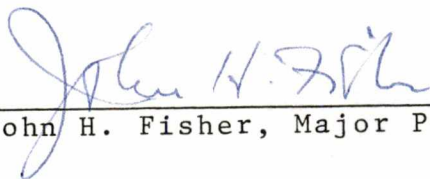
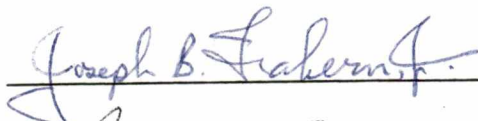
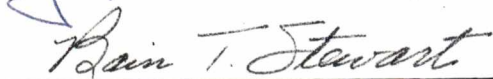


To the Graduate Council:

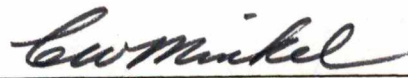
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Joana Preast Simmers entitled "'No Grace, No Remedy': The Moral of the Physician's Tale." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.


John H. Fisher, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


The Graduate School

"NO GRACE, NO REMEDYE": THE MORAL OF THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Joana Preast Simmers

December 1983

ABSTRACT

The Physician's Tale has long presented a critical problem for its apparent juxtaposition to the moral framework suggested by the remainder of the tales in the Canterbury collection. The prevailing mood of Chaucer's poetry is the hope for "Jerusalem celestial" and the sense of God's eternal presence; existence does not end in death, but in the Parson's promise of grace and hope. In contrast, the Physician's Tale presents a tragic world, bleak and pessimistic, a world which offers "no grace . . . no remedye." But, if viewed as a part of the whole, the Physician's Tale affords a sharper picture of the moral necessity which is prevalent in the other tales; it offers a contrast between justice and the absence of all fairness, between hope and the depths of despair. Beside the other tales, then, the Physician's Tale becomes a study in paradox. But it is this very paradox that facilitates a better understanding of the function of justice and grace in the other tales of the collection. It is the virtue of the Physician's Tale that in the antithesis of the tale to its counterparts we achieve a richer appreciation of the whole of the Canterbury Tales.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE, ITS CHARACTERS, AND ITS MORALS.....	10
II. A MORAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE...	28
III. THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE AND THE <u>CANTERBURY</u> COLLECTION.....	50
IV. CONCLUSIONS.....	65
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	70
VITA.....	72

INTRODUCTION

The Physician's Tale has been one of the least popular of the Canterbury Tales. Seldom read and often criticized, it has nonetheless been the focus of a good deal of critical discussion. There is little dispute over the general quality of the tale's form and content. Nevill Coghill declares it a disastrous failure. According to Donald Howard, it is the antitype of the moral tale because of its misguided values.² Others say that the tale is unsatisfying and ineffective because it is unclear, confused, and vacillating.³ One must wonder how a tale can at once be so bad and still generate so much commentary.

One of the concerns of the scholarship is with the teller of the tale, that is with the Physician as pilgrim and as a representative of his profession.⁴ However,

¹Nevill Coghill, "Chaucer's Narrative Art in The Canterbury Tales," in Chaucer and Chaucerians, ed. D. S. Brewer (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1966), pp. 126-128.

²Donald R. Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976), p. 52n.

³For this viewpoint, see Thomas L. Kinney, "The Popular Meaning of Chaucer's Physician's Tale," Literature and Psychology, 28, No. 2 (1978), p. 79; Anne Middleton, "The Physician's Tale and Love's Martyrs: 'Ensamles No Mo than Ten' as a Method in the Canterbury Tales," The Chaucer Review, 8, No. 1 (1973), p. 12; and Lee C. Ramsey, "'The Sentence of It Sooth Is': Chaucer's Physician's Tale," The Chaucer Review, 6, No. 2 (1971), p. 186.

⁴For this discussion, see Frederick Tupper, "Chaucer's

these treatments focus primarily on the Physician in the General Prologue and are thus of little help in interpreting the tale. Some criticism has indeed focused on the relationship between teller and tale.⁵ Hanson discusses the tale as a reflection of a teller who does not understand the sources he uses, concluding that the tale is "appropriately amoral."⁶ These studies present the tale as a reflection of the Physician's character, extrapolating from the tale to the man presented in the General Prologue. However, they do shed some light on the meaning of the tale itself.

Another concern of scholarship has been the sources of the Physician's Tale. These studies have yielded some of the most useful insights into the meaning of the tale and the evaluation of Chaucer's skill as a storyteller. Edgar Shannon's "The Physician's Tale" remains one of the most useful discussions of these sources.⁷ Shannon's

'Doctour of Phisik,'" Nation, 96 (1913), pp. 640-641; and Huling E. Ussery, Chaucer's Physician: Medicine and Literature in Fourteenth Century England (New Orleans: Tulane Univ. Press, 1971).

⁵For this discussion, see Thomas B. Hanson, "Chaucer's Physician as Storyteller and Moralizer," The Chaucer Review, 7, No. 2 (1972), pp. 132-139; and Huling E. Ussery, "The Appropriateness of the Physician's Tale to its Tellers," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, 50, pp. 545-556.

⁶Hanson, p. 137.

⁷Edgar F. Shannon, "The Physician's Tale," in Sources and Analogues for Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 398-408.

chapter in Bryan and Dempster focuses primarily on Livy but also summarizes Chaucer's use of Le Roman de la Rose and the De virginibus of St. Ambrose. Other scholars have discussed the changes Chaucer made in the tale and base critical interpretations upon the significance of these changes. For example, Lee Ramsey points out that Chaucer shifts the focus of the story from Apius to Virginia and her father.⁸ Sheila Delaney examines the political aspect of the tale. She suggests that by removing social commentary, Chaucer removes convincing dramatic motivation from the tale.⁹

Another area of study of the Physician's Tale involves interpretation of the moral of the tale. Almost without exception, critics respond to the tragic tone of the tale.¹⁰ Aside from their agreement on this tragic tone, their interpretations fall into four categories. Huling Ussery has advanced the most straightforward interpretation of the tale's moral. He says that the Physician's Tale is "a moral tale of chastity designed to evoke fearful and unselfish sentiment."¹¹ Ussery finds the tale

⁸ Ramsey, p. 194.

⁹ Sheila Delaney, "Politics and the Paralysis of Poetic Imagination in The Physician's Tale," Studies in the Age of Chaucer, 3 (1981), pp. 47-60.

¹⁰ Robert Longworth, "The Doctor's Dilemma: A Comic View of the Physician's Tale," Criticism, 13 (1971), pp. 223-233, a possible exception, was unavailable for review.

¹¹ Ussery, Chaucer's Physician, p. 131.

essentially Christian just because the evil are punished.¹² But Ussery ignores the central problem of Virginia's death and thus avoids the tale's moral dilemma. Therefore, his interpretation is flawed and untenable.

A more complex interpretation examines the Physician's Tale as political commentary. While Delaney examines the political aspects of the original story, Jerome Mandel sees the tale's major concern as the relationship between the governed and those who govern, with Apius representing civil government, Virginius familial government, and Virginia self-government. Mandel asserts that both Virginius and Apius subvert justice by imposing their wills upon others.¹³ Neither the civil nor the familial government functions as successfully as it should. In contrast, Virginia is a completely moral and virtuous person, as well as one who actively pursues that which is right.¹⁴ She governs herself well and submits to the government of others. However, Mandel does not resolve the problem of Virginia's unjustifiable death.

Donald Howard details another interpretation of the Physician's Tale, viewing it as an example of tragically misguided morality.¹⁵ Howard says that "The

¹²Ussery, Chaucer's Physician, p. 131.

¹³Jerome Mandel, "Governance in the Physician's Tale," The Chaucer Review, 10, No. 4 (1976), p. 322.

¹⁴Mandel, p. 319.

¹⁵Howard, p. 334.

Physician, in the manner of his profession, ends giving advice which sounds a little pat."¹⁶ However, while pointing out that the advice is not appropriate, Howard does not deduce another moral interpretation of the tale. Anne Middleton's interpretation follows Howard's lead. She points out that the Physician's Tale fails to provide "a set of understandable definitions, derived through particular actions, for the moral absolutes it is supposed to illustrate."¹⁷ Thomas Kinney feels that the tale muddles our perceptions and our sense of values.¹⁸ These interpretations share the conclusion that the tale's moral is misleading, and that the tale is therefore confusing and dissatisfying.

In the Physician's Tale and the prologue to the Pardoner's Tale, the Physician and Harry Bailly propose morals which do not correspond to the tale. The interpretations are inadequate, and herein lie both the frustration and the interest of the Physician's Tale. These varying interpretations represent a critical debate which is unresolved. Is the tale about the value of chastity or about the importance of good government on all levels? Or is the moral of the tale so obscured

¹⁶Howard, p. 180.

¹⁷Middleton, p. 12.

¹⁸Kinney, p. 79.

by contradiction that it is non-existent? It is apparent that one important controversy concerning the Physician's Tale revolves around an adequate interpretation of the tale's moral.

I believe that the tale is only secondarily concerned with either the value of chastity or the problem of governance. These issues are motives for action rather than the moral center of the tale. Does the tale then not have a moral? Howard and others seem to argue that the moral is either warped or non-existent. But in my opinion, these critics expect too little of Chaucer's craftsmanship. Interpretations of the tale's moral have been limited to deductions from the tale's internal workings and wrestling with the moral tags applied by the Physician or the Host. Neither the Physician's "Forsaketh synne ere synne yow forsake" nor the Host's admonition about the fickle gifts of Fortune is a satisfactory interpretation of the tale's moral meaning.¹⁹ Understanding of the tale's moral cannot be obtained from these surface structures. Instead, we must look for the moral in the deep structure of the plot of the tale and its moral applications.

¹⁹Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, in The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. John H. Fisher (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), VI.286 and 297-298. All further references to this work appear parenthetically within the text.

The Physician's Tale does teach, but its moral is neither a simple nor an expected one. The morality of the tale is more complex than the simple morality of a fable, and thus has greater significance. In the Physician's Tale, Chaucer depicts a world made incomprehensible by the breakdown of morality. It is a world in which moral absolutes do not function. Virginia, Apius, and Virginus are caught up in this disintegration. Chaos is the reigning force. In this chaotic world, tragedies are not averted by any mitigating force. There is no justice, no grace, no possibility of escape for the tale's characters. The confusion in the action exemplifies the confusion of the non-Christian, classical world. The confusion of the tale is central to its meaning. In the Physician's Tale, Chaucer represents a world which is frustrating, disheartening, and hopeless. This world view becomes evident when the tale's actions, characters, and morals are contrasted with those in other tales in the Canterbury collection. In this light, it becomes clear that the meaning of the tale does not lie in the morals applied to it by the Physician or the Host. If we accept their interpretations, we are as naive as Harry Bailly or as morally blind as the Physician. In the convoluted world of the Physician's Tale, justice is blind, reason in hiding, and grace an unfulfilled

hope. Thus, Chaucer offers his readers a realm devoid of meaning, a world in which there is "no grace. . .no remedye" (VI. 236).

CHAPTER I

THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE, ITS CHARACTERS AND ITS MORALS

One of the miracles of the Canterbury Tales is Chaucer's ability to given dimension and realism to the stories which he tells. Whether it is the Wife of Bath's description of her family life or Chaunticleer's account of his fateful dreams, we are drawn deep into the world of the pilgrimage and then drawn even deeper into the worlds of the individual tales. The same effect is produced in the Physician's Tale as Chaucer draws us into the non-Christian, classical world of Virginius, Virginia, and Apius. Chaucer has transformed classical and contemporary sources, and what has emerged is a tale whose tragic tone is reflected in the plot, and in the characterizations.

The Physician's Tale begins with the citation of Livy as the source and authority for the Virginia story.¹ However, Chaucer's version differs significantly from the Latin on several points. Edgar Shannon points out these variations in his article in Sources and Analogues for Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.² First, Chaucer specifies Virginia's age as twelve years, the legal age for marriage

¹Livy's History of Rome was unavailable in English translation through the University of Tennessee library system; therefore, I have relied heavily on Edgar Shannon's discussion of the story.

²Shannon, pp. 398-408.

for girls in Chaucer's day, while Livy says only that she was a "virginem adultam," a more indefinite description.³ Livy says that Virginia was betrothed, a detail omitted in the Physician's Tale. By doing so, Chaucer makes Virginia seem younger, more innocent, and more appropriately representative of Virginité. Livy also states that Apius carried out his plot when Virginius was away from home. Chaucer has the father close at hand. Perhaps this altered detail diminishes the subversion of Apius' role, making him less a wolf preying upon an unprotected lamb, but as a result, Apius' actions seem all the more brazen. Further, Chaucer increases the pathos of the situation by making Virginia an only child, thus intensifying the tragic consequences of her death for her father.⁴ From this evidence, Shannon concludes that Chaucer used the Latin original which he supplemented with additional details.

However, as John Fisher points out, Chaucer seems to have taken this version of the tale primarily from the Roman de la Rose.⁵ Although he adds details to his

³ Shannon, p. 402n.

⁴ Shannon, p. 404.

⁵ Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, trans. Harry W. Robbins, ed. Charles W. Dunn (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1962), 27.1 ff.

source, the basic plot of Chaucer's version is identical to de Meun's.⁶ There is the hatching of the plot in the mind of the corrupt judge; on the other hand, there is an innocent, young maiden and her morally upright father. From the conflict between Lechery and Innocence, tragedy ensues. Some details in the two versions differ. Like Livy, de Meun does not specify Virginia's age--she is simply "a maid."⁷ More significantly, de Meun's moral interpretation of the tale does not correspond to Chaucer's. The lesson which de Meun draws from the story is "that no man has ever yet seen power and virtue joined."⁸ This interpretation is more socio-political than moral. Because de Meun's version is an anecdotal exemplum, it does not include multi-dimensional characters or elaborations of plot. Compared with Chaucer's version, de Meun's telling of the Virginia story seems bare and unornamented.

By citing Livy as his source, Chaucer places himself firmly in the line of medieval tradition. It was conventional for Chaucer to cite a classical authority,

⁶John H. Fisher, ed., The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), p. 216.

⁷De Lorris and de Meun, p. 119, line 3.

⁸De Lorris and de Meun, p. 120, lines 47-48.

even when relying on a contemporary source. In fact, he refers to his source twice, in the first line of the tale and again in line 161 with "as telleth us the storie." Thus Chaucer reminds his readers that this story is based on respected authority. Such respect for authority is characteristic of medieval writers. Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium, which defends the worth of poetry in the human experience against those who call poets liars, makes this point clear. Boccaccio attempts to prove the legitimacy of his sources by pointing out that:

However recent they once may have been who are now the Ancients, yet that which has been preserved through many ages has been approved by great lapse of time, and thence gains its authority.⁹

Indeed, the principal objective of a poet in the Middle Ages seems to have been the ability to renew old tales rather than to create new ones. Chaucer incorporates both traits into the Physician's Tale by preserving the framework of the original story while adding details that increase the tragic tone of the tale. However, since there is evidence that Chaucer made use of The Romance

⁹ Boccaccio, Boccaccio on Poetry, ed. and trans. Charles G. Osgood (1930; rpt. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956), p. 111.

of the Rose as well as Livy's History of Rome, one wonders why de Meun's version is not mentioned. But Chaucer does the same thing in other places. It seems reasonable to suppose that the Latin classic, firmly established in time, may have carried more authoritative weight than the thirteenth-century French poem. Thus the citation of Livy more firmly establishes the authority of the present version of the tale.

After giving the authority for the Virginia story, the narrative begins in fits and starts. The premise for the story is set in lines 2 through 6 which describe Virginus' social position and moral character. Virginus is a perfect knight, "fulfild of honour and of worthynesse" (VI. 3). From the description of Virginus, the tale moves immediately to a description of Virginia, the knight's daughter and the impetus for the story's action. Virginia is likewise described as superlative:

Fair was this mayde in excellent beautee
 Aboven every wight that men may see,
 For Nature hath in sovereyn diligence
 Yformed hire in so greet excellence.
 (VI. 7-10)

This description continues with another series of superlatives heaped one upon another. In lines 30 through 71, Virginia is pictured as a blonde, rosy-cheeked young girl. However, the focus of the description is primarily upon

Virginia's character rather than her physical appearance, for "if that excellent was hire beautee,/A thousand foold moore vertuous was she" (VI. 39-40). She is chaste, humble, abstinent, temperate, patient, discreet, honest, modest, constant, and industrious. She preserves these qualities by avoiding parties and dances where innocence is soon lost. Virginia seems, in fact, to be perfect in every way. The third part of the description is found in lines 105 to 117. Here, Virginia's perfection is again stressed, including her powers of self-control and her place as an example to all young girls. The Physician further enhances this image by noting that all loved her, with the exception of Envy, "that sory is of oother mennes wele" (VI. 115). This description is cliché as we see in its similarity to the descriptions of Griselda in the Clerk's Tale and of Emelye in the Knight's Tale.

One question which must be raised is the purpose of the lengthy and detailed description of Virginia. This description is minimal in Chaucer's sources, but typical of Chaucer's transformation of an anecdote into a story. The description functions on the one hand to increase the dramatic tenor of the story. It seems that the more we know about a character, the more interested we are in him or her; the more we identify with them. We are given only three lines describing Virginius, compared with fifty-five lines describing his daughter, even

though the knight plays a more extensive role in the tale. The length of this description foreshadows Virginia's later function as the object of our sympathy. But the detailed description of Virginia does more than create sympathy and dramatic effect. Unless we are given a detailed description of a character, it is difficult to understand the character's psychological motivation. The detailed description of Virginia's character makes her acquiescence to her father's will quite believable. Virginius, on the other hand, is not described in great detail, and his actions are hardly credible. One is led to ask whether a man who loved his daughter so much would take her life. This credibility gap is one element of confusion in the Physician's Tale.

So perfect is Virginia that she is the object of a long digression by Nature. In this digression, which interrupts the description, Nature points out her own creative power which far surpasses the "counterfeiting" of human artists. This power is hers because God, the Creator, has made Nature His assistant, with the ability to create earthly creatures as she wishes. Nature and God are so close in origin that they are always in agreement. This digression places the Virginia story in a broader context and gives it cosmic significance.

Just as Virginia's life and character take on cosmic significance, the conflict between Apius and Virginius

also has far-reaching significance. Apius, infected by the fiend and maddened by lust, becomes an initiator of evil. As Virginia's enemy, he is by extension the enemy of Nature and God. Thus, the struggle of Virginius and Apius over Virginia becomes symbolic of the struggle between Good and Evil over the human soul, or the mythic struggle between God and the Devil.

Another digression follows the second part of the description of Virginia, a sermon to governesses and parents concerning their authority over and responsibility for their charges (VI. 72-104). The Physician points out that governesses obtain their positions for one of two reasons:

Thenketh that ye been set in governynges
Of lordes doghtres only for two thynges,
Outher for ye han kept your honestee,
Or elles ye han falle in freletee
And knowen wel ynough the olde daunce,
An han forsaken fully swich meschaunce
For everemo. . . (VI. 75-81)

The penalties for governesses failing in their responsibility will be terrible because the betrayal of innocence is the greatest treason (VI. 91-92). The Physician goes on to admonish parents to be careful of the examples they set and about disciplining their children. The purpose of this digression is questionable in the context of the story since Virginia is so nearly perfect. We can perhaps find here some revelation

of the Physician's own limitations; he is dealing with material above his intellectual and emotional level. Marshall Leicester reaches this conclusion in "The Art of Impersonation: A General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" which proposes that the tales help to define better the pilgrim's characters.¹⁰ In the light of this interpretation, the Physician might be seen as a narrator ignorant of the inappropriateness of some of his remarks. The digression on governesses might also be an indication of the Physician's perception of the interests of his "audience." It would be fitting to speak of the "olde daunce" to one as familiar with it as the Wife of Bath. For her, this exemplum might serve as an admonition to show a better example to young girls. We know that the Knight, at least, is a parent and must have been confronted with the responsibility for his child's values. A third purpose behind this digression may be an echo of the sort of admonitions found in medieval handbooks on the nurture of children. Karl Young points out the similarity of Chaucer's description of Virginia to governesses' descriptions of the Virgin.¹¹ In the De eruditione filiorum nobilium of

¹⁰ Marshall Leicester, "The Art of Impersonation: A General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," PMLA, 95, No. 2 (1980), pp. 213-224.

¹¹ Karl Young, "The Maidenly Virtues of Chaucer's Virginia," Speculum, 16, No. 3 (July 1941), pp. 340-349.

Vincent of Beauvais, the Virgin is recommended as a model of behavior for young maidens, in terms similar to those in the Physician's Tale. The description of Virginia also indicates an exemplary character.

Chaucer begins the whole Canterbury collection and many individual tales with a series of character sketches before going on to the narratives. The same technique is used in the Physician's Tale, with the narrative beginning after the long character sketches. From that point, the action moves rapidly (VI. 118-270). Apius sees Virginia as she walks to the temple with her mother, and "Anon his herte chaunged and his mood" (VI. 126). Apius' sudden change of mood brings him to a serious decision:

So was he caught with beautee of this
mayde,
And so hymself ful pryvely he sayde,
"This mayde shal be myn, for
any man!" (VI. 127-129)

In an interesting psychological observation on this decision, the Physician says that:

Anon the feend into his herte ran
And taughte hym sodeynly that he by slyghte
The mayden to his purpos wyne myghte.
(VI. 130-132)

This task is a difficult one to accomplish because Virginia is "strong of freendes" and too pure to consent to his nefarious desire (VI. 135). In order to obtain

Virginia, Apius makes use of a "cherl," or rascal, who agrees to swear that Virginia is in reality his slave who was forcibly taken from him by Virginius. Apius' tool, Claudius, makes this charge as the "false juge" sits hearing cases, and Virginius is immediately summoned to court. Claudius charges Virginius with the theft of his "thral" (VI. 183). Before Virginius can prove his own innocence, Apius awards Virginia to Claudius.

At this point, the logic of the tale begins to break down. Virginius realizes--quite correctly--that Apius has engineered this episode for his own lecherous ends. However, we do not know how Virginius reached this conclusion since Apius gives no indication of his involvement in Claudius' suit. The only evidence Virginius might have would be Apius' overly hasty decision in Claudius' favor, but this suggests only collusion, not instigation.

At least three explanations are possible. The details of how Virginius came by his knowledge may have been omitted because of the audience's familiarity with the tale. It is equally possible that this omission is an indication of the Physician's lack of skill as a storyteller. More significantly for the tale itself, this gap in logic suggests the irrationality of the world in which these characters function.

With the "knowledge" of Apius' intentions, Virginius calls his daughter to him for his "sentence," or judgment. Virginius sees only two alternatives for her, either shame or death. Faced with these alternatives, Virginius chooses death for her--"For love, and not for hate, thou must be deed" (VI. 225). Acting with the authority conferred by Roman law upon the pater familias, Virginius makes the choice; he does not ask Virginia to choose. She is without power over her own life and has no ability to determine her fate in the pre-Christian world of the Physician's Tale. Virginia's response is gentle, but nonetheless a protest:

Goode fader, shal I dye?
Is there no grace, is there no remedye?
(VI. 235-236)

But for Virginia, there is no grace, no escape from the death which is Virginius' judgment. The girl's second response is a plea for time to mourn her own death. Here, a reference is made to the Biblical story of Jephthah's daughter who died as a result of her father's vow, but who was allowed time to mourn her death as a virgin. This reference seems ironic in context, since Virginia is killed in order to preserve her virginity. Rather than making her own choice, Virginia is sacrificed to Virginius' sense of morality and pride. Virginia's third and final response is to accept her fate

as God's will and to ask her father to make her death painless.

Virginus takes his daughter's life and presents her severed head to Apus. The judge responds by sentencing Virginus to be hanged. Here again, logic breaks down as "a thousand peple in thraste/to save the knyght, for routhe and for pitee" (VI. 260-261). The desire to save Virginus is easily understood, but if the knight had so much public support, why was the crowd not summoned to save Virginia's life? If Virginus had time to make such a long speech to his innocent child, could he not have obtained protection for her? These are the questions which leave the reader dissatisfied with the Physician's Tale and cause one to wonder about the rationale behind such a world. Two factors stand in the way of a "happy ending." First, Virginia's rescue would prevent the accomplishment of the exemplum. Second, the original story does not end happily.

Justice is satisfied in part when Apus dies at his own hand, while Virginus shows mercy to Claudius as a seemingly helpless tool of evil. Other unidentified and previously unmentioned collaborators in the plot are hanged.

While these collaborators are briefly mentioned and then forgotten, the major figures in the story deserve a closer analysis. Apus is the personification of evil,

an older man in a position of authority lusting after an innocent young virgin. He is a judge, and his responsibility is to insure the common good rather than further his own self-interests. This responsibility is forgotten in the heat of his desire. However, this state is apparently not natural to Apius. We are told that he underwent a change of mood and character when he first saw Virginia's beauty. This transformation cannot be attributed to Virginia, since she can hardly be held to blame for her own beauty, as her appearance is the gift of Nature. This attribute is clear in the Host's interpretation of the tale. Apius' lust allows the fiend to run to his heart and initiates his treacherous manipulations. Apius' fate has been foreshadowed in the author's apostrophe to governesses. Within the context of the tale, we are told that the betrayal of innocence is the worst treason and that the result of this treason is damnation. This judgment upon governesses is even more appropriate for Apius, as he is a man who would sit in judgment on his fellow man.

Unlike Apius, Claudius is the tool of evil. Apius first threatens Claudius with death if he does not acquiesce to the judge's plan. With that consent forcibly obtained, Apius rewards his "cherl" with "yiftes preciouise and deere" (VI. 148). Claudius seems to have had no option but to cooperate with Apius,

although he too could have chosen death rather than the loss of honor. Claudius plays his role of accomplice well and could be called upon to pay the price. He is sentenced to hang, but Virginius intervenes.

Virginius' merciful intervention is one aspect of his complex character. The mercy that he could not--or would not--show to his daughter is extended to one of the instruments of her death. This action is as inexplicable as Virginius' lack of effort to arouse public support for her. His stoic acceptance of his daughter's fate is very hard for the modern reader, in particular, to understand. Further examination of Virginius' actions yields the impression that the knight is very rash in taking his daughter's life. He sees only two alternatives and seeks no others. Jerome Mandel suggests that in this way Virginius is much like Apius, deciding what is to be done and then summoning his victim in order to dispense his verdict.¹² However, it would be difficult to deny Virginius' very real anguish over his daughter's fate. He may not be as rational or as effective as one might wish, but he is not, like Apius, the betrayer of innocence. He does, however, sacrifice Virginia to his own pride as surely as Apius seeks to sacrifice her to lust.

Virginia, the center of this cyclone, functions as

¹²Mandel, p. 322.

the source of the conflict, but this is not the full extent of her role. As we read the Physician's Tale, we see that the superlatives applied to the girl describe her accurately. However, she is more than simply an object, the source of conflict. Although the story centers around the motives and actions of men, Virginia is an individual with an active moral stance, which is her commitment to God and her obedience to her father. Virginia accepts her death saying "Blessed be God that I shal dye a mayde" (VI. 248). Virginia's role is not the emotionally empty one of victim.¹³ She is no more a type than any other of the characters, perhaps even less so. She realizes the injustice of her fate and genuinely mourns that fate rather than accepting it stoically. Perhaps it is the depth of her own feeling which lends much of the interest to this tale.

The final consideration of the text of the Physician's Tale involves the morals applied to the tale by its teller and by the Host. At the end of the tale, the Physician says:

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 pryvee be

¹³Mandel, p. 319.

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.
 Therefore I rede yow this conseil take:
 Forsaketh synne er synne yow forsake.

(VI. 277-286)

It is difficult to reconcile the high emotion of Virginia's tragic fate with the paradoxical lack of feeling in the Physician's interpretation of the tale. The Physician says first that sin receives its just reward. He goes on to point out that we do not know whom conscience will affect or where God will strike. Man is equally unaware of when punishment will overtake him. Therefore the Physician advises people to forsake their sins before sin catches up with them. This advice seems to apply in part to Apius. He does die as a result of his sinful actions, but his conscience became a problem only after he had been caught. On the other hand, Claudius escapes Apius' fate. The churl is caught, but with Virginius' intervention, his hanging is prevented. Claudius certainly does not appear to have deserved the mercy which was denied to Virginia. The death of Virginia compounds the doubt as to the appropriateness of the Physician's moral. If sin receives its reward, then so should virtue. Virginia is indubitably the most virtuous young girl imaginable. The fact of her tragic death denies the truth of the Physician's moral, at least in the context of this tale.

The Host offers another interpretation of the Physician's Tale, but his analysis is no more satisfactory than the Physician's. In the prologue to the Pardoner's Tale, we are told:

Oure Hooste gan to swere as he were wood,
 "Harrow," quod he, "by nayles and by blood!
 There was a fals cherl and a fals justise.
 As shameful deeth as herte may devyse
 Come to thise false jugesand hire
 advocat.

Algate this sely mayde is slayn, allas!
 Allas, to deere boughte she beautee!
 Wherefore I seye al day as men may see
 That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature
 Been cause of deeth to many a creature.
 Of bothe yiftes that I speak of now
 Men han ful ofte moore for harm than
 prow." (II. 287-300)

In other words, Virginia's fate is caused by her Nature, Fortune, and her own beauty. In the tale we are told that the assault of a judge who personifies lechery is the cause of the girl's death. He has been driven mad by the girl's phenomenal beauty. In order to preserve her purity and innocence, Virginia approaches death at her father's hands with the composure and peace of a holy martyr. A second difficulty with the Host's interpretation is that it implies that the gifts of Nature result in evil. But in her digression in the tale, Nature is portrayed as the executrix of God's plan for earthly creatures:

For He (God) that is the formere principal
 Hath maked me his vicaire general
 To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
 Right as me list. . .(VI. 19-22)

Her power comes ultimately from God, and from the Christian perspective, God does not cause evil. Beauty cannot be bad since it is the creation of God.

It is apparent that a review of the plot, characters and moral interpretations of the Physician's Tale both enhances the interest of the story and increases dissatisfaction with interpretations offered of its meaning. The Physician, who has difficulty dealing with the mechanics of his narrative, fails completely to divine the true complexity of the tale. The vociferous Host is no better at dealing with the story's deeper meaning. One wonders whether this is simply an authorial mistake--was Chaucer himself unable to interpret the tale? Or are the morals irrelevant to the meaning of the tale? Rather than accept any of these options, I should like to propose an interpretation of the tale which is both reasonable and satisfying in the light of the Canterbury Tales as a whole.

CHAPTER II

A MORAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE

Chaucer's chief departure from the sources of the Physician's Tale occurs in the conversation between Virginius and Virginia. Neither this scene nor the conversation involved is present in Livy or the Romance of the Rose. The encounter is heart-rending. Chaucer's unique contribution to the episode is its depth of emotion and its tragic overtones. We watch the knight face the alternatives, make his decision, and call his beloved daughter to him. He tells her of her tragic fate "With fadres pitee stikyng thurgh his herte,/Al wolde he from his purpos nat converte" (I. 211-212). The epitome of virginity, she must die because of lechery, and Virginius must be the instrument of her death:

For love, and nat for hate, thou must be deed;
My pitous hand moot smyteen of thyn heed.
(I. 225-226)

It is the ultimate irony, and the reader echoes Virginia's question, knowing the answer that will come:

"Goode fader, shal I dye?
Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye?"
"No, certes, deere doghter myn," quod he.
(I. 235-237)

Virginia's question is the heart of the Physician's Tale, the problem it poses for the reader. In order to try to

answer this question we must first attempt to define the terms "grace" and "justice" and then examine how these concepts function in the Physician's Tale.

Most of the tale deals with the abuse of justice and the results of that abuse. The catalyst for the events of the tale is the perversion of justice which takes place within Apius. When he sees Virginia and wishes to possess her, he initially abuses his role as an administrator of justice. At this moment, he is described as the "false juge," and the description is applied to him throughout the rest of the tale (VI. 154). The just action would have been to protect innocence; instead, Apius seeks to use the mechanics of justice to destroy innocence, and in the process destroys the justice he represents. By perverting the judicial system in this way, Apius betrays his own role as the representative of justice, and he becomes the worst of criminals, the betrayer of innocence. His crime takes more than one form. First, he forces Claudius to join his plot and rewards the man for his participation. Then he manipulates the court in order to obtain the object of his desire. When his plan fails, he attempts to use the court to punish Virginius. When the breakdown of justice seems complete, the mob breaks in and re-establishes justice by saving Virginius from Apius' vengeance. However, the problem of Virginia's death still remains. She is the

most deserving of life, but she too dies. Here the perversion of justice is most apparent--the innocent girl suffers along with the guilty judge. In fact, the injustice of her death makes it even more painful. In contrast to the fate that Virginia suffers, Claudius does not pay for his role in Apius' plot. Virginius steps in and saves Apius' pawn. Both Virginia's death and Claudius' salvation are unjust and bring into question the role of justice in this tale. If the evil survive and the good do not, justice here seems to be a perversion of its ideal.

The magnitude of Apius' offence becomes clearer in light of the meanings attached to the word justice. Several uses of the word are particularly relevant in this context.¹ Justice may be used to designate one who administers justice. This role is one in which Apius fails. In fact, he becomes the opposite, one who administers falsehood. As a false justice, he betrays the system of justice which he represents, and the concept of justice, as well as the innocent Virginia. Another use of the word justice applies to the function of judicial administration to preserve the law and to insure equity.² By definition, justice is also the use of judicial autho-

¹For a fuller discussion with examples of each use, see The Oxford English Dictionary (1933; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

²The Oxford English Dictionary, p. 640, use III.

rity to maintain right and, through the use of reward or punishment, to vindicate right.³ Apius is far from the ideal in the exercise of this authority. Instead of rewarding right and punishing wrong, he victimizes Virginia and her father.

It is this latter use of the term justice which poses the problem about Virginia's fate. Right must be rewarded and wrong punished if there is to be justice. However, there seems to be no justice for Virginia. Instead of being rewarded for being good, she dies as a direct result. If she had succumbed to evil, she would have survived. Had Virginius not be so morally upright, his daughter might have lived. Justice is not available to Virginia and her father. Another use of justice which functions in the Physician's Tale is the state of being just or morally right. The moral integrity which this use implies is obviously lacking in Apius. His actions do not conform to what is morally right, fair, or proper. Virginius and Virginia, on the other hand, conform to these standards of moral integrity and right action. However, one is once again reminded that Virginia is the one who dies by being denied the protection of justice. Apius' death at his own hand serves the ends of poetic justice, but it defies the system of equal justice. He

³The Oxford English Dictionary, p. 640, use II, 4.

imposes his own punishment upon himself rather than accepting the verdict of a court of law. This action is not an administration of justice to himself. He has already broken the moral and judicial code. As a result of this breakdown, the mob has stepped in and removed Apius from his position as judge. He no longer has the right to make such a judgment.

Justice fails utterly in the Physician's Tale. The framework for justice is manipulated and perverted for personal ends. The innocent suffer at the hands of the guilty and find no refuge in the law. In fact, justice is present in name only in this tale. The vacuum left by the absence of justice must be filled by some other force.

In addition to justice, grace is also an important concern in the Physician's Tale. The words grace and mercy are frequently used interchangeably. I will use the word mercy to refer to a human act of pardon or clemency. Grace will refer to the underlying concept of forgiveness, whether human or divine.

In the Christian mind, justice is frequently opposed to the concept of grace. The law of the Old Testament is the law of justice--an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. In this ethic, man knows the rules and must suffer the consequences if he does not obey them. In contrast, the New Testament represents a departure from

this ethic of vengeance and restitution. As a result of the teachings of Jesus, the apostles, and Paul, a new ethic was instituted. According to this teaching, God is love, and grace is available to those who truly repent. This dialectic is extremely difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, the Judeo-Christian faith teaches that all men are guilty of breaking God's law: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). On the other hand, redemption is available to all: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). In other words, if justice is done, all deserve to be punished. However, grace allows man to escape the consequences of original sin. Thus grace replaces justice as the governing force and should regulate God's dealings with man, and an individual's dealings with others.

D. W. Robertson points out that Theseus, in the Knight's Tale, rules according to this ideal mixture of grace and justice.⁴ Theseus continually tempers justice with mercy. We see this in his treatment of the widows and of Palamon and Arcite. It is this temperate action which makes Theseus an ideal ruler. The dual function of grace and justice does not avert tragedy entirely, but it does sometimes cause good to come out of evil. However,

⁴D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 261-262.

we see a somewhat different relationship between justice and grace in the Physician's Tale. As we have seen, justice is not present in the tale. The role of grace remains to be explored.

Several definitions of grace may be considered pertinent within the context of the Physician's Tale. First, as the Oxford English Dictionary points out, grace may be used in terms of one's fate, the relative allotment of good or evil which an individual receives.⁵ I do not think that this sense of the word explains Virginia's cry of "Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye" (VI. 236). Nevertheless, this concept of fate or Fortune is implicit in the Tale. In the Host's comment upon the tale, he says:

That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature
 Been cause of death to many a
 creature.
 Of bothe yiftes that I speke of now
 Men han ful ofte moore for harm
 than prow. (VI. 295-300)

Virginia's death is the result of her fate, not a flaw within her own character or a sin upon her part. She is completely a victim; her destiny is forced upon her.

Two other uses of the word grace apply more directly to Virginia's plea for grace. First the word may be used to mean mercy or clemency. Virginia, of course, has done

⁵The Oxford English Dictionary, p. 326.

no wrong, but she does ask for mercy with regard to the actions of others. She asks if there is no mercy allowing her to escape death as a result of Apius' attempts on her virtue. A second meaning attached to the word grace also applies, "favour shown by granting a delay in the performance of an action."⁶ Virginia refers to Jephthah's daughter and asks:

"Thanne yif me leyser, fader myn,"
 quod she,
 "My deeth for to compleyne a litel
 space." (VI. 238-239)

However, neither mercy nor delay is available to Virginia. Apparently there can be no grace for her. Virginius, for reasons which are unfathomable within the context of the tale, does not seek an escape for his daughter. But though Virginia must die, Virginius is saved from Apius' vengeance. As Apius sentences Virginius to death, the intervention of the mob takes place:

But right anon a thousand peple in thraste
 To save the knyght, for routhe and for
 pitee,
 For knowen was the false iniquitee..
 (VI. 260-262)

The mob does not intervene for Virginia. She cannot submit to evil in the form of Apius. Therefore, she must die. There is no possibility for a delay in accomplishing

⁶The Oxford English Dictionary, p. 327.

Virginia's fate. Her death must take place immediately, with no respite for mourning her tragic destiny. To delay would be to allow Apius the opportunity to take her for his own lecherous purposes. Grace in the form of neither delay nor an escape is possible for Virginia. Virginius is neither consistent in Old Testament or Roman justice nor in Christian grace. He is not merciful to Virginia, but he is not just to Claudius either. The churl deserves to die, but does not. Virginia deserves to live, but does not.

A final meaning associated with the word grace is particularly important for this tale. In this sense, grace may denote a divine influence on men which inspires them to regeneration and sanctification and which enables them to withstand temptation.⁷ This use of the word is Christian in implication and more difficult to explain in the non-Christian context of the Physician's Tale. Nonetheless, this definition is important in the contrast set up in the tale. Virginia is by nature good, pure, and innocent. She readily resists temptation in all its forms. Her virtue is such that:

She hath ful ofte tyme syk hire feyned
For that she wolde fleen the compaignye
Where likly was to treten of folye.
(VI. 62-64)

⁷The Oxford English Dictionary, p. 327.

Seemingly she is most deserving of grace or mercy, but she dies anyway.

In contrast to Virginia, Apius readily gives in to temptation in the form of desire. As soon as he sees Virginia:

Anon his herte chaunged and his mood,
 So was he caught with beautee of this
 mayde,
 And so hymself ful pryvely he sayde,
 "This mayde shal be myn, for any man!"
 (VI. 126-129)

He makes no attempt to resist the "feend" (VI. 130). Rather he chooses to victimize an innocent, and the result is her undeserved death. Although suicide could be an honorable death for pagan Romans, one wonders whether Apius' suicide is an act of repentance or merely an expression of despair over having been caught. It is difficult to believe that one so remorseless in pursuit could repent of the act. However, no conclusion about Apius' repentance can be drawn from the text. Like Virginia, Apius receives no grace, and the result is death. Others in the story die because of lack of mercy or grace. We are told that in the aftermath of Virginia's tragedy:

The remenant were anhangd, moore
 and lesse,
 That were consentant of this
 cursednesse. (VI. 275-276)

only Claudius is spared the full consequence of his misdeeds. Rather than suffering a well-deserved death for his actions, Claudius is merely exiled. Ironically, Virginius is the one who shows this mercy, even though he showed no mercy to his beloved daughter.

The connotations of grace in the Physician's Tale lead to some broad conclusions about the role played by grace in the story. Three things which deserve closer study are apparent about the function of grace. First, the story illustrates the meaning of grace as a undeserved act of mercy, directly in contradiction to the worth of the individual. Secondly, in the light of this statement, it can be proven that grace is not a fully active force in the tale. Finally, we are led to the conclusion that the world of the Physician's Tale is not based upon the Christian conception of grace. Therefore, an alternative to grace or justice must be found.

In the light of the meaning associated with the concept of grace, the first conclusion which presents itself is that the grace or mercy one receives is not based on one's merit. One does not deserve grace, and, in fact, the concepts of grace and merit are directly opposed to one another. On the other hand, justice is based directly upon merit--one receives a relative amount of reward or punishment based on one's merit. This contrast leads to the logical conclusion that grace and justice are not only

unrelated to one another, but are in fact directly opposed. According to the Christian conceptualization of the term, grace has nothing to do with justice, because grace is an unearned pardon for sin or wrongdoing. Christian grace may even extend to the point of rewarding those who practice evil.

This understanding of grace is based on biblical precedent. In the tenth chapter of Mark, the story is told of a rich young ruler who asks the master teacher how to find eternal life. Jesus instructs the man to follow accepted Mosaic law, the system of justice, and the man replies that he has done so. However, it is impossible for this man to find his way because of the impediment of wealth. We are told that "the disciples were amazed at his (Jesus') words" (Mark 10:24).⁸ This man is a just person, but cannot receive grace. The most startling example of grace in action is in the ultimate act of Christ, at the moment of His death. The thief on the cross recognizes the potential for grace and appeals to Jesus:

And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23: 42-43)

⁸New American Standard Version

Herein the mystery of grace: we see the apparently just and good man failing to receive grace and the man who has led a sinful life receiving the full force of that grace.

The same sort of irony is present in the Virginia story. The good, pure, innocent Virginia dies; the instrument of evil, Claudius, receives merciful treatment in spite of his evil action. Virginia is innocent and could not be an object of grace for her own actions; however, she is guilty as an inheritor of original sin, even though the concept is anachronistic to the tale's setting. The failure of the Christian concept of grace is the heart-break of Virginia's story. This concept is one which the rational mind cannot apprehend and increases the irrational aspect of the tale.

Anne Lancashire points out another biblical parallel to the Virginia story which further enlightens our understanding of grace and justice. Lancashire sees definite correspondences to the Physician's Tale in the story of Abraham and Issac and suggests that the biblical story may be still another source for the tale.⁹ Details that are not found in other sources are present in the story of Issac, including the fact that Issac is an only child, his resignation to God's will, the privacy of the scene, and the plea for an easy death. However, the biblical

⁹ Anne Lancashire, "Chaucer and the Sacrifice of Issac," The Chaucer Review, 9, No. 4 (1975), p. 321.

tale's role as a source for the Physician's Tale is less important than the light which the interplay of justice and grace throws upon Chaucer's poem. The twenty-second chapter of Genesis contains this story. God sees Abraham's great love of his son and decides to test that love against Abraham's love for God. Abraham is instructed to offer his only son as a burnt offering. Without hesitation, Abraham follows God's instructions and prepares to take the child's life. However, at the last moment with the knife poised above Issac's chest, God intervenes:

But the angel of the Lord
called to him from Heaven,
and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"
And he said, "Here I am."
And he said, "Do not stretch
out your hand against the lad,
and do nothing to him." (Genesis 22: 11-12)

Abraham functions as the agent of justice. He carries out God's will as he is instructed, without regard to his own feelings. However, justice is not carried out because grace intervenes in the form of God's angel. Thus, Issac is saved from a needless sacrifice. The contrast with the Virginia story is clear. Grace does not intervene on Virginia's behalf, and Virginius, in Abraham's role, must take the life of his only child. The difference in the outcome of the two stories reflects the difference between the pagan and the Judeo-Christian world view.

A second thing becomes apparent in the function of

grace in the Physician's Tale. We have already seen that justice is not a fully functioning force in the tale. It is apparent that grace is an unequally functioning quality in the Physician's Tale. Its functioning is random and indiscriminate. Claudius receives Virginius' mercy. This extension of grace is not outside the boundaries of the concept. However, if grace goes to all those in need of it, even though they might not deserve it, then Apius should be at least a co-recipient of Virginius' grace. Obviously, Apius does not receive mercy since he commits suicide. In this connection, one wonders if Apius might have received mercy if he had given Virginius the chance. The question is probably irrelevant but raises the spectre of the irrational once again. Clearly, the concept of grace is in itself irrational.

The problem is that there is no rational system on which grace is based in this tale. Grace is dispensed neither to the deserving nor to the undeserving on a consistent basis. Once again, a contrast with the Christian understanding of grace is obvious and may be clarified by a final biblical parallel. As we have seen, the Christian ethic is based upon the concept of divine grace. This ethic is nowhere more clearly delineated than in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32).

Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son tells of a man with two sons. The younger of the sons comes to his father and

asks for his share of his inheritance. The father complies, and soon the young man leaves home and journeys to another country. Away from home, the young man wastes his money on a frivolous, wild life and soon is completely broke. The country begins to suffer a severe famine, and the young man suffers as well. A resident of the country hires the young man and sends him to feed his swine. The young man is so desperate that he is about to eat the seed pods he is feeding to the swine. At that point, he remembers the abundant resources of his father's house and resolves to go home. He plans to ask his father to forgive him and to allow him to work as a hired servant.

As the young man approaches his home, his father sees him coming, has compassion on him, and runs to greet his son. The son makes his plea but is ignored while the father calls his servants to bring his very best possessions. The joy of the son's homecoming gives way to a feast of celebration.

The working of grace is obvious in this story. The son does not deserve his father's forgiveness, much less the overwhelming greeting which he receives. This fact is obvious to the older son who returns from his work to find his younger brother being honored. The injustice of the situation makes him angry, and he says to his father;

"Look! For so many years I have been serving you,

and I have never neglected a command of yours;
 and yet you have never given me a kid,
 that I might be merry with my friends;
 but when this son of yours came,
 who has devoured your wealth with harlots,
 you killed the fattened calf for him."
 And he said to him (the son),
 "My child, you have always been with me,
 and all that is mine is yours.
 But we had to be merry and rejoice,
 for this brother of yours was dead
 and has begun to live, and was lost
 and has been found." (Luke 15: 29-32)

There is a rationale here, in spite of the seeming injustice. Grace is intended precisely for those who are in no way deserving of it.

However, in the Physician's Tale, there is no rationale. Virginia may deserve grace, a pardon from her fate, but it is not available for her. Her destiny does not, however, deny the existence of grace. Claudius is undeserving but receives Virginius' mercy. He, too, fits within the system of grace. However, for the function of grace to be logical, grace must also extend to Apius. Apius does not receive either forgiveness or mercy and dies as a result of his own actions. The unnamed accomplices suffer the same fate. Obviously, the system has broken down.

A comparison of the Physician's Tale with these biblical parallels shows that grace is not based on merit. More importantly, we see that grace is not a rationally functioning force in the Physician's Tale. It may be help-

ful to indulge in a syllogistic argument. Grace is the foundation of Christian thought. Grace does not function according to the accepted definition in the Physician's Tale. Therefore, we must reach the conclusion that the world of the Physician's Tale is not based on Christian thought. Of course, there is some ambiguity in Christian thought concerning the function of grace. Like most syllogisms, this logic seems obvious. When one considers the fact that the tale is based upon classical legend, this observation seems redundant. Chaucer explores this non-Christian philosophy in several tales. However, most tales placed in a classical setting are still Christian in their emphasis and in the working of grace. For example, the Knight's Tale is placed in a classical setting, even though it is a chivalric tale. Nonetheless, the mixture of justice tempered by grace which Theseus exhibits is a Christian function of the concept of grace. Of course, the problem remains that the person who deserves Emelie doesn't get her. As we have seen, the characters of the Physician's Tale do not function as those in the Knight's Tale do. The tale is classical in the sense that it is non-Christian because of the absence of grace, and, of course, the reverse is true as well.

This classical world must function without the benefit of grace. Grace takes the form of forgiveness of sins. If there is no grace, this forgiveness cannot be granted.

Therefore, there is no need to repent, because repentance would have no effect anyway. Without repentance and forgiveness, any form of salvation or redemption is impossible. This absence of any form of escape results in Apius' death. He cannot hope for the redemptive gift embodied in Christianity. Claudius' narrow escape merely intensifies the significance of Apius' death.

It would appear that fate or Fortune, rather than either justice or grace, rules the world of the Physician's Tale. In this discussion, fate will refer to the arbitrary force which governs man's life. Although the word fortune is sometimes used interchangeably with fate, I will use fortune--or Fortune--to refer to the goddess who exemplifies the concept. While justice and grace are frustrated in the Physician's Tale, it is fate that takes control, preventing the effective functioning of the other two forces. The result of fate's control is confusion and tragedy. The events of the tale are inexplicable. Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy follows the same line of argument. In an attempt to explain the inexplicable, Boethius says, "Here, then, is the great miracle of the order of Fate: divine wisdom does what the ignorant cannot understand."¹⁰ The function of fate can

¹⁰ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. Richard Green (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962), p. 94.

be explained in only one way: "Any fortune which seems difficult either tests virtue or corrects and punishes vice."¹¹ For Boethius, fate is simply the working of God's will and cannot be unjust. This explanation does not, however, reconcile us to the tragedy of Virginia's death.

As we have seen, neither grace nor justice functions completely in the Physician's Tale. The void between is expressed in Virginia's poignant question, "Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye" (VI. 236). Clearly, there is none. None of the characters in the Physician's Tale is left with any hope. Virginius cannot find a way out for his daughter. Virginia and Apius, on opposite ends of the moral spectrum, are both faced with death. Only Claudius, by a strange quirk of fate, avoids death, but the arbitrary nature of his escape undermines confidence rather than increasing it.

The central theme of the Physician's Tale is that there is no escape from that which fate has in store for man. One difficulty which Christianity cannot resolve is the injustices in human experience. In a pagan existence, justice is absent, so one cannot depend on his actions or moral character to save him. Grace is likewise nonexistent. As a result, a pre-Christian cannot hope for

¹¹Boethius, p. 99.

pardon for wrongs that he has done. The tale takes place in a moral vacuum. With neither justice nor grace in control, there are no rules to govern man's behavior or to determine his fate. Life and death, reward and punishment, are merely the random results of circumstances. Man is naked and alone, the pawn of forces outside his control. In this vacuum, the obscurity of the tale's moral is a natural, understandable result.

The world of the Physician's Tale has no moral parameters or rules to operate by, even though Virginius thinks it does. His moral judgments are based on pride rather than a regard for human life. There is no basis for hope of fairness, much less mercy. As a result, the characters of the Physician's Tale have no hope for themselves. The world is full of hatred and pain, and there is no hope for improvement. Both good and evil people face the same prospect--death--with no hope of reprieve. This utter lack of hope gives the Physician's Tale nowhere to go. However, the question of the tale's meaning remains.

In spite of the confusion that the Physician and the Host experience, a satisfactory moral interpretation of the tale can be deduced from the story. This interpretation lies in those very factors which seem to lead to the impasse. We have seen that there is no justice, no grace, and no hope. A void remains in their absence. For the

inhabitants of this non-Christian world, the ruling force is chaos, not love, and the only escape is death. There are no answers for the why questions of Apius' actions and Virginia's subsequent death. Therein lies the deeper meaning of the tale. The message is one of despair and hopelessness. The question "Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye" brings the desperate cry of no--not for Virginia, not for Apius, and not for the world they represent.

CHAPTER III

THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE AND THE CANTERBURY COLLECTION

The most emphatic impression made by the Physician's Tale is one of gloom and despair. The absence of grace, justice, and hope leaves in its void only death. Clearly, this theme is a radical departure from orthodox Christianity. The basic teaching of Christianity is one of love, mercy, and hope. These emotions, or actions, have no real strength in the world of the Physician's Tale. With its tone of helplessness and despair, the Physician's Tale stands in stark contrast to other tales in the Canterbury collection.

The moral chaos of the Physician's Tale is not a common occurrence in the Canterbury Tales. For example, the working of justice in the Miller's Tale stands in clear contrast to the Physician's Tale. In the Miller's Tale, everyone is subject to the rule of justice, and one of the chief delights of the tale is seeing how each character receives his just reward. The action of the tale, like that of the Physician's Tale, is instigated by lust. However, the lust in the Physician's Tale is unnatural, in that it is lust for an innocent. Alison, on the other hand, is a willing participant in lechery, John the carpenter, enamored of his young wife, is blind to truth and to his own ignorance. Because of his own age and Alison's beauty, he is jealous and "demed hymself been lik a

cokewold" (I. 3226). John is a victim of his jealousy and his ignorance: he falls headlong for Nicholas' "revelation" about a flood that will rival the biblical deluge. As a result, John is tricked into a scheme that does allow Nicholas to make him a cuckold. It is fitting that John is punished for his love for Alison in the very way he fears most. His punishment becomes even more severe when his foolishness becomes public knowledge. Poetic justice also functions in the fate of the tale's other characters. "Hende Nicholas" desires Alison. It is therefore satisfying that his punishment comes not only in the process of fulfilling his desires, but also near the seat of the problem, so to speak. For Nicholas, the administrator of justice is Absolon, who applies a hot iron to the clerk's bare buttocks. Absolon does not escape justice, however. His sin is the sin of both pride and lechery. He is quite vain and "somdeel squaymous/Of fartyng" (I. 3337-3338). Inevitably, he woos Alison as Nicholas is making love to her and receives for his pains only a kiss on Alison's hinder parts. Then, in the act of revenge, he receives the full force of Nicholas' ire when:

This Nicholas anon leet fle a fart
 As greet as it had been a thonder-dent
 That with the strook he was almoost yblent.
 (I. 3806-3808)

The retribution which each man receives is fitting both to his character and to his sin. Only Alison escapes the hand of justice, but she, like Virginia, is merely the impetus for action rather than an active participant in the tale's action.

The Miller's Tale is thus an excellent example of justice working itself out, unlike the tragic failure of justice in the Physician's Tale. In fact, it is precisely this "working out" of justice that makes the difference between comedy and tragedy. Each character receives exactly the punishment he deserves. As we have seen, this principle does not function in the Physician's Tale. The justice in the Miller's Tale has no reference to a religious concept and shows no form of grace. Nonetheless, clearly defined rules govern the ethics in this world. For John, Nicholas, and Absolon, sin or wrongdoing is repaid in kind.

The unique element of injustice in the Physician's Tale is again illustrated by contrast with the Friar's Tale. Here, too, justice functions in a rational way, if not in an accepted legal or theological way. In this tale, even a demon can function as the instrument of God's will, or the supreme form of justice. The demon tells the summoner that:

"For somtyme we been Goddes instrumentz
And meenes to doon his comandementz,

Whan that hym list, upon his creatures,
 In divers art and in diverse figures."
 (III. 1483-1486)

This theme is illustrated by the summoner and the devil. The summoner unjustly accuses an elderly widow of adultery in order to obtain a bribe, and as a result he is roundly cursed by the old woman. Since she means what she says, the devil carries the summoner off to hell. Thus, even the forces of evil work to carry out justice. The devil has no power over those without sin, as we see when he refuses to take the work horses. His power extends only to carry out God's justice. The difference between the Friar's Tale and the Physician's Tale is clear. In Virginia's case, we have seen how evil can work to defeat good and to usurp the place of justice. The Friar's Tale, a comedy, carries out justice satisfactorily, whereas the Physician's Tale, a tragedy, does not.

Another example of Chaucer's use of the theme of justice may be found in the Pardoner's Tale. This moral tale deals with the sin of avarice and the consequences of greed. The tale is an example of poetic justice in action; thus, it is not a tragedy. However, because of its ending, the Pardoner's Tale is not a comedy either. In the Pardoner's Tale, the three men leave in search of Death who has been tyrannizing the countryside. Upon discovering a horde of gold, the men quickly submit to their lust. In-

evitably, this surrender to avarice is the means by which the men find what they are seeking--Death. The tale resolves itself in an exercise of poetic justice. The youngest of the men plots to poison his confederates, but his success has little sweetness since his own death occurs at their hands. Death wins out as it always does.

Thematically, the Pardoner's Tale differs from the Physician's Tale in its treatment of justice. Here, evil is inevitably, hastily punished. The men receive a just compensation for their greed and evil, and, ironically, they accomplish their common goal of finding Death. This tale follows the example of the Miller's and Friar's tales--no one escapes justice. The chief difference between the Miller's and Friar's tales and the Physician's Tale does not lie solely in the consistent punishment of the wicked. Just as significant, the first two tales embody a rational system of justice. Justice does not misfire and punish the innocent. Nor do the wicked escape it. Everything about the reward or punishment each character receives is based upon desert. There can be no argument about whether Nicholas or Absolon or the summoner or the rioters deserve their fates. The sense of injustice which pervades the Physician's Tale is not found in these tales.

The contrast between the ethics of the Physician's Tale and the other tales in the Canterbury collection

becomes even clearer when we move from justice to grace. As we have seen, the Christian ideal of grace fails to operate in the Physician's Tale, as the evil and the virtuous suffer indistinguishably. This failure is not typical of other tales. In general, justice functions effectively in the tales where its presence is provided for.

The Franklin's Tale, which immediately precedes the Physician's Tale in the Ellesmere manuscript, forms an interesting counterpoint to the Virginia story. While the Physician's Tale tells of a girl who dies in order that her chastity be preserved, the Franklin's Tale is about a woman who rashly commits herself to infidelity. Of course, Dorigen's promise is made in jest, but honor compells her to comply when her conditions are met. Her husband, Arveragus, is equally bound by his conception of honor, and he instructs her to fulfill the promise she has made. Not to be outdone by this display of honor, Aurelius, Dorigen's would-be lover, releases her from her promise when he perceives her misery and Arveragus' grace. And Aurelius, in turn, receives a pardon from the magician to whom he is indebted for the apparent miracle by which Dorigen's conditions were fulfilled. It seems that each character is trying to outdo the other in his display of gentillesse. The Franklin's question makes the theme clear--"Which was the mooste fre,

as thynketh yow?" (V. 1622). While the question may be rhetorical, the display of gentillesse is an interesting one.

The characters in the Franklin's Tale show their gentle natures through their acts of grace. Arveragus is "gracious" to Dorigen when he gives her permission to fulfill her vow, without fear of his interference or punishment. For Aurelius, grace takes the form of releasing Dorigen from her promise. In this he is gracious both to Dorigen and to her husband. Aurelius, too, is the recipient of grace at the hands of the magician. Everyone in the tale reflects the ideal of grace in action.

This tale is the antithesis to the Physician's Tale, which is characterized by the nearly total denial of grace. The characters of the Franklin's Tale face an apparently insoluble situation, but in every complication of the plot, grace provides an escape. Unlike Virginia, it is possible for Dorigen to postpone her suicide for several days and eventually escape it altogether, while Virginia must die immediately. Not only are the fates of the two women different, but their worlds are very different. While Dorigen's world is one of courtesy and grace, Virginia's existence is one of suffering and injustice. Grace is not only a possibility for the characters of the Franklin's Tale; it is a quality which is admired and actively cultivated. Indeed, this grace almost becomes a

laughing matter because of the characters' warped morals. For this reason, the Franklin's Tale achieves a happy ending, while the Physician's Tale devolves into tragedy.

Although the Knight's Tale is a chivalric romance, it shares a pagan setting with the Physician's Tale. However, the treatment of justice, grace, and fortune differs sharply in the two tales. While Apius embodies all that may be wrong with an authority figure, Theseus represents the ideal ruler. From the beginning of the tale, he is established as a merciful man. As Theseus returns to his home, he is confronted by a group of women in mourning who appeal to him to:

Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse!
Som drope of pitee, thurgh they gentillesse,
Upon us wrecched women lat thou falle.
(I. 919-921)

Immediately, Theseus is so struck with pity that "Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke" (I. 954). And he leaves to wreak their vengeance upon Creon and the city of Thebes. This incident illustrates not only Theseus' grace, but his willingness to take action upon that feeling as well. The same incident also shows Theseus' exercise of justice. Feeling the women to have been wronged, he takes action to set things right, to punish the offenders, and to comfort the unfortunate as much as possible. To that end, Theseus destroys

and "to the ladyes he restored agayn/The bones of hir housbondes that were slayn" (I. 991-992).

Theseus' bountiful nature does not appear to extend to those who are on the side of his enemy. When Palamon and Arcite are discovered alive in among the fallen Thebans:

. . .he ful soone hem sente
To Athenes, to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly--he nolde no raunsoun.
(I. 1022-1024)

Here we see Theseus' honor in his refusal to accept a ransom, which would reduce warfare to a mercenary endeavor, as well as violate his sense of justice. Perhaps the young men receive the justice they deserve because they have brought this fate upon themselves, while the women are the hapless victims of Fortune in the form of the Theban army. Nonetheless, the young men have no recourse to grace.

Theseus' tendency to temper justice with grace again becomes apparent when he comes upon Palamon and Arcite fighting in the forest. Theseus' immediate reaction is to deal justice to them. Not only are they both illegal aliens, so to speak, but they are also violating the laws of chivalric combat by fighting "Withouten juge or oother officere" (I. 1712). Having heard their reasons, Theseus' judgment is a stern one:

. . . "This is a short conclusioun.
 Youre owene mouth, by youre confessioun,
 Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde.
 It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde.
 Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!"
 (I. 1743-1747)

However, Theseus once again finds a group of ladies appealing to him for mercy. In this case, the ladies of his court petition his grace for the two lovers.

The play between justice and grace in Theseus' mind is very interesting. The anger that Theseus feels is the impetus to justice, while reason calls for grace:

And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
 He hath considered shortly, in a clause,
 The trespas of him bothe, and eek the cause,
 And although that his ire hir bothe excused,
 Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused.
 (I. 1762-1766)

Theseus is a good ruler precisely because he allows his reason to guide him to right action. In this respect, he stands in obvious contrast to Apius in the Physician's Tale. Apius is ruled by the emotions of lust, anger, and despair. On the other hand, Theseus allows reason to rule over emotion and grace to temper justice. In this decision, he discourses on the importance of the act of mercy:

And softe unto hymself he seyde, "Fy
 Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
 But been a leon, bothe in a word and dede,
 To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,

As well as to a proud, despitous man
 That wol mayntene that he first bigan.
 That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
 That in swich cas kan no divisioun,
 But weyeth pride and humblesse afteroon."
 (I. 1773-1781)

Theseus' ability to make reason control his emotions is one of the marks which sets him apart from Apus. This characteristic, along with the willingness to be merciful, makes Theseus a man of moral integrity and a model ruler.

However, in spite of Theseus' estimable character and the tempering of justice with grace, the Knight's Tale ends in an atmosphere of joy tempered by sorrow. The characters in the Knight's Tale, cannot escape the hand of Fortune. The Knight points out that fate causes inexplicable, seemingly impossible things to happen, because:

The destinee, ministre general,
 That executeth in the world over al
 The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
 So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
 The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,
 Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
 That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere
 For certainly, oure appetites heere,
 Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
 Al it this reuled by the sights above.
 (I. 1663-1672)

Therefore, Arcite wins the tournament, but Palamon gets the girl. Since fate cannot be averted, Theseus asserts that "Thanne is it wysdom as it thynketh me,/To maken vertu of necessitee". (I. 3041-3042). In other words,

since destiny cannot be changed, one must make the best of circumstance, whatever it may be.

Perhaps Theseus' counsel about acceptance can help to enlighten our understanding of Virginia's fate and her father's reaction. Since her fate cannot be averted, it is best to acquiesce to the situation and to resolve her fate as quickly as possible. Whatever the case, one cannot avoid one's destiny, and as it is Emelye's destiny to marry Palamon, so it is Virginia's destiny to die. However, Virginius' stoical acceptance of fate is not an admirable characteristic, because the result of his passivity is Virginia's death. Rather than fighting for her, he kills her.

The Knight's Tale and the Physician's Tale present an interesting paradox. Fate is a factor in human life which cannot be controlled by virtue, justice, grace, or reason. It is this fate which lends uncertainty to all human dealings. On the other hand, fate cannot be avoided; Palamon and Arcite are destined to love the same woman. Palamon is destined to have her in defeat while Arcite loses her in victory. Emelye is destined to marry against her will. Saturn's intervention in the Knight's Tale does not avert tragedy. Arcite's death is inescapable. However, the gods' action does bring good out of evil in the marriage of Palamon and Emelye. In the Physician's Tale, Apis falls into evil as inevitably as Virginia and her father must adhere to that

which is right. Each incident in the Virginia story leads unerringly to the merciless execution of fate.

Morton Bloomfield points out that the Physician's Tale is a "tragedy of victimization" like the Man of Law's Tale; the two tales are similar in several ways. First, through a long series of digressions and apostrophes, the narrator distances the reader from the tale and its characters.¹ Second, Constance and Virginia are passive victims.² Neither resists her fate; each is "a victim, a sufferer, the essence of patience itself."³ However, while Constance's story ends with her return to her husband and father, Virginia's story ends in death. The Man of Law's Tale, like the other tales of victimization, operates on the principle of poetic justice. Constance and Friselda, for example, surmount their trials and are restored to happiness. The wicked characters in these tales are punished for their sins. The only exception to this generalization is the Physician's Tale, which functions by injustice rather than poetic justice. Virginia is the only heroine who does not escape death.

The treatment of grace and justice in the Knight's

¹Morton W. Bloomfield, "The Man of Law's Tale: A Tragedy of Victimization and a Christian Comedy," PMLA, 87, No. 3 (May 1972), p. 385.

²Bloomfield, p. 386.

³Bloomfield, p. 386.

and Physician's tales leaves uncertainty about the state of a world in which fate outweighs all other forces. However, the Parson's Tale does not reflect this uncertainty. Just as the Parson's Tale represents the culmination of the Canterbury pilgrimage, the tale also culminates in the representation of grace and justice. The tale approaches the two concepts in the light of Christian thought. Man deserves only punishment because of his innate tendency to fall into sin. However, a way has been provided for man to escape the consequences of sin, because God "wole no man perisse but wole that we comen alle to the knoweleche of hym and to the blissful life that is perdurable" (X. 72-75). By God's grace, man can find salvation through contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The Parson dwells heavily on the Seven Deadly Sins as an indication of man's unworthiness. But in spite of man's lack of merit, a way has been provided to escape the "horroure and grisly dread" of punishment (X. 222).

Because of its pagan setting, the Physician's Tale lacks this conception of grace. God's grace is unavailable, and man is subject to the caprice of Fortune. The characters in the Physician's Tale experience complete subjugation to fate, but this is not a common theme in the Canterbury Tales. Even in the Knight's Tale, where fate rules the lives of men, the consequences of fate are

at least mediated by Theseus' guiding hand. No such guidance exists in the Physician's Tale, where the characters are both instruments and victims of fate.

In the Physician's Tale, grace and justice are not operative, and Fortune is left in total control. This theme brings the tale into sharp contrast with the philosophy of the Canterbury collection as a whole. No other tale treats the conflict between fate and virtue in quite the same way. The Physician's Tale serves to illuminate the theme of the Canterbury Tales through contrast. The proper function of grace and justice becomes more apparent as they are viewed in a world in which their function becomes negative. The confusion of the Physician's Tale remains unresolved, but serves the larger purpose of clarifying the audience's perceptions of grace and justice.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The Physician's Tale is one of the most interesting stories in the Canterbury Tales because of the complexity of its moral framework. The plot dates from Livy's History of Rome, and the story has been retold by others. However, Chaucer's treatment of the Virginia story is unique in the depth of its emotional range and the difficulty of the moral problems it poses.

In the story of Virginia, many problems are raised. One is brought to question the place of justice in a world where no justice exists, a world in which the innocent suffer at the hands of the guilty. Further doubts are raised by the absence of grace as a force in people's lives. The conventional understanding of grace as a manifestation of undeserved favor is not at question. But, if Claudius may receive Virginius' grace, then why is grace unavailable to Apius, his accomplices, and especially to Virginia?

The Physician's and the Host's moral interpretations do not answer these questions. The Physician draws the conclusion that the tale instructs his listeners to abandon sin before the consequences of sin must be paid. The Host sees the tale as an illustration of the way the gifts of Fortune and Nature may lead to grief. Neither interpretation is valid within the context of the tale. The problem resolves itself into a conflict between jus-

tice, grace, and fortune. Justice and grace do not function effectively in the Physician's Tale, and as a result, the reader is left with a sense of confusion and dissatisfaction. The world represented in this tale is ruled over by capricious fate rather than by rational morality.

The tragedy of the Physician's Tale stems from the fact that there is "no grace. . .no remedye." By this theme, the Physician's Tale is set apart from the other tales of the Canterbury collection. Whether popular or chivalric, secular, or religious, the other tales dealing with justice and grace avoid the bleak pessimism of the Physician's Tale. Even the Knight's Tale, which turns on the inevitability of fate, shows Theseus attempting to rule with justice and grace. Through the good ruler, the effects of fate are at least minimized, if they cannot be eliminated.

Through this contrast, the Physician's Tale is able to shed light upon the rest of the tales. Taken as a whole, the Canterbury Tales does not argue that grace and justice are failures. Indeed, most of the tales prove just the opposite. The Man of Law's Tale, the Knight's Tale, and Troilus and Criseyde all leave the problem of fate unsolved, but the prevailing theme seems to be that grace is a necessary, if not entirely effective, force in human life. But the mood of the Physician's Tale is one

of hopelessness and despair. The prevailing mood of Chaucer's poetry is the hope for "Jerusalem celestial" (X. 51) and the sense of God's eternal presence. Existence does not end in death, but in the Parson's promise of grace and hope. The bleakness of the Physician's Tale throws that pathway into a clearer light. This highlighting is accomplished through the contrast between grace and a merciless existence, between justice and the absence of all fairness, between hope and the depths of despair. To see this contrast more clearly, the Physician's Tale must be viewed not in isolation but as a part of the whole.

The Physician's Tale succeeds in the goal of clarifying through contrast. For this reason, the tale is far from being the disastrous failure it has been called.¹ Instead, the strength of the Physician's Tale lies in the very confusion which it engenders. In Virginia's fate, we are shown the absence of God's law. In Apis' death, we see the need for God's grace. In the debacle caused by blind fate, the desire for divine control becomes an almost tangible reality. Beside the other tales, the Physician's Tale becomes a study in paradox.

Viewed in this light, the Physician's Tale is a successful link in the Canterbury sequence. Through paradox the tale facilitates a better understanding of

¹Coghill, p. 126-128.

the function of justice and grace in the other tales of the collection. Only by taking this paradox into account can the value of the tale be determined. It is the virtue of the Physician's Tale that in the antithesis of the tale to its counterparts we achieve a richer appreciation of the whole of the Canterbury Tales.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bartholomew, Barbara. Fortuna and Natura: A Reading of Chaucer Narratives. London: Mouton and Co., 1966.
- Beidler, Peter G. "The Pairing of the Franklin's Tale and the Physician's Tale." The Chaucer Review, 3, No. 3 (1969), 275-279.
- Boccaccio. Boccaccio on Poetry. Ed. and trans. Charles G. Osgood. 1930; rpt. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956.
- Boethius. The Consolation of Philosophy. Trans. Richard Green. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962.
- Coghill, Nevill. "Chaucer's Narrative Art in The Canterbury Tales." In Chaucer and Chaucerians. Ed. D. S. Brewer. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1966.
- Delaney, Sheila. "Politics and the Paralysis of Poetic Imagination in The Physician's Tale." Studies in the Age of Chaucer 3 (1981), 47-60.
- De Lorris, Guillaume and Jean de Meun. The Romance of the Rose. Trans. Harry W. Robbins. Ed. Charles W. Dunn. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1962.
- Fichte, Jeorg O. "Incident-History-Exemplum-Novella: The Transformation of History in Chaucer's Physician's Tale." Unpublished article.
- Hanson, Thomas B. "Chaucer's Physician as Storyteller and Moralizer." The Chaucer Review, 7, No. 2 (1972), 132-139.
- Howard, Donald R. The Idea of the Canterbury Tales. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976.
- Joseph, Gerhard. "The Gifts of Nature, Fortune, and Grace in the Physician's, Pardoner's, and Parson's Tales." The Chaucer Review, 9, No. 3 (1975), 237-245.
- Kinney, Thomas L. "The Popular Meaning of Chaucer's Physician's Tale." Literature and Psychology, 28, No. 2 (1978), 76-84.

- Lancashire, Anne. "Chaucer and the Sacrifice of Issac." The Chaucer Review, 9, No. 4 (1975), 320-323.
- Leicester, H. Marshall, Jr. "The Art of Impersonation: A General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales." PMLA, 95, No. 2 (1980), 213-224.
- Longworth, Robert. "The Doctor's Dilemma: A Comic View of the Physician's Tale." Criticism, 13 (1971), 223-233.
- Mandel, Jerome H. "Governance in the Physician's Tale." The Chaucer Review, 10, No. 4 (1976), 316-325.
- Middleton, Anne. "The Physician's Tale and Love's Martyrs: 'Ensamples No Mo than Ten' as a Method in the Canterbury Tales." The Chaucer Review, 8, No. 1 (197), 9-32.
- Ramsey, Lee C. "'The Sentence of It Sooth Is': Chaucer's Physician's Tale." The Chaucer Review, 6, No. 2 (1971), 185-197.
- Robertson, D. W. A Preface to Chaucer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962.
- Shannon, Edgar F. "The Physician's Tale." In Sources and Analogues for Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1941.
- Tupper, Frederick. "Chaucer's 'Doctour of Phisik'." Nation, 96 (1913), 640-641.
- Ussery, Huling E. Chaucer's Physician: Medicine and Literature in 14th Century England (Tennessee Studies in English 19). New Orleans: Tulane Univ. Press, 1971.
- Ussery, Huling E. "The Appropriateness of the Physician's Tale to It's Teller." Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, 50, 545-556.
- Young, Karl. "The Maidenly Virtues of Chaucer's Virginia." Speculum, 16, No. 3 (July 1941), 340-349.

VITA

Joana Preast Simmers was born in Rome, Georgia on October 12, 1960. She attended elementary schools in Atlanta, Georgia; Ducktown, Tennessee; and Chattanooga, Tennessee. She attended Campbell High School in Fairburn, Georgia and entered Shorter College in September 1977 on the Early Admissions Program. In May 1981, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. In the fall of 1981, she accepted a teaching assistantship at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and began study toward a Master's degree. This degree was awarded in December 1983.

The author is a member of the Modern Language Association. Mrs. Simmers will be pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in English after graduation.