idea has some actual beginnings in early Roman times.

(p. 154)

Then Patch follows the figure through medieval literature and suggests its significance for the Middle Ages:

The wheel, then, in the Middle Ages means relative exaltation or humiliation in worldly dignity. It is turned by Fortune, and man is actually attached to the rim, where he suffers the consequent changes of position.

(p. 159)

In summarizing this topic, Patch says,

The wheel as a symbol should be dwelt upon particularly because it is so medieavai in its conception. The mediaeval imagination was primarily concrete: it necessarily visualized the symbol as an actual image with the real figures of men turning upon it.

(p. 176)
The ubiquity of the Wheel of Fortune in the Middle Ages is an interesting phenomenon and suggests something of the thorough Christianization of the originally pagan concept. For instance, the Wheel is portrayed in the rose-window of the south porch of the cathedral at Amiens, and, according to Emile Mâle, "The example at Amiens is not unique." Mâle says that "the Wheel of Fortune at Amiens offers a new subject for meditation" and that the devout could contemplate that "Man's work, man's knowledge, man's effort should not be for the possession of any such transient good." And so this pagan notion of the Wheel of Fortune persisted, even to becoming part of the medieval church itself—and part of the modern church, too, at least in the "Wheel of Chance" at Catholic charity carnivals.

In his "Conclusion" (Goddess, pp. 178-80), Patch suggests some of "the peculiar marks of a religious growth that distinguish it from a poetic fiction":

they are somewhat as follows: (1) continued vitality, which keeps the personified figure from becoming outworn; (2) the independence of any historical period, to show that the cult is something more than a part of some artistic creed or aesthetic fad; (3) an automatic development of external media in which we find the figure embodied—a growth of symbolism, in other words; (4) the use of ritual for purposes of devotion or for an indication of faith. (pp. 178-79)

And, he adds,
Of these marks, Fortuna shows all, except possibly the fourth. And even there, the prevalence of games of chance, throwing up a coin to decide an issue, and various other minor superstitions which somehow fail to go out of usage, seem to give the visible sign of some sort of credulity, however flippantly concealed or humorously defended.

Thus Patch ends his major study of the tradition of Fortune:

I offer no apology for drawing on it so heavily, for the thoroughness of his study--the breadth and diversity of his sources--recommends it as almost definitive.

Chaucer and the Tradition of Fortune

Before leaving the subject of Fortune and before treating the Fortune-Nature-Grace theme in The Canterbury Tales, I would like to cover briefly some of Chaucer's comments on Fortune (exclusive of The Canterbury Tales). Some of the major passages on Fortune have already been mentioned, but I would like to look at a couple of them more closely.

Some scholars have touched on this question--usually dealing with predestination in the Troilus or with Fortune in The Knight's Tale or The Monk's Tale. Patch (in the works cited) touches on Fortune in Chaucer, and he has a separate article on the question ("Chaucer and Lady Fortune," MLR, 22 [1927], 377-88). Unfortunately, his unpublished dissertation on the subject of Fortune and Chaucer is not available; I can only assume he adapted it
in his published works.

Before getting to Chaucer's passages and Patch's comments, I should say something about the pervasiveness of the notion of Fortune in Chaucer's works. According to the Chaucer Concordance, there are about two-hundred forty occurrences of the word "fortune" in Chaucer's works, although almost half of them are in Chaucer's translation of Boethius. This tally, however, does not take into account other forms of the word ("fortuned," "fortunel," "fortunes," "fortunest," and fortunous") or the many occurrences of numerous synonyms ("cas," "chance," "hap," "sort," "aventure," etc.).33 As Patch says,

References to the great problem [of Fortune] appear all through the work of Chaucer; and he is both casual and systematic in his consideration of what is involved.

("Chaucer," p. 379)

In considering The Book of the Duchess, Patch discusses briefly the "long treatment of Fortune," in which, he says, "The point is this: the sufferings of these present times, in the loss of the Duchess, are not to be ascribed to a rational God; they come from a whimsical deity, who is unconcerned with justice and mercy" ("Chaucer," pp. 379 and 380). He adds, "The usual formulae associated with the tradition occur in the Book of the Duchess, and similar apparatus appears again in the House of Fame, transferred, however, to Fame herself" (p. 380). Patch does not
develop his ideas on _The Book of the Duchess_, but the "formulae associated with the tradition" must surely include the already mentioned chess game and the following lines describing the fickle goddess:

```
She ys th'envyouse charite
That ys ay fals, and semeth wel,
So turneth she hyr false whel
Aboute, for hyt ys nothyng stable,
Now by the fire, now at table;
For many oon hath she thus yblent.
She ys ple of enchaunteent,
That semeth oon and ys not soo.
The false thef!
```

(BD, 642-50)

This, then, is a "traditional" complaint about Fortune's falseness, her envy of prosperity, her "false whel," her lack of stability, and her ability to delude.

Excluding what Patch says of some of _The Canterbury Tales_, I should note that he makes a good point about two other works. He sees in the _Troilus_ and in the ballad _Fortune_ a "Christian conception" of Fortune. In evidence he cites these two passages (see "Chaucer," pp. 381 and 383-85):

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Lo, th'execucion of the majestee
That al purveyeth of his rightwysnesse,
That same thing "Fortune" clepen ye,
Ye blinde bestes, ful of lewednesse!
```

(Fortune, 65-68)

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But 0 Fortune, executrice of wyrdes,
0 influences of thise hevenes hye!
Soth is, that under God ye ben our hierdes,
Though to us bestes ben the cause wrie.
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(TC, III, 617-20)
I prefer not to deal with the Troilus, but I would like to examine the ballad in detail. For the reader's convenience, I present the poem in full:

"Fortune"

Balades de Visage sans Peinture

I. Le Pleintif contre Fortune

This wrecched worldes tranmutacioun,
As wele or wo, now povre and now honour,
Withouten ordre or wys discrecioun
Governed is by Fortunes errour.
But natheles, the lak of hir favour
Ne may nat don me singen, though I dye,
"Jay tout perdu mon tems et mon labour;"
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye!

Yit is me left the light of my resoun,
To knowen fremd fro fo in thy mirour.
So muchel hath yit thy whirling up and doun
Ytaught me for to knowen in an hour.
But trevely, no force of thy reddour
To him that over himself hath the maystrye!
My suffisaunce shal be my socour;
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye!

O Socrates, thou stidfast champioun,
She never mighte be thy tormentour;
Thou never dreddest hir oppressioun,
No in hir chere founde thou no savour.
Thou knewe wel the deceit of hir colour,
And that hir moste worshipe is to lye.
I knowe hir eek a fals dissimulour;
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye!

II. La responunse de Fortune au Pleintif

No man is wrecched, but himself it wene.
And he that hath himself hath suffisaunce.
Why seystow thanne I am to thee so lene,
That hast thyself out of my governaunce?
Sey thus: "Graunt mercy of thyn haboundaunce
That thou hast lent or this." Why wolt thou stryve?
What wostow yit how I thee wol avaunce?
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.
I have thee taught divisoun hitwene
Frend of effect, and frend of countenaunce;
Thee ncesth nat the galle of noon hyene,
That cureth eyen derked for penaunce;
Now seestow cler, that were in ignoraunce.
Yit halt thy ancre, and yit thou mayst arryve
Ther bountee berth the keye of my substaunce;
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.

How many have I refused to sustene,
Sin I thee fostred have in thy plesaunce!
Woltow than make a statut on thy quene
That I shall been ay at thy ordinaunce?
Thou born art in my regne of variaunce,
Aboute the wheel with other most thou dryve.
My lore is bet than wikke is thy grevaunce;
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.

III. La respoune du Pleintif countre Fortune

Thy lore I damne, it is adversitee.
My frend maystow nat reven, blind goddesse
That I thy frendes knowe, I thanke hit thee.
Tak hem agayn, lat hem go lye on presse!
The negardye in keping hir richesse
Prenostik is thou wolt hir tour assayle;
Wikke appetyt comth ay before syknesse:
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

La respoune de Fortune countre le Pleintif

Thou pinchest at my mutabilitee,
For I thee lente a drope of my richesse,
And now mo lyketh to withdrawe me.
Why sholdestow my realtee oppresse?
The see may ebe and flowen more or lesse;
The welkne hath might to shyne, reyne, or hayle;
Right so mot I kythen my brotelnesse:
In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Lo, th'execucion of the majestee
That al purveyeth of his rightwysnesse,
That same thing "Fortune" clepen ye,
Ye blinde bestes, ful of lewednesse!
The hevene hath propretee of sikernesse,
This world hath ever resteles travayle;
Thy laste day is ende of myn intresse:
In general, this reule may nat fayle.
Lenvoy de Fortune

Princes, I prey you, of your gentilesse,
Lat nat this man on me thus crye and pleyne,
And I shal quyte you your bisinesse
At my requeste, as three of you or twyne;
And, but you list releve him of his peyne,
Preyeth his beste fren'd, of his noblesse,
That to som beter estat he may atteyne.

The "plaintiff against Fortune" calls attention to
the mutability of this wretched world, which is governed by
"Fortunes errour" (note the rich-poor, weal-woe motif and
its similarity to the Middle English poem above, see p. 23).
In spite of this situation, though, the plaintiff defies
Fortune. He is "left the light of [his] resoun" and knows
"frend fro fo" in Fortune's mirror (cf. Roman: "Misfortune
shows . . . Most clearly who deserves the name of friend";
p. 107). The plaintiff notes that he who "over himself
hath the maystrye," he who has "suffisaunce" (cf. Roman,
p. 108), is not bothered by Fortune. He then invokes that
"stidfast" example, Socrates, mentioned in both the Roman
and the Consolation as exemplary of the way to face For­
tune.

Fortune responds that no man is wretched unless he
thinks so, and she too lauds self-sufficiency. But she
asks, "Why complain against me, if you are self-sufficient?
Why not thank me for the abundance I have lent you so far?"
She adds, "I have taught you the difference between a
friend in deed and a friend in appearance only. Now you
see clearly." (Again, cf. *Roman.*) She continues, "Will you have me in your control—you who were born in my reign, under control of my wheel? My teaching is better than your grievance is wicked."

The plaintiff damns her teaching—"it is adversitee." He thanks the "blind goddesse" for his true friends but asks her to take back her friends, whose prosperity foreshadows a fall.

She answers, "You chide my mutability because I lent some of my riches and because it now pleases me to withdraw them. Why should you suppress my royalty? I declare my fickleness ("brotelnesse") as the sea ebbs and flows, as the weather changes." She says, "You call 'Fortune' the execution of the majesty (Providence) which provides all. Heaven is stable; the world is mutable. When you die, my reign over you ends."

Then, in the envoy, Fortune addresses us: "Let not this man complain about me and I will reward your trouble. And, unless you relieve his pain, ask his best friend of his nobleness to help him to a better state."

This paraphrase brings out many of the traditional elements and attributes we have seen: the complaint about and defiance of fortune, her fickleness and instability, her "loan" of goods to men, her instruction of men (especially about true friends), her turning wheel, her
prosperity which foreshadows adversity, her utter control over worldly matters, her subordination to heavenly Providence, and so on. From this alone it should be apparent that Chaucer thoroughly knew and made use of the medieval tradition of the goddess Fortune.
CHAPTER II

NATURE

O Nature, mother of everything! universally working Goddess, Heavenly and venerable Queen, ever creating! Master of all, mastered by none, lighting and leading! Governing all, praised by all, first of all things! Indestructible, first-born, blossoming yet ancient! Inexorable in your course, you guide the stars of the night; Soundlessly you tread the light summit of your footsteps! Holy ornament of the Gods, you infinite end of all things; Common to all beings, yet completely unique! Self-generated, fatherless, eternal first power, Blossom-drawer, uniter of love, mingling all things; Beginning and End, imparter of life and nourishment, Completely self-sufficient, just, loving mother of the graces, Ruling in heaven, earth, and the seas! Severe and sharp to the wicked, kind and loving to the obedient! Omniscient and plentiful of gifts, ruling Goddess; Nourisher of whatever grows, deliverer of all that ripens: You are the father and mother and nurse of all things! Quickly-bearing, many seeded, fulfillment of time; Full of art, shaper of forms, ever creating; Eternal mover of perpetuity, rich in power and intelligence; Swiftly your steps roll in endless circles; Course of perfection, ever flowing, transforming images; Gloriously enthroned, you alone execute your will At all times: elevated above all rulers, mighty and thundering,
Unshakeable, of firm foundation, firebreathing, All mastering, eternal life, deathless wisdom! All things are yours. For you alone are the creator of everything. Therefore, 0 Goddess! I pray to you that you bring in good time Peace, health, and increase to all things. (Tenth Orphic Hymn)
Ernst Robert Curtius notes that the Orphic hymns are "a collection made in the third or fourth century by an unknown author, presumably in Egypt or Asia Minor," and that "The tenth hymn [quoted above] is dedicated to Physis." Curtius says of the hymn:

Over eighty predicates of the goddess are compressed into its thirty hexameters. She is the age-old Mother of All; father, mother, nurse, sustainer; all-wise, all-bestowing, all-ruling; regulator of the gods; creator; first-born; eternal life and immortal providence. This universal goddess is not the personification of an intellectual concept. She is one of the last religious experiences of the late-pagan world. She possesses inexhaustible vitality. But what varied masks the Orphic Physis can assume?

This Physis/Natura, who is one of the last vestiges of "the late-pagan world," has a career which parallels that of Tyche/Fortuna. Both make the transition from the pagan to the Christian world, in spite of the Christian polemics against them; however, Natura's role is a bit more complex than Fortuna's. By the later Middle Ages she is, at times, a personification or goddess in poetry (as is Fortuna), but Natura becomes confused with the concept of Nature—an increasingly important notion in the later Middle Ages. Essentially, the distinction is that Natura is the power subordinate to God but superior to everything earthly, while Nature is the "everything earthly"—all created existence. And, at any one time, a medieval poet might be evoking either or both of these meanings. But, as we
shall see, the problem of definition is not even this simple.

One clear indication of the problem of definition occurs in the Appendix to Lovejoy and Boas's Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity. In their Appendix, "Some Meanings of 'Nature,'" they give sixty-six meanings of "physis" or "nature"! It is not really necessary for me to go into the kind of fine distinctions in meaning that Lovejoy and Boas do, but I shall give both a sense of the range of meaning and a sense of the historical context up to and including Chaucer's time. I shall briefly survey the important earlier sources, concentrating more attention on the later works which were probably Chaucer's sources--Boethius, Alain de Lille, and Jean de Meun.

The Tradition of Nature/Natura

Perhaps C.S. Lewis is right when he says that "The pre-Socratic philosophers of Greece invented Nature." We cannot be sure of the origin of the concept, but we can begin with the pre-Socratics. To them, Nature was used "to designate the primordial stuff or underlying substratum persisting through all change"; it was conceived of as "an intrinsic principle that accounted for the ceaseless change or becoming of things." In addition, "the very process of becoming, it seems, was itself called Φύσις [physis, or "nature"]." Later, apparently, "the
term was applied to the changing things themselves taken in their totality," and, interestingly, "This is possibly the most common sense of nature in modern usage."

Parmenides tried "to explain all becoming in terms of one material principle (e.g., water or air or fire)" and concluded with "the very denial of nature as process"; to him "all change is but sensory illusion." Then followed other attempts "to reconcile being, stable object of intellect, with the becoming of sensory experience" (see, for example, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, and Democritus). This very brief discussion of the pre-Socratics at least gives us a beginning and a sense of the wide-ranging philosophical problems involved in defining "nature."

The first really important figure, however, is Plato. Lewis, discussing the classical origin of the figures Physis and Natura in "those ancients whom the Middle Ages knew," says that one

will find what he is looking for. But he will not find very much of it. . . . He will find nothing (where he might hope to find it) in Plato's Timaeus. Or, as Lewis notes in another work,

Something that almost might be called an accident--the loss of Plato's other works and the partial survival of the Timaeus (interprete Chalcidio)--had concentrated attention on the cosmogonic elements in Plato. [But] Nature [is] not made much of in the Timaeus itself. . . .
George D. Economou, in his dissertation on personified Nature (op. cit.), points out that "unlike Aristotle, Plato does not personify physis/nature"; Economou notes, however, that Plato does give a three-fold classification of Nature:

For the present we have only to conceive of three natures: first, that which is in process of generation; secondly, that in which the generation takes place; and thirdly, that of which the thing generated is a resemblance naturally produced.

As another scholar, R.G. Collingwood, says,

The world of nature [in the Timaeus] is a material organism or animal, alive everywhere with spontaneous movement; the intelligible world is called an immaterial organism or animal; alive, because the forms are dynamically related to each other in virtue of the dialectical connexions between them, but not alive with movement, because movement implies space and time, and the world of forms has in it no space or time.

Economou asserts that, in the Timaeus, what is "Closest to what Aristotle calls Physis, his sublunary world, is Plato's corporeal world, created by the stellar gods at the behest of the Demiurge (Tim. 41 ff.)." But for my purposes, Plato himself is not as important as the Platonic influence. As Étienne Gilson says,

The more one studies the middle ages, the more one notices the polymorphism of the Platonic influence. Plato himself does not appear at all, but Platonism is everywhere; let us say rather that there are Platonisms everywhere: the Platonism of Denis and of Maximus the Confessor . . . ; Saint Augustine's Platonism . . . ; the Platonism of Boethius . . . ;
I shall return to this important influence later.

The next major figure is Aristotle. As Economou says,

Aristotle's pronouncements on physis/natura in the Metaphysics, the Physics, and other works are of great importance to us for three reasons. First, the Aristotelian books were to exercise their influence on medieval thought with greater depth and scope during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in a period frequently characterized as the Rediscovery of Aristotle . . . . Second, Aristotelian thought played a considerable role in the shaping of Neoplatonism. . . . And third . . . it must be emphasized that in clearly articulating his definition of physis/natura, Aristotle was not thoroughly repudiating Plato and the pre-Socratics . . . .

Aristotle, in the Metaphysics, outlines seven meanings of "physis":

'Nature' means (1) the genesis of growing things--the meaning which would be suggested if one were to pronounce the y in physis long. (2) That immanent part of a growing thing, from which its growth first proceeds. (3) The source from which the primary movement in each natural object is present in it in virtue of its own essence. Those things are said to grow which derive increase from something else by contact and either by organic unity, or by organic adhesion as in the case of embryos. Organic unity differs from contact; for in the latter case there need not be anything else besides the contact, but in organic unities there is something identical in both parts, which makes them grow together instead of merely touching, and be one in respect of continuity and quantity, though not of quality.--(4) 'Nature' means the primary material of which any natural object consists or out of which it is made, which is relatively unshaped and cannot be changed from its own potency, as e.g. bronze
is said to be the nature of a statue and of bronze utensils, and wood is the nature of wooden things; and so in all other cases; for when a product is made out of these materials, the first matter is preserved throughout. For it is in this way that people call the elements of natural objects also their nature, some naming fire, others earth, others air, others water, others something else of the sort, and some naming more than one of these, and others all of them.--
(5) 'Nature' means the essence of natural objects, as with those who say the nature is the primary mode of composition, or as Empedocles says:--

Nothing that is has a nature,
But only mixing and parting of the mixed,
And nature is but a name given them by men.

Hence as regards the things that are or come to be by nature, though that from which they naturally come to be or are is already present, we say they have not their nature yet, unless they have their form or shape. That which comprises both of these exists by nature, e.g. the animals and their parts; and not only is the first matter nature (and this in two senses, either the first, counting from the thing, or the first in general; e.g. in the case of works in bronze, bronze is first with reference to them, but in general perhaps water is first, if all things that can be melted are water), but also the form or essence, which is the end of the process of becoming.--(6) By an extension of meaning from this sense of 'nature' every essence in general has come to be called a 'nature', because the nature of a thing is one kind of essence.

From what has been said, then, it is plain that nature in the primary and strict sense [7] is the essence of things which have in themselves, as such a source of movement; for the matter is called the nature because it is qualified to receive this, and processes of becoming and growing are called nature because they are movements proceeding from this. And nature in this sense is the source of movement of natural objects, being present in them somehow, either potentially or in complete reality.

(Met. 1014b - 1015a)49
Collingwood says that Aristotle "recognizes that a single word has several different meanings, and never falls into the stupid mistake of supposing that one word means one thing," and he sees in Aristotle's seven definitions a kind of progression: "[Aristotle] arranges his meanings in a series like shots on a target which gradually creep in and find the bull." Collingwood then offers brief commentaries on each of the seven meanings, the first two of which are meanings "nowhere found in Greek," though the second seems to me to be very close to the second meaning given in the Timaeus (see above, p. 70). Of the third, he says, "This is the meaning when we say that a stone falls, or that fire rises, by nature: it corresponds to the ordinary untechnical Greek usage"; the fourth meaning "is the sense emphasized by the Ionians . . . . the essence or nature of things in terms of the stuff out of which they were made" (cf. above, pp. 68-69, the discussion of the pre-Socratics). On the fifth Collingwood says,

The essence or form of natural things. This is how we find the word actually used both in philosophy and in ordinary Greek, in fifth-century writers; but the definition is faulty because circular. To define nature as the essence of natural things leaves the term "natural things" undefined.

Of the sixth, "Essence or form in general," he notes that "The circle is here removed, but in Aristotle's opinion
the term is now being too widely and loosely used: so he proceeds to narrow it again" in the seventh meaning. This final meaning--"The essence of things which have a source of movement in themselves"--is the one that "Aristotle regards as the true and fundamental meaning"; it is "how he uses the word himself," and "It certainly does accurately correspond with the ordinary Greek usage." After this survey, Collingwood concludes,

The world of nature is thus for Aristotle a world of self-moving things, as it is for the Ionians and for Plato. It is a living world. . . . Nature as such is process, growth, change. This process is development . . . but it is not what we call "evolution", because for Aristotle the kinds of change and of structure exhibited in the world of nature form an external repertory, and the items in the repertory are related logically, not temporally, among themselves. It follows that the change is in the last resort cyclical; circular movement is for him characteristic of the perfectly organic, not as for us of the inorganic.

W.D. Ross, one of Aristotle's modern editors and commentators, agrees: for Aristotle,

Nature . . . is "innate impulse to movement." . . . He habitually identifies nature as power of movement with nature as form.

Aristotle takes up the subject of Nature again in the Physics (Book II, chapter 1). The definitions here are similar to those in the Metaphysics. Nature is "a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in
that to which it belongs primarily"; it is "the immediate material substratum of things which have in themselves a principle of motion or change"; it is also "the shape or form which is specified in the definition of the thing" (Phys. 192b 22-23, 193a 28-30). To Aristotle, then, Nature is, generally, form and/or the principle of motion.

There is, according to Economou, one important difference between Plato's and Aristotle's views of Nature:

Whereas the one [Aristotle] saw the sublunary world, though subject to mutability, as fundamentally good, without any evil principle, but chiefly characterized by a striving for perfection, the other [Plato] saw the same world of mutability as something to be overcome, to be transcended, as a world in which evil is a given necessity.

And this particular distinction is one that is very important in the later spokesmen of the Church, especially in St. Augustine and St. Thomas. As we shall see,

The teaching of Aquinas contrasts with that of Augustine . . . , representing a kindlier view both of man and of nature. The will is free, and the natural desire for the good persists despite sin. . . . In so far as they are and are good, they reflect the being of God who is their first cause.

The distinction between the two great theologians undoubtedly results, in part at least, from their respective alliances with Aristotle and Plato. But I shall return to this topic at the proper time.

Without devoting any great attention to the earlier Neoplatonists or other early Roman writers, let me at
least call attention to the persistence of the Platonic
notion of the decaying sublunary world. As Economou
asserts,

Of the basic sources of medieval Platonism,
the commentaries of Chalcidius (fl. 325 A.D.)
on the Timaeus and Macrobius (354-430 A.D.)
on Cicero's Somnium Scipionis are of primary
importance. Both works refer to the sublunary
world as the realm of generation, decay, and
death, as opposed to the divine and immortal
translunary world. Both reflect the Neo-
platonic development of the World-soul as
the creative principle in the material world
. . . . In addition, both commentaries con­
tain instances of the personification of
natura.59

Another early Roman writer who is also of interest is
Seneca, who, in his explanation of Natura, gives "two
phases, the physical and the moral":

The principal passage finds that the terms
universe, Jupiter, Natura, Fate, Providence,
are interchangeable. Natura's law in the
physical world is paralleled in the moral
world; hence man, who only of creatures can
do wrong, should live according to Nature.
Natura perforce is good, and the law of
conduct requires us to abide by her injunc­
tions.60

Here we see a notion that becomes extremely important
later, in Alain de Lille and in Jean de Meun--the idea that
man alone violates Nature's law. We also see an Aristote-
lian sense of Nature as essentially good (from Aristotle
via the Stoic philosophers--see Knowlton, pp. 227 and 229).

One more interesting Roman writer is Statius (ca. 45-90
A.D.), who was well-known to Dante and Chaucer. Of
Statius's Natura Economou says,

She is a deity to whom the characters in the poem [Thebaid] can appeal, in whose name the righteous may act, for she is the order of the entire universe. . . . [But] Statius' Natura is, after all, an invisible and mute figure. What is useful to us is that here in a work of imaginative literature that was widely read in the Middle Ages is a Natura figure that assumes a role, however slight it may seem in comparison with that of the medieval figure, in the affairs of mankind.61

After discussing the various classical and Neoplatonic figures, Economou concludes,

It is certain that the concepts of natura . . . in these sources, personified though some of them may be, are not yet anything approaching the figure of a Goddess Natura. But much of her activity and even hints at her personality are suggested in [these] works . . . . The concepts of natura as the general order of all creation, as the moment of contact between the World-soul and matter, as the sublunary world, as the power presiding over the continuity and preservation of whatever lives in that lower world, as a creative principle directly subordinated to the will and mind of God, all are the stuff out of which the poetic and allegorical figure will be shaped.62

Economou and Curtius differ in their views of the early figure on Natura, Curtius seeing her as "one of the last religious experiences of the late-pagan world" (see above, p. 67), and Economou seeing her as a mere personification of an abstract concept. Economou (in commenting on the much later Consolation of Boethius) draws an even sharper distinction:
One of the most striking features of this poetically expressed natura [in the Consolation] is her personification. Though, as we have seen, the term natura was rhetorically personified in philosophical works and commentaries, her personification in poetry is of another kind. The major distinction is that the rhetorical personification merely aids in making an abstraction intellectually more accessible, while the poetic personification concentrates upon the representation of a figure of some character. But the question of when the conception of Physis or Natura became the goddess or the allegorical figure is really unimportant for my purposes, since it is clear that by Chaucer's time either was available—the concept through philosophy, theology, and customary usage and the figure through poetry.

At this point, we ought to look at one of the most important theologians, St. Augustine. As I indicated above, a good deal of Augustine's philosophy is Platonist (from Plato via Plotinus and Ambrose). As Gilson says, "That Plato has influenced Augustine, through Plotinus, is beyond discussion, but his doctrine cannot be reduced to those of either Plato or Plotinus." The main reason that Augustine's doctrine cannot be reduced to either Platonist doctrine is that Augustine was intent upon reconciling, wherever possible, Platonism with Christian doctrine and dogma. But one major problem in this reconciliation would have been to resolve the conflict between
the Platonist view of Nature and Christian cosmogony. In the Platonist view, of course, Nature is the world of "images," far removed from the world of "ideas," and hence the world of mutability, decay, and death. But in Christian terms, the world of Nature is the world of God's creation--and how could there by anything wrong with God's creation? The answer, to St. Augustine, lay in the doctrine of original sin. The deficiency we see now in Nature--mutability, decay, and death--is the result of the Fall. Man, created in a "perfect" state of Nature, was given Free Will, and he "willed" his own rebellion. That rebellion brought him and his progeny down, and he cannot raise himself by his own will, hence the need for Grace (but more of that later). Here, for instance, is one passage on this subject:

Man's nature, indeed, was created at first faultless and without any sin; but that nature of man in which every one is born of Adam, now wants the Physician, because it is not sound. All good qualities, do not doubt, which it still possesses in its make, life, senses, intellect, it has of the Most High God, its Creator and Maker. But the flaw, which darkens and weakens all those natural goods, so that it has need of illumination and healing, it has not contracted from its blameless Creator--but from that original sin, which it committed by free will.65

In The City of God, Augustine draws a clear distinction between man's nature and Christ's:
Now, therefore, let us walk in hope, and let us by the spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh, and so make progress from day to day. For "the Lord knoweth them that are His:" [2 Tim. 2:19] and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God," [Rom. 8:14] but by grace, not by nature. For there is but one Son of God by nature, who in His compassion became Son of man for our sakes, that we, by nature sons of men, might by grace become through him sons of God. For he, abiding unchangeable, took upon Him our nature, that thereby He might take us to Himself; and, holding fast His own divinity, He became partaker of our infirmity, that we, being changed into some better thing, might by participating in His righteousness and immortality, lose our own properties of sin and mortality, and preserve whatever good quality He had implanted in our nature, perfected now by sharing in the goodness of His nature. For as by the sin of one man we have fallen into a misery so deplorable, so by the righteousness of one Man, who also is God, shall we come to a blessedness inconceivably exalted.66

What concrete evidence do we have of man's deficiency?

St. Augustine answers,

That the whole human race has been condemned in its first origin, this life itself, if life it is to be called, bears witness by the host of cruel ills with which it is filled. Is not this proved by the profound and dreadful ignorance which produces all the errors that enfold the children of Adam, and from which no man can be delivered without toil, pain, and fear?67

This "dreadful ignorance" is only one of the results of the Fall, as Gilson points out in his book of Augustine:

The two consequences of original sin Augustine always associates whenever he mentions them are concupiscence and ignorance. Inasmuch
as these two vices had been excluded by
God from human nature as He had fashioned
it, it may be said without exaggeration
that human nature was changed by the first
man's evil will.

To conclude Augustine's views on Nature, we might ask with
Gilson,

After such disorder [resulting from original
sin], what remains of the nature fashioned
by God? Evil was only the evil of sin in
Adam, but in its propagation down to our
own day it became the evil of nature. A
vitiating and vicious nature took the place
of a good nature thenceforth. Yet we must
not think that the original nature willed
by God was completely destroyed by Adam's
sin. That nature was a gift of God; hence,
if God took away all He gave it, it would
cease entirely to exist.

And thus we have the Christianized Platonist view of Nature.

Another Christian Platonist (but more a philosopher
than a theologian)--and very important to the tradition of
Nature--is Boethius, in whose works we find both the concept
and the figure of Nature. Boethius is, as Gilson points
out, fundamentally a Platonist, but we must not overlook
the influence of Aristotle. It must be remembered that
"The initial intention of Boethius had been to translate
into Latin all the writings of Plato and Aristotle,"
though "He fell far short of achieving that immense
project." In fact, Boethius's definitions of Nature
in "A Treatise against Eutyches and Nestorius" (Chapter I)
sound distinctly Aristotelian:
Nature belongs to those things which, since they exist, can in some measure be apprehended by the mind.

Nature is either that which can act or that which can be acted upon.

Nature is the principle of movement properly inherent in and not accidentally attached to bodies.

Nature is the specific difference that gives form to anything.\(^2\)

These comments, especially the last two, are clearly Aristotelian (cf. above, pp. 71-75).

The allegorical figure of Nature (or the goddess) becomes prominent in the *Consolation*. And, as Economou claims, there are two perspectives from which the *Consolation* is important to the tradition of Nature personified:

First is the formal. From this point of view, the similarity between the figures of Philosophia and the medieval Naturas is most obvious, a clear illustration of the Boethian impact on medieval allegory. Second, and of great importance to the continuity of the philosophical conceptions of physis/natura . . . , is the significance, both ethical and cosmological, which Boethius assigns to the word *natura*.\(^3\)

Surprisingly enough, Bernard Jefferson, in his book (*op. cit.*) on Chaucer and the Consolation, says little about Nature in the *Consolation*, but what he does say is of interest:

The present orderly arrangement of the universe, according to Boethius, is the resultant, if it may so be termed, of two forces, Nature and Love. Nature is the
god-given principle which enters into every object, celestial or terrestrial, and which causes it to possess a certain definite motive power, propelling it in a certain direction. 74

Though I am not sure all this is justified by the text of the Consolation, it is clear that Jefferson is right in discussing Nature in relation to its role in Providence. In fact, the first significant feature of Nature I would draw attention to in the Consolation is her role in the universe and her relation to God. Boethius rhapsodizes about her powers in one of his meters:

How the first reins of all things guided are
By powerful Nature as the chiefest cause,
And how she keeps, with a foreseeing care,
The spacious world in order by her laws,
And to sure knots which nothing can untie,
By her strong hand all earthly motions draws--75

Here, then, is Nature in her role as ruler of the "natural" world (the sublunary world)--but what is her relation to God?

This world could never have been compacted of so many divers and contrary parts, unless there were One [God] that doth unite these so different things; and this disagreeing diversity of natures being united would separate and divide this concord, unless there were One that holdeth together that which He united. Neither would the course continue so certain, nor would the different parts hold so well-ordered motions in due places, times, causality, spaces and qualities, unless there were One who, Himself remaining quiet, disposeth and ordereth this variety of motions. This . . . I call God . . . 76
And again--

The generation of all things, and all the proceedings of mutable natures, and whatsoever is moved in any sort, take their causes, order, and forms from the stability of the Divine mind.

That is, Nature, in all its mutability, has its origin in the immutable mind of God:

For the nature of things began not from that which is defective and not complete, but, proceeding from [that which is] entire and absolute, falleth into that which is extreme and enfeebled.

Thus, as with St. Augustine, Nature began good but became bad. As with Nature, so with the nature of man:

... whatsoever falleth from goodness ceaseth to be, by which it followeth that evil men leave to be that which they were, but the shape of men, which they still retain, showeth them to have been men: wherefore by embracing wickedness they have lost the nature of men.

As Gilson says,

[Boethius] identifies, as do Plato and Augustine, being with good, and non-being with evil.

And the Platonic influence (as well as the Augustinian) is evident; Meter 9 of Book III is, essentially, "a résumé in twenty-eight verses of the Timaeus annotated by Chalcidius."

But one important function of Nature in the Consolation—one that is especially significant to later medieval Nature-figures—is her role in continuity and propagation:
... nature giveth every one that which is fitting, and striveth to keep them from decaying so long as they can remain. ... And how great is the diligence of nature that all things may continue by the multiplication of seed; all which who knoweth not to be, as it were, certain engines, not only to remain for a time, but successively in a manner to endure for ever? ... For even in living creatures the love of life proceedeth not from the will of the soul, but from the principles of nature. For the will many times embraceth death upon urgent occasions, which nature abhorreth; and contrariwise the act of generation, by which alone the continuance of mortal things is maintained, is sometimes bridled by the will, though nature doth always desire it. So true it is that this self-love [or "self-preservation"] proceedeth not from any voluntary motion, but from natural intention. For providence gave to her creatures this as the greatest cause of continuance, that they naturally desire to continue so long as they may ... .

Nature's role as procreatrix, as mater generationes, is subordinate to God's ("providence"), and, as it becomes clear elsewhere, opposed to Fortune's. Fortune, it must be remembered (see above, p. 54 ), had at times the function of Atropos--and this alone would make her Nature's enemy. But Nature and Fortune are opposed in other ways too; in berating the "gifts of fortune," Philosophy says,

Why embraceth thou outward goods as if they were thine own? Fortune will never make those things thine which by the appointment of Nature belong not to thee. The fruits of the earth are doubtless appointed for the sustenance of living creatures. But if thou wilt only satisfy want, which sufficeth Nature, there is no cause to require the superfluities of fortune. For Nature is contented with little ... .
If man abides by Nature's laws, he is satisfied with a simple sufficiency; if he gives himself over to a love of Fortune's goods (especially in excess), he violates Nature's laws. When man understands his own nature and follows Nature's laws, he is at the head of the "chain of being," but when he violates these laws he falls below the other animals:

... this is the condition of man's nature, that then only it surpasseth other things when it knoweth itself, and it is worse than beasts when it is without that knowledge. For in other living creatures the ignorance of themselves is nature, but in man it is vice.84

And so Boethius advises man to "know thyself," and laments that "Too much the former age was blest," when man followed Nature and not Fortune (see Book II, prose 5). Thus, as Economou says,

the groundwork is laid for Philosophia to demonstrate to Boethius, as she later does, that Fortune is really in no way responsible for his plight, since he possesses the unique ability and responsibility among God's creatures to choose between the life under Fortune or the life according to Nature.85

This fundamental opposition between Fortune and Nature and the sense of wronged Nature become important to the later medieval writers.

It is interesting to note that even before Boethius there were attempts to displace Natura and her power over men. The Christian polemic against her "begins," according
to Curtius, "with Lactantius (d. after 317) and is continued by Prudentius in his poem Against Symmachus (written 402)," a poem which places Natura "Among the defeated pagan deities," although one might go back to St. Paul and the early ascetics for an early polemic against Nature. But almost contemporaneous with these is the important expression of Nature in the work of the pagan Claudian, whose Natura "speaks, acts, and is the subject of a little description, though Claudian's descriptions of her do not come near the thoroughness with which her allegorical person was handled by the medieval poets." Natura's appearance "in the works of Claudian was a definite preview of the medieval figure," says Economou; but, as he adds, if Claudian's Natura is "placed side by side with those of Bernard, Alan, Jean de Meun, and Chaucer, they seem but distantly related." As a poetic figure or personification, Claudian's Nature is "vaguer, less delineated" than its medieval counterparts. The significant point, though, is that the Claudian-Boethian use of Natura outlasted the polemics against her, as we can see now as we skip several centuries to the important renewal of interest in Plato in twelfth-century France.

The twelfth-century Platonist movement centered in the cathedral school at Chartres, beginning under the chancellorship of Bernard of Chartres (d. between 1124 and
1130), whose "teaching was characterized by a strong insistence on the humanities and, in philosophy, by a distinctly Platonist trend."\textsuperscript{89} It was, as is generally true of the Middle Ages, a Platonism "almost entirely derived from secondary sources":

fragments of Plato's Timaeus in the translation of Chalcidian; the commentary of Chalcidian on the same; Macrobius, Apuleius and Boethius.\textsuperscript{90}

For my purposes, the two most important figures to come out of this tradition are Bernardus Silvestris and Alain de Lille, but first a word about the school in general. M.-D. Chenu has done what is probably one of the most thorough studies of this school and its thought.\textsuperscript{91} Chenu sees the school at Chartres as a true "renaissance," in its study of Euclid, its translation of the Almagest, its interest in passion and Ovid's Art of Love, and its eagerness to know the origins of the universe through the commentaries on the Timaeus.\textsuperscript{92} But the crucial development there was the "discovery of nature":

we are not now concerned merely with the feeling for nature which poets of the time evinced here and there in fashionable constructions, nor are we concerned merely with the representations of nature that sculptors fashioned at the portals and on the capitals of cathedrals [but see my remarks below, pp. 102-03]. Rather, our concern is with the realization which laid hold upon these men of the twelfth century when they thought of themselves as confronting an external, present, intelligible,
and active reality as they might confront a partner (and in fact they personified this partner in their allegories) whose might and whose decrees called for accommodation or conflict—a realization which struck them at the very moment when, with no less a shock, they reflected that they were themselves caught up within the framework of nature, were themselves also bits of this cosmos they were ready to master.93

Out of this came the "simplest but not the least significant evidence of this discovery of nature"—"their perception of the universe as an entity"94:

Because it is a single whole, the harmony of this universe is striking, despite the extreme diversity of the beings that compose it. "The world is an ordered aggregation of creatures" [according to William of Conches]. The universitas is a cosmos; its contemplation is a source of delight. When one considers the laws proper to each being, even the antimony between matter and spirit, the universe resembles an immense zither whose strings produce an astonishing harmony for all their differences of sound . . . .

Doubtless such considerations might never rise above banality and commonplace. Here, however, through the firmness of the formulation, through the allusions to Platonic idealism, and through the free options exercised in interpreting the universe of Genesis for example, these considerations evinced an optimistic rationalism that was not banal in the vision they afforded of the order of the world.95

One result of all this was "an increasingly active scientific curiosity," though nothing to match the discovery of Aristotelian and Islamic science in the thirteenth century.96 Another result was Nature herself—"personified
and . . . by a fashionable literary fiction of the time, . . . a goddess." Another was the notion of man as microcosm:

The moral life of men is a particular instance of life as found in the universe; the universe of human liberty presupposes the universe of Nature, and it fulfills the promise of that universe of Nature.

Out of this intellectual ferment grew Bernard Silvestris of Tours. His most important work is De Universitate Mundi, written between 1145 and 1153. Bernard's work is, according to Economou, "the first work in which [Natura] appears as an allegorical character of cosmic dimension." But Bernard's Natura is not the major actor; she is, as Economou notes, "a figure subordinate to Noys, whose role in the action involves four activities":

First, Natura complains of matter's shapelessness and pleads with Noys to put it into order, natura plangens. Second, she provides bodies for the souls that are produced by endelechia, the World-soul. Third, she makes a celestial journey. Finally, Natura joins the soul of man, furnished by Urania, to the body that Physis has fashioned for him; in her joiner's work she must emulate the order of the heavens.

Or, as Knowlton says,

If Nous represents divine thought or providence, Natura stands for the principle which, presiding over matter, is desirous of bringing order out of chaos, of substituting harmony for strife.
Bernard is not as important in his own right, though, as he is for his influence on Alain de Lille. Chaucer did know Bernard ("Chaucer refers to the works of Bernardus as if they were familiar works of learning in his day, over two hundred years later"); but Alain is a much more influential figure in the Nature/Natura tradition.

As we have seen in the discussion of Fortune, Alain is an important figure. He drew heavily on Boethius, and, in turn, he and Boethius influenced Jean de Meun. Chaucer, of course, knew and used the works of all three. The figure of Natura is one of the most frequently noted features of Alain's two major works, De Planctu Naturae and the Anticlaudianus. Another indication, though, of the importance of Nature to Alain is his entry on Natura in his Distinctiones (see PL, 210, col. 871). Chenu says of this entry,

The long entry devoted to the word "Nature" in the theological dictionary of Alain de Lille testifies as explicitly as possible to the doctrinal profundity of such literary uses of the concept [in both Alain and Jean de Meun]. The eleven meanings he assigned to the content of the term pertained to wholly diverse intellectual contexts which are revealed by the ideological sources he cites, from Boethian metaphysics to medical terminology to the religious vocabulary of St. Paul. This assembly of meanings was no mere technical exercise; instead, an underlying consistency of emphasis and outlook reveals that the "naturalism" of Alan belonged rather to the whole cast of his mind than to a theoretical analysis that fits into a perfected system of thought.
(In fact, Alain cites Boethius four times, Paul once, Hilarius once, and Plato's Timaeus once.\textsuperscript{105}) But much more significant--and much more interesting--is Natura in Alain's two major works, which are together, according to Economou, "perhaps the single most significant contribution to the history of the Goddess Natura in medieval literature."\textsuperscript{106} I turn now to a consideration of relevant elements in the two works, without attempting comprehensive readings of the two.\textsuperscript{107}

First of all, it is worth noting that Alain's Natura is a development of Bernard's, and there are, consequently, some similarities. As Economou says,

Both figures [Bernard's and Alain's], it is obvious, operate in the tradition of natura plangens, though to a much greater degree in the Alan and under more favorable circumstances in Bernard. In both works, reference is made to Natura's fashioning of man as a microcosm, though there are significant differences in detail. In Bernard, Natura joins the soul to the body in emulation of the heavens. In Alan [i.e., in the Complaint], Natura says nothing of joining the soul to the body, though in the Anticlaudianus this will be done by Concord. . . . Despite the differences, the conception of man as the microcosm definitely links the two poets, at least in the sense that the idea was one of the commonplaces of Chartrian thought.\textsuperscript{108}

Economou also notes the differences:

He [Alain] brought to the figure of Natura philosophical concepts that are not associated with Bernard's figure, namely, Natura as vicar of God, and as procreative and moral force. And in terms of poetic expression of the figure, Alan gives to the Natura of the
Economou adds that "Alan is the first medieval poet to develop the moral character of the figure and as such can be considered something of an innovator." Or as Curtius says, "Alan retains Bernard's concept of Natura, but gives it a Christian retouching."

One of the most interesting features of Alain's Natura is what results from her personification--the descriptions of Natura herself and of her abode. In the Complaint, Nature comes to the poet (in the manner of Lady Philosophy); she is lovely in face and figure and in dress (Complaint, pp. 5-18). Her crown has twelve jewels representing the zodiac and seven more for the planets (pp. 7-11), but more interesting is her robe (pp. 11-15), on which is pictured "a parliament of the living creation" (p. 11), said to be Chaucer's inspiration for The Parliament of Fowls. Her linen mantle is covered with "a graphic picture... of the watery creation" (see pp. 13-15)--the robe showing only the birds. Her "damask tunic" (pp. 15-17) shows those creatures of "the terrestrial element," but "the tunic had undergone a rending of its parts, and showed abuses and injuries" at the spot where man is pictured (see p. 15).

(I shall say more below about the significance of the rip.) Natura's home and its surroundings are described at length.
in the Anticlaudian (pp. 55-57); it is a beautiful region in which "earth strives to paint a new heaven" (p. 53)--the flowers and trees bloom and the birds sing. (In the Complaint, the "sympathy" of the natural world to Natura's arrival is comparable to the regions of Natura's home in the Anticlaudian; see the Complaint, pp. 19-23). Natura's royal court in the Anticlaudian is beautifully decorated, painted with figures whose "fidelity" is so great "that the thing depicted deviates little from the truth" (p. 54)--a palace prefiguring the Temple of Venus in Chaucer's Parliament. Natura's home in the Anticlaudian is clearly drawn to contrast with that of Fortune in the same work (see above, pp. 43-44).

As a "goddess" Natura has a province and activities somewhat larger than we have seen hitherto. As Wetherbee says, Alain shifts the emphasis from her role in Bernard's work, "largely by elaborating the scope of the activity of Natura and by giving her a new prominence; in his work the 'goddess' of Jean de Meun and Chaucer becomes clearly recognizable." 112 Her role in the Complaint, as Knowlton notes, "is not brought out so clearly" as in the Anticlaudian, "But she is evidently remote from [God] and subordinate to him" in the Complaint. 113 In her long lament (Complaint, pp. 24-31), Natura defines her position and her powers: she is the "vicegerent of God the Creator;"
who has "ordered by sure management thy [i.e., man's] life's proper course," and she has "ennobled" man's appearance, "ordered the senses," "stamped [man's spirit] with vital powers" and in it "established a power of native strength" and on it "impressed the seal of reason," and given man "the powers of memory." She concludes, "With these gifts, then, I have blessed both [body and spirit], that neither might groan over its own poverty, or complain at the other's affluence." But, she adds, "Not in the particular, but also in all things universally, shines out the abundance of my power." She defines the cosmic hierarchy: "In this state, then, God is commanding, the angel administering, man serving. God by command creates man; the angel by work procreates him; man by obedience recreates himself." More specifically, Nature affirms,

I profess most emphatically that I am the lowly disciple of the Supreme Ruler. . . .
His work is faultless, mine is defective;
His is marvelous, mine is transient . . .
He works by His own divine will, I work under His name. By His nod alone He orders a thing to exist; but my activity is the mark of the divine activity, and, compared with the divine power, thou canst see that my power is impotent.

In answer to the poet's question about why she grieves, Natura tells how all but one of her creatures obey her:

Since all things are by law of their being held subject to my laws, and ought to pay me a rightful and established tribute, almost all, with just dues and with seemly
presentation, regularly obey my commands; but from this general rule man alone is excluded by abnormal exception.

(Complaint, p. 34)

She then shows how all else obeys her (pp. 34-36) and surveys man's deviations (pp. 36-38). A little later, she makes somewhat clearer her role in creation:

Me, then, He appointed a sort of deputy, a coiner for stamping the orders of things . . . . Accordingly, obeying the command of the Ruler, in my work I stamp, so to speak, the various coins of things in the image of the original . . . . Yet beneath the mysterious, divine majesty, I have so performed this work and service that the right hand of spiritual power should direct my hand in its application, since the pen of my composition would stray in sudden error, should it not be guided by the supreme Supporter.

(p. 44)

It is clear, then, that in Christian terms Natura is an angel performing earthly duties at God's command, especially in the Creation; in Platonic terms, she is the Demiurge copying the Ideas in the production of earthly images. The view of her role in the Anticlaudian is similar:

What Nature has made the divine Author perfects; creates the imperishable out of nothing; Nature procreates the perishable out of something; God commands, she administers. He ordains, she fashions . . . .

(p. 66)

From these two passages, especially the one from the Complaint, it is obvious that Nature is deficient. Green concludes about the Complaint,
The work is tightly organized about the central theme of man's willful corruption of his nature by his rejection of the divinely ordered government of reason. Wetherbee, who sees Green's article as "A good example of . . . intelligent but too narrow criticism," nevertheless reaches a similar conclusion:

The literal subject of the De planctu naturae is sexual perversion, considered in terms of its intellectual and psychological implications as a consequence of man's abrogation of reason, and with it the power to discern the divinely ordained pattern of conduct set out in the order of the universe.

The problem in the Complaint is summarized in the opening Meter (pp. 3-5), where man's perversion of Nature's order is outlined. The rip in Natura's tunic is an indication of the disorder man has caused. There are really two kinds of deficiency--a "natural" deficiency in all created matter (Platonic) and an "unnatural" deficiency resulting from man's willful disobedience (Augustinian)--and the two seem vaguely connected in the Complaint. The "natural" deficiency:

But although my activity is deficient when compared with the divine power, nevertheless it exceeds human power, when balanced with it, greatly. . . . the power of God may be called the superlative, that of Nature the comparative, that of man the positive.

(p. 31)
The "unnatural":

This tunic, then, is made with this rent, since by the unlawful assaults of man alone the garments of my modesty suffer disgrace and division.

(p. 41)

And so, at the end of the Complaint, Genius, Natura's priest (as he will be again in the Roman), pronounces man anathema and exclaims his excommunication (see pp. 93-95). In the Anticlaudian, Nature attempts to do something about the deficiency and resolves to make a "divine man" (p. 57).

Of Natura's role in this endeavor, Economou says,

As in the De planctu, the complaint of Natura in the Anticlaudianus leads into her moral aspect. In the earlier work Natura procreatrix moves into the moral sphere by condemning man's sexual corruption. But in the Anticlaudianus, it is not man that is criticized by Natura; it is, rather, herself and the Virtues who are the target of her complaint. They have not fashioned anything that is in every way perfect.

Not only is her creation thus far imperfect, but Natura alone cannot perfect it. She must seek help in fashioning the perfect soul. As Prudence tells Theology,

But the great office of Nature's authority thrives only in earthly affairs ... and she is unable to create a soul ... .

(p. 108)

Or as Prudence says to God,

She [Natura] assigns to herself the fashioning of the body, requests of Thee what blessing exceeds Nature and a gift which Thou alone dost possess,--she begs
a soul, which demands only the perception of the supernal Artificer and requires His polishing. (p. 125)

Prudence succeeds in getting the soul (pp. 126-27) and returns it to Natura, who forms the man (pp. 129-30), and then Concord joins the body to the soul (pp. 130-31).

Thus, the Natura of Alain's two works picks up many threads we have seen being spun, and he weaves the threads into two beautifully designed tapestries. The decoration of the tapestries, especially the earlier Complaint, attracts two great poets, Jean de Meun and Chaucer, and it is clear that these two later poets carefully examine the very warp and woof of the fabrics in front of them. (I shall not entirely leave the subject of Alain's works; when I deal with Grace, I shall return to Alain.)

Contemporary with Alain, though not so important, is Jean de Hanville (or de Hauteville), whose Archithrenius was written about 1185. As Knowlton points out, we have in this work a man who, "mistaken though he is about Natura and unable to recognize her just as Alanus is, makes the journey [to Natura] for the purpose of complaint," and in the work, the poet "preaches the moral life through Natura." And as J.A.W. Bennett notes, there are in this work some new features relevant to a reading of Chaucer's Parliament--"the abode of Venus, the association
of Nature and moderation, and the speaking birds." Knowlton concludes the following about this work, that of Bernard, and the two of Alain:

These four great works of the twelfth century all have characteristics in common: a fondness for allegory and philosophy; respect for the ancient philosophers; an avidity for old mythology, understood presumably as allegorical; a humanistic interest in the classics, especially in works of a writer like Claudianus; and marked subordination of Biblical material or references, as if the authors treated virtue as independent of Christian revelation, and imitated the philosophy of Boethius. With the exception of De Mundi Universitate, the theme of all revolves around the evil conduct of man and the desire for a change therefrom. Man's sin is against Natura.119

Before leaving the subject of the twelfth century, I should like to discuss briefly a work seemingly outside the Nature/Natura tradition. Lothario dei Segni (later to become Pope Innocent III) wrote his De Miseria Humane Conditionis probably in 1195 in the contemptus mundi tradition. Donald Howard, the most recent translator of the work,120 sets out in his Introduction the "standard subjects" of the contemptus mundi tradition:

1. The corruption of the natural order, and in particular that of the human body. Many treatises de contemptu mundi give morbid descriptions of man's physical being, diseases and pain, and the terrors of birth and death.
2. The mutability of earthly things, the argument that worldly things are unsatisfying because they are temporary. The principle of Fortune's wheel was often used
to illustrate this fact, as was the ubi sunt motif . . . .
3. The vanity of earthly things, the argument that earthly pursuits are per
se dissatisfying even before time or Fortune has removed their objects . . . .
4. The evils of the social order . . . .
5. Punishment or reward in the afterlife.

In general, then, this contemptus mundi tradition involves a conscious despising of the gifts of Fortune and Nature, with one's whole attention devoted to the gifts of Grace (I shall, obviously, return to this subject later), but in Pope Innocent's tract the major emphasis is on the "natural" condition. He writes of the vile matter of which man is made (pp. 6-7), of the vileness of conception (pp. 7-9), of the nourishment of the child by "menstrual blood" (p. 9), of the pain of childbirth (pp. 10-11), of the shortness and the miseries of life and of old age (pp. 12-14), of man's vices (see Book II, pp. 33-65), and of the horrors of death (see Book III, pp. 67-89), including the putrefaction of the dead body (pp. 70-71). In his discussion of avarice (in Book II), Pope Innocent strikes a familiar chord:

Every covetous man struggles and strives against nature. For nature brings him into the world poor and takes him out of it poor.

(p. 41)

Though generally Pope Innocent cannot be said to take a kindly view of Nature, it would seem that he sees the
"human condition" as a perversion of Nature and avarice, in particular, as a sin against Nature. In any case, in this tract we have an extreme example of the view of corrupt Nature (cf. Augustine above, pp. 79-80), with none of Alain's optimism about a Golden Age of revivified Nature.

The thirteenth century is generally more open to Nature, partly, I suspect, as a result of the new interest in Aristotelian science. And nowhere is the openness to Nature more evident than in the religious art of the thirteenth century. As Emile Mâle says, the "Mirror of Nature is carved in brief on the façades of most of the French cathedrals" of the thirteenth century. He says that to the men of the Middle Ages "the world was a symbol"; when medieval men look at the plants, animals, and monsters on the pinnacles, ballustrades, and capitals of the cathedrals,

The ignorant see the forms . . . understanding nothing of their meaning, but the wise pass from the visible to the invisible, and in reading nature read the thoughts of God.

Here, obviously, is the influence of the twelfth-century Platonists (at least on Mâle!), and Mâle goes into detail about how the "natural" objects in the cathedrals symbolize the "supernatural" (see Mâle, pp. 23-46). But, as Mâle points out, even St. Bernard failed to see the relevance of all the creatures in the churches, and so he suggests "the futility of interpreting in a symbolic sense every
animal and flower," since some of "the decorative fauna and flora of the thirteenth century . . . [is] the expression of a deep and tender love of nature." In conclusion, he says,

For the theologian of the Middle Ages nature was a symbol, and living creatures were the expression of the thought of God. At times the theologians imposed their conception of the world on art, and a small number of dogmatic works executed under their direction, works in which each animal has the value of a symbol. But such works are rare, and for the most part the sculptors peopled the churches at will with plants and animals chosen for purely decorative reasons, but with a confused idea that the cathedral is an epitome of the world and so a place in which all God's creatures may find a home.

Thus, the thirteenth-century churches not only continued the classical notion of the Wheel of Fortune (see above, p. 57), but they also glorified Nature per se.

We come now to St. Thomas Aquinas and Jean de Meun, for my purposes the two most important figures of the thirteenth century. The latter is more important to the Nature/Natura tradition, but St. Thomas's views on Nature cannot be totally overlooked. It is certainly an oversimplification to classify all post-thirteenth-century Catholic theologians as either Augustinians or Thomists, but one can scarcely overlook the significance of what Gilson calls the "Thomistic Reformation." As Gilson makes clear, St. Thomas is, in a sense, an Augustinian himself,
but he does diverge decidedly from St. Augustine on key
points, partly, as I have said, through the influence of
Aristotelian thought on St. Thomas. Thomas's notions
about Nature, like his notions about all else (as is true
of all theologians), stem from his idea of God. His
concept of God is that God is--He has no essence, no
"quiddity" or "whatness," other than His fact of exist-
tence. As Prime Cause of all else, God gives to the
world of Nature "the existence which it has." Hence,
the Thomistic view of the world of Nature--

If the universe owes its existence to an
intelligent cause, and moreover a perfect
one, the result is that the imperfections
of the universe cannot be imputed to its
author. To create the world was to produce
a certain amount of perfection and a
certain degree of being; but evil is
nothing properly speaking; it is much less
a being than an absence of being; natural
ever derives from the ontological limita-
tion essential to any creature, and to say
that God created not only the world but
the evil in it, would be to say that God
created nothingness. . . . The resemblance
of the world to God is inevitably deficient.
No creature receives the total plenitude of
divine perfection because perfections pass
from God to creatures only by effecting a
sort of descent. The order according to
which this descent is effected is the very
law which regulates the intimate constitu-
tion of the universe: all creatures are
ordered according to a hierarchical scale
of perfection, going from the most perfect,
which are angels, to the least perfect,
namely, material things, in such a way that
the lowest degree of each superior species
borders on the highest degree of each
inferior species.
But in spite of the "natural" deficiency, man's end in life is to seek the good, and he does this by conforming to the law of reason, so that "In man, therefore, 'the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law.'" And, consequently, "Every moral fault, or every sin, is before anything else a violation of the law of nature, and through it, a violation of the laws prescribed to nature by the divine reason."\(^{130}\) What then is the effect of sin on Nature? As St. Thomas says (ST, Prima Secundae, Question 85, Article 2), "the natural good which sin diminishes is the natural inclination to virtue." Sin does not take away all good; some natural good remains (man needs his reason--a natural good--to be able to sin).\(^{131}\) Even in his discussion of the necessity of Grace, Thomas notes (ST, Prima Secundae, Question 109, Article 2) that "even in the state of corrupt nature [after the Fall] a man can do some particular good by the power of his own nature," such as building houses and so on, "But he cannot achieve the whole good natural to him, as if he lacked nothing"--hence the need for Grace.\(^{132}\) Thus, as I have said (above, p. 75), St. Thomas's view of Nature is generally kindlier than St. Augustine's and certainly kindlier than Pope Innocent's.

Another thirteenth-century writer, however, is closer to Nature than St. Thomas--Jean de Meun, who, as
Fansler notes, was to Chaucer the source of "all kinds of allusions and information":

The long discourses of Raison, L'Amis, La Vieille, Nature, and Genius were clearly [Chaucer's] favorite passages . . . [including] Nature's discussion of various natural phenomena of the earth and heavens, of alchemy, astronomy, free-will, necessity, destiny, optics, dreams, true nobility and gentility; and Genius's earnest and vigorous exhortation to fecundity, and his promise that if men do their duty in this respect they shall be received into a paradise that exceeds in beauty, beyond power of words to tell, Mirth's Garden of the Rose.133

And, as Economou asserts, the Nature-figures in the Roman and in Chaucer's Parliament have "the most sophisticated expressions of the Goddess Natura that medieval poetry has to offer."134 The crucial passage in the Roman is that beginning with Nature's introduction and ending with Genius's exhortation (Robbins trans., pp. 339-438). Economou notes that this passage "contains Jean's view of Natura and . . . what some students of the poem believe to be the definitive statement of Jean's personal conviction on the question of love,"135 and he adds, "Particularly in evidence are natura plangens and natura procreatrix," derived, of course, from Alain.136 Economou summarizes the similarities and differences between Jean and Alain:

It is important to remark here that what Jean borrows from Alan consists of three features of Natura's cosmological role. First, Natura is vicaria Dei, the exalted subordinate of God the Father of all things.
Second, she works as His representative and in His name at sustaining life, i.e., preserving the plenitude of His creation through continuity. And third, Natura makes a moral judgment of the behavior of all things that come within her domain as vicaria Dei. . . . Although the three basic motifs are present, and although some passages are directly indebted to Alan, Jean develops his Natura and her realm in his own way.

There are two significant differences between the two Naturas [Alain's and Jean's] . . . . First, unlike the Goddess of the De planctu naturae, Jean's Natura never refers to the sacramental state of marriage as the only acceptable avenue of sexual expression. . . . Second, Alain's Natura is closely associated with reason; indeed, like Boethius' Philosophia, who names Natura as the source of reason, Alain's Natura identifies herself as the giver of reason to man. But Jean's Natura admits that man's reason was not provided by her, for her powers do not extend that far. 137

Jean's divergence from Alain, especially on the first point, is also a divergence from orthodoxy, as Curtius shows:

. . . in Parisian university circles round about 1250 there was a heretical Scholasticism of love which appears to be akin to Averroism. Thomas Aquinas attacked it in a passage of his Summa contra Gentiles (III, 136): "Certain men of distorted mind have spoken against the good of sexual moderation . . . For the union of man and woman is ordained for the good of the species. But this is more divine than the good of the individual . . . Organs of generation are given to man by divine ordinance . . . To this may be added the Lord's commandment to our first parents: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Jean de Meun is a man of letters, not a philosopher. But he shares the atmosphere of the trend against which Thomas argues; he is, then, no strange and solitary phenomenon.
(In fact, as Curtius adds, this particular heresy is later propounded by Chaucer's Wife of Bath.)

We should, at this point, examine Jean's own words on these and other issues.

Natura's role in the hierarchy and her providence in the Roman are traditional. She is the "Dame Nature, who takes cognizance of all / That haps beneath the sky's blue covering" (Robbins trans., p. 339). Though she is in charge of all below, she is, as she says, subordinate to God:

When He, according to his fixed design, had thus His other creatures all disposed, With his own grace God honored me so much-- Held me so dear--that He established me As chamberlain of all, to serve Him thus Permitting me, as ever He will permit While it shall be His will. . . . Appointed me His constable--indeed, His steward and His vicar-general . . . . To me He has entrusted everything Within those rings of gold, and all their forms It is my duty to perpetuate. His will it is that all should me obey And to my rules conform . . . .

(pp. 359-60)

All that Nature performs, then, is at God's command. She works through the offices of Genius, her "gentle priest" (p. 347), who enlists the aid of Love and his barons (see pp. 411-38), and she it is who gives man "All blessings that I know how to bestow," so that "He has from me in body and in soul / Three energies--existence, feeling, life" (p. 403). Of her creature, man, and his place in
the world she says:

Companion he to creatures everywhere
And sharer of the blessings they enjoy--
Being he owns in common with the stones;
Life he enjoys in common with the herbs;
Feeling he has in common with the beasts;
Thinking in common with the angel host
He has, excelling all the others thus
(What more need I enumerate of him?)
He has whatever humans can conceive;
He is a microcosm in himself--

(p. 404)

Man is, then, in the same place, more or less, he occupies
in the works of Boethius and Alain.

Nature's most important duty with respect to man,
as in Boethius and Alain, is her role in propagation,
plenitude, and continuity. She busies herself "With forging
individual entities / To save the species' continuity /
Against the assaults of Death" (p. 339). She works "So
that when all of them [her new creatures] shall come to
death / They will leave others still alive" (p. 341).

But, in spite of all that Nature does for man, it
is against him she complains. She repents her error:

Alas! What have I done! I do repent
Of nothing that has happened soon or late
Except one deed committed long ago
When this fair world was young. In that I erred
Most miserably, and for that one act
I call myself a fool.

(p. 347)

Exactly what her "deed" was is not explicit here, but it
appears from what she says later to be man's creation.
She absolves all creation (see pp. 401-03), except man,
whom she roundly denounces (see pp. 403-11). Because "Against my rules he works," she says, "I much regret that e'er I made mankind"--as she does in Alain's Complaint--and, as in the Complaint, Nature rehearses man's vices (pp. 407-09). Then Genius delivers Nature's message to Love and his barons. In this exhortation to fecundity, Genius even echoes Alain's image: Genius berates "those whose two strong hammers have been lent / But will not as they should use them to forge / Upon the proper anvil properly" (p. 415). Genius tells the barons to "Be active in your functions natural" (p. 416) and--in a particularly effective image--advises them to "Plow, barons, plow . . . strive to thrust the coulter firmly home / And keep it in its proper place, to sink / More deeply in the furrow" (p. 419). He tells them, "You never will be blamed for loyal love" (p. 422). But Economou is right: there is no mention of "the sacramental state of marriage." Thus we must agree with Economou that "the Natura of the Roman operates as procreatrix outside of the Christian context in which Alan's Natura acts," and perhaps we should also agree that in Jean's poem she is "morally neutral." At any rate, it is obvious that Jean's Nature is relatively traditional but has some interesting new developments.

One last point about Jean's Nature: she--like Boethius's and, to a lesser extent, Alain's Nature-figures--
is opposed to Fortune, or at least they work toward different ends. Nature creates all men equal ("Equally naked they are brought to birth"), and "Fortune may do the rest." Fortune "bestows / Her favors as she pleases, and on whom / She chooses, without care; and when she will / she takes away, or will take, all that she has given" (p. 394). At the very least, Jean makes Nature the just bestower of God's goods and Fortune the whimsical giver and taker of what she will. Thus, in one more way, Jean's depiction of Nature is within the tradition I have described.

Aldo Scaglione, in *Nature and Love in the Middle Ages* (op. cit.), posits for the fourteenth-century Boccaccio (at least in the *Decameron*) a kind of "naturalism" growing out of the roots we have seen. Scaglione sees in the Courtly Love tradition a limited "naturalistic undercurrent," citing Andreas's dictum, "I do not believe that God can be seriously offended by sins of love; for that which is accomplished under the compulsion of nature can be cleansed by easy attonement." Scaglione sees Alain as "engaged in [a] reconciliation of Christian morals and courtly naturalism" (p. 35) and Jean de Meun as "closer to the world of the *Decameron* than to that of courtly love" (p. 37). Of love in the *Decameron*, Scaglione claims it is "'naturalistic' inasmuch as it is an urge that engages the whole human being, body and soul, muscles and mind,
senses, will, and intellect, all at the service of natural desires" (p. 67). He continues,

In the movement toward this goal [of "the re-establishment of an equilibrium between body and the soul" in the Renaissance] the Decameron sounded like the battle cry against the excesses of the Middle Ages. If the majority of its stories seem to go overboard in underscoring the newly realized rights of the senses, this is not simply due to the characteristics of the genre, the low-style comedy that had claimed such privileges from Aristophanes and Plautus through the rich tradition of the fabliaux; the Decameron is, indeed, a conscious revolt against prevailing standards, as the Proem to the Fourth Day will show. Nor could the "balance" be restored without temporarily going overboard in the opposite direction. Briefly, the excesses of spiritualism had to be corrected by an outburst of naturalism.

Scaglione sees "the novelty of Boccaccio's position" in "his bold and unequivocal proclamation of the 'law of nature' as a new creed for everybody, in direct, explicit reply to the objections of official culture" (p. 126). Thus, although one may not entirely agree with all that Scaglione says, and although Nature as a figure may not be important in Boccaccio, it is clear that "the laws of Nature"--however consciously dealt with--are important in the Decameron. And the Decameron, it must be remembered, was possibly one of Chaucer's sources.

Admittedly I have not covered all the figures in the Nature/Natura tradition, and some I have covered have been given short shrift. But I have given enough of a
sense of the streams in the tradition—and I have covered the writers most influential on Chaucer—in order to be able to show now how Chaucer is within the tradition.

**Chaucer and the Nature/Natura Tradition**

In his article on "Nature in Middle English," Knowlton claims that "The allegorical figure Nature has played no inconsiderable part in English literature since about 1350." Knowlton traces four lines of tradition in English literature from about 1350 to about 1500; he sees Chaucer and Lydgate as the "most influential native authors." Specifically of Chaucer, he says,

Chaucer occasionally used the figure of Nature as a creator in general [note to General Prologue, 9-11] and as a creator of beautiful women in particular [note to The Book of the Duchess, 871 ff.; Anelida and Arcite, 80; Troilus, I, 100-05; and The Physician's Tale, 9 ff.]. But his influence arose especially through the allegorical Parlement of Foules (about 1381-2), wherein the goddess took a considerable part in the action.

Skipping for the time being the passages from *The Canterbury Tales*, I would like to look more closely at some of the others.

In the first of the passages, the one from *The Book of the Duchess*, the Lady's eyes are described as the creation of "the goddess, Dame Nature" (871), who later is said to be the Lady's "chef patron of beaute / And chef ensample of al hir werk" (910-11). Near the end of
the poem, the Knight says,

I bethought me that Nature
Ne formed never in creature
So moche beaute, trewely,
And bounte, wythoute mercy.
(1195-98)

In *Anelida* and *Arcite*, the heroine is described thus:

Yong was this quene, of twenty yer of elde,
Of mydel stature, and of such fairenesse,
That Nature had a joye her to behelde;
And for to spoken of hir stidfastnesse,
She passed hath Penelope and Lucresse;
And shortly, yf she shal be comprehended,
In her ne myghte no thing been amended.
(78-84)

Criseyde is described thus:

As to my doom, in al Troies cite
Nas non so fair, for passynge every wight
So aungelik was ner natif beaute,
That lik a thing inmortal semed she,
As doth an hevenyssh perfitt creature,
That down were sent in scornynge of nature.
(Troilus, I, 100-05)

In *The Book of the Duchess* and *Anelida* and *Arcite*, Nature is, clearly, the goddess who creates natural beauty. In addition, in the first poem, Nature is also connected to virtue ("bounte"); in the second, such a connection is suggested (with Anelida's "stidfastnesse"). Nature is not actually personified in the *Troilus* passage, as Knowlton implied; rather, Criseyde's "hevenyssh" beauty surpasses all created Nature. What is important, though, is that Chaucer traditionally associates beauty and virtue (or morality) with the personified goddess Nature.
Chaucer's fullest portrait of Nature, however, is in *The Parliament of Fowls*, where more of her traditional attributes are developed. As Economou says, Nature in the Parliament fills the roles of Nature *pronuba et procreatrix* and of *vicaria Dei* "just as she had appeared in Alan's *De planctu naturae*."\(^{147}\) And, of course, Chaucer acknowledges Alain's *Complaint* in the *Parliament* (316-18); he also mentions the Anticlaudian in *The House of Fame* (986). As Robinson notes, "The account of Nature and the birds [in the *Parliament*, 298 ff.] is based on a much longer passage in the *De Planctu Naturae* of Alanus de Insulis . . . [and] many of the characterizations [of the birds] correspond to those of Alanus."\(^{148}\)

At line 298 of the *Parliament*, we are introduced to "a queene" who is the "noble goddesse Nature" (303), and to her all the birds have come, ready in her presence "To take hire dom and yeve hire audyence" (308). (Some of the other epithets Chaucer applies to Nature are "This noble emperesse, ful of grace" [319; note the language normally used for the Virgin], "noble goddesse of Nature" [368], "goddesse of Nature" [639], "Almyghty queen" [647], "noble goddesse of kynde" [672].) Her description Chaucer omits, but he refers us instead to Alain's description in the *Complaint* (see 11. 316-18). Her province is suggested by the many epithets and by the fact that all the birds
submit to her judgment, but Chaucer is more explicit yet:

Nature, the vicaire of the almyghty Lord,
That hot, cold, heavy, lyght, moyst, and dreye
Hath knyt by even noumbres of acord,
In esy voys began to speke and seye,
". . . Ye [birds] come for to chese--and fie youre wey--
Youre makes, as I prike yow with plesaunce;
But natheles, my ryghtful ordenaunce
May I nat lete for al this world to wynne . . . ."

(379-91)

Nature is, then, God's "vicaire," and she controls all the elemental (or sublunary) world. She pricks the desire of the birds (and of all animals), and she can in no way leave off or abandon her "ryghtful ordenaunce" (her order, plan, etc.). In the poem, of course, Nature presides over the parliament and brings it to a just conclusion, advising the tercelets that "A yer is nat so longe to endure" (661); then, "To every foul Nature yaf his make / By evene acord" (667-68). And the birds end with a roundel "To don to Nature honour and plesaunce" (676).

Thus, we see in Nature in the Parliament most of the traditional characteristics we have seen except Nature plangens. The latter attribute, as Economou says, "would have been inappropriate to Chaucer's work, which is a study of man's eagerness, which is not without its problems, to follow Nature's decree rather than of his reluctance to behave according to her law." Bennett says that in the Parliament Chaucer is "concerned with Natura ministrans," what he sees as "Alain's concept of Nature--
the poetic sublimation of Chartrian philosophy."\textsuperscript{150}

This brief discussion will show at least that Chaucer was aware of and used the Nature/Natura tradition. There is no doubt that he knew and used Boethius, Alain, and Jean de Meun--the most important figures in the tradition, but it is clear that he also knew some of the other figures I have mentioned. Just how important the concept of Nature and the figure Natura are to Chaucer remains to be assessed.\textsuperscript{151}
CHAPTER III

GRACE

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.152

Although the song quoted above is a poem by an
eighteenth-century writer set to an early American melody,
although it is much later than the time with which I am
primarily dealing, and although it is undoubtedly Protes­
tant in inspiration, "Amazing Grace" captures quite well
some of the important features of the fourteenth-century
Catholic view of Grace. The two most important points one
must make about the Catholic view of Grace are, first, that
it is absolutely gratuitous and, second, that it is absolutely necessary. The hymn quoted above deals mainly with the necessity of Grace and with the consequent effects once it is obtained. "Amazing grace" does away with blindness (cf. above, p. 80--St. Augustine's view that the Fall made men ignorant); it gives one hope, as opposed to the fears and despair resulting from a lack of Grace; and, finally, it is what "will lead me home," what will, in other words, bring one to heaven--to "A life of joy and peace." What seems unCatholic about the hymn is the suggestion "that grace [did] appear, / The hour I first believed"--that the gift of Grace is somehow merited. The Catholic view is that Grace is not based on merit but is, instead, absolutely gratuitous. As the New Catholic Encyclopedia puts it, "It is this fundamental emphasis on the total gratuity of grace that effectively relates the totality of its Catholic theological exposition to the affirmations of Christian revelation."\(^{153}\)

But what is the import of Grace to the Church? As Jean Daujat says, "in the Catholic religion grace is not a subject of secondary importance"; rather, he says, "It is the essential and the whole of the Catholic religion, so that it may be said that to speak of the latter is to speak of grace: that whenever we expound the faith we are expounding grace; that whenever we treat of any point whatsoever of Catholic doctrine we are treating of one of the aspects of grace.\(^ {154}\)
In fact, we have already seen that to speak of the Catholic view of Nature is to speak of Grace.) The importance of Grace, in the Catholic view, results mainly from its necessity. As Daujat says,

we see grace not only as a pure gift of God, which man does not deserve and cannot obtain by himself [i.e., it is gratuitous], but as something which, once given, completely changes him, by purifying him inwardly from sin, and rendering him good and holy. By his grace, God communicates to man the holiness of which he is himself the fountain-head. 155

We have seen what is, in the Catholic view, the deficiency of Nature (resulting, of course, from the Fall); it is only logical, then, that to be like God, to approach his Throne, we need something "extra." The something extra is Grace, and how Grace has been defined I shall undertake to demonstrate. In general, we must remember with Daujat that Grace is "something which [man's] human nature does not include and does not claim, and which is not due to him." 156

My approach to this subject will differ from my approaches to Fortune and Nature. In discussing Fortune I set out, chronologically, the tradition of Fortune/Fortuna and then gave a sort of logical analysis of Fortune's purview. In discussing Nature I showed, again chronologically, the tradition of Nature/Natura, suggesting within this pattern the changing view of Nature's role and
province. In covering Grace, I shall not attempt to cover the full history of Grace, with all its intricacies and controversies; I shall not even follow a chronological pattern. Instead, I shall first analyze the topic following essentially the pattern St. Thomas Aquinas uses in his *Summa* (one can hardly find a better model for logical analysis than St. Thomas), and under each sub-topic I shall consider what has been said by the "Doctor of Grace" (St. Augustine) and the "Universal Doctor" (St. Thomas), because these two are probably the most representative spokesmen of the Church and because they have so much to say about Grace. (In addition, much of what St. Thomas says about Grace eventually becomes official doctrine, at the Council of Trent.) In dealing with other Catholic theologians, either I would repeat what Thomas or Augustine say, or I would get entangled in the fine points of doctrine that Chaucer (who, with the Nun's Priest, could "nat bulte it to the bren") just would not have bothered with. I shall not entirely overlook other views: I shall have something to say about Boethius and Alain de Lille, about the "practical" author of *The Ancrene Riwle*, about the mystical author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, about Bishop Bradwardine (the extreme Augustinian Chaucer mentions in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* in connection with the Free Will controversy; see VII, 3242), and about John Wyclif.
As I indicated above, I shall, in the first part of this chapter, follow the order St. Thomas uses (see *ST*, Prima Secundae, Questions 109-114): the necessity of Grace, the essence of Grace, the divisions of Grace, the cause of Grace, and the effects of Grace. After these subjects, I shall take up the figures mentioned above (Boethius, Alain, et al.).

The Necessity of Grace

As we have seen (above, pp. 78-81), St. Augustine sees Nature as deficient—not original Nature but Nature as now constituted (as the result of the Fall). Augustine, in his dispute with the Pelagians, stresses that the Fall is the result of man's Free Will; man willed his own Fall. As Gilson says, "Human nature could fall, otherwise there would have been no sin; but it did not have to fall, otherwise the act it committed would not have been a sin." 157 Or, as Milton says several centuries later, man was created "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (*Paradise Lost*, III, 99). 158 In his fallen state, then, man needs Grace; as Gilson says, "To fall, man has but to will it; but a mere desire to rise from that fall is not enough to enable him to do so." 159 For instance, in "Admonition and Grace," Augustine says of the consequent necessity of Grace (and of its gratuity),
because man of his own free will abandoned God, he experienced the just judgment of God, with the result that he was damned together with all his progeny, who were all contained in him and who all sinned with him. Those of his progeny who are freed by the grace of God are freed from a damnation under sentence of which they lie; wherefore, even if no one of them were to be freed, nobody could justly criticize the just judgment of God. The fact that a few are saved ... is the work of grace—a free work, for which many thanks are to be rendered—in order that no one may take pride in his own merits ....

Or as he says in The City of God, "From this hell on earth there is no escape, save through the grace of the Saviour Christ, our God and Lord." "Hence," as Gilson says, "the gaining of grace is a necessary requirement for man's salvation" in Augustine's view.

But the eschatological necessity is not the only reason for Grace in Augustine's view. We must face the problem of merit more fully later, but for now I should like at least to note that in Augustine's view merit begins with Grace and is not the cause of Grace. Auguste says (in "Grace and Free Will") that Grace is that "without which we are incapable of doing good," and again (in "Admonition and Grace") that it is that "without which they [men] do no good whatsoever, either in thought, or in will and love, or in action." Thus, in the view of St. Augustine, Grace is necessary not only to achieve the ultimate goal of salvation but also to do good while on
earth.

In his *Summa*, St. Thomas Aquinas offers ten articles on the question of the necessity of Grace (Prima Secundae, Question 109).\(^{166}\) St. Thomas argues that man can know certain "natural truths" without Grace but that he needs Grace to know the Truth which transcends his natural knowledge (p. 139); that man can do some good by his own nature but needs Grace "in order to do and will supernatural good" (p. 141; cf. above, esp. p. 105); that fallen man needs Grace "in order to love God above all things" (p. 143); that fallen man "cannot fulfil all the divine commandments without healing grace" (p. 144); that "a man cannot merit eternal life without grace" (p. 146); that a man without Grace cannot prepare himself for Grace, "cannot therefore turn to God except through God turning him to [H]imself" (p. 148); that "a man can in no wise rise from sin by himself, without the help of grace" (p. 149); that a man in a corrupted state (i.e., postlapsarian man) cannot entirely avoid sin without the aid of Grace (pp. 151-52); that man "needs a habitual gift by which his corrupt nature may be healed, and thereafter raised to perform works such as merit eternal life, which exceed what is commensurate with his nature" but that he also "needs the help of grace by which God moves him to act" (i.e., he needs Actual Grace in addition to Habitual Grace;
pp. 153-54); and finally, that man needs the "gift of perseverance even after he has been justified by grace, so that he may be delivered from evil until the end of life" (p. 155). In general, as Thomas says in *Contra Impugnantes Dei*, "Grace is nature's perfection." 167

Thomas, as did Augustine, sees the necessity of Grace in Nature's deficiency, but Thomas sees more good remaining in Nature. And, of course, Thomas more fully and more systematically sets out the necessity of Grace, possibly because, unlike Augustine, he is not embroiled in controversy.

**The Essence of Grace**

What is Grace? To Augustine, according to Gilson, Grace is "the sum-total of God's free gifts, the purpose of which is to make man's salvation possible in the state of fallen nature," and "The essential characteristic of grace . . . is that it is supernatural by definition." 168

As Augustine says in "Grace and Free Will,"

It follows then that we are molded, that is, formed and created, in good works which we ourselves have not prepared but "which God has made beforehand that we may walk in them." It follows . . . that if our good life is nothing more than the grace of God, then eternal life, the recompense for a good life is, without any doubt, also a grace of God; for it is freely given in recompense for that which has also been freely given. Now a good life that is so rewarded is itself simply a grace, whereas eternal life, which is given in return as a recompense,
is a grace given for a grace, a kind of remuneration, as it were, in accordance with justice. Hence the truth . . . that God "will render to everyone according to his works." Thus, we see that to St. Augustine Grace is "the sum-total of God's free gifts." It is the "good life" (i.e., a life lived in and for "good"), and it is the good end to that life. Finally, as Augustine suggests above and constantly in his works, Grace is "freely given"; as he says,

grace is not given according to man's merits; otherwise grace is no longer grace, seeing that it is called grace precisely because it is freely given.

This grace . . . of Christ, without which neither infants nor adults can be saved, is not rendered for any merits, but is given gratis, on account of which it is also called grace.

Augustine is working from one sense of "the Latin gratia, equivalent to the Greek charis and derived from the Latin adjective gratus, meaning 'pleasing,'" from which comes "the sense of something granted to someone, as being pleasing to him without its being strictly his due, a gratuitous favor granted to an individual without its being an obligation." Thus, to Augustine, Grace is the gratuitous, supernatural sum-total of all good that comes to man (by way of Christ's intercession as a result of God's mercy).

St. Thomas, in four articles (ST, Question 110), deals with the essence of Grace. In dealing with the
subject of "Whether Grace Denotes Something in the Soul,"
Thomas says that Grace, as commonly used, means three
things: someone's love, a gift freely given, and the
response to a gift freely given. The latter two meanings,
he says, suggest that something is left in the soul--"the
gift freely given, or the acknowledgment of it." And so
he concludes, "To say that a man has the grace of God,
therefore, is to say that there is something supernatural
in him, which God bestows" (pp. 157-58). In his next
article, Thomas goes a bit further and asserts that Grace
"is a certain quality" of the soul (pp. 159-60). Then, in
Article Three, he asserts that "the light of grace, which
is a partaking of the divine nature, is something over
and above the infused virtues [which "dispose men in a
higher way to a higher end"], which are derived from it
and ordered by it," and hence, Grace "is not the same as
virtue" (pp. 161-62). In the final article on the essence
of Grace, Thomas reaches the following conclusions:

... just as the soul's essence is the
source of the powers which are its prin-
ciples of action, so is grace the source
of the virtues which enter the powers of
the soul, and move them to act. Hence
grace is related to the will as a mover to
the thing moved ... .

... . Grace is the principle of
meritorious works through the medium of
the virtues, just as the soul's essence
is the principle of its vital operations
through the medium powers.

... the soul is the subject of
grace because it belongs to the species
of the intellectual, or rational. But it is not on account of any of its powers that it belongs to this species. The powers of the soul are its natural properties, and are therefore consequential to its species. Because of its essence, the soul belongs to a different species from other souls, such as irrational animals and plants. That the human soul should be the subject of grace does not then imply that every soul should be so. A soul can be the subject of grace only if it is of a certain kind.

(pp. 163-64)

And so, as with almost everything else, St. Thomas analyzes his subject—this time the essence of Grace—with his usual sense of fine distinctions.

The Divisions of Grace

There is probably not a topic under the subject of Grace that is more confusing than that of the various divisions or kinds of Grace. Part of the confusion results from the shifting terminology. To facilitate our understanding of the medieval divisions (and the explanations of these divisions), I shall first outline the modern view of Grace, a view which sees Grace as divided first into Uncreated Grace and Created Grace. The former is "God communicating Himself directly to His creatures"; the latter is "a gratuitous, supernatural gift, distinct from God, and the effect of His love." We are mainly concerned with the divisions of Created Grace, which is variously subdivided. The cause of Created Grace is
"either the grace of God or the grace of Christ," and its mode is either external or internal (the latter "when it inheres in the subject as an intrinsic attribute"). Internal Grace is divided into *gratia gratis data*—"given to an individual for the help and salvation of others," but "not awarded to all Christians and can include sinners"—and *gratia gratum faciens*, which is further divided into Habitual and Actual. Habitual (or Sanctifying or Sacramental or Supernatural) Grace is "first obtained through the Sacrament of Baptism in the case of infants or through either Baptism or an act of perfect contrition in the case of adults"; it can be lost but "may be recovered through an act of perfect contrition or through attrition coupled with sacramental absolution." It is this Sanctifying Grace without which one "cannot attain the Beatific Vision" at death. Actual Grace is "an internal movement of the will or intellect which comes, and enables a man to exceed his natural powers." It is further divided into Sufficient Grace, which "gives merely the power of acting without involving the achievement of a good action," and Efficacious Grace, which "enables the will freely, and actually, to consent" and which consequently "is always associated with the act to which it gives effect." Sufficient Grace is apparently the same as Operating Grace, and Efficacious is the same as
Cooperating. There are other kinds of Grace (including the special Efficacious Grace which gives one "Final Perseverance unto death"), but this discussion gives a quick survey of the modern view of the main kinds of Grace. [See Diagram 1 below.]

The finer distinctions of the kinds of Grace have developed through the ages, much of it probably coming from St. Thomas. St. Augustine does not make an "explicit distinction between sanctifying and actual grace, as we
call them today," as Gilson says, but "there can be no doubt that he attributes the latter [Actual] to man as God created him." That is, "To persevere in good, Adam possessed a grace such as we have to free us from evil." The distinction between Sanctifying and Actual Grace is, I think, implicit in what Augustine says in "Grace and Free Will":

Consequently, man has need of God's grace not only to be made just when he is wicked [i.e., Sanctifying Grace], when he is changed, that is, from a wicked to a just man, and when he is given good in return for evil, but grace [Actual?] must accompany him, and he must lean on it in order not to fall.

In all his arguments for merit as a result of Grace, Augustine is concerned with Actual Grace; when he deals with the end of man's life and the State of Grace which achieves that end, he is concerned with Sanctifying Grace.

St. Thomas covers the divisions of Grace in five articles (ST, Prima Secundae, Question 111). In the first article, he divides Grace into gratia gratum faciens (or Sanctifying Grace, as he means it) and gratia gratis data (or Free Grace):

There is grace through which a man is himself united to God, which is called sanctifying grace. There is also grace whereby one man co-operates with another to lead him to God. This latter is called "free grace," since it is beyond the capacity of nature to give, and beyond the
merit of him to whom it is given. But it is not called sanctifying grace, since it is not given in order that a man may himself be justified by it, but in order that he may co-operate towards the justification of another.

(p. 165)

This, obviously, is close to the modern view (see above, pp. 128-30). In his second article, Thomas divides Grace into Operative and Cooperative (but it is not clear what kind of Grace he is now dividing), the former when God is the "mover" and the soul the "moved" and the latter when the soul is the "mover" (pp. 167-68). In the next article, Thomas divides Grace "on the same grounds" (i.e., "on account of its different effects") into Prevenient and Subsequent. He lists five effects of Grace:

first, that the soul is healed; second, that it wills what is good; third, that it carries out what it wills; fourth, that it perseveres in good; and fifth, that it attains to glory.

On the basis of this he explains his new division:

Since grace causes the first effect in us, it is called prevenient in relation to the second effect. Since it causes the second effect in us, it is called subsequent in relation to the first effect. And since any particular effect follows one effect and precedes another, grace may be called both prevenient and subsequent in regard to the same effect as related to different effects.

(p. 169)

In Article Four, he divides Free Grace, which he says "contains all that a man requires in order to instruct another in divine things which transcend reason":
1. He must have a full knowledge of divine things, so as to be able to teach others.
2. He must be able to verify or prove what he says, otherwise his teaching will be ineffective. 3. He must be able to convey his knowledge to others in a suitable manner.

(p. 171)

(Each of these three skills which are subdivisions of Free Grace Thomas then develops more fully; see pp. 171-72.) In his final article, he draws a finer distinction between Free and Sanctifying Grace and concludes that "Sanctifying grace is . . . more excellent than free grace," because the former "is ordained to unite man directly with his final end" (p. 173).

In his "Disputation on Truth," Thomas makes a similar distinction:

Divine grace may be . . . divided. In one sense it is called grace freely bestowed, *gratia gratis data*, which in technical theology usually stands for the special gifts of prophecy, wisdom, and the like . . . In the second sense, grace is called sanctifying grace, *gratia gratum faciens*, and this . . . renders a man agreeable to God . . . .

It is clear, then, that the roots of the modern view are in Thomas; he does not deal with Actual Grace *per se*, though his division into Operative and Cooperative Grace prefigures the later division of Actual Grace (see also the discussion in the next section).
The Cause of Grace

In the passages quoted from St. Augustine (above, pp. 125-26), it is obvious that to him the cause of Grace is God (or Christ) and His love and mercy (mercy—not justice, since the gift "is given gratis"). And beyond developing this concept, Augustine does not analyze the cause(s) of Grace.

St. Thomas, on the other hand, goes into the same kind of fine distinctions he did on the kinds of Grace (see ST, Prima Secundae, Question 112, Articles 1-5). In the first article, Thomas—like Augustine—asserts that it is "impossible for any creature to be a cause of grace" and that it is "inevitable that God alone should deify, by communicating a sharing of the divine nature through a participation of likeness" (p. 175). In discussing in the second article whether one can prepare for Grace, Thomas seems to suggest a distinction between Sanctifying and Actual Grace:

... grace may be understood in two ways. Sometimes it means a habitual gift which God bestows [i.e., Sanctifying Grace]. At other times it means the help of God, who moves the soul to good [Actual]. Now some preparation is required for grace as a habitual gift, since a form can exist only in matter which is disposed to it. But no previous preparation is required on the part of man if we are speaking of grace as the help of God, by which he moves him to good. Rather is any preparation which takes place within him due to the help of God, who thus moves him.

(p. 176)
In Article Three, Thomas goes further:

... preparation for grace may be considered under two aspects, since a man's preparation for it is due to God as mover, and also to his own free will as moved by God, as we said in the preceding article. In so far as preparation for grace is due to a man's own free will, there is no necessity why grace should follow it. The gift of grace exceeds any preparation by human power.

(p. 178)

In the next article Thomas asserts that Sanctifying Grace is distributed equally "in respect of its end or object" but that "grace does admit of more or less in respect of its subject, since one man may be more enlightened by the light of grace than another," partly because of the differences in preparation and partly because "God distributes his gracious gifts diversely, to the end that the beauty and perfection of the Church may ensue from their diversity" (p. 179). In his final article on this subject, Thomas says that "man may know by revelation that he has [Sanctifying] grace" and that "we may know ... conjecturally by means of signs" that we have Grace (i.e., by the effects--by perceiving that one "delights in God and loves not the world, and in as much as he is not aware of any mortal sin within him"), but, he asserts, a man cannot "by himself" and "with certainty" judge whether he has Grace (p. 181).
The Effects of Grace

To Augustine, the most important effect of Grace is, as I have suggested, the ultimate effect—the final Beatific Vision, salvation; but another important effect, as I have also suggested, is merit. Augustine is adamant about merit's resulting from Grace; he pushes this point so hard because of his opposition to the Pelagians, who see merit as prevenient to Grace, who, in fact, see Grace as the result of merit. As he says in "Grace and Free Will,"

We prove by these and similar testimonies of Sacred Scripture that God's grace is not given according to merits. We see, in fact, that it is given, and continues to be given daily, not only where there are no good merits, but also where there are many previous merits that are evil. But it is when grace is unmistakably given that even our own merits begin to be good, though only because of grace. For if it is withdrawn, man falls, and he is not raised up by his free will, but rather cast down.

But the fact that man cannot merit Grace would seem to deny his Free Will, and so Augustine has much to say about Free Will. In fact, the freedom of the Will is, to Augustine, another major effect of Grace. As he says (again in "Grace and Free Will"),

For the grace bestowed upon us through Jesus our Lord is neither the knowledge of God's law nor nature nor the mere remission of sin, but that grace which makes it possible to fulfill the Law so that our nature is set free from the dominion of sin.
The will is not destroyed by grace, but is changed from a bad to a good will, and is aided by grace once it becomes good.187

Or as he says in "Admonition and Grace,"

It must, therefore, be admitted that we have a will free to do both evil and good; but, in doing evil, one is free of justice and the slave of sin; on the other hand, in the matter of good no one is free unless he be freed by Him who said: "If the Son makes you free, you will be freed indeed."

The fact is that the human will does not achieve grace through freedom, but rather freedom through grace, and through grace, too, joyous consistency and invincible strength to persevere.188

Thus, to St. Augustine the major effects of Grace are salvation, merit, and freedom of the Will.

St. Thomas is more detailed (see ST, Prima Secundae, Questions 113-14). He considers first "the justification of the ungodly, which is the effect of operative grace" (Question 113, Articles 1-10), and then "merit, which is the effect of co-operative grace" (Question 114, Articles 1-10). Thomas concludes in the first five articles that the justification of the ungodly "means the transmutation from a state of injustice to the state of justice," which is accompanied by "remission of sin" (p. 184); that "The remission of sin would ... be meaningless if there were no infusion of grace" (p. 185); that "God infuses the gift of justifying grace in such wise that he also moves the free will to accept it" (p. 187); that the justification
"requires a movement of the free will" and hence "the movement of the mind by which it turns to God in the first instance by faith" (p. 189); and that the justification "requires a twofold movement of the free will," since "It must yearn for the justice which is of God" and "It must also abhor sin" (p. 191). In the sixth article, Thomas says that four things are necessary to the justification of the ungodly: "an infusion of grace, a movement of the free will toward God in faith, a movement of the free will in recoil from sin, and the remission of guilt." The last is, he says, "the consummation of the movement, or attainment of the end" (pp. 192-93). In Article Seven, Thomas says that "the infusion of grace takes place in an instant" (not gradually) and that "The justification of the ungodly is therefore achieved by God in an instant" (pp. 194-95). In Article Eight, he says that the four things required for justification (see above) are "simultaneous in time" but one is "prior to another in the order of nature" (they occur in the order given above), and in Article Nine, he says that in one sense ("that of absolute quantity") glorification (i.e., achieving heaven) is greater than justification but that in another sense ("relative quantity") "the gift of grace which makes the ungodly just is greater than the gift of glory which beatifies the just" (p. 200). In his last article, he says that
justification is, in some (but not all) senses, "miraculous" (pp. 201-02).

In the first article on merit, Thomas says—with Augustine—that "merit and reward are the same thing," that "all the good that is in a man is due to God," and that it is "only by a previous divine ordination that a man can merit anything from God" (pp. 203-04). This seems to contradict his point about man's ability to perform particular goods without God's help (see above, p. 105) unless he is here limiting "good" to its supernatural meaning. In the next article he says that "No created nature . . . can suffice as the principle of an action which merits eternal life, unless there is added to it a supernatural gift, which we call grace," and that "no one who lives in sin can merit eternal life" unless he remits all sin through Grace (p. 206). In Article Three, Thomas considers the sticky problem of condign and congruent merit and concludes that "A man's work is . . . rewarded according to the worth of the grace by which he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and adopted as a son of God to whom the inheritance is due by right of adoption" (p. 207). In the next article, he says that "the principle of merit depends especially on charity," the proper action of which is the "movement of man's mind towards the enjoyment of divine good," and which "directs all
action of the other virtues to this end"; consequently, "The meriting of eternal life... depends primarily on charity" (p. 209). In the next four articles, Thomas concludes that "no man can merit the first grace for himself" (p. 210); that one cannot really merit the first Grace for another but that "A man in grace fulfils the divine will, and it is congruous according to the relation of friendship, that God should fulfil his desire by saving another" (p. 212); that a man cannot merit his restoration after a lapse (p. 213); and that an "increase of grace is merited condignly" (p. 215). In Article Nine, Thomas says that the perseverance in Grace of a man on earth "is not merited, since it depends entirely on the moving of God, which is the principle of merit" but that God "bestows the gift of perseverance freely" (p. 216), and in his final article on merit, he says that "God gives to just men [men in a State of Grace] as much of temporal goods, and of temporal evils, as will help them to attain to eternal life" and that temporal goods "are merited in so far as men are moved by God to do certain temporal things, wherein they achieve what God sets before them, and through God's favor" (p. 218; cf. Alain's statement in the Complaint, above, p. 43).

This long analysis of Grace—as it is presented in the Church's two major spokesmen—should suggest the
importance of the subject in pre-Tridentine (as well as post-Tridentine) Catholic theology, and it should give some notion of the size and complexity of the problem of attempting a thorough study of Grace which would cover more completely such problems as condign and congruent merit and the various controversies (the aforementioned Pelagians and the Bainists, the Jansenists, et al.). But a good deal of this would be outside Chaucer's purview, intellectually as well as chronologically. I do wish, however, to take up a few special topics.

Boethius and Alain de Lille

The first subject I would like to present is a short survey of what two of the important sources I have previously dealt with--Boethius and Alain de Lille--have to say about Grace. The two are not primarily theologians; therefore, we should not expect the sort of explicit treatment St. Augustine gives or the sort of systematic treatment St. Thomas gives.

Boethius, in his Consolation, takes a "rational," philosophical approach to the problems of Providence, and so he has little to say here about God's Grace. But in his "Theological Tractates" he sets aside his philosopher's hat--or covers it with the mitre. For instance, in "On the Catholic Faith," Boethius sets out the "assertions" on which the Catholic Faith is "founded chiefly," and in
this tractate he shows his orthodoxy on the subject of Grace. He says,

So the human race that sprang from the first man and mightily increased and multiplied, broke into strife, stirred up wars, and became the heir of earthly misery, because it had lost the joys of Paradise in its first parent. Yet were there not a few of mankind whom the Giver of Grace [conditor gratiae] set apart for Himself and who were obedient to His will; and though by desert of nature they were condemned, yet God by making them partakers in the hidden mystery, long afterwards to be revealed, vouchsafed to recover fallen nature.190

Here we see the orthodox view of the necessity of Grace, its gratuity, and its supernatural essence. A little later, Boethius says,

And because the human race was wounded by the weapon of eternal punishment by reason of the nature which they had inherited from the first transgressor and could not win a full meed of salvation because they had lost it in its first parent, God instituted certain health-giving sacraments to teach the difference between what grace bestowed and human nature deserved, nature simply subjecting to punishment, but grace, which is won by no merit, since it would not be grace if it were due to merit, conferring all that belongs to salvation.191

Here, in addition to the elements we saw above, we have a fairly orthodox view of Sacramental Grace and its effect, and we see a truly Augustinian view of merit.192

With this kind of orthodoxy in the background of Boethius, it is not unreasonable to look for traces of it in his Consolation. Jefferson says that "The object of
Boethius in the Consolation is to teach what happiness, or 'felicitee' as Chaucer terms it, is," and that he did this "by explaining the nature and operation of Providence in man's affairs." He have seen the parts Nature and Fortune play in relation to Providence in the Consolation, and we have seen God's role in controlling all. But the closest thing in the Consolation to Grace is, I think, Boethius's concept of Love. As Jefferson says (in a passage quoted in part above, pp. 82-83),

The present orderly arrangement of the universe, according to Boethius, is the resultant . . . of two forces, Nature and Love. Nature is the god-given principle which enters into every object, . . . propelling it in a certain definite direction. But if left to itself, each object would pursue its course independently of all other objects. The universe would be a flux. . . . But to rescue the universe from this confusion, exists the bond of Love, emanating from Providence.

That is, the Love emanating from Providence corrects the course which Nature charts; hence, Boethius's Love seems to have much the same corrective power as Grace, which we must remember, inclines one to the proper path. As Boethius says (in Book II, meter 8),

That this fair world in settled course her several forms should vary,
That a perpetual law should tame the fighting seeds of things,

Love ruling heaven, and earth, and seas, them
in this course doth bind.
And in the moving meter which I indicated above is an imitation of the Chalcidian Timaeus (Book III, meter 9),

Boethius sets out this force of Love more clearly:

O Thou, that dost the world in lasting order guide, Father of heaven and earth, Who makest time swiftly slide,
And, standing still Thyself, yet fram'st all moving laws,
Who to Thy work wert moved by no external cause: But by a sweet desire, where envy hath no place,
Thy goodness moving Thee to give each thing his grace,
Thou dost all creatures' forms from highest patterns take,
From Thy fair mind the world fair like Thyself doth make,
Thus Thou perfect the whole perfect each part dost frame.
Thou temp'rest elements, making cold mixed with flame
And dry things join with moist, lest fire away should fly,
Or earth, opprest with weight, buried too low should lie.
Thou in consenting parts fitly disposed hast Th'all-moving soul in midst of threefold nature placed,
Which, cut in several parts that run a different race, Into itself returns, and circling doth embrace The highest mind, and heaven with like proportion drives.
Thou with like cause dost make the souls and lesser lives, Fix them in chariots swift, and widely scatterest O'er heaven and earth; then at Thy fatherly behest They stream, like fire returning, back to Thee, Their God.
Dear Father, let my mind Thy hallowed seat ascend, Let me behold the spring of grace [fontem . . . boni] and find Thy light,
That I on Thee may fix my soul's well cleared sight. Cast off the earthly weight wherewith I am opprest, Shine as Thou art most bright, Thou only calm and rest
To pious men whose end is to behold Thy ray,
Who their beginning art, their guide, their bound,
and way.196

Here it seems clear that the chain of Love which holds all together is also what brings souls back to God and allows one to "behold the spring of grace and find Thy light" (i.e., the final Beatific Vision)--the "end" of "pious men."

Thus, it is possible to see how Chaucer's predecessors and contemporaries read the Consolation as a Christian document (regardless of whether Boethius did write the "Theological Tractates"), and it is also possible to see suggestions of the Doctrine of Grace in the Consolation.

But this bond of Love is not the only relevant topic in the Consolation. Boethius, like Augustine, is concerned with the problem of Free Will. I shall return to this subject when I take up Bishop Bradwardine.

We have seen how Alain de Lille also subordinates Nature to God, in this case more obviously Christian than in the Consolation. There is little in the Complaint about Grace, but in her dissertation on her role in Providence Nature does say,

man by my working is born, by the might of God is born again. Through me he is called from not being to being; through Him he is led from being on into a better being. For through me man is begotten unto death, through Him he is created unto life again... of this second birth... am I, Nature, ignorant... since here all
theory of natural objects fails, let us 
revere the mystery of so great a thing 
by the strength of faith alone.

(Moffat, p. 30)

Here, clearly, is the Doctrine of Grace—the orthodox idea 
that Grace perfects Nature and brings man to the final 
Beatific Vision. In addition, Nature's whole emphasis in 
the Complaint on the proper kind of love (wedded love only) 
is concerned, like Boethius's Philosophia, with the cor-
rective power of Love (though admittedly Alain is concerned 
with marriage and Boethius is not).

In the Anticlaudian, Alain makes God's superiority 
to Nature (and His perfection thereof) more dramatic. 
Nature and the Virtues recognize Nature's inability to 
create the "divine man"—hence the journey of Prudence to 
God to get a soul. On her journey, accompanied by Reason, 
Prudence meets Theology and goes with her to God, leaving 
Reason behind (see Cornog, p. 109). Prudence passes the 
Virgin on her way, and the poet says of the Virgin,

At her advent the golden age returned to 
the world, after outrage piety, after sin 
grace, virtue after vice, peace after hate, 
mirth after sadness. 

(pp. 115-16; italics mine)

Then of Christ—

This is He who pitied our lot; forsaking the 
palace of the eternal Father He sustained 
the loathesomeness of our condition, without 
sin fastening upon Himself the penalties of 
sin, the damnations of our guilt.

(p. 116)
In these two passages, we can see that it is "grace" which perfects our sinful condition and that the cause of Grace is Christ Himself. After Prudence returns to Nature with the soul, Concord (not unrelated to Boethius's bond of Love) joins it to the body Nature has fashioned, thus "perfecting" Nature. In conclusion, though there is much in Alain that is not strictly orthodox, it is clear that behind his works lies not only Platonism but the orthodox Doctrine of Grace.

The Ancrene Riwle

The next subject I would like to consider is what the anonymous author of The Ancrene Riwle has to say about Grace. I wish to consider this early-thirteenth-century work not because Chaucer knew it (though considering the number of manuscripts in circulation it is certainly possible that he did), but because it represents a view of Grace through the eyes of an ordinary, possibly secular, priest. The book is written as a guide for "three well-born ladies who were undertaking the life of anchoresses" and is intended to show them how to live the contemplative life, though Gerard Sitwell says that actually there is "little about contemplation and a correspondingly greater emphasis on the ascetic element, the pursuit of virtue and the avoidance of sin." I do not entirely agree with Sitwell: though the emphases he sees are there,
they are there as a means to an end, and the end is contemplation with the ultimate goal of a Beatific Vision. Thus, the whole work is about contemplation. True, as Sitwell says, the work does not contain the kind of mystical rhapsodies that *The Cloud of Unknowing* does, but the goal of this work and of the mystical treatises is essentially the same. Perhaps all the emphasis on pursuing virtue and avoiding sin is in the work because the author was writing for women, but he certainly does not think women are unable to attain the Beatific Vision; more likely, the emphasis is different because the *Riwle* is a book of discipline and guidance. This goal--"the close union . . . between God and man"--has, as Sitwell says, "its foundation in the doctrine of sanctifying grace." That is, the Vision achieved by a contemplative on earth or the ultimate Vision at the end of life must come from God, who initiates it; man cannot achieve the Vision on his own merits or by his efforts. The author advises the anchoresses to "be blind to the outside world" and they "shall see, spiritually, the joys of heaven, which will inflame your heart to hasten towards them." The anchoresses must have "custody of the senses"--must achieve what a later author will call the "Cloud of Forgetting"--in order to achieve the Vision, to pierce through the "Cloud of Unknowing." But all the emphasis in the *Riwle* on outward
forms is clearly an indication of the inner State of Grace. For instance, the anonymous author discusses various temptations:

For all temptations, and particularly for those of the flesh, there are, under God's grace, medicines and remedies. Constant interior meditations--the prayers of anguish, robust faith, reading, fasting, keeping vigil, bodily exertions, comfort from other people to whom one may speak, by which one may be supported in the moment of temptation . . . .

(p. 106; italics mine)

Thus, when one has Grace, there are various activities he can perform to avoid falling from Grace. To insure Grace one must participate in the Sacraments--hence the long chapters on "Confession" and "Penance" (pp. 133-53 and 154-69), the emphasis (in the section of "External Rules," pp. 182-92) on Communion (only "fifteen times a year"--no more because "People think less of a thing which they have often"; p. 182), and the emphasis on prayers during Mass (see pp. 13-14). The interesting thing about The Ancrene Riwle is that it is built on an assumption of Grace but does not treat it explicitly. Grace is implicit in the whole work and is almost taken for granted. We can see, therefore, that to the ordinary priest Grace was not a subject to be analyzed or argued over; it was simply a "given" from which all else could be established.
The Cloud of Unknowing

The anonymous late-fourteenth-century mystic who wrote The Cloud of Unknowing does not take Grace so much for granted; in fact, he frequently stresses that the Grace of God's prevenient mercy is absolutely necessary to successful meditation, to true contemplation:

Though the Christian Church is not committed to the full-blooded acceptance of the Dionysian incomprehensibility of God, she unhesitatingly declares that unless God should reveal himself we should know very little about him. But she also confidently affirms that God has revealed himself, primarily through the Hebrews, and supremely through Jesus Christ. And because of this gracious act, man may come to trust and know and love, and ultimately to see and unite with him. The Church exists, she believes, for this very purpose, that in her and through her the freely given help of God (in other words, his grace) may enable man to achieve his true end, God himself.

The Cloud of Unknowing . . . is at pains to emphasize that the initiative is always with God, and that only by his grace may the soul contemplate him. . . . From beginning to end it is "of grace" . . . . the word "grace" and its cognates are found over ninety times, and . . . this number is in addition to the many other references to the providential and prevenient work of God.202

Of the necessity of Grace, this fourteenth-century mystic says, "The soul, when it is restored by grace, is made wholly sufficient to comprehend him fully by love" (p. 55); or a little later--
All the while the soul dwells in this corruptible body, the clarity of our spiritual understanding, especially of God, is touched with some sort of distortion, which causes our works to be imperfect, and which, apart from God's wonderful grace, would be fruitful of much error.

(p. 65)

The hint in this passage of the deficiency of man's nature is made clearer a little earlier:

In the higher part of contemplative life a man is definitely reaching above himself and is inferior to none but God. Above himself undoubtedly, because his deliberate intention is to win by grace what he cannot attain by nature, namely, to be united to God in spirit, one with him in love and will.

(p. 64; italics mine)

We are to strive, as he says, "That we should be perfect in this [i.e., in humility, which comes "by God's grace"] as in all things, [as] our Lord Jesus Christ himself calls us in the Gospel, when he bids us be perfect by grace, as he is by nature" (pp. 72-73). Even the choice of the life "in this dark cloud of unknowing" (i.e., in the mystic way) one may choose only if he "is called by God's grace to choose" (pp. 80-81), and "this is the work of God alone, deliberately wrought in whatever soul he chooses, irrespective of the merits of that particular soul" (p. 92). God's Grace, then, calls one to the mystic way, and through Grace one may succeed and "be united to God." The postlapsarian Reason is incapable of knowing God "unless it is
enlightened by grace" (p. 130).

These two medieval works—The Ancrene Riwle and The Cloud of Unknowing—reveal two different approaches to Grace, even though both have essentially the same end (instruction in the contemplative life). The former work assumes the necessity of Grace and concentrates on the forms of activity; the latter never lets its readers forget the necessity of Grace, the fundamental need of God's prevenient mercy.

Bradwardine and Free Will

As we have seen, the problem of Free Will was one of major concern to St. Augustine, who maintained that Grace does not negate Free Will but rather sets it free (see above, pp. 136-37). In the review of what St. Thomas says about Grace there was not a great deal on the freedom of the Will, but in an earlier section of the Summa (Part I, Question 83, Articles 1-4) he covers the problem of "Free Choice" more fully. In the article concerning "Whether Man has Free Choice?" St. Thomas concludes,

Man has free choice, or otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would be in vain . . . . man acts from judgment, because by his apprehensive power he judges that something should be avoided or sought. But because this judgment, in the case of some particular act, is not from a natural instinct, but from some act of comparison in the reason, therefore he acts from free judgment and retains the power of being
inclined to various things. . . . And in that man is rational, it is necessary that he have free choice. 203

But these two great Doctors of the Church are not the only figures we have seen who have something to say about Free Will. Boethius, too, believes in the liberated Will. In Book V of the Consolation is a long discussion of Providence, Foreknowledge, and Free Will. In Prose 6 (the last section of the work), Philosophia offers this solution to the Foreknowledge/Free Will problem:

Here if thou sayest that cannot choose but happen which God seeth shall happen, must be of necessity, and so tiest me to this name of necessity, I will grant that it is a most solid truth, but whereof scarce any but a contemplator of divinity is capable. For I will answer that the same thing is necessary when it is referred to the Divine knowledge; but when it is weighed in its own nature that it seemeth altogether free and absolute. For there be two necessities: the one simple, as that it is necessary for all men to be mortal; the other conditional, as if thou knowest that any man walketh, he must needs walk. For what a man knoweth cannot be otherwise than it is known. But this conditional draweth not with it that simple or absolute necessity. For this is not caused by the nature of the thing, but by the adding a condition. For no necessity maketh him to go that goeth of his own accord, although it be necessary that he goeth while he goeth. In like manner, if providence seeth anything present, that must needs be, although it hath no necessity of nature. But God beholdeth these future things, which proceed from free-will, present. These things, therefore, being referred to the divine sight are necessary by the condition of the divine knowledge, and, considered by themselves, they lose not absolute freedom of their own nature. Wherefore doubtless all those things
come to pass which God foreknoweth shall come, but some of them proceed from free-will, which though they come to pass, yet do not, by coming into being, lose, since before they came to pass, they might also not have happened.

The discussion of Free Will by Philosophia is echoed in the Roman de la Rose, in Nature's long conversation (see Robbins trans., pp. 365-80). For instance, Nature says,

But those who take the pains
To reason subtly tell us that divine
Foreknowledge places no necessity
Upon the acts of men. For well they say
That just because God knows what men will do
It does not follow that they're forced to act
So that they will attain to such an end;
But, since it happens that such tendency
They have toward such an end, therefore God knows.

(p. 369)

And so, Nature concludes, "right or wrong each man does by free will" (p. 373).

Generally, then, the two great Doctors (and most theologians), the philosopher Boethius, and the worldly Jean de Meun all affirm the freedom of the Will, in spite of God's Grace, His foreknowledge, or even His predestination of men. But Thomas Bradwardine, a fourteenth-century Archbishop of Canterbury, takes a somewhat different view.

The Doctor Profundus, as Bradwardine was called, "in his own day, seems to have enjoyed a great reputation for his learning and the power of his thought." To Bradwardine, the cause of Grace is the gratuitous mercy
of God, and "he refuses to recognize goodness apart from"
Grace (p. 69). On the necessity of Grace, Bradwardine goes
further than St. Augustine:

Bradwardine, in dealing with the necessity
of grace, is concerned to show the inherent
weakness of the human will; so that, by its
very nature, it is inconceivable that, alone,
it could ever have remained free from sin.
In its present state, therefore, it is
doubly handicapped: its own original nature,
which was itself too weak to transcend its
desires, has, since the fall, become weighed
down and weakened by the burden of sin.
(p. 71)

The major effects of Grace, to Bradwardine, are merit and
justification; as Gordon Leff says of Bradwardine's views,
"Merit and justification . . . owe nothing to human incli-
nations or deeds; they are gifts for which man can take no
credit" (p. 74). Leff concludes,

Bradwardine's doctrine of grace is the
most rigorous possible. . . . everything,
however inconsequential, must have its
starting-point in God's will. There is
no realm for natural causation: it is this
which makes Bradwardine's view of the
necessity of Grace appear so ruthless.
. . . Bradwardine has reached the
point in his doctrine of grace where its
entirely supernatural and unmerited char-
acter allows of no human action. He marks
a break in kind, not merely in degree: for
it is a logical extension of his own teaching
either to transfer belief into a personal
and emotional experience, as Luther did; or,
on the other hand, to establish a theocracy
on the certainty of God's predetermined will,
such as Calvin was to found.
(p. 86)
What then of Bradwardine's view of the Will? As Leff says,

Bradwardine replies that it [the Will] holds a position between the divine spirit on the one hand, and appetite on the other. With regard to natural forces, man's will is free from all necessity; and it is here that his free will lies. . . . His freedom of will comes from his primacy over all other creatures and blind forces. . . . It is alone in man's relations with God that he is in any way directed. . . . No rational creature . . . can be confirmed or resolved by his own nature; nor can he move by his own free will: he is completely dependent upon God's grace.

(p. 93)

Thus, we see in Bradwardine a much more restrictive view of the Will: he does not totally deny the freedom of the Will, but he does make the Will more dependent on God than we have hitherto seen.206

Wyclif and Bradwardine

Although I have no intention of giving a thorough survey of fourteenth-century commentaries on Grace and Free Will, I can hardly omit some mention of Chaucer's famous contemporary, John Wyclif. Wyclif was greatly influenced by Bradwardine, especially on the subject of Free Will, but they do not fully agree.207 Though as we have seen, Bradwardine does not entirely deny free choice, Wyclif saw such a denial as the logical conclusion of Bradwardine's position, and Wyclif rejects this conclusion.208 But Wyclif's own "definition of freedom is itself
limited." To Wyclif, "Our liberty is not absolute because we tend toward an ordained end, which is not the less determined because, through sin, we may not attain it." "Both Wyclif and Bradwardine were fundamentally determinists," but Wyclif objects to "Bradwardine's declaration that, since God necessitates every act, we are impotent to defy his will." How does Wyclif resolve the problem of Free Will and determinism? As one critic asserts, it "was not solved by Wyclif any more than by other theologians who have held a doctrine of Election"—"like a good theologian he was content to assert two truths which were logically incompatible in the faith that a higher synthesis waits to be revealed." But, "as Wyclif grew older the sovereign will of God loomed larger in his thought than the freewill [sic] of man." What of Wyclif's views on Grace and merit? As J.A. Robson says, However suspect other features of Wyclif's theology might be, his doctrine of grace was impeccably orthodox; he was in no danger of falling into the Pelagian error of supposing that we can merit salvation. To Wyclif, "We are necessitated to election or reprobation by the free gift of his grace which, working in the divine order that is outside time, must naturally be prior to merit or any human cause." In general, Wyclif does indeed take an orthodox view of Grace.
As I have said, my intention is not to cover the subject of Grace thoroughly; that would be outside the scope of this essay (and beyond Chaucer's range of interest as an artist). But I have outlined the fundamentals of the orthodox view, with some of the minor variations; I have given some notion of the topics dealt with in relation to Grace; I have suggested some of the controversies which arose; and I have given some range of views, from St. Augustine to John Wyclif. With this background, I shall now offer an overview of Chaucer's familiarity with and use of the Doctrine of Grace.

**Chaucer and Grace**

A good place to begin to show Chaucer's awareness of the topics I have discussed is the discussion of Free Will in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*:

> But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,
> After the opiniooun of certein clerkis,
> Witnesse on hym that any parfit clerk is,
> That in scole is greet altercacioun
> In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,
> And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
> But I ne kan nat bulte i t to the bren
> As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
> Or Boece, or the Bisshop Bradwardyn,
> Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng
> Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thyng,--
> "Nedly" clepe I symple necessitee;
> Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
> To do that same thyng, or do it nought,
> Though God forwoot it er that was wroght;
> Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel
> But by necessitee condicioneel.
> I wol nat han to do of swich mateere;
> My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere . . . .

*(VII, 3234-52)*
This fascinating passage is an epitome of one major type of humor in The Nun's Priest's Tale. Here the "greet disputisoun" on Free Will is discussed in connection with the action and dream of a rooster! But without going into the humorous intent of the passage--the "mock heroic" element and the satire on Scholastics--I would like to demonstrate Chaucer's awareness of the kind of debate we have seen. Though Chaucer (or at least the Nun's Priest) says he cannot "bulte . . . to the bren" the "greet disputisoun" which has caused a "greet altercacioun," he does know that three of the major disputants--St. Augustine, Boethius, and Thomas Bradwardine--did not entirely agree on the question. The first possibility--that God's foreknowing constrains one to do something ("symple necessitee")--Chaucer probably associated with Bradwardine, as did Wyclif, even though Bradwardine does not actually deny Free Will. The second possibility--that God's foreknowledge has no influence on Free Will--is, essentially, Augustine's position. The third--the "necessitee condi- cioneel"--is, with simple necessity, one of two kinds of necessity discussed by Boethius (see above, pp. 153-54). Chaucer (or the Nun's Priest), whose "tale is of a cok," will "nat han to do of swich mateere" as this debate on Free Will, but it is evident that he knows whereof he speaks.
What of the other aspects of the Doctrine of Grace? Burke O'Neill, in his unpublished dissertation, attempts "an interpretation from the viewpoint of orthodox Catholic doctrine of certain theological matters which are found in [Chaucer's] writings." One of these "matters" is Grace. O'Neill notes that the word "'grace' occurs approximately three hundred times" in Chaucer's works and that "the most common Chaucerian meaning of grace is a favor, bestowed by God, man, or fortune." He adds,

In its strict theological significance . . . grace is a supernatural gift bestowed by God either for the performance of some salutary action (actual grace), or for the production of a permanent state of holiness in the soul of the human recipient (sanctifying grace). In this thesis there is question of Chaucer's use of the word "grace" in its strict theological meaning. O'Neill demonstrates that Chaucer is "quite aware of the ecclesiastical teaching concerning the necessity of grace for salutary actions" by showing that in The Man of Law's Tale (II, 533-39 and 683-86) persons are twice converted through the action of Christ's Grace and that in The Second Nun's Tale (VIII, 237-38) Valerian asks for his brother the same Grace to know God that he now has (see O'Neill, pp. 8-9). A large part of O'Neill's discussion of the necessity of Grace in Chaucer deals with the parody involved "in conversions to the religion of love," that is, with Courtly Love as a kind of blasphemous parody of the
Doctrine of Grace, especially in the *Troilus* (see O'Neill, pp. 9-13); but he does note the more orthodox necessity of dying in a State of Grace (in order to attain heaven and avoid hell) as it appears in what are, I think, formulaic phrases, like the ending of *The Friar's Tale* (III, 1653-55; see O'Neill, pp. 13-15).

O'Neill discusses the gratuity of Grace and the merit that results from this gift and how this merit "earns" sanctification. He then notes that St. Cecelia "wan thurgh hire merite / The eterneel lyf, and of the feend victorie" (VIII, 33-34; see O'Neill, p. 17). O'Neill also covers the willingness of God to pardon sinners (by giving them Grace) as it is discussed in *The Parson's Tale* (X, 90-93; see O'Neill, pp. 19-20), and in *The Parson's Tale* (X, 282) he notes the orthodoxy of the forgiveness of sin accompanying Grace (i.e., the justification of the ungodly through Sanctifying Grace; see O'Neill, pp. 29-30). In addition, he calls attention to the ironic orthodoxy of the Pardoner, who says that one without Grace has no power "To offren to my relikes" (VI, 383-84; see O'Neill, p. 40); that is one must have his sins remitted first, must be in a State of Grace, before he can take advantage of the remission of temporal punishment.
Without repeating in detail what O'Neill says, I would suggest that his telling analysis of Chaucer's Retraction fully demonstrates Chaucer's orthodoxy (see pp. 44-45). But in general, I think, O'Neill is too much bound by looking for explicit mentions of Grace to find sufficient evidence of Chaucer's orthodoxy, and I find his discussion of Grace in Chaucer far from satisfactory. Giving some indication here, though, of what O'Neill did find should suggest Chaucer's knowledge of the orthodox view of Grace. I shall reserve most of my own points for my discussion of specific tales (in Part II).
CHAPTER IV

FORTUNE, NATURE, AND GRACE

What I should like to do now is to show the propriety of discussing Fortune, Nature, and Grace in Chaucer by indicating something of the prevalence of such a linking. But before launching that project, let me first discuss other combinations.

Combinations

We have seen in the discussion of Grace something of the frequency with which theologians discuss Nature and Grace together. Most theologians, somewhere in a discussion of Grace, deal with Nature and Grace, mainly, of course, to show the superiority of Grace, to show how God's Grace perfects Nature's deficiency (how, in fact, the deficiency of Nature necessitates Grace as a gratuitous gift of God). And in the discussion of personified Nature, we have seen the constant subordination of Nature to God in what is, again, a representation of the idea that Nature is deficient beside the Grace of God.

In the discussion of Fortune, we have seen a similar subordination of Fortune to God, and in Alain's Anticlaudian the brief suggestion that Fortune is God's
scourge (see above, p. 43). We have also seen a linking of Fortune and Nature, especially in the explicit or implicit opposition to each other. Barbara Bartholomew, in *Fortuna and Natura: A Reading of Three Chaucer Narratives*, attempts "to demonstrate that Chaucer uses the concept of the two allegorical goddesses not only philosophically but also on occasion dramatically, pairing them so that they function in dynamic opposition to each other, with pervasive effect within the narratives." The bulk of her work deals with three tales (the Physician's, the Clerk's, and the Knight's) in order to show the "dramatic opposition between Fortuna and Natura" as "usually antagonistic but interdependent" (p. 11). Mrs. Bartholomew says,

Transcending Fortuna is always important in Chaucer. For a character to be defeated by the fickle goddess is for him to die believing that she is supreme; for a character to be victorious over her is for him to die--or live--secure in the philosophical acceptance of God and his agents beyond her. Rising above Fortuna, however, does not mean automatic ascent into a higher realm of Natura. Often Chaucer treats Natura, too, as a sharply limited deity, a view most obvious in the religious tales. Though in her most basic role she is the life-giving principle, Chaucer posits situations in which a character, through a strong act of will or faith, chooses death or acts contrary to the principle of generation, thus conquering not only Fortune but also Nature and achieving a higher spiritual humanity through transcending both, as in the "Physician's Tale" and the "Clerk's Tale".

(pp. 11-12)
To support her linking of Fortuna and Natura, Mrs. Bartholomew traces the tradition through Boethius, Alain de Lille, Jean de Meun, and Guillaume de Machault (see pp. 12-24) and briefly through the works of Chaucer, excluding his translations of the Roman and of Boethius and his Fortune "because they are not narratives" (p. 24; see pp. 24-45). I shall return to some of her comments on specific works of Chaucer later; here, however, I wish only to call attention to her mention of Fortune, Nature, and Grace. She says that

Deschamps and others, including Boccaccio, divide God's gifts to man between Fortuna and Natura (and often, Grace, a tradition which Chaucer follows in the "Parson's Tale"), with Natura controlling physical properties both in man and the universe and Fortuna bestowing conditions of worldly weal.

Likewise, Patch, in *The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature*, mentions the linking of the three in Frère Lorens (Somme des Vices et des Vertus) and notes that he does not know where Frère Lorens "found this analysis"; he adds that "It is not likely, of course, that it originated with him." Patch refers to discussions of the three gifts in *The Parson's Tale* and in the works of Lorenzo de' Medici (Poemi, ed. R. Carabba [Lanciano, 1911], pp. 79-80), in the De Fortuna of Giovanni Pontano (Opera Omnia soluta oratione composita [Florentiae, per haeredes...
The Tradition of Fortune, Nature, and Grace

Although like Patch I do not know the origin of the traditional linking of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, and although I have not examined all of those sources Patch notes, I can still demonstrate that such a traditional linking did exist. I would like to begin with one of the possible sources of The Parson's Tale—the Summa seu Tractatus de Viciis of Guilielmus Peraldus, written sometime before 1261.

Kate O. Petersen, in The Sources of the Parson's Tale, compares passages of this work with the Parson's section on the Seven Deadly Sins, and in particular, she sets the passage on Fortune, Nature, and Grace in The Parson's Tale (X, 450-74; quoted in part above, p. 14 and analyzed in greater detail below) beside the corresponding passages in the work of Peraldus. Here, for instance, is the section in Peraldus's work that correspond to lines 451-55 (see p. 14 above or the full passage below):

Bona vero naturae quedam sunt coporis, quedam anime. Corporis sunt ista: sanitas, fortitudo, agilitas, pulchritudo, nobilitas, franchise. Bona vero anime naturalia sunt ista: rectitudo ingenii, et velocitas, memorie bonitas, potestas tolerandi, exercitium spirituale, naturalis disposito ad
Although parts of this passage do not exactly correspond to the Parson's words (e.g., Peraldus puts under the natural goods of the soul part of the information the Parson puts under the "goodes of grace"), some parts precisely correspond (cf. the first two sentences of Peraldus with 11. 451-52 in Chaucer). In the rest of the passage in Chaucer (456-74), the similarity to Peraldus is about the same as in the part presented here.

As Robinson notes (p. 766), "Chaucer's immediate source [for The Parson's Tale] has not been found," and some still opt for Chaucer's use of Frère Lorens (the Somme des Vices et des Vertus, ca. 1279). Without analyzing Frère Lorens's work, I offer instead the fourteenth-century Kentish translation, the Ayenbite of Inwyt, wherein
are listed "pri manere guodes / þet men heþ of god"—"þe
guodes of kende [nature]. þe guodes of hap [fortune].
þe guodes of grace."223 Without analyzing in detail, let
me offer these two passages—the first by the Parson and
the second by Dan Michel—to show the similarity of diction:

Certes, the goodes of nature stonden outher
in goodes of body or in goodes of soule./
Certes, goodes of body been heele of body,
strength, delivernesse, beautee, gentrice,
franchise./ Goodes of nature of the soule
been good wit, sharp understondynge, subtil
engyn, vertu natureel, good memorie.

(X, 451-53)

Þe kendliche [natural] guodes / byeþ þo/
þet me clepeþ / by kende. óber / aye þet
body: óber / aye þe zaule. Auorye [as
regards] þet bodi: ase helþe. uayrheye
[beauty]. strengeþe. prouesse. noblesse
[nobleness; cf. "gentrie"]. guode tonge.
guode rearde [speech]. Auorye þe zaule:
ase clier wyt. wel uor to understonde.
and sotil wyt / uor to vynde / guode
onderstondinge: wel to ofhealde [restrain,
refrain].224

Though the rest of the passage in the Ayenbite is only
vaguely parallel to the Parson’s dissertation (as are the
passages in Paraldus and Lorens), it is evident that there
is some connection among all these works. I suspect there
is (or was) somewhere an Ur-version of the tracts on the
Seven Deadly Sins. In any case, it is evident that more
work could be done on these works (and perhaps on other Sins
tracts) to try to establish some sort of pattern of rela-
tionship, but this subject is really outside my range of
focus. All that I wish to suggest by this discussion is
that the diversity of the tracts on the Sins would alone be enough to establish a kind of tradition in the linking of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, but there are also suggestions elsewhere.225

For instance, in the Argument to Alain's Anticlaudian,226 the book is divided according to "the four artificers, God, Nature, Fortune, and Vice." The Argument continues,

Four principalities appertain to the Prime Maker, that is, God: power over mind, power over substance, power over form, and power over will. Two conditions are in Nature, one considered in its pure state and foreign to all pollution, such as was the condition of Nature before Adam's sin, the other infected by varied corruption. Two also exist in Fortune, one of prosperity, the other of adversity. But one only is in Vice, that is, depravity. This book [Anticlaudian], in which these four are discussed, consists not illogically of four parts. The first part, however, is of the works of Nature rather than of God, since through whatever things are fashioned by her the invisible arts of God are discerned; the second part concerns divine workmanship, the third, Fortune, the fourth, Vice.227

Near the end, the Argument states that "Through this book a man learns what he possesses from God, what he receives by the ministration of Nature, what from Fortune, and what he contracts from Vice."228 The Anticlaudian itself does not entirely justify the reading given in the Argument, mainly because there are not four clear divisions corresponding to "the four artificers" (though the four do
appear in the order suggested). The important point is that here, in a work earlier than Peraldus or Lorens and in a work known to Chaucer, is a suggestion of the three kinds of gifts to man (with the addition of the "depravity" Vice brings to corrupt these gifts). And within the Anti-claudian itself is a passage vaguely similar to the ones we have examined. In the ascent of Prudence, she approaches the heavens, and we are told,

Not here does nobility of race, nor grace of form, nor abject love of riches, nor glory of things, nor highest worldly honor, nor strength of body, the daring impudence of man, his headlong boldness, avail, but only strength of soul, constancy of mind, achieved nobility—not inborn but ingrafted in the mind, the inner sort,—and abundance of virtues, a rule of morals, worldly poverty, and the scorning of honor.

As should be clear by now, the first part of this passage says, essentially, that the "goodes" of Fortune and of Nature do not "avail," that only the "goodes" of Grace— including the "gentilesse" that comes from God alone (as Chaucer says in The Wife of Bath's Tale and in Gentilesse and implies in The Parson's Tale, as we shall see)—will avail.

One other fourteenth-century writer, in addition to Chaucer, gives some evidence of the Fortune-Nature-Grace topos. William Langland, in the Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman (in Passus XI of the B text), deals with Fortune, Nature (or "Kynde"), and two guides to Grace,
Good Faith or Loyalty ("Lewte") and Scripture. Here is a summary of Passus XI:

The dreamer, rebuked by Scripture for his presumption, falls into a deeper dream, in which he meets the goddess Fortune and follows her for forty-five years. Then he reaches Old Age, and Fortune and the Friars desert him. While he is reproaching the Friars about this, he suddenly sees Good Faith, and before long Scripture reappears as well. She preaches a sermon which makes the dreamer fear for his own salvation, but he is reassured by Trajan, the pagan Emperor who is said to have been released from hell. Then Good Faith teaches him the way of salvation, through the love and poverty of Christ. But the dreamer continues to argue till he meets Nature, and is shown all the wonders of creation; yet this only leads him to turn against Reason, at whose hands he suffers further reproach. So he wakes from his deeper sleep in shame and confusion, to find one called Imagination standing by him, who he decides to follow.

Good Faith and Scripture (and, to some extent, Old Age) try to teach the dreamer the way to God (to Grace), after Fortune has with her gifts misled him for so long. When the lesson does not take, Nature shows the dreamer his (Nature is masculine here) wonders and shames him. Fortune and Nature both appear in traditional roles (including Nature's association with Reason and the adherence of all but man to the ways of Nature and Reason). In the instruction in the ways of God, the pagan Trajan says of the gratuity of Grace,
Not all the learning of the Church could drag me out of hell, but only love and good faith, and my own just judgments. St. Gregory knew this well, and because he saw that my life had been honest, he longed for my soul to be saved. And as he wept and yearned for me to have grace, his boon was granted, and I was saved as you can see, without any prayers or Masses at all. 

That is, because Trajan was a just pagan, Gregory prayed for him, and God gave him Grace and Trajan was saved. But he was not saved by his own merit; his merit did not earn him Grace; it earned him only the favor of Gregory (cf. above, p. 140), where St. Thomas asserts that though one cannot merit Grace for another, yet God might fulfill one's desire in saving another). What is significant is that in this part of Piers Langland seems to be associating Fortune, Nature, and Grace, perhaps because it was a traditional association.

**Chaucer on Nature, Fortune, and Grace**

To end Part I, I wish to consider more fully Chaucer's discussion of the gifts of Nature, Fortune, and Grace:

Certes, the goodes of nature stonden outhre in goodes of body or in goodes of soule./ Certes, goodes of body been heele of body, strengthe, delivernesse, beautee, gentrice, franchise./ Goodes of nature of the soule been good wit, sharp understondynge, subtil engyn, vertu natureel, good memorie./ Goodes of fortune been richesse, hyghe degrees of lordshipes, preisynges of the peple./ Goodes of grace been science, power to suffre
spirituoeel travaille, benignitee, vertuous contemplacioun, withstondynge of temptacioun, and semblable thynges./ Of which foresyde goodes, certes it is a ful greet folye a man to priden hym in any of hem alle./ Now as for to speken of goodes of nature, God woot that somtyme we han hem in nature as muche to oure damage as to oure profit./ As for to speken of heele of body, certes it passeth ful lightly, and eek it is ful ofte enchesoun of the siknesse of oure soule. For, God woot, the flessh is a ful greet enemy to the soule; and theryfore, the moore that the body is hool, the moore be we in peril to falle./ Eke for to pride hym in his strenthe of body, it is an heigh folye. For certes, the flessh Coveiteth agayn the spirit; and ay the moore strong that the flessh is, the sorier may the soule be./ And over al this, strenthe of body and worldly hardynesse causeth ful ofte many a man to peril and meschaunce./ Eek for to pride hym of his gentrie is ful greet folie; for ofte tyme the gentrie of the body binymeth the gentrie of the soule; and eek we ben alle of o fader and of o mooder; and alle we been of o nature, rotten and corrupt, bothe riche and povre./ For sothe, o manere gentrie is for to preise, that apparailleth mannes corage with vertues and moralitees, and maketh hym Cristes childe. For truste wel that over what man that synne hath maistrie, he is a verry chere to synne./ Now been ther generale signes of gentilesse, as eschewynge of vice and ribaudye and servage of synne, in word, in werk, and contenaunce;/ and usynge vertu, curteisye, and clennesse, and to be liberal, that is to seyn, large by mesure; for thilke that passeth mesure is folie and synne./ Another is to remembre hym of bountee, that he of oother folk hath receyved./ Another is to be benigne to his goode subgetis; wherfore seith Senek, "Ther is no thing moore convenable to a man of heigh estaat than debonairetee and pitee./ And therfore thise flyes that men clepen bees, whan they maken hir kyng, they chesen oon that hath no prikke wherwith he may stynghe."/
Another is, a man to have a noble herte and a diligent, to attayne to heighe vertuouse thynges./ Now certes, a man to pride hym in the goodes of grace is eek an outrageous folic; for thilke yifte of grace that sholde have turned hym to goodnesse and to medicine, turneth hym to venym and to confusioun, as seith Seint Gregorie./ Certes also, whoso prideth hym in the goodes of fortune, he is a ful greet fool; for somtyme is a man a greet lord by the morwe, that is a catyf and a wrecche er it be nyght;/ and somtyme the richesse of a man is cause of his deth; somtyme the delices of a man ben cause of the grevous maladye thurgh which he dyeth./ Certes, the commendacioun of the peple is somtyme ful fals and ful brotel for to triste; this day they preyse, tomorwe they blame./ God woot, desir to have commendacioun eek of the peple hath caused deeth to many a bisy man./

The Parson, in his discussion of Pride ("De Superbia"), notes that it sometimes arises from a wrong attitude toward the gifts (or "goodes") of Nature, Fortune, and Grace. The gifts of Nature are of the body or of the soul. The former include bodily health, strength, activity (Aristotle's "principle of motion"?), beauty, gentility, and "franchise" ("generosity" or "nobleness"?). The natural gifts of the soul are good wit (or "judgment"), clear understanding, subtle skill, natural virtue (or "mental faculty"), and good memory. These are all, then, qualities and abilities with which one is born, either in body or in mind (soul); they are what we would call "inherited characteristics"; they are those things which personified Nature mentions when she boasts of what she
has done for man (cf., e.g., Alain and Jean). In this much longer discussion of Nature's gifts, the Parson warns that they are more often to our detriment than to our profit for several reasons. Health passes quickly, and besides, it is occasionally a cause of sin, since we can more easily fall when we are whole. Strength, too, is dangerous, since the body might then overcome the soul. Then the Parson launches into a long digression on gentility and expresses a philosophy we shall see later—the idea that "natural gentility" (being born into a high position) is often at odds with "true gentility" (being a true Christian—eschewing vice, ribaldry, and service to sin, and pursuing virtue, courtesy, purity, liberality, and "high virtuous things"). In general, we see in the gifts of Nature those things which traditionally fall in Nature's province, and we see traces of the association of Nature and virtue or morality, especially the idea that when one is aware of his proper place and condition he will be virtuous (cf. Boethius; also cf. The Parson's Tale, 756-64).

The "goodes" of Fortune are riches, high position, and the praise of people (or reputation). These, too, are traditional, and, as the Parson warns, we ought not to pride ourselves in them, since they, like the gifts of Nature, are not permanent. A man that is a lord in the
morning can be a wretch by nightfall. The praise of the people does not last, since the folk tend to be fickle, and the desire for this praise often leads one to death. Riches and "delices" ("delights," "loose pleasures") also often lead to death or to the "grevous maladye" which causes death. The death discussed here could be either physical or spiritual (cf. Matthew 19:23-24, about the difficulty of a rich man's entering heaven).

The gifts of Grace are knowledge or wisdom, the power to endure spiritual travail (i.e., perseverance), benignity, virtuous contemplation, withstanding of temptation (also perseverance), and such things. Here the Parson is more explicit than the analogues I have seen (see note 233). Grace bestows wisdom or truth; it makes one benign or virtuous, like Chaucer's more saintly figures; it allows true contemplation (cf. The Ancrene Riwle and The Cloud of Unknowing); and it allows one to persevere in a State of Grace (cf. St. Thomas). And to pride oneself in the gifts of Grace is "an outrageous folie": the gifts are, after all, gratuitous, and they should turn one to good (i.e., cause merit) instead of turning him "to venym and to confusioun." Thus, we see a traditional view not only of Nature and Fortune but also of Grace, and with this background, I can now turn
to a consideration of *The Canterbury Tales* and the thematic use of the Fortune-Nature-Grace *topos*. 
NOTES TO PART I


3Aldo D. Scaglione, Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California, 1963).


6Reprinted in George F. Whicher's The Goliard Poets: Medieval Latin Songs and Satires (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1949), p. 262. Whicher's translation (p. 263) is far too free. My own is closer to the original, though it allows some interpretive liberties. I have slightly changed Whicher's punctuation in my translation. (All unidentified translations in this essay are mine.)


8References to Patch's major study of Fortuna will be given in the text, where the book will be cited as Goddess or by page numbers only, when the text is obvious.

9Cf. New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), vol 5, pp. 1035-36 (see entry on "Fortune, Greco-Roman Cult of"): "This Italic goddess [Fortuna] was transformed under the influence of Tyche" (p. 1036).

10Cf. New Catholic Encyclopedia, 5, 1035, on parallel in Greek cult of Tyche.
It is not really necessary at this point to go beyond St. Augustine and St. Thomas, since all I would be doing is multiplying examples of essentially similar points of view.


Madden, pp. 2 and 4.

Madden, p. 6.


St. Augustine, *City*, p. 211.

Madden, p. 65.

Madden, p. 127.


I realize the paucity of quotations from the Consolation in this section, but the discussion is perhaps over-long now. Besides, I have not left the subject of Boethius for good, as will be seen immediately below in my discussion of the Roman.
Though I am breaking strict chronological order, by treating the Roman before Alain de Lille, the close connections between the Consolation and the Roman and the heavy use of these two works by Chaucer argue for my present order.

The text of the Roman used is the translation of Harry W. Robbins, The Romance of the Rose (New York: Dutton, 1962). All future citations to this translation will be given in the text by page numbers.

Douglas M. Moffat, trans., The Complaint of Nature by Alain de Lille, Yale Studies in English, 36 (New York: Henry Holt, 1908), p. 65. All future citations of this work will be given in the text by page numbers.


I omit here a full discussion of Boccaccio, who is undoubtedly important to a study of Chaucer, but I shall return to the Decameron in the section on Nature.


Mâle, p. 97.

Hereafter this article will be cited in the text as "Chaucer."


Trans. by George D. Economou in his unpub. diss. (op. cit.), pp. 77-78. Economou notes that "This translation is based primarily on the translation into German by Karl Kerenyi in 'Die Göttin Natur,' Eranos-Jahrbuch, XIV (1946), 85-86."

Curtius, pp. 106-07.


Lewis, p. 36.


Economou, p. 29.


Economou, pp. 29-30.


Economou, pp. 11-13.

Or "five," "six," or "eight"--depending on how the editor or commentator divides the definitions.

Collingwood, p. 80.

Collingwood, pp. 80-82 (source of quotes which follow).

Collingwood, p. 82.


Economou, pp. 30-31.

Cf. Knowlton, "Early Periods," p. 228: "The school of Neo-Platonism also influenced the Fathers . . . ."


Cf. also New Catholic Encyclopedia, 10, p. 277: "Both the Platonist and the Aristotelian view of nature extended into the Middle Ages. The early period was largely Neoplatonist, but in the 13th century the commentaries of St. Albert the Great and especially of St. Thomas Aquinas brought the Aristotelian doctrine of nature into the foreground."

Economou, p. 33.

Knowlton, pp. 229-30.

Economou, p. 89. Lewis (see Studies, pp. 95-96, and Discarded Image, pp. 34-35) notes the important influence of Statius on Dante.

Economou, p. 55.

indicates how the word may signify a personification, an agent, a passive recipient of action, a divinity. We have the idea of natura naturans ["creating Nature"] and natura naturata ["created Nature"].

64Gilson, p. 80.


66St. Augustine, City, pp. 785-86.

67St. Augustine, City, p. 846.


69Gilson, Saint Augustine, pp. 151-52.

70See Gilson, History, p. 100.

71Gilson, History, p. 97.


73Economou, p. 57.

74Jefferson, p. 65.

75Consolation, p. 233 (III, met. 2).

76Consolation, pp. 287 and 289 (III, pr. 12).

77Consolation, p. 341 (IV, pr. 6).

78Consolation, p. 267 (III, pr. 10).

79Consolation, p. 319 (IV, pr. 3).

80Gilson, History, p. 104.

81Gilson, History, p. 103.

82Consolation, pp. 281 and 283 (III, pr. 11).

83Consolation, p. 199 (II, pr. 5).
84Consolation, p. 203 (II, pr. 5).
85Economou, p. 60.
86Curtius, p. 107.
87Economou, p. 90.
88Economou, p. 99.
89Gilson, History, pp. 139-40.
90Gilson, History, p. 140.
92Chenu, p. 3.
93Chenu, pp. 4-5.
94Chenu, p. 5.
95Chenu, pp. 7-8.
96Chenu, p. 10.
97Chenu, p. 18 (see pp. 18-24).
98Chenu, p. 27 (see pp. 24-37).
101Economou, pp. 140-41.
103Knowlton, p. 241.
104Chenu, p. 20.
The translations of the two works are those by Moffat and by Cornog (both previously cited); page numbers in the text will refer to these editions. For summaries of the works, see Economou, pp. 153-56 and 188-92; Curtius, pp. 118-21; Knowlton, "Early Periods," pp. 242-43 and 246; or James I. Wimsatt, Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature (New York: Pegasus, 1970), pp. 102-04. Wimsatt summarizes only the Anti- claudian, but he has a good discussion of the work in his chapter, "The Allegory of Reason" (pp. 91-113), in which he fits the work into a tradition he describes. Useful articles on the Complaint are Richard Hamilton Green, "Alan of Lille's De planctu naturae," Speculum, 31 (1956), 649-74; and Winthrop Wetherbee, "The Function of Poetry in the 'De planctu naturae' of Alain de Lille," Traditio, 25 (New York: Fordham University, 1969), 87-125. Green also has an article on the Anticlaudian: "Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus: Ascensus Mentis in Deum," Annuale Medievale, 8 (1967), 5-16.

105 See entry in PL, 210, col. 871.


107 The translations of the two works are those by Moffat and by Cornog (both previously cited); page numbers in the text will refer to these editions. For summaries of the works, see Economou, pp. 153-56 and 188-92; Curtius, pp. 118-21; Knowlton, "Early Periods," pp. 242-43 and 246; or James I. Wimsatt, Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature (New York: Pegasus, 1970), pp. 102-04. Wimsatt summarizes only the Anti- claudian, but he has a good discussion of the work in his chapter, "The Allegory of Reason" (pp. 91-113), in which he fits the work into a tradition he describes. Useful articles on the Complaint are Richard Hamilton Green, "Alan of Lille's De planctu naturae," Speculum, 31 (1956), 649-74; and Winthrop Wetherbee, "The Function of Poetry in the 'De planctu naturae' of Alain de Lille," Traditio, 25 (New York: Fordham University, 1969), 87-125. Green also has an article on the Anticlaudian: "Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus: Ascensus Mentis in Deum," Annuale Medievale, 8 (1967), 5-16.

108 Economou, pp. 156-57.


110 Economou, p. 166.

111 Curtius, p. 119.


114 Green, "De planctu," p. 673.

115 Wetherbee, pp. 89 and 101.

116 Economou, p. 192.


120 Māle, op. cit., p. 27.
121 Māle, p. 29.
122 Māle, pp. 48-49 and 51.
123 Māle, p. 63.
124 See Gilson, History, pp. 361-65.
125 See Gilson, History, p. 368.
126 See Gilson, History, pp. 368-69.
127 See Gilson, History, p. 371.
128 See Gilson, History, p. 375.
129 See Gilson, History, p. 381 (see pp. 379-81).
130 St. Thomas Aquinas, Nature and Grace, p. 128.
132 Fansler, pp. 231-32.
133 Economou, p. 199.
134 Economou, pp. 201-02.
135 Economou, p. 204.
136 Economou, p. 207.
137 Economou, pp. 210-12.
138 Curtius, p. 126.
139 Cf. Alain, Complaint, p. 37: "And many youths . . . have turned their hammers of love to the office of anvils."
140 Economou, pp. 213 and 236.
Scaglione, op. cit., p. 18. The passage from Andreas is cited as De Amore, I, Dialogue H (Battaglia, p. 188). Future citations to Scaglione will generally be given in the text.

Scaglione, p. 68. The passage referred to in the Decameron includes, I think, the following: "... anyone who speaks reasonably will say that I and others who love you are thereby acting naturally. And to thwart the laws of Nature requires too much strength, especially as those who labour to do so, not only labour in vain, but to their own great harm." (Cited from Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio, trans. Richard Aldington [New York: Dell, 1962], p. 251.)


Knowlton, "Middle English," p. 207.

Knowlton, "Middle English," p. 187. Cf. J.A.W. Bennett, pp. 205-06: "Chaucer was probably the first English poet to use 'Nature' in a clearly personified sense, following the example of Alain and the Roman de la Rose. In Anelida and Arcite, 1. 80, the Book of the Duchesse, II. 871, 1195, Troilus and Criseyde, i. 102-5, she appears as the creator of beautiful women, in the Complaint of Venus, 1. 14 (cf. Troilus, iv. 1096), of handsome men."

Economou, p. 276.

Robinson, ed. cit., note to 1. 298, p. 794.

Economou, p. 263.


According to the Concordance, "Nature(s)," "Natural," and "Naturally" occur in the Chaucer canon about two hundred twenty-five times; "Kind(s)" occurs about one hundred thirty-five times and "Kindly" just under twenty.
Words by John Newton (1725-1807); set to an "Early American Melody." Quoted from The Methodist Hymnal: Official Hymnal of the Methodist Church (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1966), #92. I chose to include this song, rather than a medieval poem, in order to suggest the continuity of the tradition of Grace—and because the song has recently undergone a revival of popularity. In fact, I was recently struck by the coincidence of hearing the song in a concert by Arlo Guthrie (son of the famous Woody Guthrie) along with a song entitled "Wheel of Fortune."

New Catholic Encyclopedia. 6, p. 658.


Daujat, p. 17.

Gilson, Saint Augustine, p. 151.


Gilson, Saint Augustine, p. 153.


St. Augustine, City, p. 848.

Gilson, Saint Augustine, p. 154.

See Gilson, Saint Augustine, p. 161.


166This section of the Summa (Prima Secundae, Questions 109-14) is translated in the previously cited edition of A.M. Fairweather (Nature and Grace). Future citations of this work will be given in the text by page numbers.


168Gilson, Saint Augustine, p. 152.


172Daujat, p. 10.

173Cf. this from "Admonition and Grace," p. 281: "And what more powerful grace is there than the only-begotten Son of God, equal to, and co-eternal with, the Father; who was made man for them, and crucified by sinful men, He in whom there was neither original nor personal sin?"


175Having Habitual or Sanctifying Grace is what is normally referred to as being in a State of Grace--"that permanent disposition of soul in which the divine life of sanctifying or habitual grace is present." It is a condition "marked by sinlessness and by the fulfillment of God's will and, once obtained, remains unless . . . destroyed by willful mortal sin" (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 6, p. 682). See also Daujat, pp. 63-64.

176But some modern theologians say that Sanctifying and Sacramental Grace are not the same; see New Catholic Encyclopedia, 6, pp. 679-80.

177New Catholic Encyclopedia, 6, p. 682.

179 See Leff, p. 268.

180 See Leff, p. 268.

181 Gilson, Saint Augustine, p. 150.


183 Cf. City, p. 787: "Whoever, therefore, desires to escape eternal punishment, let him not only be baptized, but also justified in Christ, and so let him in truth pass from the devil to Christ."

184 St. Thomas Aquinas, Theological Texts, p. 163.

185 Cf. this from "Grace and Free Will," p. 263: "And they [the Pelagians] do their utmost to show that grace is given according to our merits, namely, that grace is not grace."

186 St. Augustine, "Grace and Free Will," p. 265.


192 And with Augustine, Boethius asserts the freedom of the Will (see p. 57) and refutes Pelagius's denial of Original Sin (see p. 61).


195 Consolation, p. 223.

196 Consolation, pp. 263, 265, and 267.


200 Salu, p. 40.

201 See Salu, Part II, pp. 21-52; future citations will be given in the text.


203 St. Thomas Aquinas, Basic Writings, I, 787. Or as Thomas makes clear later (Prima Secundae, Question 85, Articles 1 and 2; see Nature and Grace, pp. 125-29), the ability to choose freely is not diminished by the Fall, since a man would not be able to sin without his rational nature, without freedom of choice.

204 Consolation, pp. 405 and 407 (V, pr. 6).

205 Leff, p. 3. Future citations of this work will be given in the text.


208 Stacey, p. 95.

210 Robson, p. 198.

211 Robson, p. 198.

212 Stacey, p. 98. For a full discussion of Wyclif on the Will, see Stacey, pp. 94-99, and Robson, pp. 196-207.

213 Robson, pp. 209-10.

214 Robson, p. 212. For a full discussion of Wyclif on Grace, see Robson, pp. 207-14.


216 See O'Neill, pp. 2-45.

217 O'Neill, p. 2n. Future citations will be given in the text.

218 Bartholomew, op. cit., p. 10. Future citations will be given in the text.

219 Patch, Goddess, pp. 65-66 and 66n.


221 Peterson, pp. 41-42.


Morris, p. 24. The italics in both passages are mine—to draw attention to the closer similarities in diction.

See W. Nelson Francis, ed., The Book of Vices and Virtues: A Fourteenth Century English Translation of the Somme le Roi of Lorens D'Orleans, E.E.T.S., O.S. 277 (London: Humphrey Milford, 1942). This fourteenth-century work is also a translation of Lorens's tract. Nelson says that there were "at least nine English versions of this text [the Somme] between the Ayenbite in 1340 and the Royal Book [of Caxton] in c. 1486" and that there were three MSS. of the text Nelson edited. The passage parallel to the one under examination is on pp. 19-21.

As Cornog says in a note (p. 163), the Argument is "from the gloss by Alain's pupil, the Englishman Ralph de Longo Campo, written in 1216," and preserved in one of the MSS.

Cornog, p. 49.

Cornog, p. 51.

Cornog, p. 104.


Goodridge, p. 127.

Goodridge, p. 131; italics mine.

Since the precise source of The Parson's Tale (and, hence, of this passage) is not known and since none of the analogues is a precise parallel, we can treat this passage more or less as Chaucer's work, and we can note particular differences, especially in the section on Grace. To
Lorens, the goods of Grace are "Vertuz" and "Bones oevres" (virtues and good works; see Eilers, p. 513); to Peraldus, "scientia et virtutes" (wisdom and virtues; see Petersen, p. 42); to Dan Michel, "uirtues / and guode workes" (see Morris, p. 25). Chaucer's additions, however, are orthodox; see discussion below.
PART II

FORTUNE, NATURE, AND GRACE IN
THE CANTERBURY TALES
I have said that the Fortune-Nature-Grace topos can be seen as a unifying theme in The Canterbury Tales. I should at this point both amplify and limit that statement. I do not mean that all the tales treat the theme explicitly. But once I can demonstrate that in places it is treated explicitly, I can then show implicit treatments, partial developments, and related concepts. In the next three chapters, I shall demonstrate how Fragment VI deals explicitly with the theme and is a development of the Fortune-Nature-Grace passage in Fragment X (The Parson's Tale), how it is, in fact, the focal point of the development of that theme. Before and after Fragment VI, some of the tales treat aspects of the theme. For instance, The Tale of Melibee has a great deal to say about the goods of Fortune (and a little to say about both Nature and Grace), and The Second Nun's Tale says a good deal about the gifts of Grace. What we have then is an explicit expository statement in The Parson's Tale, and, as I shall show, an explicit (though not absolutely obvious) development in Fragment VI. In this core are certain seeds which, when transplanted, develop more or less hybrid forms, such as the independent growth of Fortune alone. But the important thing to keep in mind when considering the separate sprouts
is the parent plant: that is, when a character's attitude toward Fortune is delineated, his attitude toward Nature and/or Grace is often implied. (For example, if one has dedicated his life to the gifts of Fortune, to the acquisition of worldly goods, he is perverting Nature by going beyond what she requires, and he is turning away from God, turning from caritas to cupiditas.) Related notions, like "gentillesse," are also important: the Parson's digression in his discussion of Nature, Fortune, and Grace suggests that "true gentility" comes not from Nature or from Fortune, but from God's Grace, and the theme of "gentillesse" comes up often in the tales, as we shall see.

Fragment VI, as I have said, develops most fully the theme of Fortune, Nature, and Grace. After the Physician finishes his tale, the Host says,

"Harrow!" quod he, "by nayles and by blood! This was a fals cherl and a fals justise. As shameful deeth as herte may devyse Come to thise juges and hire advocatz! Algate this sely mayde is slayn, allas! Alas, to deere bought she beautee! Wherefore I seye al day that men may see That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature Been cause of deeth to many a creature. Hire beautee was hire deth, I dar wel sayn. Allas, so pitously as she was slayn! O bothe yiftes that I speke of now Men han ful ofte moore for harm than prow. But trewely, myn owene maister deere, This is a pitous tale for to heere. . . ."

(VI, 288-302)
Harry Bailly says that the gifts of Fortune and of Nature are often the cause of death and that Virginia's beauty (a gift of Nature—cf. X, 452) caused her death; he says that men often have the two kinds of gifts more for harm than for profit. Similarly, the Parson says (X, 457), "Now. . . we han hem ["goodes of nature"] as much to oure damage as to oure profit"; and later (X, 472 and 474) he says of the gifts of Fortune, "... and somtyme the richesse of a man is cause for his deth; somtyme the delices of a man been cause of the grevous maladye thurgh which he dyeth," and, "God woot, desir to have commendacioun eek of the peple hath caused deeth to many a bisy man."

Harry, then, as we can see by setting what he says next to what the Parson says, gives an absolutely orthodox view of the gifts of Fortune and of Nature. (It is also possible, judging from the similarity of expression in The Introduction to The Pardoner's Tale and The Parson's Tale, that Chaucer had one in mind while writing the other.)

There are various ways of explaining Harry's omission of the gifts of Grace. First, the gifts of Grace are not quite so obvious in The Physician's Tale (as I shall show). Or possibly, Harry is either too ignorant or too worldly to have mentioned Grace. That is, either he was ignorant of the Fortune-Nature-Grace linking (which, after all, comes from relatively learned treatises, like The
Parson's Tale which Harry has not yet heard), or Fortune and Nature are of this world, as is our Host. Finally, and most significantly, it may be that Harry omitted Grace simply because the gifts of Grace do not cause death; in fact, the main gift of Grace is the gift of life, eternal life.

But even though Harry omits Grace, he has given us one of the best clues for examining The Physician's Tale. Barbara Bartholomew picks up the clue and examines the opposition of Fortuna and Natura in the tale (see my next chapter). Paul G. Ruggiers notes the clue but applies it mainly to The Pardoner's Tale. He, too, sees The Physician's Tale as dealing with the gifts of Fortune and Nature, and he sees The Pardoner's Tale as a treatment of the abuses of the gift of Grace:

If we must limit ourselves as Chaucer does to the gifts of nature and of fortune for the Physician's Tale because of its non-Christian context, The entirely Christian context of the Pardoner's performance demands the inclusion of the gifts of grace. And the demonstration of evil resulting from the gifts of fortune and nature...now subtly shifts its emphasis principally to an abuse of the gifts of grace, with the consequent death of the soul. 1

What Ruggiers says of The Pardoner's Tale corresponds closely to my own view, but he does not develop very fully even his own limited view.
Before turning to the tales and their treatment of the theme under consideration, I should like to make one final point about the passage in the link that deals with the two kinds of gifts. In his discussion of the "Author's Revision in Block C of the Canterbury Tales" (Speculum, 29 [1954], 512-30), J. Burke Severs, noting specifically the difference between MSS. "Ha4" and "E1+," suggests that lines 299-300 (see above, the second mention of the "yiftes" and the closer parallel to The Parson's Tale) were added in revision (see Severs, p. 519). In fact, he concludes, "Certainly Chaucer made no systematic revision of either tale in the Block...[but] he did importantly revise the link joining the two tales" (p. 530). What seems likely at this point is that Chaucer attempted to make more explicit a theme unifying the two tales. (I shall return to this subject of unity in Chapter VII.)
The Physician's Tale, according to Ruggiers and Mrs. Bartholomew, deals with Fortune and Nature. Ruggiers does not develop this notion at all; Mrs. Bartholomew does. What she says can serve as a good springboard to launch my own views of the tale.

Mrs. Bartholomew's purpose in her discussion of the tale is "to analyze one dimension of literary technique in the 'Physician's Tale,'" but she disclaims any attempt to consider "the relationship of this and other tales to the framework of the Canterbury pilgrimage" (p. 46). She says of the tale,

It seems to me that the role of Natura is functional, and, indeed, fundamental to the meaning of the story. Chaucer's description of her is not preliminary to the tale; it is the beginning of the tale. And the conflict which the tale presents is as much celestial as it is terrestrial. Thus the narrative from the beginning assumes overtones of allegory, though finally it is not, on this level, allegorical. In Chaucer's version of the Appius and Virginia story, Natura's sovereignty is put to the test by earthly forces of evil resembling Fortuna. Virginius, Virginia, and Appius—none of whom Chaucer individualizes as
characters--appear stylized for a reason: they are actors who give the conflict its human representation. Natura fully as much as Virginia is the protagonist of the "Physician's Tale".

(p. 47)

After reviewing the Host's words, Mrs. Bartholomew suggests that his judgment is "askew," that "Fortuna's machinations, not Natura's gifts, are Virginia's 'cause of deeth.'" But, she adds, the Host's "linking of the goddesses identifies the forces which work behind the surface of the narrative."

She identifies Apius with Fortuna and notes his "broad resemblances to Fortuna":

Appius is a governor, wielding absolute worldly power; he is a judge, ruling without regard for right or justice. The epithet which Chaucer most often uses for him is "false", a stock epithet for Fortuna.

Mrs. Bartholomew says that "Chaucer poses a philosophical dilemma for the goddess Natura": after establishing Natura's sovereignty over living things, Chaucer "questions this sovereignty dramatically through the story of Appius and Virginia in which lechery and death, both enemies of Natura, threaten the goddess's human agents with a situation in which they have no alternative but to choose between two evils" (p. 49). Mrs. Bartholomew demonstrates the "traditional" role of Natura and shows that Virginia is Natura's paragon (see pp. 49-53), and then she says,

In my opinion, critics have not sufficiently emphasized the importance of Virginius in the tale. He rather than Virginia is
Natura's positive and assertive force for good... Virginius represents active good and Virginia is passive acceptance of that good.

(p. 53)

I shall, shortly, take issue with this view of Virginius.

I think, however, that Mrs. Bartholomew is on the right track--she just does not go far enough. A little further in her chapter, though, she adds,

Since the mandates of Natura leave [Virginius] trapped [i.e., he must choose between lechery and death for his daughter], he makes the only decision possible by exerting the agony of human will to transcend Natura and act in accord with a higher principle of love than that which demands life at all costs.

(p. 55)

(That "higher principle of love" is, as I shall suggest, Grace.) Mrs. Bartholomew concludes,

The destructive forces of Fortuna implied in the tale are, of course, roundly defeated. As far as possible, Natura in the "Physician's Tale" is faithful to her cardinal principle of love. Chaucer's point, however, is that, just as Fortuna's destructive tyranny is never a worthy basis for human action, even so Natura's love is not always sufficient for human need. Because both father and daughter agree in love that Virginia must die, she meets her death in victory, not in defeat; and in approaching a love like that of God himself, so powerful that it can create good from evil, both father and daughter assume a spiritual transcendence beyond the laws of Natura. Thus, though the tale moves on dramatic levels more complex than those of allegory, the Fortuna-Natura overtones lend depth to the Christian theme.

(p. 57; italics mine)
Here Mrs. Bartholomew comes very close to my own view of the tale, and she clearly departs from Ruggiers (et al.), who sees the tale in a "non-Christian context."³

Commentaries on The Physician's Tale

Most of the published scholarship and criticism on The Physician's Tale deals either with the sources of the tale or with its appropriateness (or lack thereof) to the teller. Most of the scholars and critics find the tale to have what Ruggiers calls a "non-Christian context," and some say that it is, therefore, appropriate to a man whose "studie was but litel on the Bible" (I, 438).⁴ Lumiansky goes even further; he sees the morality of the tale as the Physician's "bold attempt to perpetrate on the Pilgrims a bit of moral virtuosity."⁵ But generally the tendency has been to find the tale inappropriate or only vaguely appropriate to the teller.⁶

The scholars who have dealt with the sources of The Physician's Tale are generally agreed that, though the ultimate source is Livy, Chaucer went to the Roman for the story of Virginius, Virginia, and Apius.⁷ The passage at the beginning of the tale on Nature was also probably taken from the Roman.⁸ The passage on Virginia's virtues was possibly taken either from St. Ambrose's Libri Tres de Virginibus⁹ or from Vincent of Beauvais's De Eruditione Filiorum Nobilium.¹⁰ Both Robinson and Edgar F. Shannon
cite lines 35-120 and 207-53 of the tale as Chaucer's additions. 11

There has been some commentary on the "digression" on the rearing of young girls (11. 72-104). 12 But, as Richard L. Hoffman says in one of the best articles on the tale, The Physician's Tale "has called forth very little literary criticism, even of the appreciative variety; less, perhaps, than any other complete tale in the book." 13 And this scarcity of criticism is itself enough to occasion my explication.

Explication of The Physician's Tale

After a brief introduction to the honorable and worthy Virginius (VI, 1-4), the Physician presents Virginius's daughter (not named until 1. 213), who is known for her "excellent beautee"; in fact, she is so beautiful that it is as if Nature would say,

"Lo! I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature,
When that me list; who kan me countrefete?
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or peynye; for I dar wel seyn,
Apelles, Zanzis, sholde werche in veyn
Outher to grave, or peynye, or forge, or bete,
If they presumed me to countrefete.
For He that is the formere principal
Hath maked me his vicaire general,
To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
Under the moone, that may wane and waxe;
And for my werk right no thyng wol I axe,
My lord and I been ful of oon accord.
I made hire to the worshipe of my lord;
So do I alle myne othere creatures,
What colour that they han, or what figures."
(Vi, 11-28)

Here we see a traditional view of Nature--her association
with beauty (see above, pp.113-14), her superiority to
art, her role as God's "vicaire general" (see above, pp.
94and 116), and her control over the sublunary ("Under the
moone") world.

The Physician then describes Virginia's physical
appearance (11. 30-38) and her character (39-71). As I
indicated above, the delineation of Virginia's virtues has
been traced to a couple of possible sources. There is, I
think, another possibility--one closer to home. But first,
extactly what are her virtues? She is chaste; she has
humility, abstinence, general moderation, patience, moder-
ation in bearing and array; though wise, she is discreet,
womanly, and plain in speech, so that all her words lead
only to virtue and "gentillesse"; she is modest, constant
in heart, and busy enough to avoid sloth; she avoids wine
and the sort of company whose actions are foolish and might
lead to wantonness. Let us look again at what the Parson
says (X, 455) are the "Goodes of grace": "science" (wis-
dom or knowledge), "power to suffre spiritueel travaille"
(perseverance, patience, or constancy, especially in
adversity), "benignitee" (benignity, gentleness, mildness,
or humility), "vertuous contemplacioun" (keeping one's mind properly directed, avoiding idle thoughts), "withstondynge of temptacioun" (such as avoiding wine and wanton parties), and "semblable thynges." A bit later the Parson notes (X, 470) that the gift of Grace should turn one "to goodness and to medicine" (to goodness and to the remedies for sin--humility, love of God and of one's neighbor, patience or sufferance, fortitude, mercy, abstinence and temperance, and chastity). Virginia also has "gentillesse," which, the Parson says (X, 465-69), consists of the eschewing of vice, ribaldry, and service to sin in word, in work, and in countenance and of the pursuit of virtue, courtesy, and purity; it is also largesse, moderation, benignity, and a noble and diligent heart. Or as Chaucer makes clear in *Gentilesse*, it is the following in the track of the "fader of gentillesse" and the addressing of all one's wits "Vertu to sewe, and vyces for to flee" (see 11. 1-5). The "firste stok" (Christ or God), who is the "fader of gentillesse," is full of righteousness, true of his word, sober, piteous, generous, clean in spirit, and allied to "Besinesse, / Ayeinst the vyce of sloute," and the heir of this "fader of gentillesse" must also love virtue or "He is nought gentil, though he riche seme, / Al were he mytre, crowne, or diademe" (see 11. 8-14). Or as the loathly lady in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* says, "gentillesse cometh fro God
Thus, it is clear, Virginia's virtues and her "gentillesse" come from God's Grace; this notion, of course, accords perfectly with Augustine's and Thomas's views of merit as a result of Grace. And so, Virginia is not merely the "paragon of Nature," as Mrs. Bartholomew said, but she is also a paragon of Grace.

Following the description of Virginia is Chaucer's digression on the rearing of children (72-104). The passage is not so much out of keeping with the context as some commentators have suggested. It does not seem to me to be inappropriate, after a dissertation on the character of a very proper (and very Christian) young girl, to advise governesses, "for Cristes sake, / To teche hem ["lordes doghters"] vertu looke that ye ne slake" (81-82). Nor is it inappropriate to advise parents to beware that by example ("of youre lyvynge") or by negligence in chastising their children "ne perisse" (do not die--spiritually), and one example of this ought to suffice (see 11. 97-104). The one example--the story of Virginius and Virginia--then follows (105-276). (The major problem, then, is the shift in point of view involved in the direct address to a segment of the audience, but this is not unusual in Chaucer [see, e.g., the Envoy at the end of The Clerk's Tale].)
The story, briefly, is this. Virginia, who was famous for "hir beautee and hir bountee," except to those who were envious, goes one day to town (to a temple, appropriately), where she is spotted by Apius, "a false juge," who is inflamed with lust and swears to have Virginia. Apius enlists the aid of Claudius, "a cherl," who advises Apius in a plot to get Virginia. Claudius draws up a bill of complaint against Virginius, claiming that Virginia is a slave stolen from him and not the daughter of Virginius, who is prevented from testifying with witnesses against the bill. Apius awards Virginia to Claudius, and when Virginius hears the sentence, he goes home and delivers his own "sentence" to Virginia,

> Ther been two weyes, outher deeth or shame,
> O gemme of chastitie, in pacience
> Take thou thy deeth, for this is my sentence.
> For love, and nat for hate, thou most be deed;
> My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heed.

(214-26)

Virginia asks for mercy at hearing the harshness of the sentence: "Goode fader, shal I dye? / Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye?" (235-36). When Virginius denies any other alternative, Virginia says,

> "Thanno yif me leyser, fader myn," quod she,
> "My deeth for to compleyne a litel space;
> For, pardee, Jepte yaf his doghter grace
> For to compleyne, er he hir slow, allas!
> And, God it woot, no thyng was hir trespas,
> But for she ran hir fader first to see,
> To welcome hym with greet solemnitee."

(238-44)
And then she faints. When she awakes she says,

Blissed be God, that I shal dye a mayde!
Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame;
Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name!"
(248-50)

She faints again, and Virginius then beheads her and takes the head to Apius, who sentences him to hang. But the people rise up: they cast Apius into prison, where he kills himself, they hang Claudius and others who helped, but mercifully they merely exile Virginius. The tale ends with the Physician's application of the moral (277-86).

Mrs. Bartholomew is probably right in seeing Apius as a representative of Fortune (he is a "false juge" whose sentence is not in keeping with the merit of his victim), and, as I said, she comes very close with the attribution of "a higher principle of love" to Virginius. But she stops short of saying that the higher principle is Grace. Virginius delivers his own "sentence" to counter the false judgment of Apius. He approaches his daughter with a "fadres pitee" (211) to kill her with a "pitous hand" (226)—"For love, and nat for hate" (225), suggesting, I think, God's pity and love, as it is manifested in Grace. The two mentions of "grace" are rather ironic. On one level, Virginia's question "Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye?" means simply, "Is there no mercy or pardon, is there no remedy against my imminent death?" And Virginius's answer ("No") means simply that she must die. On another, higher
level, it is clear that there is "grace" and "remedye"; that is, death is a remedy against the enforced lechery of Apius and assures that Virginia will die in a State of Grace, without mortal sin, as it eventually becomes clear. The mention of Jepthah, who "yaf his doghter grace," is also ironic. On one level, Virginia says that Jepthah (see Judges 11) allowed his daughter the favor of some time to bewail her virginity, and she too wants this same "grace." Even this is ironic, since she is not complaining of dying a virgin. But in another sense, Virginius is about to give "his doghter grace," since, as with Jepthah's daughter, "no thyng was hir trespas." In fact, Virginia blesses God "that I shal dye a mayde," that she will die "er that I have a shame," and she tells her father to proceed, "a Goddes name!" (The mention of the cause of the death of Jepthah's daughter--the fact that she was by chance the first to greet her father--emphasizes the element of Fortune in Virginia's death.) Virginius, then, preserves his daughter's gifts of Grace, while going against Nature (by killing his daughter), and he thus helps her transcend both Fortune and Nature.

The Physician's moral, when his tale is viewed in this light, seems more appropriate:

Heere may men seen how synne hath his merite.
Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol smyte
In no degree, ne in which manere wyse
The worm of conscience may agryse
Of wikked lyf, though it so pryve be
That no man woot therof but God and he.
For be he lewed man, or ellis lered,
He noot how soone that he shal been afered.
Therfore I red yow this conseil take:
Forsaketh synne, er synne yow forsake.

(277-86)

The Physician notes the "merite" of sin: as St. Paul says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). That is, as Virginia has "merited" eternal life through Christ's Grace, Apius and Claudius have as their "wages" not merely the physical death they suffer but the spiritual death of sinners. The Physician advises us to beware, since no man knows when he will die, and to forsake sin before sin forsakes us (as the Parson also advises; see X, 93). We are, that is, to be as well prepared as Virginia, to be in a State of Grace, when death comes; if we are not, our sin will deliver us to the same spiritual death Apius and Claudius suffer.

It is clear, I think, that The Physician's Tale is not the pagan tale many have suggested, no matter what its origin; the tale is presented in fairly orthodox Christian terms, as the echoes of The Parson's Tale alone should reveal. Some questions, though, still remain. First, how is this religious tale suited to a man whose "studie was but litel on the Bible"? The answer to this question I shall reserve for Chapter VII. But, second, while it is
clear that Virginia is approved and Apius and Claudius disapproved, what of Virginius? How are we to see the ambivalence of his treatment? He is not, after all, hanged for killing Virginia, nor is he entirely approved (he is exiled). And, the Physician says of Virginius that "he had been bigyled" (274). The Parson says that on the Day of Judgment "Ther shul we han a juge that may not be deceyved ne corrupt" (X, 167). Clearly, Apius is a corrupt judge, but, I suggest, the Physician makes it equally clear that Virginius in his "sentence" is deceived or beguiled. Deception is not as heinous as corruption. (For instance, as Milton makes clear, one of the reasons that Adam and Eve can have mercy and Satan cannot is that Adam and Eve were deceived through Satan's hypocrisy [Satan himself was self-deceived].) But neither can deception be condoned--hence the exile of Virginius. I do not believe that one can say, as some have suggested, that Virginius comes out unscathed. His motive (Mrs. Bartholomew's "higher principle of love" or my suggestion that Virginius wants to preserve his daughter in a State of Grace by keeping her from sin) may be approved, but most assuredly his action is not. He is an instrument of Grace, but no more so than Christ's tormentors or the executioners of Christian martyrs. Virginia has Habitual or Sanctifying Grace, one of the species of gratia gratum faciens, and
she has the special Efficacious Grace which allows perseverance in a State of Grace until death. Virginius, on the other hand, might be said to have obtained the *gratia gratis data* (or Free Grace), which, as we have seen, is "given to an individual for the help and salvation of others," but which is "not awarded to all Christians and can include sinners" (see above, esp. p.129). Thus, the "sinner" Virginius preserves his daughter's State of Grace by killing her (his sin) before she is polluted by sin.

But would she really have sinned if Apius had forced marriage on Virginia? It is not clear whether Apius had planned to marry her or to keep her as his concubine. In either case—in the strictest orthodoxy—Virginia would have been guilty of living in sin. As the Parson says, "marriage clenseth fornicacioun" and "chaungeth deedly synne into venial synne betwixe hem that been ywedded" (X, 920). As the Parson also says, there are three reasons which justify sexual relations between man and wife—the "engendrure of children," paying "the dette of hire bodies," and "to eschewe leccherye and vileynye"; the first and second reasons are meritorious, the third venial sin. A fourth reason—"for amorous love and for noon of the forseyde causes"—is a "deedly synne" (X, 939-43), and this fourth reason is obviously Apius's only motive, if in fact he had marriage in mind at all.
(and it is doubtful that he did—see 11. 130 ff.). Virginia has applied the proper remedies to keep herself from lechery: she has maintained the highest state in the scale of perfection—she has persisted in the third and best species of chastity, virginity (see X, 948-50), and she follows the advice "to withdrawen swiche thynges as yeve occasion to thilke vileynye, as ese, etynge, and drynkynge" (X, 951). But now that her participation in Apius's fou.
sin is imminent, death is the only remedy. She cannot die by her own hand, for that too would be a mortal sin. And so God needs an instrument—Virginius, who, while not himself guiltless, is given Free Grace to be able to over­come Nature (including his "natural" love for his daughter).
Finally, the idea that death is preferable to sin, espe­cially this sin, is not unusual. The author of The Ancrene Riwle, for instance, says,

One should try to avoid death as far as one can without sin, but one must die rather than commit any mortal sin . . .

God knows, I would far rather see all three of you, my dear sisters, to me the dearest of women, hanging on a gibbet in order to avoid sin, than see one of you giving a single kiss to any man on earth in the way I mean. I say nothing of what is worse . . .

A harsh view, no doubt, but certainly not unorthodox.
Conclusion

In The Physician's Tale, I would suggest, the view that death is preferable to sin, though it does seem to be accepted by Virginius and Virginia, is not the point the tale stresses. The moral of the tale is that one must forsake sin (now--since he does not know when death will come, since death may come at Fortune's whim) in order to persevere in a State of Grace until death. In some cases, as the tale demonstrates, one may have to strive against Fortune (the fortuitous whim of a "false juge") and against Nature (especially against Nature's fight with death) to persevere in Grace, and, in this particular case, the gifts of Grace are sufficient to overcome or transcend both Fortune and Nature.
CHAPTER VI

FORTUNE, NATURE, AND GRACE

IN THE PARDONER'S TALE

The Pardoner's most serious sin, as I shall attempt to show, is the sin of presumption, and, fittingly, he tells a tale of three rioters who also commit the sin of presumption, one of the worst species of the deadliest sin. Similarly, it seems presumptuous of me to attempt to go beyond the broad and deep scholarly and critical streams running from Jusserand, Lowes, Kittredge, and Curry to Sedgewick, Kellogg, Miller, Owen, Reiss, Steadman, Stockman, et al., but I shall presume, though to some extent I shall merely extend some existing views a step further and fit them into the thematic schema I am examining.

Indeed, the scholarly and critical tradition behind my view of The Pardoner's Tale is vast, and, as I hope will be clear, my debt to this tradition is great. I doubt that many of The Canterbury Tales have occasioned more comment than The Pardoner's Tale. I do not wish to review the full range of this commentary, though I shall shortly have to do some review and though I should like at this point at
least to indicate the kind of topics most frequently dealt with in connection with The Pardoner's Tale.

The most common general topic is the suitability of the tale to the teller. Almost everyone who comments on the tale writes of the perfect appropriateness of tale and teller, and I shall (in Chapter VII) also consider this fascinating subject. Connected with this topic is often some discussion on pardoners in general and on the kind of satire or social commentary frequently associated with them. Many scholars, I find, deal with pardoners and Chaucer's Pardoner, without going beyond the obvious in interpreting the tale.

Frequently in connection with The Pardoner's Tale scholars deal with various analogues, either merely to identify them or to suggest what Chaucer might have added to his possible source. (I, too, shall deal with this subject, in the Appendix to this essay.) Scholars also attempt occasionally to identify sources or analogues of parts of the tale. One part of the tale they often concentrate on is the Old Man, who has been variously identified as the Wandering Jew, merely the philosopher or hermit of the folktale analogue, Death, Death's messenger, Old Age, St. Paul's vetus homo, or simply an old man.

More recently, criticism has centered on the scriptural and theological background of the image of the
Pardoner and of the tale, and, consequently, on the exact nature of the sin of the Pardoner and his tale. My own comments on the tale also center on this general subject, though I shall have something to say on many of the other points, too.

Overview of The Pardoner's Tale

Before explicating The Pardoner's Tale in detail, I wish to give, in general terms, my thematic reading of the tale and its teller and to say something about the relationship of The Pardoner's Tale to both The Physician's Tale and The Parson's Tale. But this overview will necessitate first a brief review of some relevant scholarship and criticism.

Twenty years ago, Alfred L. Kellogg offered "An Augustinian Interpretation of Chaucer's Pardoner."²⁰ After reviewing the Augustinian tradition of the secret punishment of evil ("the progressive mental deformity and suffering which sin itself inflicts upon its perpetrator . . . . the punishment of sin by sin . . . . [the idea that] through concupiscence sin and suffering become synonymous"), Kellogg demonstrates that the Pardoner shows "not only the aversion of the will of God which is common to all sin, but the pure refusal of the will to serve God which is the sin of pride" and the various self-destructive perversions ("Law, sermon, relics, all have been perverted to serve
his ends") which result from his perverted will.

Robert P. Miller, a few years later, elaborated on part of Kellogg's view. Miller, a thorough-going Robertsonian, sees the Pardoner within one of the scriptural traditions of eunuchry. He sees him as the eunuchus non Dei, "sterile in good works, impotent to produce spiritual fruit"; as the vetus homo, the "old man" of St. Paul who is "unregenerate in accepted grace and unredeemed by Christ"; and as "a man sinning vigorously against the Holy Ghost," because he is guilty of "Presumption, . . . the one sin which is irremissible, since it involves the refusal of grace" (in his impentence).

Garland Ethel finds the Pardoner guilty of all seven of the Deadly Sins, but especially guilty of the overlapping sins of covetousness and pride, in all their species, and Eric W. Stockton sees pride as the true theme of The Pardoner's Tale. Stockton finds the "three revelers guilty chiefly of superbia, pride in its most Satanic form . . . [of] diabolical presumption . . . [in their attempt] to supplant Christ in His role of killing Death."

In the Introduction to his edition of The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale, A.C. Spearing develops this last notion
in his discussion of blasphemy in the tale.27 Spearing says of the Pardoner that "his very way of life is a blasphemous parody of the divine values it ought properly to serve" and that his tale is "about blasphemers."28 He sees as the worst of their blasphemies the vow to slay Death, "a profane parody of God's purpose in the Crucifixion."29

Finally, William B. Toole, building on some of the above views, says that "the brilliance of the story can be fully appreciated only when one sees in detail the relationship of the primary characteristics of the revellers to the action of the story."30 For Toole, "the three chief characters in the story represent confusion ... because of an obsession with the physical that blinds the revellers to the abstract and the spiritual."31 Consequently, they miss "the significance of the child's admonition: be spiritually prepared to meet death at any time because the world is uncertain and men's lives are at the mercy of chance."32 And this same "inability to understand the spiritual ... accounts for what is, as Eric Stockton points out, the revellers's greatest error, their unwitting attempt to usurp the function of Christ."33

To discuss my own views on the Pardoner and his tale, let me begin with the subject of the Pardoner's sin. What is he guilty of? Avarice, certainly--that much he
tells us. And not just the avarice that is the love of worldly goods (avarice in the "special sense"), but also avarice in the "general sense," that is, "an inordinate love of anything other than God" (the cupiditas which is the antithesis of caritas, or charity; the love of self in lieu of the love of God). Is the Pardoner's avarice (in both senses) his only sin? Certainly not. No doubt Garland Ethel is right: the Pardoner is guilty of all the Seven Deadly Sins (and God knows how many venial ones!). His pride and gluttony are evident in his Prologue; his envy is implicit in his physical condition; his sloth, in the lack of work for God's sake; his wrath, in the epilogue to his tale; his lechery, at least in the vicariousness of his boasts. And, as Ethel shows, the Pardoner has all the species of pride outlined by the Parson. One of the worst of these species of pride is presumption, which the Parson defines as "whan a man undertaketh an emprise that hym ought nat do, or elles that he may nat do" (X, 403), and the Pardoner presumes, according to his own report, to absolve men from sin, to give them Grace—in spite of the fact that he may not be empowered to do so and in spite of his own fallen state, his impenitence, which would not invalidate the sacraments (if he were allowed to administer them). Does the Pardoner's whole performance, then deal with pride or avarice? Neither, and both—The Pardoner's
Prologue and Tale are about sin. But what is the "root sin"? The Pardoner and the Parson say that avarice is the radix malorum (see VI, 334 and 426, and X, 739). But the Pardoner also says of gluttony, "how manye maladyes / Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes" (VI, 413-14), and the Parson says of the same sin, "He that is usaunt to this synne of glotonye, he ne may no synne withstonde" (X, 821).

The Pardoner says that gambling is the mother of lies, deceit, "cursed forswerynges," blasphemy, manslaughter, and waste (see VI, 591-93; cf. the Parson's parallel passage, X, 793). The Parson, however, also says that "Pride [is] the general roote of alle harmes" (X, 388). The point is, any sin can be the root of any or all the others; it does not make any difference which of the Pardoner's sins came first--and any one could have. The various sins are inevitably connected and overlapping.

What sin is the tale about? What is it an exemplum of? Most obviously, again, avarice, but the tale, like the picture of the Pardoner, is about sin in general. The three rioters are proud: they presume to replace Christ. They also show signs of wrath, sloth, lechery, gluttony, and possibly envy (of those more fortunate than they). They gamble and swear, and, finally, they are murderers. Though the announced theme of the tale is avarice, and though in large part the tale is an exemplum on avarice,
nevertheless, the general point of the tale is that "the wages of sin is death"; it makes no difference which of the mortal sins one is "envoluped" in. Thus, the general point is the same as in The Physician's Tale. (In Chapter VII, I shall develop more fully the relationship between the tales.)

The point I must now take up is the relevance to The Pardoner's Tale of the theme of Fortune, Nature, and Grace. As I indicated above, Ruggiers sees the Pardoner's performance as an "abuse of the gifts of grace." I prefer to see his performance (Prologue and Tale) as an abuse of all three gifts. The Parson's discussion of the three gifts is, in context, about the source of pride, which might arise from any of the three kinds of gifts. The Pardoner, as Curry has made clear, was cheated in the goods of Nature of the body: he is a eunuchus ex navitate, he is not particularly strong, nor is he especially beautiful. But of the goods of Nature of the soul he has his share: good wit, a sharp understanding (especially of his "lewed" audiences), a subtle skill (in manipulating those audiences), and a good memory (he has learned his whole performance "al by rote"). But these latter gifts are abused, perverted to evil ends, no doubt because of his malice toward Nature's cheating him physically, and, as the Parson warns is possible, the goods of the soul become a source
of pride to the Pardoner. One particular aspect of the malice he undoubtedly feels toward Nature is his pursuit of Fortune and her gifts, which, as we have seen, is in opposition to Nature. Avarice, that is, is a sin against Nature as well as against God. The gifts of Fortune he has obtained ("An hundred mark" a year) also become to him a source of pride. But the Pardoner goes even further in offending God by abusing the gifts of Grace: he is, certainly, inpenitent, and he presumes to absolve (or to pretend to absolve) men of their sins as well as of their temporal punishment. It is not that the Pardoner is ignorant of the Way. He notes that, though his intention is evil, still he helps others to depart from sin, especially from avarice, and (whatever problems the passage may cause) he says, in quite a matter-of-fact manner,

And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche,  
So graunte yow his pardoun to receythe,  
For that is best; I wol yow nat deceythe.  
(VI, 916-18)

He knows he is evil (which implies that he knows what is good), but he consciously rejects the good, rejects God's Grace. It might be argued, though, that he has the same Grace (gratia gratis data) that Virginius had—the Grace which allows a sinner to save others. Of course, Virginius at least had a good motive for his actions.

The Pardoner's Tale, like the Pardoner himself, is a picture of the abuse of the three kinds of gifts (as I
shall show in more detail below). The rioters, like the Pardoner, vainly pursue Fortune and, in other ways, live unnatural lives, and in their swearing and their presumption they abuse the ultimate gift of Grace—Christ Himself. The two major features Chaucer probably added to his source (see Appendix)—the homilies at the beginning of the tale and the attempt to slay Death—make clearer Chaucer's thematic development of the abuse of the gifts of Fortune, Nature, and Grace.

Explication of The Pardoner's Tale

In the opening of The Pardoner's Tale (11. 463-82), the Pardoner introduces "a compaignye / Of yonge folk that haunteden folye" (463-64), a company who are beset with all sorts of vices and who "doon the devel sacrificise / Withinne that develes temple [the tavern]" (469-70). After listing their vices, the Pardoner delivers three homilies—on gluttony (483-588), gambling or "hasardrye" (589-628), and swearing (629-59), and these three homilies are, I think, a significant addition to the tale.

Robertson says that the Pardoner "subdivides cupidi-tas into three parts: gluttony, gambling, and swearing," and, Robertson continues,

The three sins may . . . be seen as a progression along the road to spiritual death: (1) the submission of the spirit to the flesh in gluttony, foreshadowed, as the pardoner suggests, by the sin of
Adam and Eve, (2) the submission to Fortune implied by gambling, and (3) the denial of Christ, which is the "spiritual" implication of violating the Second Commandment. Hence, the three sins reflect the old pattern of the temptations of the flesh, the world, and the Devil, for submission to Fortune is submission to the world, and the denial of Christ is the ultimate aim of the Devil's temptation.  

To extend this view further is to bring it into my schema. Gluttony is a temptation of the flesh, but it is also an abuse of Nature. Nature, in the generosity of her gifts, requires only a simple sufficiency, and eating and drinking in excess abuses these gifts. The notion that "Corrupt was al this world for glotonye" (that is, the idea that gluttony precipitated the Fall, 1. 504) suggests the perversion and consequent decay of Nature that followed the Fall. Giving oneself over to sensual pleasures ("the short throte, the tendre mouth"; 1. 517) is a continuing perversion of Nature and turning from God— to make "wombe . . . hir god" (533). And gluttony can lead to other sins which one does equally "unkyndely" (unnaturally), like Lot's incest (485-87). The homily on gluttony echoes Pope Innocent's tract, especially Innocent's description of the glutton; significantly, Innocent makes it clear that gluttony is against Nature. The homily also echoes the Parson's dissertation on gluttony, even to the close parallel, "hire wombe is hire god" (X, 820), and to the treatment of drunkenness as a species of gluttony (see X,
818-30). Both the Pardoner (VI, 492-97) and the Parson 
(X, 822-24) liken drunkenness to madness or loss of reason, 
and Reason is traditionally the associate of Nature or, to 
the Parson, a gift of Nature.

Gambling or "hasardrye" is, as Robertson says, a 
submission to Fortune. Submitting oneself to Fortune is 
an abuse of Fortune's gifts (cf. Boethius); it is placing 
too much faith in her and not enough in God. To transcend 
Fortune is to begin to love God aright. To gamble is to 
misuse, to waste, Fortune's goods, and gambling is also 
"reppreeve and contrarie of honour" (595). Reputation (or 
as the Parson says, "the commendacioun of the peple"; X, 
473) is also one of the gifts of Fortune, and by falsely 
allying oneself to Fortune one sets himself up for a fall. 
The dice (or the casting of lots) are, in fact, as we have 
seen, traditionally associated with Fortune. Again, the 
Parson treats "hasardrie" under "Avaricia" in language 
that is very close to the Pardoner's homily (see X, 793-94).

The homily on swearing also echoes The Parson's Tale 
(see X, 587-99). The Parson, who bases his views on the 
Third Commandment, says, "For Cristes sake, ne swereth nat 
so synfully in dismembrynge of Crist by soule, herte, bones, 
and body" (X, 591). Soon after the short homily on swearing, 
we hear the rioters swearing, and the Pardoner says, "And 
many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn, / And Cristes
blessed body al torente" (VI, 708-09). At the end of the homily itself, the Pardoner says, "Now, for the love of Crist, that for us dyde, / Lete youre othes, both grete and smale" (658-59). What is clear from all this is that swearing is an abuse of the greatest gift, of the ultimate gift of Grace--of Christ--and at the very least an abuse of those particular gifts of Grace, "benignitee" and "vertuous contemplacioun." And, as the Parson says of the gifts of Grace generally, "thilke yifte of grace that sholde have turned hym to goodnesse and to medicine, tur­neth hym to venym and to confusion" (X, 470). The three rioters spit out more venom than the Pardoner himself (cf. VI, 421-22), and generally they abuse the gifts of Grace, as the Parson and the Pardoner's homily show.

The three homilies, then, can be read as tempta­tions of the flesh, the world, and the Devil, though the order is not the usual order. It is clear, however, that the homilies can be read as sermons on the abuses of the gifts of Nature, Fortune, and Grace, and, significantly, this is the order in the passage on the gifts in The Parson's Tale. The parallels in the homilies to other parts of The Parson's Tale suggest that Chaucer may indeed have had it in mind while writing or revising The Pardoner's Tale, and I think it is not unreasonable to suggest that Chaucer added the homilies to make somewhat more explicit
the thematic development of Fortune, Nature, and Grace in Fragment VI and that he drew on material in *The Parson's Tale*, particularly the passage on the gifts. Various critics have objected to the homilies as bothersome interruptions; others have accounted for the homilies by pointing to the development of the sins in the tale. The homilies can also be accounted for by referring to standard preaching techniques, but they are even more appropriate, I think, if they set up a thematic schema by which to read the tale and the Fragment.

After the homilies, the Pardoner returns to his tale of "Thise riotoures" in their tavern (ll. 661 ff.), where they are busy drinking before Prime, when they hear a funeral procession. One of the "riotoures thre" sends his servant boy to find who died, but the boy already knows:

"Sire," quod this boy, "it nedeth never-a-deel; It was me toold er ye cam heer two houres. He was, pardee, an old felawe of youres; And sodeynly he was yslayn to-nyght, Fordronke, as he sat on his bench upright. Ther cam a privee theef men clepeth Deeth, That in this contree al the peple sleeth, And with his spere he smoot his herte atwo, And wente his wey withouten wordes mo. He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence. And, maister, er ye come in his presence, Me thynketh that it were necessarie For to be war of swich an adversarie. Beth redy for to meet hym everemoore; Thus taughte me my dame; I sey namoore."

(VI, 670-84)
The "old felawe" of theirs was slain while exceedingly drunk by the "privee theef men clepeth Deeth." The innocent young boy ends with the advice he learned from his mother to beware "swich an adversarie," to "Beth redy for to meete hym everemoore." The boy, in his innocence, takes literally what his mother presented as a personification of the concept of Death and advises the rioters to be ready to meet him. The advice is essentially that of the moral of The Physician's Tale ("Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol smyte"; VI, 278). The rioters, however, in their confusion (the cause and the result of their concupiscence), also interpret Death as a literal figure, and they make "avow to Goddes digne bones" to "sleen this false traytour Deeth" (see 11. 692-701). Here, as I have said, is the rioters's ultimate presumption: in the ignorance of their concupiscence, they swear an unholy vow ("by Goddes armes," "to Goddes digne bones," and "By Goddes dignitee"); "Togidres han thise thre hir trouthes plight / To lyven and dyen ech of hem for oother" (702-03); and they affirm that "Deeth shal be deed" (710). Thus, they have usurped Christ's role in the death of Death, the mors mortis, which, as Spearing says, "is a formulation traditionally used by Christian writers to express Christ's victory in the Crucifixion" and which "goes back to an Old Testament source, Hosea xiii. 14: O mors, ero mors tua,
'O death, I will be thy death.'" And so, instead of preparing to meet death, they rashly go in search of it, with the most blasphemous of purposes.

Instead of Death, they meet "An oold man and a povre" (11. 713 ff.). As I have said, there are many candidates for the identity of the Old Man. Frankly, I see nothing wrong with reading him simply as an old man, but with symbolic implications. The Old Man, like the rioters, is searching for Death, who "alas! ne wol nat han my lyf" (727), and, unlike the rioters, he is prepared for death. (He is, for instance, ready to change his chest of clothes for a simple hair-shirt; he is well-acquainted with "Hooly Writ"; and he tries to take his leave with a "God be with yow"—see 11. 721-49. He, like Virginia, also uses the term "grace" ironically to refer to death, and like Virginia, the Old Man is undoubtedly in a State of Grace, prepared for death.) Interestingly, in Piers (Passus XI), it is Old-Age ("Elde") who shows the Dreamer the futility of following Fortune (in a passage which mentions lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life and which deals with, as I have suggested, Fortune, Nature, and Grace). In both The Pardoner's Tale and Piers, an old man representative of old age (or Old Age itself) serves as a warning against the pursuit of Fortune, and in the case of the rioters the warning proves fatal (the ultimate warning is to us!).
In The Pardoner's Tale, when the three rioters refuse to let the Old Man go unless he tells them where to find Death, the Old Man says,

"Now, sires," quod he, "if that yow be so leef To fynde Deeth, turne up this croked wey, For in that grove I lafte hym, by my fey, Under a tree, and there he wole abyde; Noght for youre boost he wole him no thyng hyde. Se ye that ook? Right there ye shal hym fynde. God save yow, that bokhte agayn mankynde, And yow amende!"

(760-67)

Various commentators have pointed to the scriptural ironies of the "croked wey," the "grove," and the "tree." For instance, in Psalm 125, we find this: "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." And there are also echoes of Matthew 7, where the way to God offers an obvious contrast. In the same chapter Matthew also mentions the "corrupt tree [which] bringeth forth evil fruit" (Matt. 7:17). The grove, I am sure Robertson would tell us, is a type of the Garden where man fell, after partaking of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (as opposed to the Tree of Life--see Gen. 2:9). And, indeed, the various Biblical echoes foreshadow the fall of our three rioters. But there are other echoes--suggestions of Fortune's home, especially in Alain's Anticlaudian (see above, pp. 43-44) and the Roman (see Robbins trans., pp. 125-29). In the
Anticlaudian, for instance, the way from Fortune's house is by "an uncertain path," and on her isle, "Here a changing grove and an inconsistent tree springs forth." Patch also calls attention to Fortune's garden and her association with a tree (see Goddess, pp. 136-40). Thus, in addition to the Biblical echoes about the Fall must be added the associations from the tradition of Fortune.

The rioters run to the Tree and find eight bushels of gold florins, and the Pardoner, with marvelous irony, says, "No longer thanne after Deeth they soughte" (772), because, obviously, they have found death. The Tree is, then, the Tree of Death, and the treasure is the death they have found, not only the physical death we shall shortly see but also the spiritual death which love of earthly treasure brings. Christ (Matt. 6:19-24) makes clear that earthly treasure separates one from God, and that one ought to be concerned with spiritual treasure, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (6:21). Later Christ says, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matt. 19:21).

What is the attitude of the rioters toward the treasure? The "worste of hem" says,

"Bretheren," quod he, "taak kep what that I seye; My wit is greet, though that I bourde and pleye. This tresor hath Fortune unto us yiven, In myrthe and joliftee oure lyf to lyven,
And lightly as it comth, so wol we spende. 
Ey! Goddes precious dignitee! who wende 
To-day that we sholde han so fair a grace? 
But myghte this gold be caried fro this place 
Hoom to myn hous, or elles unto youres-- 
For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures-- 
Thanne were we in heigh felicitee. 
But trevely, by daye it may nat bee. 
Men wolde seyn that we were theves stronge, 
And for oure owene tresor doon us honge. 
This tresor moste ycaried be by nyghte 
As wisely and as slyly as it myghte. 
Wherfore I rede that cut among us alle 
Be drawe, and lat se wher the cut wol falle; 
And he that hath the cut with herte blithe 
Shal renne to the town, and that ful swithe, 
And brynge us breed and wyn ful prively. 
And two of us shul kep en subtillly 
This tresor wel; and if he wol nat tarie, 
When it is nyght, we wol this tresor carie, 
By oon assent, where as us thynketh best." 

(VI, 777-801)

In the pride resulting from his "greet" wit, the "worste" rioter thinks he knows all, but he is obviously blinded in his concupiscence. He rightly attributes the treasure to Fortune but wrongly sees it as "so fair a grace" and a "heigh felicitee," when, in fact, the treasure separates them from true Grace and from the true felicity that lies in a simple sufficiency. He continues his allegiance to Fortune by advising the drawing of lots to see who will go for food and, hence, who will die first. (Here we see the traditional association of the casting of lots with Fortune's role as bearer of misfortune, especially death.) The lot falls to the "yongeste of hem alle" (804), and the blasphemous parody continues. The youngest goes for "breed and wyn" to celebrate the receiving of the false
"grace" and false "felicitee" and, ironically, to celebrate the imminent death of the youngest of this "unholy trinity" (for other possible references to the Eucharist, see 539 and 757). Spearing sees in the conspiracy of the remaining two against the third a parody of a current blasphemy about "a conspiracy by two members of the Trinity against the third."46

When the youngest leaves, the other two do plot his death; as the one says to the other, "Thy profit wol I telle thee anon" (809), echoing Harry Bailly's words that the gifts of Fortune and of Nature are "ofte moore for harm than prov" (VI, 300). He then proposes the murder of the youngest, because "Thanne may we bothe oure lustes all fulfille, / And pleye at dees right at oure owene wille" (833-34); that is, they can continue their allegiance to Fortune (as represented by the dice game).

The youngest, however, has plans of his own, or, rather, the Devil gives him a plan:

And atte laste the feend,oure enemy,
Putte in his thought that he sholde poysen byye,
With which he myghte sleen his felawes tweye;
For-why the feend foond hym in swich lyvyngne
That he hadde leve him to sorwe brynge.
For this was outrely his fulle entente,
To sleen hem bothe, and nevere to repente.

(844-50)47

That is, because of his manner of living, because he has followed the "croked wey," the Devil finds him vulnerable and succeeds in tempting him to murder and "nevere to
repente" (to live in the same state of impenitence the Pardoner is in). And so he goes to "a pothecarie" for poison (see 11. 851 ff.), which he puts into two of the three bottles of wine. He returns to his "felawes," and they kill him, "right as they hadde cast [in the sense of "casting lots," not merely in the sense of "shaping" or "framing"] his deeth bifoore" (880--the emphasis again is on the element of chance or Fortune in the death of the youngest). Then, gluttons that they are, the remaining two sit down to "drynke, and make us merie" (883), and--by chance ("par cas"--885)--they choose one of the poisoned bottles and die (again, the emphasis is on Fortune's role in their deaths).

The Pardoner ends in a series of apostrophes to a variety of sins and sinners--to homicide, wickedness in general, gluttony, lechery, and gambling; to any blasphemer of Christ with his wicked speech and great oaths, from habit or from pride; to mankind, generally, who is able to be "so fals and so unkynde ["unkind" and "unnatural"] to its creator (see 11. 895-903). Then follows the Pardoner's peroration (904-15), with the warning against avarice and the promise of absolution in exchange for sufficient offerings; here again the Pardoner presumes to absolve from sin as well as from penance.
Conclusion

The Pardoner's Tale can be seen as a development of the theme of the gifts of Fortune, Nature, and Grace and their abuses. The three rioters constantly participate in the three sins set out in the three homilies. They are gluttons; they have, in the beginning of the tale, been drinking before Prime, and, in the end, the two plotter's gluttony is the immediate cause of their death. And, as in the homily, their excess leads to other sins. They are gamblers—in the tavern, in their pursuit of Fortune, in their drawing lots, and in the plan of the two to play dice with the treasure. They are constant swearers, their supremely presumptive oath is the ultimate cause of their death (physical and spiritual), and the two plotters swear another oath to kill the third. Hence, they have abused the gifts of Nature, Fortune, and Grace. As we have seen, the unnaturalness and the element of chance are emphasized throughout the tale, and the blasphemous parodies in this tale of an unholy trinity emphasize how much they have abused the gifts of Grace, how far from Grace they have fallen, how they—unlike Virginia—die impenitent and out of Grace. But the general point of the tale—to "Beth redy for to meete [Death] everemoore"—is essentially the same as that of The Physician's Tale.
CHAPTER VII

THE UNITY OF FRAGMENT VI AND
THE TALE-TELLER RELATIONSHIPS

Unity

Fragment VI, as Robinson notes (p. 726), is "a floating fragment which is not connected at either end with the rest of the tales," and its position in the context of The Canterbury Tales is not at all settled. The Fragment is, clearly, in its present form, not a fully articulated segment of The Canterbury Tales, but I think Chaucer took significant steps toward unifying the Fragment. Had he finished the Fragment and fitted it into the context, perhaps that unity would be clearer. With what we have seen so far, however, we can begin to see the direction in which Chaucer was headed.

The Physician's Tale is frequently disparaged for its lack of development, The Pardoner's Tale praised for its economy and "swift dénouement." The Physician's Tale is often belittled for its didactic interruption in the opening of the tale, The Pardoner's Tale lauded for its organic development of the three homilies. The Physician's Tale is often condemned for its harsh morality,
The Pardoner's Tale commended for the stark exemplum with its poetic justice. What is overwhelmingly obvious to me is that the two tales are very much alike. Both begin with an introduction of major characters, are interrupted by lengthy "digressions," and then move swiftly to their equally harsh conclusions: both have lengthy digressions that are essential to their thematic development, and both have extremely economical narrative movement. Both make fundamentally the same point—that one must be prepared for death, since he never knows when it will come. Perhaps, if Chaucer had given The Physician's Tale a fully articulated Prologue (especially a confessional one), the tale would be as universally admired as The Pardoner's Tale.

The two tales, then, are unified by their similarity—in pace, in structure, and in moral. But they are also connected in other ways. As I have suggested, the Pardoner is a figure like Virginius, a sinner who has the gratia gratis data, or Free Grace, which allows him to bring salvation to others. The tales, as I have shown in the explications, have various parallels, many of them verbal, and each has numerous verbal parallels to The Parson's Tale and some to the works of Alain and/or the Roman. But, above all, the tales are linked thematically.
The probable revisions in *The Introduction to The Pardoner's Tale* (see above, esp. p. 200), the additions to the sources of *The Physician's Tale* (see above, pp. 204-05), and the probable additions to *The Pardoner's Tale* (see above, p. 226, and see Appendix) support my view that Chaucer was consciously developing the theme of the gifts of Fortune, Nature, and Grace: all of these revisions and additions are crucial to a reading of the theme in Fragment VI. I would suggest that Chaucer realized the possibilities of such a thematic development and, consequently, added to *The Physician's Tale* the discussion of Virginia's State of Grace and her crucial conversation with her father, added to the already explicit mention of the gifts of Fortune and Nature (in Harry's speech) a second mention of the gifts, and added to his folktale source for *The Pardoner's Tale* the homilies on the abuses of the three gifts and the presumptive quest to slay Death. And thus, he gives us his most explicit development of the Fortune-Nature-Grace theme.

**Relationships of Tales and Tellers**

One favorite subject in Chaucer studies is the suitability of tale to teller in *The Canterbury Tales*, and one of the most thorough discussions of this subject is R.M. Lumiansky's *Of Sondry Folk* (op. cit.). Lumiansky's focus is the dramatic context of the tales, and he often
goes to great lengths to justify the assignment of a given
tale to a particular pilgrim. What he says of the Physi-
cian and the Pardoner is of particular interest and worth
brief review.

In general, Lumiansky places all of the tales into
one of three groups: "Simple suiting of tale and teller,"
"Simple suiting of tale and teller, plus an externally
motivated dramatic situation," and "Simple suiting of tale
and teller, plus an externally motivated dramatic situa-
tion, plus internally motivated and extended self-revelation
of which the teller is not fully aware." Lumiansky places
the Physician in the first category and the Pardoner in
the third (see Of Sondry Folk, pp. 247-48).

More specifically, he sees in the Physician's
performance a "bold attempt to perpetrate on the Pilgrims
a bit of moral virtuosity" (p. 200). He views the Physician
as "a 'society doctor,' who attempts to impress his public
with his learning and skill, though he is mainly inter-
ested in collecting fat fees," and as one who is "primarily
concerned with putting on an impressive show to cover his
real motives" (p. 195). In his analysis of the portrait
of the Physician in the General Prologue, Lumiansky sees
the major "satiric thrust" aimed at the fact that the
Physician "is extremely tight-fisted" (p. 196). In his
analysis of the tale, he says that "the Physician intends
his performance as a moral story primarily in praise of
chastity," and he thinks "the somewhat stilted, semilearned
[sic] device of having Nature proudly speak of Virginia"
to be "well suited to the pompous Physician, who appar­
etly stresses Virginia's physical beauty in order to
increase his emphasis on her inner purity" (p. 197). But
Lumiansky also notes that the "story is a strangely moral
one for a man whose study is but little on the Bible,
whose arrangements with his apothecaries are suspect, and
whose main interest is in collecting and holding on to as
much money as possible" (p. 198). (Many commentators, in
fact, find the tale clearly inappropriate.) Harry Bailly,
according to Lumiansky, sees through the Physician's
hypocrisy: "No great interpretative straining is needed
to find irony in the Host's asking God to save the aphro­
disiacs sold by a man who has just completed a tale in
praise of virginity" (p. 199). In conclusion, Lumiansky
says,

When the tale is so understood [as a "bold
attempt to perpetrate on the Pilgrims a bit
of moral virtuosity"], the pompous and
exaggeratedly noble tone of the long intro­
ductive passage on Virginia's purity, the
so-called "digressive" plea to governesses
and parents, and the concluding moral do
not cause baffling difficulties in the drama
of this section of the Canterbury Tales, for
they represent a part of the Physician's
dramatic purpose. That the Host, in his
comments upon the performance, does not allow
the Physician to carry out his scheme with complete success is in keeping with Chaucer's method throughout.

(p. 200)

Lumiansky's discussion of tale and teller is mildly convincing, but I am not sure it holds up under close examination. For instance, without a Prologue, there is no real evidence to support the idea of a scheme on the part of the Physician to bilk the other Pilgrims. The Pardoner obviously is a schemer: the Physician is obviously a worldly man. The Pardoner attempts a sale: the Physician does not. There just is no evidence of his scheming against the Pilgrims. My purpose, though, is not so much to refute Lumiansky's view of the tale-teller relationship as to present my own—about this tale and The Pardoner's Tale.

Lumiansky's analysis of The Pardoner's Tale and its teller is one of the fullest. He sees in the Pardoner "the greatest degree of dramatic complexity," and he shows this complexity by analyzing the Pardoner's character through eight sections of The Canterbury Tales: "first, the portrait of the Pardoner in the General Prologue (I, 669-714); second, the interruption by the Pardoner in the Wife of Bath's Prologue (III, 163-87); third, the Introduction to the Pardoner's Tale (VI, 318-28); fourth, the Pardoner's Prologue (VI, 329-462); fifth, the sermon (VI, 463-915); sixth, the benediction (VI, 915-918); seventh,
the attempted sale (VI, 919-45); eighth, the quarrel with the Host (VI, 946-68)" (p. 201). From this detailed picture Lumiansky concludes

that the physically handicapped Pardoner, having joined the pilgrimage with the definite purpose of extracting money from his traveling companions, most of whom he despises, by a refinement of his usual methods of salesmanship among peasants directs his actions and words throughout toward that end and fails, after almost succeeding, because he foolishly reverts to those usual methods at the crucial moment. Thus, the dramatic structure of the Pardoner's performance, which includes a tale that suits both his regular occupation and his present purpose, involves his bitter antagonism towards his physically well-adjusted companions and represents an unintentional self-revelation of his own inadequacies in the very field of endeavor—salesmanship—at which he feels most competent. Here the tale proper is more completely subordinated to the whole performance than in any other instance.

(pp. 201 and 203)

Lumiansky, then, goes further than most critics in his view of the Pardoner's scheme: he suggests that the Pardoner's interruption of the Wife of Bath is a way of testing or "feeling out" his potential dupes (see pp. 205-09). His view of the Pardoner's failure also differs from that of many critics:

What methods has Chaucer used here to bring about the Pardoner's failure? An explanation lies, I think, in the fact that the Pardoner foolishly breaks the spell which his sermon and benediction have cast upon the Pilgrims; reverting in this crucial moment to his habitual methods among the peasants,
he establishes an atmosphere too undignified to be at all flattering in its appeal to his listeners.

(p. 220)

But most important for my purpose is what Lumiansky says about the tale itself and its suitability to this teller whose scheme begins so subtly but ends so disastrously (see pp. 213-17). Given Lumiansky's premise that the Pardoner--from his interruption of the Wife of Bath to his quarrel with Harry Bailly--has nothing in mind but the bilking of his fellow Pilgrims, one can easily accept Lumiansky's views of the tale. As I suggested above, Lumiansky sees the interruption of the Wife as a test--for the Pardoner to see how deeply runs the affected worldliness of the Pilgrims. On the basis of this test, the Pardoner allegedly begins his address to the Pilgrims by appealing to their worldliness and to their superiority toward his usual audience. In his transition to the tale proper, in the line "in which the Pardoner describes the 'moral tale' he plans to tell as one which he uses frequently when preaching to 'wynne'--that is, before his peasant audiences" (p. 214), the Pardoner hopes, according to Lumiansky, to give his present audience a chance to laugh with him at his usual dupes and in the process to effect in them a subtle change:
Earlier it was maintained that the Pardoner skillfully and purposely combines in his prologue an appeal to the affected worldliness of some of the Pilgrims with the idea that, in spite of his evil methods, absolution from him is thoroughly efficacious. In his prologue the latter idea stood in the background. Now, in his sermon, the Pardoner reverses their positions in the minds of his listeners; he uses the appeal to the Pilgrims' assumed worldliness as background, and moves to the fore the implication of the worth of what he has to offer as confessor.

(p. 216)

Thus, it is the tale that Lumiansky sees as the major device in effecting the necessary change in the elaborate scheme the Pardoner has embarked upon. The tale itself Lumiansky considers a skillful combination of narrative opening, miscellaneous homiletic material, return to the engrossing narrative, and culmination in a moving benediction.

However much one views the tale as a part of the Pardoner's scheme--and I find it ludicrous to view the Pardoner's scheme as quite so elaborately planned as Lumiansky suggests--one might at least accept the tale as a part of a scheme. (My own view of the tale, as I shall soon show, goes beyond the Pardoner's intention: I see a character revelation somewhat more subtle on Chaucer's part.)

Not every Chaucerian, however, would go quite so far as Lumiansky. Kemp Malone, for instance, presents a much
different view. He repudiates Kittredge's notion that "the Pilgrims do not exist for the sake of the stories, but vice versa" (Chaucer and His Poetry, p. 155). Malone maintains that "it would be a great mistake to interpret a given story as serving primarily to characterize its teller as an individual" (Chapters, p. 211), because, as he says, "For Chaucer the tale is the thing" (p. 217). But even one so opposed to Kittredge's point of view will allow that The Pardoner's Tale "not only befits the teller but also makes an integral part of his characterization of himself" (p. 211). Even so, Malone sees "no new light" thrown on the character of the Pardoner in his telling of his tale, since "we knew what his methods were already" (p. 213).

According to Malone, "In no other case does the story have this function" of serving "as part of the teller's characterization of himself" (p. 234). To the Physician, for instance, Malone attributes only "a vague appropriateness" in the assignment of his tale. Speaking of the Manciple and the Physician, he says, "One can find no compelling reason for the assignment to these two pilgrims of the particular tales they told" (p. 232).

However, from what I have said in the previous chapters and in the first part of this one about Fortune, Nature, and Grace in Fragment VI, I do see "compelling reason" for the respective tale-assignments—or at least
a kind of suitability beyond that noted by Lumiansky. My justification begins with Walter Clyde Curry's *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences*. Curry's first chapter, "The Doctor of Physic and Mediaeval Medicine," discusses in detail the Physician's probable knowledge of and familiarity with the important sources and with those disciplines relevant to his practice. Chaucer says that the Physician "was grounded in astronomye [i.e., astrology]" (I, 414), and Curry explains why astrology was important to a medieval doctor and what Chaucer meant when he says of the Physician,

He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel
In houres by his magyk natureel.
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his ymages for his pacient.

(I, 415-8)

As Curry says,

In his diagnosis of a malady...it is manifestly of prime importance that the physician should know something of the patient's nativity, i.e., the influence responsible for the given complexion, and that by observation of the present configuration he should be able to determine how, why, and to what extent the proportions of original element-compounds have been upset or disordered.

(p. 9)

Hence, by knowing his patient's nativity, the time of the onset of an ailment, and the current astrological conditions, a medieval physician could know at what hours to treat his patient with what, and he could "fortunen" an accurate
prognosis. And, to be on the safe side, such a physician might also make appropriate astrological "ymages" which would "receive and store up tremendous energy of either beneficent or malignant constellations, which the clever practitioner of natural magic [could] use at will to work health or sickness or death here below" (p. 21). Obviously, then, it was extremely important for the medieval physician to be "grounded in astronomye."

The final lines of the Physician's description in the General Prologue add a significant bit of information:

In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal;
And yet he was but esy of dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therefore he lovede gold in special.
(I, 439-44)

These lines and the earlier reference to the Physician's connection with the apothecary ("For ech of hem made oother for to wynne-- / Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to begynne"; I, 427-28) not only ring curiously modern but also make fairly clear why the Physician would be interested in Fortune. He needs to know the intimate workings of Fortune (Astrology) in order to be able to cure his patients, and the curing of patients (especially in peak-periods like an epidemic of plague!) serves to increase the gifts of Fortune with which our Physician is so obviously pleased.
But for a medieval physician to be successful, as Curry explains, a knowledge of astrology (Fortune) is not enough:

It is...impossible for the theoretical physician, however much of astrology he may know, to arrive at the complete diagnosis of a given disturbance in the body unless he is fully acquainted with the character and inter-actions of the four humours. In other words, he must recognise both the primitive and the immediate causes. (p. 10)

Thus, the medieval physician had to know the workings of Nature as well as those of Fortune.

But a thorough knowledge of Fortune and Nature without acquaintance with Grace would imply a rather worldly man. And, indeed, Chaucer says of our Physician, "His studie was but litel on the Bible" (I, 438). As Curry says, after quoting John of Salisbury's complaint against physicians who "attribute too much authority to Nature, [and] cast aside the Author of Nature,"

...one may strongly suspect that Chaucer's Doctor is this sort of man, trusting to his own intellect in understanding and to his skill in managing the laws of nature, relying upon his power to compel the influence of constellations according to the principles of natural magic, and leaving out an account of God, the Author of Nature, and His will as is made manifest in the Bible. (pp. 30-31)

The gifts of Fortune and Nature were obvious enough in The Physician's Tale for Harry Bailly to see them. The implications about the gifts of Grace are a bit more
subtle, perhaps too subtle for the rather worldly Physician himself to realize the full import of his tale (as indeed this subtlety by-passed Harry Bailly). I would suggest, therefore, that not only is The Physician's Tale linked thematically to the character of the teller, but that the tale and its theme amplify our view of the Physician's worldliness.

The theme of the three kinds of gifts also adds to our picture of the Pardoner. In his third chapter, "The Pardoner's Secret," Curry tells of the Pardoner's not-too-well-hidden secret:

In this passage [I, 688-91] the poet suggests the secret of the Pardoner; he is most unfortunate in his birth. He carries upon his body and has stamped upon his mind and character the marks of what is known to mediaeval physiognomists as a eunuchus ex navitate. The Sophist Admantius (ca. the middle of the fourth century) devotes one whole section to eunuchs of this type: "Those who are eunuchs by fault of nature possess certain evil characteristics which distinguish them from other men; they are usually cruel, crafty, and vicious, but some are more so than others." (p. 59)

Curry demonstrates rather convincingly that the Pardoner is surely a eunuchus ex navitate. The significance of this is that the Pardoner is a eunuch "by fault of nature" and is, therefore, an unnatural man. The Pardoner's chief character trait, as he himself admits, is his avarice, and his tale is an exemplum showing the evils of his own sin:
Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice....
I preche nothyng but for coveitise.
(VI, 427-33)

As I have shown, avarice is a sin against Nature and what Curry reveals about the Pardoner's being somewhat short-changed by Nature would explain why the Pardoner might be allied against Nature. Curry suggests something of this sort without going quite as far as I do:

Born a eunuch and in consequence provided by nature with a warped mind and soul, [the Pardoner] is compelled to follow the urge of his unholy impulses into debauchery, vice, and crime.

But the Pardoner not only allies himself against Nature: he misallies himself with Fortune. He has—or so he thinks—good reason to view Fortune favorably:

By this gaud have I wonne, yeer by yeer,
An hundred mark sith I was pardonere.
(VI, 389-90)

He preaches, as he has told us, for money, and he has done well; consequently, he actively pursues the gifts of Fortune, even though, as his tale shows and as the Host says, these gifts "Been cause of deeth to many a creature" (VI, 296). Not only does he have the wrong attitudes toward Nature and Fortune, but he also has a perverted view of Grace—so much so that Kittredge has called him the one lost soul on the pilgrimage. None of this misdirection, however, stops him from preaching effectively or telling
an exemplum which shows how wrong his own attitudes are, greatly enhancing in the process the dramatic irony of the tale, and showing as I have suggested the Free Grace which allows a sinner to save others. And so, it seems to me, Chaucer certainly intended Fragment VI as a treatment of the theme of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, but he did not overlook what I believe is, in spite of objections like Malone's, a standard Chaucerian technique--the wedding of theme and character.

In fact, one might add two more characters to this discussion--Harry Bailly and the Parson. Harry Bailly, of course, supplies the link between the two tales in Fragment VI, and his interpretation of The Physician's Tale is as usual slightly off the mark, or, as Mrs. Bartholomew says, "askew." He sees the tale as dealing with only the gifts of Fortune and Nature; our somewhat benighted literary critic does not see the full implications of the tale. It remains for the Parson to set the other three pilgrims--and us--straight. The Parson, as we have seen, in keeping with his orthodox and pious character, sets out clearly the proper attitude toward the gifts of Fortune, Nature, and Grace. So, as he does with some improper attitudes expressed by other pilgrims, the Parson eventually "corrects" the Host, the Physician, and the Pardoner.
CHAPTER VIII

SURVEY OF FORTUNE, NATURE, AND GRACE
IN SOME OF THE CANTERBURY TALES

What I propose to do in this chapter is to survey some of the remaining tales in order to suggest the prevalence of the Fortune-Nature-Grace problem in The Canterbury Tales. I do not plan to deal with all the tales, simply because they are not all relevant in discussing this particular theme, nor do I plan to give the sort of detailed reading I gave for The Physician's Tale and The Pardoner's Tale, because it would be "al to long to rehearse." What I will do instead is to cover briefly those tales which are most pertinent to the Fortune-Nature-Grace theme or to any of its components, and I will, in most cases, give only a general outline of the relevant situation and the solution (if any) offered in the course of the tale under examination.52

The General Prologue

What better place to begin a discussion of a potentially unifying theme than the beginning of The Canterbury Tales? In the famous opening lines of The General Prologue, in the reverdie, Chaucer draws together two strands which
have been noticed before but which are especially pertinent to my interests. In describing the urges of the spring (what another, much later poet has called the urging toward the "easing of the Spring"), Chaucer shows a dual movement--the revitalization of Nature (in the plants and especially in the animals, as "priketh hem nature in hir corages"--cf. Parliament, 388-89) and the spurring of the folk who "Thanne longen . . . to goon on pilgrimages" (see 11. 1-18). That is, with the coming of spring, we see the revitalization of both the natural and the spiritual impulses, and we see, in this _reverdie_, the tendency we shall see more of--the tendency of Chaucer (among others) to bring Nature and Grace together, to see in the prompting of Nature to love the impulse toward the higher spiritual love. But immediately following the _reverdie_ Chaucer turns to the setting at the Tabard. What is interesting about this scene is the relevance of Fortune. Chaucer makes clear that this gathering was something which simply "Bifil . . . in that seson on a day," that this company "Of sondry folk, by aventure [by chance] yfalle / In felaweship" (see 11. 19-26). We can see, therefore, that in the opening of his work Chaucer has pulled together--consciously or not--the three important forces related to man's destiny. It may be that he is intentionally setting up the development of an important
theme, or, rather, it may simply be that this tripartite way of looking at the world was to Chaucer a habit of mind.

The Knight's Tale

The Knight's Tale has, perhaps, occasioned more response than most of the tales, and it has called forth, in particular, some commentary on the subject of Destiny, which often includes the forces of Fortune and Nature. No one, as far as I am aware, disputes the philosophical seriousness of the tale, and it is, therefore, appropriate to examine the tale for the philosophical-theological schema I am tracing. Once again, I can use Barbara Bartholomew's remarks as a starting-point. Mrs. Bartholomew's approach to the tale is to analyze the opposition of Fortuna and Nature, to see "the functional role of the two Boethian semi-deities and their effect upon action, character, philosophy, and courtly love conventions in the 'Knight's Tale'" (p. 74), but, she notes, in this tale "Chaucer does not consistently associate a particular deity with a particular character" (p. 73). She asserts that "None of the characters in the poem is devoted wholly to Natura and none to Fortuna"; she continues,

Characters and kingdoms vacillate throughout the tale. The victory ultimately resides in the principles of Natura; but Natura's dominion over characters and
kingdoms is an evolutionary process, not sudden, developing slowly and finding its expression only with the measured passage of time.

(pp. 76-77)

Mrs. Bartholomew has a good deal to say about the settings, the "Mayings" and Gardens belonging to Natura and the Temples which have much in common with the palace of Fortuna in the Anticlaudian of Alain, but her most perceptive comments are on the characters and the best of these discussions on Theseus. Her introduction to the character of Theseus is essential:

Chaucer's Theseus is a character of extremes--gentle or arrogant, unpredictably exacting or mild in command, whimsically stringent or clement in judgment. A number of scholars believe that Theseus is the representative of the Boethian Destiny which controls the tale. In my opinion, Theseus is not in command of the Boethian Destiny which operates in the tale; rather, he, like all the other characters, falls under the sway of Destiny's agents. While Fortuna influences Theseus, his domain--victorious Athens and conquered Thebes--is in vague unrest. When Theseus reaches an acceptance of Boethian order, the kingdoms of Athens and Thebes unite and there is universal concord. Further, Theseus is not, as most critics regard him, a static figure. His character follows a definite line of development as he rises above the tyranny of Fortuna to an acceptance of the ordered love of Natura, as he grows from a dim and inarticulate understanding of the universe to a more perfect comprehension which finds its fluent expression in the power, wisdom, and beauty of his bond-of-love oration. In short, Theseus grows from the power of action to the more philosophically profound power of speech.

(p. 79)
After this, Mrs. Bartholomew moves through a detailed analysis, showing Theseus's alternating allegiance to Natura and Fortune. As she says, "At no time until the end of the tale does Theseus make a single decision and stick by it" (p. 80). He enters the tale under the aegis of Fortune; he reacts harshly to Palamon and Arcite and then rescinds his decree; after imprisoning them for life, he later releases Arcite; after Palamon escapes and Theseus comes upon him fighting with Arcite, Theseus again condemns them to death until Ypolita intervenes, at whose urging he commits all to Fortune; at Arcite's death Theseus grieves unnaturally until Egeus consoles him; and finally, near the end of the tale, Theseus, in tune with Nature and with God, delivers his bond-of-love speech (see pp. 78-85).

Again, I would suggest, Mrs. Bartholomew comes very close to saying what I would say, but she just does not say it. Quite correctly, I think, she identifies the bond-of-love speech as the center of the "philosophical theme of the tale and the resolution of the Natura-Fortuna contest" (see p. 103), and equally accurately, she says that "Theseus transcends Egeus' philosophy because he adds a new dimension--love" and then she adds,

For Theseus the key is not--as it is for Egeus--grim acceptance of 'this worldes transmutacioun' (2839). Rather, Theseus
bases his philosophy on the creative love of God, the 'Firste Moevere' who, through his 'vicaire' Natura, endows the world with eternal order and direction.

(p. 104)

What she never says is that the ultimate "love of God" is Grace: it is Grace that overcomes Nature, as St. Augustine had made clear; it is Grace that overcomes any misfortune—physical or spiritual—that Fortune might bestow; and, as I have suggested (above, pp. 142-45), the Boethian bond-of-love comes very close to the orthodox view of Grace, especially the sort of medicinal Grace which corrects any disorder.

And so, it seems to me, if one can read the tale, as Mrs. Bartholomew does, with the alternating ascendancy of Fortune and Nature (and I highly recommend her chapter on The Knight's Tale), and if one is willing to read Theseus's speech (I, 2987 ff.) as the philosophical center of the tale, then it is perfectly logical to read as one of the major points of the tale the idea that Grace allows one to overcome or transcend the vicissitudes of Fortune and Nature. This moral certainly is not out-of-keeping with the character of the teller, "a verray, perfit gentil knyght" who had often fought in "his lorde werre" (I, 72 and 47).
The Miller's Tale

If The Knight's Tale shows how one adheres to Nature by loving properly, then The Miller's Tale, which as many have pointed out is in some ways a parody of The Knight's Tale, parodies this tale in another way by showing a sort of descent from Grace or the love of God to a "natural" love of the basest sort.

First of all, the perversions of (and, hence, falling from) Grace abound in the story. The worldly clerk, "hende Nicholas," sings the Angelus ad virginem--a song of the Annunciation, of the filling of the Virgin with Grace--for his own and his friends' entertainment, but this is only one symptom of his generally worldly way of life (see I, 3199-220). The other scoundrel, "joly Absolon," also a clerk, is truly a wolf in shepherd's clothing! But the worst abuse of the gifts of Grace is Nicholas's scheme: he pretends to have the gift of prophecy (a special gift of Grace, as St. Thomas makes clear), to know "Goddess pryvetee" (3558), and he pretends that he, the carpenter, and Alisoun--like Noah and his family--will, by God's Grace, be saved (cf. 3560: "To han as greet a grace as Noe hadde"; also see I. 3595). And all of this pretending to Grace Nicholas performs in order to be able to sin.

Second, the gifts of Nature play an equally important role. John's marriage, at his advanced age, to
an eighteen year old wife is itself a perversion of Nature, but I shall return to that subject (and to the figure of the Reeve) when I take up The Merchant's Tale. Nature, though, gets her revenge. It is obvious that Alisoun is Nature's creature (see 11. 3233-70--note especially the animal and natural imagery), but she is not, as Virginia was, a paragon of Nature. She has mainly beauty (a gift of Nature) and the most animal-like urgings Nature can bestow; she, like the "smaile foweles" of the opening of the General Prologue, is apt to "slepen al the nyght with open ye." She becomes Nature's instrument for getting even with John, who, most unnaturally, must now forever bear his horns.

One could argue, too, that Fortune has an important role in the tale, what with that sudden turn of the wheel at the end that brings down all four, but the emphasis is on the abuses of Nature and, through and beyond these abuses, on the abuses of Grace. I am by no means denying the comic import of the tale. I am suggesting that its level of comedy is a bit above the farce-fabliau category, that like all higher comedy there is a serious message beneath the comic surface, or to use an almost unavoidable Robertsonian phrase, a kernel within that is only revealed by removing the outer husk.
The Man of Law's Tale

The tale of Constance (or "Custance"), like The Clerk's Tale, The Second Nun's Tale, and The Physician's Tale, is a story of the suffering of a saintly woman, a story of the perseverance in Grace by a woman tossed about by the various winds of Fortune, and a story clearly modeled on a Saint's legend. And the evidence of Constances Grace abounds. Her description is very like Virginia's:

"Our Emperour of Rome . . .
A doghter hath that . . .
To rekene as wel hir goodnesse as beautee,
Nas nevere swich another as is shee.

In hire is heigh beautee, withoute pride,
Yowthe, withoute grenehede or follye;
To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde;
Humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye.
She is mirour of alle curteisye;
Hir herte is verray chambre of hoolynesse,
Hir hand, ministre of fredam for almesse."

And al this voys was sooth, as God is trewe.
(II, 156-69)

Like Virginia, Constance is a paragon of Nature and of Grace. She has, that is, Sanctifying Grace, but she asks, before leaving for Syria, for Actual Grace:

But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun
So yeve me grace his heestes to fulfillment!
(II, 283-84)

That is to say, she wants the Grace that will enable her to do God's will, to perform good works. And in addition to these two species of gratia gratum faciens, she is also given the gratia gratis data that allows her to bring about
the conversion of the Sultan of Syria and of Alla, King of Northumbria. In fact, in the conversion of the latter, others were also joined to Christ:

And by Custances mediacioun,  
The kyng—-and many another in that place—-  
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace!  

But the remarkable thing about Constance is that she perseveres in Grace in spite of all the misfortune she suffers: she could be said to have either or both the Boethian patience in adversity and the Christian gift of Grace which, as the Parson says, allows one "to suffre spirituell travaille." In any case, her misfortunes are indeed great: a slaughter of guests at her first wedding, being cast adrift, an attempted seduction, a frame-up for murder, and the banishment by Alla's mother. The role of Fortune in her life is best symbolized by her being cast adrift in a rudderless boat ("in a ship al steereless"—1. 439). As Patch points out, Fortuna is traditionally the goddess in control of one's destiny at sea (Goddess, pp. 101-07), and, surely, the notion of a rudderless boat suggests even more than usual Fortune's lack of direction, her caprice. If the image were not clear enough, it becomes quite clear when the narrator asks for proper direction on Constance's behalf:
Here, then, is one of the best hints on how to read the tale. In spite of the vagaries of Fortune, Constance does not give herself over to Fortune's control but chooses God as her "steere"--"He that is lord of Fortune." Thus, one of the points of The Man of Law's Tale is that one must not, no matter how much "travaille," give his allegiance to Fortune but, rather, persevere in Grace and have patience in adversity. Hence, the appropriate closing of the tale--

Now Jhesu Crist, that of his myght may sende
Joye after wo, governe us in his grace,
And kepe us alle that been in this place! Amen.  

That is, "May Christ, who has the power to send us joy after woe (as he did for Constance), direct us in his Grace (or, to persevere in his Grace), and protect us (as he did for Constance) here on earth." Or, in other words, "May God's Grace help us to overcome the whims of Fortune!"

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

Without even attempting to wade through the exegetical problems involved in the Wife's heresies, let me at least suggest that one topic of her Prologue is the perversion of the gifts of Nature and of Grace. As I have discussed above, to the orthodox mind the only proper
reasons for sexual relations in marriage are, as the Parson says, the engendering of children and the payment of the debt of one's body. Marrying only to avoid lechery and villainy is venial sin; marrying only for amorous reasons is deadly sin. It is clear that the Wife is not marrying for the proper reasons. She is not marrying for the more "natural" reason of continuing the race, but for the baser reason of satisfying her own physical urgings. Hence, she abuses the gifts of Nature and of Grace, and in spite of all her argument to the contrary, she does realize that she is also committing a sin: "Allas! allas! that evere love was synne!" (III, 614). But she also sins against Nature by marrying outside her own age-bracket (a sin I shall return to under The Merchant's Tale). Her sin, especially her abuse of the gifts of Grace, is intensified by her misuse of authorities (the Bible and the tracts of the Fathers).

The Wife of Bath's Tale is also relevant to a discussion of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, but the theme plays only a minor role in any reading of the tale. The main interest of this tale, for my purposes, is what I have said about "gentillesse" in the tale. In a long passage (III, 1109-1206), the Loathly Lady lectures the young knight about true "gentillesse." She first considers whether it comes from riches, whether it is a
gift of Fortune (see 11. 1109-32); then she discusses whether "gentillesse were planted natureelly" (see 11. 1133 ff.). She affirms that

Heere may ye se wel how that genterye
Is nat annexed to possessioun,
Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun
Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo, in his kynde.
For, God it woot, men may wel often fynde
A lordes sone do shame and vileynye . . . .
(III, 1146-51)

And so, "gentilnesse" is neither a gift of Fortune nor a gift of Nature, but it is, as the Wife concludes, a gift of Grace:

Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone,
Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace;
It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.
(III, 1162-64)

This, then, from the mouth of the Loathly Lady—a surrogate for the Wife of Bath, who also aspires to a magical transformation and to "gentilnesse."

The Friar's Tale and The Summoner's Tale

The Friar-Summoner exchange is one of the most dramatically conceived episodes in The Canterbury Tales. The major relevance of this playlet, for my purposes, is the picture of the two corrupt Churchmen. We know from the General Prologue that both men abuse the gifts of Fortune, Nature, and Grace. The Friar, who should be a vessel of Grace, is a bit of a glutton, he is avaricious, he is a lecher, he can be bribed to easy penance, and,
in general, he violates the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (violations which can themselves be seen as abuses of Fortune, Nature, and Grace—see the whole portrait, I, 208-69). Similarly, the Summoner, who probably has taken Minor Orders, is a glutton and a lecher, and he, too perverts the Church for monetary gain (see I, 623-68).

The tales these two corrupt Churchmen tell on each other merely amplify the picture we have of their depravity. The Friar's Tale shows how a summoner's avarice and his abuse of Church authority—hence, his alliance with Fortune and against Grace—make him an unwitting ally of the Devil. The Summoner gets even twice—once in his Prologue and once in The Summoner's Tale. In the Prologue, he tells the amusing story of the peculiar spot in Hell reserved for friars. The benighted friar of the anecdote, seeing no friars, asks, "Now, sire . . . han freres swich a grace / That noon of hem come to this place?" (III, 1683-84) The friar, in his pride, thinks that all friars necessarily are in a State of Grace, but Satan shows what is, in the Summoner's view, the special "grace" of friars, and to this friar "the develes ers [was] ay in his mynde, / That is his heritage of verray kynde" (1705-06). To the Summoner, then, friars will end in Hell by nature. In the tale, we see more of the depravity of friars. The friar
of the tale abuses the gifts of Grace and allies himself with Fortune. Probably one of his worst abuses is his pretense about seeing the young boy in Heaven. Like Nicholas's pretending to prophesy, the friar pretends to have received the special Grace that would allow this miracle of a Beatific Vision--and he does it, obviously, to enhance his chances of bilking Thomas and his wife.

The significance of the two stories, for my purposes, then, is the warnings against being taken by those corrupt Churchmen who abuse the gifts of Grace and who wrongly ally themselves with Fortune, and a warning against any abuses of our own in a similar vein. But, as usual, even when Chaucer is pointing up the vilest of corruption, the most evil of men, he does it with comic relish.

The Clerk's Tale

The Clerk's Tale is the last of those analyzed in detail by Barbara Bartholomew. Again, Mrs. Bartholomew sees Fortuna and Natura as the motivating forces behind the tale: she sees Walter as "Fortuna's darling" and Grisilde as "Natura's child" (pp. 60 and 63; see pp. 59-64). She shows that the explicit mentions of Nature (IV, 902) and of Fortuna (69, 756, 812, and 898) are additions to Chaucer's sources, and she says that by these additions Chaucer shows great "originality and artistry.
in his use of Fortuna and Natura as literary symbols in the 'Clerk's Tale' because . . . he reflects their traits in the two major characters and thus shapes on the human level a conflict and a triumph . . . which give the poem an added dimension" (pp. 58-59). She notes that Walter is introduced as Fortune's child ("Biloved and drad, thurgh favour of Fortune"--IV, 69; see Bartholomew, p. 60); then, she details his similarity to Fortune--his fickleness, his unpredictability, his unjust tyranny. Mrs. Bartholomew next demonstrates Grisilde's allegiance to and final transcendence of Nature: Grisilde lives simply, loves her father, readily accepts her role as wife and then mother, grieves over her "lost" children but accepts what must be, and so on. Mrs. Bartholomew does suggest at one point that Grisilde is "blessed with the grace of God" (p. 63), but she does not suggest that it is Grace which helps her to endure all her misfortunes and, especially, to accept, almost "unnaturally," the "death" of her children.

I would, in fact, generally put more stress on the part Grace plays in the tale. Grisilde, quite obviously, is in a State of Grace. Her initial description makes clear that she is a paragon of Grace: she has "vertuous beautee" and no "likerous lust"; she is moderate and not slothful; she has a mature and steadfast heart; she honors
her father; she is satisfied with a simple sufficiency (see 11. 211-31). The similarities to Virginia are obvious (11. 215-17, which, according to Robinson, are Chaucer's addition, make the parallel closer). If this were not enough, the "Annunciation Scene" (11. 274-94) reveals a close parallel between Grisilde and the Virgin. A later mention of the "oxe-stalle" discloses a connection between the Virgin and the idea of Grace--see 11. 393-99. What seems fairly obvious to me (but not to Mrs. Bartholomew) is that it is Grisilde's State of Grace that allows her to overcome Walter's (or Fortune's) capriciousness and to accept and finally overcome the loss of her own children. She, like Constance, has the gift of Grace that allows her to suffer spiritual travail.

Consequently, the real moral of the tale is not the Envoy (though the Clerk does make a second point here), but it is instead the point the Clerk makes before the Envoy (see 11. 1142-62): every man, whatever his degree, should be patient in adversity, as Grisilde was; if she could have been so patient to a mortal man, then certainly we ought to be able to accept whatever God has in store for us; we must accept whatever comes and be true to God, since we do not understand why we have misfortunes--but all is for the best. We must, that is, persevere in Grace, no matter what Fortune throws at us or what Nature
urges us to do—we must stick to the higher goal.

The Merchant's Tale

The story of January and May is a kind of parody of The Clerk's Tale: both tales open with a lord considering with counsellors his possible marriage, but then, in The Merchant's Tale it is the wife who tests the husband with her indiscretions—or, one could say, the husband tests with his jealousy the wife's ability to be discreet. In any case, the tale demonstrates abuses of all three kinds of gifts.

One can say that January, like Walter, is Fortune's darling. Like Walter, he is a rich lord of Italy ("he lyved in greet prosperitee"—IV, 1247) and is allied against Nature and Grace. He recognizes that all his goods are Fortune's gifts but sees a wife as God's gift:

A wyf is Goddes yifte verraily;
Alle othere manere yiftes hardly,
As londes, rentes, pasture, or commune,
Or moebles, alle been yiftes of Fortune,
That passen as a shadwe upon a wal.

(IV, 1311-15)

Here we see the spiritual blindness that foreshadows his later physical blindness: he sees as God's gift the wife he wants to satisfy his lust (but his lust is actually a deadly sin), and he overlooks the gifts of Nature altogether, indicative of his overt abuse of Nature. The symbolism of January's blindness (like that of Fortune herself) and the "unfruitful" tree make even clearer his association with
Fortune. May, on the other hand, is Nature's darling: she is young and beautiful, and January (in his blindness) associates her animal beauty with virtue (see 11. 1577-1610)—an association we later find unjustified. But January—like the carpenter of The Miller's Tale, the Reeve, and the Wife of Bath—commits a sin against Nature by marrying one so young; that is, it is not according to Nature's plan for an older person to marry a younger, primarily, I suppose, because Nature is concerned with continuing the line and the urgings one feels are to further that goal.57

The tale, then, shows what happens to a man allied to Fortune and abusing Nature and God. January, Fortune's minion, marries May, one of Nature's lesser creatures, and merely by the kind of union, he abuses Nature. Nature, in her urgings of May, gets even while he is supposedly blind, but in his real (spiritual) blindness he accepts May's explanation and accepts his cuckoldry.

The Prioress's Tale

The Prioress's Tale, unlike any of the tales we have seen, deals almost exclusively with the gifts of Grace. The tale is a Miracle of the Virgin, and, as such, it presents an exposition of the Grace that comes through the mediation on Our Lady. It is, consequently, appropriate to the Lady Prioress.
Before the tale itself opens, the Prioress sings a hymn, the bulk of which is addressed to the Virgin, who is described in terms much like those we have seen used for Virginia, Constance, and Grisilde, and who was, of course, Maria plena gratia. The young boy, the "litel clergeon," of the tale knows his Ave Maria well (see VII, 502-08), and "On Cristes mooder set was his entente" (550). He is, through his mediation on the Virgin, undoubtedly in a State of Grace. While singing her praise (O Alma Redemptoris Mater), walking through a Jewish ghetto, he is murdered by Jews. His mother is able to find him because

... Jhesu, of his grace,
Yaf in hir thoght, inwith a litel space,
That in that place after hir sone she cryde,
Where he was casten in a pit bisyde.

(VII, 603-06)

But she is also aided in her search by the miracle of the dead boy's continuing to sing his Alma Redemptoris. The dead boy explains to a monk how he is able to overcome Nature:

"My throte is kut unto my nokke boon,"
Seyde this child, "and, as by wey of kynde,
I sholde have dyed, ye, longe tyme agon.
But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde,
Wil that his glorie laste and be in mynde,
And for the worship of his Mudder deere
Yet may I synge O Alma loude and cleere. . . ."

(649-55)

Then he proceeds to explain how the Virgin performed this miracle because he loved "This welle of mercy" (see 11.
656-69). The Lady Prioress ends the tale asking mercy for all "For reverence of his mooer Marie" (690).

The Tale of Melibee

After his Sir Thopas is so ill-received, Chaucer the Pilgrim launches into the long, didactic prose tale of Melibeus and Dame Prudence. Dame Prudence is a very orthodox teacher. She tells Melibeus that "with the grace of God" his daughter will recover (VII, 981) and urges the Boethian patience in adversity: "Wherfore us oghte, as wel in the deeth of oure children as in the los of oure othere goodes temporels, have pacience" (998) -- advice similar to that offered in the tales of Grisilde and of Constance. At one point, quoting Cicero, she suggests that the gifts of Grace are greater than the gifts of Nature:

And Tullius seith that 'grete thynges ne been nat ay accompliced by strength, ne by delivernes of body, but by good conseil, by auctoritee of persons, and by science; the whiche thre thynges ne been nat fieble by age, but certes they enforcen and encreescen day by day.'

(1165--note similarity in diction of italicized parts to Parson's Tale)

In fact, she is almost Augustinian about the perfection of Nature by Grace: "For ther nys no creature so good that hym ne wanteth somwhat of the perfeccioun of God, that is his makere" (1080).
In addition, she has a good deal to say about the gifts of Fortune and especially how they tend to move one away from a love of God:

Thou hast ydronke so muchel hony of sweete temporeel riches, and delices and honoure of this world, that thou art dronken, and hast forgeten Jhesu Crist thy creatour. . . . And peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath turned awey fro thee his face and eeries of misericorde;/ and also he hath suffred that thou hast been punysshed in the manere that thou hast ytrespassed./ Thou hast doon synne agayn oure Lord Crist;/ for certes, the three enimys of mankynde, that is to seyn, the fleshe, the feend, and the world,/ thou hast suffred hem entre in to thyn herte wilfully by the wyndowes of thy body,/ and hast nat defended thyself suffisantly agayns hire assautes and hire temptaciouns . . . .

Here we encounter not merely the notion that the gifts of Fortune make one forget Christ (again, in diction that echoes The Parson's Tale), but we also see the notion of Fortune as a scourge of God (as we have seen in Alain—see above, p. 43), the idea that God punishes with misfortunes. And, finally, we find that Melibeus has sinned by being tempted by the world, the flesh, and the devil (or, he sins against Fortune, Nature, and Grace). Dame Prudence has a good deal more to say but what she says of the goods of the world applies to both the gifts of Fortune and of Nature: "... ye sholde enforce yow to have pacience,/ considerynge that the tribulaciouns of this world but litel while endure" (1507-08). And in one
of her final pieces of advice, she says,

"I conseille yow," quod she, "aboven alle thynge, that ye make pees bitwene God and yow;/ and beth reconsoned into hym and to his grace.

(1714-15)

A fitting way to end her counsel--after showing him how to remedy his attitude toward the gifts of Fortune and Nature, she recommends that he be "reconsiled" to God and His Grace.

The Monk's Tale

The Monk's Tale is a good sequel to The Tale of Melibee, for it picks up and develops the topic of the gifts of Fortune. Indeed, there has never been any doubt about what this tale is about, and I need not detain myself long with it.

The tale is a series of tragedies, but tragedies based upon the definition the Monk gives in his Prologue:

Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,  
As olde bookes maken us memorie,  
Of hym that stood in greet presperitee,  
And is yfallen out of heigh degree  
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.

(VII, 1973-77)

And in the first stanza of the tale, the Monk reveals that it is Fortune who causes this fall, and he warns against faith in "blynde prosperitee" (1997). As Edward M. Socola suggests, there is within the tale a developing notion of Fortune and her role in the fall of great men, and at times, there is the suggestion that one's fall is
at least in part dependent upon one's actions. 58

I would suggest also that there is a hint that the fall Fortune causes is at times a fall from Grace. The tragedy of Lucifer (1999-2006), although it does not come from Fortune (see 1. 2001), is clearly a fall from Grace and is a type for many later falls, including Adam's. But the conclusion to the tale makes the main point:

Tragediœs noon oother maner thyng
Ne kan in syngyng crie ne biwaille
But that Fortune alwey wole assaille
With unwar strook the regnes that been proude;
For whan men trusteth hire, thanne wol she faille,
And covere hire brighte face with a clowde.

Here, though the concentration is on Fortune, is a message that is a variant of that in The Physician's Tale and The Pardoner's Tale.

The Nun's Priest's Tale

The Nun's Priest's Tale is a nice balance to The Monk's Tale in many ways: its lightness contrasts with the heavy seriousness of its predecessor; it parodies the kind of learning the Monk displays; it, too, has something to say about Fortune, as well as about Nature and Grace. I have already discussed the passage on Foreknowledge and Free Will, but there is more.

As Curry shows, the debate between Chauntecleer and Pertelote over the nature of Chauntecleer's dream concerns whether the dream is a somnium naturale or a somnium
What this amounts to is a debate about whether his dream is from natural or heavenly origins, whether it is a gift of Nature or a gift of Grace. And the narrator gives us the answer:

O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe
That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes
That thilke day was perilous to thee.

(VII, 3230-33)

If this were not conclusive enough, the dream turns out, after all, to be true!

But Fortune has her role, too. After Chauntecleer is captured, we are given this warning:

Now, goode men, I prey yow herkneth alle:
Lo, how Fortune turneth sodeynly
The hope and pryde eek of hir enomy!

(3402-04)

We have, before this, seen Chauntecleer's "pride [that] goeth before a fall" (see especially 11. 3176-85) and have thus seen him set up for the turning of Fortune's wheel. He is in a position much like Nero's in The Monk's Tale:

Now fil it so that Fortune listeth no lenger.
The hye pryde of Nero to cherice,
For though that he were strong, yet was she strenger.
She thoughte thus, "By God! I am to nyce
to sette a man that if fulfield of vice
In heigh degree, and emperour hym calle.
By God! out of his sete I wol him trice;
When he leest weneth, sonnest shal he falle."

(VII, 2519-26)

It is possible, then, to see his pride (and the blindness it causes---cf. The Pardoner's Tale) as the cause of
Chauntecleer's fall.

Is all this too serious for the magnificently funny Nun's Priest's Tale? The narrator answers, "Take the moralitee . . . . Take the fruyt, and let the chaf be stille" (3440-43). The lesson—or, at least, a lesson—of the tale might well be that the blindness which results from pride and from misdirected love can bring us down. As Chauntecleer says,

... he that wynketh, when he sholde see,
Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee!
(3431-32)

The Second Nun's Tale

The tale of St. Cecelia—clearly a Saint's legend—is another of those tales of a saintly woman in a State of Grace, a tale of the gifts of Grace. Before the tale itself opens, the Second Nun invokes the aid of Mary—"thou, that art so fair and ful of grace" (VIII, 67). The opening stanza of the tale discloses immediately the State of Grace of Cecelia:

This mayden bright Cecelie, as hir lif seith,
Was comen of Romayns, and of noble kynde,
And from hir cradel up fostred in the feith
Of Crist, and bar his gospel in hir mynde.
She nevere cessed, as I writen fynde,
Of hir preyere, and God to love and drede,
Bisekynge hym to kepe hir maydenhede.
(120-26)

Like Virginia, she was properly nurtured, and she is resolved to persevere in her virgin state.
After she is betrothed, she prays to remain a virgin, and an angel is sent to guard her. She tells her husband of the angel and tells him that he too can see it if he is baptized. Thus, through the gratia gratis data of Cecelia, Valerian is brought to God. After he is given the Grace to see the angel, he promises to preserve her virginity, but he wants the same Sanctifying Grace he now has for his brother:

"I have a brother . . .
That in this world I love no man so.
I pray you that my brother may have grace
To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place."

(235-38)

When the brother (Tiburce) balks at going to see Urban (as Valerian had done) because of the danger involved, Cecelia says,

"Men myghten dreden wel and skilfully
This lyf to lese, myn owene deere brother,
If this were lyvyng oonly and noon oother.

"But ther is bettre lif in oother place,
That nevere shal be lost, ne drede thee noght,
Which Goddes Sone us tolde thurgh his grace.
That Fadres Sone hath alle thyng ywroght,
And al that wroght is with a skilful thought,
The Goost, that fro the Fader gan procede,
Hath sowled hem, withouten any drede.

By word and by miracle heigh Goddes Sone,
Whan he was in this world, declared heere
That ther was oother lyf ther men may won."  

(320-32)

Here we see an absolutely orthodox doctrine of Grace, and shortly after this Cecelia (with the aid of the gratia gratis data) is able to bring about the conversion of
Tiburce, though at the hands of Urban, so that

... after this, Tiburce gat swich grace
That every day he saugh, in tyme and space,
The aungel of God; and every maner Boone
That he God axed, it was sped ful soone.

(354057)

In addition to the two species of gratia gratum faciens, the Sanctifying Grace that assures her eternal life and the Actual Grace that allows her to perform good works, and in addition to the gratia gratis data that allows her to aid in the conversion of others, Cecelia is given the special Efficacious Grace to persevere in Grace, in spite of the tortures she must endure. She is also awarded a special Grace to perform a miracle similar to that of the "litel clergeon": after her beheading she is allowed three days to commend to Urban the souls of those she converted (see 11. 540-46). Hence, we get a picture not only of what Grace "normally" can do but of what it can allow in those unusual situations we call miracles.
CONCLUSION

What I have attempted to do in this essay is to survey the background of Fortune, Nature, and Grace; to show how the three are often treated together or how a treatment of one often implies attitudes toward the others; to show how the three together as a theme can shed some light on Fragment VI, its tales and tellers; and to suggest that the theme or aspects of the theme are treated in most of The Canterbury Tales.

Part I of this essay is not a complete picture of the background of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, by any means, but it is a relatively full survey of the most pertinent figures and works in the background of the three concepts. In addition, I have given some justification for treating the three together as a medieval topos. More work in this area--especially with Donald Howard's "three temptations" and possibly with the triple monastic vow--might reveal (would reveal, I think) even greater justification.

In the first three chapters of Part II, I have shown, conclusively I think, that Fragment VI is a development of the theme of the gifts of Fortune, Nature, and Grace. Reading the tales in this light not only shows
closer connections between the tales than have hitherto been seen but also adds one more dimension to our understanding of the two tales. And, too, we can see that the thematic reading in some ways amplifies our understanding of the two tellers.

In the last chapter, I have covered most of the remaining tales and have shown that the ones I have dealt with can be seen as examinations of the three kinds of gifts or as examinations of one or two of the kinds of gifts or as analyses of a related issue like "gentelless." Not in every case, surely, was the theme of Fortune, Nature, and Grace the major issue, but I have given enough to suggest that, overall, the subject of Fortune, Nature, and Grace was one of Chaucer's major concerns.

In conclusion, I wish to return to a point I made in the beginning. I do not mean to propose in this essay that the theme I am examining is the only theme or the only way to pull together The Canterbury Tales, but it is one way of reading many of the tales and it is one way of pulling together the bulk of the tales. And so I say to my readers with Chaucer "that if ther be any thyng in it that liketh hem, that therof they thanken our Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al wit and al goodnesse."
NOTES TO PART II

1Ruggiers, _The Art of the Canterbury Tales_, p. 123.

2Bartholomew, _Fortuna and Natura . . ._, Chapter II, pp. 46-57. Future references in this chapter to this work will be given in the text.

3Ruggiers, p. 123; see pp. 12-23.

4See, e.g., Ruggiers, p. 122.

5Lumiansky, _Of Sondry Folk_, p. 200. See below, Chapter VII.

6E.g., Trevor Whittock, in a recent book (A Reading of The Canterbury Tales [Cambridge: University Press, 1968]), finds "the character of the narrator . . . at odds with the character presented in the General Prologue" (p. 181). Whittock echoes many of the earlier commentators. Robinson (p. 727) frankly admits to finding the situation "puzzling." An unusual new view is offered by Huling E. Ussery ("The Appropriateness of The Physician's Tale to its Teller," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, 50 [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965], 545-56), who attempts to demonstrate that the Physician was a cleric and that the tale is, therefore, appropriate. I shall return to the tale/teller topic in Chapter VII.


8Roman, 16177-90 (see pp. 342-45 in Robbins for the whole passage, including these lines). Robinson (p. 727) cites this parallel; Richard L. Hoffman ("Pygmalion in the
Physician's Tale," ANQ, 5 [1967], 83-84) develops the similar function both Jean and Chaucer have for the allusion to Pygmalion.

9See Frederick Tupper, "Chaucer's Bed's Head," MLN, 30 (1915), 5-12.

10See Karl Young, "The Maidenly Virtues of Chaucer's Virginia," Speculum, 16 (1941), 340-49.

11Robinson, pp. 727-28; Shannon, in Sources and Analogues, p. 399n.


14Cf. Roman (Robbins, p. 342): "But Art's so naked and devoid of skill / That he can never bring a thing to life / Or make it seem that it is natural."


16As Robinson says (p. 861), "The ultimate source of both passages [Gentilesse and The Wife of Bath's Tale] is Boethius, iii, pr. 6, and m. 6," but, he notes, Chaucer may have drawn the discussion from Dante's Convivio (see Robinson, pp. 704 and 861). A similar idea also appears in Alain's Complaint (Moffat, p. 69) and the Roman (Robbins, pp. 395-400). On the relationship between Gentilesse and The Wife of Bath's Tale, on the one hand, and The Parson's Tale, on the other, cf. Garland Ethel, "Chaucer's Worst Shrowe: the Pardoner," MLQ, 20 (1959), 211-27: "The source of Gentilesse and its parallel in The Wife of Bath's Tale (1109-64) are commonly attributed to Seneca, Boethius, and Dante, but the doctrinal substance is clearly stated in the Parson's Tale [460-69]" (p. 214). I shall return to this subject of "gentilesse" when I deal with The Wife of Bath's Tale and other relevant tales. (I have here [and elsewhere below] italicized words in Chaucer's passages; generally in succeeding passages I shall italicize for emphasis without noting that I have done so.)

The text used throughout for The Holy Bible . . . , is the "Authorized King James Version" (Cleveland: World Publishing, n.d.). In citing Biblical passages in the text I shall ignore italics and pronunciation guides used in this edition.

Salu, pp. 46 and 51.


Miller, pp. 226, 230, and 231.

See Garland Ethel, op. cit., on "Chaucer's Worste Shrewe."


Stockton, p. 47; see also pp. 53 and 57. Cf. D.W. Robertson, Preface, p. 270: "... the pardoners vice in recognizing the truth but deliberately abusing it is presumption, one of two aspects of the Sin against the Holy Spirit." See also the passage by Miller (above).


Spearing, p. 41.

Spearing, pp. 42-43.

31 Toole, p. 38.
32 Toole, pp. 38-39.
33 Toole, p. 40.


35 See X, 391-406, and Ethel, pp. 221-22.


37 Cf., e.g., Boethius, Consolation, II, pr. 5 (Stewart and Rand, p. 199). Also see Complaint, pp. 63-69; Anti-claudian, pp. 159-60; Pope Innocent, p. 41 (above, p. 101); and St. Thomas, quoted in Gilson, History, p. 381 (above, p. 105). True felicity, as Jean de Meun makes clear, lies in simple sufficiency (see Robbins, p. 108). See also Ancrene Riwle, pp. 90-91 and 127-28.

38 See Spearing, pp. 8-9.

39 Cf. Jean de Meun (Robbins, p. 110--italics mine) on preachers who preach "to gain favor, honor, wealth":

... such priests
Are never profitable to themselves
Whatever good they may for others do;
For evil purpose, when it fails its end,
May yet produce a sermon that does good.
The hearers may a good example take
The while Vainglory damns the sermoner.

40 Robertson, Preface, p. 333. For a discussion of the three temptations, see Donald R. Howard, The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World (Princeton: University Press, 1966). After studying Howard's book, I am convinced that his triple temptation schema (world, flesh, and devil; or, avarice, gluttony, and vainglory; or, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life) can be seen as approximately parallel to the abuses of Fortune, Nature, and Grace. I have not, however, pursued in this essay the full import of this idea.
41 See Robinson, p. 730, and also see Howard trans. of Innocent, pp. 45-48.

42 Spearing, p. 42.


44 See, e.g., Spearing, p. 39.

45 Cornog, pp. 144 and 139; italics mine.

46 Spearing, pp. 43-44.

47 Cf. this to The Physician's Tale, 130-32, where Apius's plan comes from a similar source: "Anon the feend into his herte ran, / And taughte hym sodeynly that he by slyghte / The mayden to his purpos wynn myghte."

48 See Robinson, p. 11.

49 Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951). Citations to this work will be given in the text.

50 Page references to this previously cited work will be given in the text.


52 I shall follow, except for the omissions, the order of the Ellesmere MS., the order Robinson uses in his edition. The tales not discussed in this chapter are the following: The Reeve's Tale, The Cook's Tale, The Squire's Tale, The Franklin's Tale (although it does deal with "gentillesse"), The Shipman's Tale, Sir Thopas, The Canon's Yeoman's Tale, The Manciple's Tale, and The Parson's Tale, which is, certainly, relevant but already thoroughly discussed.


54 See Fortuna and Natura . . . , pp. 73-107. Again, citations will be given in the text.

55 Ibid., pp. 58-72. Citations will be given in the text.
I am heavily indebted for my view of Grisilde to Francis L. Utley, whose essay "The Five Genres of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale" has been submitted for a new anthology edited by Edward Reiss.


APPENDIX

CHAUCER'S PARDONER'S TALE AND SOME OF ITS
ANALOGUES: SECTION I

Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale has generally been assumed to have as its ultimate source an oriental folktale. The tale is Type 763 in Aarne-Thompson (The Types of the Folk-tale, Helsinki, 1964), and it has many analogues, including a number of oriental ones. I have gathered together some of these analogues in order to do a comparative study, placing the Pardoner's Tale into a matrix composed of these nineteen analogues. (The analogues that I have drawn from Originals and Analogues or from Sources and Analogues are listed in Section II, but the tales themselves have not been appended. Section III contains those tales which are not so readily available.)

Since the time between Chaucer's writing of the Pardoner's Tale and the recording dates of many of the analogues is generally great and since there is no evidence to suggest what Chaucer's exact source was, establishing a genetic relationship between the tale and any of its analogues is not my purpose. What I hope to suggest--by
showing the similarities in plot elements (and in theme) between the Pardoner's Tale and its analogues—is the likelihood of Chaucer's using a folktale source for most of the plot elements of the Pardoner's Tale, and more importantly I hope also to show that in spite of this literary borrowing Chaucer made significant additions to his source.

The basic plot structure—the finding of a treasure by some men (usually three), the sending of one man (or some men) for sustenance, the murdering of the man (or men) sent, and the subsequent poisoning of the others—is present in all of the tales examined here. There are, however, some interesting variations. The "riotoures thre" of Chaucer's tale are often three robbers (CI 1, CI 2, RP 1, AK 1, RI 1, II 1, and AT 1 [robbers in the latter two but five hundred of them!])—see Sections II and III for identifications), three malefactors (RI 3), or three murderers (GG 1); but they may be of a more innocuous sort (three sisters in Af 1, three travelers in Af 2, four fortune seekers in IK 1, three men in SA 1, a merchant but "two sharpers" in SA 2 [cf. a businessman and "two deceitful companions" in SJ 1], and three merchants in Lat 1). Or the treasure-finders may appear to be basically good: they may be men associated with or disciples of a wise man—a Wizard in RI 2 or Christ in Lat 2 and in IrP 1. In
these latter analogues, the wise man delivers a warning about the treasure. In some of the other tales, the warning may come from another source--a toad and an old woman in Af 1; a small man in CI 2 (though here the warning is about the poisoned bread); a hermit in RI 1, Lat 1, GG 1, and RI 3 (here it is the hermit St. Anthony); and a Bodhisattva in II 1. In some cases this or a similar figure moralizes after the murders--an old man (who tells the story) in AK 1; the hermit of Lat 1; Jesus in Lat 2, IrP 1, and SA 1; an angel in RI 3 and GG 1; and the Bodhisattva in II 1. All of these figures are probably analogous to the Old Man in Chaucer's tale. (There are also parallels to the Old Man in the first elegy of Maximian and possibly in the Wandering Jew legend,² and further research on Aarne-Thompson Type 845 ["The Old Man and Death. Weary old man wishes for death...."] might reveal other analogues.)

In some of the analogues, those involved come upon the treasure by accident, but in some (RI 1, RI 2, Lat 1, GG 1, II 1, and IrP 1), the treasure-finders are directed to the treasure (as the Old Man directs the three rioters in Chaucer's tale). In two of these (RI 1 and GG 1), the treasure is called "death" before it is found, and in one (Lat 1), the treasure is called "death" after the murders (cf. the Old Man who tells the three rioters where to
find Death, 11. 760-763). The motif of the association of the gold with a tree is present in three of the analogues (IK 1, GG 1, and RP 1--the latter two being fairly close parallels).

In almost all the analogues involving three people, one is sent away, usually for food, but his leaving is also frequently associated with bearing away the money (cf. 11. 784-797 in the Pardoner's Tale). In three of the analogues (RI 3, GG 1, and CI 1), the three men cast lots to see who will go (cf. 11. 793-796 and 802-804). In two of the tales (RP 1 and Af 1), the youngest of the three is sent (cf. 1. 804). Only in RI 3 is there an apothecary or the mention of rats (cf. 11. 852-854), but in Af 1 the youngest sister buys poison from a Boschi. Frequently, the food brought back is bread and wine, but only in AK 1 and CI 1 is the wine alone poisoned (cf. 11. 869-878).

In addition to these similarities in plot, Chaucer's stated theme is similar to that of some of the analogues. The Pardoner announces the text for his exemplum in line 334 of his Prologue: "Radix malorum est Cupiditas." A similar theme occurs in RI 2, RI 3, Lat 2, RP 1, and GG 1. In RI 3, the Spirit of Avarice places the mound of gold in the way of St. Anthony; at the end of the play, the angel warns of the evils of Avarice. In RI 2 are the
words, radice malorum cupiditate, and in GG 1 are the words, geicz ist ein wurczl aller süent. Thus, it seems likely that the original tale behind Chaucer must have had the various plot elements above, but it might also have had the same theme.

But, in spite of the borrowed theme and plot, what Chaucer has done with these borrowings is admirable. The adaptation of the theme is obviously a good ironic commentary on the character of the Pardoner (see above, Chapters VI and VII), and Chaucer builds into his plot other ironic commentaries as well. Since the tale is an exemplum, the addition of the three short sermons (on gluttony, gambling, and swearing), which appear in none of the analogues, is not out of place, as I have suggested; and, in fact, the addition sets up some of the plot elements, gives some additional characterization, and allows further ironic commentary on the nature of the Pardoner and the rioters. Since "cupidity is the root of all evils," this discussion of the three sins is not at all out of place, and since the three men are to die in the tale, Chaucer must establish that the three are thoroughly despicable. And so he adds the three homilies.

The three sermons are also connected to some of the ironies that Chaucer inserted into the existing plot of the tale. For instance, the sermon on gluttony (and
especially on the element of drunkenness) and the setting of the opening of the tale in a tavern are good ironic commentaries on the setting in which the Pardoner speaks at the end of his Introduction (see 11. 321-328). The sermon on gambling is naturally associated with the Pardoner's ironic theme, and it is connected with the Pardoner's own reliance on Fortune even though he shows in his tale how wrong such a reliance is. (He cannot rely on Nature who has already so mistreated him, as we have seen, and his vicious nature precludes any reliance on the gifts of Grace.) The sermon on swearing and the profane and blasphemous nature of the three rioters are good ironic commentaries on the Pardoner's own profanities and blasphemies in his Introduction and Prologue.

But the ultimate irony of the tale is that which Chaucer inserts into the story itself. Possibly struck by the incongruity of this unholy trinity and some of their actions, Chaucer added one element that gives an ironic treatment to the whole story. A study of the analogues suggests that Chaucer added the determination on the part of the three rioters to slay Death. (When one considers this in light of the fact that the tale involves three men, of the tree, which lies "up this croked wey"--1. 761, and of the death of the youngest of the three after he has prepared bread and wine for his
comrades, he can hardly miss the black irony of this tale: it is indeed an unholy trinity, they do die in their attempt to slay Death even though Death does not die, the tree becomes the Tree of Death, and the wine of this Communion is poisoned.) It is this larger irony, I believe, which gives the tale the powerful effect it has, and it is the direct result of one of Chaucer's almost certain additions to his folktale source.

I am not suggesting that one must allegorize the **Pardoner's Tale**: I think the three rioters are men. But I do believe that the ironic undertones of this tale--especially considering the probability of Chaucer's addition to his source--can hardly be accidental or superimposed by an overly moralistic reader. Besides, the tale is an exemplum. In any case, the antichrist character of this unholy trinity, like so much of the tale, is a direct commentary on the nature of the Pardoner--the man who is so ready to have even these forewarned pilgrims (even in jest) kiss his relics and buy his pardons, the man who so frankly admits,

Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.

(427-428)

We can see, therefore, that Chaucer's probable additions to his source--the three sermons (and their development within the tale) and the resolution of the rioters to slay death--are significant additions indeed.
The sermons allow Chaucer to have the Pardoner deliver a sermon on more than just the sin of his announced theme, to give some justification for the inclusion of some of his borrowed plot elements, and to characterize the three rioters more fully. Through the sermons, the character of the rioters, and the irony caused by the slaying of Death motif, Chaucer can more fully develop his ironic comments on the nature of the Pardoner.

NOTES TO APPENDIX

1Robinson, p. 729. But see H.S. Canby, "Some Comments on the Sources of Chaucer's 'Pardoner's Tale'" (MP, 2 [1905], 477-487), for a full discussion of how the tale may have reached Chaucer from the East through a probable Italian source.

2See full discussion in Bryan and Dempster, but also see N.S. Bushnell, "The Wandering Jew and the Pardoner's Tale, SP, 28 (1931), 450-460.

3See W.M. Hart, "'The Pardoner's Tale' and 'Der Dot im Stock'" (MP, 9 [1911], 1, pp. 17-22) for a thorough discussion of the similarities between the PT and GG 1.

4In SA 2 and SJ 1, the good merchant survives.
The following analogues are in Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales by William F. Bryan and G. Dempster (Reprinted, New York, 1958), pp. 417-436:

RI 1 (Lit.)--Italian novella, printed as No. 82 in Borghini's 1572 Libro di novelle e di bel parlar gentile.

RI 2 (Lit.)--Italian novella, printed as N. 42 in the Novellae of Morlinus (Naples, ca. 1520).

Lat 1 (Lit.)--Latin exemplum, De tribus sociis qui thesarahum invenerunt--exemplum de avaricia (Prague, 1406).

Lat 2 (Lit.)--Latin exemplum, British Museum Add. MS 27336, No. 184 (early fifteenth century).

RI 3 (Lit.)--Italian play, Reppresentazione di Sant' Antonio (from Sacre rappresentazioni dei secoli xiv, xv, e xvi--this one probably fifteenth century).

GG 1 (Lit.)--German play, Der Dot im Stock by Hans Sachs (ca. 1554-1556).

The following analogues are in Originals and Analogues of some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales by F.J. Furnivall and Edmund Brock, 2nd Series, 6 (London: Chaucer Society, n.d.), pp. 418-432:

II 1--Buddhist tale (also in E.B. Cowell's Jātaka, I, 121-124).

IrP 1--Persian tale (ca. twelfth century).

SA 1--Arabian tale (from Breslau ed. of 1001 Nights).
SA 2--Arabian tale (from Burton's ed. of Nights).

IK 1--Kashmiri tale (also in J.H. Knowles' Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings, pp. 45-46).

AT 1--Tibetan tale.

(RI 1 and RI 2 are also in Originals and Analogues, pp. 132-134.)
AK 1--Korean tale from Zong In-Sob's *Folk Tales from Korea* (London, 1952), p. 186:

One day an old man said to his grandson, 'Once upon a time three corpses lay on a mountain-side, and beside them were a large sum of money and a wine-bottle. Can you tell me why?'

'No, I don't know,' replied the boy.

Then the old man explained. 'The three corpses were three thieves,' he said. 'They had stolen the money and came to the mountain to share it out. Before they did so they sent one of their number to a village to buy wine, so that they might drink to celebrate their success. But while he was away the other two thieves decided to kill him when he returned, so that the money might be divided among two instead of three. So when their companion came back with the wine they fell upon him and killed him. Then they drank the wine their companion had brought, and immediately they too died. The thief who had been sent to the wine-shop had also decided to kill his companions so that he might take the whole of the spoils, and so had put poison in the wine. Thus three corpses, money, and a wine bottle were left lying on the mountain-side. You understand now?'

The old man's grandson thought it was a good story and smiled.


Three thieves were waiting for the rain to be over under a tree, when one of them noticed one of the sides of a box sticking out of the ground. As fast as they could, they started digging, and they took this box full of golden coins out of the
ground. They were extremely happy.

'Let's divide it into three equal parts,' said one.

"I want the biggest part because I discovered it,' said the other.

After a lot of arguments, they agreed on the division. The oldest man said that it was better for the youngest to go get a good beast of burden with two sacks on its back to carry away the money. In the meantime, the other reminded them that they were all hungry and that the youngest should bring something for them to eat. They gave him money, and the young man went on his way. The two who stayed agreed upon killing the third one and having his part for themselves. When the young man arrived with the horse, they stabbed him to death.

'Let's load the money as fast as we can.'

As soon as one of the thieves bent over to take the money from the box, the other stabbed him in the back and killed him in a minute. He kept all the money for himself. He was tired and hungry. He went to the bags on the horse and found roasted beef, wheat, sugar cane candy, and a bottle of wine. The thief ate and drank. As soon as he finished swallowing, his vision grew dark, and he fell dead on the ground. The youngest thief had poisoned the drink, so that he could have the money all for himself. Because of the ambition (or avarice), no one enjoyed the gold in the box.


There were three oobbers living in a thick wood once upon a time. It happened one day that they found a hoard (of hidden treasure). They were delighted and took the treasure home with them. They started to argue when they reached home, for it was hard to divide the treasure to satisfy them all. At last they shared it among them.

Then they decided to have a feast. One of them would have to go to the town for food and drink for the feast. So they cast lots as to who would go. The robber on whom the lot fell threw a sack over his back and set off to get the delicacies.

The pair that remained behind sat near the fire, chatting. They were talking about the treasure.
They were lucky, they said, to get it--such a fine big hoard; but it wasn't so big when it had to be divided among three--if it were shared between two, it wouldn't be so small, but among three!--it wasn't worth much!

"If there were only the pair of us, we would each have something worthwhile," said one of them.

"That's true," said the second. "How could we lay hands on the other share, do you think?"

"What other share?"

"The share that our friend who went off got."

"Oh, well, there's only one way to get that, to my thinking--put our friend out of the way."

It was decided to kill the poor man who had gone to fetch the delicacies, when he came back.

But, along the road, he was thinking too on his way to the town. He knew that when the hoard would be divided among three, it would not be worth so much, but if it fell to one person only! And what was to stop that? By heavens, he thought of a plan. He bought all kinds of food and drink first. When he had that done, he bought some poison and set out for home. On the way home, he mixed the poison and the drink and arrived home, singing at the top of his voice.

No sooner was he in the camp in the middle of the wood, however, than he was taken hold of, tied up and thrown into a pool of water. Then the other pair started to have the feast. They ate and drank their seven fills. Then they went to sleep--and it was the easy everlasting sleep they had!


There were three robbers one time, and every day two of them were telling the third that they would kill him. One day when they were going through a wood, they met a rich man. They killed him and then they had all the money for themselves. A few days later they were in the wood, and two of them told the third to go and bring them bread, wherever he would get it. He went off, and when he was going along the road, a small man jumped out from behind
the fence. He gave bread to the robber and told him, whatever happened, not to eat any bit of it. The robber returned home, and he wasn't five minutes at home when the other pair killed him. They ate the bread then and died a few minutes after, for there was poison in the bread.

Af 1--African tale from Western Sudan; summarized in May A. Klipple, African Folk Tales with Foreign Analogues, unpub. diss. (Indiana University, 1938), p. 554:

Three sisters set out to go to a hill to look for gold. They meet a toad which greets them and tells them that if they take gold from the hill, they will die. They meet an old woman who greets them and also warns them about the gold. The three sisters disregard the warnings, go to the hill, and fill their baskets with gold. The older sisters send the youngest sister to buy food. When the youngest leaves, they plan to kill her on her return and divide her gold between them. As the youngest is going for food, she plans to poison her sisters and to take all their gold for herself. She buys poison of a Boschi, poisons the food for her sisters, and returns. The sisters waylay her, kill her, eat the poisoned food, and die.

Af 2--African tale; summarized in Klipple (above), p. 555:

Three travelers find a treasure on their way. One is sent to look for food. He decides to poison the food in order to get all the treasure. The two who remain plot to kill the third on his return and do so. They eat the food and die. The treasure remains there.

SJ 1--Jewish tale from M.J. Der Born Judas bin Gorion, Legenden, Märchen, und Erzählungen (Leipzig, 1918 ff.), IV, 41-43:

A businessman, who carried much money with him, went with his wares from city to city, from land to land, until he arrived at a place in which many travelers had just arrived. Two deceitful companions became attentive to the merchant, and one said to the
other, "Both of us will visit him in his hut and become friendly with him. Then we will outwit him and seize his gold and silver." And they came to the man's tent, wished him a friendly greeting, conversed with him, and ate and drank with him. Afterwards they left, each one to his own dwelling. Soon, however, the one deceiver said to himself, "Why should I give a share in the booty to my comrade? I will lay a trap for him as well as for the merchant and keep the loot for myself." And he prepared a meal, such as his friend liked, and put spices and poison in it. He placed it on the table cheerfully and in high spirits and thought to himself, "Now my comrade will come, eat the food, and die." However, what he had intended for his friend his friend had intended for him, and he (i.e., the friend) proceeded in the same way. He (the friend) went to call his companion to a meal, but did not come across him. However, he found a covered table and on it a prepared course. Since he was hungry, he tested what was in the dish and soon went away. On the way, however, he became sick and died from the poison that he had eaten. The first man had proceeded in the same way to meet the companion and the foreign merchant in order to kill them both. He came to his friend and saw a meal prepared in the hut; he ate from it, without suspecting that this would be his death. Thereupon he got up to look for his absent companion, and as he came to the spot at which his friend had died, he fell down dead. Thus, one and the same end overtook both of them.

The honest businessman, on the other hand, did not want to eat his bread alone and waited for his two companions. When they failed to appear, he went to get them, but found both of them lying dead on the street. Then the heart beat in the brave man. An investigation was made, and it appeared that, on that day, the two creatures had made an attempt on the innocent man's life. However, the evil which they had intended for him had turned back against them, and the merchant remained unhurt and uninjured. Furthermore, the property of the demons was awarded to him.

Thus it fares with him who uses violence against another.

(Trans. by Roger Wallins, Ohio State, 5/67)


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"On Nature and Grace."


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