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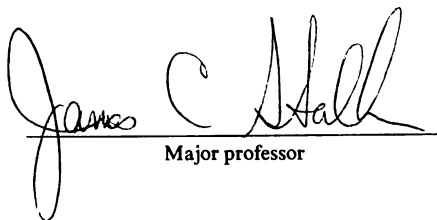
POLITE SPEECH: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CHAUCER
AND THE GAWAIN-POET

presented by

Hyesoon Lim Eun

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POLITE SPEECH: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF
CHAUCER AND THE GAWAIN-POET

By

Hyesoon Lim Eun

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ABSTRACT

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By

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Using sociolinguistic theory, the polite speech of Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet has been analyzed in terms of the two singular pronouns, various vocatives and different syntactic forms of request. Through their variations in the use of the second singular pronouns *ye* and *thou*, the characters in these works show their attitudes toward each other as well as their relative social status. In order to analyze these relationships, the distinctive use of the two singular pronouns *ye* and *thou* is classified into four categories of politeness; honorific, humble, neutral and sarcastic.

Vocatives were also analyzed in symmetrical and asymmetrical situations to show the relationships among the characters. Calling someone by his personal name, a kinship term such as *brother*, *suster*, *cosyn*, *nece* and *uncle* or both indicates that their relationships are friendly or hostile whereas honorific titles such as *lorde*, *sire*, *maister*, *lady*, *dame* and *madame* were employed in polite speech to show social distance. On the other hand, professional or rank



labels were normally used as neutral vocatives even though they were often employed to show animosity between professional enemies with respect to their occupation.

Different syntactic forms of request such as imperatives, statements and interrogatives were used to define the situation in which they occur. Though they all have the illocutionary force of requests they have different expressive values depending on the situation in which they are spoken. Generally speaking, the more indirect a speech is, the more polite it is considered in an appropriate situation.

Above all, social context is very important in interpreting polite speech both at the lexical and at the syntactic level. Depending on the social context, polite speech can be interpreted as sarcasm or as an insult.

Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet took great advantage of the linguistic varieties which the language of their time, late Middle English, could provide in showing their views on issues such as 'gentillesse,' 'courtly love,' 'marriage,' 'friendship' and 'courtesy' in their own ways.

Through the examination of social factors determining the use of polite speech in Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet, I tried to find out the social value of these linguistic features in the society of the late Middle English period.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. THE DISTINCTIVE USE OF THE SECOND SINGULAR.....	24
PRONOUNS <i>YE</i> AND <i>THOU</i>	
The honorific-polite <i>Ye</i>	27
The humble-polite <i>Ye</i>	50
The neutral-polite <i>Ye</i>	57
The sarcastic-polite <i>Ye</i>	68
III. VOCATIVES.....	79
Personal names and kinship terms.....	81
Professional or rank labels.....	95
Honorific titles.....	101
IV. REQUESTS.....	145
Direct requests.....	151
Indirect requests.....	168
V. CONCLUSION.....	193
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	201



I. INTRODUCTION

Polite speech is used to keep social distance in public situations in Modern English. Besides keeping social distance, late Middle English employed a much wider range of features to mark politeness from honorific address to sarcastic address, and from socially distancing to socially intimate. These markers, although relatively absent in Modern English, are retained in some other languages, including Korean. Although the language is different, the principles remain much the same. Therefore I, as a native speaker of Korean, am much more sensitive to the use of these markers than Modern English speakers because my ear is more attuned to the use of intimate versus distancing pronouns, the use of vocatives to give honor or insult and the phrasing of requests which are socially appropriate. Among these items I am basically aware of the different coded social features.

There are a great many social features which are coded in the rules for the selection of a certain linguistic pattern. One selects the appropriate linguistic features which mark the politeness value of an utterance according to various complex and elusive social factors such as the



relative status of the speaker and the addressee, as well as the speaker's attitude towards the addressee.

Language can be used for various functions. In one traditional view, the functions of language are cognitive, evaluative and affective. The cognitive function is the use of language to express ideas, concepts and thoughts. The evaluative function is that language which conveys attitudes and values, and the affective function of language is to transmit emotion and feeling.¹ As one of the modifications to the traditional classification, Michael Halliday proposes three general functions which "to some degree supplement and cut across the three traditional functions" (Roger Bell, *Sociolinguistics*, p.85); the ideational, or the expression of content, the interpersonal, aimed at the establishment and maintenance of social relations, and the textual function whereby language provided links with itself and with the situation in which it is used. Any utterance can fulfill more than one function.

Polite speech is a social attitude of the speaker expressed through a certain selection of linguistic markers or forms in a social relationship, so it has to do with the social context in the use or choice of language rather than the capacity of language to evoke ideas, or the expression of 'content.' Politeness in speech may be indicated by a wide variety of linguistic forms, but for this study I have focused on three drawn from the morphological, lexical and syntactic levels: the use of the second singular personal



pronouns *ye* and *thou*, vocatives, and request forms dependent on the social context.

Halliday (1978) divides the social context in which language occurs into two categories: social and situational. Social patterns include such social aspects of language use as the establishment of boundaries in interpersonal relations, as well as the social status of the speaker and the addressee. Situational patterns are the settings in which language is used.

There have been some systematic studies in modern contemporary languages focused on how politeness is marked through linguistic features, though they are few. The major contribution is that of Brown and Gilman (1960), who examined the use of the two second person pronouns (referred to for convenience as T and V, following the Latin *Tu* and *Vos*) in some of the Indo-European languages. They argue in their well-known article "The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity" that the symmetrical and asymmetrical use of the two pronouns varies along with the dimensions of solidarity and power. They also argue that nonreciprocal patterns of address have given way, through time, to symmetrical ones, with the T form now being used by both interlocutors to indicate solidarity, and the V form being used by both to indicate social distance. They suggest that the importance of expressing status difference through pronoun usage has diminished in recent times relative to the importance of



expressing degrees of solidarity. The shift reflects basic changes in value systems.

Brown and Ford (1961) also suggest in the study of forms of address in American society that there is very little expression of status differences in the current use of address forms. They looked at modes of address used in American plays and collected data on actual usage and self-reported usage in American English. They analyzed three patterns: reciprocal use of first name, reciprocal use of honorific title before last name, and the nonreciprocal situation where one person uses first name and the other uses an honorific title before last name according to the relationship between speaker and addressee. Their study showed that the use of title before last name indicates distance and deference, while the first name is used to express both intimacy and condescension. Brown and Ford's study also showed how the development of a personal relationship affects the progression from mutual use of title before last name to nonreciprocal use of address, to mutual use of first name. However, in the Middle English period, social class differences played a very important role in the use of address forms.

One other linguistic treatment of politeness is that of Robin Lakoff (1972), who emphasizes the social context of the utterance in determining the choice of politeness markers. Focusing on modal auxiliaries as devices for politeness, she argues that the degree of politeness of an



utterance can be changed depending on the situation in which it occurs. An auxiliary verb which is considered polite in one context can be interpreted as impolite in another context. For example, under ordinary circumstances, the modal verb 'must' imposes an obligation, whereas the modal verb 'may' allows the addressee to do something. Therefore, the use of 'may' is considered more polite than that of 'must.' However, the degree of politeness can be reversed if such sentences as 'you must have some of this cake' and 'you may have some of this cake' are spoken by a hostess at a party.² As shown in her examples, in order to be able to predict how rules are going to apply, one has to be able to identify the assumptions about the social context of an utterance as well as any other implicit assumptions made by the speaker.

Susan Ervin-Tripp (1976) shows that a number of different types of speech acts can be expressed in a variety of syntactic forms. She identified six types of directives, ordered approximately according to the relative power of speaker and addressee: need statements, imperatives, imbedded imperatives, permission directives, question directives and hints. According to her analysis the first two categories, need statements and imperatives, are used to inferiors or familiar equals, while, at the other extreme, question directives and hints are used when the task seems to be difficult to ask someone to do. The two middle



categories, imbedded imperatives and permission directives, are used to superiors or unfamiliar addressees.³

The concept of politeness itself was discussed in considerable detail by Brown and Levinson (1978). After examining the various types of linguistic expression used to convey politeness in a wide variety of languages, they offer a detailed pragmatic model which describes the quality of social relationships with respect to politeness.⁴ They contend that social context or situation is the most important in interpreting polite speech, even though specific forms are often considered more polite than others.

As little research as there is focused on politeness markers in current English, there are no studies of polite speech in Middle English. By investigating the literary language of any period from a sociolinguistic point of view, one can see how the language reflects the society of that period and how the language can be exploited to express its morality and its value. Through the synchronic analysis of the markers of some aspects of polite speech in Middle English literature, it is possible to explore the literary effects which were present in the state of the language.

In analyzing polite speech as represented in the literature of Late Middle English, I assume, as Marie Borroff (1962) does in her book *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, that the characters in the literature use the language of everyday life in 'real' situations. She argues in her study of style that the fictional speaker uses "words



and phrases that the author himself might have used in everyday life " (35), apart from metrical form and word order. She explains that "the extent to which the language of literary works reproduces the language of everyday life is precisely what is to be determined " (35).

Since Russian Formalists and the members of Prague School such as Ejxenbaum, Sklovskij, Jakobson, and many other literary critics suggest that literature is linguistically autonomous because it consists of intrinsic properties which distinguish it from other kinds of discourse, it has been traditionally assumed within literary criticism that literary and non-literary discourse (or poetic and non-poetic) should be distinguished.

However, I agree with Mary Louise Pratt's argument in *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* that "it is both possible and necessary to develop a unified theory of discourse which allows us to talk about all the things people do in literature in the same terms we use to talk about all the other things people do with language" (xiii). Pratt develops her argument against the attempt to build the poetic/ordinary language opposition into linguistic theory, claiming "literary discourse must be viewed as a use rather than a kind of language" (xiii). As Pratt suggests, "socially-based, use-oriented linguistics is a prerequisite toward sealing the breach between formal and sociological approaches to literature" (xix). The only differences between the language of literature and of non-literature lie



in how language is used in a given utterance and context. She demonstrates "how some of the general principles of language use worked out by sociolinguists such as William Labov and Emmanuel Schegloff, and speech act theoreticians such as John Searle and H. Paul Grice can be used to describe what writers and readers are doing with the language when they are participating in works of literature" (xiii). Agreeing with Pratt, Michael Halliday (1978:57) proposes that any theory of language use should serve to describe literary language to the same extent it can describe ordinary language. Searle (1972) contends that both literary and non-literary language consist in performing speech acts of a quite specific kind called "illocutionary acts."⁵ Ohmann (1972) argues that literary works are discourses with the usual illocutionary rules suspended.⁶ As Ohmann (1974:54) puts it, many literary works are "imitation speech acts."

Stanley Fish (1980) also makes no distinction between literary language and 'ordinary' or 'real world' language. He says that "the very act of distinguishing between ordinary and literary language...leads to an inadequate account of both" (101). Therefore there is only one distinction which will be made between ordinary and literary language.

In the application of sociolinguistic theory to the literature, I have found that literature has some advantage over non-literature in analyzing the linguistic features



relating to social factors. The author will often supply words descriptive of the character's background, such as those dealing with social status, age, education or else. Above all, the most important advantage of analyzing speech used in literature is that such speech offers patterns that are understood by the audience and reader in that age. The case for using literature as a basis for a linguistic analysis has been well established (Page 1972; Halliday 1967; Chatman and Levin 1967; Saporta 1960; Jakobson 1960). Compared with lively research in modern literature, there are not many studies in Middle English literature from a sociolinguistic point of view. As far as the second singular personal pronouns are concerned, there have been some studies focused on their usage in Chaucer and the Gawain-poet. Finkenstaedt (1963) analyzed the pronoun usage of the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, Norman Nathan (1956), of the *Friar's Tale*, William Evans (1959), of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Charles C. Walcutt (1935), and Everett C. Johnston (1962), of *Troilus and Criseyde*. As for vocatives, however, there is no systematic study at all. William Stowell (1908) dealt with the honorific titles in French in his book *Old-French Titles of Respect in Direct Address*, which is the only work on vocatives I can refer to. At the syntactic level some speeches in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* have been studied with respect to 'courtesy' by A. C. Spearing (1964) and Cecily Clark (1966). With scanty



research of this field, I attempt to explain some linguistic features to mark politeness in Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet.

The distinctions of the second person pronouns *ye* and *thou* as singular, and various vocatives are discussed in terms of social patterns. Request forms which range from the most direct to the least direct are interpreted with respect to the situational context in which they are used.

These linguistic variants have been selected with the help of Concordance to Chaucer's work and other Middle English poetry,⁷ and *A Middle English Dictionary* (Francis Henry Stratmann's dictionary, rev. by Bradley, Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1891), from direct discourse in Late Middle English literature, particularly, from two poets, Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet, to analyze politeness in speech. Because I am dealing with direct discourse, I will take into account only the micro-conversational aspect of a work of literature--the conversations between the fictional characters within a work--rather than macro-conversation, the larger communication between the author of a work and his audience.

My discussion of polite speech is limited to the works of Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet because they represent the second half of the fourteenth century, which belongs to late Middle English literature.⁸ As far as polite speech is concerned, it has greater importance in late Middle English literature than in that of any other period in the history of English literature.



The late Middle English period was considered to be the most important in the history of the medieval English language and its literature. As Elizabeth Salter (1983:1) comments on this period in *Fourteenth Century English Poetry*, the late Middle English period was "the zenith of medieval civilization" and "the greatness of which was reflected in its literature." Compared with the earlier and later medieval period in which English poets were "almost silent," this period was very alive in poetry. As Salter also notes, "No later age has ever utilized poetry quite so naturally and so relentlessly " and "the whole range of medieval life-inner or outer-was expressed in poetry; it served practical needs and refined appetites with equal enthusiasm and fidelity" (1).

For three hundred years after the Normans conquered England in 1066, most literature was written in French or Latin. The upper classes spoke French, but the common people continued to speak English. Around the middle of the fourteenth century English finally received the official recognition of the upper class, as V. T. Scattergood notes:

In 1362 English was made the official language of the law and in the same year the Chancellor first opened Parliament with a speech in English.
(*Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century*, p.13)

With the development of English there was also a greater transition in the social and economic spheres of effective political power, than in the immediately earlier and subsequent periods. The outstanding features of the century were the broadening of the basis of the social hierarchy,

the rise of the bourgeoisie, and the working out in detail of the concept of limited monarchy. The traditional vertical structure of the society was mixed with the horizontal structure because of the sudden appearance of a new group, the middle class promoted by the expansion of trade. With increasing prosperity, the middle class, developed to a position of affluence and prestige between the hereditary nobility and the lower commons. The fluidity of social status is reflected in the literature in that period through the use of linguistic variants.

Late Middle English allowed great variation in all aspects of language because there was no standard English in the forms of a norm of correctness to which one should adhere.

Particularly, in grammar the second person plural pronoun *ye* began to be used to refer to a singular person, a usage which originates in the use of *ye* as a term of politeness. Thus, synchronic study of the distinctive usage of the two second singular personal pronouns *ye* and *thou* in this period helps to explain their diachronic development. Much of the English literature of this period is, if not straightforward translation, at least imitative of foreign works. Through translation and imitation many foreign words entered the language. Thus the writers could take a good advantage of the diverse aspect of language to their purpose.



As Doyle (1963) notes in *The Social Context of Medieval English Literature*, almost all medieval literature is ultimately didactic, overtly or covertly. One of the aims of literature of this period was the education of its audience in matters of current theological, political and ethical interest. Besides entertainment, the purpose of writing was to instruct the audience or reader by "instilling and encouraging a moral code." Jackson (1960) comments on the aim of writing in medieval literature as follows:

Much literature has been produced by authors who felt that society needed their help in overcoming its evils. Most satirists are would-be improvers of their social milieu. The more didactic authors of classical antiquity appealed strongly to medieval readers, since they had a purpose, announced or unannounced, to improve morals and lash out at wickedness.
 ("The Reasons for Writing Literature." in *Literature of the Middle Ages*, p.37)

By presenting the relationship of the characters in their works through their use of language, the Middle English writers tried to show their morality in order that they might teach the audience (or readers), concentrating on the language in terms of diversity rather than uniformity. Teaching social value from the author's point of view is the important aspect of medieval literary works. Therefore literature was used as a tool of encouragement to critique and change the values of the social system and the morality of that society.

Above all, the greatest ideal of this age, upheld by every writer was 'courtesy' (cortaysye). As D. S. Brewer



observes, a characteristic of much medieval literature was 'courtesy':

All viable societies necessarily practice some forms of self-control and mutual help among their members, some forms of decency and gracefulness in daily social intercourse. This necessity in part took the form, in medieval European feudal society, of courtesy.
(Chaucer and His Contemporaries, 1968, p.310)

Considering 'courtesy' as a word describing a relationship between persons, one of the chief ways that courtesy is made known is through the speech by which relationships are expressed and regulated.

Among others who represent late Middle English literature, Chaucer and the anonymous author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are writers whose main interests are on the social and moral level. Besides the fact that they were the great masters of language in the late Middle English period, they were considered the greatest didactic poets and they were both interested in 'courtesy.' They put much emphasis on 'courtesy,' one of the expressions of which is through the speech in their poems. In Chaucer, 'courtly love' and 'gentillesse' are reflected in the use of courteous speech. In the *Gawain-poet*, the setting of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is in the courts where 'courtesy' is demanded. The two courts of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Arthur's and Bercilak's are each represented as the height of 'courtesy.' In order to focus my analysis, I have chosen to concentrate on some works of Chaucer and the *Gawain-poet*, particularly on the *Canterbury Tales* and



Troilus and Criseyde by Chaucer, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by the other poet.

Since the depiction of courtesy is a reflection of the author's perception, some time must be devoted to biography.

Geoffrey Chaucer is known as the man who helped make the English language what it is today. He was probably born about 1340.⁹ He was the son of a well-to-do wine-merchant; member of the King's personal household; courtier; diplomatic envoy to France and Italy; high customs official and later a member of Parliament. He lived much of his life in the City of London, therefore his language is the dialect of East Midlands. As reflected in his works, he knew many of the area's most important men. He was dependent on French authority, and instead of turning to the native alliterative verse, he wrought, by critical cultivation, to reform and establish an English style, so he is called the father of English poetry. He also made the English language polite and courteous. As George H. Cowling (1971) observes, "no English dialect, before Chaucer wrote, was quite definitely the language of polite and courtely verse" (181).

The *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde* are considered the representative works of Chaucer on which his reputation rests. The weight of these two works makes all the others, that is, what is written by and about Chaucer, significant and interesting, even though there is



diminishing objective coincidence between his minor works and what is known of his life (Fisher, p.952).

The *Canterbury Tales* is about a pilgrimage. This was the one social function in medieval life that would bring people of different social castes together on a footing of equality. Though the exact time when Chaucer first conceived the idea of writing the *Canterbury Tales* is not known, it is generally thought that he had begun it either in 1385 or in 1386. The sources of the tales are found in other European literature, yet the work as a whole is markedly English. Chaucer gave vivid character sketches of all kinds of people, high and low. The characters in the *Canterbury Tales* are so real and varied that they represent the whole range of humanity in medieval England. Each tale has significance in relation to other tales, but also in relation to the interlude between the tales, to the character of its own teller, and to the characters of the other Canterbury Pilgrims who tell the other Tales and who are imagined to make up the audiences. Characters are individuals and at the same time are moral and social representatives. These Tales are the entertainment the Pilgrims provide for each other and at the same time they are a fuller revelation of themselves, their interests, attitudes and antagonisms.

Through their language interaction with each other in the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer shows their social relationships as well as their social rank in that



hierarchical society. His shifts of style reflect the changing relationship, not only between fictional characters, but also the poet and his literary tradition.

About the same time the *Canterbury Tales* was completed between 1390 and 1393, Chaucer was working on *Troilus and Criseyde*, which is considered as "the first modern novel" (John Speirs, p.20). Though somewhat lesser in importance now, it "was referred to more often and praised more highly than the *Canterbury Tales*" (Robinson, p.309). Though the story was known to be derived from an Italian poem, *Il Filostrato* written by Boccaccio, Chaucer modified the story by adding and reducing some parts. In particular the relationships between characters in the story were quite differently described from those in *Il Filostrato*, such as the friendship between Troilus and Pandarus; and Pandarus and Criseyde. The medieval convention of courtly love is also handled critically in the poem. My interest in *Troilus and Criseyde* is how the relationships between the characters and their attitude toward each other are shown through the use of language, such as friendship and courtly love in hierarchical society.

Chaucer's love vision poem, *Parliament of Fowls*, was written in a form which was popular in that period. It reflects the hierarchy of all ranks and provides good data for analyzing how language reflects social status and marks politeness. This poem is believed to have been begun in May 1382 and was therefore ready for St Valentine's day, 14



February 1383. As a form of love-visions, this poem is concerned with the question of who makes the best lover among the birds, who stand as representatives of all living species, from the noblest to the lowest. The birds compose a hierarchy of worth comparable to, though not exactly matching, that of fourteenth-century society, with the hawks and eagles highest, representing the highest' knightly class, and the other groups of birds lower in the scale. Nature, the vicar of God, endorses this hierarchy, and the most worthy birds have the right to choose their mates first.

Another great poet of Chaucer's time is the *Gawain*-poet, whose name and identity are not known. He may take his place beside Chaucer as a commentator upon his time. He shares with Chaucer and other writers in that period a recognition of the hierarchical nature of society. The poet himself is thought to have been highly educated, familiar with courtly French literature as well as English alliterative poetry, and deeply learned in Scripture and controversial religious questions. His most notable trait, however, is his sympathetic understanding of the aristocratic life and his admiration for its highest ideals of civilized conduct. Though it is still not proven that the other poems such as *Pearl*, *Purity*, and *Patience* are written by the same poet, I share the general view that the poems are the work of a single writer, the *Gawain*-poet.¹⁰

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These four Middle English poems are preserved in a single manuscript now in the British Museum, known as Cotton Nero A.x: *Pearl*, *Purity*, *Patience*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, listed in the order in which they appear in manuscript. The date of the manuscript is about 1400, and internal evidence suggests that the four poems were composed between 1360 and 1395, in the dialect of the Northwest Midlands. It is generally assumed that the simpler poems are the earlier, and the more complex later, thus the alliterative poems, *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which are more complex than the earlier two, can be considered to be latest.¹¹

The alliterative romance poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a primary source for this study, is considered "one of the great poems of the Middle Ages" and is built upon 'courtesy.'¹² The focus of the poem is to maintain the honor of the Arthur's Court and the order of chivalry. Even though it has its own sources, it is considered a totally different type of poetry apart from its French romantic roots. Because as John Speirs (1966) already notes in *Medieval English Poetry*, the Beheading Game and the Temptation, the two major elements of the plot, are not found in combination in any conceivable source, although they are found separately elsewhere. The value of 'courtesy' is defined in the poem through the two elements of the plot which are considered moral tests for its hero, Gawain.

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Pearl consists of a dialogue between a dreamer-father and his daughter, Pearl, who had died in infancy and had been redeemed by Christ. This poem is basically a dream or vision allegory in the popular medieval tradition. Though there are still many discussions about dialect, authorship, elegy versus allegory, theology and symbolism in the poem, my concern focuses on the relationships between the dreamer-father and his two-year old daughter through the language they are using in the poem. The dreamer-father is instructed by or arguing with his glorified daughter throughout *Pearl*. In showing respect to his daughter the father uses *ye* to her, which makes their relationship ironic. However, their normal father-daughter relationship is also shown in the use of the pronouns, *thou* to the daughter and *ye* to the father, when they are talking about worldly things.

In subsequent chapters, I examine the ways these two authors used polite speech to mark the social status of the characters, comment indirectly on their characters' relationships, and judge the social system they write about. By showing interesting insights about the characters of the same or different social rank, and about the various situations with respect to the important themes of the period, each author reveals his linguistic flexibility by choosing the best linguistic variants.

I will analyze polite speech of direct discourse in the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Parliament of Fowles* and *Troilus and*



Criseyde by Chaucer, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl* by the *Gawain*-poet. In doing so, I will take into account from a sociolinguistic viewpoint the distinctive use of the second person singular pronouns *ye* and *thou*; the use of various vocatives such as calling someone by his personal name alone and/or by kinship terms or non-honorific common nouns, professional or rank labels, or the honorific titles; and the use of the different syntactic request forms, based on the speech acts theory developed by J. L. Austin (1962) and John R. Searle (1969).

Notes

¹Roger T. Bell, *Sociolinguistics*, p.82. Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*, p.30. They introduce three influential theories about the functions of language. The first one is I.A. Richards' four types of function; sense, feeling, tone and intention. The second is the one by Jakobson who distinguishes six functions; referential, emotive, connotive, phatic, poetic, and metalinguistic. As a more recent one Halliday's three way classification is considered.

²Robin Lakoff, "Language in Context," *Language*, 48 (1972), pp.907-27.

³Susan Ervin-Tripp, "Is Sybil there? The Structure of Some American English Directives," *Language in Society* 5 (1976), pp. 25-66

⁴P.Brown and S.Levinson (1978), "Universals in language usage," In E.N.Goody, ed., *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction*.

⁵John R. Searle (1975), "The Logical status of fictional discourse." *New Literary History* 6, 2, pp. 319-322.

⁶R. Ohmann, "Speech, Literature and the Space Between," *New Literary History* 4 (1972), pp. 47-63.

⁷J. S. P. Tatlock and A. G. Kennedy, *A Concordance of the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Washington, 1927).

Barnet Kottler and Alan M. Markman, *A Concordance to Five Middle English Poems: Cleanness, St. Erkenwald, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Patience, Pearl* (Pittsburgh, 1972).

⁸The late Middle English was usually thought of as the period of Chaucer.

⁹I rely mainly on Fisher and Robinson for Chaucer's biography.



¹⁰Believing that the Gawain-poet wrote the other three poems, Larry Benson mentions as follows:

"If it could be proved that they were written by two, three, or four different authors, we would still have to assume that those authors knew, admired, and echoed one another's work, and we would merely have replaced "the school of the Gawain-poet."

(*Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 1965, p.xi.)

¹¹D. S. Brewer, "The Gawain-poet; A General Application of Four Poems," EIC 16 (April 1967) 130-142.

¹²John Speirs, p.221.

II. THE DISTINCTIVE USE OF THE SECOND SINGULAR PRONOUNS

YE AND THOU

The second person singular pronoun *you* in modern English developed from the Middle English *ye* which was originally only plural. Though the distinction between *ye* and *thou* does not exist in Modern Standard English any more, a synchronic study of *ye* and *thou* in Late Middle English literature from a sociolinguistic point of view can help to explain the historic development and the survival of *ye* as a singular pronoun as well as explaining how it took over the function of *thou*. The use of the plural pronoun *ye* to refer to a singular person appeared in the Middle English Period. Used with increasing frequency, it finally expelled the original second singular pronoun *thou* from Modern Standard English.¹ Besides the phonological reasons for this change² the replacement of the original singular pronoun *thou* by the plural pronoun *ye* can be explained sociolinguistically with respect to politeness.

In Old English there were two second person pronouns, the plural *3e* and the singular *þu*, besides the dual pronoun *git*.³ In the early Middle English period, because of partly



the influence of French, the language of the court, the plural form of the second personal pronoun, *ye*, with its oblique case *you* and possessive *youre*, began to replace the singular forms *thou*, *thee*, *thy(n)*.⁴ At the beginning it was employed to refer to a singular person in a very limited way similar to the use of the polite *vous* in French. In French the plural *vous* had already been used as a respectful or polite form of address.⁵

The French practice of using *vous* influenced the English use of *ye* with a singular referent. However, the rules governing the selection of *thou* or *ye* as the appropriate form of address were not the same as those determining the alternation between *tu* and *vous* in French. A comparison of English translations with their French equivalents shows that there is no regular, mechanical substitution of a *thou* for a *tu* and a *ye* for a *vous*.⁶

Many scholars have studied the English usage of the second singular person pronouns *ye* and *thou* independent of the French influence. Studies of the function of the second singular person pronouns *ye* and *thou* have been done by Kennedy (1915), who writes on the thirteenth century usage, and Stidtsen (1917), who writes on the fourteenth century usage. Based on their discoveries, Nathan (1957) writes on Chaucer's usage of *ye* and *thou* in the *Friar's Tale*. Walcutt (1935) and Johnston (1962) study the use of the second-person pronoun in *Troilus and Criseyde*. The most detailed analysis of the usage of the two second singular pronoun is,



however, the one by William W. Evans, Jr. (1959), who examines the pronoun usage of the *Gawain*-poet in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In his dissertation he asserts that *ye* as the singular pronoun is "the norm in his romance," though "the historical singular-*thou*-was still the norm in colloquial speech."⁷ According to his conclusion, the *Gawain*-poet departs radically from fourteenth-century English reality in which the two second person singular pronouns were used altogether.

Finkenstaedt (1963), however, focuses on Middle English usage of the two singular pronouns from the sociolinguistic point of view.⁸ He contends that the plural form *ye* was used as 'marked' for politeness when it referred to a singular person, in contrast with the 'unmarked' form *thou*, which was the normal second singular person pronoun in Middle English. As the plural *ye* encroached increasingly on the territory of the singular *thou*, *ye* became 'unmarked' with regard to any pretensions to politeness by the end of the sixteenth century.⁹ By Shakespeare's time the situation was completely reversed; that is, *thou* was used as marked, implying contempt or insult in contrast with the 'unmarked' *ye*.¹⁰ Contempt is also shown in Coke's berating of Sir Walter Raleigh; "All that he did was by thy instigation, thou Viper; for I thou thee, thou Traitor" (Finkenstaedt, p.148). Gradually decreasing in use, *thou* became obsolete in the standard language in the eighteenth century except for poems and addresses to God (Finkenstaedt, p.195).



According to Kennedy's examination (p.90), the use of the plural *ye* as a pronoun of address to a singular person first appeared in English literature in the thirteenth century (around 1252). As the literature developed, the singular meaning of *ye* began to replace the singular form *thou* more frequently, as authors highlighted contrasts between characters and situations in the conversation of late Middle English literature.

Since *thou* alone was used as the second person singular pronoun in Old English and in earlier Middle English, the usage of *ye* as the second person singular pronoun along with *thou* in late Middle English literature could become a sociolinguistic tag. By using this tag the author could express the speaker's respect or humility towards the addressee or relative social distance between speaker and addressee. The author could indicate sarcasm on the part of the speaker. Or, finally, the author may use any combination of these usages. Thus, I classify the usages of singular *ye* into four general categories in terms of relative politeness: honorific, humble, neutral, and sarcastic.

The honorific-polite *ye*:

The first usage category of the polite form of *ye* is used to show the speaker's respect for the addressee or to exalt an addressee who is superior in terms of social station, age, learnedness or morality. I will call this



usage 'honorific-politeness.' The second singular pronoun *ye* was first used in the asymmetrical speech situation, a situation in which the speaker uses *ye* to his superior and receives *thou* from the latter. This usage is well explained by W.W. Skeat:

Thou is the language of a lord to a servant
 ...whilst *ye* is the language of a servant to a lord.
 (*The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, p. 175)

However, this asymmetrical use of the honorific-polite *ye* expanded to other relations between superior and inferior. Thus I will use the word 'superior' in terms of the 'power' semantic of Brown and Gilman who examine the relationship between the polite and familiar pronouns of address in several European languages using the dimensions of power and solidarity. According to Brown and Gilman, "there are many bases of power-physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalized role in church, the state, the army or within family " (*Language and Social Context*, p.255). I will apply the word 'superior' not only to social status, but also to age, learnedness and morality.

The fact that Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet have their characters use the honorific-polite *ye* asymmetrically to their social superiors shows the vertical relationship between speaker and addressee in their works, reflecting the hierarchical society of that period. In the *Canterbury Tales* Chaucer has the Host use *ye* to his social superiors: to the Knight and his son the Squire, who belong to



nobility, and to the Monk and the Prioress, who are members of the upper ranks of their religious orders.

In contrast to his use of the polite *ye* to his social superiors, the Host addresses his social inferiors or his equals with *thou*: the Miller, the Reeve, the Cook and the Canon's Yeoman who represent the working class; the low clergy: the Parish Priest,¹¹ the Nun's Priest who accompanies the Prioress, and the Pardoner whose profession is the most contemptible, the Summoner, a functionary of the ecclesiastical courts and the Pardoner's friend and travelling companion, and the Manciple, who may be considered a lower stratum businessman.

This asymmetrical use of *ye* and *thou* is also shown in the *Parliament of Fowls*, in which the second falcon addresses the royal falcon with *ye*, indicating the natural superiority of the birds:

Another tersel egle spak anon,
Of lower kynde, and seyde, "That shal nat be!
I love hire bet than ye don, by Seynt John,
Or at the leste i love as wel as ye,
And longer have served hire in my degre. (449-53)

On the other hand, *thou* is used by the falcon to the duck, his inferior:

"Now fy, cherl," quod the gentil terselet,
"Out of the donghil cam that word ful right!
Thow canst nat seen what thyng is wel beset.
Thow farst by love as oules don by lyght:
The day hem blent, but wel they sen by nyght.
Thy kynde is of so low a wrechednesse
That what love is thow canst nat seen ne gesse.
(596-602)

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This asymmetrical use of the second singular pronouns shows the hierarchical relationship between the speaker and the addressee.

In the same way, in *Troilus and Criseyde* Pandarus usually uses the polite *ye* to his social superiors who are Trojan royalty, who in turn always use *thou* to Pandarus.¹² Pandarus uses the polite *ye* to Helen (II,1268), Deiphebus (II,1406; 1420) and to Troilus, but only in public situations,¹³ whereas he receives *thou* from them.

The *Gawain*-poet also emphasizes the hierarchical relationships of characters through the asymmetrical use of the second singular person pronouns *ye* and *thou*. He employs the polite *ye* to show the respectful attitude of a speaker towards an addressee who is a social superior. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Gawain addresses King Arthur with *ye* (343-344), whereas he addresses a number of relatively minor characters who are his inferiors in social status with *thou*. He speaks to the porter at Bercilak's castle using *thou* (811) and addresses a servant likewise (2127). This correct usage of the second singular pronoun *ye* and *thou* shows Gawain's good manners as a perfect knight. All the examples above show the correct parameters of usage of the honorific-polite *ye* to superiors.

In contrast to the speaker who observes the norm of usage of the polite *ye* to his superior, the speaker who breaks the norm indicates that he has no manners, or that he is challenging the social status of the addressee, or both.



In contrast to Gawain's usage of the polite *ye* to the King, the Green Knight at first appearance consistently uses *thou* in speaking to his superior, King Arthur:

Bot for þe los of þe, lede, is lyft vp so hy3e
 And þy bur3 and þy burnes best ar holden,
 Stifest vnder stel-gere on stedes to ryde,
 þe wy3test and þe worpyest of þe worldes kynde,
 Preue for to play wyth in oþer pure laykez (258-662)

And then he continues his speech with *thou* showing both bad manners and an attempt to manipulate his position.

A speaker might deliberately address an obvious social superior as *thou* in an attempt to put himself into a certain position in relation to the addressee. Thus, the Green Knight's use of *thou* to the King Arthur could be interpreted to demonstrate that the latter does not deserve his respect and deference. This breaking of the norm of pronoun usage shows not only the rudeness of his attitude but also his challenge to King Arthur's perception of the social situation because if he had used the polite *ye*, he would have acknowledged Arthur's social superiority.¹⁴

Another example of breaking the norm of the honorific-polite usage of *ye* to a social superior can be taken from the speeches of the Guide who escorts Gawain to the Green Chapel. He switches from his previous *ye* into *thou* to his obvious social superior, Gawain, in his second speeches. Like the Green Knight, the Guide ignores the ordinary conventions of society by breaking the norm of second person pronoun usage. Mabel Day argues the Guide is the Green



Knight himself 'in the likeness of a servant' in part because of his use of the the familiar *thou*.¹⁵

In his analysis of the second personal pronouns in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Evans concludes that the Gawain-poet shows the speaker's personality as well as the speaker's attitude towards the addressee through pronominal usage.¹⁶ The use of the honorific-polite *ye* to social superiors reflects the hierarchical society in which the ordering of society in degree is "natural" and God-ordained, as Chaucer himself confirms through the Parson's mouth:

God ordeyned that som folk sholde be moore heigh in
estaat and in degree, and some folk moore lough, and
that everich sholde be served in his estaat and in his
degree. (X, 770)

However, what is important in the usage of the honorific-polite *ye* in these later Middle English poems is the notion of 'superior' which Brown and Gilman call the 'power semantic.' The basis of the notion 'superior' can be other than social status. Therefore the use of the honorific-polite *ye* is affected not only by social status but also by age, learnedness, sex in marriage and morality.

Age is another factor which affects the speaker's attitude in the poetry of that period. If the addressee is relatively older than the speaker or the speaker and addressee are parent and child, the older addressee or the parent usually receives the polite *ye* from the younger speaker or child (Kennedy, p.87).

Chaucer contrasts the correct usage of the honorific-polite *ye* to the older with the breaking of this usage norm

to reveal his characters' personality. In the *Friar's Tale* the summoner uses *thou* to the widow:

Thou olde virytrate !
I trowe thou hast som frere or preest with thee.
(III,1582-83)

Here the summoner is shown by the Pilgrim Friar to be rude and disrespectful. The summoner's use of *thou* to the old is contrasted with the devil's use of the honorific-polite *ye* to her:

Now Mabely, myn owene moder deere,
Is this youre wyl in earnest that ye seye?
(III,1626-27)

The story teller, the Pilgrim Friar, intends to show the Pilgrim Summoner's bad manners by having the summoner in his *Tale* violate the norm of usage of the honorific-polite *ye* to the old, in contrast to the devil's use of the polite *ye* to the same person, the old widow.

And also in the *Pardoner's Tale*, the young boy uses *ye* to one of the patrons of the inn (VI,671), as is proper. This is contrasted with the three rioters who use *thou* to the old man whom they meet on the way. One of them says:

...What, carl with sory grace,
Why artow al forwrapped save thy face?
Why lyvestow so longe in so greet age?
(VI,717-19)

Another rioter also uses *thou* to the old man:

"Nay, olde cherl, by God, thou shalt nat so."
Seyde this oother hasardour anon;
"Thou partest nat so lightly, by Seint John!
Thou spak right now of thilke traytour Deeth,
That in this contree alle oure freendes sleeth.
Have heere my trouthe, as thou art his espye,
Telle where he is, or thou shalt it abyge,
By God, and by the hooly sacrement!
For soothly thou art oon of his assent



To sleen us yonge folke, thou false theef!"
(VI, 750-59)

This shows their rude attitude or bad manners toward the addressee, the old man, by ignoring the normal usage of the polite pronoun *ye* to the old.

The use of the honorific-polite *ye* because of the relative age of the speaker and addressee takes precedence over its usage on the basis of social class. For example, the Knight in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* addresses the old ugly woman as *ye* when he first meets her beginning with *My leeve mooder* (III, 1004), in spite of his higher social position. And the knight receives *thou* from her interspersed with *ye* because of his high status:

Plight me thy trouthe heere in myn hand, ...
The nexte thyng that I requere thee,
Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy myght,
And I wol telle it yow er it be nyght.
(III, 1009-12)

Similarly, other speakers put themselves in a superior position by using *thou* to the younger. The Franklin uses *thou* to the young Squire, the Knight's son:

...thou hast thee wel yquit
And gentilly. I preise wel thy wit.
(V, 673-74)

The Squire is "of twenty yeer of age" (I, 81) and the Franklin is as old as "whit was his berd as is the dayesye" (I, 332). Though the young Squire is of higher social position than the Franklin,¹⁷ the Franklin uses *thou* to the Squire simply because of the Squire's youth.

In the *Merchant's Tale*, January addresses his younger brother Justinus as *thou* (IV, 1566; 1570), whereas he receives

ye from his brother according to the norm of the pronoun usage to the old.

In parent-child relationships, the parent is expected to receive ye from his or her child who is, in turn, addressed as *thou*. In the *Man of Law's Tale*, Constance addresses both her father and her mother as *ye* whereas Constance use *thou* to her child. In the *Physician's Tale*, the knight Virginius addresses his daughter, Virginia, as *thou* whereas Virginia uses the honorific-polite *ye* to her father:

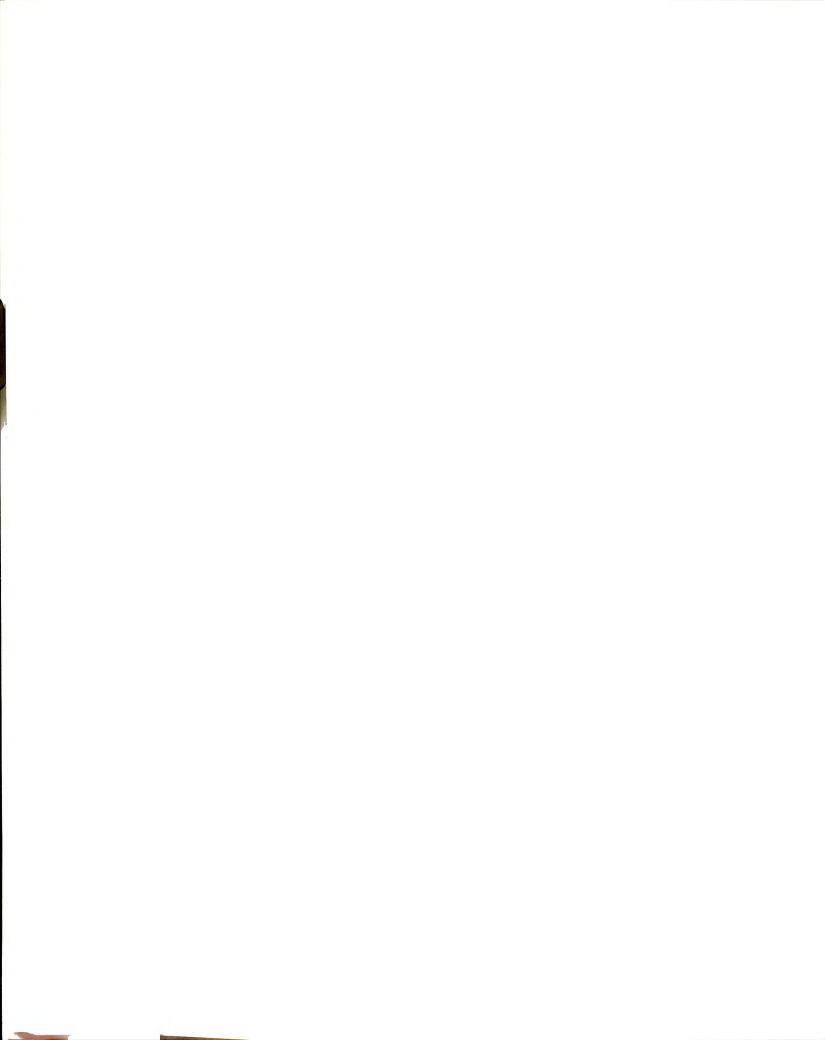
Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame;
Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name!
(VI, 249-50)

In the *Clerk's Tale*, Griselda says *thou* to her child when she is going to deliver her first baby to an officer.

Fareweel my child! I shal thee nevere see.
But sith I thee have marked with the croys
Of thilke Fader-blessed moote he be!-
That for us deyde upon a croys of tree,
Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake,
For this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake.
(II, 554-60)

In Chaucer the norms of *ye* usage are upheld for both age and social status unless the teller of the tale has in mind to insult a fellow Pilgrim.

The *Gawain*-poet also applies this usage of the honorific-polite *ye* to showing the changing relationships, worldly and religious, between the dreamer-father and his daughter, the Pearl-maiden. In the beginning of the conversation between father and daughter in the poem *Pearl* the dreamer-father uses *thou* to his child and receives *ye*



from the latter as we would normally expect between father and daughter. Here is an example of the dreamer-father's speech:

O perle, ..., in perle3 py3t,
 Art þou my perle þat I haf playned,
 Regretted by myn one on ny3te?
 Much longeyng haf I for þe layned
 Syþen into gresse þou me agly3te.
 Pensyf, payred, I am forpayned,
 & þou in a lyf of lykyng ly3te
 In Paradys-erde, of stryf vnstrayned!
 (V, 241-48)

The child answers him with ye:

Sir, 3e haf youre tale myse tente
 To say youre perle is al awaye
 þat is in cofer so comly clente
 As in þis gardyn gracios gaye,
 Hereinne to lenge for euer & play,
 þer mys nee mornyng neur here.
 (V, 257-62)

And then the dreamer-father begins alternate using *thou* and *ye* to his daughter. When he is talking about worldly things, he uses *thou* to his daughter. Otherwise he will switch to *ye*, even in the middle of conversation.

In the same way the maiden Pearl alternates using *ye* and *thou* though the use of *thou* prevails. After the use of *ye* to her father which is based on the normal father-daughter relationship in the opening conversation, the maiden Pearl switches into *thou*, which is the reversal of the usage found in an ordinary parent-child relationship. This reverse use of pronouns shows the changed relationship between the dreamer-father and the maiden; it shows the religious relationship between the two in which she is deified rather than that of a worldly parent and child.

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In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Criseyde addresses her uncle Pandarus with the honorific-polite *ye* without any single exception. When she meets Pandarus in her place, she receives him ("Ey, uncle myn, welcome iwys") and starts her conversation, using the honorific-polite *ye*:

...This nyght thrie,
To goode mot it turne, of yow I mette. (II,89-90)

And then she continues to use the honorific-polite pronoun *ye* to the end of the story.

As all these examples show, the norm of the usage of honorific-polite *ye* to the old can be used to reveal the relationships between characters such as those of parent-child or young and elder. By observing the norm of the honorific-polite *ye* in terms of age the speaker reveals his good manners, whereas his bad manners can be revealed by breaking the norm of usage.

In addition to social status and age, learnedness in the addressee is another factor that affects the use of the honorific-polite *ye*. The Host uses *ye* to the two members who are learned, the Clerk (I,840; IV,2) and the Man of Law (III,1286:1300) though the nature of their learning differs. The title 'clerk' in the Middle Ages was used to refer to a man who had taken "minor" (as opposed to "holy") orders in the Church and hence could read, write, and perform certain subordinate ecclesiastical duties. The Man of Law is also described as a learned man in *The General Prologue* :

In terms hadde he caas and doomes alle
That from the tyme of Kyng William were yfalle.
Therto he koude endite and make a thyng,

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Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;
 And every statut koude he pleyne by rote.
 (I,321-27)

In contrast to the use of *ye* to the learned, the Host uses *thou* to the pilgrim Chaucer and the Physician who are considered representatives of not-so-learned professions. Chaucer, the Pilgrim, is described as slow-witted, easily frightened, and having little desire for knowledge or power.¹⁸ The Host does not know him, but at the close of the tale of the Prioress asks him, "What man artow? " (VII,695). The Physician is also considered a not-so-learned man though "he was a verray parfit praktisour" (I,422). In the *General Prologue* his study is mentioned after a long list of his medical knowledge: "His studie was but litel on the Bible" (I,438).

Another factor which plays a role in pronoun usage is the sex of the person in marriage relations. In the marriage relations the husband is superior to his wife, which reflects the inferior social position of women in the medieval period. A wife is completely subordinate to her husband.

In the *Tale of Melibee* the learned dame Prudence usually addresses her husband as *ye* with several cases of *thou*, in which she shows off her superiority in terms of learnedness rather than the relationship of marriage, while Melibeus mostly uses *thou* to her. In the same way, in the *Shipman's Tale* the merchant constantly addresses his wife as *thou* whereas he receives *ye* from his wife. And in the

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Second Nun's Tale Cecilia addresses her husband, Valeria, as ye, while she receives thou from her husband. Through the asymmetrical use of the second person pronouns these examples show the woman's inferior position in that society.

However, Chaucer shows the different relationships or undesirable personalities of his characters by having them break the conventional norms in using the second person singular pronouns. In the *Canterbury Tales* after the *Tale of Melibee* the Host quotes his wife's thou to him:

And if that any neighebore of myne
 Wol nat in chirche to my wyf enclyne,
 Or be so hardy to hire to trespace,
 Whan she comth hoom she rampeth in my face,
 And crieth, 'False coward, wreke thy wyf !
 By corpus bones, I wol have thy knyf,
 And thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne!
 (VII,1902-8)

This use of *thou* by wife to husband reflects the opposite position of the ordinary relationship of marriage and thus his wife's bad manners, because she breaks the norm of convention in the use of this pronoun.¹⁹

In the *Tales* of the so-called Marriage Group the relationships between wife and husband are shown through the usage of the second person singular pronouns ye and thou. The Marriage Group is usually said to begin with the *Wife of Bath's* prologue and ends with the *Franklin's Tale*. The traditional order is first, the *Wife of Bath*, whose prologue opens this marriage discussion; the *Friar's Tale* and the *Summoner's Tale* which are not concerned with marriage; the *Clerk's Tale*; and the *Merchant's Tale*. After the *Squire's*

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Tale, which must be regarded as another interlude, the marriage debate is ended by the Franklin.²⁰

The knight in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, as noted above, addresses the ugly old woman as *ye* when they meet first because of her greater age (III,1008). After they marry, however, he switches into *thou* (III,1100) from his previous use of *ye*, whereas the woman addresses him continuously as *ye*. An extreme example of this subordinate position of the wife in marriage is well described in the *Clerk's Tale* in which the obedient Griselda always addresses her husband, Walter, as *ye* with the respectful title *lord* and always receives *thou* and her personal name from her husband, even though Walter addresses her by the honorific-polite *ye* during the test. In the same way, in the *Merchant's Tale*, January addresses his wife as *thou* while his wife May uses *ye* to her husband. Even when he addresses his wife in the elevated poetic language of the Song of Solomon, he still uses *thou*:

The turtles voys is herd, my dowve sweete;
The wyntwe is goon with alle his reynes weete
Com forth now, with thyne eyen columbyn.
(IV,2139-41)

The above examples all show the inferior position of women in the marriage relationship, as was commonly accepted at the time.

However, contrary to the conventional use of the pronoun in marriage relations, in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* the Wife of Bath concentrates upon the conditions for a successful married life. She preaches that the superiority

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of the wife is the essential condition for success. Through the use of *thou* to her husbands she sets up her antagonism toward the antifeminists. She is portrayed as a radical opponent of inherited values, whereas Griselda's behaviour is seen as the result of social determinism in a male-dominated society. Thus, Chaucer's advice for a successful marriage is given in the *Franklin's Tale*, where at the beginning the knightly husband, Arveragus, promises always to obey his wife, Dorigen, just like a lover in the courtly love tradition, while his wife also promises to be his "humble trewe wife" (V, 758). In his *Tale* the Franklin tries to show the ideal relations between a man and wife, based on a reconciliation between the convention of courtly love and the terms of a workable marriage through the use of *ye* to each other. C. Hugh Holman (1951) finds Chaucer applauding the wisdom of Dorigen and Averagus in abandoning 'maistrie' to arrive at a deep rich love.

Even though social status, age and learnedness are all factors which help set the norm of use for the honorific-polite *ye*, the most important factor affecting the usage of the honorific-polite *ye* is morality. The use of the honorific-polite *ye* in moral situations is dependent upon the speaker's judgment of the addressee's moral purity. The use of the honorific-polite *ye* based on the determination of morality often takes precedence over every other factor. Chaucer, in particular, put the first priority on morality in his poetry, which makes his poetry didactic, based upon

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the judgement and approval of the many Pilgrims, but especially the Host.

When the Host in the *Canterbury Tales* calls upon the Parson for a story, he uses *thou* because of the Parson's lower social position at that period:

...artow a vicary,
Or arte a person? Sey sooth, by thy fey.
Be what thou be, ne breke thou nat oure pley,
For every man save thou hath toold his tale.
Unbokele and shewe us what is in thy male,
For trewely me thynketh by thy cheree
Thou sholdest knytte up wel a greet mateere.
Telle us a fable anon, for cokkes bones!

(X, 22-29)

However, after the Parson says he will not tell a fable but rather give a sermon, the Host is impressed and switches into the honorific-polite *ye* out of respect for the Parson's morality:

Sire preest, ...now faire yow bifalle!
Telleth, ...youre meditacioun.
But hasteth yow, the sonne wole adoun;
Beth fructuous and that in litel space,
And to do wel God sende yow his grace.
Sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere.

(X, 68-73)

The opposite case is shown in the way the Host addresses the Monk. He first addresses the Monk as *ye*, because of the latter's higher social status. However, since the Monk shows that he is not morally upright, the Host uses *thou* to the Monk:

I vow to God, thou hast a ful fair skyn;
It is a gentil pasture ther thow goost.
Thou art nat lyk a penant or a goost.
Upon my feith, thou art som officer.
Som worthy sexteyn, or som celerer,
For by my fader soule, as to my doom
Thou art a maister whan thou art at hoom,
No poure cloysterer ne no novys,

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But a governour, wily and wys,
 And therwithal of brawnes and of bones,
 A wel farynge persone for the nones.

(VII,1932-42).

And he continues using *thou* to the line VII,1951. Though he reverts to *ye* again, the first shift to *thou* from the previous *ye* shows the Host's attitude towards the low morality of the Monk. The Monk lives a lusty life, unfitting a monk, and thus he loses the Host's respect. The Monk is also described in the *General Prologue* as a worldly successful man who sees no reason to stick to his cloister or to follow the dull routine of prayer, study, fasting, and manual labor which should be his primary responsibility. This rebuke by the Host is subtle and delivered under the guise of "murye word" starting with the customary *ye*:

But, by my trouthe, I knowe nat youre name.
 What shal I calle yow my lord daun John,
 Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon?
 Of what hous be ye, by youre fader kyn?

(VII,1928-31)

Later, however, the Host reverts to *ye* again because of the higher status of the Monk. This is a case in which morality temporarily takes precedence over social status.

Sometimes religious morality also takes precedence over age as well. A good example can be taken from the elegy poem *Pearl* in which, in the vision form favored by medieval writers, the dreamer-father laments the death of his two year-old-daughter, Pearl. In this poem the spiritual daughter, who is now in the position of teacher is considered the superior of her worldly father who is in the position of her pupil, though the dreamer-father uses *thou*

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to his daughter Pearl when the topic concerns their worldly relationship. The ordinary relationship between father and daughter is reversed because of Pearl's death and shown through her continual use of *thou* toward her father, as opposed to her father's use of *ye* toward her.

The Pilgrim Franklin also switches from *thou* to *ye* to the young Squire, the Knight's son, when he learns of the Squire's impressive accomplishments. At first he had addressed the Squire with *thou* because of his young age (V, 686). After hearing the Squire, however, the Franklin thinks of his own son, and the comparison between the two young men is very much to his son's disadvantage, so he uses *ye* out of respect:

I have a sone, and by the Trinitee,
I hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond,
though it right now were fallen in myn hond,
He were a man of swich discrecioun.

(V, 682-85)

Each poet's concept of morality relates to the issue which each considers most important, *gentillesse* for Chaucer and *cortasye* for the Gawain-poet. For Chaucer, *gentillesse* is a moral ideal, independent of external social rank. It is personally chosen, and evinced in personal behavior. With respect to *gentillesse*, moral superiority sometimes also takes precedence over gender in the marital relationships. The Knight in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* addresses his wife with the honorific-polite *ye* instead of his customary *thou*, (the conventional address of husband to wife-as I explained

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earlier), after he is impressed by her sermon about
gentillesse:

I put me in youre wise governance;
 Cheseth youreself which may be moost plesance
 And moost honour to yow and me also.
 I do no fors the wheither of the two,
 For as yow liketh it suffiseth me.

(III,1231-35)

The marquis in the *Clerk's Tale* addresses the peasant-girl
 Griselda by the honorific-polite *ye* when he first meets her
 ("Where is youre fader, O Griseldis? "), though he uses to
 her father the conventional pronoun *thou*:

If that thou vouche sauf, what so bityde,
 Thy doghter wol I take, er that I wende,
 As for my wyf, unto hir lyves ende.

(IV,306-8)

His use of *ye* to his social inferior, the peasant-girl
 Griselda, reflects the admiration he had already developed
 for her when he had observed her from afar ("commendynge in
 his herte hir wommanhede,/ And eek hir vertu"). And after
 he marries her, he continues using the honorific-polite *ye*
 to her while he is testing her fidelity to him:

I seye, Grisilde, this present dignitee,
 In which that I have put yow, asd I trowe,
 Maketh yow nat foryetful for to be
 That I yow took in povre estaat ful lowe,
 For any wele ye moot youreselfes knowe. (IV,470-74)

He sometimes switches into *thou* which is the conventional
 pronoun from husband to wife, though W.W. Skeat explains in
 his *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, "it is a slight but
 significant sign of insult, offered under pretense of
 reporting the opinion of others."²¹ Finally, Walter uses
 only *thou* in addressing her:

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This is ynogh, Grisilde myn,...
 Be now namooore agast ne yvele apayed.
 I have thy feith and thy benyngnytee
 As wel as evere womman was assayed,
 In greet esaat and pourliche arrayed.
 Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedfastnesse.
 (IV,1051-56)

And he continues *thou* to the end of the story. This exclusive use of *thou* is a great contrast to the previous usage of *ye*. Considering that the singular-polite *ye* is 'marked' for politeness, and *thou* is the norm of usage for a pronoun to a wife from a husband: then, the use of *thou* should be interpreted in that context. Therefore, the previous *thous* in the same story cannot be a 'sign of insult.' Rather, through the alternation of *ye* and *thou* the Clerk, the teller of the Tale, emphasizes Griselda's virtue, that is, her patience in the marriage relationship.

The speaker's own morality affects whether he judges the addressee as his superior, revealing the willingness of the speaker to use the socially polite and acceptable form of the second person pronoun when the speaker feels that it is otherwise inappropriate.

The Pilgrim Friar shows in his tale that the Pilgrim Summoner is stupid and vicious through his choice of the second singular pronoun *ye* or *thou*. The summoner in the *Friar's Tale* addresses the devil as *ye* when the latter boasts of his great wealth saying "I have gold and silver in my cheste":

"Brother," quod he, "where is now youre dwellyng
 Another day if that I sholde yow seche?"
 (III,1410-11)

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because he thinks the devil is his superior in terms of wealth and then he continues with the polite *ye* (III,1417-19). But later, when the devil says "My wages been ful streite and ful smale" (III,1426), the summoner switches into *thou*: "tel me thanne thy name" (III,1444). The summoner switches *thou* and *ye* depending on the addressee's wealth. If the addressee is rich, (which is the speaker's judgment by the former's words) the summoner uses the honorific-polite *ye* because he thinks the addressee is his superior. In the same way, he switches into *thou* when he thinks the addressee is poor, and thus, his inferior, or at best his equal.

The same summoner in the story also uses the polite *ye* to the devil when the latter identifies himself as a fiend: "I am a feend; my dwellyng is in helle...." (III, 1448), because he thinks that the devil is his superior in terms of evil. In contrast, the summoner uses *thou* when he at first meets the devil, because he appears to be but an ordinary character. By using the honorific-polite *ye* to the devil the summoner shows his low morality because of his respect for wealth and evil. For Chaucer wealth has nothing to do with *gentillesse*. Thus the Pilgrim Friar's intention is to betray the Pilgrim Summoner's vice, shown by his respect for wealth and evil, and his stupidity, shown by his judging a person (here the devil) by his appearance and words. The Friar Pilgrim does so by having the summoner in his tale switch between the honorific-polite *ye* and the familiar *thou*

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as he makes different assumptions when he speaks to the devil.

However, there are many occasions on which it is difficult to decide which factor has priority over another, because in this period social class and morality often go together, that is, high class people are moral while lower class people are immoral. For example, as Chaucer shows in the *General Prologue*, the Pilgrim Knight, who belongs to the highest social station is described as a man of perfect morality: "He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght" (I,72).

The lower class is assumed to have a lower morality, as shown in the characters of the Miller, the Reeve, the Summoner and the Shipman. The Miller is rough and rude; he tells his tale without being asked and in spite of the Host's urging him to wait; he quarrels with the Reeve. Chaucer apologizes in advance for any indecency in the *Miller's Tale* by saying that the "Millere is a cherl, ye knowe wel this" and therefore as a matter of course, he will tell "a cherle's tale in his manere." The Reeve, who is a counterpart to the Miller, has become the manager or bailiff to some great landowner. He is described in the *General Prologue* as an unattractive lean man of unpleasant disposition ('a sclendre colerik man'). The Summoner, who is one of the most loathsome and dangerous of all the pilgrims, is an example of moral corruption. He receives bribes and will let a potential prisoner remain free to practice licentiousness if his "palm is well oiled."

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And this is why the Host does not use the honorific-polite ye to him. The Shipman is also anything but devout when he refuses to listen to a tale from the parson. When the Host tells the whole company "we schal han a predicacioun/ This Lollere herre wil prechen us somewhat," the Shipman says:²²

Nay, by my fader soule, that schal he nat.
 ...he shal nat preche.
 He shal no gospel glosen here ne teche.
 We leven alle in the grete God.

(II,1168-80)

So, the choice of the honorific-polite ye is in part determined by the speaker's perception of the morality of the addressee.

Though medieval society was rigidly divided on the basis of class, this division leads to a conception of virtues and vices which is neither purely ethical nor purely social, but a mixture of the two. However, Chaucer also shows that external status has nothing to do with *gentillesse* as the Parson and Plowman are good examples of *gentillesse* in spite of their low social status. Chaucer most explicitly dissociates *gentillesse* from rank or degree in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* to show that those of noble birth like the Knight in the Tale do not always behave nobly:

And nel hymselfen do no gentil dedis
 Ne folwen his gentil auncestre that deed is,
 He nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl,

(III,1155-57)

And noble behavior is not confined to the aristocracy, which is what the Franklin argues in his Tale.²³

As all the above examples have shown, the honorific-polite ye is chosen when the social status is higher for the

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addressee, but that choice may be set aside if the speaker believes that the addressee is of a lower moral status. The reverse seems true also, namely that the familiar *thou*, appropriate for subordinates, can be replaced with *ye*, provided the speaker believes the addressee has great (not necessarily superior) qualities of virtue and morality. This latter use then would be complimentary because it is not common.

Through the asymmetrical use of the honorific-polite *ye* to superiors, we can see not only the hierarchical structure of the society but also the moral lessons which these poets want to impart to the audience or the reader.

The humble-polite *ye*:

The polite *ye* is also used to show humility on the speaker's part regardless of the status of the addressee. However, this humble-politeness is focused on the speaker rather than the addressee who is exalted through the use of the honorific-polite *ye*. Humble-politeness might be overlapped with the first category, honorific-politeness, in the sense that the addressee could be also exalted. Yet, in humble-politeness the speaker humbles himself regardless of his status in relation to the addressee.

Good examples can be taken from the lover's use of *ye* in courtly love. Courtly love demands an attitude of abject, patient adoration on the part of the male lover as a

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servant, though the lady's use of ye is not humble-polite but neutral-polite, which I will explain a little later.

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, which depicts the courtly love of Troilus and Criseyde, Troilus consistently addresses his love Criseyde as ye with several exceptions of thou ²⁴ in spite of her inferior position in social rank. Troilus is the King's son and Criseyde is the former wife of a nobleman and the daughter of a priest. Criseyde is not only in an extremely precarious social position but also she is the daughter of a traitor and in need of the protection of Hector in order to maintain any position in Trojan society at all.

In the same way, Chaucer emphasizes the abjectness of the male courtly lover in the *Knight's Tale* by having his characters observe the norm of the usage of the humble-polite ye. In the *Knight's Tale* the courtly lover Arcite addresses his love, Emelye as ye in his long speech when he is dying (I, 2765-96). Unlike the other Tales in which the convention of the honorific-polite ye is observed, the *Knight's Tale* which is all about courtly love has no honorific-polite ye where it would be expected. For example, the Duke, Theseus, who occupies the highest position in the court, is usually addressed as thou by his inferiors, including women, and Arcite and Palamon. Arcite uses ye to his lady in the courtly situation and Duke Theseus also uses ye to his sister Emelye and even to

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Palamon, to whom otherwise thou would be used. First he addresses his sister Emelye:

Suster, this is my fulle assent,
 With al th'avys heere of my parlement,
 That gentil Palamon, youre owene knyght,
 And ever hath doon syn ye first hym knewe,
 That ye shul of youre grace upon hym rewe,
 And taken hym for housbobde and for lord.
 Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee.
 He is a kynges brother sone, pardee
 And though he were a poure bacheler,
 Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,
 And had for yow so greet adversitee,
 It moste been considered, leeveth me,
 For gentil mercy oghte to passen right.
 (I, 3075-89)

And then to Palamon:

I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng
 To make yow assente to this thyng.
 Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond.
 (I, 3091-93)

In the *Knight's Tale* all characters observe the convention of the humble-polite ye though the honorific-polite ye is not observed, suggesting that the narrator (and Chaucer) intend to emphasize the humility of the courtly lover and his situation.

In the scene of imitation of courtly love this humble-polite ye is also employed, which heightens the ironic effect of the passage. In the *Miller's Tale* "on the fateful night," the vain parish clerk, love-sick Absalon addresses his beloved Alisoun as ye:

What do ye, honycomb, sweete Alisoun,
 My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome?
 Awaketh, lemman myn, and speketh to me!
 Wel litel thynken ye upon my wo,
 That for youre love I swete ther I go.
 (I, 3698-702)

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This scene could be interpreted as parody of courtly love since his customary pronoun to her is *thou* (I,3766,3771). Before he tells his story, the Miller promised that he would 'quit' the *Knight's Tale* which was about courtly love:

By arms, and by blood and bones,
I kan a noble tale for the nones,
With which I wol now quite the Knyghtes tale.
(I,3125-27)

By using the humble-polite *ye* like a courtly lover, the Miller might think his story is also considered as a courtly love story. Thus the irony of the *Miller's Tale* "results from the application of a courtly vocabulary to an inelegant character or situation."²⁵

The humble-polite *ye*, besides being used by the courtly lover, is also used to show the personality of the speaker in Chaucer and the *Gawain-poet*. The *Gawain-poet* in particular shows his hero's, *Gawain's*, humility by having him use the humble-polite *ye* to his addressee, the Green Knight. Though *Gawain's* customary pronoun to the Green Knight is *thou*, he switches to the humble-polite *ye* when he feels humility. After he fails in the challenge to the Green Knight, he feels humility and confesses his fault with the use of the humble-polite *ye* to the Green Knight:

I biknowe yow, kny3t, here stylle,
Al fawty is my fare,
Letez me ouertake your wylle
And efte I schal be ware.
(2385-88)

Chaucer also uses the humble-polite *ye* to show his characters' personalities. For example, among all the Pilgrims the Friar and the Franklin are described as the men

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who most want to give a good impression to others; their usage of the humble-polite ye reflects this desire.

The Pilgrim Friar can be as courteous and humble as necessary when it profits him to be so. The friar in the *Summoner's Tale* uses ye to layman Thomas, which reflects the Pilgrim Friar's character as described in the *General Prologue*:

And over al ther as profit sholde arise
Curteis he was and lowly of servyse.

(I, 249-50)

In his *Tale* the Pilgrim Summoner here also intends to insult the Pilgrim Friar by the friar's hypocritical use of the humble-polite ye. Thus the Pilgrim Summoner has the friar in his *Tale* use the humble-polite ye to Thomas, who is his inferior, to humble himself whenever he needs to do so:

What nedeth yow diverse freres seche?
What nedeth hym that hath a parfit leche
To sechen othere leches in the toun?
Youre inconstance is youre confusioun.
Holde ye thanne me, or elles oure covent,
To pray for yow been insufficient?
Thomas, that jape nys nat worth a myte.
Youre maladye is for we han to lyte.

(III, 1955-62)

The friar also uses the humble-polite ye in other places: (III, 1976-1984; 1999-2000). The friar, however, will usually in the same conversation put himself in a superior position by switching from the humble-polite ye to thou. This can be seen when he is preaching to the same person, Thomas:

Nere thou oure brother, sholdest nat thryve.
In oure chapitre praye we day and nyght

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 (III, 1944-46).

Thomas, of me thou shalt nat been yflatered;
 Thou woldest han oure labour al for noght.
 (III, 1970-71)

The Pilgrim Friar's language skill is also mentioned in the
General Prologue:

In alle the orders foure is noon that kan
 So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
 (I, 210-11)

The Pilgrim Summoner shows through the friar's usage of the second pronoun that the friar in his Tale shares hypocritical humility with the Pilgrim Friar.

In the same way, the Franklin uses *ye* to the Host, whom he wants to impress with his *gentillesse* towards the cherl²⁶ who treats him as inferior. Thus the Franklin addresses the Host as *ye*, and the latter uses *thou* to him, contrary to the normal usage, since the Franklin is of higher status than the Host.²⁷ When the Host calls on the Franklin for a tale, he uses *thou*:

Telle on thy tale withouten wordes mo.
 (V, 702)

To this the Franklin replies with the humble-polite *ye*:

Gladly, sire Hoost, ... I wole obeye
 Unto youre wyl. Now herkneth what i seye.
 (V, 703-4)

Considering the Franklin's aspiring to *gentillesse*, it is no surprise that he would show his humility even to the person who insulted him.²⁸ As A. C. Spearing puts it, this humility, almost "an obsequiousness" towards the Host, can be seen as "an exaggerated parody of *gentil* behaviour" (10).

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In the same way, in his *Tale* he shows humility even in marriage relationships by having a husband (here Arveragus) use the humble-polite *ye* to his wife instead of the conventional use of *thou*. As I explained in the first section of this chapter on honorific-politeness, the husband is supposed to be addressed by his wife as *ye* whereas the wife is addressed as *thou*, reflecting the inferior position of women in the society of the period. At the beginning of the *Franklin's Tale*, the knightly husband, Arveragus, promises always to obey his wife, Dorigen, just like a courtly lover, and his wife also promises to be his "humble trewe wife." Thus they address each other with the humble-polite *ye* in order to have a happy marriage. Chaucer emphasizes humility, as a great virtue in the period as the key to a happy marriage through the use of the second person singular pronoun *ye*.

Besides the two Pilgrims, the Friar and the Franklin, another Pilgrim, the Merchant, shows humility through the use of the humble-polite pronoun *ye* in his *Tale*. In the *Merchant's Tale* January addresses his two brothers, Justinus and Placebo with two different pronouns. He uses *thou* to his one brother, Justinus, according to the conventions. However, he switches into *ye* when he speaks to his other brother, Placebo, who is not his superior in any of the categories of status. As his name alludes, Placebo flatters January by telling January only what will please him. Placebo means 'I shall please.' Thus January wants to show

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his humility to his younger brother, Placebo, by using the humble-polite *ye* even though the latter is younger and inferior in social rank. After he listens to Justinus's advice, with which he is not satisfied, January uses the conventional *thou* to Justinus, whose name means 'the just man.' First he says to Justinus, using *thou*:

Wel, and hastow ysayd?
 Straw for thy Senek, and for thy proverbs.
 I counte nat a panyer ful of herbes
 Of scole-terms. Wyser men than thou,
 As thou hast herd, assenteden right now
 To my purpos.

(IV,1566-1571)

Then he switches into *ye* when he shifts his speech to Placebo:

Placebo, what sey ye? (IV,1571)

Here January shows a humble attitude towards Placebo, because he is content with his words. Otherwise he would use *thou* to Placebo, just as he does to his other younger brother, Justinus. Through January's use of the humble-polite *ye* to Placebo we can see not only the personality of the speaker in the story, January, who believes only what he wants, but also the personality of the teller of the *Tale*, Pilgrim Merchant who lacks the wisdom to know what is true and the humility to accept it.

Thus the humble-polite *ye* is frequently used to show the speaker's humility towards the addressee regardless of the latter's social status, learnedness, age, sex and morality, though some of these uses are hypocritical.

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The neutral-polite Ye:

Besides showing respect or humility towards the addressee, the second person singular pronoun *ye* is also used by the upper classes as a neutral, unemotional form of address between social equals or sometimes even to inferiors, whereas the lower classes normally use *thou* to one another. In other words the second person singular pronoun *ye* is employed to maintain social distance between speaker and addressee. This category will be called neutral-politeness. Since the use of the plural pronoun *ye* to indicate only one person is influenced by the use of 'tu' and 'vous' in French literature,²⁹ its usage in this way shows that the speaker belongs to the high class or wants to be regarded as such.

This neutral-polite *ye* shows the respectful attitude of the speaker but does not exalt the addressee as the honorific-polite *ye*, or humble the speaker as the humble-polite *ye*. In other words, the neutral-polite *ye* is used as a distancing device. First, the neutral-polite *ye* is used to a stranger whereas the pronoun *thou* is used to a familiar person. The *Gawain*-poet uses the neutral-polite *ye* to show the speaker's courtesy towards the addressee who is a stranger. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Gawain constantly uses the polite *ye* to Sir Bercilak who returns his polite address. Gawain also uses the neutral-polite *ye* in response to Bercilak's neutral-polite address. When

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Bercilak sees Gawain in his court, he addresses Gawain politely by using the neutral-polite *ye*:

3e are welcum to welde as yow lykez
 þat here is; al is yowre awen,
 to haue at yowre wylle and welde (835-37)

Gawain replies to this by the use of the neutral-polite *ye*:

Graunt mercy, ...
 þer Kryst hit yow for3elde. (838-39)

However, the Green Knight shows himself as a rude knight by using *thou* to King Arthur and Gawain when he appears as the Green Knight at the court of King Arthur. In contrast to the rude attitude in Arthur's court through the use of the *thou* to King Arthur and Gawain, in his own court, Bercilak reveals himself as the man of good birth by addressing Gawain by *ye* although he sometimes slips into the normal previous *thou*. This 'slip' helps identify Bercilak as the Green Knight. The Green Knight shows a different personality before and after he identifies himself through the different use of the second singular personal pronouns *ye* and *thou*. Before he identifies himself to Gawain, he always uses *thou* to Gawain, as he had done as the Green Knight in Arthur's court. After he reveals himself to Gawain, however, he shows courtesy by keeping the usage convention of the neutral polite pronoun *ye*. Another example of the neutral-polite *ye* to a stranger is seen in the speech of the Pilgrim Knight. Even though a hierarchical relationship is shown in the asymmetrical use of vocatives, the Pilgrim Knight in the *Canterbury Tales* uses *ye* to anyone he might be expected to address. Because

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of his social class, virtually every other member of the party should be addressed as *thou*. This use of *ye* even to the lower classes shows that the speaker is a man of good birth. In contrast to the polite use of *ye* from the nobility to the Host, the lower social orders address the Host and one another as *thou*. The representatives of the lower classes --the Cook, the Shipman, the Pardoner, the Parson, and Chaucer the Pilgrim--all address the Host as *thou*. They address one another as *thou* though there are actual exchanges only between three pairs of lower class pilgrims: the Reeve and the Miller, the Manciple and the Cook, and the Cook and the Host. Therefore *thou* is the unmarked normal form among lower class people.

Second, the neutral-polite *ye* is used to the opposite sex. In contrast to the use of the humble-polite *ye* of the courtly lover, the use of *ye* on the lady's part in courtly love can be explained in terms of neutral politeness. The lady in courtly love does not have to exalt her lover or humble herself like the man in courtly love. The lady in courtly love is supposed to maintain a respectable distance from the lover by using the neutral-polite pronoun *ye*.

In *Troilus and Criseyde* Criseyde addresses Troilus by the neutral-polite *ye* with three exceptions of petrified phrases or contractions.³⁰ Criseyde also uses the neutral-polite *ye* to Diomedes who, in turn addresses her with the humble-polite *ye* according to the norm of courtly love.

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In the *Franklin's Tale* Dorigen addresses Aurelius, her social inferior who falls in love with her by ye:

'Is this youre wil,' quod she, 'and sey ye thus?
Nevere erst,' quod she, 'ne wiste I what ye mente.'
(V, 980-81)

Dorigen's use of the polite ye to her social inferior shows her good manners to any one regardless of his status.

Dorigen also addresses Aurelius by his name, whereas Aurelius addresses her by the honorific title *madame*, which I will explain further in the next chapter on vocatives. As Arthur Kennedy explains regarding this neutral-polite ye:

...by the time of Crestien de Troyes (c.1170), the plural form is commonly employed between equals as well as to superiors as a sign of good breeding. (23-24)

The use of the neutral-polite can be a marker of good breeding.

The neutral-polite ye is also used in formal or public situations while the other second pronoun thou is used in informal or intimate situations. Unless the relationship between speaker and addressee is intimate or close, the speaker wants to be polite to the addressee regardless of the social status of the addressee by using the polite singular pronoun ye.

Thus the neutral-polite ye can be an indicator of formality. The neutral-politeness has the same function as that of formality in the sense that both politeness and formality convey a sense of distance, though politeness and formality are in principle different. Leech and Short (1980) point out that a formal style is associated with the

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distance of serious public communication of language "on its best behaviour."³² In the *Franklin's Tale*, the Clerk addresses his servant-squire by the neutral-polite *ye*:

To him this maister called his squire,
And seyde him thus: 'Is redy oure soper?
Almoost an houre it is, I undertake,
Sith I yow bad oure soper for to make.'

(V,1209-12)

By using the neutral-polite pronoun *ye* to his social superior the philosopher wants to keep the situation formal rather than private. Unlike the other categories of politeness, the speaker uses the neutral-polite *ye* in public situations even if the relationship between the speaker and the addressee is close and intimate. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Pandarus uses *ye* to his niece, Criseyde, in spite of being her elder relative. This reflects his wish to maintain the impression that he is of good breeding and that he is aware of it.³³

However, he switches into *thou* to Criseyde when he wishes to emphasize intimacy as her uncle rather than politeness as her uncle. One occasion occurs when he is exhorting her to accept the attentions of Troilus:

And also thenk wel that this is no gaude;
For me were levere thow and I and he
Were hanged than I sholde be his baude,
As heygh as men myghte on us alle yse.
I am thyn em; the shame were to me
As wel as the, yf that i sholde assente
Thorough myn abet that he thyn honour shente.

(II,351-57)

The other occasion on which he addresses Criseyde as *thou* is

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when he is trying to comfort Criseyde after she learns that she is to be exchanged for Antenor and thus must leave Troy and Troilus.

"And thow, my suster, ful of discomfort,"
 Quod Pandarus, "what thynkestow to do?
 Whi ne hastow to thiselven som resport?
 Whi woltow thus thiselwe, allas, fordo?
 Lef al this werk, and take now hede to
 That I shal seyn, and herkene of good entente
 This which by me thi Troylus the sente."

(IV, 848-54)

Here he is in the role of a compassionate uncle. In both cases the close relationship between niece and uncle is reinforced by the use of *thou* instead of the distancing polite address *ye* except for purpose of rhyme and petrified forms.³²

Thus, the pronoun *thou* is used among the high class if the situation calls for intimacy rather than politeness. In the *Knight's Tale*, the two knights, Palamon and Arcite, use *thou* to each other from the beginning to the end. This reciprocal use of *thou* consistently shows their close friendship.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* King Arthur addresses his wife Guinevere, with neutral-polite *ye* in public:

Dere dame, to-day demay yow neuer; (470)

In private Arthur would be expected to use *thou* to her, the conventional usage of the second pronoun to the wife. In contrast to the use of the polite *ye* in public, the knights

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in Arthur's court address each other as *thou* in private:

...Bi Kryst, hit is scape
 þat þou, leude, schal be lost, þat art of lyf noble!
 (675)

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Gawain invariably uses *ye* to the Lady:

Iwisse, worpy, ... 3e haf waled wel better,
 Bot I am proude of þe prys þat 3e put on me,
 And, soberly your seruauant, my souerayn I holde yow,
 And yowre knyȝt I becom, and Kryst yow forȝelde.
 (1276-80)

with a single exception for alliteration:³⁴

Now iwysse, ... I wolde I hade here
 þe leuest þing for þy luf þat I in londe welde,
 (1801-02)

By his continuous use of *ye* in a situation of non-courtly love, Gawain shows not only that he wants to keep distance from the Lady who is trying to tempt him, but he also reveals himself as a courteous knight who observes the norms of politeness.

In contrast with Gawain's use of *ye*, the Lady alternates between the neutral-polite *ye* and the conventional *thou*. She begins with the neutral-polite *ye*:

God moroun, Sir Gawayn,
 3e ar a sleper vnslyȝe, þat mon may slyde hider;
 Now ar 3e tan as-tyt! Bot true vus may schape,
 I schal bynde yow in your bedde, þat be 3e trayst'
 (1208-1211)

And she continues this *ye* over more than thirty lines (1223-40). Then she switches into *thou* (1250) and subsequently alternates between *ye* and *thou* until the end of the conversation in their first meeting.

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In the second encounter, the Lady begins with the polite *ye* and uses it constantly, except for one *thou*:

Sir, 3if 3e be Wawen, wonder me þynkkez,
 Wy3e þat is so wel wrast alway to god,
 And if mon kennes yow hom to knowe, 3e kest hom of
 youre mynde;
 þou hatz for3eten 3ederly þat 3isterday I ta3tte
 Bi alder-truest token of talk þat I cowþe.
 (1481-86)

In the third encounter she begins with *thou*:

A! mon, how may þou slepe,
 þis morning is so clere? (1746)

Then switches into the polite *ye* and uses it until shortly before her departure, when she once again lapses into *thou*. This alternation can be explained in terms of formality and intimacy. The Lady is trying various means of tempting Gawain, switching back and forth between familiarity and politeness. Through the use of *thou*, the Lady invites Gawain to do the same and to allow their relationship to take on intimacy rather than formality. However, Gawain's continuous use of *ye* forces her to return their conversation back to a more formal level, so she switches back to the polite *ye*.

In *Troilus and Criseyde* Pandarus distinguishes the public situation from the private one by using the different pronouns to the same person. Troilus and Pandarus address each other as *thou* from Book I through Book V, which reflects their close relationship as friends in spite of their different social rank. However, Pandarus always switches into *ye* in the presence of others, that is, in a public situation. Besides the use of the honorific-polite

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ye to his social superior (I,553), Pandarus addresses Troilus by the neutral-polite ye on formal occasions. When Troilus is visited at his sickbed by Pandarus, Deiphebus and Helen, Pandarus uses ye to Troilus:

And it youre will be,
That she may take hire leve, er that she go?
(III,1688-89)

And also in the presence of Criseyde Pandarus use ye again:

God do boot on alle syke!
Se who is here yow comen to visite.
(III,61-2)

Chaucer also uses the neutral-polite ye in the *Summoner's Tale*. The friar usually uses the neutral-polite ye when he meets laymen regardless of their social status to show off his good education or good manners. He uses the neutral-polite ye not only to the the lord of the village he uses the neutral-polite ye, but also to the lower class. When he first meets the sick layman, Thomas, he uses the neutral-polite ye:

"Thomas,...God yelde yow! ful ofte
Have I upon this bench faren ful weel
Heere have I eten many a myrie meel."
(III,1771-73)

However, the friar switches to thou in order to pretend to be intimate with Thomas to achieve his purpose of receiving gifts from him:

Thomas! Thomas! so moote I ryde or go,
And by that lord that clepid is Seint Yve,
Nere thou oure brother, sholdestou nat thryve.
In our chapitre praye we day and nyght
To Crist, that he thee sende heele and myght
Thy body for to weelden hastily.
(III, 1942-47)

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Just as the friar has pretended intimacy in order to obtain gifts from Thomas, Thomas also pretends intimacy by switching to *thou* from his customary *ye* in order to trick the friar:

And in thyn hand thou shalt it have anon,
On this condicion, and oother noon,
That thou departe it so, my deere brother,
That every frere have also mucche as oother,
This shaltou swere on thy professioun,
Withouten fraude or cavillacioun.

(III, 2131-36)

Thomas and the friar use the second singular pronouns *ye* and *thou* to show their hypocritical intentions. Particularly, the friar uses the neutral-polite *ye* and the intimate *thou* freely even in the same sentence, confirming what is said about his language skill in the *General Prologue*.

In the *Second Nun's Tale*, Cecilia addresses Almache with the neutral-polite *ye* until the latter condemns her to death. When Almache, an inquisitor, asks her using *thou* ("What maner womman artow? I axe thee though it thee greeve,/ Of thy religioun and of thy bileeve.") she answers him with the neutral-polite *ye*:

Ye han bigonne youre question folily,
...that wolden two answeres conclude
In o demande; ye lewedly.

(VIII, 428-30)

However, she shifts into *thou* when Almache urges her to renounce her religion on the pain of death:

...O nyce creature!
Thou seyst no word syn thou spak to me

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That I ne knew therwith thy nycetee;
 And that thou were, in every maner wise,
 A lewed officer and a veyn justise.

(VIII, 493-97)

This sudden shift from *ye* to *thou* shows Cecilia's anger at Almeche and thus her desire to insult him publicly.

Thus the use of the neutral-polite *ye* indicates that the situation is formal, whereas its use in an inappropriate situation can reveal the speaker's hypocritical intentions as in the case of the friar in the *Summoner's Tale*. On the other hand, the use of conventional *thou* shows the close or intimate relationship between speaker and addressee in private or informal situation. But *thou* in formal situations can be interpreted as "impolite" showing the speaker's intention to insult the addressee or his contempt towards the addressee like the example of Cecilia's sudden shift to *thou* in the *Second Nun's Tale*.

The Sarcastic-polite *ye*:

Lastly, the polite-*ye* can also be chosen by the speaker to satirize the addressee or something which the addressee represents, such as his or her occupation, manner or attitude. Because of its connotation of politeness in appropriate situations, the singular pronoun *ye* as used in unexpected situations can be sarcastic or ironic. In such cases, the use of the polite *ye* can be interpreted as an intention to insult, which the addressee does not always recognize. This will be called 'sarcastic-politeness.'

The use of *ye* can be interpreted by members of the

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lower classes as abusive. Such degradation may come about through the exploitive use of the polite *ye* in order to convey insult, that is, through sarcastic politeness. In the *Canterbury Tales*, the sarcastic-polite *ye* is used by the Manciple to the Cook. When the Cook is drunk and cannot tell a tale, the Manciple insults him through the use of the polite *ye*:

...wol ye justen atte fan?
 Therto me thynketh ye been wel yshape!
 I trowe that ye dronken han wyn ape,
 And that is whan men pleyen with a straw.
 (IX, 42-45)

This polite form of address does not fit the Cook by any means since the Cook is of lower status and has low morality. Thus the use of the polite form *ye* in an inappropriate situation such as to describe the Cook should be interpreted as sarcastic.

In the same way the Host rudely interrupts the Franklin when the latter mentions the *gentillesse* to which he aspires.

"Straw for youre gentillesse!" quod oure Hoost.
 (V, 695)

By using the sarcastic-polite *ye* the Host shows his impatience with the Franklin. As Spearing points out "fear of an extended moral disquisition, either too private or too abstract," is "the Host's main motive for his interruption" (10). Therefore, the use of the polite pronoun *ye* (*youre*) should be interpreted as a sarcastic comments on the Franklin's *gentillesse*. Otherwise the Host would use his customary *thou* to him.

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The Wife of Bath in the *Canterbury Tales* switches into ye from *thou* when she is being sarcastic, as in her words to her first husband, though she usually uses *thou* to her husbands in accordance with her theory of *maistrie*:

Sire olde kaynard, is this thyn array?
 Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?
 She is honoured over al ther she gooth;
 I sitte at hoom; I have no thrifty clooth.
 What dostow at my neighbors hous?
 Is she so fair? Artow so amorous?
 What rowne ye with oure mayde, benedicite?
 (III,235-241)

And she goes on:

By this proverbe thou shalt understonde,
 Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care
 How myrily that othere folkes fare?
 For certeyn, olde dotard, by youre leve,
 Ye shul have queynte right ynogh at eve.
 (III,328-32)

The only time the devil in the *Friar's Tale* uses ye to the summoner provides another example of sarcasm. When the carter says "The devel have al, bothe hors and cart and hey" (III,1547), the summoner cannot tell what the carter intends, that is, *entente* from what he says. After the summoner says to the devil, "Hent it anon, for he hath yeve it thee,/ Bothe hey and cart, and eek his caples thre" (III,1553-54), the devil replies sarcastically with the use of the polite ye, which pronoun does not befit the summoner, his social inferior:

Heere may ye se, myn owene deere brother
 The carl spak oon, but he thoghte another.
 Lat us go forth abouten oure viage;
 Heere wyne I nothyng upon cariage.
 (III,1567-69)

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The devil otherwise uses *thou* to the summoner, whom he considers his social inferior. Since the only pronoun to the inferior is *thou*, Norman Nathan in his analysis of pronouns of the *Friar's Tale* concludes that the use of *ye* in the words of devil is "a slip of Chaucer's pen" and "incorrect."³⁵ Instead, it should be interpreted as a sarcasm, showing contempt for the summoner, which the summoner does not recognize, because the devil's intention is to mock the summoner with the respectful pronoun of address, *ye*. Furthermore, it is evident that the narrator, the Pilgrim Friar, intends to show the Pilgrim Summoner's stupidity through the use of *ye* of the devil to the summoner in the Tale

So far, I have examined the distinctive use of the two second singular pronouns *thou* and *ye* in the works of Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet, who are fairly representative of late Middle English literature. For this analysis, with respect to polite speech, the second singular pronouns *ye* and *thou* have been divided into four usage categories: honorific, humble, neutral and sarcastic.

In Chaucer, many characters of all ranks show their personality as well as their relationships through the use of the marked pronoun *ye*. The *Gawain*-poet, however, because of the setting of his poems, has a limited number of characters of lower rank. Therefore, we cannot reliably analyze the pronoun usage of the lower class in the society about which he writes.

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The two poets emphasize various aspects of their work-
 themes, issues, personal relationships-by having their
 characters observe and break the norms of pronoun usage.
 The fact that *thou* was used in Late Middle English
 literature as an unmarked form concurs with Stidston's
 conclusion that *thou* was still the natural second person
 singular form in the fourteenth century. Therefore we can
 interpret the usage of *ye* as a singular in these late Middle
 English poems to be a consciously marked form for
 politeness. The use of the polite *ye* as a marked form in
 the Late Middle English period played a great role in
 changing common usage. Through the use of the honorific-
 polite, the humble-polite and the sarcastic-polite *ye*, the
 value of that society reflects in the literature of late
 Middle English. Because of the use of the neutral-polite *ye*
 between equals among the high classes the usage of the
 polite *ye* was imitated by those below them, and spread down
 the social hierarchy.

Therefore, in the works of Chaucer and the Gawain poet,
 special significance is attached to *ye* to emphasize their
 issues or themes with respect to polite speech rather than
 to *thou* which is still the norm of the second singular
 pronoun. *Thou* is unmarked as a second singular pronoun but
 it becomes marked when it is used where *ye* is expected, for
 example, when a wife addresses her husband. In other words,
 the *ye-thou* pair operates together. *Thou* takes on
 "impolite" uses whereas *ye* takes on "polite" uses. Through

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the process of marked *thou* in early Modern English, the singular *ye* could survive because of its use to connote politeness in the late Middle English period.

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¹In standard speech *thou* survives down to the 18th century.

²As for phonological reasons for disappearance of *thou*, linguistic changes in verb conjugations should be considered. The verb form with *thou* is marked by an inflectional ending *-est* in the present tense, whereas the verb form with *ye* is not. The verb was unmarked for the first person singular and plural; second and third person plural; the third person singular, the ending was *-eth*. But by the end of the 16C the ending *-s* was regularly appearing in standard English, especially in informal registers, apparently spread from the northern dialects; and after the Restoration the *-eth* forms gradually disappear altogether. In contrast to the rest of the verbal paradigm, *-est* must appear increasingly archaic; and from the phonetic point of view more unwieldly, since it demanded an extra syllable (although syncope was common); and could result in awkward clusters (*revisitest*; cf. also past tense *promisedst*, etc.)

³The dual pronoun *git* did not survive beyond the thirteenth century. (Mustanoja, *Middle English Syntax*, 1960)

⁴Hereafter, for simplicity, I will use *ye* for three forms, *ye*, *you* and *youre*; *thou* for *thou*, *thee* and *thy(n)*.

⁵Arthur Garfield Kennedy, *The Pronoun of Address in English Literature of the Thirteenth Century* (Stanford University, 1915) p.23.

⁶Patricia E. Mason, "The Pronouns of Familiarity and Respect in the Roman de la Rose and its Middle English Translation." *Literary and Historical Perspectives of The Middle Ages*. (1982) pp.66-75.

⁷William W. Evans, *The second-person Pronoun in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 1959 and "Dramatic Use of the Second Person Singular Pronoun in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," *Studia Neophilologica*, 39 (1967), 38-45.

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⁸Thomas Finkenstaedt, "You and Thou. Studien zur Anrede im Englischen." Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963.

⁹Albert C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language*, p.293.

¹⁰Angus McIntosh, " 'As you like it': a grammatical clue to character." *Review of English literature* 4. 1963, pp68-81.

¹¹Country Parson's social position was not high and did not enjoy exalted social prestige in fourteenth century society.

¹²Everett C. Johnston, " The pronoun of Address in Chaucer's Troilus," *Language Quarterly* (1962) vol.1,no.1 According to Johnston's assumption, "Pandarus' social position was that of the lesser Nobility in Chaucer's England: that is, above the knightly class yet below the Greater Nobility. In today's England Pandarus would perhaps be a baron or viscount. Since he was an uncle of Criseyde who was the former wife of a nobleman and was the daughter of a priest. Even if Criseyde's possible noble position did not automatically give Pandarus the same position, he could not be of the lower class considering he was a close friend of Troilus."

¹³Pandarus uses most of the time thou to Troilus, his obvious social superior, out of close friendship.

¹⁴Allan A. Metcalf, "Sir Gawain and You" *The Chaucer Review*, vol.5 no.3.(1971) pp. 165-178.

¹⁵Evans introduces Mabel Day's suggestion which, in turn, follows Gollancz's theory.

¹⁶Evans, pp.122-128.

¹⁷There has been some discussion as to what the word 'franklin' implied about a man's social status. It means literally a freeholder, one who possesses land absolutely, not temporarily or in return for dues or services. By the fourteenth century it seems to have come to be the name of a class of landowners below the class of the nobility and yet roughly the equivalents of gentleman.(Gordon Hall Gerould, "The Social Status of the Franklin," in *Chaucerian Essays*, p.33) In some circumstances perhaps a franklin would be thought the social equal of a knight or an esquire, but this Franklin, evidently a rich country squire, is clearly outside the magic circle of chivalry represented by the Knight and his son.

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¹⁸Baugh, "Chaucer the Man," in *Companion to Chaucer* Stuides, Rowland, pp.12-13 He cites Marchette Chute's argument that Chaucer is "as much Chaucer's literary creation as any other pilgrim" and "the characteristics attributed to him are not necessarily a faithful reflection of the poet himself."

¹⁹Stidston observes that a wife used ye to husband but husband used thou to wife. (pp57-59)

²⁰Marriage debate in the *Canterbury Tales* was first proposed by G.L.Kittredge in 1912.

²¹Robinson (p.711) quotes Skeat's suggestion.

²²This passage was originally assigned to the Wife of Bath but Chaucer substituted "Shipman" for "Wife of Bath."

²³The Franklin shows in his Tale that noble behaviour is not confined to the aristocracy through the gentillesse of Arveragus, Dorigen, Aurelius and the magician.

²⁴When Criseyde has fainted Troilus thinks her dead and uses thou.

And thow, Criseyde, o swete herte deere,
Receyve now my spirit! (IV,1209-10).

According to the explanation of Finkensteadt the dead person is addressed as thou. Another case in which Troilus uses thou to Criseyde is when he is apostrophizing:

What gilt of me, what fel experience,
Hath fro me raft, allas! thyn advertence? (V,1257-58)

²⁵Paul G. Ruggiers, *The Art of the Canterbury Tales*.
p.57

²⁶Brewer, "Class Distinction in Chaucer," *Speculum*, 43 (Spring, 1968), pp290-305. According to his binary classification of the class, the gentil and the cherl, the Host belongs to the class of cherl.

²⁷Kemp Malone, pp.192-21. He mentions the Host's use of thou and the Franklin's use of ye:

"On an actual pilgrimage in fourteenth-century England this give and take would have been impossible: no innkeeper would have dreamt of behaving in this way towards a gentleman, and if he did so behave no gentleman would have put up with it."

²⁸The Host interrupts rudely with the Franklin's speaking. When the Franklin is talking about gentillesse, the

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Host satirizes his gentillesse with the use of sarcastic-polite ye.

²⁹In French, reciprocal *vous* had been already used among power equals of the upper classes as a respectful form of address.

³⁰Three cases in which Criseyde uses conventional *thou* to Troilus are petrified phrases or contractions:

For I am thyn, by God and by my trouthe! (III, 1512)

And: Syn I am thyn al hol, withouten mo, (IV, 1641)

And: O Troilus, what dostow now? (V, 734)

³¹Leech and Short (1980) distinguish politeness from formality: "The scale of formality often correlates with that of politeness, but the two are in principle distinct. Both convey a sense of distance, but a formal style is associated with the distance of serious public communication, of language 'on its best behaviour.' Formality reinforces a norm, rather than reacts against it". (p. 314)

However, I am here relating the neutral-politeness to formality.

³²Walcutt explains Pandarus's use of *ye* to Criseyde, his niece in terms of courtly situation:

It may be that Chaucer wished thus to emphasize Criseyde's situation as an object of courtly love, rather than as someone's relative; perhaps Pandarus's courtly servility would have reminded a contemporary that he too was a lover, who had 'a joly wo, a lusty sorwe.'

³³The other cases in which Pandarus addresses Criseyde by *thou* can be explained in terms of rhyme or contractions (petrified forms). The cases of rhyme are:

Now, nece myn, the kynges deere sone,
The goode, wise, worthi, fresshe, and free,
Which alwey for to don wel is his wone,
The noble Troilus, so loveth the,
That, but ye heipe, it wol his bane be. (II, 316-320)

And: Think ek how elde wasteth every houre
In ech of yow a partie of beautee;
And therefore, er that age the devoure,
Go love; for old, ther wol no wight of the.
Lat this proverbe a loore unto yow be: (II, 392-97)

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The examples of contractions or petrified forms are:

...what thynkestow to do?

Whi ne hastow to thyselfen som resport?

Whi wiltow thus thiself, allas, fordo? (IV,849-51)

³⁴Evans argues that this use of singular *thou* by Gawain to the Lady is an indication of Gawain's agitated state of mind.

³⁵Norman Nathan, "Pronouns of Address in the Friar's Tale" *Modern Language Quarterly* 17 (1956), pp39-42.

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III. VOCATIVES

Just as the second singular pronouns *ye* and *thou* are used to show politeness and familiarity, vocatives also can be used to delineate rank and the social relationship between speaker and addressee. Vocatives, words or phrases used when calling someone,¹ can express the manifold gradients of superiority and inferiority, and of intimacy and distance, between speaker and addressee.

In Middle English literature, vocative forms can be largely classified into three categories with respect to politeness. The first category consists of speakers calling addressees by kinship terms such as *brother*, *suster*, *cosyn*, *nece* and *uncle*, by their personal names or both together. In the second category, speakers use professional or rank labels,² such as *knyght* and *squire*. In the last category, speakers use honorific titles such as *lorde*, *sire*, *mayster*, *lady*, *dame* and *madame*.

All these vocatives are used in both symmetrical and asymmetrical speech situations to show the speaker's attitude towards the addressee and their relationship. The symmetrical use of vocatives includes speaker and addressee calling each other by their personal names or kinship terms, or by professional or rank labels, without using any

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honorific titles. The reciprocal or symmetrical use of personal names or kinship terms in direct address shows the horizontal relationship between speaker and addressee. Social equals usually address one another by their personal names. Even among different social classes, the symmetrical use of vocatives occurs among intimate persons regardless of their social status. In most cases the familiar second singular pronoun *thou* accompanies their use of personal names and kinship terms rather than the polite *ye*. Calling each other by their professional or rank labels without any honorific titles also shows a symmetrical relationship between speaker and addressee.

The asymmetrical use of vocatives occurs when one person uses a personal name or kinship term to address another person, who in return uses an honorific title to address the former. The honorific title used reveals the nature of vertical relationship. Thus, the symmetrical use of vocatives indicates that the speaker and the addressee are on the same social level or that their relationship is close, or in the use of personal names, it may indicate enmity. On the other hand, the asymmetrical use of vocatives shows that they are not on the same social level. A reciprocal use of vocative usually indicates intimacy, regardless of any honor attributed to the addressee. Thus vocatives indicate the level of intimacy or the level of respect or politeness. The only case where the two should

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be considered together is in the case of intended insult. Then the pronoun is a cue to the intentions of the speaker.

The conjunction with the second personal pronouns vocatives reinforces not only the intention of the speaker, but also the relationships between the speaker and the addressee. First, the use of personal names and kinship terms as vocatives shows intimacy or enmity when used with *thou*, whereas use with the polite *ye* shows both intimacy and politeness. The second category, professional and rank label, is usually used to show no respect and no insult when used alone. Therefore if used with *thou* to the social inferior, it shows no insult and if used with *ye* to the social superior, it shows no respect. However, when it is used with *thou* to the social superior, it shows insult. And when used with *ye* to the social inferior, it shows sarcasm. Contrasted with the use of two categories of vocatives, personal names and kinship terms, and professional and rank labels, honorific titles generally show different connotations when used with the personal pronouns *ye* and *thou*. Since honorific titles are used to show politeness, the polite pronoun *ye* is expected with them. However, when used with *thou*, they show respect to the social inferior or reinforce sarcasm to any person.

Personal names and kinship terms:

Even though personal names occur only infrequently in Middle English poetry, they usually are an indication of

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intimacy between two characters unless some occupational animosity exists. Among close or intimate persons, personal names and kinship terms are symmetrically used to express the intimacy between the two people regardless of their social status. Thus, Chaucer has his characters use their personal names and kinship terms in intimate relationships even among equals in high social classes. In the *Knight's Tale*, the two knights, Palamon and Arcite, call each other by the kinship term, *cosyn* in addition to using the familiar pronoun *thou*. Arcite addresses Palamon:

Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and deedly on to see?
Why cridestow? Who hath thee doon offence?
(I,1081-83)

Palamon's answer to this also begins with *cosyn*:

Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
Thou hast a veyn ymaginacioun. (I,1093-94)

Through the symmetrical use of vocatives, the relationship between the 'sworn brothers' is emphasized. Similarly, in the *Shipman's Tale*, the story of a monk-wife-merchant triangle, their relationships and deceptions are shown despite the use of kinship terms, *cosyn* and *nece*. The merchant's wife uses the kinship term *cosyn* to the monk:

O deere cosyn myn, daun John,
What eyleth yow so rathe for to ryse?
(VII,98-99)

And the monk replies by using the kinship term *nece*:

Nece,...it oghte ynough suffuse
Fyve houres for to slepe upon a nyght
(VII,100-101)

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They continue to use those kinship terms to each other to emphasize their intimate relationship, which turns out to be a deception. The relationship between the monk and the merchant is also emphasized through the use of the kinship term *cosyn*. When the merchant is about to leave his house on a business trip, the monk addresses the merchant:

...Cosyn, it standeth so,
That wel I se to Brugges wol ye go.
God and seint Austin spede yow and gyde!
I prey yow, cosyn, wisely that ye ryde.
(VII, 257-60)

The merchant replies to the monk:

...O cosyn myn, daun John,
Now sikerly this is a smal requeste.
My gold is youre, whan that it yow lests,
And nat oonly my gold, but my chaffare.
Take what yow list, God shilde that ye spare.
(VII, 282-85)

The teller, the Shipman, (Chaucer, too) intends to show the ironical relationships among the characters by having them overuse the kinship term *cosyn* and the polite pronoun *ye* to each other. Unlike the relationship between the two knights, Palamon and Arcite in the *Knight's Tale*, which is pure, the three characters in the *Shipman's Tale* deceive each other by pretending intimacy. The merchant is duped both by the monk who "hym claymeth as for cosynage," and also by his wife at the end of the tale.

In the same way, among the lower classes, like those portrayed in the *Miller's Tale* and the *Reeve's Tale*, close relationships are shown by the reciprocal use of personal names. In the *Miller's Tale*, John and Nicholas who live in the same house reciprocate personal names with each other.

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John and Aleyn in the Reeve's Tale also call each other by their personal names.

Speakers and addressees belonging to different social classes also show their close friendship through the reciprocal use of personal names and kinship terms.

Throughout *Troilus and Criseyde*, friendship is emphasized through the symmetrical use of personal names and kinship terms such as *brother*, *nece* and *uncle*. The friendship between Troilus and Pandarus is primarily portrayed throughout the story by their reciprocal use of vocatives. They call each other by personal names, just as they reciprocate the use of *thou* to each other. Pandarus uses Troilus' personal name in addressing him, even though Troilus is his social superior:³

Ye, Troilus, now herke,...
 Though I be nyce, it happeth often so,
 That oon that excesse doth ful yvele fare
 By good counseil kan kepe his frend therfro.
 (I, 624-27)

Troilus also calls Pandarus by his personal name :

But herke, Pandare, o word, for I nolde
 That thow in me wendest so gret folie,
 That to my lady I desiren sholde
 That toucheth harm or any vilenye;
 (I, 1030-33)

And:

Now, Pandare, I kan na more seye,
 But, thow wis, thow woost, thow maist, thow art al!
 (I, 1051-52)

Troilus also uses the kinship term, *brother*:

Allas, my deere brother Pandarus,
 I am ashamed for to write, ywis,
 Lest of myn innocence I seyde amys,
 Or that she nolde it for despit receyve;

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Than were I ded, ther myght it nothyng weyve.
(II,1046-50)

Sometimes this pair uses non-kinship common nouns to each other instead of or in addition to their personal name or kinship term which reinforces their close friendship, despite their different social rank. Troilus addresses Pandarus by *frend* with his name, as we would expect him to:

Suffiseth this, my fulle frend Pandare,
That I have seyde, for now wostow my wo;
And for the love of God, my colde care,
So hide it wel--I tolde it nevere to mo.
(I,610-13)

We know that relationship is intimate because Troilus allows Pandarus to address him, his social superior, as *frend* :

Allas, what may this be?
Now, frend, yf evere love or trouthe
Hath ben, or is, bytwyxen the and me,
Ne do thow nevere swich a crueltee
To hiden fro thi frend so gret a care!
Wostow naught wel that it am I, Pandare
(I,583-85)

Pandarus even uses the word *fool* to Troilus:

How, hastow thus unkyndely and longe
Hid this fro me, thow fool?
(I,617-18)

In the *Friar's Tale*, the summoner and the devil use *brother* to each other to show their intimacy or solidarity because they are both bailiffs. The summoner says to the devil:

Brother,...where is now youre dwelling
Another day if that I sholde yow seche?
(III,1410-11)

Even if the summoner addresses the devil by the honorific-polite pronoun *ye*, because the devil is his social superior, his use of the kinship term *brother* expresses his intimate

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Feeling towards the devil because they have common interests. The devil also replies with *brother*:

Brother, ...fer in the north contree,
Where as I hope som tyme I shal thee see.
(III,1413-14)

They then continue to reciprocate *brother* to each other. The reciprocal use of the kinship term *brother* is contrasted with the use of the honorific title *sire*. When the summoner meets the devil first, he uses the honorific title *sire*:

"Sire, hayl, and wel atake." However, after the summoner explains his job and the devil asks "Artow thann a baily?" the devil addresses the summoner as *brother*:

Depardieux, ... deere broother,
Thou are a baily, and I am another
I am unknownen as in this contree;
Of thyn aqueyntance I wolde praye thee
And eek of bretherhede, if that yow leste.
(III,1395-99)

In the same way Pandarus and Criseyde address each other by kinship terms, *nece* and *uncle* to show their friendship. Even though they use the polite pronoun *ye* to each other, Pandarus always uses the kinship term *nece* ('niece') to her despite the fact that he addresses her by using the honorific title *madame* in the presence of other ladies:

...Madame, God yow see,
With yowre faire book and al the compaignye.
(II,85-86)

After Criseyde replies to him:

Ey, uncle myn, welcome ywys
(II,87)

Pandarus switches to a kinship term *nece*:

Ye, nece, ye shal fare wel the bet,
If God wole, al this yer,

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Through the use of common familiar nouns to each other they show their close friendship as Criseyde mentions:

Iwis, myn uncle, grant mercy.
 Youre frendshie have I founden evere yit;
 I am to no man holden, trewely,
 So muche as yow, and have so litel quyrt....
 (II, 239-42)

Though this friendship is different from that of Troilus and Pandarus it implies advice and counsel.⁴ Pandarus and Criseyde's use of kinship terms to each other shows their intimate relationship; at the same time they show their politeness to each other through the use of *ye*, which I already explained in Chapter I.

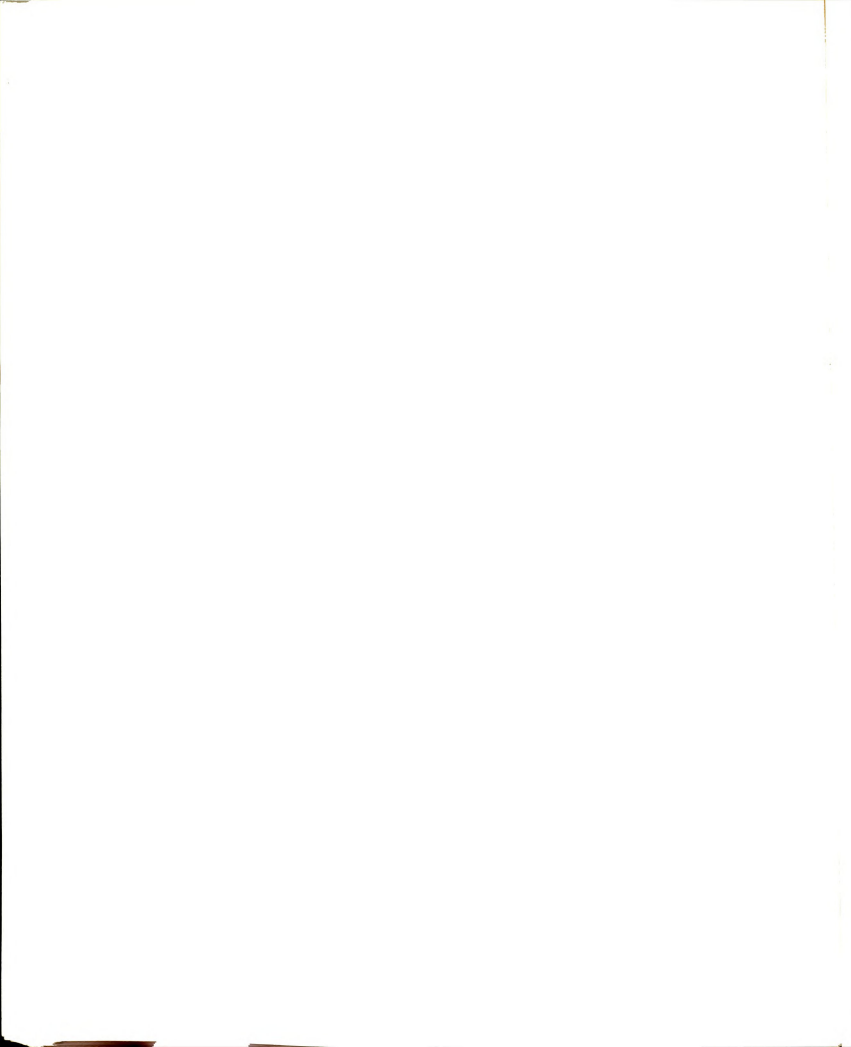
The symmetrical use of personal names and kinship terms is in sharp contrast to the asymmetrical use of vocatives between Troilus' brother, Deiphebus and Pandarus. Pandarus calls Deiphebus, who is his superior, by *sire* and *lord* along with using the honorific-polite pronoun *ye*, whereas Deiphebus calls Pandarus by *frend* and *thou*. Pandarus always addresses Deiphebus with the honorific titles *sire* and *lorde*:

Lo, sire, I have a lady yn this town
 That is my nece and called is Criseyde,
 (II, 1416)

and:

...yf ye, my lord so dere,
 Wolden as now do this honour to me,
 To preyen hire to-morwe, lo, that she
 Come unto yow, hire pleyntes to devise,
 Hire adversaries wolde of it agrise.
 (II, 1431-35)

and:



Syre, al this shal be don. (II,1459)

In contrast to his use of honorific titles to Deiphebus, his social superior, Pandarus receives the general common noun *frend*:

...O, is not this
That thou spekest of to me so straungely
Criseyda, my frend? (II,1423)

Thus in *Troilus and Criseyde* the friendships between Troilus and Pandarus, and Pandarus and Criseyde, are emphasized through the symmetrical use of vocatives, in contrast with the asymmetrical use of vocatives between Pandarus and Deiphebus.

In the same way, speakers use personal names or common familiar nouns to show their intimate relationship with the addressee or to pretend an intimate relationship where none exists. In the *Summoner's Tale*, for example, the friar constantly repeats the layman Thomas's name, as well as using *thou* when he is asking for gifts from him. Elsewhere the friar uses the polite pronoun *ye* as noted in Chapter I. The Pilgrim Summoner intends to uncover the Pilgrim Friar's hypocrisy and so has the friar in his tale pretended to be intimate with Thomas through the obviously hypocritical use of his personal name in conjunction with the use of familiar *thou*:

Thomas, of me thou shalt nat been yflatered;
Thou woldest han oure labour al for noght.
(III,1970-71)

And therefore, Thomas, trowe me if thee leste,
Ne stryve nat with thy wyf, as for thy beste.
And ber this word away now, by thy feith,
(III,1985-87)

The fact that the Pilgrim Summoner has his friar in his *Tale* use a personal name in a hypocritical manner underscores the convention which states that personal names when used between friends indicates familiarity.

Between lovers, as between friends, personal names are generally used to express intimate feelings. In the *Miller's Tale*, Absalon, the parish clerk, calls Alison by her name: "What do ye, honycomb, swete Alisoun " (I,3698). In the same way in the *Reeve's Tale* Aleyn calls Malyne by her personal name: " Fare weel, Malyne, sweete wight!" (I,4236).

In the marriage relationship husband and wife usually address each other by their personal names. In the *Miller's Tale*, the carpenter and his wife call each other by their personal names:

What, Alison, herestow nat Absolon,
That chaunteth thus under oure boures wal?
(I,3366-67)

And she answers her husband:

Yis, God woot, John, I heere it every deel.
(I, 3369)

Also in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the fourth husband of the Wife of Bath, Jankin, calls her "Deere suster Alison" (III-804), a term of endearment, as he attempts to apologize for throwing her to the floor. This precarious situation requires more intimacy than any other time in the tale, in order to soothe her anger. All the above examples show that

personal names and kinship terms are used between people in close relationships.

Besides emphasizing that a situation requires intimacy or familiarity between speaker and addressee, personal names are also used to show enmity towards the addressee. Thus animosity between professional rivals reveals itself through the symmetrical use of personal names and/or general common nouns.

One pair of occupational rivals in the *Canterbury Tales* is the Host and the Cook. There were laws that prohibited London innkeepers from selling food or drink in competition with victualers, such as the Cook. Consequently, a natural antagonism existed between the Host and the Cook.⁵ The personal names of the two come out in their quarrel. The Host addresses the Cook by his personal name when he calls upon him for a tale:

Now telle on, Roger, looke that it be good;
(I, 4345)

Now telle on, gentil Roger by thy name
(I, 4353)

In his response to the Host, the Cook also uses the personal name of the Host, Harry Bailly:

..., Herry Bailly, by thy feith,
Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,
Though that my tale be of an hostileer.
But natheless I wol nat telle it yit,
But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit.
(I, 4358-62).

Along with the second person singular pronoun *thou*, the interchange of personal names between professional or occupational enemies heightens the sense of their enmity.

Another pair of rivals is the Miller and the Reeve. As Tupper has already shown in his article "The Quarrels of the Canterbury Pilgrims," the Miller and the Reeve are professional and traditional enemies (p.265). The job of the Miller is to grind grain, while the Reeve's is to oversee the farm; and because of their conflicting interests, they often accuse each other of cheating. The Miller is the first one to call the Reeve by his name, when the two men quarrel: "leve brother Osewald" (I,3151). The Miller, by using the Reeve's personal name in conjunction with the kinship term *brother*, which otherwise would indicate a close relationship, thereby shows his animosity.

In addition to the use of personal names to show friendship or animosity, personal names are also used to members of the lower class. In the *Canterbury Tales*, the Pilgrims of lower class are addressed by their personal names alone, whereas those Pilgrims who are of the higher class are addressed by honorific titles. When the Miller insists upon telling his story immediately after the *Knight's Tale* in spite of his drunkenness, the Host calls him by his personal name:

Abid, Robyn, my leeve brother,
Som bettre man shal telle us first another.
Abid, and lat us werken thriftily.
(I,3129-31)

Even though he uses the kinship term *brother* with his personal name, the Host's calling the Miller by his personal name simply indicates the latter's lower rank; but not animosity, because these men are not professional rivals.

The Host thereby emphasizes the Miller's disruption of the social order. Instead of kinship terms, the common nouns such as *carl* and *cherl* are used to deride members of the lower class. The cognates of the words *carl* and *cherl* are both terms of abuse in Middle English, the latter being used rather more frequently.⁶ Even though the basic meaning of the two words is: "any person not belong to the nobility or clergy" (MED), they have connotations of contempt or abusiveness as these examples, the first from in the *General Prologue*, and the second from the *Prologue* to the *Miller's Tale* show:

The Millere was a stout carl for the nones. (I,545)

The Millere is a cherl (I,3182)

In direct address, these two words are used in offensive situations with the common noun, *theef*. In the *Pardoner's Tale*, the three rioters address each other by 'felawes' 'bretheren' and 'may deere freend,' which show their intimate relationships or their pretentious intimacy whereas they address the old man with 'carl,' 'olde cherl' and 'false theef.'

And in the *Summoner's Tale*, the friar who uses the personal pronoun and familiar noun *brother* to Thomas, switches to the word *cherl* when he is tricked by Thomas:

A, false cherl, for Goddes bones!

This hastow for despit doon for the nones.

(I,2153-4)

In the *Franklin's Tale*, personal names are used in asymmetrical situations. Dorigen addresses Aurelius by his

personal name, whereas Aurelius addresses Dorigen, his social superior, and whom he loves, by the honorific title *madame*:

But now, Aurelie, I knowe youre entente,
By thilke God that yaf me soule and lyf
Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wyf
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit
(V, 982-85)

And then she continues:

Aurelie, ...by heighte God above,
Yet wolde I graunte yow to been youre love,
Syn I yow se so pitously complayne.
(V, 989-91)

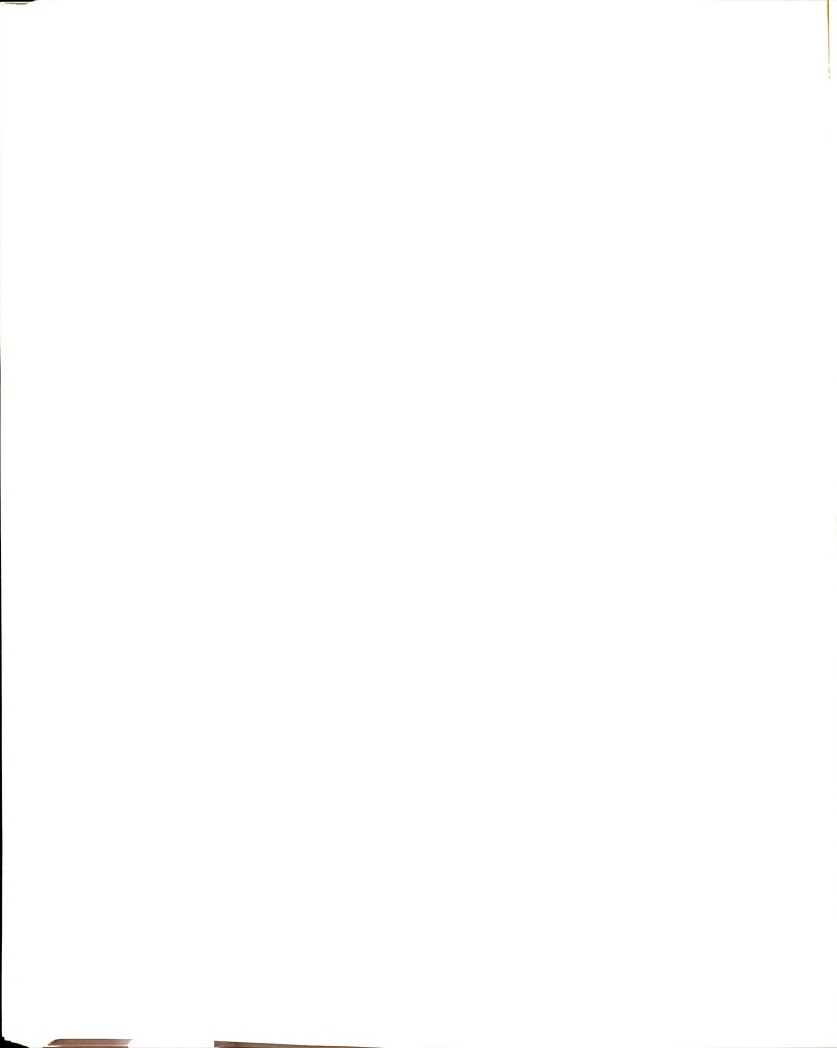
Aurelius uses the honorific title *madame* in answering her:

Madame, ...this were an impossible
Thanne moot I dye of sodeyn deth horrible.
(V, 1009-10)

This asymmetrical use of vocatives indicates the hierarchical relationship between the duchess and the squire, even though Dorigen uses the neutral-polite *ye* to him, as I explained in Chapter I (p.57). Therefore, the asymmetrical use of vocatives can be a cue to their social status where the polite pronoun *ye* is neutrally used.

In marriage, the asymmetrical use of the wife's personal name by her husband reflects the inferior position of women in that period. In the *Clerk's Tale*, the obedient wife, Griselda, is always addressed by her personal name by her husband, Walter, who in return receives the honorific title *lorde*. Griselda never calls her husband by his name, but Walter always addresses his wife by her personal name and the familiar pronoun *thou*:

This is ynogh, Grisilde myn,



Be now namoore agast ne yvele apayed.
 I have thy feith and thy nenyngnytee
 As wel as evere womman was assayed,
 In greet estaat and pourelliche arrayed.
 Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedfastnesse
 (IV,1051-56)

and:

Grisilde, by God that for us deyde,
 Thou art my wyf, ne noon oother I have,
 Ne nevere hadde, as God my soule save.
 (IV,1062-64)

Even when he uses the polite pronoun ye to her, he calls her
 by her name instead of by an honorific title:

I seye, Grisilde, this present dignitee
 In which that I have put yow, as I trowe,
 Maketh yow nat foryetful for to be
 That I yow took in povre estaat ful lowe,
 For any wele ye moot yourselven knowe.
 (IV,470-74)

In contrast to the use of his personal name Griselda always
 uses the honorific title *lorde* to her husband. This
 asymmetrical use of vocatives reflects their vertical
 relationship which is easily contrasted with the symmetrical
 use of personal names to reveal intimacy in other Tales.

The *Gawain*-poet also uses personal names in similar
 situations. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, when the
 Green Knight first appears in Arthur's court and later in
 his chapel, he calls Gawain by his personal name without any
 honorific title. First the Green Knight in Arthur's court:

Lok, Gawain, pou be graybe to go as pou hettez,
 And layte as lelly til pou me, lude, fynde,
 (448-49)

And also in his chapel:

'Gawain,' quod þat grene gome, 'God þe mot loke!
 (2239)

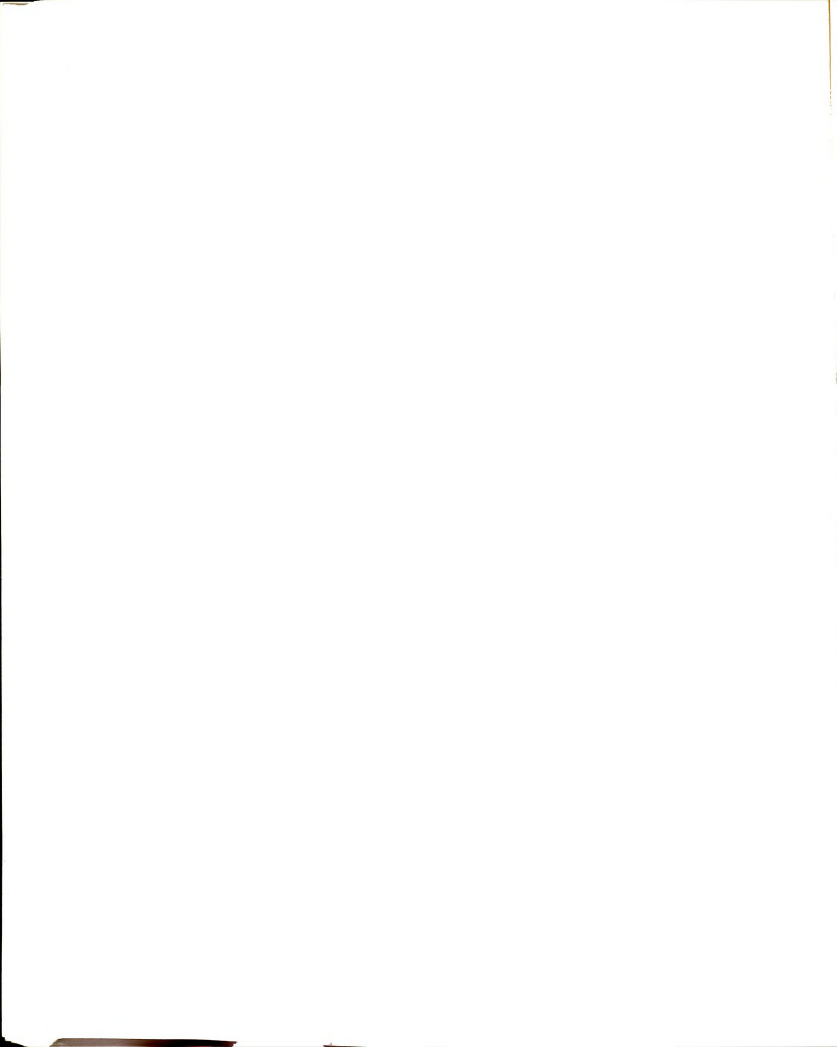
This shows that the Green Knight is acting as a superior to Gawain, which in turn also suggests the Green Knight's rude attitude toward Gawain, who is also a knight and therefore should be addressed with an honorific title such as *sire*.

Thus personal names and kinship terms are used either symmetrically or asymmetrically. In symmetrical situations personal names are used to indicate intimacy or animosity. The kinship terms such as *suster*, *brother*, *cosyn*, *nece* and *uncle* accompany personal names in intimate situation whereas other common nouns such as *carl*, *cherl* or *theef* accompany in order to reinforce thoughts of animosity. Personal names and kinship terms are found in asymmetrical situations to show a hierarchical relationship between speaker and addressee.

Professional or rank labels:

While personal names and kinship terms are used to show intimacy, professional or rank labels are also employed in contexts where personal names could also serve. The difference is that the use of personal names indicates intimacy or insult, whereas professional or rank labels are usually neutral; they generally convey neither intimacy nor respect, although a professional label may be used to denigrate a person's occupation.

By calling someone by his professional label without any honorific title the speaker indicates that the addressee is not his superior. In the *Canterbury Tales*, the Host uses



professional labels to the lower-class Pilgrims, who are his inferiors. Harry Baily calls the Canon's Yeoman, an alchemist, by his occupational label:

"Ther-of-no fors, good Yeman" (VIII, 652). He calls the Pardoner by his occupational name when he asks the Pardoner for a merry tale after the Physician's tragic story of Virginia, which has profoundly affected the Host: "Thou beel amy, thou pardoner" and to the Nun's Priest: "Com neer, thou preest, com hyder."

He can be also blunt and direct when he addresses those whom he considers his equals, as is evidenced by his calling them by their professional labels. The Host addresses those among the middle class whom he thinks his inferiors or at best his equals by professional labels whereas he addresses those whom he thinks his superiors by honorific titles. For example, the Host addresses the Franklin, the Manciple, and the Merchant by their professional labels. The common in these three cases is the Host's use of their professional labels after the three men delay their stories. When the Franklin is talking about *gentillesse* after the Squire's Tale, the Host interrupts him and urges him to tell his story with the use of the second person singular pronoun *thou* and his professional label and then adds sarcastic *sire*:

What, Frankleyn, pardee, sire, wel thou woost
That ech of yow moot tellen atte leste
A tale or two, or breken his biheste.

(V, 696-98)

When the Host calls on the Cook to tell a tale, the Manciple interrupts and says he will do the Host a service by telling a story, berating the Cook for being ridiculously drunk. The Host uses the Manciple's occupational label when he warns him of the revenge the Cook might take on him:

But yet, Manciple, in feith thou art to nyce,
Thus openly repreve hym of his vice.
Another day he wole, peraventure.
Reclayme me thee and brynge thee to lure.
(IX, 69-71)

And the Host addresses the Merchant with the polite pronoun ye and his professional label without any honorific title:

Now, ...Marchaunt, so God yow blesse,
Syn ye so muchel knowen of that art,
Ful hertely I pray yow telle us part.
(IV, 1240-42)

Even though the Host uses the polite ye to the Merchant, unlike to the Franklin and to the Merchant, he shows no respect for the Merchant by using his professional label alone. After the Clerk finishes his tale, the Merchant gives the details of his marital troubles, indicating the Clerk's story as the immediate occasion for his outburst:

Wepyng and waylyng, care and oother sorwe
I know ynogh, on even and a-morwe,
...and so doon othere mo
That wedded been. I trowe that it be so,
For wel I woot it fareth so with me.
I have a wyf, the worste that may be;
(IV, 1213-18)

He continues his troubles to line IV, 1238. As Lumiansky explains about this situation, "the Host is quick in his attempt to turn this outburst to the benefit of the storytelling game" (155).



The Host's use of the particular vocative shows that the middle class Pilgrims neutrally address each other by professional labels without any honorific titles depending on their subjective judgement. When the speaker considers the addressee as his superior, he uses the honorific title. However, when the speaker thinks the addressee is his equal he uses the occupational or professional label only.

Among the Pilgrims, there are two men who call the Host by his occupational label alone without any honorific title: the Pilgrim Chaucer (VII,707) and the Man of Law (II,39). Pilgrim Chaucer and the Man of Law consider the Host their inferior or at best their equal. In contrast to the Man of Law's use of his professional label alone to him, the Host addresses the Man of Law with an honorific title before his professional label: "Sire Man of Law" (II, 33) As these examples show, the concept of equality or inferiority among the so-called middle classes is not objectively defined in this period.⁷ The characters in this literature decide inferiority or equality on the basis of their subjective judgment.

In the same way rank labels such as *knyght* or *squire* are employed to equal or inferior without any honorific title. For example, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Gawain addresses the Green Knight as just *knyght* when they first meet in Arthur's court:

I wot neuer where þou wonynnes, bi hym þat me
wro3t,
Ne I know not þe, kny3t, þy cort ne þi name.
(399-400)

Gawain treats the Green Knight as his inferior by using rank label without any honorific title. This use of vocative is reinforced by the use of the pronoun *thou*.

In the *Canterbury Tales* the Pilgrim Franklin addresses the Squire, the Knight's son, by his rank label alone without any honorific title:

In feith, Squire, thow hast thee wel yquit!
And gentilly. I preise wel thy wit.

(V, 673-74)

The Franklin wants to identify himself as equal to the Squire, who is his obvious social superior, by using his rank label without any honorific title. Franklin's use of the rank label to the Squire can be contrasted with the use of the honorific title *sire* to the Host (V, 703) who is his social inferior, or at best his equal.

Between rivals, the informal use of professional or rank labels shows antagonism in much the same way as calling someone by his personal name. As the Host uses the personal name of his occupational enemy, the Cook, he also uses his occupational label, along with *thou* when the latter is sleeping:

Awake, thou Cook,God yeve thee sorwe!
What eyleth thee to slepe by the morwe?
Hastow had fleen al nyght, or artow dronke,
So that thow mayst nat holden up thyn heed?

(IX, 15-19)

By using his occupational label, the speaker can insult the addressee's job as well as the addressee himself. While the use of personal names is focused on individual attack, the use of professional labels is focused on the type of

profession to show the animosity between rival characters.

Another pair of professional rivals are the Friar and the Summoner. The Friar is a member of the regular clergy with papal authority; the Summoner is a member of the secular clergy under the control of the Bishop and Archdeacon of the Diocese. Their enmity is shown by their use of professional labels without any honorific title. This enmity is reinforced by their descriptions of each other in their Tales. The Summoner calls the Friar by his professional label without any modifying words:

Now elles, Frere, I bishreewe thy face
(III, 844-5)

To those whom they consider to be inferiors, or at best equals, the speakers employ professional labels without any modifying honorific titles as vocative forms of address in all the quotations above. This use of professional labels is usually reinforced by the use of the pronoun *thou*.

On the other hand, rank labels can also be used as neutral vocatives which accompanies the polite pronoun *ye*. The Host calls the Squire by his rank label without any honorific title:

Squire, com neer, if youre will be,
And sey somewhat of love, for certes ye
Konnen theron as muche as any man.
(V, 1-3)

Even if he uses the honorific-polite *ye* to the Squire, who is his social superior, the Host calls the Squire by his rank label alone because of the latter's young age.



From these examples, familiarity, animosity or superiority can be clearly seen through the symmetrical or asymmetrical use of vocatives. Thus the use of personal names or kinship terms, or professional or rank labels shows the relationship between speaker and addressee as well as the speaker's attitude towards the addressee regardless of the latter's real social position. Although personal names and professional or rank labels are both used in situations of animosity and to inferiors, as well as to insult the addressee, only personal names are used in intimate situations because they turn the focus on the individual and his personality. However, professional or rank labels focus on a more "public" aspect of the person, and hence generally are a more neutral form of address.

Honorific titles:

Originally honorific titles were devised and used to establish the identity of speaker in terms of his relationship with the larger group. Along with personal names or professional labels, honorific titles such as *lorde*, *sire*, *mayster*, *lady*, *dame* and *madame* are also used as vocatives. According to the Concordance to Chaucer,⁸ of all the honorific titles *sire* and *dame* were the most widely used as a polite term of address. Contrary to the two earlier categories, in which vocatives were used in intimate or antagonistic situations, or neutral context, these honorific titles are employed in Middle English poems as forms of



respectful address to show politeness towards the addressee. These honorific titles can also be employed symmetrically and asymmetrically in late Middle English literature depending on the situation, though they had originally been used only asymmetrically to social superiors.

Sire, Mayster and Lorde:

Among three honorific titles largely used to refer to men, *sire* is the most common as a term of respectful address. It was used either by itself or in combination with the addressee's personal name, professional or rank label. The normal meaning of *sire* in the Middle Ages is "he who has authority."⁹ Thus *sire* was generally used to refer to the emperor, the king and to feudal seigneurs, who possessed authority over country and for husbands, lovers and fathers, who had authority over their wives, sweethearts and children (Stowell, p.191).

Just as the honorific-polite *ye* is used to a superior so the honorific title *sire* is used to a superior in terms of social status, age, sex, learnedness and morality of the addressee. The Host in the *Canterbury Tales* often shows courtesy by calling those whom he considers his superiors by the title *sire* alone or before professional labels. He addresses his social superiors, the Knight, and the Squire, who belong to nobility; and the Monk, who belongs to the upper rank of the clergy, by calling them *sire*. The Host addresses the Knight who holds the highest rank among the



Pilgrims as *sire* when he calls him for drawing a cut and telling a story: "Sire Knyght" (I, 837). The Host addresses the Monk as *sire* when he needs to show courtesy because the latter's socially superior rank.¹⁰ When the Knight has finished his romance of Palamon and Arcite, the Host compliments him and then calls upon the Monk, who is next in rank to the Knight, with the use of the honorific title *sire*: "Sire Monk" (I, 3118). Also, when inviting the Monk to tell a Tale, the Host courteously addresses him as "My lord, the Monk" (VIII, 1924), but after the Knight's interruption, he rudely refers to "this Monk" (VII-2781). And then he softens the situation immediately by addressing him as *Sire Monk*:

Sire Monk, namoore of this, so God yow blesse!
 Youre tale anoyeth al this compaignye.
 (VII, 2788).

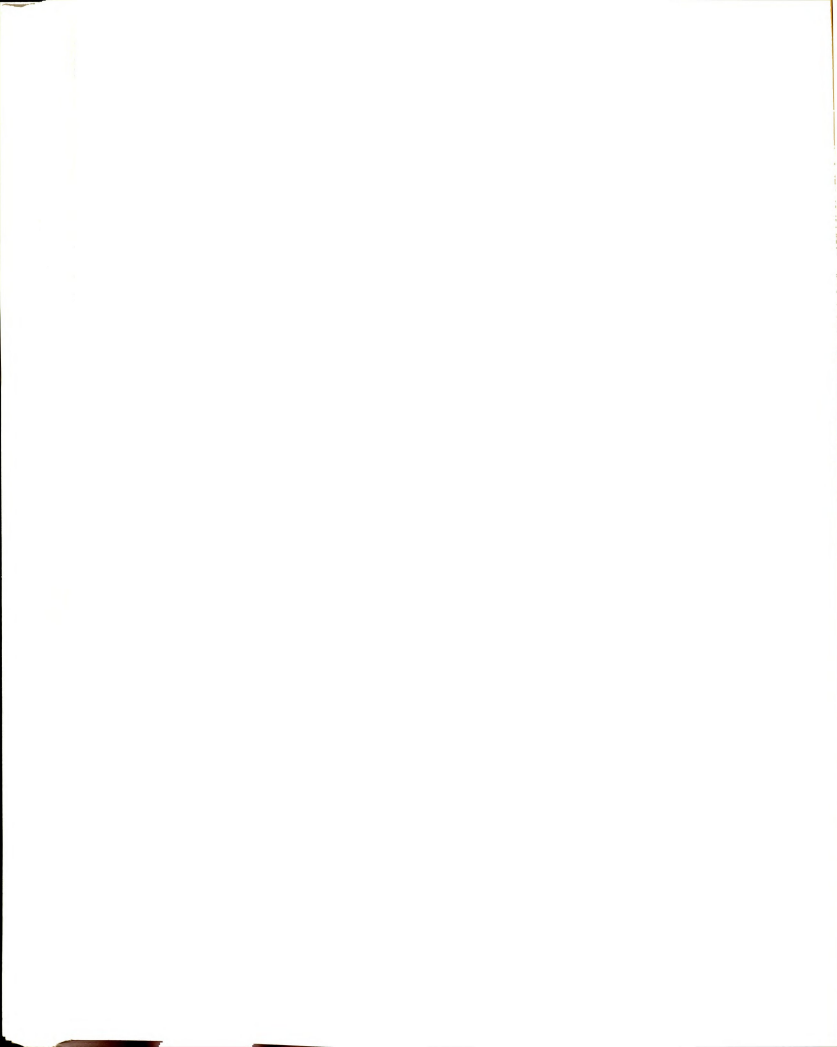
In the *Knight's Tale*, Duke Theseus, who holds the highest position in his court, is addressed as *sire* by Arcite. In *Troilus and Criseyde* all members of the Trojan royal family are addressed as *sire* by the other characters. Pandarus uses *sire* to King Hector's sons, Deiphebus (II, 1416; 1459) and Troilus (II, 957). Criseyde sometimes uses *sire* to Troilus (III, 68).

The use of the honorific title *sire* is also applied to the learnedness of the addressee as the honorific-polite *ye* is. The Host also addresses the Clerk (I, 840; IV, 1) and the Man of Law who are known as men of learning (II, 33) as *sire*.¹¹

In marriage, husbands are regularly addressed by their wives as *sire* which is contrasted with a common noun husband.¹² In the *Tale of Melibee*, dame Prudence mostly calls her husband Melibeus as *sire* and Melibeus addresses her as *dame*. In contrast with the symmetrical use of honorific titles between husband and wife in the *Tale of Melibee*, in the *Franklin's Tale* Arveragus is addressed as *sire* by his wife, whereas he addresses his wife, Dorigen, by her personal name and the non-honorific common noun *wyf*. Dorigen addresses her husband by the honorific title *sire*:

...Sire, sith of youre gentillesse
 Ye profre me to have so large a reyne,
 Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us tweyne,
 As in my gilt, were outhur werre or stryf.
 Sire, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf.
 (V,754-58)

In contrast, Arveragus calls his wife, Dorigen, by her name: "Is ther oght elles, Dorigen, but this?" (V,1468). He also he uses the common noun *wyf*: "Ye, wyf,...lat slepen that is stille" (V,1472). This asymmetrical use of Arveragus and Dorigen in the *Franklin's Tale* indicates that their relationship between husband and wife is vertical rather than horizontal in spite of their symmetrical use of the polite pronoun *ye*. Arveragus's use of her personal name or the word *wyf* to his wife instead of the honorific title contradicts his statements about humility and his use of the honorific-polite *ye* (discussed in Chapter I), and thus shows his contradictory personality, which in turn reflects that of the teller, the Franklin.



Morality is also a factor which affects the use of the honorific title *sire*. In the *Canterbury Tales* the Franklin switches from using a rank label into using the honorific title *sire* when he is impressed by the achievements of the young Squire. In complimenting the Squire on his excellent performance when the Squire finishes his story, the Franklin addresses the Squire as *sire*, in spite of the Squire's young age, which would normally cause the Franklin to use the rank label *Squire* (V, 673):

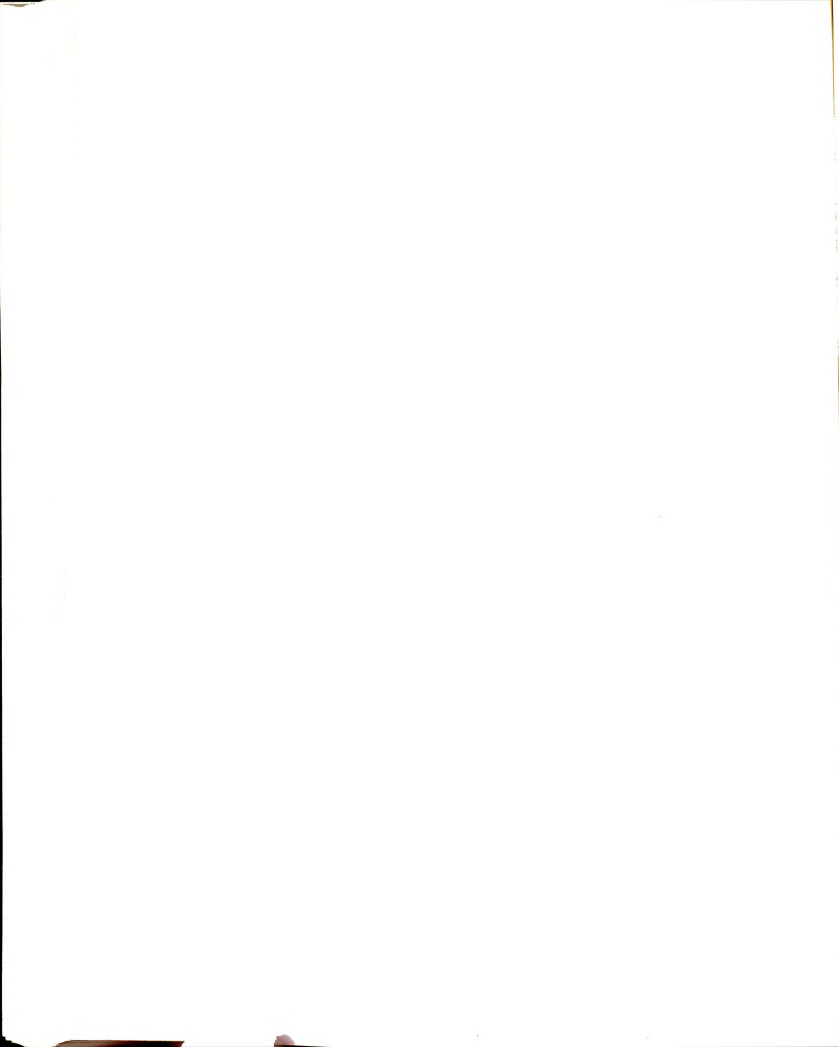
...considerynge thy youthe,
So feelyngly thou spekest, *sire*, I allow the.
(V, 3-4)

Using the honorific title *sire* causes him to use the polite *ye* later. He switches to the polite *ye* from the previous *thou* which is the conventional pronoun used by an elder speaker to an younger addressee.

In the *Franklin's Tale*, the clerk magician speaks respectfully to Aurelius when he is touched by Aurelius's 'gentil dede.' After Aurelius tells about his sending Dorigen to her husband as 'frely' as Arveragus sent her to him, the magician says to Aurelius:

Sire, I releesse thy thousand pound
As thou right now were copen out of the ground
Ne nevere er now ne haddest knowen me.
For, *sire*, I wol nat taken a peny of thee
For al my craft, ne noght for my travaille.
Thou hast ypayed wel for my vitaille.
It is ynogh, and farewel, have good day!
(V, 1613-19)

Even though the magician uses the familiar pronoun *thou* to Aurelius who is his social inferior, he shows his respect towards Aurelius by using the honorific title *sire*.



Sire is also used by the speaker who wants to show humility towards the addressee regardless of the latter's social status. Just like the use of the humble-polite *ye* in Chapter I, the speaker uses the honorific title *sire* to show his humility towards the addressee.

In the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, when the fox first sees the cock, Chauntecleer, in the herbs, the fox courteously addresses Chauntecleer, who is frightened and is about to fly away by using *both sire* and *ye*:

Gentil sire, allas! wher wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend?...
(VII, 3284-5)

The fox addresses Chauntecleer in this manner in order to persuade the cock to stay and put him off his guard. He pretends to be humble by using the title *sire* to Chauntecleer. Later, Chauntecleer also uses the title *sire* to deceive the fox:

Sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet wolde I seyn, as wys God helpe me,
Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
A verray pestilence upon yow falle!
Now I am come unto the wodes syde.
Maugre youre heed, the cock shal heere abyde.
I wol hym ete, in feith, and that anon.
(VII, 3406-14)

The use of the honorific title *sire* is used to show the speaker's humility towards the addressee, if it is pretentious or not.

The Pilgrim Franklin uses *sire* to the Host even though the Host insulted him. This shows that the Franklin is obsequious in the hope of making a good impression on the rest of the company. Every time he addresses himself

directly to the pilgrims he speaks respectfully using *sire* twice to the Host in spite of the latter's insulting his interest in *gentillesse*. Though the Host rudely interrupts the Franklin, the Franklin replies humbly with the use of the honorific title *sire*: "That knowe I wel, *sire*" (V, 699). And later:

Gladly, *sire* Hoost, I wol obeye
 Unto your wil. Now herkneth what I seye.
 (V, 703-4)

This use of the honorific title *sire* to the Host who is not only his social inferior but also the man who insults him, reflects the Franklin's ingratiating personality rather than his *gentillesse*.¹³ Besides using the honorific title *sire*, the Franklin addresses the polite pronoun *ye* to the Host who in return uses the pronoun *thou*.

The *Gawain*-poet also uses the title *sire* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to show the speaker's humility towards the addressee. After Gawain humbly confesses his failure to the Green Knight, the Green Knight uses the title *sire*:

And I gif þe, sir, þe gurdel þat is golde-hemmed,
 For hit is grene as my goune. Sir Gawain, 3e maye
 Benk vpon þis ilke þrepe, þer þou forth þryngez
 Among prynces of prys, and þis a pure token
 Of þe chaunce of þe grene chapel at cheuralrous
 kny3tez. (2395-99)

Impressed by Gawain's humble attitude, the Green Knight also shows his humility to Gawain by using the honorific title *sire* and the humble-polite pronoun *ye* even though he still mixes *ye* with his customary pronoun *thou*. The Green Knight's use of the honorific title *sire* to Gawain is



contrasted to that of personal name alone in Arthur's court, which shows his rude attitude.

Just as the polite-pronoun *ye* is employed neutrally, so is the honorific title *sire*. Regardless of the social status of the addressee one can use the title *sire* as a respectful term of address to those who are not superiors. In other words, the title *sire* is used to the addressee regardless of his or her social station, just like the use of neutral-polite *ye* when the speaker wants or needs to be polite to the addressee in these late Middle English poems. Such usage reveals the speaker's awareness of the conversational conventions which in turn shows his good breeding or education.

In the *Canterbury Tales* the Pilgrim Knight, who has the highest rank of all the Pilgrims, addresses the other Pilgrims as *sire*, who are all his social inferiors. For example, the Knight uses *sire* to the Pardoner and the Host along with *ye* and *thou* when he stills their quarrel at the end of the *Pardoner's Tale*. He soothes the tempers of the Pardoner and the Host by addressing them in overly polite terms with honorific title *sire*:

Namore of this, for it is right ynough!
Sire Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere;
And ye, sire Hoost, that been to me so deere,
I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner.

(VI, 962-5)

He addresses the Monk as *sire* when he interrupts his sad story:

...good sire, namore of this!
That ye han seyde is right ynough, ywis,

And muchel moore, for litel hevynesse
Is right ynough to muche folk, I gesse.

(VII,2767-70)

The Squire also uses *sire* to the Host when the Host calls upon the young Squire for a tale of love, alleging that he knew as much as any man on the subject:

Nay, sire, but I wol seye as I kan
With hertly wyl; for I wol nat rebelle
Agayn youre lust; a tale wol I telle.

(V,4-6)

Sire is also used by the Canterbury Pilgrims to address the Host: the Wife of Bath (III,844), the Merchant (IV,1233), the Manciple (IX,104), the Franklin (V,703) and the Nun's Priest (VII,2816), all use this form of address.

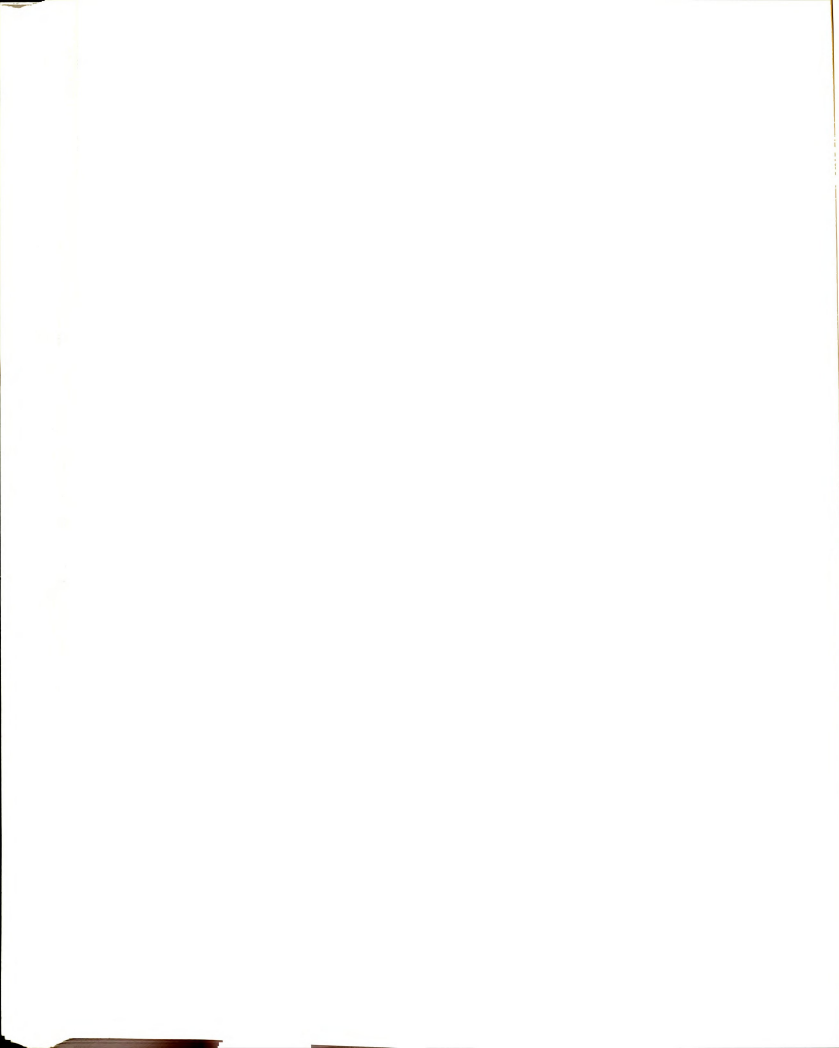
In the *Tale of Melibee*, Melibeus, a powerful and rich young man, is addressed as *sire* by the young and the old, as well as by professionals such as surgeons and physicians when he calls them together to ask for advice.

The title *sire* is also used to the person whose profession gives him authority over the speaker. The Host calls the Parson *sire* in spite of his lower social status in that period:

Sir Parisshe Prest,...for Goddes bones,
Telle us a tale, as was thi forward yore.

(II,1166).

Though the Host uses the familiar pronoun *thou* to the parson because of his lower social status,¹⁴ he addresses the parson as *sir* because of his profession, which has authority over laymen. Also the Host uses the honorific title *sire* to the Nun's Priest, though he calls the latter by his professional label alone without any honorific title before



(VII,3447) because of his lower status: "Sire, faire falle yow" (VII,3460). In the *Friar's* and the *Summoner's Tale* all the laymen address the summoner and the friar as *sire* because their professions give them authority over the laymen. For example, in the *Friar's Tale*, the old widow addresses the summoner as *sire*:

God save you, sire, what is youre sweete
wille? (III,1585)

In the same way all the laymen in the *Summoner's Tale* address the friar as *sire* because of his profession.

Thomas's wife calls the friar by *sire* :

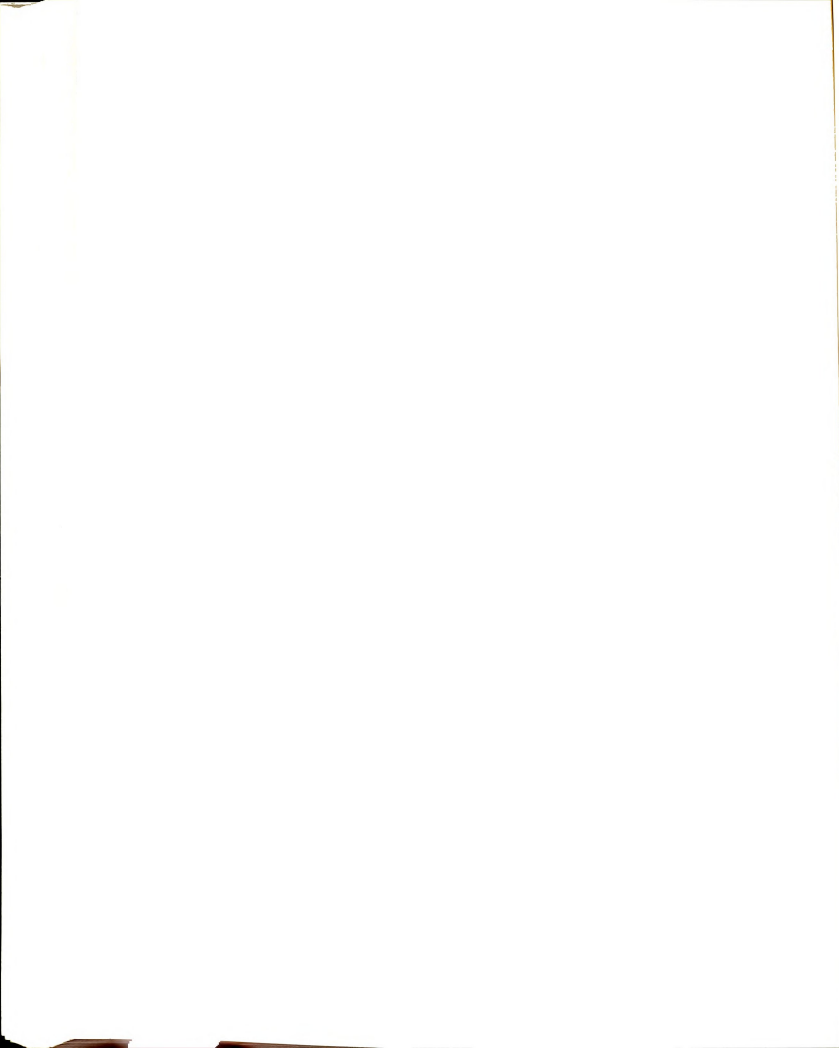
Ye, God amende defautes, sire,
Algates, welcome be ye, by my fey. (III,1810-11)

And a lord of the village also calls him *sire*:

Sire,... ye woost what is to doone
(III,2194)

Therefore the title *sire* is used to the person whose job has the authority over the layman regardless of his social status which is seen in the usage of the second singular pronoun *ye* and *thou*.

The *Gawain*-poet uses the title *sire* neutrally to show politeness to the addressee regardless of their status. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, King Arthur addresses the Green Knight and Gawain as *sire* (275;477) though they are his social inferiors. The Green Knight and Gawain reciprocate *sire* to each other along with the alternation of non-honorific common words such as *burne* and *wi3e* which have more general meaning.¹⁵ The Lady of Bercilak also addresses



Gawain as *sire* with *ye* and sometimes with *thou*.¹⁶ Gawain and the Porter also reciprocate *sire* to one another despite their different social statuses. This neutral use of *sire* is seen in another poem *Pearl*, where the honorific title *sire* is also used by the maiden to her dreamer-father as a neutral polite form of address along with non-honorific common word *burne* without any different meaning.

Sir, 3e haf your tale myse tente
To say your perle is al awaye, (257-58)

Now blysse, burne, mot þe bytyde! (397)

Sir, fele here porchase3 & fonge3 pray
Bot supplantore3 none wythinne þys place. (439-40)

Thus the neutral use of the honorific title *sire* is used independently from the use of the second person singular pronouns *ye* and *thou* which shows their social relationship.

In the same way that the polite *ye* is employed sarcastically, *sire* can be used sarcastically or ironically when the word does not fit the situation.

The sarcastic *sire* is used by the Pilgrim Friar to his professional enemy, the Summoner, when he is angry with him. The Friar calls his professional enemy, the Summoner, by the honorific title *sire* before his occupational label:

Ye, woltow so, sire Somonour? (III, 840)

Since the Friar is angry with the Summoner, it is obvious that his use of *sire* is intended to anger the Summoner.

When the Friar comments on the *Prologue of the Wife of Bath's Tale* ("So have I joye or blis,/ This is a long preamble of a tale" III, 830-31), the quarrelsome Summoner

seems to seize this opportunity to express in language of increasing violence what is obviously a long-standing grudge against friars:

...What spekestow of preambulacioun?
 What! amble, or trotte, or pees, or go sit doun!
 Thou lettest oure disport in this manere.
 (III, 837-39)

To this Summoner's attack the Friar responds scornfully with the use of honorific title *sire*, which does not befit the Summoner.

The Friar also uses the sarcastic *sire* to insult the Summoner in his Tale. In the Friar's Tale the devil addresses the summoner as *sire* when the latter asks a stupid question ("What maketh yow to han al this labour?"):

Ful may a came, leeve sire somonour,
 ...but alle thyng hath tyme.
 (III, 1474-75)

The devil always uses *thou* to the summoner because of the latter's inferior position and to show the social inferiority of summoners is precisely the Pilgrim Friar's intention, too. Furthermore, by using the honorific title to the summoner in his Tale, the Pilgrim Friar also intends to insult the Pilgrim Summoner. The summoner in his Tale who resembles the Pilgrim Summoner cannot recognize the devil's intention because of his stupidity. Here the Pilgrim Friar makes a fool of the Pilgrim Summoner and at the same time the summoner's occupation through the sarcastic use of the honorific title *sire*.

Another sarcastic use of the honorific title *sire* appears in the speech of the Manciple to the Cook. When the



Cook falls off his horse and cannot tell a tale, the Manciple addresses him scornfully by using the honorific title *sire*:

Wel, ...if it may doon ese
To thee, sire Cook, and to no wight displese,
Which that heere rideth in this compaignye,
And that oure Hoost wole of his curteisye,
I wol as now excuse thee of thy tale.

(IX, 25-29)

He uses *sire* to the Cook one other time after he mentions the Cook's bad smell ("Fy, styngyng swyn, fy, foul moote thee falle!"):

Now sweete sire, wol ye been justen atte fan?
Therto me thynketh ye been wel yshape!
I trowe that ye dronken han wyn ape,
And that is whan men pleyen with a straw.

(IX, 42-45)

This time the polite pronoun *ye*, the honorific title *sire* accompanies instead of *thou*. Thus the Manciple sneers at the Cook repeatedly by using an ironic, courtly epithet: the honorific title *sire* combined with the polite pronoun *ye*. Of course, the Cook, of all the pilgrims, least merits this address since he is not only the person of low morality but also of the lowest social status. This unexpected honorific title should be interpreted as an insult or show of contempt, since irony is as powerful a weapon as direct abuse. After the Host calls the drunken Cook by his occupational label to insult his occupation as well as the Cook himself, the Manciple flatters the Host by treating the Cook in the same way as the Host does through the sarcastic use of the honorific title *sire*. In most cases we would

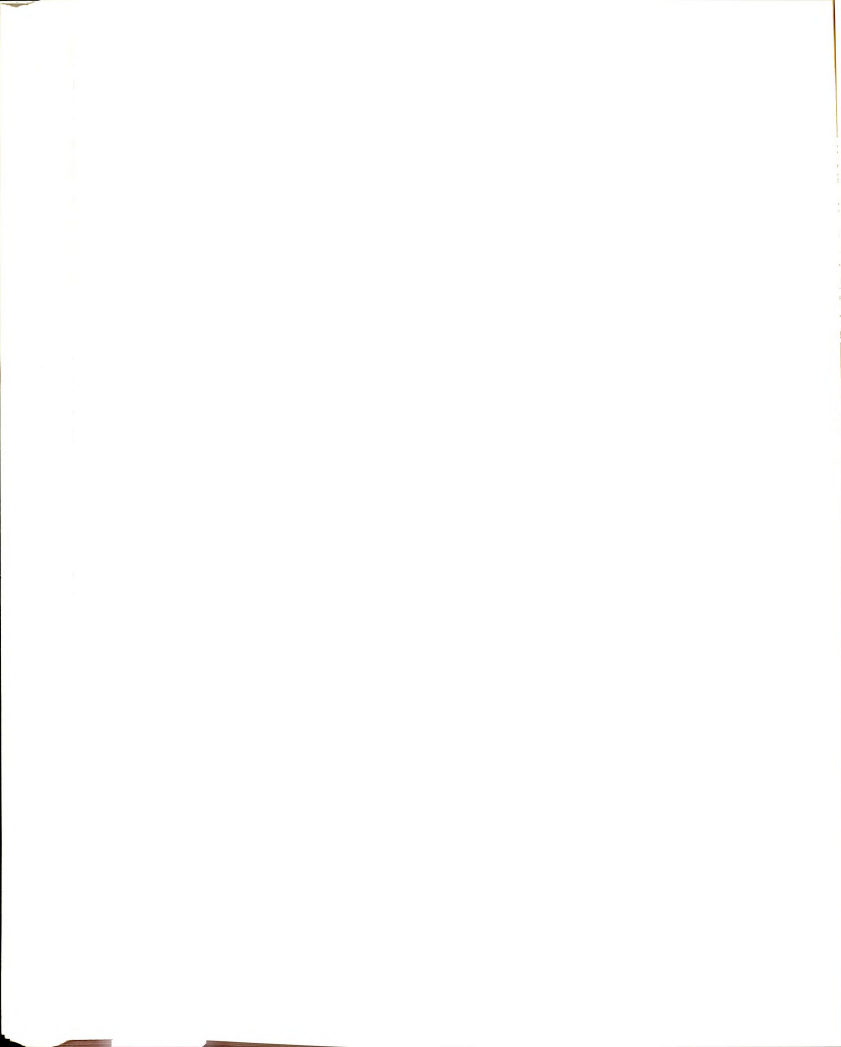
expect this sarcastic *sire* might be spoken in a different tone from other uses of *sire*.

The Host uses the honorific title *sire* sarcastically to Pilgrim Chaucer and the Franklin. When the Host can no longer stand the tale of *Sir Thopas*, (a parody of the popular romances of the time,) he softens his interrupting with "Namore of this,... for thou makest me/So wery... (VII, 901-11) but when the narrator Pilgrim Chaucer protests against being hindered, the Host uses the title *sire* to indicate his anger:

Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme (VII, 932)
The Host also uses *sire* to the Franklin whom he considers his equal, which usually causes the Host to address him by *thou* and his professional label, Franklin. But then he adds *sire*, which might be spoken in a different tone from the previous words.¹⁷ When the Franklin tells about *gentillesse*, to which he aspires, the Host calls him by his professional label and then adds *sire* sarcastically:

What, Franklin, pardee sire, wel thou woost
That ech of yow moot tellen atte leste
A tale or two, or breken his biheste.
(V, 696-98)

Gentillesse has already been mentioned too often for the Host and he protests with his usual bluntness. Once the Franklin has got started on this, evidently his favorite subject, there is no knowing when he will come to a stop. And so he reminds him of the pilgrims' agreement to tell stories on their way by using the honorific title *sire* sarcastically.



Another situation of sarcastic use of *sire* takes place in the confrontation between the Pardoner and the Host. After the Pardoner finishes his Tale and then describes the Host as "moost enveloped in synne" (VI, 942), he asks the Host to kiss his relics:

Com forth, sire Hoost, and offre first anon.
(VI, 943)

The Pardoner's use of *sire* to the Host can be interpreted as an attack on the Host, since the use of an unexpected strategy could be seen as an intention to insult which the addressee does not always recognize.

In the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale* this sarcastic use of the honorific title *sire* appears several times. The Wife of Bath addresses her husband sarcastically with *sire* when she is blaming him for the lechery in which he has not indulged. She continues using her usual *thou* to him adding *sire*:

Sire olde Kaynard, is this thyn array? (III, 235)

Sire olde lecchour, lat thy japes be. (III, 242)

Sire olde fool (III, 357)

The use of the honorific title *sire* can be interpreted as sarcasm because it appears with the familiar pronoun *thou* instead of the polite pronoun *ye* by which a wife would be expected to address her husband.

Also, in her Tale, when in full court, the old woman reminds the knight of his promise to marry her, she addresses him as *sire*:

Bifore the court thanne preye I thee, sir knyght,
 Quod she, 'that thou me take unto thy wyf'
 (1054-5)

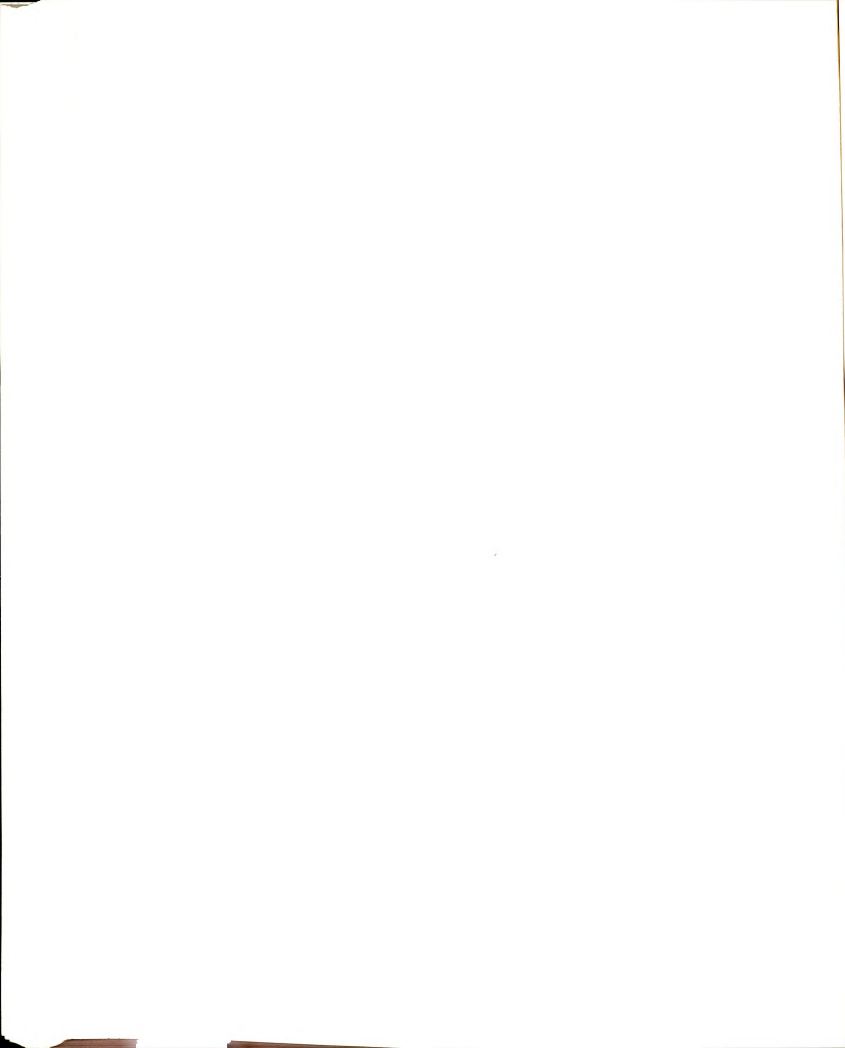
Her use of the sarcastic *sire* with *thou* in her Prologue and her Tale is in sharp contrast to that of the honorific *sire* with *ye*. When later in the story the old woman has become the knight's wife, she addresses the knight as *sire* and *ye*, which is the norm of address to a husband.

In the *Franklin's Tale*, Dorigen uses *sire* to her husband, Arveragus as befits a humble wife:

Sire, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf.
 (V, 758)

As the above examples show *sire* is usually used as a polite term of address with or without a professional or rank label, even though it can be used sarcastically. However, the connotation of *sire* can be derogative when used with personal names.¹⁸ The Host sarcastically addresses the Nun's Priest by using *sire* before his occupational label combined with *thou* when the Nun's Priest finishes his tale about the cock, Chantecleer. After the Knight has interrupted the Monk's dreary accounts of the fall of great men, the Host turns from the Monk to the Nun's Priest who has not hitherto figured in the foreground, for a merry tale by calling him *sire* before his personal name: "thou sir John" (VII-2820).

As Lumiansky points out, this can be considered as "a contemptuous appellation for a priest" (108). Since he is annoyed at the Monk's story, the Host speaks quite rudely to another churchman, the Nun's Priest, by using *sir* with his



personal name because of his lower social position:

Sire Nonnes Preest,
Iblessed by thy breche, and every 'stoon!
This was murie tale of Chauntecleer.
But by my trouthe, it thou were seculer,
Thou woldest ben a trede-foul aright.

(VII, 3447-3451)

In the *Physician's Tale* a judge, who is depicted as a 'false juge' is addressed as 'sire Apius' (VI, 178).

Though *sire* can be interpreted as an honorific title which sometimes carries the opposite meaning depending on the context, it is the most widely used as a polite vocative regardless of the person's social rank.

Another honorific title, *lorde*, is employed as a respectful form of address to men of high rank. *Lorde* in the plural may be used to mean "warriors" or "retainers" but in the singular it almost always refers to a person of superior rank in a group of warriors (Marie Borroff, p.54). It is also employed as the usual polite or respectful form of address to a nobleman under the rank of duke, and to a bishop by persons much inferior in position. *Lorde* was used to refer to the supreme being, God, the usage of which survives in Modern English.

In all these late Middle English poems, *lorde*, a title of ostensibly higher status than *sire*, is more restricted in direct address. It is employed to address the King or the governors as well as referring to God. Chaucer and the Gawain-poet use this honorific title *lorde* to the man who is the leader in the community. In the *Knight's Tale*, Duke Theseus is addressed as *lorde* by the Theban ladies (I,

922, 927, 930, 1757, 2419, 2563) and in the *Clerk's Tale* Duke Walter is addressed as *lorde* by the common people, including Griselda (before marriage) and her father. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Pandarus sometimes uses *lorde* to Troilus though he uses the pronoun *thou* together because of their closeness:

Lord, and frend, and brother dere,
 God woot that thi disese doth me wo.
 But wiltow stynten al this woful cheere,
 And, by my trouthe, er it be dayes two,
(II, 1359-62)

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* King Arthur is addressed as *lorde* by Gawain: "worpilych lorde" (343); "lege lorde of my lyf" (545) while Gawain is addressed as *sire* by the King Arthur: "Now sir, heng vp byn ax, pat hatz innogh hewn" (476).

However, in the *Canterbury Tales* the Host addresses the Monk with *lorde*, a title which is usually given to only abbots and bishops among clergy: "My lord, the Monk," (VII, 1924). This use of *lord* indicates that the Monk is no common soldier in the ranks but that he has already risen high, almost to the top.¹⁹ In the *General Prologue* the Monk is described as the head of an independent cell, though not yet an abbot: A manly man, to been an abbot able (I, 167).

Besides admiring his position, the Host, at the same time, satirizes him for accepting the security of the monastic life without accepting all its duties, by addressing him by the combined use of the supremely honorific title *lord* and the professional label *the Monk*. In the *General Prologue* the Monk's personality is described:

He yaf nat of that taxt a pulled hen
 That seith that hunters been nat hooly men,
 Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
 Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees--
 This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
 (I,177-181)

His disliking the cloister, his liking hunting, falconry, and good food do not fit the characteristics which are expected of a Monk.

Since the word *lord* has the opposite meaning of 'servant,' it is used to express the vertical relationship between speaker and addressee. In ordinary marital relationships, the husband is often addressed with *lord* by his wife, which reflects the dominant position of the husband and subordinate position of the wife, just like the relationship of 'lord' and 'servant.' In the *Clerk's Tale*, Griselda, the obedient wife, always addresses her husband as *lorde* combined with the honorific-polite *ye* without exception:

Lord, al lyth in your plesaunce.
 My child and I, with hertely obeisaunce,
 Been youres al, and ye mowe save or spille
 Youre owene thyng; werketh after youre wille.
 (IV,501-4)

Griselda's usage of the honorific title *lorde* and honorific-polite *ye* contrasts with her husband's use of her personal name to her as I explained earlier.

In contrast to the asymmetrical use of the honorific title *lorde* in the *Clerk's Tale*, Prudence and Melibeus reciprocate honorific titles to each other in the *Tale of Melibee*. Prudence alternates *lord* and *sire* in similar situations; because the contexts are alike, it is evident

that she uses the two titles without any difference of meaning:

My lord, I yow biseche as heretely as I dar and kan,
ne haste yow nat to faste, and for alle gerdons as
yeveth me audience. (VII,1051)

and:

My lord, as to your firste resoun, certes it may
lightly been answered. (VII,1064)

and:

Now sire,and syn ye vouchesauf to been
governed by my conseil, I wol enforme yow how
ye shul governe yourself in chesyng of youre
conseillours. (VII,1114)

Her husband, Melibeus, in turn, addressees her as *dame*:

Dame, as yet into this tyme ye han wel and convenably t
aught me as in general how I shal governe me in the
chesyng and in the withholdyng of my conseillours.
(VII,1232)

The *Clerk's Tale* and the *Tale of Melibee* show the different relationships in marriage through the use of symmetrical or asymmetrical use of vocatives. In the *Clerk's Tale* Chaucer is portraying an unequal relationship; hence, the use of vocatives is asymmetrical. In the *Tale of Melibee* the relationship is equal, so the use of vocatives is symmetrical.

Another honorific title, *mayster*, is used in alliterative poetry to refer to men; as a rule to men who are not warriors. It was originally used vocatively as a term of respect or politeness to a person who has authority or competence not only in learning (OED s.v. *mayster* sb.1 sense 12) but in such realms as government (sense 1), seamanship (sense 2, carpentry), and so on.

Therefore the title *mayster* is usually used to emphasize the learnedness of the addressee for some reason. In Chaucer the title *mayster* is seen in the speech to a learned man regardless of his social status. In deference to his learning, the Host calls the Friar *mayster*. At the beginning of his Tale the Host says:

Tel forth youre tale, my leeve maister deere.
(III,1300)

And again when the Friar quarrels with the Summoner, the Host addresses the Friar as *mayster*:

Now telleth forth, though that the Somonur gale;
Ne spareth nat, myn owene maister deere.
(III,1336-37)

This fits his character as described in the *General Prologue*. Just as the Host satirizes the Pilgrim Friar's showing off his being intellectual or learned, the Pilgrim Summoner wants to reveal the fact that in his tale the Pilgrim Friar is so hypocritical that he pretends to be learned. In the *Summoner's Tale*, the friar is addressed as *maister* by layman Thomas and his wife :

O deere maister, (III,1781)

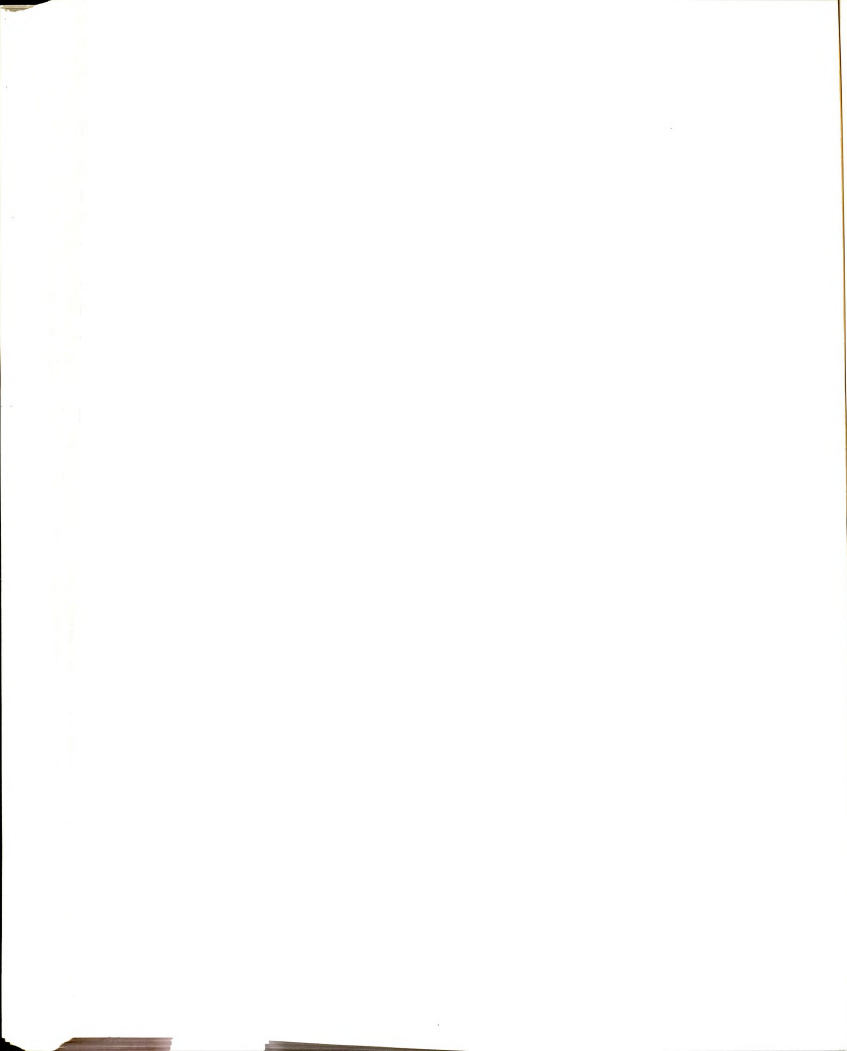
Ey, maister, welcome be ye, by Seint John!
(III,1800)

Now, maister,er that I go,
What wol ye dyne? I wol go therabout.
(III,1836-37)

When the lord of the manor also addresses the friar in the *Summoner's Tale* as *maister*:

Now, maister, I yow biseke-
(III,2184)

The friar answers:



No maister, sire, but servitour,
 Thogh I have had in scole that honour.
 God liketh nat that 'Raby' men us calle
 Neither in market ne in youre large halle.
 (III, 2184-88)

Here the friar replies humbly by rejecting the title *maister* but shows off his learnedness by indicating that he got the title *maister* from school. Considering that the controversy between the Friar and Summoner centers on satirizing intellectual achievement, the Summoner's intention to show his professional rival's, the Friar's, hypocrisy is clearly seen. The Summoner tells of a hypocritical friar who resembles Pilgrim Friar Hubert, whose special pride is intellectual superiority.

In the *Miller's Tale*, Nicholas, who is learned in astrology and can predict rain or drought, is called *maister* by carpenter:

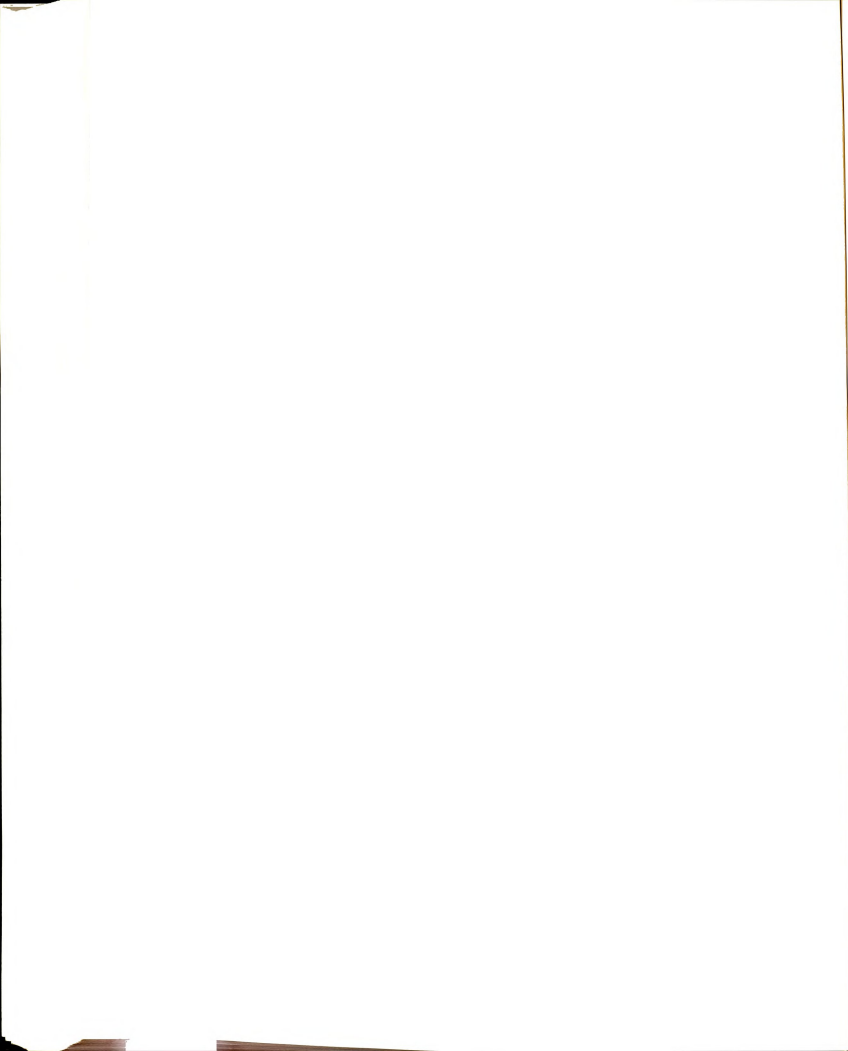
What! how! What do ye maister Nicholay?
 How may ye slepen al the longe day?
 (I, 3437-8)

In the same way in the *Franklin's Tale*, Aurelius, a squire, addresses the philosopher and magician who helped him to get out of trouble as *maister* with *yow*:

Maister, I dar wel make avaunt,
 I failled nevere of my trouthe as yit.
 (V, 1576-77)

while the latter addresses Aurelius as *sire* with *thou*:

Sire, I releesse thee thy thousand pound
 As thou right now were copen out of the ground
 Ne nevere er now haddest knowen me.
 For, sire, I wol nat taken a peny of thee
 For al my craft, ne noght for my travaille.
 (V, 1613-17)

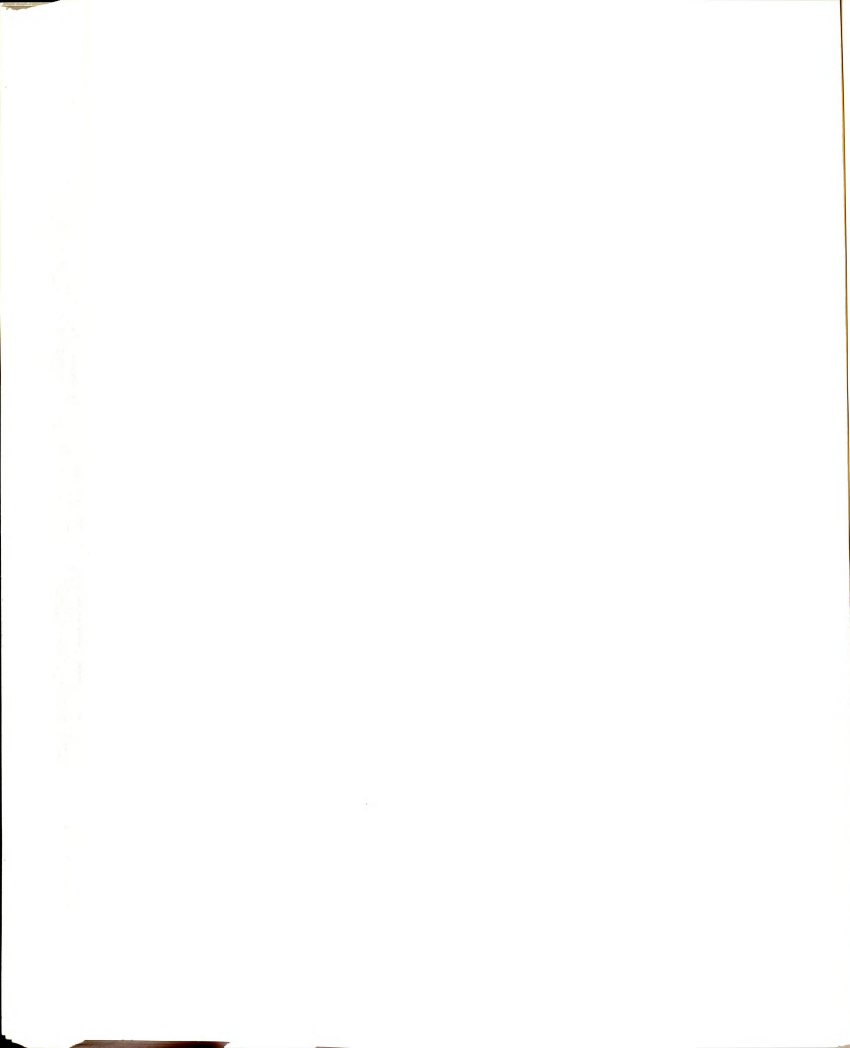


Though their asymmetrical relationship is seen in the use of the second singular pronoun *ye* and *thou*, that is, the philosopher is higher than the squire, the honorific titles show different aspects of the speaker or addressee. The philosopher's use of *sire* to his social inferior, the squire, is used as a neutral vocative to show the speaker's polite attitude towards the addressee. The squire's use of the title *maister* indicates that the speaker has respect for the learnedness of the addressee, the philosopher. However, the honorific title *maister* is sometimes used less politely than *lorde* or *sire* in Chaucer. At first the Host addresses the Friar as *sire*, as befits his social status:

A, sire, ye shode be hende
And curteys, as a man of youre estaat (III, 1286-87)

But after the Pilgrim Summoner refers to the Friar as a flattering licenced beggar ('flaterynge lymytour') the Host calls the Friar *maister*: "Tel forth youre tale, leeve *maister* deere" (III, 1300). Finally after the quarrel between the Summoner and the Friar, the Host also uses the title *maister* to the latter instead of *sire*: "Ne spareth nat, myn owene *maister* deere" (III, 1337). When the Summoner interrupts the tale shortly after it has begun, the Host silences him and urges the Friar to proceed. Encouraging the Friar to tell his tale, the Host also denigrates the Friar's position by using the less elevated honorific title *maister*.

Just as the Host uses the title *maister* to the Pilgrim friar, so does he to the Physician. Impressed by the

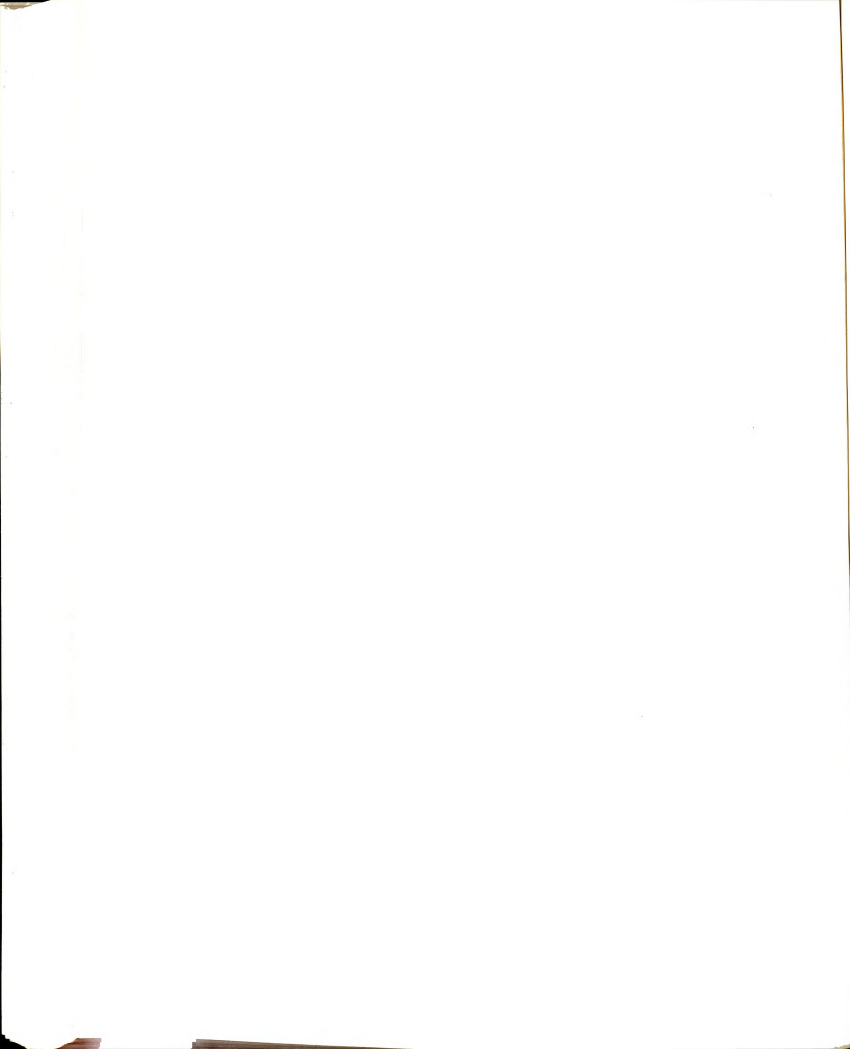


Physician's knowledge about medicine as revealed in his Tale, the Host calls the Physician as *maister* with *thou* which reveals his lower social status in that period:

But trewly, myn owene maister, (VI,301)

The Host is recognizing the Physician's lower social position by using *thou*, but recognizing his superior knowledge by using the title *maister*. However, at the same time the Host's use of the title *maister* to the Physician can be interpreted as a sarcasm since his knowledge has nothing to do with any morality and the Host is already aware of the hypocritical practices of the Physician: "He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel "(I,415). By using the same title to the Friar and the Physician, the Host shows that the Pilgrim Physician shares hypocritical practices with the Pilgrim Friar, the "worthy lymytour," besides being learned.

As Stowell notes about the title *maister*, "there has been a tendency on the part of the upper classes of society to look contemptuously on the learned man, associating pejorative notions of pedantry with the idea of the scholar" (183). This tendency was especially strong among the Medieval nobility, both because of the low ebb of scholarship, and because the nobility, being uneducated fighting machines, based their conceptions as to a man's worth upon his physical powers and upon his superiority in warlike pursuits (Stowell, p.119).

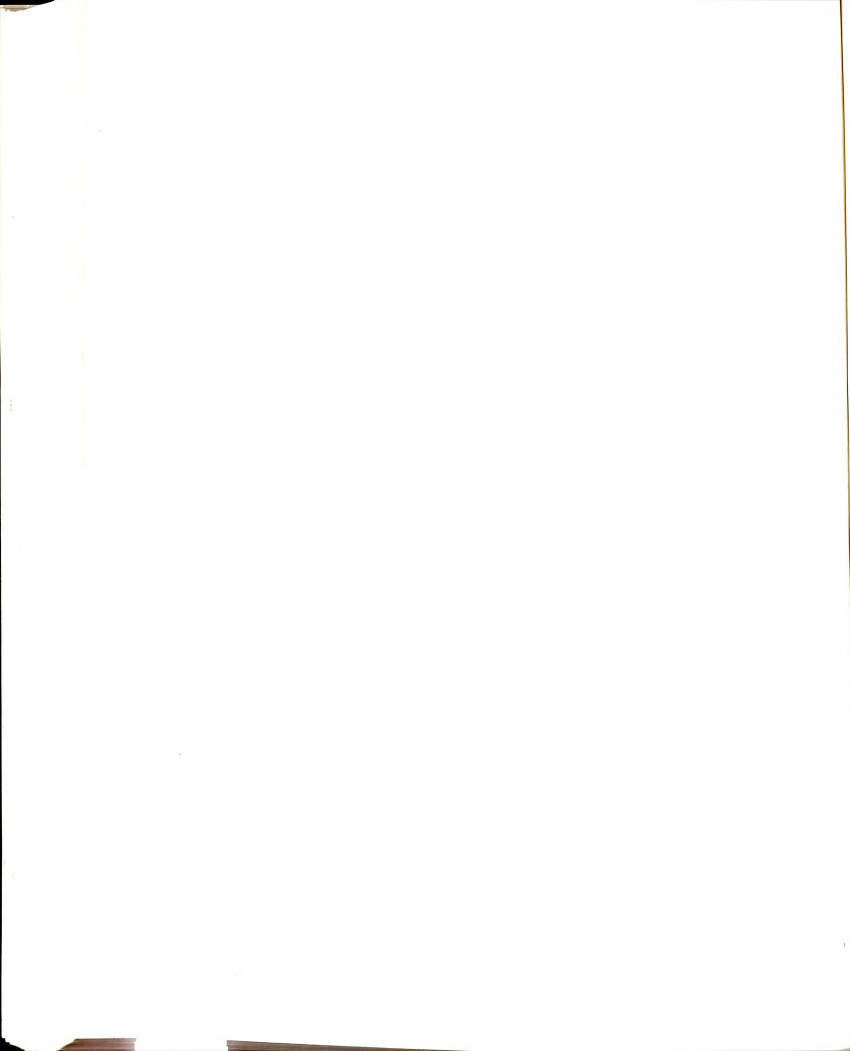


The Host also addresses the Shipman as *mayster* because the latter clearly commands an important body of knowledge that the other Pilgrims do not, even though he is of lower social status. This use of the title *maister* to the Shipman contains a touch of sarcasm too since the Host knows his lower personality, which is described in the *General Prologue*: "Of nyce conscience took he no keepe" (I,398).

As all the examples above show, Chaucer uses the title *mayster* for dramatic effect for showing the personality of the characters, which is respectful and at the same time sarcastic. Because in both the Physician's and Shipman's cases, *maister* recognizes the mastery of a body of useful knowledge which should command of a certain amount of respect but the uses of *maister* implies sarcasm because their knowledge has nothing to do with morality. However, the *Gawain*-poet does not use *mayster* in direct address because of limited characters in his works.

Thus the honorific titles to men, *sire*, *lorde* and *maister* are employed in polite speech when they show respect, humility or sarcasm towards the addressee in Chaucer. However, the *Gawain*-poet uses non-honorific common words which have more general meaning to refer to men such as *burne* and *wi3e* ²⁰ interchangeably with the honorific titles as neutral vocatives for alliteration.

As far as the word *burne* is concerned, it is seen in both polite and impolite situations. The *Gawain*-poet uses this common word *burne* in the same polite situation as the



honorific title is used as well as in less polite speech. For example, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Gawain and the Green Knight use *burne* to each other in offensive situations. When the Green Knight insults Gawain by saying "þou fles for ferde er þou fele harmez!/ Such cowardise of þat kny3t I neure here" (2272-73), Gawain uses this word *burne*:

Bot busk, burne, bi þi fayth, and bryng me to þe poynt.
Dele to me my destine, and do hit out of honde,
For I shal stonde þe a strok, and start no more
Til þyn ax haue me hitte: Haf here my trawpe.
(2284-87))

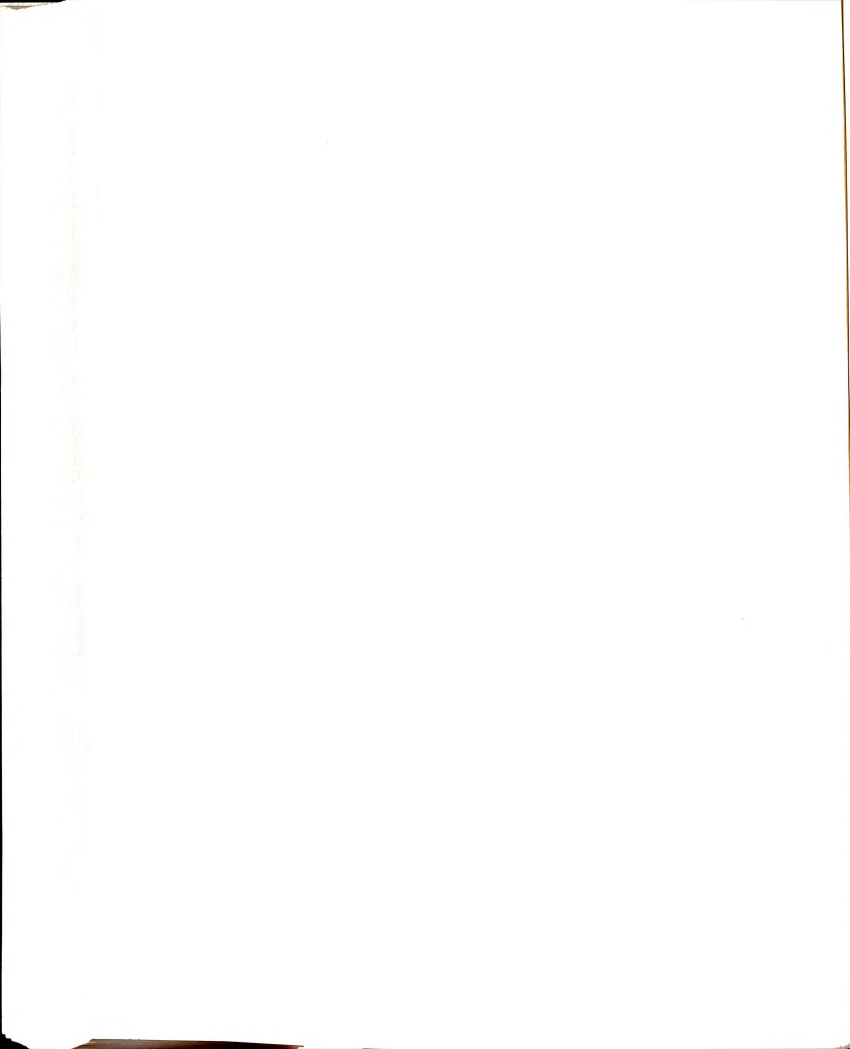
The use of common noun *burne* indicates that Gawain has no respect for the Green Knight and the familiar pronoun *thou* enforces Gawain's angry attitude toward the Green Knight. And when Gawain complains about the Green Knight's violence and asks him to stop, he calls the Green Knight by *burne*:

Blynne, burne, of þy bur, bede me no mo!
(2322)

And also in his reply the Green Knight uses the same word to Gawain:

Bolde burne, on þys bent be not so gryndel.
No mon here vnmanerly þe mysboden habbez,
Ne kyd bot as couenaunde at kyngez kort schaped.
(2338-40)

Thus each of them deprecates the other by using a non-honorific word, *burne*, instead of honorific titles.²¹ However, the non-honorific common word has the connotation of politeness when used with the polite pronoun *ye*. The common word *burne* is used in the Bercilak's court which is sharply contrasted to the challenging scene in the Green



Chapel. In his court Bercilak is polite as a knight, though he uses the common noun *burne* as a vocative to Gawain with the alternation of the polite pronoun *ye* and familiar *thou*:

Bot 3e schal be in youre bed, burne, at þyn ese,
(1071)

In the same court, Gawain always uses the honorific title *sire* to Bercilak (1037;1056;1091).

Wy3e which merely means "person" or "being" is also generally used by the *Gawain*-poet as a neutral vocative which does not belong to the category of honorific titles. The Green Knight uses this word to Gawain along with his personal name in a threatening situation:

Gawain,....God þe mot loke!
Iwysse þou art welcom, wy3e, to my place.
(2240-41)

The *Gawain*-poet, however, often uses this word as a polite term of address to anyone, regardless of their status or the situation. Therefore King Arthur addresses the Green Knight by *wi3e*, along with *sire*, without any difference in meaning:

...Wy3e, welcom iwys to þis place
þe hede of þis ostel Arthour I hat.
(252-53)

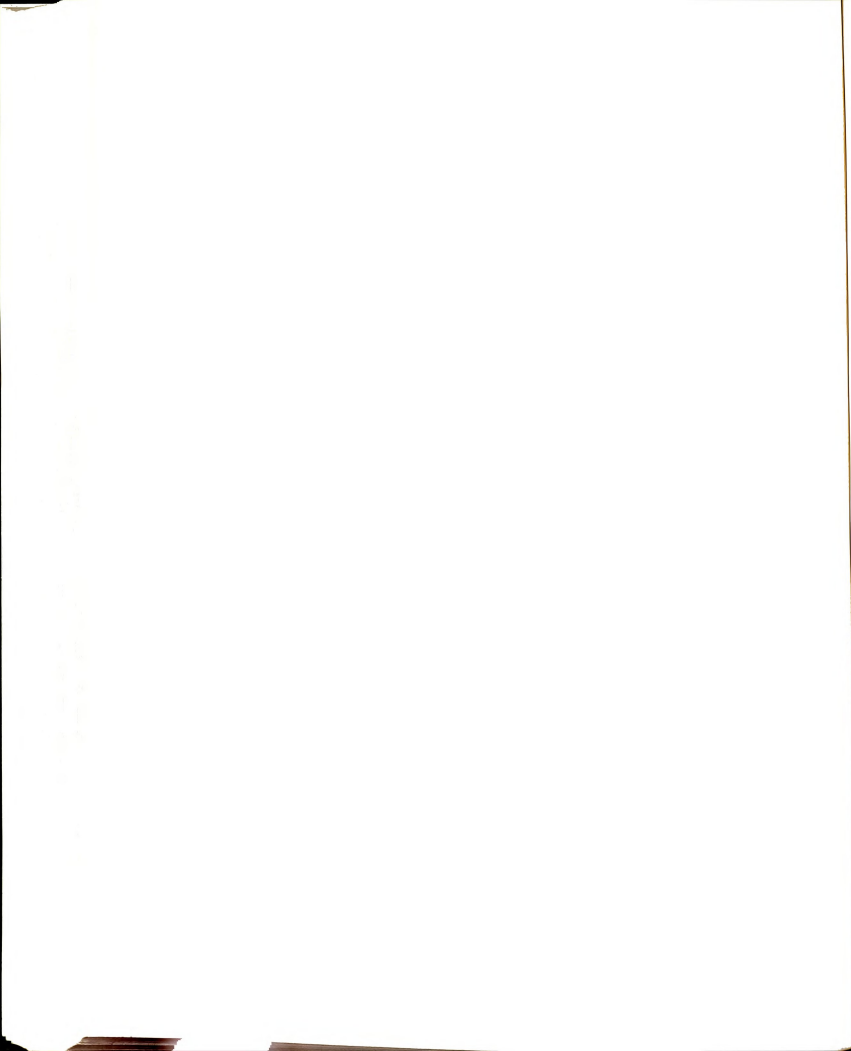
And also:

...Sir cortays kny3t,
If þou craue batayle bare,
Here faylez þou not to fy3t.
(276-78)

The lady sometimes addresses Gawain as *wy3e*:

I woled wyt at yow, wy3e, þat worþy þer sayde,
(1508)

The servant of Bercilak and Gawain use this word *wi3e* to each other in the same context as the use of the title *sire*.



When he accompanies Gawain to the Green Chapel, acting his guide he uses a common noun *wy3e* as a vocative to Gawain:

For I haf wonnen yow hider, wy3e, at þis tyme,
(2091)

And Gawain also uses this common noun to him:

Wel worth þe, wy3e, þat woldez my gode,
And þat lelly me layne I leue wel þou woldez.
(2127-28)

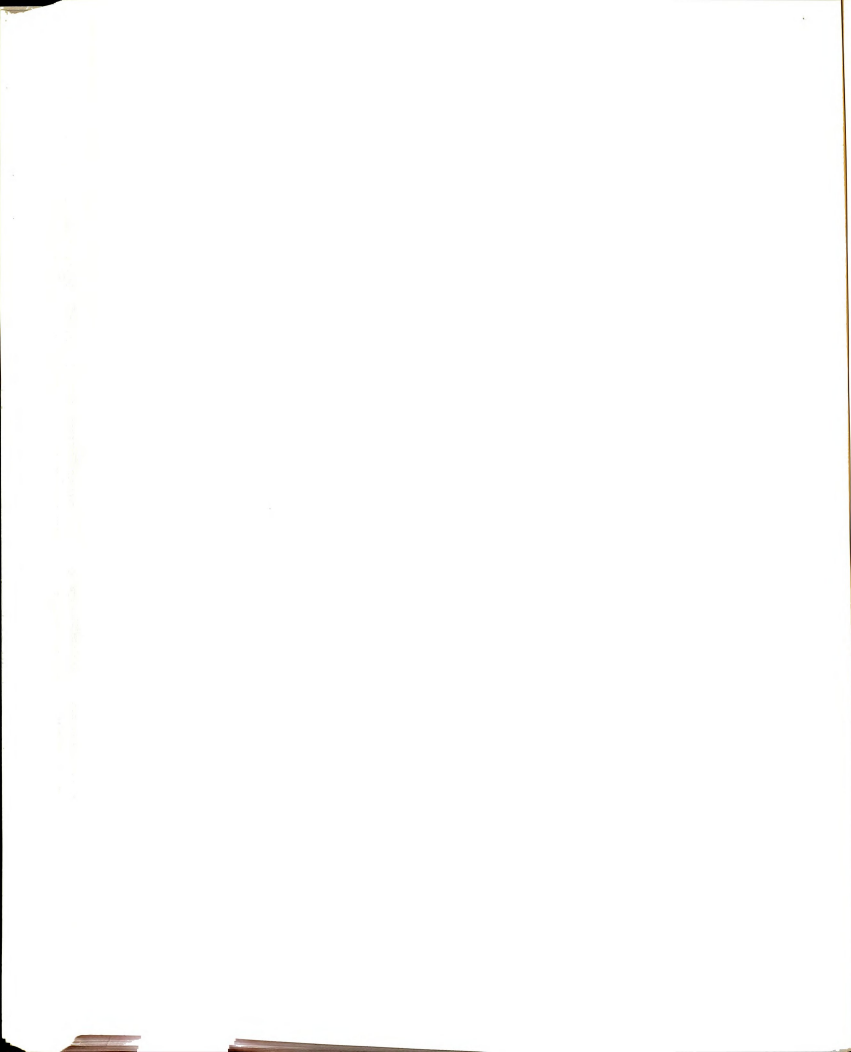
Non-honorific common nouns are often equivalent terms to the honorific titles for the *Gawain*-poet but not for Chaucer.

In Chaucer general common nouns are considered less polite than specific titles. For example, in the *Pardoner's Tale* the two audiences, the pilgrims and the villagers, are kept apart for the reader by appropriate terms of address.

Lordynges and *sires* are used by the Pardoner when he addresses the Pilgrims,²² while he addresses the villagers by "goode men" (VI, 352) and "goode men and wommen" (VI, 377) since he considers them the "lewd peple" (VI, 392; 437). In contrast to the use of the non-honorific common nouns which has no connotation of respect, the honorific titles are used to show politeness towards the addressee.

Dame, Madame, and Lady:

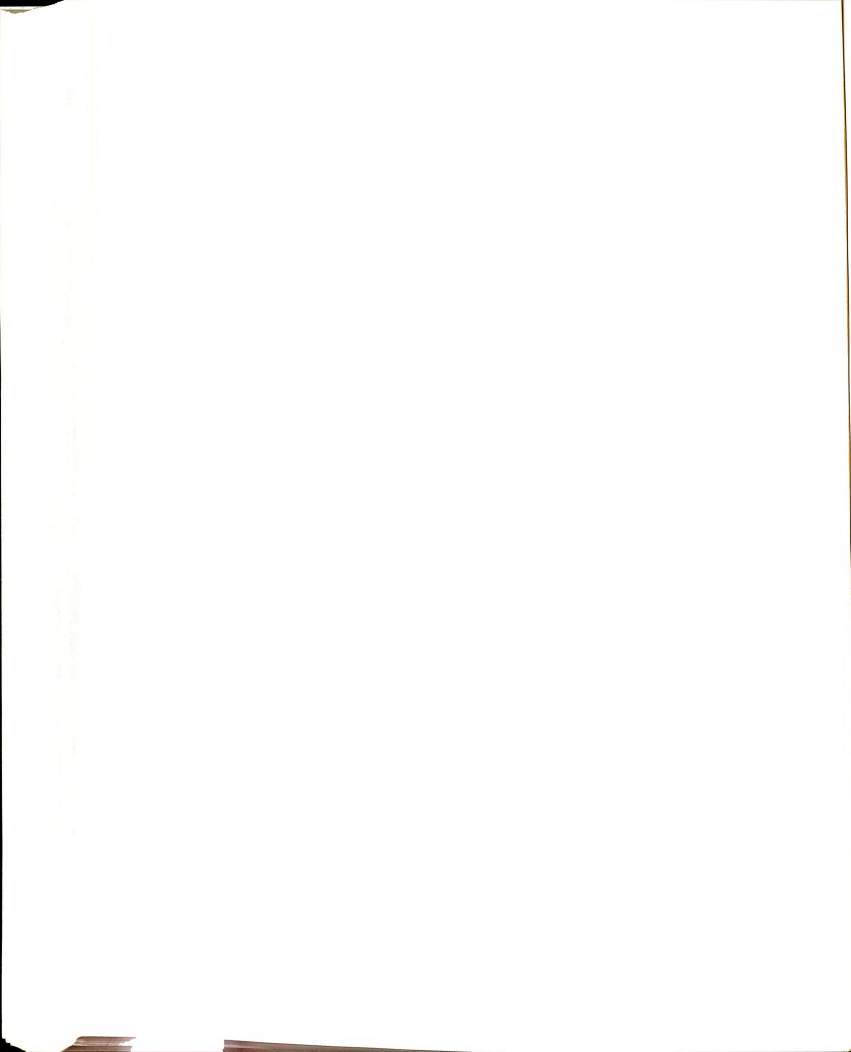
The honorific titles for women such as *dame*, *madame* and *lady* developed independently from French as polite terms of address in Middle English though sometimes French usages directly influenced the usage of *dame* and *madame*. In contrast to the use of common nouns as a vocative such as *lemman* or *wyf*, or personal names, which are used in intimate



relationships or to social inferiors, the honorific titles are used to express politeness.

In Middle English the most widely used honorific titles to woman are *dame*, *madame* and *lady*. Each title was used as a polite address to a woman, when used separately. However, depending on the context, each title showed different degrees of politeness. *Dame*, the most common honorific title referring to woman, is often employed by or to the lower class except for the same usage of an identical French word. *Madame* is seen in the speeches of higher class or in the address to a woman of higher rank. *Lady* is used as the highest honorific title to a woman, as shown in the examples of the speech of courtly lovers presented earlier.

The word *dame* in Middle English was used to describe or address a woman of rank, the head of a convent, the mistress of household, or the mother of young children. It was borrowed from the French word *dame* which was originally employed as a title for women of the nobility only (until the first half of the 13th century) and was never used as a title for the bourgeoisie or for the lower classes of society. *Dame*, meaning 'a noble lady' as a title for married women of the nobility was occasionally used as a title for a noble girl, to whom, as a mark of great respect and courtesy, was given a title that respectfully belonged to an older woman only (Stowell, p.123). However, the title *dame* is used to contrast with the title *madame*. The two titles are normally equivalent since they are both used in



the same speech situation. However, *dame* is given to a lower-ranking woman while a higher class woman is addressed as *madame*. On all occasions the Wife of Bath is addressed as *dame* by the Host, the Friar and the Pardoner. The Host addresses the Wife of Bath as *dame* when he calls upon her to tell a tale:

Do, dame, tell forth youre tale, and that is best.
(III-853)

The Host's use of *dame* to the Wife of Bath is in contrast with his use of *lady* and *madame* (I,121) to the Prioress (I,839; VII,447). The Friar, showing his interest by a laughing comment (III, 830) also addresses the Wife of Bath with *dame* when she declares that her prologue is finished and her story about to begin:

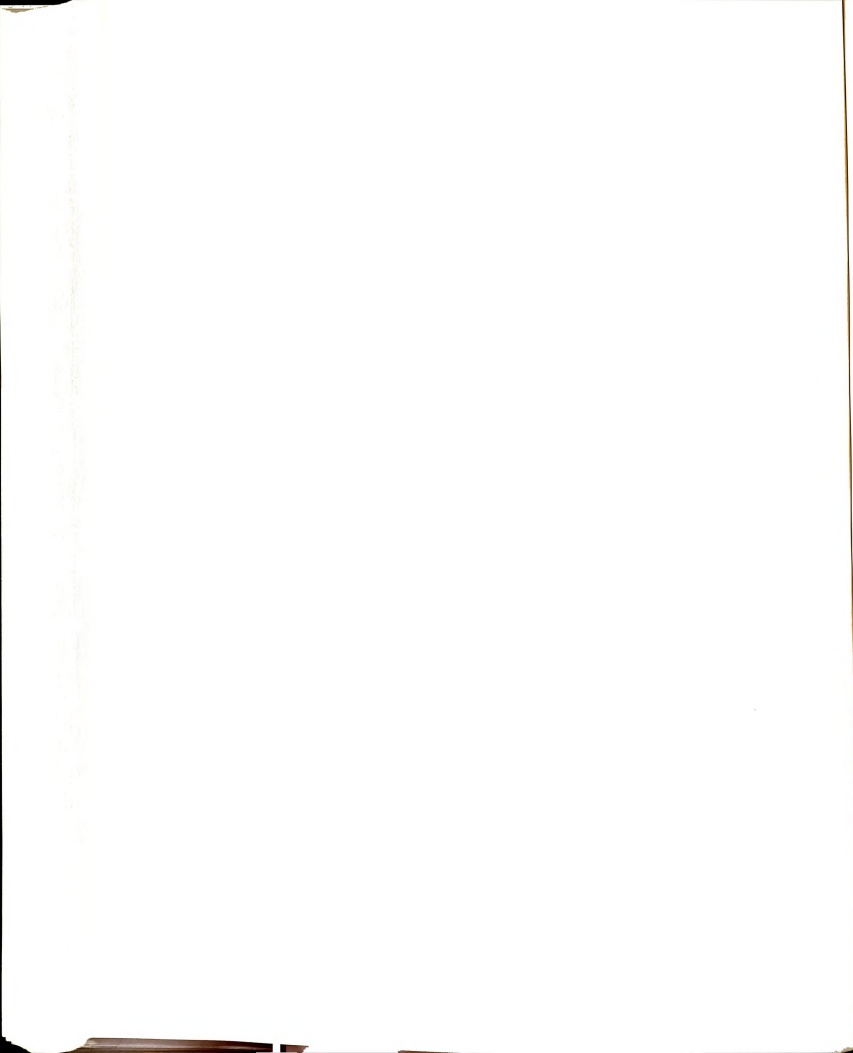
Now dame,so have I joye or blis,
This is a long preamble of a tale. (III,830-31)

He addresses her with *dame* in other places as well (III,1270;1274). The Pardoner also addresses the Wife of Bath as *dame*:

Dame, I wolde praye yow, if youre wyl it were
(III,164; 184)

The Wife of Bath herself also uses *dame* in her *Prologue* and *Tale*. When the Wife of Bath expresses what she would have, one of her husbands calls her *dame*.

In the same way the friar in the *Summoner's Tale* differentiates between the women of the lower and higher class by calling the one by *dame* (III,1805; 1812), and the other by *madame*. The friar in the *Tale* addresses Thomas's



wife by *dame* when he orders his dinner in his affected mixture of French and English:

Now dame, now je vous dy sanz doute,
Have I nat of a capon but lyvere,
And of youre softe breed nat but a shyvere.
(III, 1834-40)

whereas he uses *madame* to the other woman, the hostess of the mansion:

Madame, ...how thynke ye herby?
(III, 2204)

Madame, ...by God, I shal nat lye,
But I on oother wyse may be wreke,
I shal disclaundre hym over al ther I speke,
(III, 2212)

Besides revealing the addressee as a not so high ranking woman, the use of *dame* also shows the speaker's personality or social position. The speaker reveals himself as a member of the lower class through the use of *dame* rather than *madame*. In the *Canterbury Tales* *dame* appears in the speech of the lower orders whereas *madame* is used in the speech of the higher class. The Miller, the Shipman, the Pardoner and the Summoner, who all belong to the lower class, use *dame* in their tales as a polite address to any woman instead of *madame* (I, 1751; 1805; 1812; 1838; 1848).

As seen in the above examples, *dame* is usually used to address a not-so-high-ranking woman, or it appears in the speech of the lower class in Chaucer's the *Canterbury Tales*.

However, sometimes *dame* is used in the same context as *madame*, following the French usages, in which the words are identical. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Arthur addresses his wife Guinevere as 'dere dame' (470). In the



Tale of Melibee Melibeus uses *dame* before her personal name when he addresses his wife Prudence with *ye*:

I graunte yow, dame Prudence, that pacience is a
greet vertu of perfeccioun. (VII,1518)

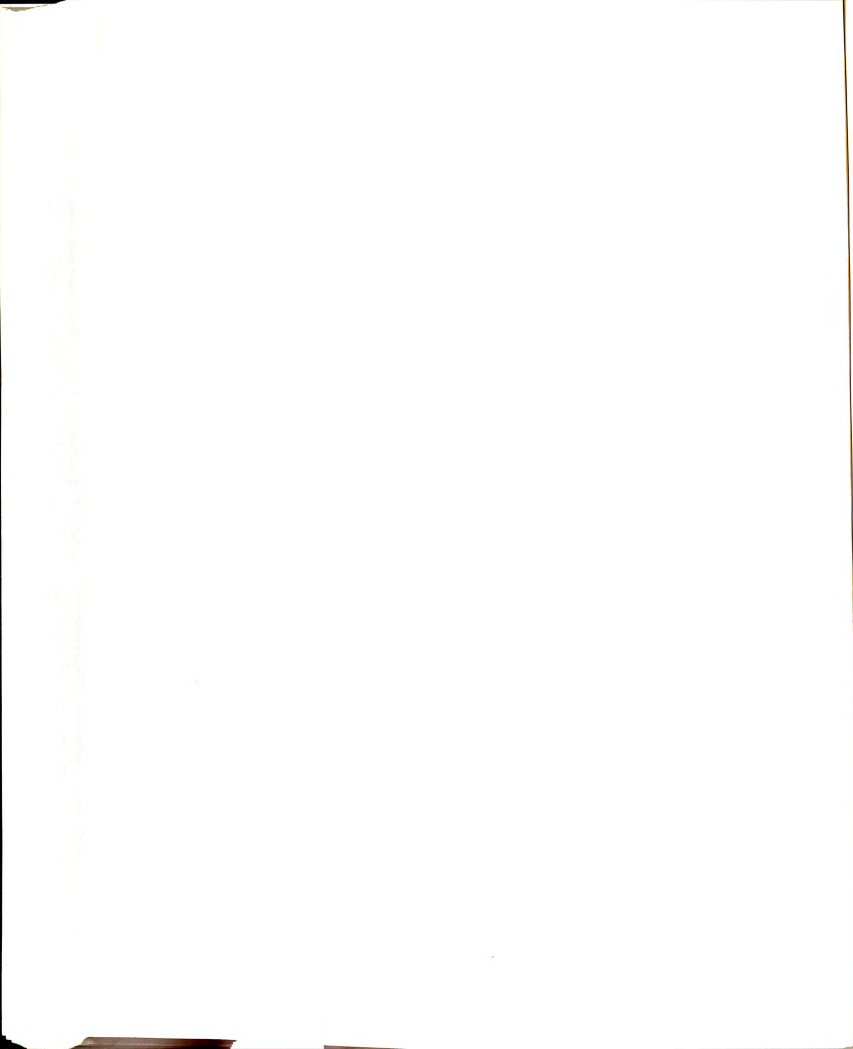
His usage of *ye* in conjunction with the title *dame* shows his intention to be respectful. The Man of Law uses *dame* only with personal names such as '*dame Custance*' and '*dame Hermengyld*', as does the Nun's Priest in '*dame Pertelote*'.

Despite the use of *dame* in polite situations, because of its increasing application to any woman, the honorific title *dame* lost its original conception of honor. Instead, *ma dame* fused into one word *madame* in French,²³ and was then adopted in English.

Compared with the title *dame*, therefore, *madame* is, because of its French source, usually used to indicate a high-ranking woman to distinguish some particular woman from the wives of other feudal seigneurs who were also entitled to the designation *dame*. The Prioress is addressed with *madame* which is in contrast with the use of *dame* to the Wife of Bath on all occasions.

In Chaucer *dame* is not found in the courtly context of the Knight's or Squire's Tales, nor in *Troilus and Cryseyde*. In these poems *madame* is used, albeit sparingly, alongside the much more common *lady*.

In the *Squire's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde* honorific titles to woman are *madame* and sometimes *lady*. Likewise in the *Franklin's Tale* Aurelius always addresses Dorigen as *madame*:



Madame,...by God that this world made,
 So that I wiste it myghte youre herte glade,
 I wolde that day that youre Arveragus,
 Hadde went ther nevere I sholde have come agayn

In the *Man of Law's Tale* the messenger addresses the King's mother as *madame* though *dame* is used in the form of '*dame Custance*' and '*dame Hermengyld*':

Madame, ye may be glad and blithe (II,732)

In the *Clerk's Tale*, the Seargent, concerned at Griselda's distress apologizes to her with the use of *madame*:

Madame,.... ye moote foryeve it to me
 Though I do thyng to which I am constreyned.
 (IV,526-27)

The *Gawain*-poet also uses *madame*. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain always calls the lady of Bercilak by *madame*.

As all the above examples show, *madame*, the respectful title to a woman, has been used to refer to women of high social status. However, as its usage increased, it also came to be used to women in the middle classes who were social climbers like the guildsmen themselves. In the *General Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* there are some suggestions for calling the wives of guildsmen such as haberdasher, carpenter, weaver, dyer and upholster *madame*. After mentioning their rising social status:

Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
 To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.
 Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,
 Was shaply for to been an alderman.
 For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,
 And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;
 And elles certeyn were they to blame. (I, 369-375)

and then:

It is ful fair to bee ycleped "madame," (I,376)

The increasing use of the honorific title *madame* to address women of the middle class shows that society was changing, and was lifting this new group to a position of affluence and prestige with the expansion of trade.²⁴

In marriage, just as the husband is addressed as *sire*, so the wife is addressed as *madame* by her husband as a polite term of address. In the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, Chauntecleer addresses his wife as *madame* (VII, 2970,3165) by itself and also with her personal name (VII, 3158,3200). Thus the honorific title *madame* is used in symmetrical situations as a counterpart title of *sire* to husband. However, unlike *dame*, which become a colorless designation for any woman, *madame* or *ma dame* still retained the conception of respect and honor that *dame* had possessed before.

Lady is also used as a polite address form in this poetry. The normal courtly title for a woman was *lady* though all the poets in that period used *dame* or *madame* as a polite vocative in direct address. *Lady* is the female counterpart of *lord* as a supreme honorific title. When it is used as a vocative in direct address, its usage is restricted. *Lady* was originally used to a woman of superior position in society, or to a woman whom such a position is attributed conventionally or by courtesy (OED), such as the

Virgin Mary (as in *Pearl*) or the Queen, just as *lord* is used to God or the King.

In the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the Queen is addressed as *lady* by the knight and the old woman. The knight addresses the Queen, on whom his life depends, as *lady* :

My liege lady, generally, (III-1037)

And the old woman who teaches him the right answer also addresses the Queen as *lady*: "my sovereyn lady queene!" (III-1048).

The Pilgrim Prioress is addressed by the Host as *lady*. In the *General Prologue* the Host asks her to draw cut by using the honorific title *lady*:

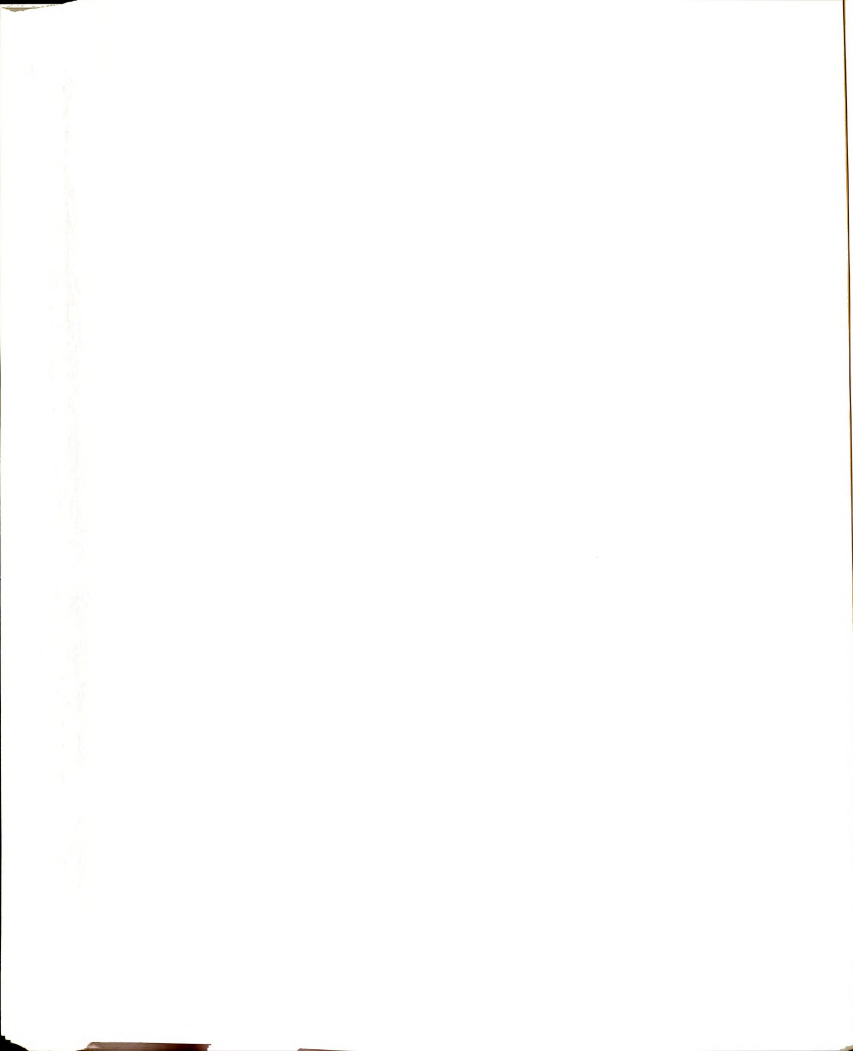
Cometh neer, my lady Prioress, (I-839)

And when he calls upon her for a tale he also uses the word *lady*:

My lady Prioress, by youre leve,
So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,
I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde
A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.
Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady deere?

(VII, 447-451)

Among the Pilgrims, the Monk is the only man who is addressed with *lord* alone and not in combination with *sire* or *maister* like the Knight. This indicates that the Prioress is the female counterpart of the Monk in terms of social rank. They have something worldly in common as described in the *General Prologue*. The worldliness of the Prioress is presented through the use of the title *lady* with a mild and amused irony, just as the Monk, able and luxurious, is admired and mocked at once in the title of



lord. The Host shows a clumsy deference to the Prioress by addressing her as lady, just as he shows deference to the Monk with the supreme honorific title lord.

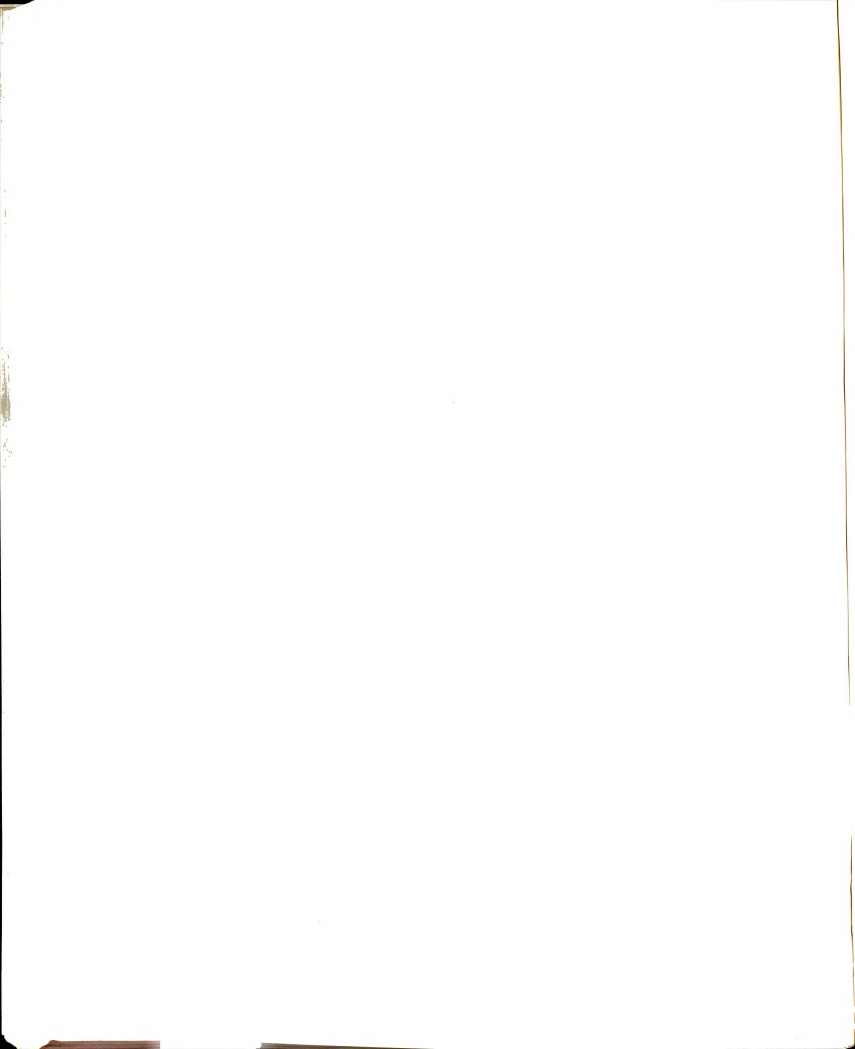
Since the honorific title lady is the usual term for a woman in high positions, it is only natural to call the object of courtly love lady, because in courtly love the woman is supposed to be in a higher position than the man, the lover. As lord is used to a husband in marriage, so lady is used to a woman in courtly love.²⁵

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Criseyde is usually addressed as lady by Troilus. In the same way in *the Knight's Tale* the archetype courtly lover Arcite uses lady to his lover, Emily. When he has been given up by his physicians and when he is just on the point of death, he says to Emily:

Naught may the woful spirit in myn hert
 Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte
 To yow, my lady, that i love moost,
 But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
 To yow aboven every creature,
 Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure. (I, 2765-70)

In contrast to the use of lady in courtly love, when the title lady is used to a lower class which makes the situation is to be interpreted as comic. In the *Miller's Tale* the carpenter's wife, Alison, is described in a way that parodies the formal description of the beautiful court lady through the use of the honorific title lady:

Now, deere lady, if thy wille be
 I praye yow that ye wole rewe on me,
 (I, 3361-62)



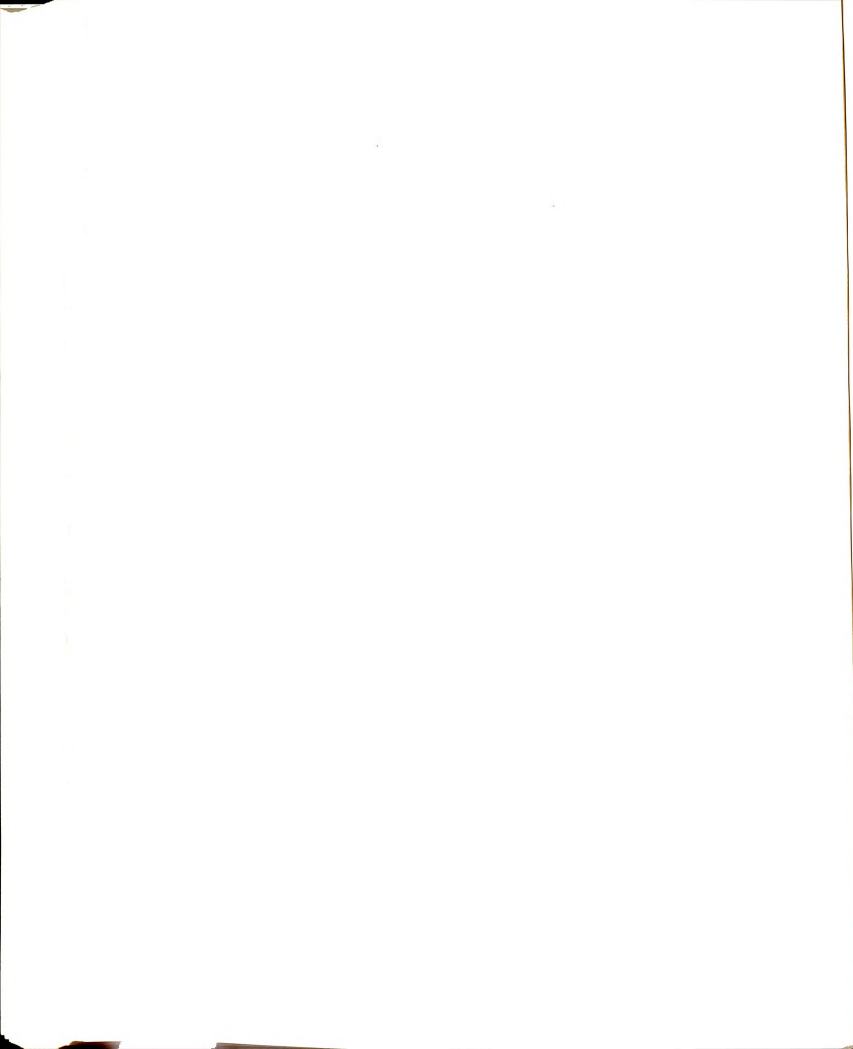
This use of *lady* displays some irony because the speaker uses a title for courtly love in conjunction with *thou* which is not used in courtly love.

In the *Shipman's Tale*, the monk calls the merchant's wife *lady*: "Now trewly, myn owene lady deere" (VII-196) By the use of the honorific title *lady*, the monk is flattering the merchant's wife.

Even in the marriage relationship, *lady* is used to refer to the wife. In the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the Knight addresses his wife as *lady* after her sermon about *gentillesse*:

My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,
I put me in youre wise governance. (III,1230-31)

The use of *lady* in marriage reflects that their relationship is that of courtly love showing humility of the husband, like a courtly lover by a combined use of the polite pronoun *ye*. However, in the *Franklin's Tale*, though Arveragus promises to behave himself as a courtly lover, he never uses the honorific title. Arveragus always uses the more general common word *wyf* to address his wife while she addresses him with the honorific title *sire*. Though the Franklin emphasizes in his Tale courtly love in marriage, Arveragus doesn't use the title *lady* to Dorigen. And the teller Franklin himself uses the word *wyf* instead of the title *lady*. As Lumiansky points out, the Franklin betrays his contradictory opinion about marriage by speaking of the couple Arveragus and Dorigen as "Arveragus and Dorigen his wyf," not "Arveragus and Dorigen his lady (193)."



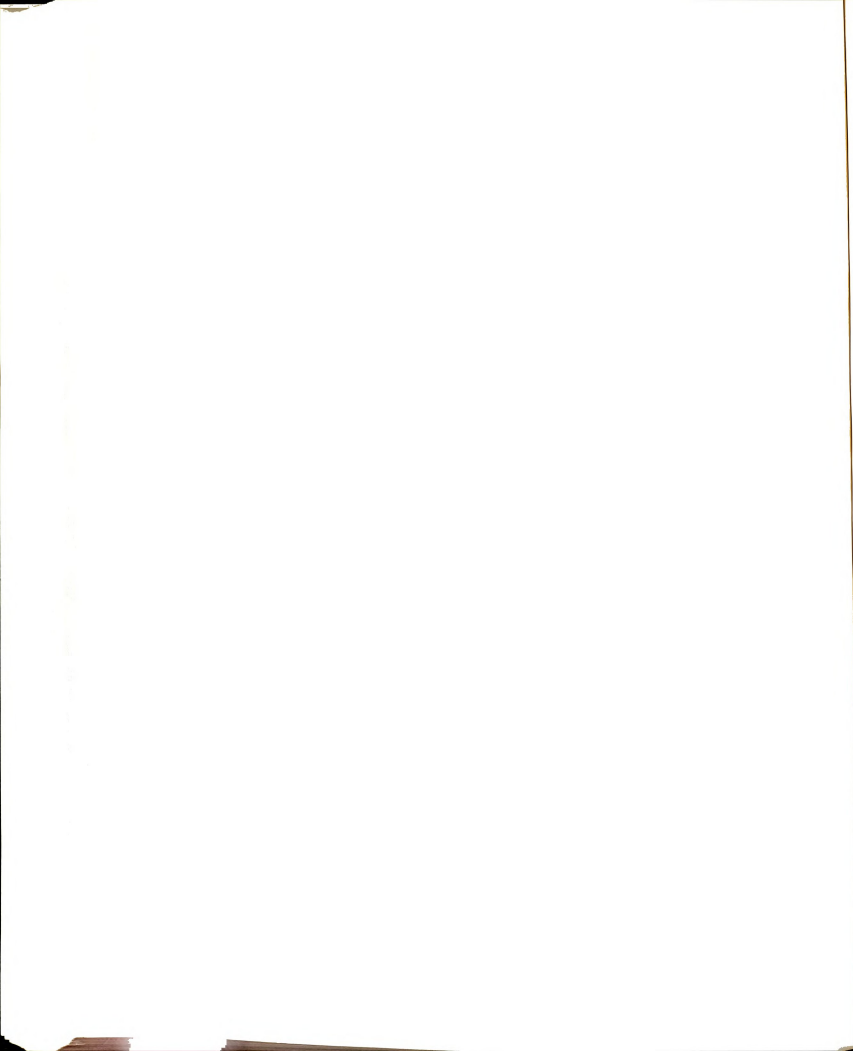
The honorific title *lady* can also be used sarcastically in an inappropriate situation, as can the other honorific titles. In *the Merchant's Tale*, when January sees his wife sitting in the tree with her lover, he says: " O stronge lady, stoore, what dostow?" (IV,2367). January also uses *lady* to his wife " in the elevated poetic language of the Song of Solomon,"²⁶ with *thou*, instead of with the polite pronoun *ye*:

Rys up, my wyf, my love, my lady free!
 The turtles voys is herd, my dowve sweete;
 The wynter is goon with alle his reynes weete.
 Com forth now, with thyne eyen eyen columbyn.
 (IV,2138-41)

Considering January's usual vocative to his wife is the common noun *wyf*, his use of *lady* and sometimes *dame* shows his hypocrisy and pretentiousness.

The use of the title *lady* in courtly love is in contrast with the use of *lemman* in the lower class. The difference between courtly lovers and lovers of the lower class is that courtly lovers use the honorific titles *lady* or *madame* to their ladies whereas lovers of the lower class use general nouns of address such as *lemman* instead of honorific titles. In *the Miller's Tale* the two lovers, Nicholas and Absalon, address Alison²⁷ as *lemman*. The lovesick Absalon addresses his beloved Alison as *lemman* with *ye*, a combination intended to parody courtly language:

What do ye, honeycomb, sweete Alisoun,
 My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome?
 Awaketh, lemman myn, and speketh to me!
 Wel litel thynken ye upon my wo,
 That for youre love I swete ther I go.
 No wonder is thogh that I swelte and swete;



I moorne as dooth a lamb after the tete.
 Ywis, lemman, I have swich love-longynge
 That lik a turtel trewe is my moornyng.
 I may nat ete na moore than a mayde.

(I,3698-707)

The other lover, Nicholas, also addresses Alison as *lemman*:

Ywis, but if ich have my wille,
 For deerne love of thee, lemman, I spille.

(I,3277-78)

And:

Lemman, love me al atones,
 Or I wol dyen, also God me save!

(I,3280-1)

In the *Reeve's Tale* lovers use *lemman* which literally means "one beloved," instead of *lady* or *madame*. Aleyn addresses Malyne as *lemman* and *wight*:

Fareweel, Malyne, sweete wight. (I,4236)

Now, deere lemman, go fareweel. (I,4240)

And, goode lemman, God thee save and kepe. (I,4247)

In the *Manciple's Tale*, Chaucer makes the following comments on how the status of the word *lemman* contrasts with the word *lady*:

And so bifel, whan Phebus was absent,
 His wyf anon hath for hir lemman sent.
 Hir lemman? Certes, this is a knavyssh speche!
 Foryeveth it me, and that I yow biseche.
 The wise Plato seith, as ye may rede,
 The word moot nede accorde with the dede.
 If men shal telle properly a thyng,
 The word moost cosyn be to the werkyng.
 I am a boystous man, right thus seye I,
 Ther nys no difference, trewely,
 Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree,
 If of hir body dishonest she bee,
 And a poure wenche, oother than this--
 If it so be they werke bothe amys--
 But that the gentile in hire estaat above,
 She shal be cleped his lady, as in love;
 And for that oother is a poure womman,
 She shal be cleped his wenche or his lemman.

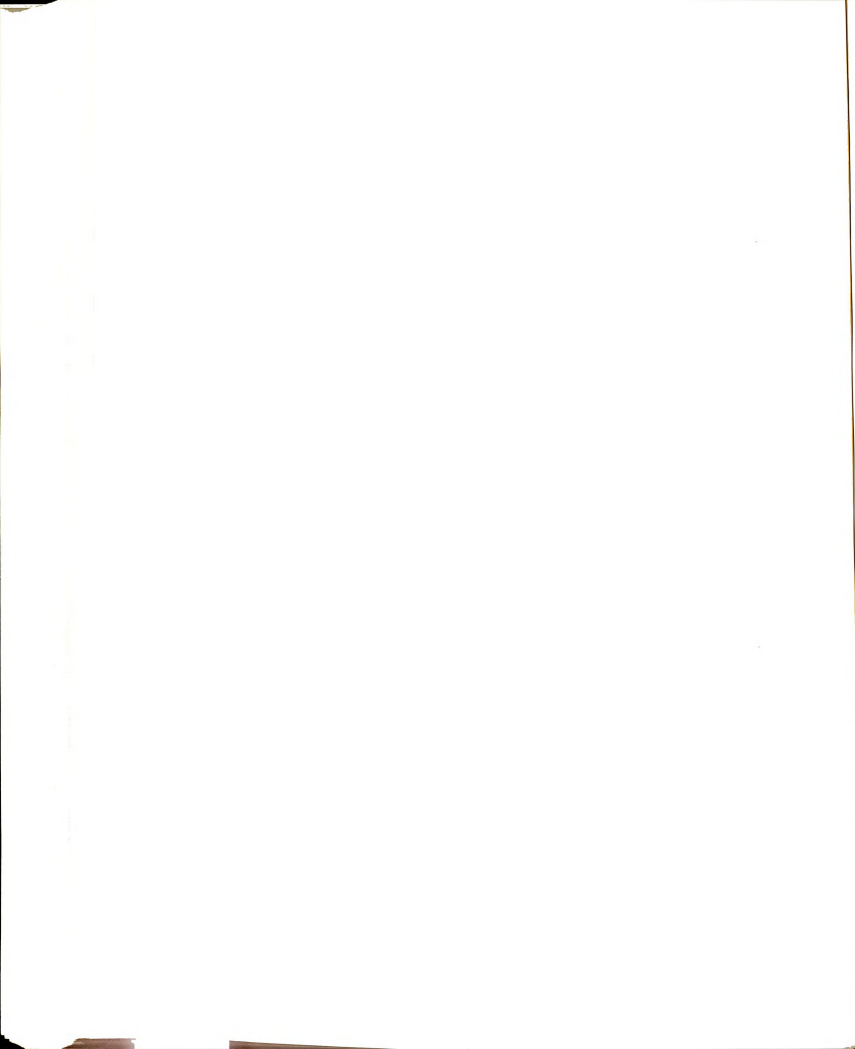
(IX,203-220)

Chaucer informs us here that *lemman* is a 'low' word in medieval times.²⁸

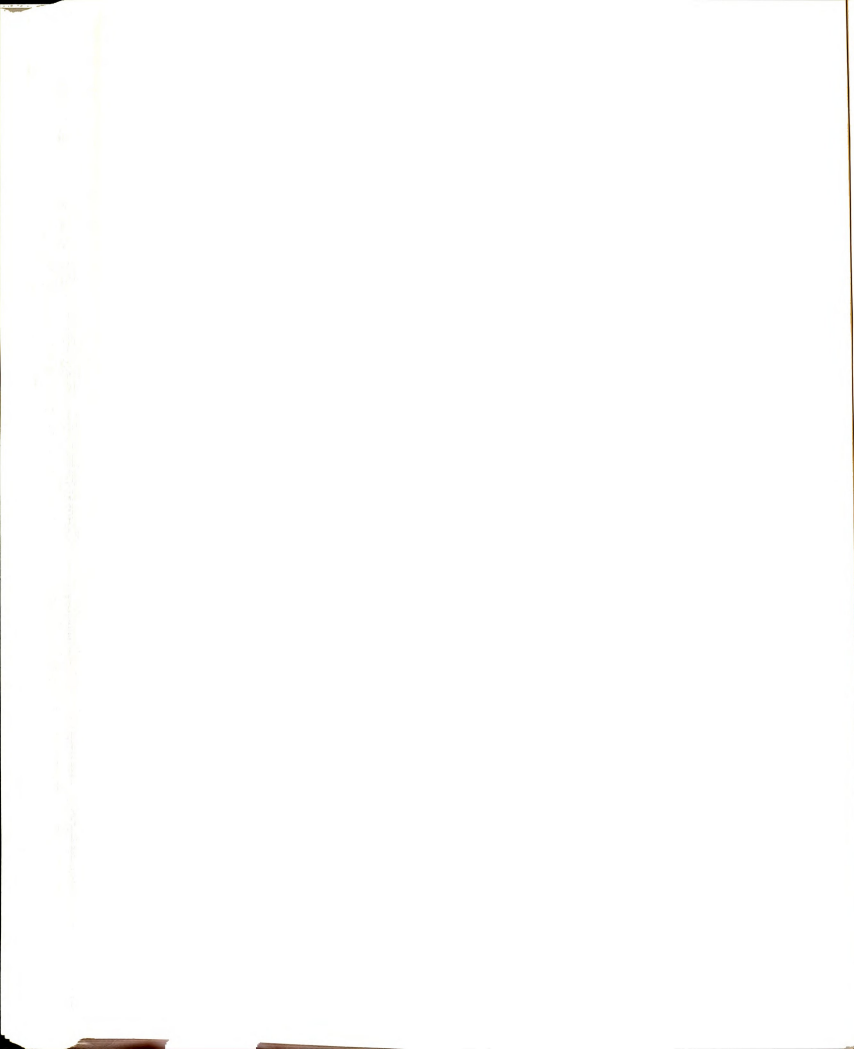
The use of vocatives in Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet shows high artistic skills in describing hierarchical society and at the same time changing social mobility. Chaucer emphasizes changing society whereas the *Gawain*-poet focuses on hierarchical society through vocatives. The use of kinship terms or personal names can be interpreted as signs of familiarity between speaker and addressee, as in the examples from the *Knight's Tale* in the *Canterbury Tales*, and in *Troilus and Criseyde* no matter what social rank they have. However, if their relationship is not close or intimate, the use of personal names can be interpreted as a contempt or an insult as shown in the conversation among the Pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales* and in the speech of the Green Knight to Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Calling the addressee by the occupational or rank label without any title can be used neutrally unless the speaker has intention of insulting the addressee.

On the other hand the use of honorific titles such as *sire*, *maister*, *lorde*, *dame*, *madame* and *lady* are used as polite, honorific, humble, neutral and sarcastic depending on the context. If separately used, each honorific title can be interpreted as the same polite address as the other. However, if used comparatively with the other honorific title, one honorific title stands higher than the other. In the late Middle English poems I have dealt with I have shown



that *maister* and *dame* are used as polite labels irrespective of the person's social rank, even though *maister* carries a special connotation of *learnedness*. The supreme honorific titles *lorde* and *lady* are only used in a situation where courtesy is required depending on the interest or ideal, and the social rank of the speaker. Thus it is no wonder to see that the Middle English honorific titles *madame* and *sire* have descended into Modern English as general polite address forms. For the *Gawain*-poet, the choice of any particular variation was usually a matter of meter rather than social meaning. However, for Chaucer all these honorific titles have different meanings depending on the context in which they appear.



Notes

¹Geoffrey N. Leech use the term 'vocative' to refer to the words to call the addressee in order to get attention from him. Thus I use the term 'vocative' as a mode of address in direct conversation.

²I will use the word 'label' only for profession and rank to distinguish these terms from honorific forms of address, for which I will use the word 'title.'

³I explained about their social rank in Chapter I.

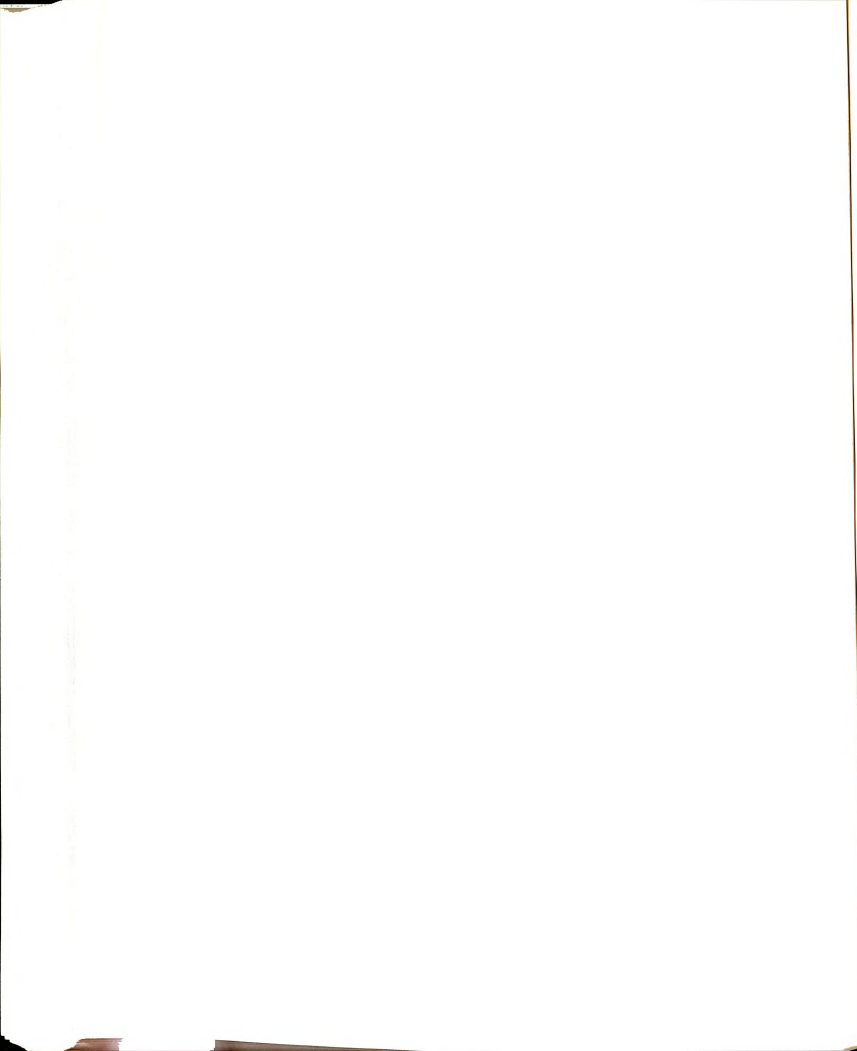
⁴Allan T. Gaylord deals with various kinds of friendship among the characters in *Troilus and Criseyde*, in his article, "Friendship in Chaucer's *Troilus*" *The Chaucer Review*, 3, No. 4 (1966), 238-64. According to his explanation 'friendship' is an idea that matters much in *Troilus and Criseyde*. He even argues that "without understanding the importance of friendship as both a value and an element in the plot cannot really be said to understand what the poem is about."

⁵Concerning antagonism between the Host and the Cook, note F.J. Tupper, "The Quarrels of the Canterbury Pilgrims," *JEGP*, 14 (1915), 265.

⁶Ralph Elliott assigns one chapter of his book, *Chaucer's English* (London: Andre Deutch, 1974) to Chaucer's cheryl's terms.

⁷The Middle class is not a unified, self-conscious class in the minds of contemporaries. Thus among the middle class each individual judges each other by his own standard.

⁸According to *A Concordance of the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, (J. S. P. Tatlock and A. G. Kennedy; Washington, 1927) and *A Concordance To Five Middle English Poems: St. Erkenwald, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Patience, Pearl*, (Kottler, Barnet and Markman M.; University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966) titles sire and dame appear more than any other title.



⁹Concerning the original meaning of honorific titles I refer to William Averill Stowell's book, *Old-French Titles of Respect in Direct Address* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1908)

¹⁰The Host uses to the Monk different vocatives which show the Host's temporary feeling at the time he speaks to the Monk.

¹¹I already mentioned the learnedness of the Clerk and the Man of Law in chapter I.

¹²It is very like the usage of Mr. in Victorian times, and later, in which some women addressed their husband with Mr.

¹³Godon Hall Gerould (p.54) explains the Franklin's polite attitude in terms of his *gentillesse*, in his book, *Chaucerian Essays* (New York: Russell & Russel, 1968).

¹⁴Parson's social status was not high in that period.

¹⁵In Middle English the word 'wy3e' had not only the meaning "a human being, man or woman" (OED s.v. wight sb. sense 2)--it is used by the poet to refer to the lady in line 1792--but "a living being in general" (s.v. sense 1); and it was often applied to supernatural beings (sense 1b).

Originally the word 'burne,' which was 'bern' or 'beorn,' meant "warrior"

¹⁶I explained about the Lady's alternation of ye and thou in Chapter I.

¹⁷Depending on the tone or intonation, the same word may have different connotation.

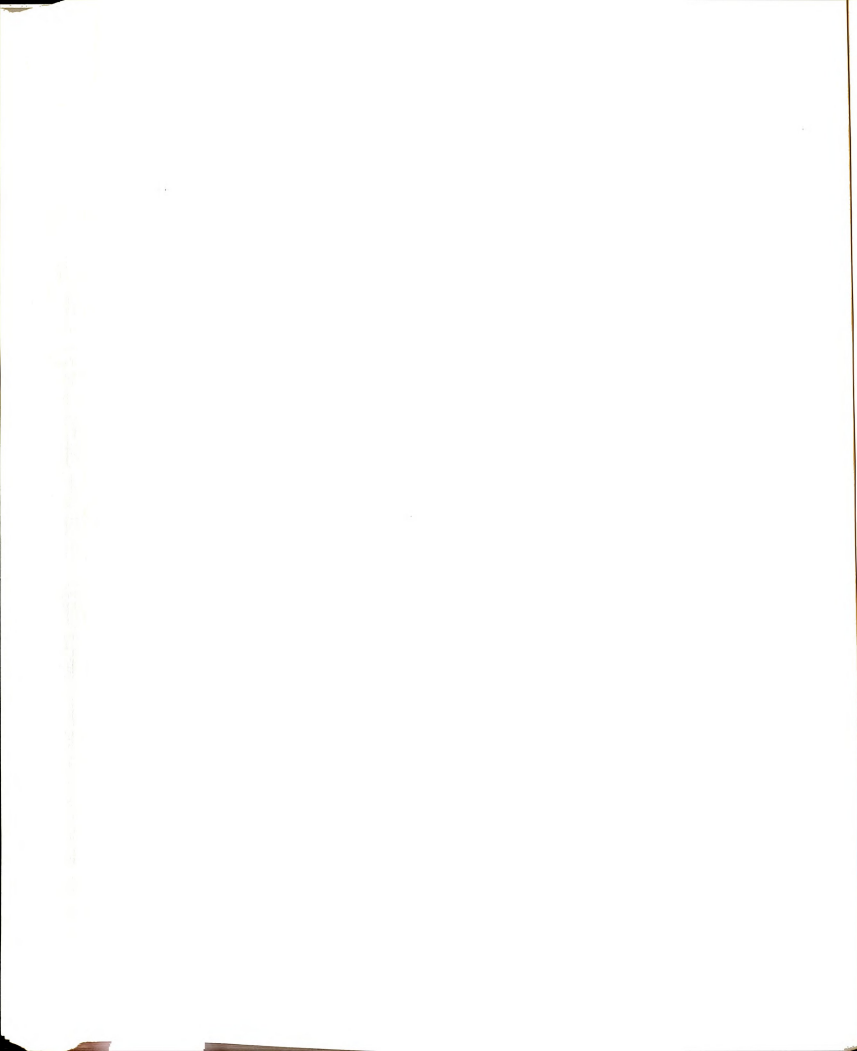
¹⁸Chaucer does not prefix 'sire' to a knight's name anywhere else in his works but 'sir Topas.' Foulet thinks that 'sire' had been too frequently associated with unworthy names and so became tainted with vulgarity. (J.A. Burrow, *Essays on Medieval Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon press. p69-74)

¹⁹Malone, p.174.

²⁰See Notes 15.

²¹Here Dr. Yunck comments that much of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight's* vocabulary depends on the need for alliteration rather than the matter of politeness.

²² A. Luengo discusses the effect of the two audiences (the church people and the Pilgrims) on the form and style of the core sermon of the Pardoner's presentation in the



article "Audience and Exempla in the Pardoner's Prologue and Tale," *The Chaucer Review* 11, No.1 (Summer, 1976), 1-10.

²³Stowell (p.125) takes examples in which "ma dame" is written as one word in some French texts of the second half of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth centuries.

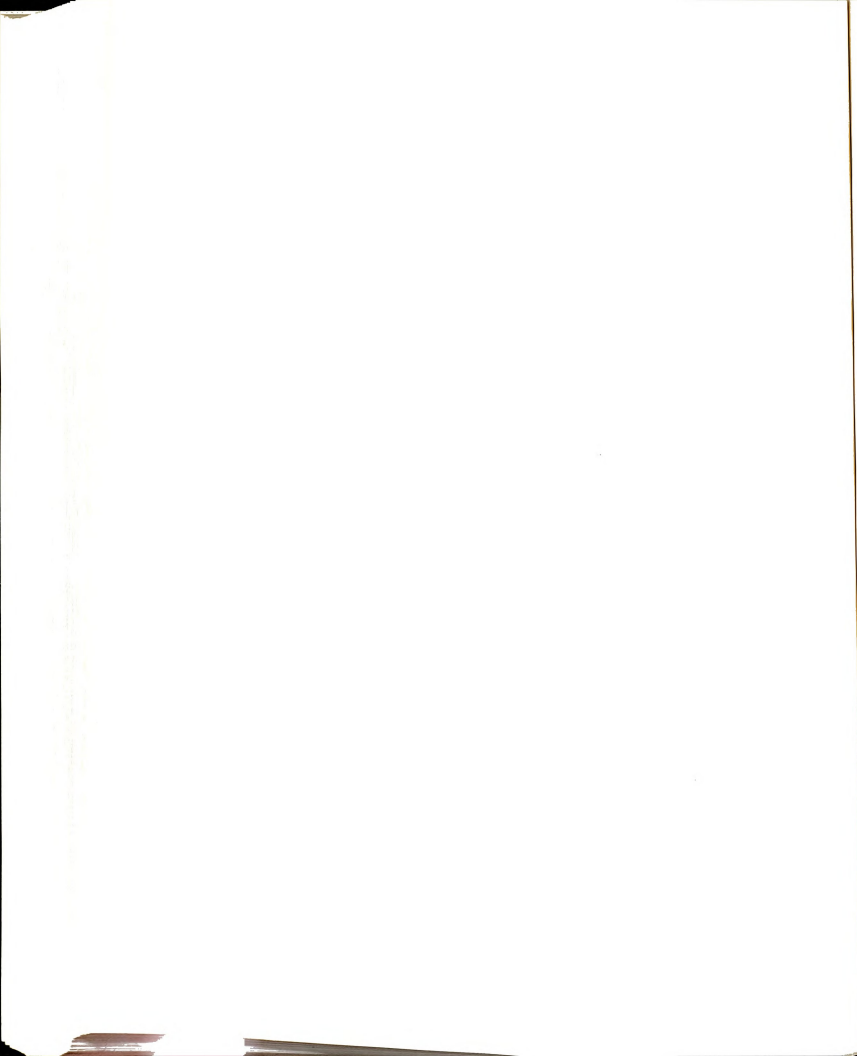
²⁴Middle class is considered to reflect changing society in the decline of feudalism of that period.

²⁵This explains well that the marriage relationship is the opposite to courtly love.

²⁶January's speech is full of echoes of the Song of Solomon.

²⁷Alison is not a courtly lady at all.

²⁸Scattergood (p.139) remarks that "lemman" was a mildly impolite word.



IV. REQUESTS

Different syntactic structures, even if they are semantically synonymous, mark the situations in which they occur as different. In conjunction with the distinctions of the two second person singular pronouns *thou* and *ye* and the vocative forms, the choice of variant syntactic forms of requests (under which category I include all kinds of directives) also shows the social context in which language is used in late Middle English poetry. While the earlier two chapters focused on social patterns of linguistic features, such social aspects of language use, as interpersonal relations and the social status of the speaker and the addressee, this chapter will focus on syntactic variants which illuminate most clearly situational patterns, the settings in which language is used.¹

Though the request forms were not used in the same way as those shown in recent studies of current English usage, as Ervin-Tripp (1969) shows in her classification of requests because of the different situation and language,² Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet make the most of the various syntactic forms of request, that is order, ask, recommend or advise, in their own way to explain the situations and at the same time the personalities of their characters.

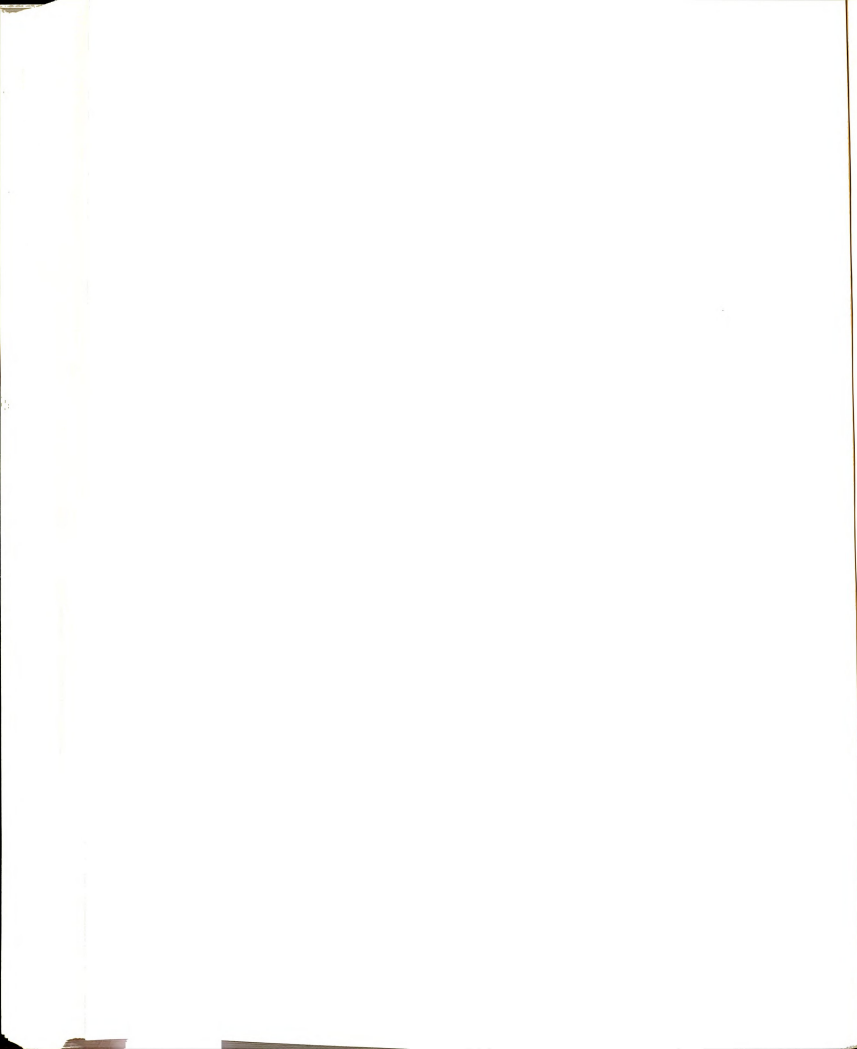


Chaucer employs different syntactic forms freely as requests to show the position or the role of his characters in his works by having the same character use different forms depending on the situation. On the other hand the *Gawain*-poet uses various syntactic forms of request as the instrument of characterization.

The analysis in this chapter is based on the assumption that the most indirect form of a request is the most polite, if it is used in an appropriate situation; otherwise it should be interpreted as sarcastic or as an insult towards the addressee. On the other hand, the most explicit and direct request is usually least polite, although context, in particular the speech situation, and relative social status will affect interpretation.

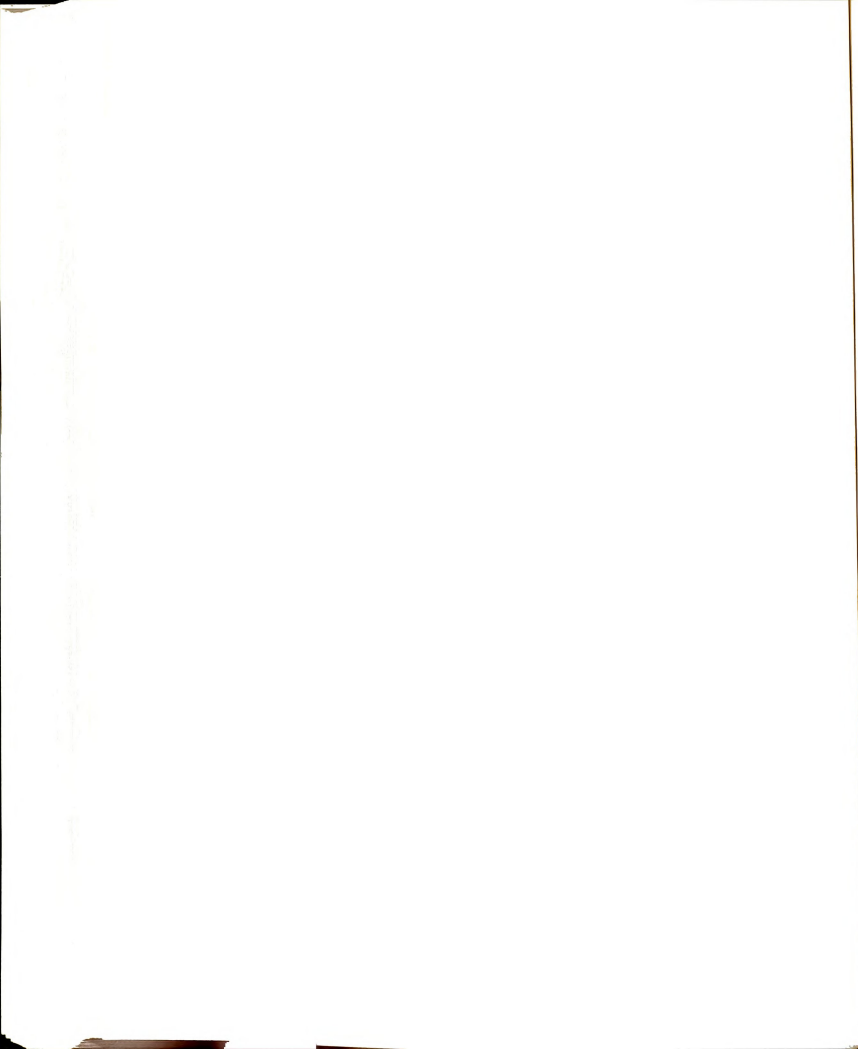
Brown and Levinson (1978) argue that indirect forms are more polite than direct structures. Thus the most indirect form would be considered the most polite choice available if it is used in appropriate situations. For example, the indirect request, "Would you open the door?" is usually interpreted as more polite than the direct request form, the imperative, "Open the door." However, the same request form could convey sarcasm if used in inappropriate situations. It could function to insult or irritate the addressee, while containing sufficient ambiguity to protect the speaker.

There have been many terms to describe indirect request forms. Gordon & Lakoff (1971) have tried to explain the relationship between direct and indirect request forms



by distinguishing literal meaning from conveyed meaning. Through conveyed meaning the speaker can deliver his attitude towards the addressee implicitly. They show that expressions of politeness rely on conveyed meaning rather than on literal meaning. Robin Lakoff (1972) shows the importance of social context of an utterance in interpreting politeness. In her article "Language in Context," she shows that social context plays a role in the interpretation of speech by using some modal verbs as examples. Depending on the social context, one modal verb which is considered more polite than the other, can be reversed in the degree of politeness and considered more rude than the other.

Other generative semanticists, such as Ross and Sadock, proposed the performative hypothesis, which assumes that the structure of a speech is coded in the form of abstract underlying sentences which contain a performative verb as well as the pronoun 'you' and 'I'. For example, the imperative form "Open the door" could be prefixed in its specific context with a performative tag "I request you to." According to the performative theory both forms are essentially identical. However, despite their syntactic relations, requests which have different surface forms cannot have the same meaning from the sociolinguistic point of view. Hymes (1974) states that "social function gives form to the ways in which linguistic features are encountered in actual life" (196). Circumstances in which one would utter one request form are different from those in

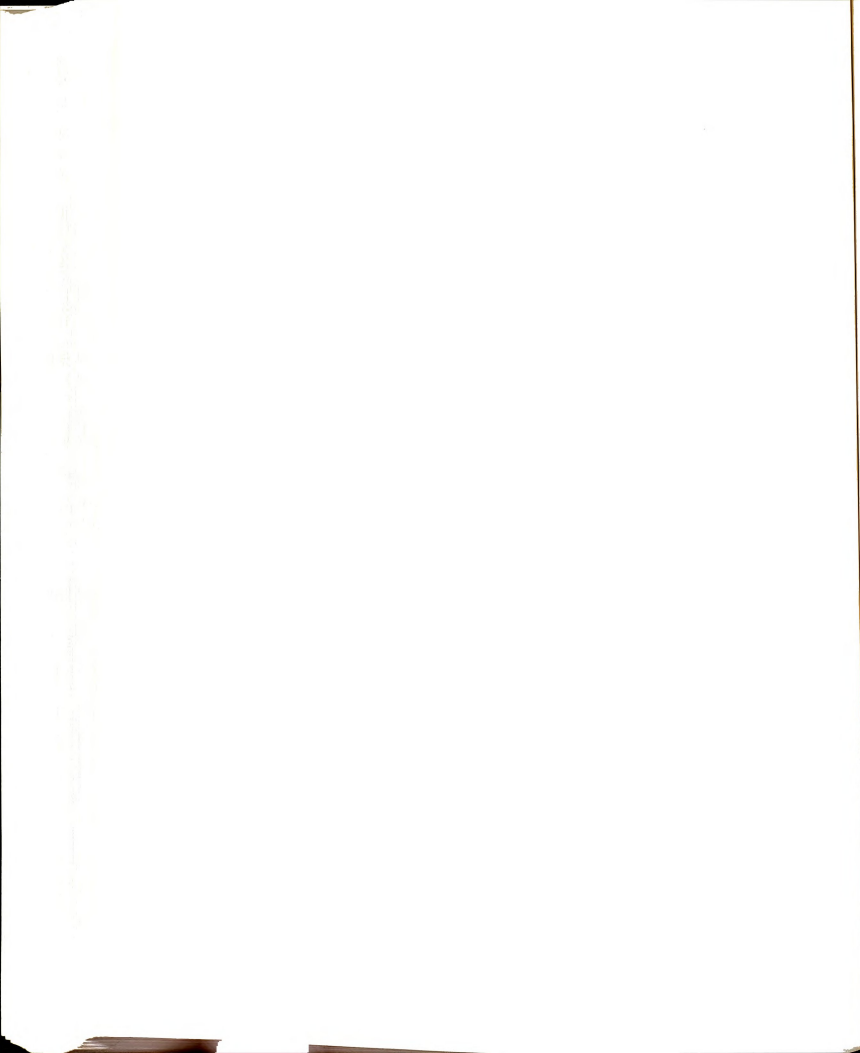


which one would utter the other. In many, perhaps most cases, one cannot tell what illocutionary act is being performed in the uttering of a certain sentence unless one is provided with a context.

Since Hymes' observations must be accounted for, perhaps the most important theory which relates the utterance meaning to the situation in which it is uttered is Speech Act theory, developed by the philosopher J. L. Austin (1962) in *How To Do Things with Words*, and elaborated by J. R. Searle (1969) in *Speech Acts*.

According to the basic Speech Act theory as outlined by Austin and Searle, there are three major kinds of acts that one performs as a speaker within the communication situation: locutionary acts, which are the sounds or the print a speaker or writer produces which are ordered according to all the structural rules of that language; illocutionary acts, which are acts performed in the speaking (writing) of a meaningful utterance; and perlocutionary acts, which are the causing of any contingent consequence as a result of speaking.

For example, simply uttering the sentence "Open the door" is to perform a locutionary act. Furthermore, if the sentence is addressed to the appropriate person in appropriate circumstances, such as standing outside or inside of a room with the intention of requesting some person in the room with you to open the door, then an illocutionary act is performed (the act of requesting). A

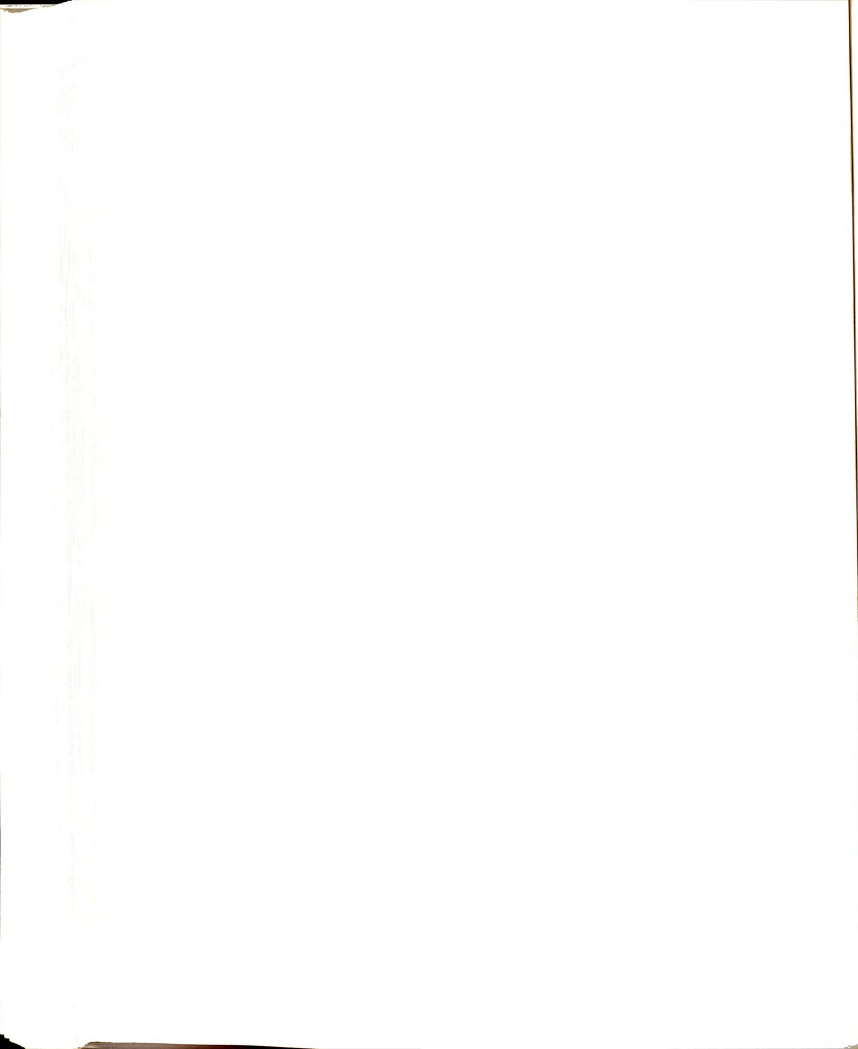


perlocutionary act would be performed if that person opened the door as a result of the request.³

Among these three kinds of acts the socially significant acts are illocutionary acts, though both the locutionary and the illocutionary acts seem to offer the richest expressive possibilities. By uttering the remark "Open the door," a locutionary act, the speaker is performing the illocutionary act of requesting which is socially significant only because of the social context.

While the locutionary act contains the coded message (oral or written) that the speaker directs to the addressee, how the speaker intends the message and what the addressee perceives from the message belong to the illocutionary act. That is, when people speak, they also perform acts of various kinds, such as declaring, asking, requesting, commanding, promising and so on. To properly decode the speaker's intention, the people involved need to share the same verbal and nonverbal background.

Speech act theory explicates the speaker's competence in what Richard Ohmann (1971) terms "using speech to act (and be acted upon) within the matrix of social and verbal conventions" ("Speech, Acts and Style," in *Literary Style: A Symposium*). The competence requisite on the part of the speaker and addressee includes both verbal and nonverbal parameters. For the verbal, the semantic and syntactic choices a speaker makes can produce different responses in the addressee. As Roger Fowler (1979) points out in regard

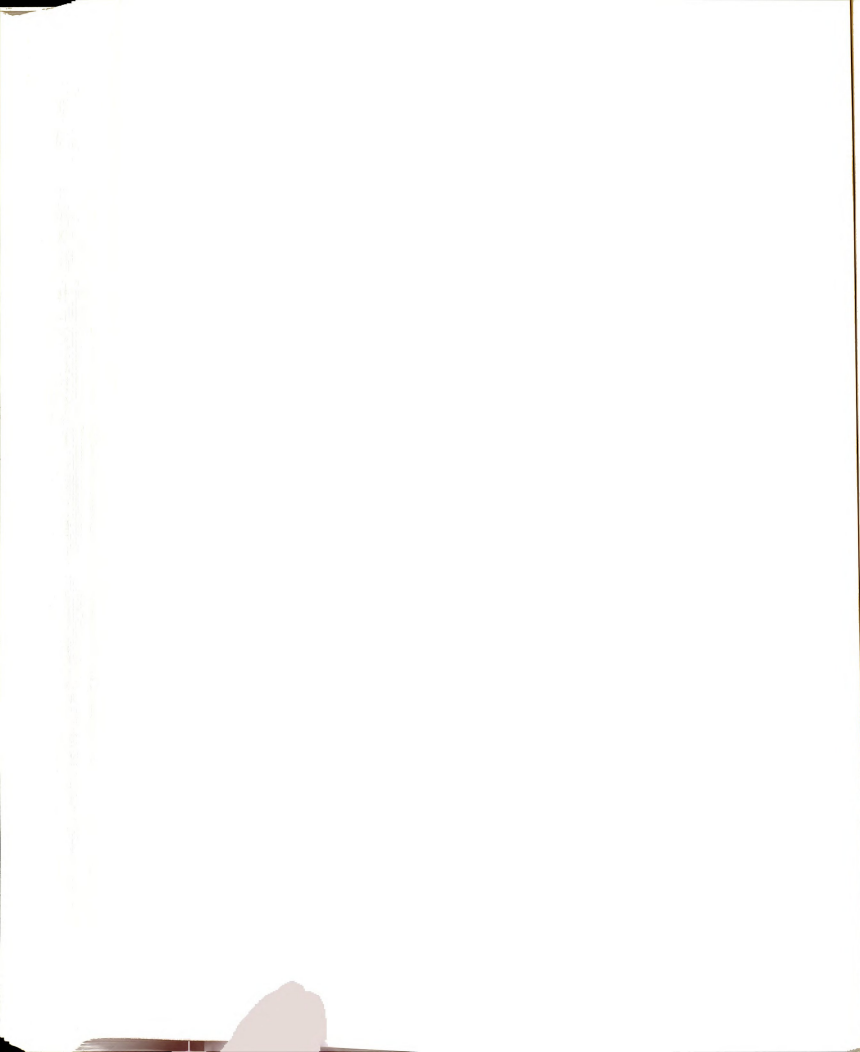


to syntactic choices, "a speaker's syntactic choices may 'mean' more than one thing and something else for interlocutor " (8).

Nonverbal factors such as social status, position of authority and power, age, occupational status, and any other indicators of placement within the social hierarchy or setting interact with the verbal message and contribute to the meaning. Illocutionary acts must be interpreted in the light of the status of the speaker relative to the addressee and of the relation of both to the social situation because these relationships can have a direct bearing upon the illocutionary force of an utterance.

Commenting on the syntax of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, A. C. Spearing (1964) in his book, *Criticism and Medieval Poetry*, points out that the manner of expression cannot be delivered through a modern translation, even though "the content of the speech can be easily translated into modern English " (40). In the second chapter he compares a modern translation of Gawain's speech to King Arthur with the original and finds that the modern translation lacks the same degree of courtesy or politeness. He then concludes that characters' personalities are "expressed though syntax rather than imagery " (45). Particularly, he shows that Gawain's courtesy is shown by the way in which he says rather than by what he says.

Unlike the other variables which were discussed in chapters one and two (the second person pronouns and



vocatives), request forms are more constrained by the social situation in which they take place, including the task or topic which is requested, than they are constrained by the social relationship between speaker and addressee. For example, the sentence "Open the door" in Modern English shows that its occurrence is more situationally than socially restrained.

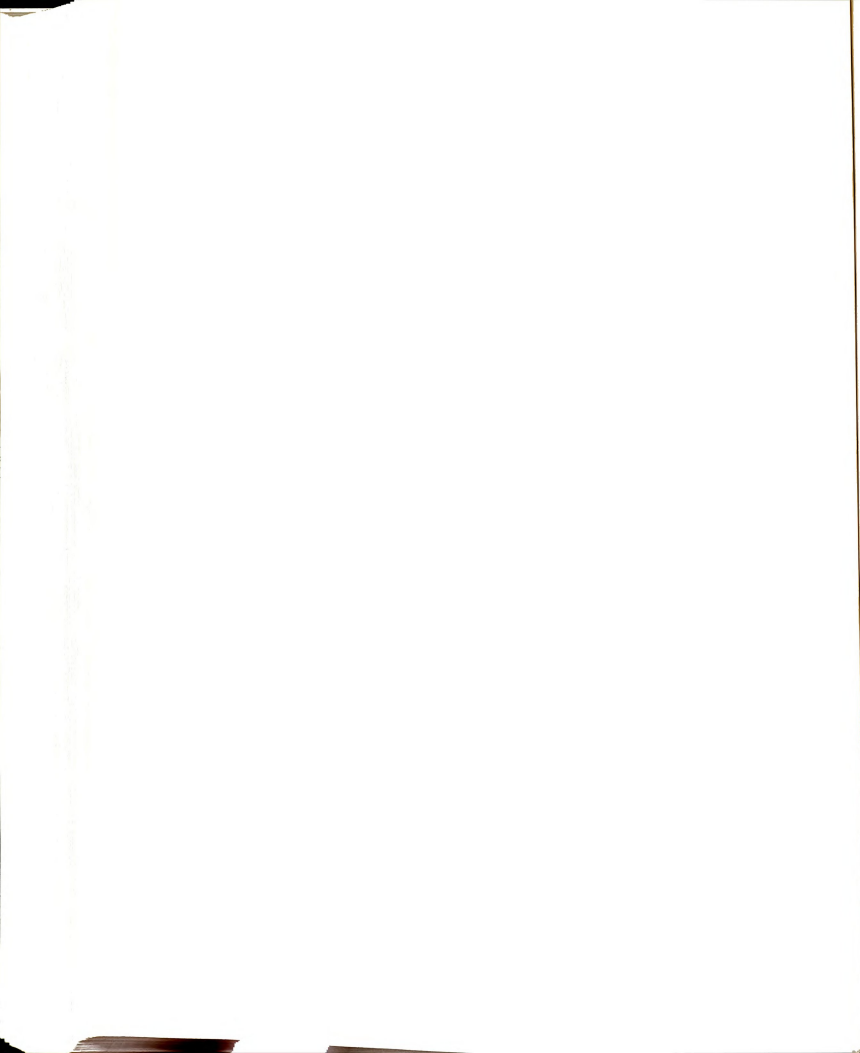
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|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| (1) (Please) open the door | (imperative) |
| (2) I'd like you to open the door | (statement) |
| (3) Could you open the door | (question) |

Though sentences (1)-(3) have different syntactic forms, they are all underlying requests, but with very different expressive value depending in part on the situation in which they are used.

I will explain different syntactic forms of request in terms of the situations in which they take place. Other factors such as task and the relative status of the speaker and addressee can be included among situations with respect to politeness. From this example of situational constraint basically three different syntactic request forms should be considered. These range from explicit and slightly modified imperatives to statements and questions which are formally identical to utterances which are not requests.

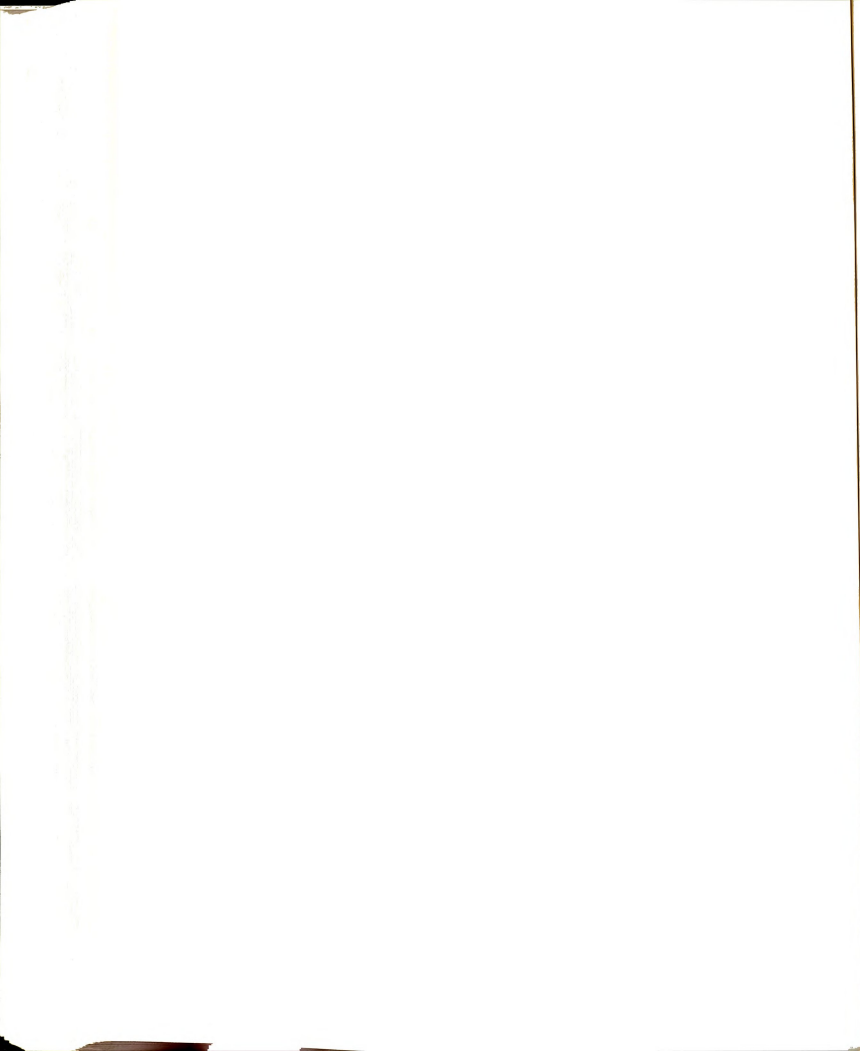
Direct Requests:

The most explicit and direct form of request is the imperative structure--the command. As the most direct form,



imperatives are employed in situations in which obligations and rights between speaker and addressee exist or the relationship of "authoritor" and "authoritee" is established.⁴ Imperatives are usually employed in an obvious rights-and-obligations situation. Where the speaker has the right to command and the addressee has the obligation to follow him, or where there is intimacy between speaker and addressee, the speaker does not need to be polite in using request forms. Thus imperative forms are used in both asymmetrical and symmetrical situations. The social rank is another factor which affects the choice of request form. For example, between the people of different social rank, the social superior uses the imperative form to his inferior, who in turn uses the indirect request form. However, the imperative form is used symmetrically between close relations regardless of their social status.

Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet employ various syntactically different forms to order, ask, recommend and advise (which I put in a larger category 'request') to characterize the situation in which the request is spoken. By having his characters use a particular syntactic form of request in the speech situation, Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet show the personality of his character depending on the situational patterns. Chaucer emphasizes the role and the position of the speaker in speech situations in the *Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Parliament of Fowles*. The *Gawain*-poet shows his ideal theme *cortayse* in



Sir Gawain and the Green Knight with respect to the court. As the greatest image of splendor and power, the court is where we would expect to find courtesy. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* there are two courts: Arthur's and Bercilak's. In Arthur's court, King Arthur uses the imperative form to command freely, which is what is expected of him because a King has every right to command in his court. He uses the imperative form to his cousin, Gawain:

Kepe þe, cosyn, þat þou on kyrf sette, (372)

and:

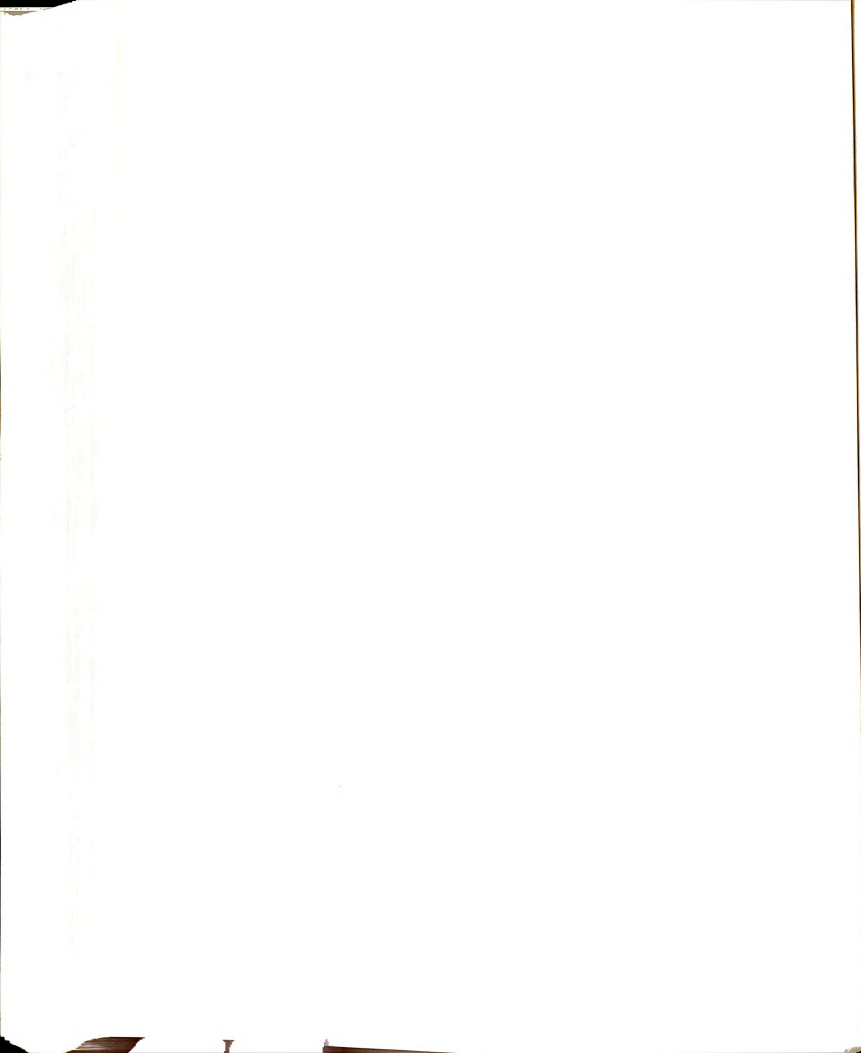
Now sir, heng vp þyn ax, þat hatz innogh hewen. (476)

King Arthur's use of imperative forms to his social inferior shows his dominant position to the fellow-men in his court. Instead of using imperatives, Gawain uses indirect request forms to Arthur:

Now, lege lorde of my lyf, leue I yow ask;
 3e know þe cost of þis cace, kepe I no more
 To telle yow tenez þerof, neuer bot trifel;
 Bot I am boun to þe bur barely to-morne
 To sech þe gome of þe grene, as God wyl me wysse.
 (545-49)

This shows the proper relationship between Arthur and his subordinates.

Just as King Arthur is in the position of authority in his court because he is King, the Lord Bercilak shows his power in his Castle through the use of imperative forms to Gawain. When Gawain tells Bercilak that he must leave to go to the Green Knight to be challenged, Bercilak uses the imperative form:



... 'Now leng þe byhoues,
 For I shal teche yow to þat terme bi þe tymeze ende,
 þe grene chapayle vpon grounde greue yow no more;
 (1068-70)

And he continues this same pattern:

And cum to þat merk at mydmorn, to make quat yow likez
 in spenne.
 Dowellez whyle New 3eres daye,
 And rys, and raykez þenne,
 Mon schal yow sette in waye,
 Hit is not two myle henne. (1074-78)

When Gawain insists again on leaving in the morning, arguing that the time has almost come, Bercilak detains him again. After he reassures Gawain that he will get there safely and promptly, he uses the imperative form :

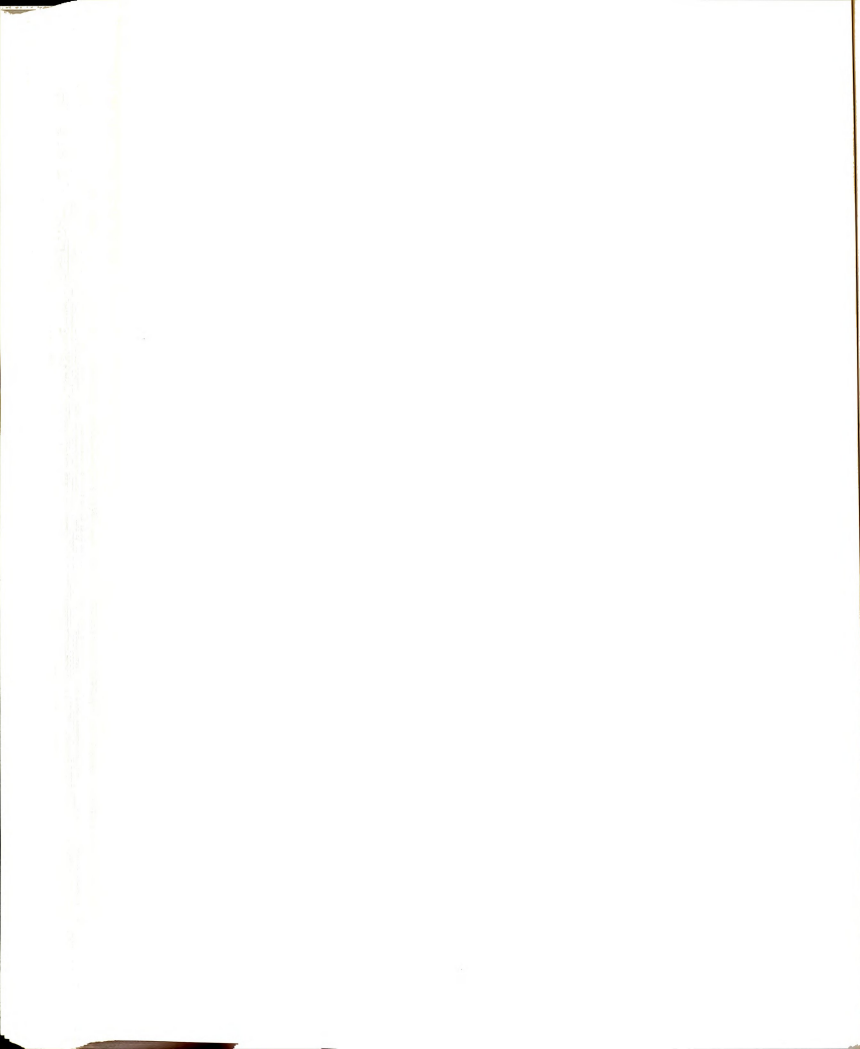
Forþy þow lye in þy loft and lach þyn ese,
 And I schall hunt in þis holt, and halde þe towchez,
 Chaunge wyth þe cheuisaunce, bi þat I charre hider.⁷
 (1676-78)

In his own court, Bercilak is in power and has the right to use the imperative form.

In contrast to the use of imperative forms with *thou* to the Green Knight as in Arthur's court, Gawain uses an indirect form of request with *ye* to Bercilak:

Forþy, sir, þis enquest I require yow here,
 þat 3e me telle with trawthe if euer ye tale herde
 Of þe grene chapel, quere hit on gounde stondez,
 And of þe knyht þat hit kepes, of colou ~~of 05650~~

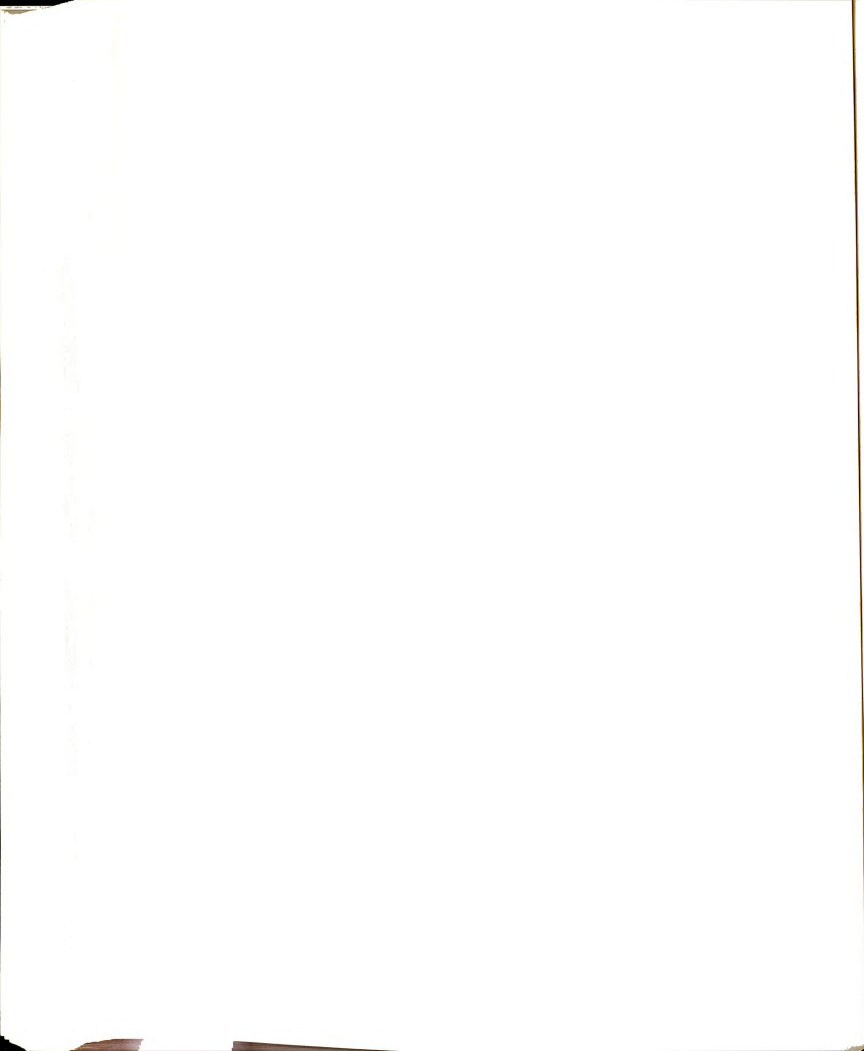
However, the Green Knight uses the imperative form in Arthur's court as well as in his own Castle before revealing himself as the Lord of Bercilak. When he first appears in Arthur's court, he addresses Gawain:



Lok, Gawan, pou be graype me, to go as pou hettez
 And layte as lelly till pou me, lude, fynde,
 As pou hatz in pis halle, herande pise kny3tes;
 (448-56)

Since in Arthur's court the Green Knight has no authority or right to command, his use of the imperative form is a sign of impertinence. This rudeness is reinforced by the use of the pronoun *thou* instead of the polite pronoun *ye*. And later, when he meets Gawain in his Chapel, before he reveals himself the Lord of Bercilak, he continues to use the imperative where we would expect a mitigated form between apparent equals: "Haf at þe þenne!" (2288)

This use of a short imperative is completely different from Gawain's long hypothetical speech. A. C. Spearing (1964) in his book, *Criticism and Medieval Poetry*, mentions that "the Green Knight's bluntness is expressed through a series of short sentences " (44), and that is also contrasted with Gawain's long elaborate sentence. As Larry Benson (1965) points out in his book, *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green knight*, "the Gawain-poet drew freely on the conventional grimaces of a churlish wild man to characterize the Green Knight " (80). The poet shows the Green Knight's personality, which is rude like his behaviour, by having the Green Knight use imperative forms. At the same time he also shows through Bercilak's use of the same request forms in both courts. The Lord of Bercilak's masquerade as the Green Knight only works superficially; he unwittingly reveals his true personality through his language patterns.

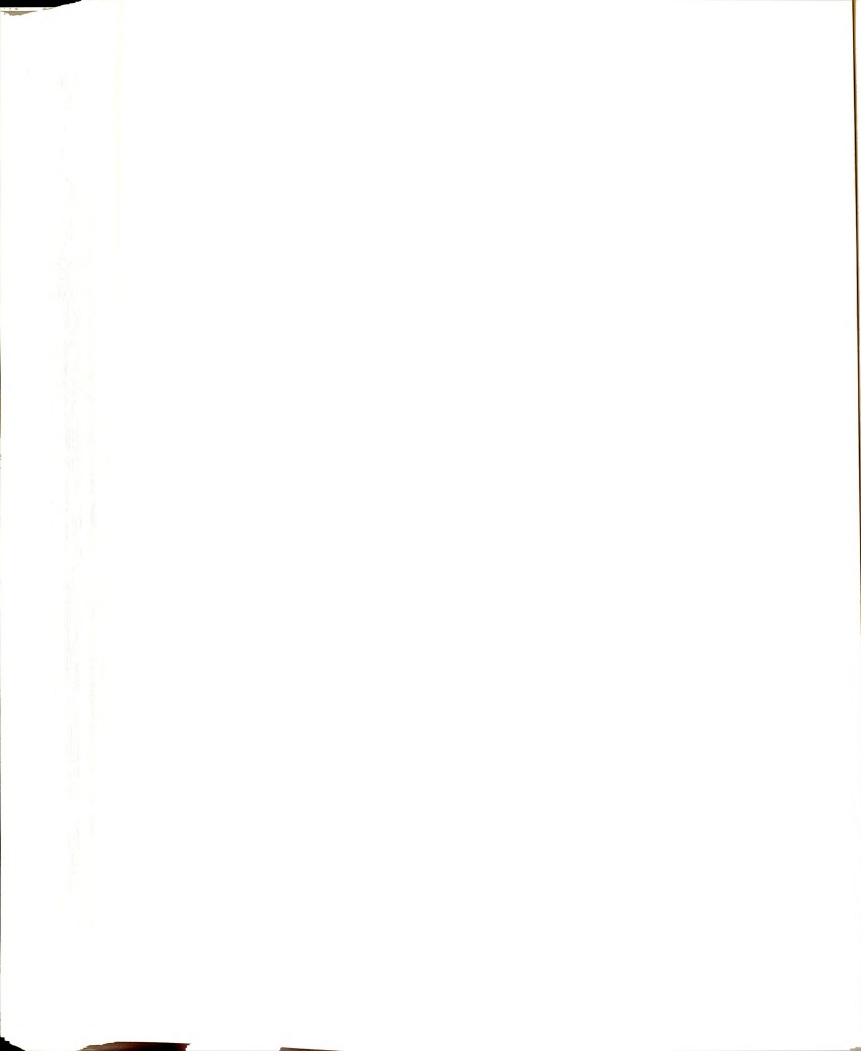


In contrast to the use of indirect polite forms to King Arthur and Bercilak, Gawain uses the most direct request form, the imperative, to the Green Knight in Arthur's court and in the Green Chapel to challenge the Green knight. When Gawain asks about the Green Knight's place in his first appearance in Arthur's court, he says:

Bot teche me truly þerto, and tell me how þou hattes
And I schal ware alle my wyt to wynne me þeder,
(401-2)

By using the direct imperative forms to the Green Knight, which the Green Knight has used to him, Gawain challenges the Green Knight's position in Arthur's court, and conveys his understanding that the Green Knight is not his superior.

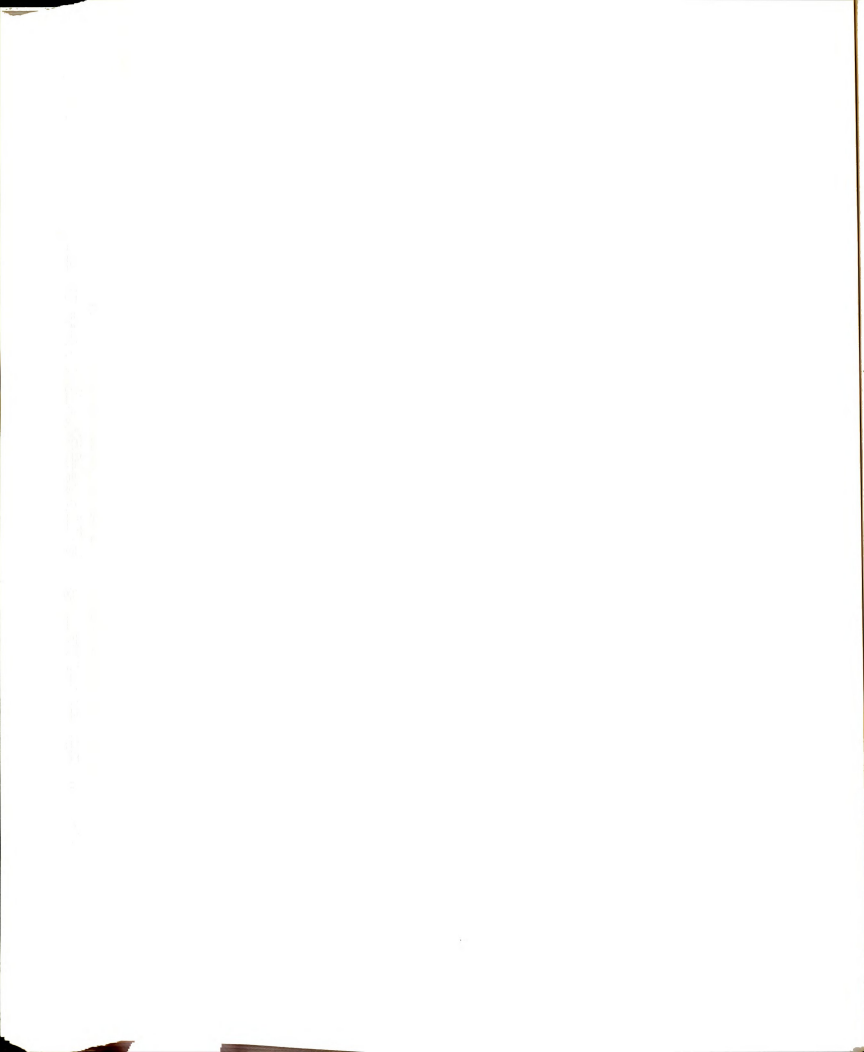
In addition to the situations in which a speaker has clear social power over the addressee, any speaker can use the imperative form as a request to any one who is under his control in those situations which give the speaker some kind of authority, even though the speaker is not normally the social superior of the addressee. For example, Harry Bailly, the Host in the *Canterbury Tales*, usually uses imperative forms to every member of the party except to the two women, the Wife of Bath and the Prioress. (I will explain these particular relationships later). In the *Canterbury Tales*, the Host is the one who is chosen to lead the story-telling and whom all the other members agree to follow. In the



(I, 809-818)

When he calls on each member to tell a tale, he uses the plain imperative form which has two different verb endings depending on the subject *thou* or *ye*. As J. Kerkhof (1982) notes in his book *Studies in the Language of Geoffrey Chaucer*, the Host, who is "in no doubt of the importance of social distinctions (57)," is remarkable in his use of the imperative towards the individual pilgrims. Although the agreement at the beginning of the pilgrimage gives him authority over the pilgrims, he still shows distinctions between high and low class pilgrims through his use of verb endings. When he speaks to the lower class pilgrims he uses the stem-form of strong verbs and a form in -e with most weak verbs, the forms which go with the subject *thou*:⁵

to the Miller; tel on devele wey
to the Reeve; sey forth thy tale, and tarie not thy
tyme
to the Cook; ne brynge not everyman into thyn house
now telle on, but yet I pray thee, be nat
wroth for a game



to the Man of Law; tell us
 to the Parson; telle us
 to the Wife of Bath; telle forth youre tale
 to the Summoner; tel forth tale
 to the Squire; sey somewhat of love
 to the Franklin; telle on thy wit
 to the Pardoner; telle us
 to Chaucer; telle us
 to the Nun's Priest ; telle us
 to the Canon's Yeoman; tel me;
 to the Manciple; telle on thy tale.

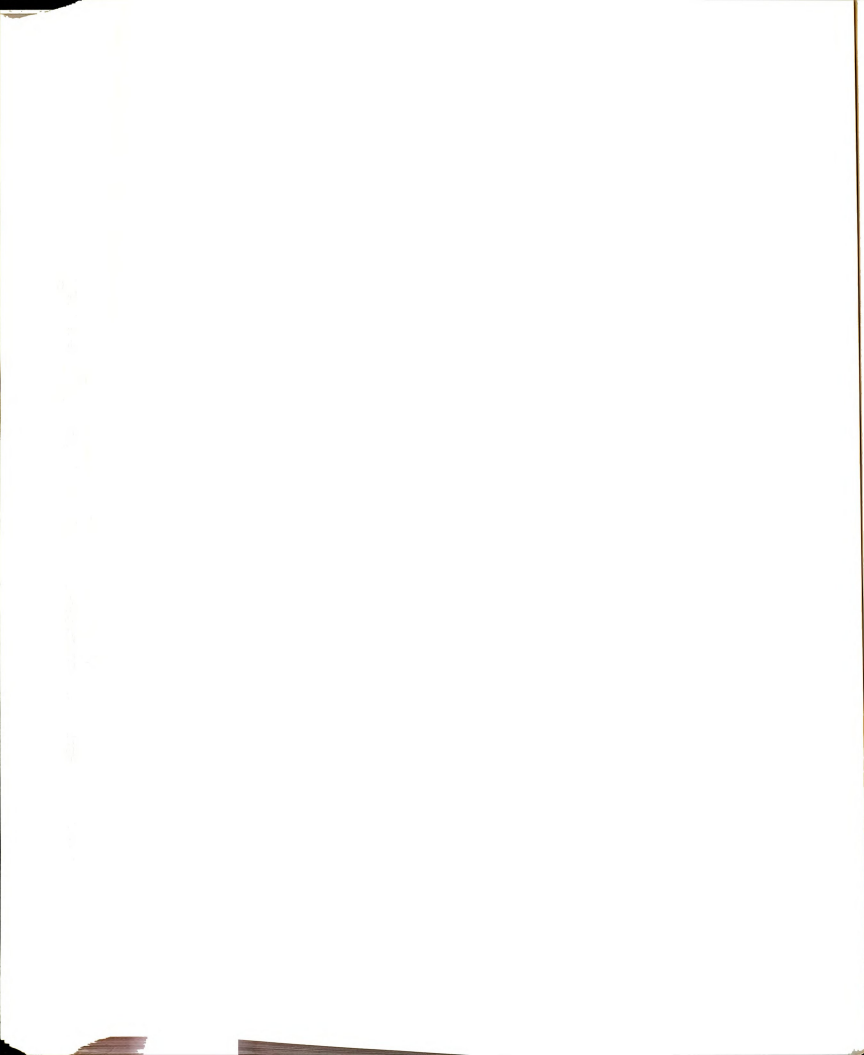
However, he uses the different verb ending -eth, which goes with *ye* in his address to higher class pilgrims. The distinctions between these verb endings carry the same meaning as the distinctions of *ye* and *thou* discussed in Chapter I.

to the Monk; now telleth ye,
 to the clerk; herkeneth me
 to the Friar; telleth youre tale
 to the Prioress: cometh
 to the Clerk; studieth

Even to the Pilgrim highest in social rank, the Knight, the Host demonstrates his power through the plain imperative form. After he uses all of the honorific titles *sire*, *maister*, and even *lord* to the Knight, he commands him with the plain imperative form:

Sire Knyght, my mayster and my lord,
 Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.
 (I, 837-38)

Thus the Host's use of imperative verb forms to all the Pilgrims, regardless of their social status, shows his power to command them to tell their stories, but his use of the different verb endings shows his awareness of the Pilgrims' different social statuses. As Kemp Malone (1951) points out, Chaucer makes the Host "domineering one moment" though



the use of imperative forms and "solicitous the next" through the use of the polite pronouns and vocatives. (p.196)

In the *Franklin's Tale* Aurelius puts himself in a position of authority to command by using the imperative to Dorigen, his social superior. Dorigen has promised to love Aurelius if he can perform the apparently impossible task of removing the black rocks which she sees as a danger to her husband. Aurelius tells her that the deed has been done, demands the fulfilment of her promise, and he does so warning her:

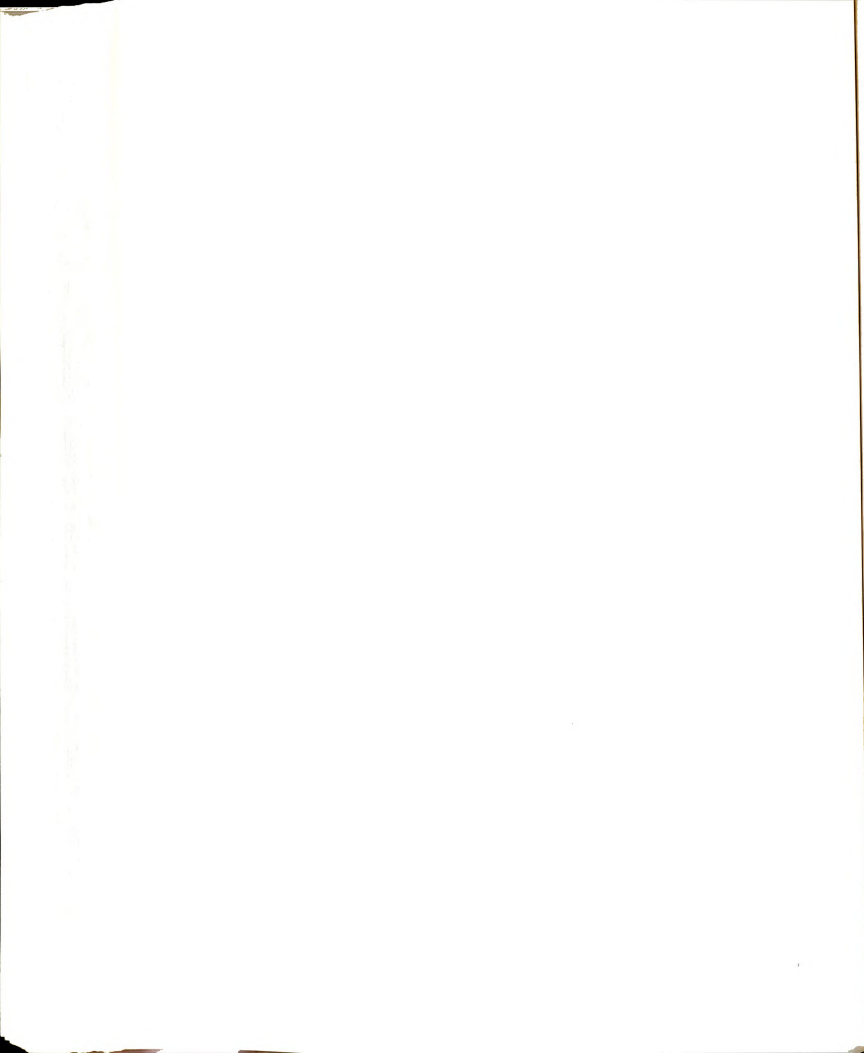
"Aviseth yow er that ye breke youre trouthe." (648)

Because Aurelius has fulfilled his promise, Dorigen is placed under obligation to him. Aurelius' use of the imperative here indicates his awareness of his temporary superiority, even though he is usually in the position of authority in terms of social status, as is evidenced by his use of vocative forms explained in Chapter II.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the Lady of Bercilak uses the plain imperative form to Gawain on the occasion of her second visit to him. After Gawain says "I am at your comaundement" (1501) she accepts her rights of authority by using the imperative form:

"Dos teches me of youre wythe" (1533)

This plain imperative form is contrasted with her usual indirect form of speech. In giving a brief lesson on the proper role of men in love she tries to argue him into



conforming to her interpretation of the courtly code (1508-1534).

The imperative form is also used in the situations in which the task requested is to the benefit of the addressee. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a servant of Bercilak who accompanies Gawain to the Green Chapel addresses Gawain:

'Forþy I say þe, as soþe as 3e in sadel sitte,
Com 3e þere, 3e be kyllled, may þe kny3t rede,
Trawe 3e me þat trwely, þa3 3e had twenty lyves
to spende.' (2110-12)

And he continues:

Forþy, goude Sir Gawayn, let þe gome one,
And gotz away sum oper gate, vpon Goddes halue!
Cayrez bi sum oper kyth, þer Kryst mot yow spede,
(2118-20)

The servant, who is acting as his guide, uses the imperative form to warn Gawain of some urgency and tempts Gawain to do what he tells by pretending that this warning is to the benefit of Gawain, even though it is not true.⁶ In the same way, in the poem *Pearl*, the maiden always uses the imperative form to the dreamer-father without a single exception because all her requests are to the benefit of the latter.

The plain imperative form is also used in intimate situations, regardless of the social status of the speaker and the addressee. Chaucer shows the close friendships between characters by having them use imperative forms to each other. In the *Knight's Tale* two knights, Arcite and Palamon always use the plain imperative form to each other. And in *Troilus and Criseyde*, which puts a great emphasis on

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'friendship' among characters, Troilus and Pandarus always use direct imperative forms to one another whenever requests take place despite their different social rank. Pandarus and Criseyde also address each other with the direct form. This symmetrical use of imperatives shows their intimate friendship.

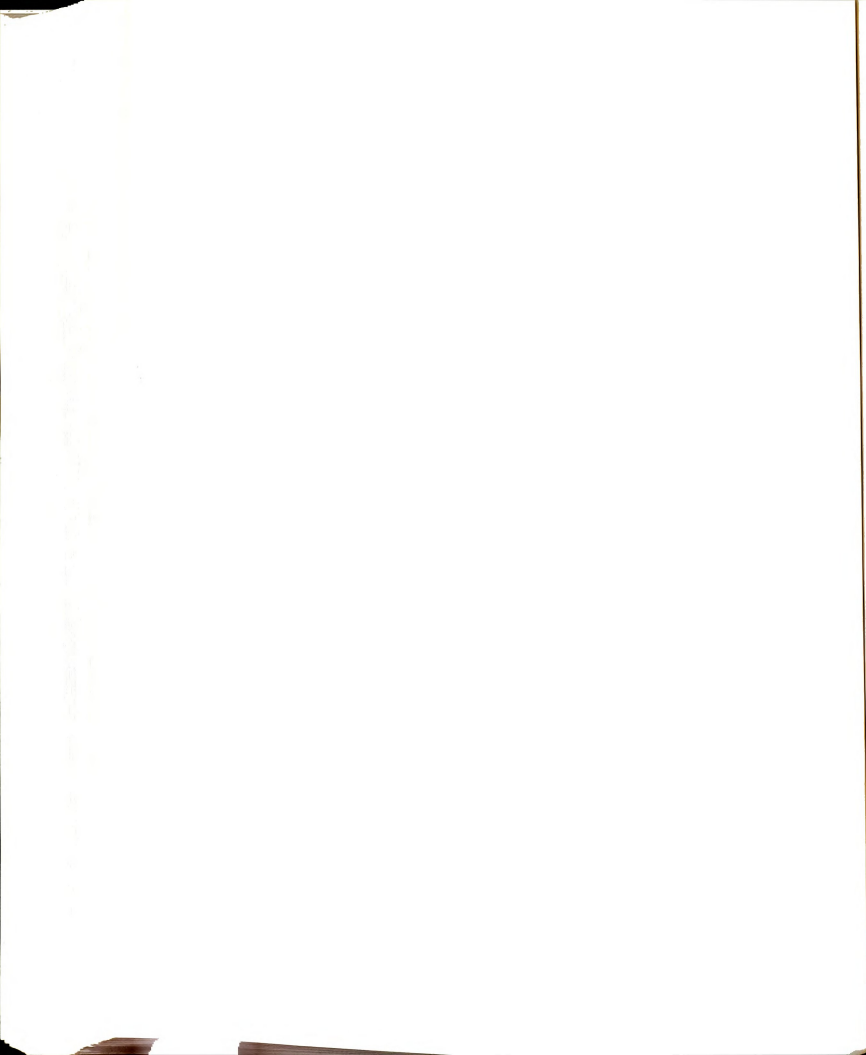
In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the Lady of Bercilak sometimes uses the imperative form to Gawain though her normal request form is much more indirect. This is appropriate to the disingenuous role she is playing: her use of this form with the conventional pronoun *thou* instead of the polite *ye* which she otherwise uses underlies the intimacy that she is trying to establish with Gawain, thus making herself more of a temptation to him:

"Now, dere, at þis departyng do me þis ese,
Gif me sumquat of þy gifte, þi gloue if hit were.
þat I may mynne on þe, mon, my mournyng to
lassen. (1798-1800)

Besides being used in intimate situations, the imperative form is also employed in adversarial situations. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in which the Green Knight and Gawain are challenging each other, they use imperative forms to each other, which indicates their adversarial attitudes towards each other.

Gawain addresses the Green Knight aggressively by using imperative forms in the Green Chapel before the latter reveals himself as Bercilak:

Bot busk, burne, bi þi fayth, and bryng me to þe
poynt.



Dele to me my destine, and do hit out of honde,
 For I schal stonde þe a strok, and start no more
 Til þyn ax haue me hitte: haf here my trawþe.
 (2284-87)

And Gawain also says to Green Knight:

Blynne, burne, of þy bur, bede me no more!
 I haf a stroke in þis sted withoute stryf hent,

 And þerfore, hende, now hoo! (2322-30)

In contrast to his usual use of indirect polite forms, this imperative form shows his competitive attitude towards the addressee, the Green Knight. The Green Knight also uses the imperative form:

Haf at þe ax haue þe a stroke. (2288)

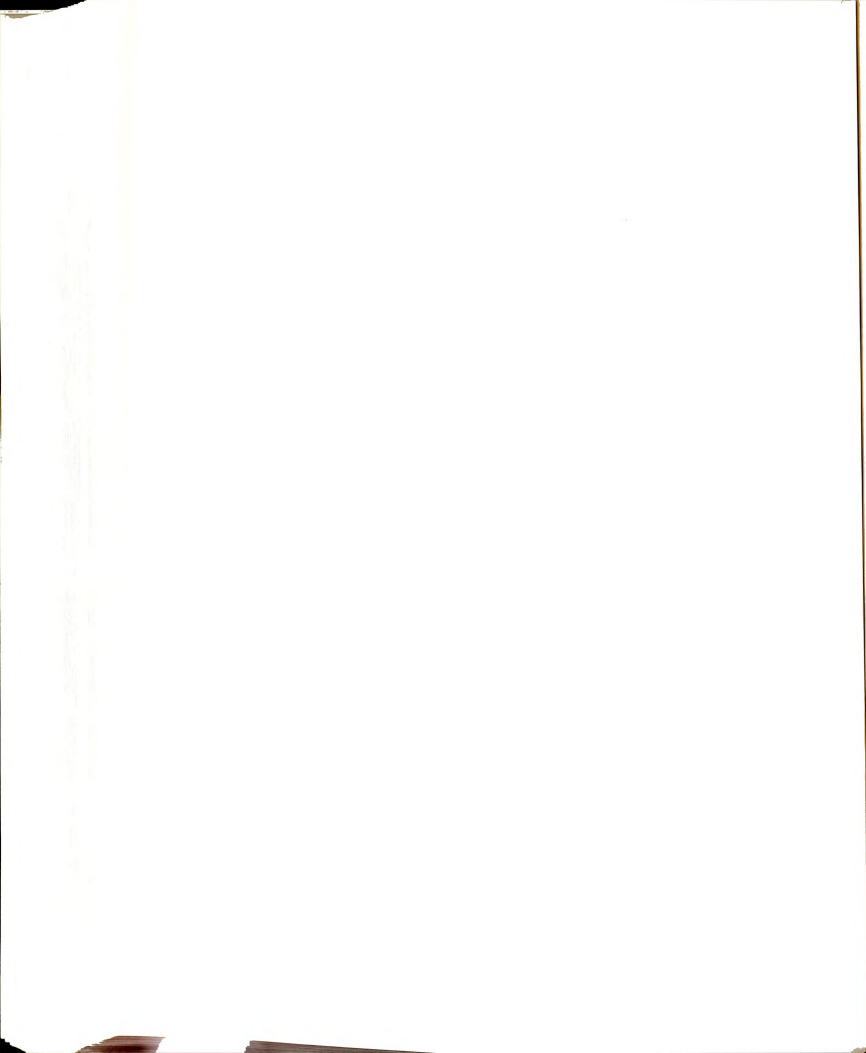
After they are reconciled, Gawain goes back to his usual indirect style:

Bot on I wolde yow pray, displeses neuer.
 Syn 3e be lorde of lorde of þe 3onder londe þer I haf
 lent inne
 Wyth yow wyth worschyp--þe wy3e hit yow 3elde
 Bat vphaldez þe heuen and on hy3 sittez--
 How norne 3e yowre ry3t nome, and þenne no more?
 (2439-43)

In the *Canterbury Tales* the Reeve uses the imperative form to the Miller when he recognizes that he is about to be attacked. The drunken Miller rises to a point of personal privilege and demands that he be permitted to "quyte the Knight's tale" with a story of a cuckolded carpenter and his faithless wife. His speech provokes the Reeve's anger and the Reeve responds:

Stynt thy clappe!
 Lat be thy lewd dronken harlotry.
 (I, 3144-49)

Another hostile situation in which the direct imperative form is used occurs in the speech of the Host after the Wife



of Bath's prologue. When the quarrel between the Friar and the Summoner erupts, the Host says to the Friar:

Pees, and that anon!
Lat the womman telle hire tale.

(III, 850-51)

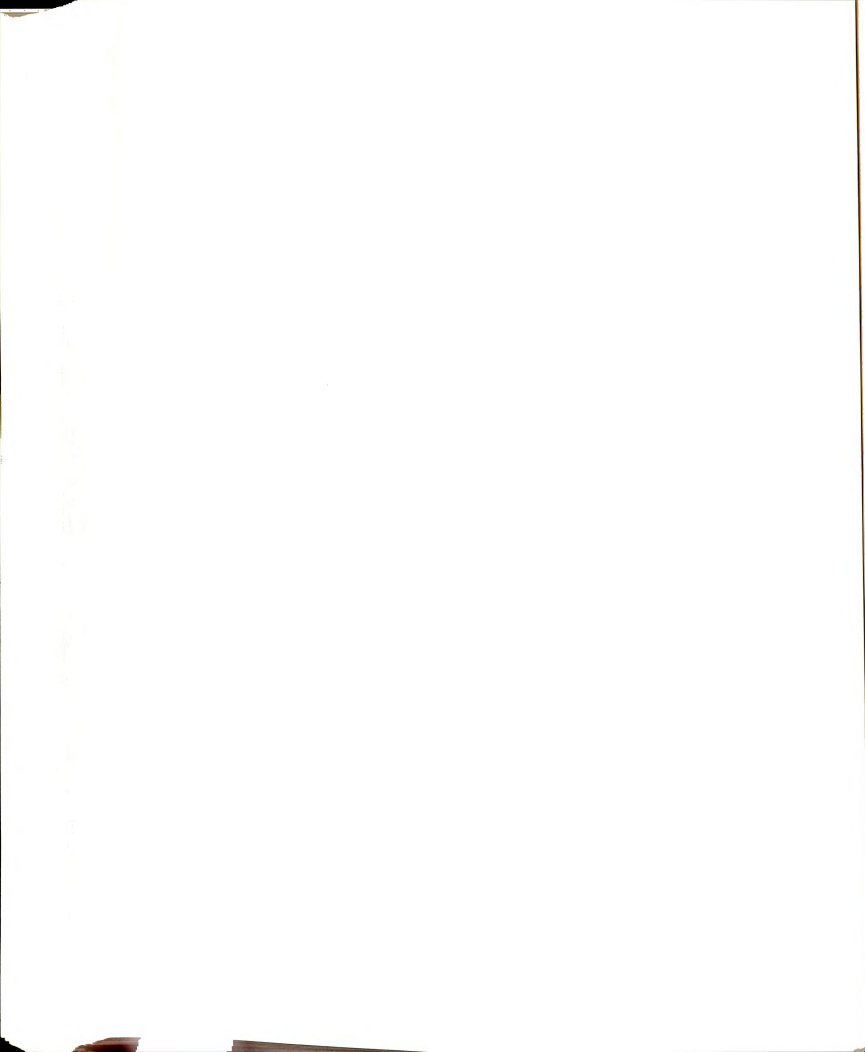
The Host could have used the equally acceptable and more polite modified imperative to restore order; however, he chooses the plain imperative form because he was angry at the disruption caused by the Friar and the Summoner.

And also the Host uses the plain imperative form to the Monk after he mentions the characteristics of the Monk unsuitable to the clergy:

But be nat wrooth, my lord, though that I
pleye. (VII, 1963)

The Host's use of an impolite imperative form with the sarcastic vocative 'my lord' provokes the Monk's anger but "this worthy Monk took al in pacience." (VII, 1915)

Another form of direct request is the modified imperative which is simply the imperative form modified with the phrase 'I prey you (or thee)' or 'I beseche' corresponding to 'please' in Modern English. This form is used to put a little more emphasis on a speaker's need or desire to have a certain task performed. When he emphatically asks the addressee to do something or asks the addressee to do something at a cost to the addressee, he adds the phrase 'I prey' or 'I biseke.' Therefore, as mentioned in reference to the Host above, the imperative form with the modifying phrase, 'I prei you (or thee)' is considered more polite than the plain imperative form by



itself since this form implies asking, not commanding, the addressee to do something.

This modified imperative is used in a situation in which the task is difficult to mention or in which the difficulty or uniqueness of the request is emphasized. In the *Shipman's Tale*, for example, the merchant's wife speaks to the addressee, the monk, in the modified imperative form when she wants to borrow some money from him. Borrowing seems to be a difficult request for her to make:

and therefore I yow prey,
Lene me this somme or ellis moot I deye.
(VII,185-186)

Her use of the modified imperative, a more polite request form, indicates that the task is difficult for her to request. She also adds dire consequences to stress the urgency of her need. An imperative lacking this tag also lacks the force associated with that urgency.

Since 'I prey' has the connotation of politeness, it is often employed in the negative imperatives. In the *Canterbury Tales*, the Host uses this modified imperative form to the Cook. When the Knight has begun the story-telling, the Host has no difficulty in inducing the others to continue. However, when the Reeve has finished his tale, the Cook of London is so delighted that he "clawed him on the bak (I,4326)," and volunteered. When the Host accepted the offer of the Cook, fearing he should offend the Cook, the Host begs the Cook not to be angry at his jest:

I pray thee, be not wroth for game. (I,4354)

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The Franklin also addresses the Host with the modified imperative because the Franklin deeply desires to have the forgiveness of the Host:

I prey yow, haveth me nat in desdeyn,
 Though to this man I speke a word or two.
 (V, 700-01)

In the third temptation scene of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* when the Lady offers Gawain gifts ⁷ which he cannot accept, he asks her to accept his refusal:

And pefore, I pray yow, displesse yow no3t,
 And lettez be your bisnesse, for I baype hit yow
 neuer to grounte, (1839-40)

The phrase 'I prey yow' or 'I biseke yow' is added to plain imperatives in situations where the speaker wants something out of the ordinary or wants to emphasize the task or both. In the example above, Gawain's request for her acceptance is out of ordinary and shows the difficulty he predicts she will experience in granting his request. Chaucer also employs this form to emphasize certain situations. In the *Canterbury Tales*, the Host often uses this imperative form when he wants to call on a particular Pilgrim to tell a specific tale because the request is somewhat demanding or unusual. The Host addresses the young Clerk of Oxford, chiding him for being as silent as a newly-wed maid at table, and asks him for his story in due turn:

Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye,
 That we may understonde what ye seye. (IV, 19-20)

In specifying the nature and treatment of a tale suitable for the pilgrimage, he uses the imperative form with the



modifying phrase, 'I pray (thee or you)' because the request is more demanding.

After the Knight interrupts the *Monk's Tale*, which is dreary and boring, the Host asks the Monk to tell another story. When he calls upon the Monk to tell a tale about hunting, an appropriate topic for him,⁸ the Host uses the imperative form with the modifying phrase 'I prey you':

I pray yow hertely telle us somewhat elles; (VII,2793)
and:

Sire, sey somewhat of hunting, I yow prey, (VII,2804)
This usage is contrasted with the plain imperative forms,
for example :

Now telleth ye, sir Monk, if that ye konne
Somwhat to quite with the Knyghtes tale.
(I,3118)

The Host uses the modified imperative form because the Monk has already been interrupted once and so needs special inducement to tell another, more appropriate tale. The Host uses the plain imperative form to every Pilgrim, because he has the right to direct their actions by virtue of his position as director of the tales. However, this situation requires politeness and so the Host modifies the imperative. The monk in the *Shipman's Tale* also uses this form for emphasis because the topic seems to be important to him:

I prey thee, wyf, ne do namore so
Telle me alwey, er that I fro thee go,
(VII,395-96)

When the Knight sees that the Pardoner is vexed, he also adds 'I prey thee' to the imperative form to soothe him:



And Pardoner, I prey thee, drawe thee neer
 And, we diden, lat us laughe and pleye.
 (VI, 966-67)

The Host uses this form to the Yeoman when, out of curiosity, the Host wants to hear about the Canon because the Yeoman has told about the Canon's magic power and his craft:

I pray thee, tel me than,
 Is he a clerk or noon?
 Telle what he is, (VIII, 615-17)

Because of the unusual nature of the request the Host uses the modified imperative to persuade the Canon to answer.

The Host uses imperative forms twice to the Manciple; at first he uses the plain imperative form: "Telle on thy tale" (IX, 68) because the Host has the right to direct the tellers. The second time the Host uses the modified imperative to strengthen the request:

Tell on thy tele, Manciple, I thee pray
 (IX, 103)

When he calls on him for a story again, he adds 'I thee pray' which emphasizes the task by gently drawing the Manciple back to the concern at hand--the telling of his tale.

In the same way in the *Miller's Tale*, Nicholas also uses imperative forms twice. First he uses the plain imperative form to his host John:

Go now thy way (I, 3596)

And then a modified imperative form:

Go, save oure lyf, and that I the biseche.
 (I, 3600)



This modified imperative shows Nicholas's need that the request be fulfilled.

In *Troilus and Cryseyde*, Pandarus and Criseyde usually use the plain imperative form, but sometimes they use this modified imperative form. For example, Criseyde adds 'I prey' to the imperative form when she insists on hearing a story that Pandarus, in order to arouse her curiosity, pretends that he doesn't want to tell her:

Now, good em, for Goddes love, I prey,
 ...,come of, and telle me what it is!

 Say on, lat me nat in this fere dwelle.
 (II,309-14)

Thus, she indicates the desire that he allieviate her curiosity.

From these examples of imperatives, a clear pattern can be seen. The plain imperative is most commonly used when the speaker has the authority to request an action. While the modified imperative is equally acceptable for use by authority figures, it is often accompanied by a scene in which either urgency or politeness is necessary. These direct requests are often used when there is some obligation on the part of the addressee to perform the requested action.

Indirect requests:

Besides direct, explicit imperatives, the speaker can also convey a request indirectly by making a statement. Just like the case of plain imperatives, this statement (or

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upor

declarative) form has two forms: one is the structure which consists of the second personal pronoun *ye* or *thou* as a subject, and the other consists of the first personal pronoun 'I' as a subject and a performative verb. Generally in these poems the modal verb *shal* accompanies the second person subject *ye* or *thou*. As A. C. Spearing (1966) observes, "the modal verb *shal* had a rather strong sense which is nearer to 'must' than to the modern 'shall' (32)." Thus *ye shul* or *thou shalt* has almost the same effect as an imperative. That is, they are used by the speaker who has authority over his addressee. The speaker who uses imperative forms sometimes switches into this form *ye shul* which is consistent with his power or desire to command.

In the *Parliament of Fowls* Nature, who is "the vicaire of the almyghty Lord " (379), speaks to the fowls:

Foules, tak hed of my sentence, I preye. (383)

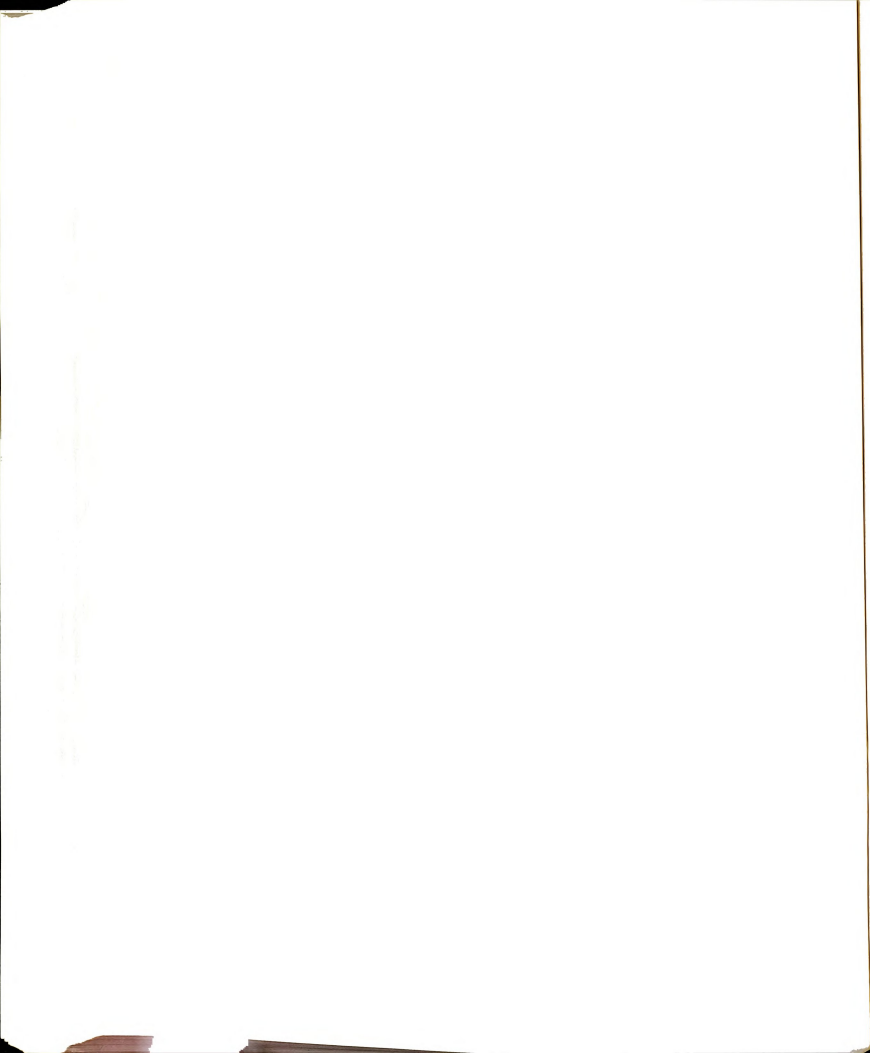
Then she switches to a statement with the modal verb 'shul':

And after hym by order shul ye chese,
 After kynde, everiche as yow lyketh,
 And as youre hap is shul ye wynne or lese--
 But which of yow that love most entriketh,
 God sende hym hire that sorest for hym syketh.
 (400-405)

Like the use of imperative form, the use of 'ye shul' by Nature shows that she has the power and authority to demand an action.

In the *Canterbury Tales*, the Host sometimes uses this form interchangeably with the imperative. Early on he uses the imperative:

Approche neer and looke up murily (VII, 698)



Sey now somewhat, (VII,705)

Telle us a tale of myrthe, (VII,706)

But when he is tired of listening to *Sir Thopas*, he addresses the Pilgrim Chaucer in a more forceful tone:

thou shalt no lenger ryme. (VII,932)

The Host also alternates between this form and the imperative to the Monk :

Ye shul telle a tale trewely (VII,1925)

And later, with imperative form:

Now telleth ye, Monk, (I,3118)

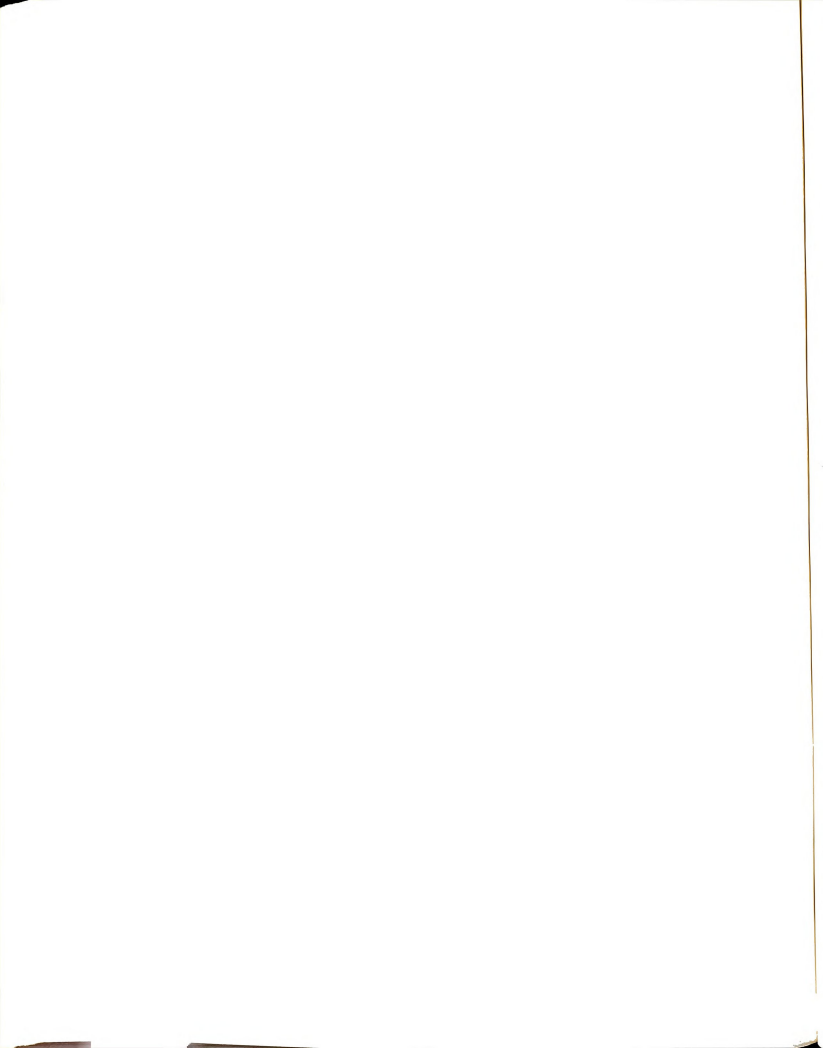
Like the plain imperative, the statement with the modal verb *shal* is used in those situations in which the speaker places himself in the position of authority. If it is used by an inappropriate person, it can make a speaker or a situation comic. The Pardoner uses this modal form with the imperative to the Host after he finishes his story :

Com forth, sire Host, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse my relics everychon. (VI,943-44)

The Pardoner's use of the direct imperative and the *thou shal* statement as requests to the Host creates the comic situation. By implying an authority over the Host, which is not in fact present, the Pardoner sets up a comic tension. In the *Pardoner's Tale*, one of the three rioters addresses the old man with this form:

"Nay, olde cherl, by God thou shalt nat so."

Just as the imperative form shows the speaker's right to command the addressee, this speaker, the rioter, shows his



rude behaviour by adopting a authoritative attitude through the use of the statement form of obligation even though his social status does not give him the right to command.

In the same way in the *Summoner's Tale*, which is "an expose of the methods employed by an unscrupulous friar" (Ruggiers, p.101), the friar uses this form to the layman, Thomas, when he is preaching-a situation which demands authority:

Nere thou oure brother, sholdestou nat thryve.
(III,1944)

and:

Thomas, of me thou shalt nat been yflatered
(III,1970)

and:

The revers shaltou se anon,
And preve it by thyn owene experience,
That wyn ne dooth to folk no swich offence
(III,2056-58)

and:

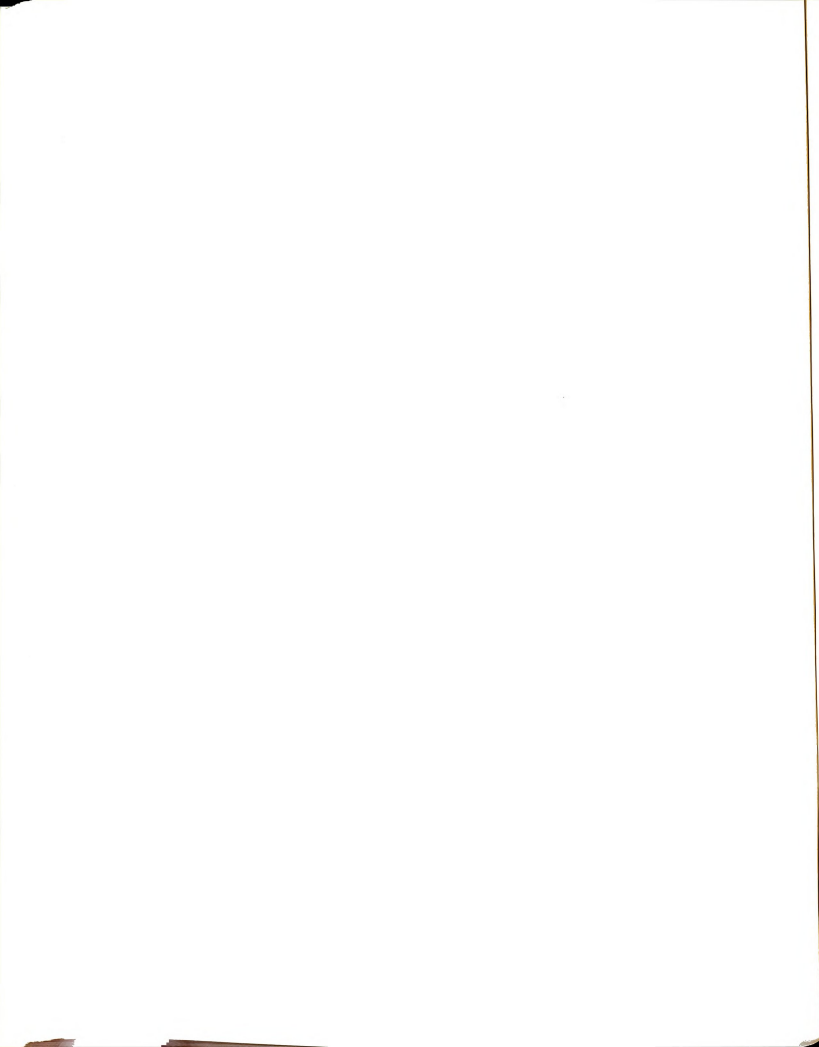
Thou shalt me fynde as just as is squyre
(III,2090)

All of these structures are in contrast to another statement structure of request which the friar uses to Thomas's wife:

I wolde prey yow that ye nat yow greve,
I wole with Thomas speke a litel throwe.
(III,1814-15)

He consistently uses polite forms to Thomas' wife and the more commanding form with *thou* with Thomas. These different kinds of requests fit the character of the friar in the story, and the character of the Pilgrim Friar, as described in the *General Prologue*:

In allé the orders foudre is noon that kan
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage. (I,210-11)



The teller, the Pilgrim Summoner, intends to betray his professional rival's hypocritical personality in his tale, the half of which is devoted to the friar's self-disclosure.

The Gawain-poet also uses these forms very often in situations where imperative forms could just as appropriately be used, but the Gawain-poet wants to show the speaker's domineering attitude. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* King Arthur uses this form to Gawain:

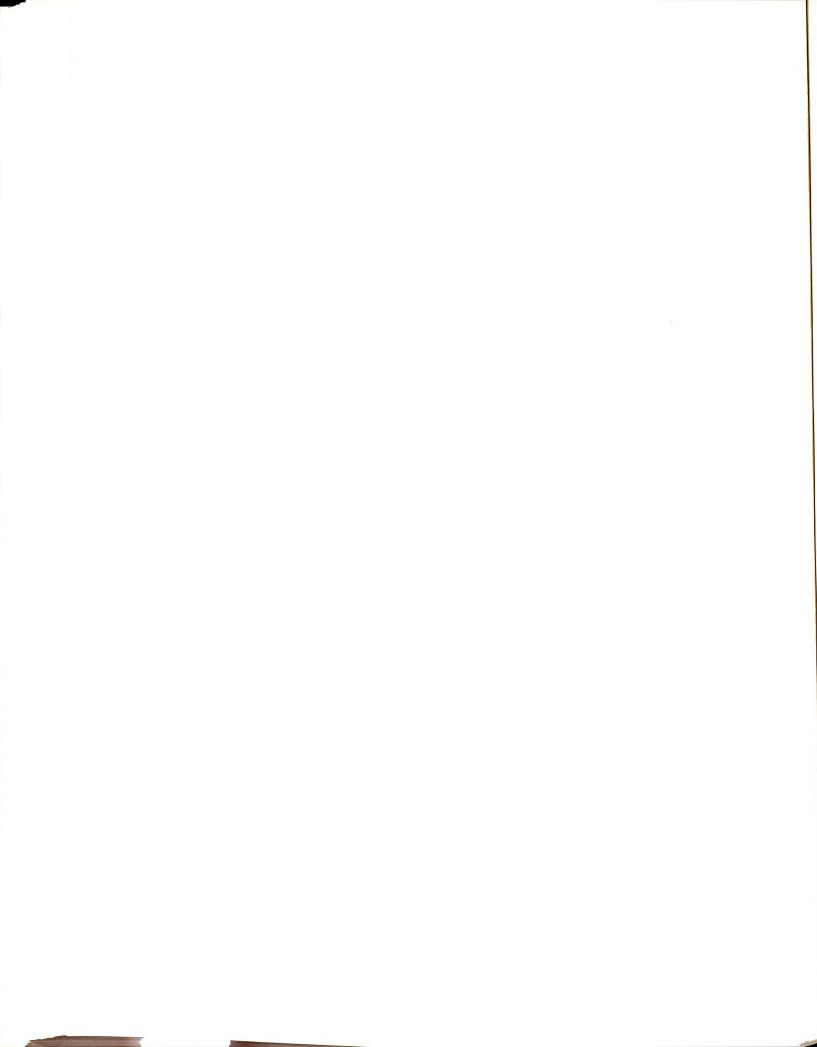
pat þou schal byden þe bur pat he schal bede
after. (374)

In the same way the Lord Bercilak switches from imperative forms to the statement form 'ye shul' with little difference in meaning:

...Now leng þe byhoues,
For I shal teche yow to pat terme bi þe tymeze ende.
þe grene chapayle vpon grounde greve yow no more;
Bot 3e schal be in yowre bed, burne, at þyn ese,
Quyle forth dayez, and ferk on þe fyrst of þe 3ere,
(1068-72)

This passage consists of virtual commands with the imperative form and the statement form with the use of future obligation 'ye shul.' Concerning the usage of the modal verb 'shal' Cecily Clark comments in the article, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Characterisation by Syntax":

By his liberal use of futures of obligation with 'shal' the Lord implies that not only his interlocutor but third parties also are subject to his command. The syntax of these apparently jocular speeches preposing the sporting covenant is not far from that of the Green Knight's original 'forward' in which he had on Gawain the duty. (*Essays in Criticism*, 16, No. 4 (1966), p.364.)



When Gawain asks to leave in the morning arguing that his time had almost come, the Green Knight argues against him, using both imperative and the statement form with 'shal' :

As I am trwe segge, I siker trawþe
 þou schal cheue to þe grene chapel þy charres to make,
 Leude, on Nw 3eres ly3t, longe bifore pryme.
 Forþy þow lye in þy loft and lach þyn ese,
 And I schal hunt in þis holt, and halde þe towchez,
 Chaunge wyth þe cheuisaunce, bi þat I charre hider;
 For I haf fraysted þe twys, and faythful I fynde þe.
 (1673-79)

And also:

And þou schal haf al in hast þat I þe hy3t ones.
 (2218)

They are equals and yet the Green Knight is attempting to become momentarily dominant over Gawain to win his release. A servant of Bercilak uses this form to Gawain when he guides the latter to the Green Chapel. After Gawain has insisted upon continuing on despite the guide's warning of danger, the guide switches his style from polite to impolite, using the conventional pronoun *thou*:

And þou schal se in þat slade þe self chapel, (2147)
 Just like the plain imperative form, this can be considered less polite. Considering the previous speech (2091-2155) which consists of long statement structures with the polite *ye*, the pronoun used to a superior, this *thou schal* structure of request shows the guide's despair over Gawain's determination to go to the Green Chapel.

In marriage the use of this statement structure shows the relation between husband and wife. In the *Canterbury*

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Tales, the Host quotes his wife's words to him in which she uses this statement structure as well as imperatives:

...Slee the dogges everichoon,
And brek hem bothe bak and every boon!
.....

...False coward, wreck thy wyf!
By corpus bones, I wol have thy knyf,
And thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne!
(VII, 1899-1907)

I have already mentioned her bad manners in Chapter 1 through the breaking the norm of the usage of the second singular pronoun. She uses *thou* to her husband who is supposed to be in a superior position in that society.

In the *Tale of Melibee* Prudence alternates the statement structure *ye shul* with the imperative form.

Ye shul first in alle youre werkes mekely biseken to
the heighe God that he wol be your conseillour/
and shapeth yow to swich entente that he yeve yow
conseil and comfort. (VII, 1115-6),

and:

First ye shul escheue the conseillyng of fooles,
(VII, 1173)

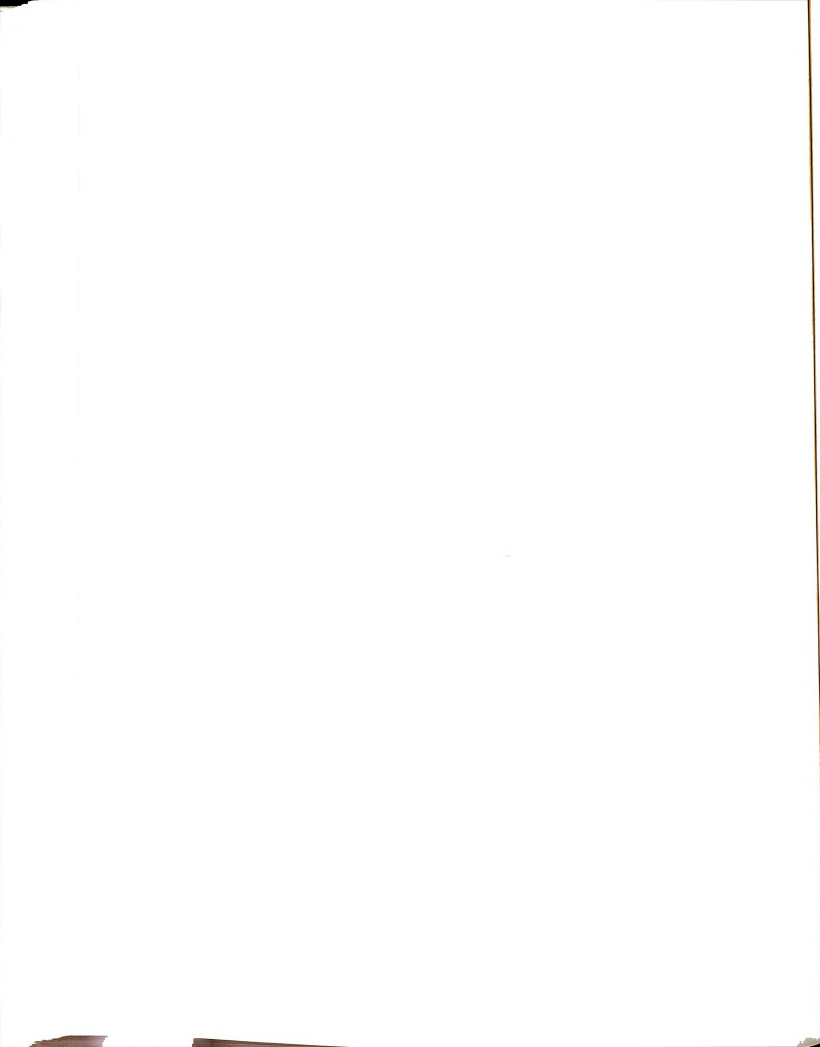
and:

Ye shul also han also han in suspect the conseillyng
of swich folk as conseilte yow o thyng prively and
conseilte yow the contrarie openly, (VII, 1194)

and also uses an imperative:

Sire, ye ne be nat alwey in lyk disposicioun/ for
certes somthyng that somtyme semeth to yow that it is
good for to do another tyme it semeth to yow the
contrarie. (VII, 1136-7)

In contrast, in many other places she uses the statement structure of obligation, which puts her in the position of authority over her husband, Melibeus. Melibeus, who at first refuses to give over sovereignty to his wife, does not use the polite pronoun *ye*:



I purpose nat,...to werke by thy conseil for many causes and resouns. For certes, every wight wolde holde me thanne a fool-this is to seyn, if I for thy conseilling wolde chaungen thynges that been ordeyned and affermed by no manye wyse...And also certes, if I governed me by thy conseil, it sholde seme that I hadde yeve to thee over me the maistrie, and God forbode that it so were. (VII,1055-57)

However, he is gradually placed in the position of an inferior, which is reflected in Prudence's use of request forms. He finally says to her:

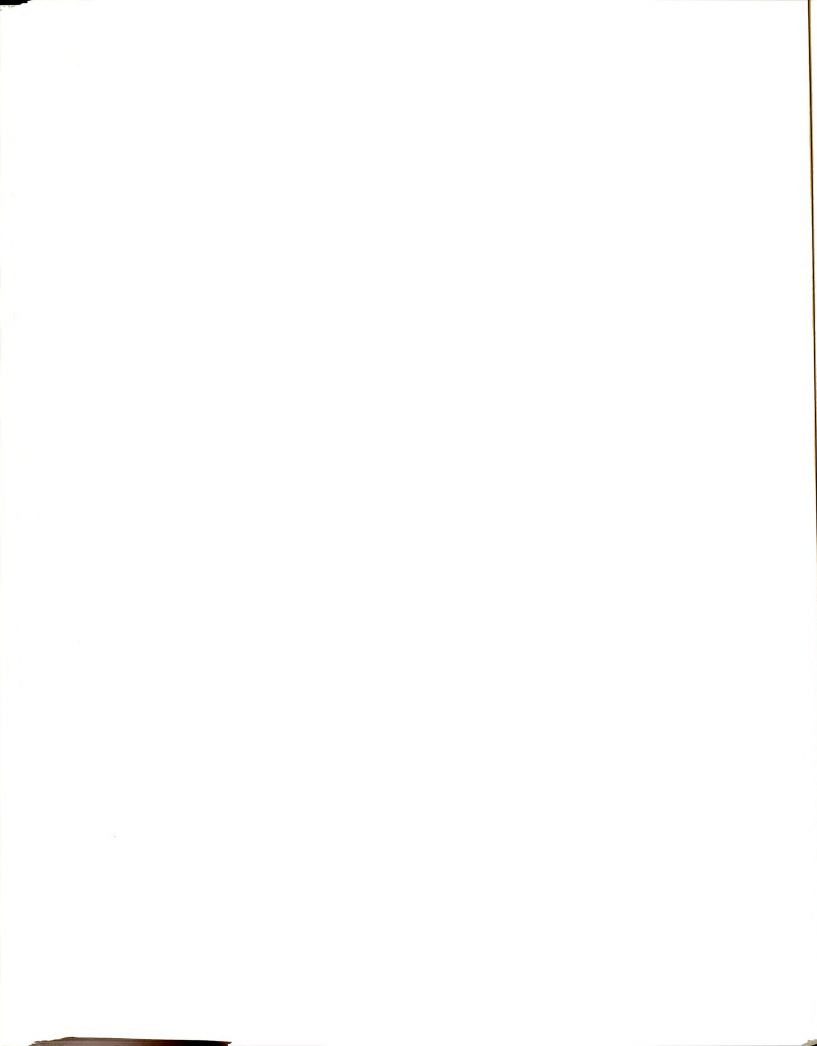
Dame,...dooth youre wil and youre likynge,
for I putte me hooly in youre disposicioun and
ordinaunce. (VII,1724-25)

Here Melibeus changes his pronoun into the polite pronoun *ye* and uses the respectful title *dame* to his wife. Therefore Prudence shows herself as authority through the use of 'ye shul' a statement form of request during the conversation with her husband.

Another good example of the use of this form to show the speaker's dominant attitude toward the addressee is illustrated by the husband's speech to his wife in the *Franklin's Tale*, when Arveragus, who promises not to dominate over his wife, "resumes his role as head" and tells her what to do. He says:

Ye, wyf,...lat slepen that is stille.
It may be wel, paraventure, yet to day.
Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay.
(V,1472-74)

As A. C. Spearing (1966) says in his book *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*, "thus at this crucial point, *maistrie* reenters the marriage, with an emphasis that gains force because paradoxically, Arveragus uses his *maistrie* to order



his wife to keep her promise to become someone else's mistress" (32). This is the point which makes the *Franklin's Tale* more controversial than the other *Tales*. It is also the most controversial point within the *Franklin's Tale* itself. At the beginning, Arveragus's and Dorigen's relationship has followed the convention of courtly love, in which the lady is the dominant partner and her lover is subservient. Spearing also mentions:

The debate about marriage among the Pilgrims has been a debate about *maistrie* in marriage. Both sides have agreed that marriage is to be seen as a struggle for power, in which either husband or wife must come out victorious. The Franklin wants to resolve the problem by changing its terms. He wishes to remove the whole question of dominance from marriage, and to present it as something other than a power relationship. (p.32)

This fact is already reflected in the ambiguous way in which the Franklin defines their relationship. He tries to get rid of *maistrie*, but only loses himself in paradoxes which seem to reappear constantly whether he wishes them to or not.

All of the examples above have almost the same power as the plain imperatives since they are used in situations in which the speaker is placed in the position of authority or the speaker puts himself in that position by using the form 'ye shal.'

The statement structures with *ye shul* are also used in intimate situations, as are the imperative forms.

In *Sir Gawain and Green Knight*, the Green Knight uses the imperative form with the polite *ye* to convey his feelings of intimacy with Gawain at this moment together :

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3e schal in þis Nwe 3er a3eyn to my wonez,
 And we schyn reul þe remnaunt of þis ryche fest ful
 bene (2400-01)

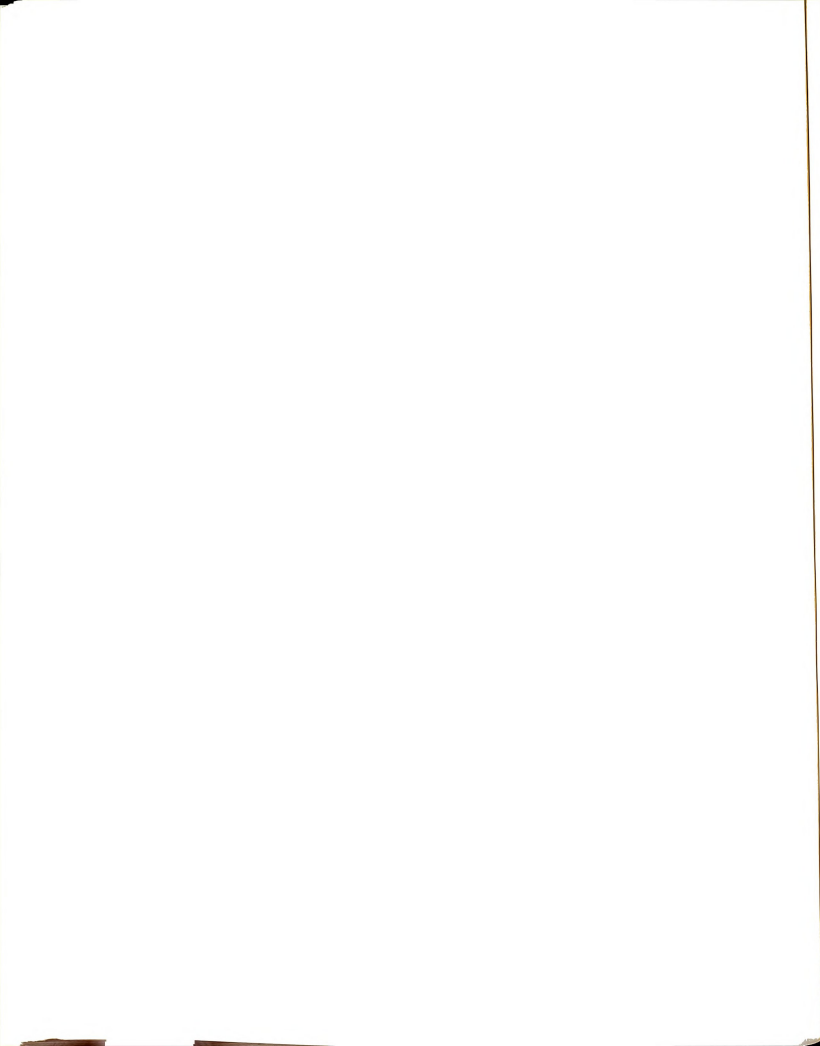
This ye *shal* request structure should be interpreted as a sign of intimacy towards Gawain.

The other statement structure used by Chaucer and the Gawain-poet consists of the performative verb combined with the subject "I." Degree of politeness is determined by the choice of the performative verb.

The most often used verbs are *conseille*, *rede*, *pray* and *beseke*. The verbs *conseille* and *rede* mean 'to advise' or 'to counsel.' Both verbs have the same function; they put the speaker in a position of authority. According to speech act theory, one of the conditions of a speech act is that the speaker should be prepared to perform a speech act, if it is to have illocutionary force. However, the other two verbs *pray* and *beseke*, do not require the speaker to be in a position of authority. Therefore structures using the verbs *pray* or *beseke* can be considered more polite than the verbs *conseille* and *rede* when a speech occurs between authoritor and authoritee. The Pardoner says to the Host after his tale by using the verb 'rede':

I rede that oure Host heere shal biginne (VI, 941)

The use of the verb *rede* makes this situation ironical because the Pardoner is not a position to direct the actions of the Host. Instead of using the second pronoun to the



Host he uses the words 'the Host' which makes the situation even more ironic.

In the *Tale of Melibee* Prudence frequently alternates between the imperative and the 'ye shal' forms. In addition, she sometimes uses the statement form of request with the verbs *conseille* and *rede*: thanne rede I yow that ye kepe it secre. (VII,1138)

and: I conseilte yow that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with hem. (VII,1674)

and: I conseilte yow...aboven alle thynges, that ye make pees bitwene God and yow, (VII,1713)

By using the statement form with the verb *conseille* or *rede* as a request, Prudence puts herself in the same position of authority as when she uses the plain imperative and the 'ye shul' structure.

The other two verbs, *pray* and *beseke* are considered more polite. The Knight uses this form to the Host and the Pardoner when they quarrel with each other. To the Host he says:

I pray you that you kiss the Pardoner, (VI,965)

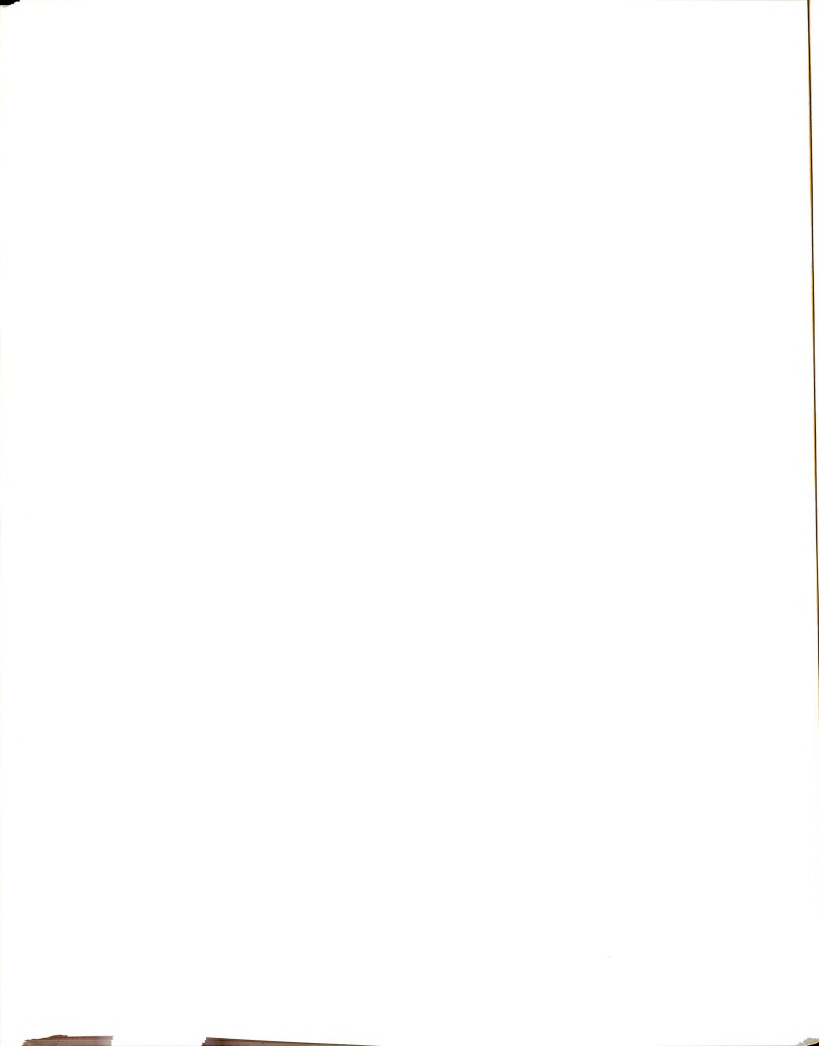
and to the Pardoner, he says:

I prey thee drawe thee neer, (VI,966)

This situation requires a more polite form than a direct imperative in order to quiet the quarrel and soothe them. In the *Miller's Tale* Absolon says to Alison when he needs her mercy:

I praye yow that ye wole rewon me. (I,3362))

And the Reeve, beginning his tale, says:



I pray yow alle that ye nat yow greve
 Though I answere and somdeel sette his howve,
 For leueful is with force of-showve

(I, 3910-12)

In the *Tale of Melibee*, in which polite speech usually appears in the use of pronouns and vocatives, Prudence, however, sometimes uses the statement forms of request to Melibeus instead of her usual imperative forms when she wants to emphasize the urgency of the task: "I prey yow that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste yow to overcome youre herte" (VII, 1857); "And I prey yow that ye wole forbere now to do vengeance " (VII, 1861). Prudence here is urgently requesting that Melibeus overcome his emotions in order that his "goode name may be kept and conserved " (VII, 1862).

In the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, an animal fable, the statement form of request with different verbs can be seen between the two main characters. Chantecleer uses the declarative form with verb 'pray' to his wife:

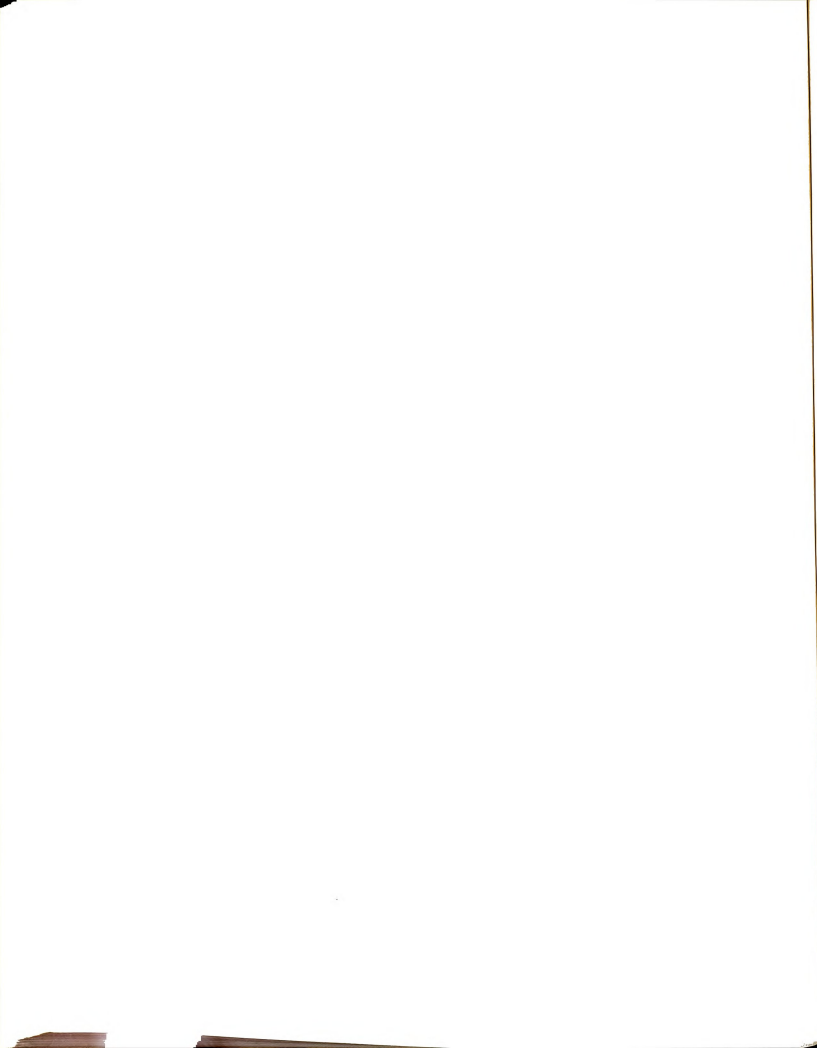
..., Madame,
 I pray yow that ye take it nat agrief
 (VII, 2892-3)

Whereas Pertelote uses the verb *conseille*:

I conseilte yow the beste. I wol nat lye,
 That bothe pf colere and of malencolye
 Ye perge yow; (VII, 2945-47)

And then she switches tone to:

...and for ye shal nat tarie,
 though in this toun is hoon apothecarie,
 I shal myself to herbs techen yow.
 (VII, 2947-49)



She shows herself far from courteous in using request forms, even though the Nun's Priest describes her as "curteys she was, discreet and debonaire" (VII,2871). Instead she shows herself to be an authoritor over her husband by switching styles from the plain imperative to the statement with 'ye shul' and 'I conseil.''

In January's serious speech in the *Merchant's Tale*, he says to his wife, his social inferior, as they enter the garden:

I prey yow first, in covenant ye me kiss, (IV,2176)
This polite request is used in an asymmetrical situation, and so creates irony or humor because the true social superior is acting as an inferior. Normally the social inferior uses this statement form of request, while the social superior uses the plain imperative form. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Pandarus, other asymmetrical uses can be seen. Pandarus uses an 'I prey' statement structure to his social superior, Deiphebus:

I pray yow that ye be
Frend to a cause which that toucheth me.
(II,1406-7)

In contrast to this indirect request form, Deiphebus, the superior, uses the most direct form, imperative, to Pandarus:

...but, sey wherfore
It is; for sith that day that I was bore,
I nas, ne nevere mo to ben I thynke,
Ayeins a thing that myghte the forthynke.
(II,1411-14)

And again Pandarus says to Deiphebus:



...Wol ye gon,
 If it youre wille be, as I yow preyde,
 To speke here of the nedes of Criseyde?
 (II,1601-3)

But tell me, thow that woost al this matere,
 How I myght best avaylen.
 (II,1429-30)

Spek thow thiself also to Troilus
 On my byhalve, and prey hym with us dyne.
 (II,1457-9)

Telle thow thi neces cas, (II,1611)

Pandarus also uses the indirect request form to Helen,
 Deiphebus' wife:

Ye, but wol ye now me here? (II,1628)

His use of the polite form to Helen indicates his deference toward her because of her higher status.

In addition to the verbs *pray* and *beseche*, another verb 'willen' is used in the statement structure as a request. A speaker may choose a volitional statement to motivate another by using 'I wolde.' This form expresses the speaker's wish or desire in a declarative form with the expectation that the addressee will fulfill the wish or desire. This syntactic form of request is considered more polite than that of performative alone since *wolde* is often used to impart various shades of meaning to the ideas expressed by the verb which are entirely divorced from the notion of past time. This use is known as the 'modal preterite'. As Kerkhof (1982:18) states in *Studies in the Language of Geoffrey Chaucer*, the preterite of modesty "is used to make a statement or a request in a modest way."

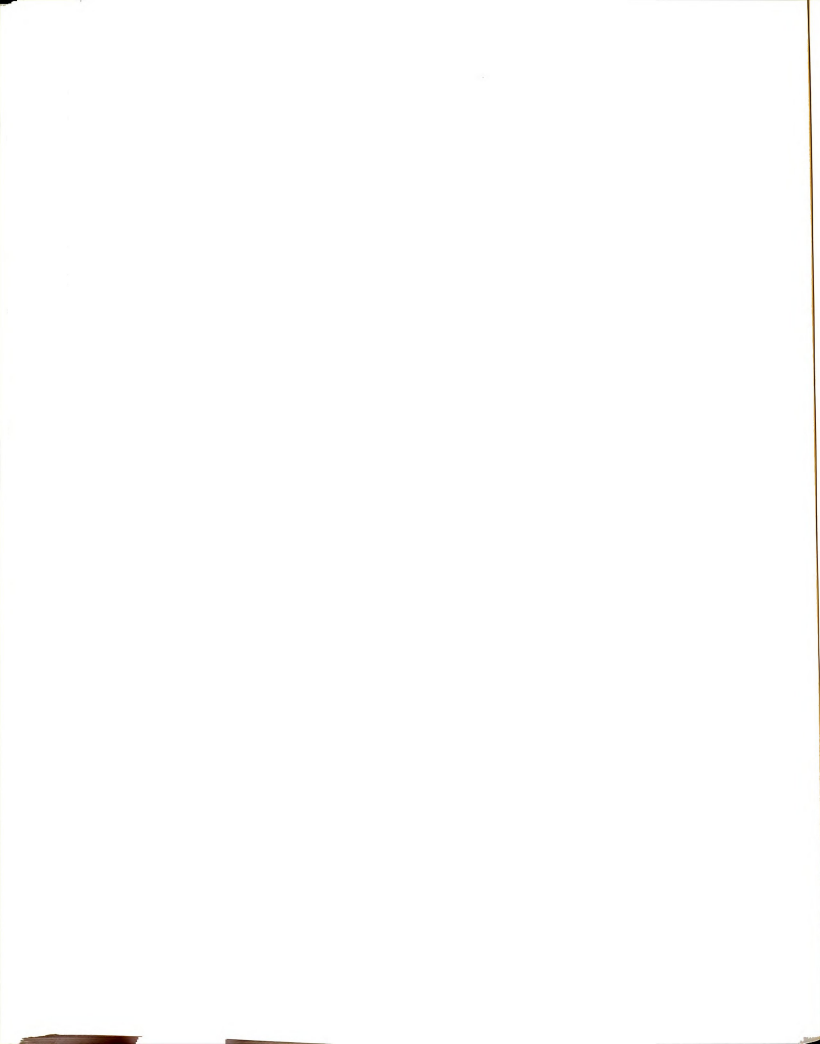
Thus 'wolde' is used as a main verb or a auxilliary verb with another performative verb. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain uses 'wolde' to the Lady:

I wolde yow pray, displese yow neuere (2239)

This speech is considered more polite than the previous 'I prey yow; because of the modal verb 'wolde.'

The question (or interrogative) form is also used as a request with modal verbs such as *can* or *wil* which modify the degree of politeness. Both present and preterite form of these modals can be used in making requests. In this interrogative form of request, context is important in differentiating requests from questioning. This form could be interpreted as a yes/no question without context. The interrogative form as request is considered polite because the speaker puts himself in the position of asking rather than demanding.

This interrogative form is usually used in the situation in which the task is difficult to request, because it places the addressee's potential refusal in the context of a hypothetical situation, rather than the here-and-now situation of a direct request. However, a speaker would use this indirect form to demonstrate his modest or gentle personality, regardless of the situation in which he is placed. The most common form is the question form with the modal verbs 'wol' 'wyl' or 'wolde'. This form is mainly used in situations where neither rights nor obligations



exist on either side. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the Lord Bercilak uses this form to Gawain :

Wyl 3e halde is hes here at pys onez? (1090)

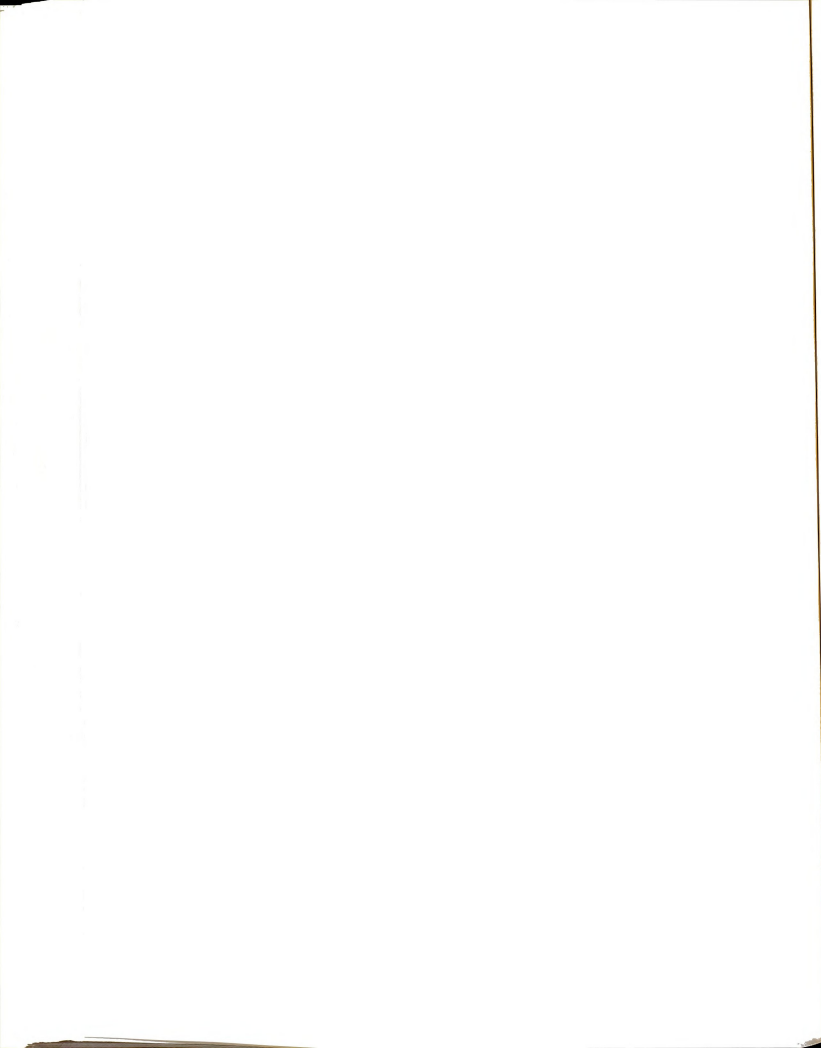
Compared with the previous commands, using the imperative and the statement 'ye shul' structures, this form can be interpreted as a polite request. After he reveals himself as the Lord Bercilak, the Green Knight is usually polite to Gawain, who in turn usually uses the preterite form of the modal verb which is considered to be polite as well.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the protagonist, the 'classical' Gawain, is introduced as the typical hero, who acts entirely in accord with the rules of courtly behavior. As befits his personality, Gawain often employs the indirect polite request form to the King, to Bercilak, and to the Lady. This extremely complex manner of expression is typical of Gawain in situations which most test his *cortaysye*.

When King Arthur accepts the Green Knight's challenge, Gawain intervenes. When he wishes to turn his uncle, the King, aside from his purpose of taking up the challenge proposed by the Green Knight, he uses the question form with the modal verb *wolde* as a request:

Wolde 3e, worþlich lorde,
Bid me bo3e fro þis benche, and stonde by yow þere,
(343-44)

Through this interrogative form as a request Gawain shows his supremely courteous attitude to the King by "begging the King to command him to rise," not simply by "asking the



King's permission to rise and give him advice" (Spearing, *Criticism and Medieval Poetry*, p.41.).

As Spearing notes, "Gawain's cortaysye is expressed most fully in the way in which he says what he says," pointing out the importance of "the manner of expression" (40). Spearing even contends that the content of the speech is delivered in Modern English, but the expressive value can not be fully delivered (40).

And Gawain also uses this question form to the Lady Bercilak in the first temptation scene, in which Gawain succeeds in maintaining his politeness, in behavior as well as in speech:

Bot wolde 3e, lady louely, þen leue me grante,
And deprece your prysoun, and pray hym to ryse,
(1218-19)

Gawain's use of interrogative form as a request shows his polite attitude towards the lady. Cecily Clark explains Gawain's courtesy in terms of many kinds of utterances which are full of subjunctive forms.⁹ For example, Gawain also uses this indirect polite form to the porter:

Gode sir, ..., woldez þou go myn ernde
To þe he3 lorde of þis hous, herber to
craue? (811-12)

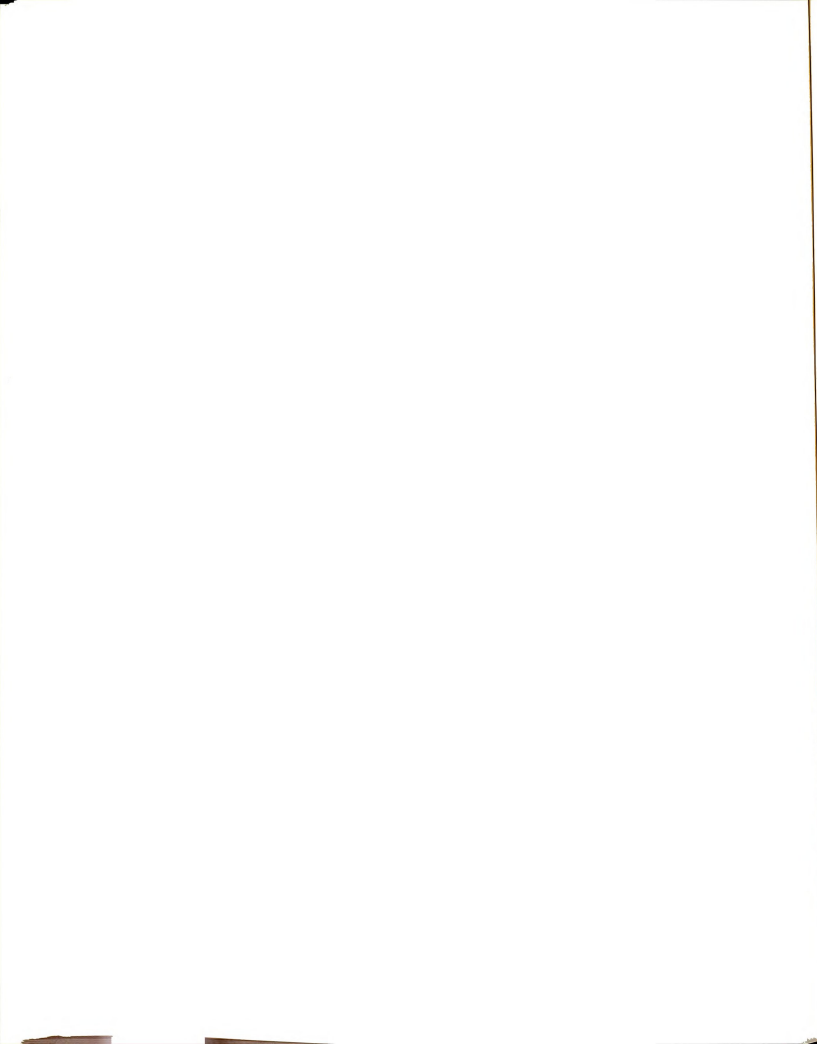
Thus Gawain displays his good manners by using the polite indirect request form even to his social inferior.

A servant of Bercilak also uses this polite form to Gawain:

Wolde 3e worch bi my witte, 3e worped þe better
(2096)

This is contrasted to his later use of the imperative form.

Forþy I say þe, as soþe as 3e in sadel sitte,



Com 3e there, 3e be kylled, may þe kny3t rede,
Trawe 3e me þat trwely, þa3 3e had twenty lyves
to spende.' (2110-12)

and:

Forþy, goude Sir Gawayn, let þe gome one,
And gotz away sum oper gate, vpon Goddes halue!
Cayrez bi sum oper kyth, þer Kryst mot yow spede...
(2118-20)

This switching gives his warning some urgency, but at the same time it tells the reader very clearly that Bercilak is tempting Gawain to stay by pretending to be intimate towards Gawain.

In the *Franklin's Tale*, Aurelius uses this polite request form to the philosopher when he asks the philosopher to give him time to pay the rent:

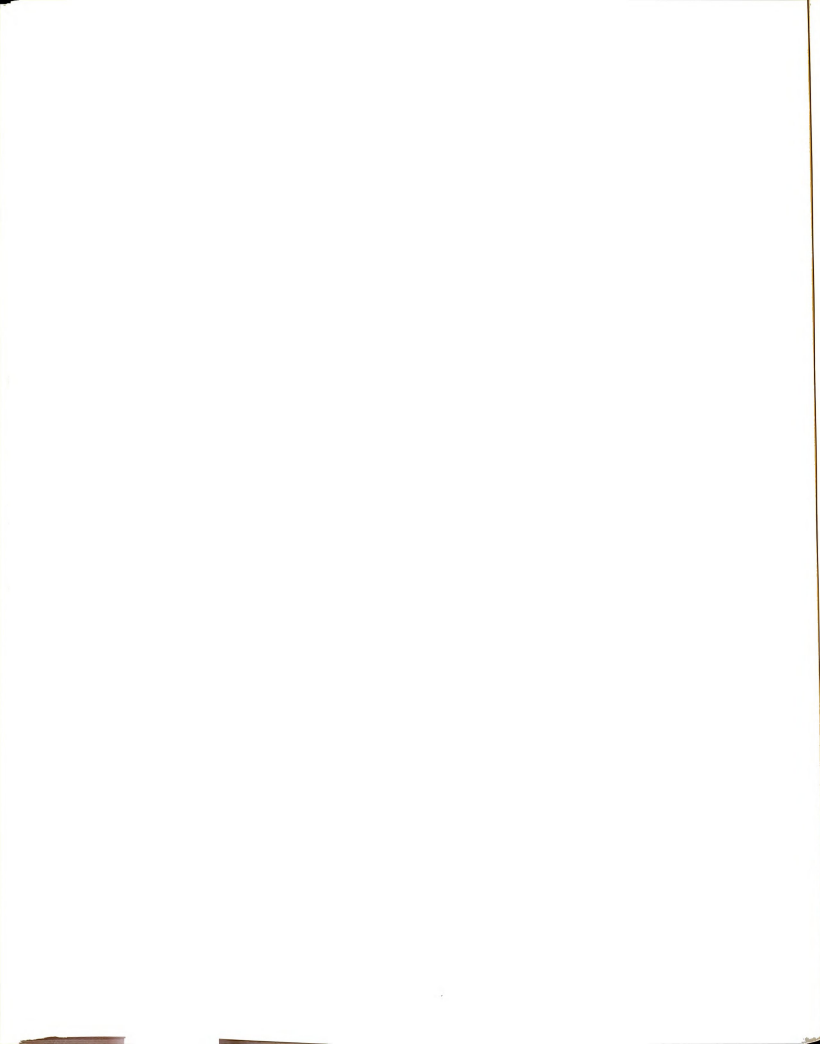
But wolde ye vouchesauf upon seuretee,
Two year or thre (V,1581-84)

Aurelius was supposed to pay a thousand pounds in solid gold to that philosopher, but he only gathered up some five hundred pounds. He is thus placed in a position where he needs to ask for the clerk's generosity; and, of course, he needs polite speech in that situation.

The Host uses this indirect request form when he calls upon the Prioress to tell a tale,

Now wol ye vouchesauf (VII,451)

This usage shows the Host's deferential attitude towards women since, although he has the right to command any Pilgrim, he refrains from commanding the Prioress, and uses a polite request instead. He wields his power over the male Pilgrims including the Knight, through his use of imperative



forms, but his attitude towards the two women Pilgrims, the Wife of Bath and the Prioress, is polite. The use of the indirect form of request to women can show his attitude about woman. He reveals himself as a "hen-pecked husband" (Malone, p.190) when he mentions his marriage at the end of the Tale of Melibee:

...As I am feithful man,
And by that precious corpus Madrian,
I hadde levere than a barel ale
That Goodelief, my wyf, hadde herd this tale.
She nys nothyng of swich pacience
As was this Melibeus wyf Prudence.

(VII,1891-96)

This is my lif but if that I wol fighte;
And out at dore anon I moot me dighte,
Or elles I am but lost but if that I
Be lik a wilde leoun, fool-hardy.
I woot wel she wol do me slee somday
Som neighebores, and thanne go my way,
For I am perilous with knyfe in honde
Al be it that I dar hire nat withstonde,
For she is byg in armes, by my feith-
That shal he fynde that hire mysdooth or seith.

(VII,1914-23)

However, this indirect form can be interpreted as sarcasm or as an insult when it is used towards an addressee who cannot always recognize it. In the *Manciple's Tale*, the Manciple use this question form as a request to the Cook in order to insult the latter:

Now, sweete sire, wol ye justen atte fan.

(IX,42)

The Manciple intends sarcasm; when he sees the Cook so drunk that he cannot tell a tale, the Manciple gets the chance to insult the Cook. The antagonism between the Manciple and the Cook is described in the Manciple's Prologue (IX, 1-104).

The modal verb *can* (or *con*) or preterite form *coude* is found in the question form of request. When given as a request, the question about the addressee's ability to perform the task cannot be paraphrased as "Are you able to ..." which would be an acceptable alternative if only syntactic information is taken into account. *Could* is considered more polite than *wyl* because *wyl* construed via its implicated meaning as a request resembles the declarative form in allowing the addressee no freedom to refuse.

In the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the knight asks the ugly old woman to give him an answer. When on the pain of losing his head, he has to reply to the Queen's question "What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren? " (III,905). The knight asks for the woman's help with the use of the polite request form:

Koude ye me wisse, I wolde wel quite youre hire.
(II,1008)

Besides the three basic different forms of request, the most complex structure is used in the most polite situations. The last request is the most indirect and therefore considered the most polite form if used in an appropriate situation. This request structure is the complex embedding of one of the above structures inside another.

In the *Canterbury Tales*, the Host uses this extremely polite form to the Prioress when he invites her to tell a story after the Shipman has finished his tale "as curteisly as it had been a mayde" (VII,445):

1000

1000

1000

My lady Prioress, by youre leve,
 So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,
 I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde
 A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.
 Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady deere?

(VII, 447-51)

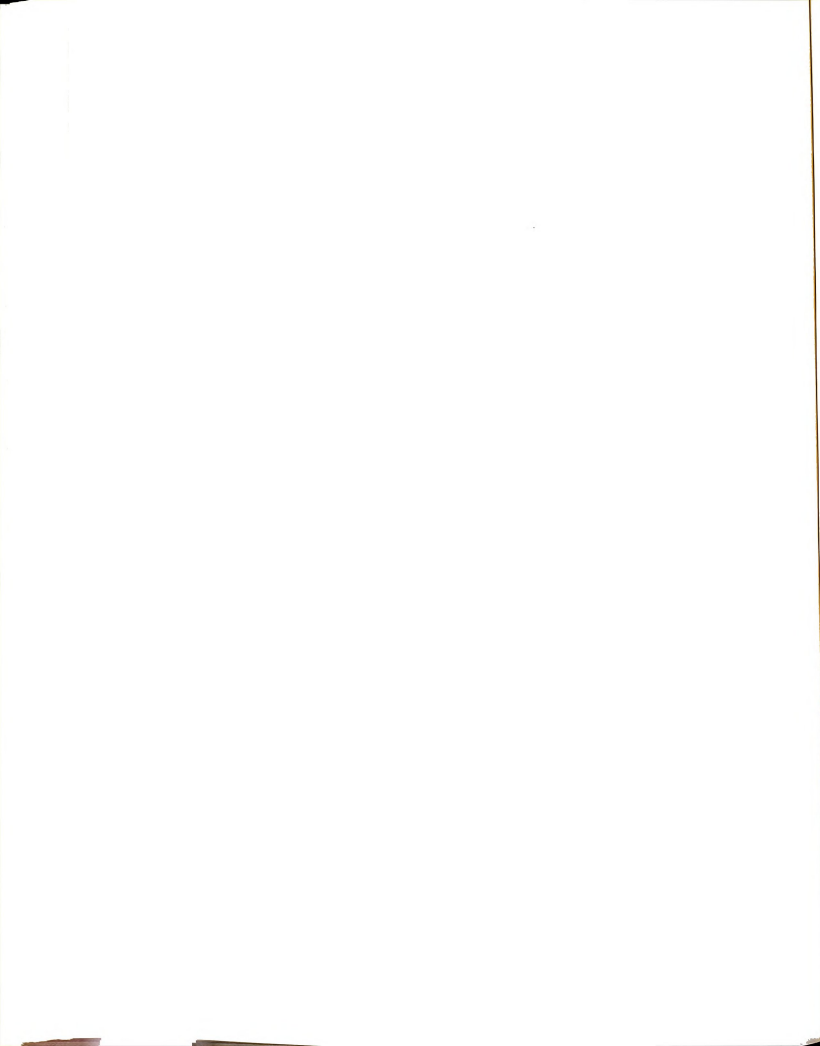
Though he is already given the authority to command by the complete agreement of all the Pilgrims, the Host uses the most indirect request form to the Prioress. This extreme politeness could be interpreted as sarcastic. On the other hand, the Host's politeness is understandable considering her social position and the fact that she is a woman. However, his courtesy is excessive because of the use of the complex request form, particularly in a situation in which the right to command has been given to him by his fellow Pilgrims. That the Host does not invite rights and obligations assigned to him suggests the possibility that he "may be slyly poking fun at her extreme emphasis on good manners" (Lumiansky, *Of Sondry Folk*, p.81) as mentioned in the General Prologue:

In curteisie was set ful muchel hie lest.
 Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene
 That in hir coppe ther was bo ferthyng sene
 Of grace, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
 Ful sikerly she was of greet desport,
 And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
 And peyned hire to countrefete cherre
 Of court, and to been estattlich of manere,
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.

(I, 132-141)

The Pilgrim Pardoner also uses this complex form to the Wife of Bath:

Dame, I wolde pray yow, if youre wyl it were,
 Seyde this Pardoner, "as ye began,



Telle forth youre tale; sparath for no man,
And teche us yonge men of youre pratike.

(III, 184-87)

His suggestion that woman is held in high-esteem is some sort of jape.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain uses this complex form when addressing to the Lord of Bercilak:

Forþy, sir, þis enquest I require yow here,
þat 3e me telle with trawthe if euer 3e tale herde
Of þe grene chapel, quere hit on grounde stondez,
And of þe knyȝt þat hit kepes, of colour of grene.
(1056-59)

Before the Green Knight identifies himself as Bercilak Gawain uses plain imperative forms to the Green Knight, with which Gawain challenges the Green Knight's authority. However, since Gawain does not recognize Bercilak as being the same man as the Green Knight, he requests in polite terms as usual.

So far I have classified the request forms from the most direct to the most indirect: explicit imperatives, modified imperatives, indirect requests and indirect complex forms depending on the context in which requests occur.

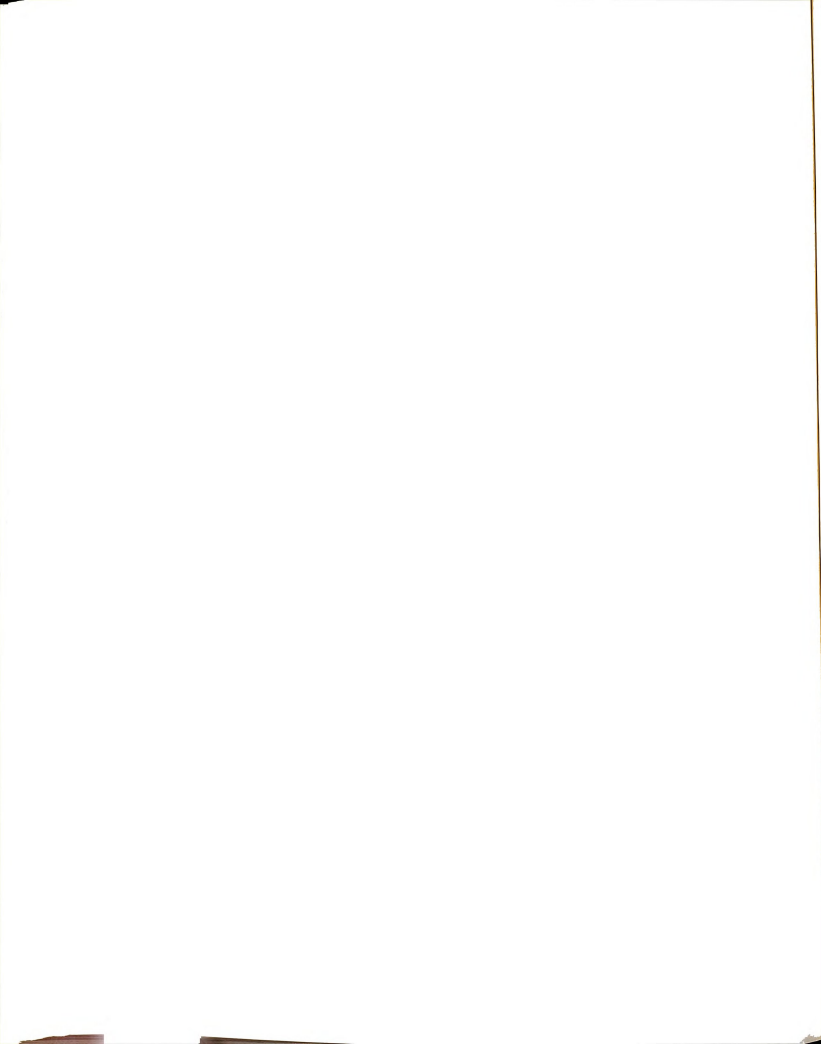
As the most direct form, imperatives are employed in situations in which obligations and rights between speaker and addressee exist or where the relationship of authoritor and authoritee has been established. The relative social status of the speaker and the addressee is included in the authoritor and the authoritee situations. The social superior is, in many cases, in the position of authoritor over the social inferior but not always as shown in Chaucer.

This imperative form is also used in intimate situations or offensive situations. Benefit is another factor which affects the choice of the request form. If the benefit is on the side of the addressee, the speaker uses a more direct form of request. If the benefit is on the side of the speaker, the speaker uses a more indirect form of request.

On the other hand, the most indirect form of request is considered the most polite if used in appropriate situations. However, depending on the context in which they are used, the forms of request could have different meanings. Other factors such as the uniqueness of the task and the relative status of the speaker and addressee might influence choice of request form. Where these other factors occur, I have included them in the descriptions of the situations. Generally speaking, the less likely the addressee is to perform the task, the more likely the speaker is to use the more polite or indirect request form. If the speaker has the right to command and the addressee has the obligation to follow, the task is not likely to be considered difficult, because the addressee already has the obligation to perform it, if asked. Therefore, the speaker uses the direct or plain imperative because there is no need to be polite. If the speaker is emphasizing the task or if extenuating circumstances exist, the speaker will often choose the modified imperative form. When a speaker has no authority to command, that is, having a poor chance of receiving whatever he is requesting, he makes his request

known in an indirect manner in order to try to encourage the favor of the person who can grant their request. Finally, the indirect complex form (a combination of the indirect form and another form) is used primarily in the situation where no rights and obligations exist at all. Since the most indirect speech could be the most polite, this complex form shows the extreme politeness if it is used in an appropriate situation, otherwise it could be interpreted as sarcasm or as an insult towards the addressee.

Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet make the most of the various syntactic forms of request to distinguish the situations and the personalities of their characters. Chaucer employs various syntactic forms freely as requests to show the position of his characters and the task requested in his works. On the other hand, the *Gawain*-poet uses various syntactic forms of request as the instrument of characterization depending on the context.



Notes

¹Halliday (1978) divides social context within which utterance occurs into two categories: social and situational.

²In her article "Is Sibil there: The Structure of some American Directives," Ervin-Tripp classifies requests into six categories depending on the situation. She identifies them, ordered approximately according to the relative power of speaker and addressee; need statements; imperatives; imbedded imperatives; permission directives; question directives and hints. *Language in Society*, 5 (1976), 25-26.

³Searle, *Speech Acts*, pp.57-61 and Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, pp.94-108. Although recent theoretical discussions disagree on the exact nature of a perlocution, those disagreements do not affect the focus of this study.

⁴I borrow these terms from Leech (1980) in *Explorations in Semantics and Pragmatics*. He refers to speaker as the authoritor, and addressee as the authoritee when the speaker is in the position of superiority over the addressee.

⁵J. Kerkhof, *Studies in the Language of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1982, pp.53-54).

a. The stem-form of strong verbs, used to address one person in a familiar way; b. a form in -e with most weak verbs, used in the same function, but also to address more than one person. c. a form in -eth with both strong and weak verbs, used to address one person politely or to address more than one person.

⁶Because the guide is also testing Gawain, as is the Green Knight.

⁷The lady says to Gawain: "I schal gif yow my girdel pat gaynes yow lasse."

⁸In the *General Prologue*, the Monk's liking for hunting is mentioned: Of prykyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.



⁹Cecily Clark compares Gawain's speech with the Green Knight's in terms of subjunctive mood, explaining Gawain's speech is full of subjunctive forms, but the Green Knight's indicative in her article "Sir Gawain and The Green Knight: Characterisation by Syntax."

1941
1942
1943
1944

V. CONCLUSION

I have noted social factors determining the use of polite speech in late Middle English by examining the distinction of the two second singular personal pronouns *ye* and *thou*; by looking at the use of various vocative forms; and by examining the use of different request forms in Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet. In classifying the usage of the second person pronouns and vocatives I have focused on social patterns which include social aspects of language use, while in request forms I have focused more on the situational patterns in which they are used.

Through the classification of polite speech in terms of the distinctive use of the second singular pronouns *ye* and *thou* I found that the conventional singular pronoun *thou* was still used as the normal usage of the second singular pronoun as seen in the *Knight's Tale* (Duke Theseus is addressed as *thou* by his subordinates). Therefore the singular use of *ye* can have special meaning depending upon the context; that is, the respect or humility and sometimes the sarcasm of the speaker. The second person pronoun *ye* also began to be used as a formal address to any one within the high class and then the usage spread to the low class because of its connotation of politeness. Thus, the



singular *ye* came to be used as a marked form for polite speech in either respectful or sarcastic situations by anyclass, whereas the conventional *thou* was still used as an unmarked form.

Through the symmetrical or asymmetrical use of vocative terms between two people we can see the mobility of middle class society as well as the systems of hierarchy in those societies. In symmetrical situations, kinship terms and personal names are widely used to show intimacy and animosity rather than politeness. The speaker uses the kinship terms such as *brother*, *suster*, *cosyn*, *nece* and *uncle*, and personal names, or both, to show his intimate feeling towards the addressee. Non-honorific common nouns are also used in intimate or hostile situations. In intimate situations the speaker sometimes uses non-honorific common nouns such as *frend* and *fool*. The speaker also uses non-honorific common nouns such as *carl*, *cherl* or *theef*, instead of kinship terms in offensive situations. In asymmetrical situations, kinship terms and personal names are used by a social superior to a social inferior who addresses his superior with an honorific title. In contrast to the honorific titles, however, non-honorific common nouns carry more meaning than that of their Modern English counterparts. Such words as *lemman*, *burne*, *wight*, *wyf* or *husband* in Middle English are considered neutral or less polite vocatives.

Professional or rank labels without any honorific title are also used as neutral vocatives even though they are sometimes used to insult the addressee. This especially occurs when there is animosity between professional enemies.

As for honorific titles, *sire*, *lorde*, *maister*, *dame*, *madame* and *lady* are used to show the speaker's polite attitude towards the addressee. Though all these honorific titles were first used only to social superiors, they came to be used as address terms to any man and woman to show politeness, whether it is authentic or pretentious. Because the words *maister* and *lorde* carry the specific connotations of 'learnedness' and 'supremacy,' the title *sire* is more widely used in polite speech to refer to a man. In the same way, *madame* is more widely used as a vocative to a woman rather than *lady* or *dame*. Though all the honorific titles were originally used to a person of authority, some honorific titles stand higher than others depending upon the situation. Therefore the social context surrounding the use of those titles is important in interpreting the meaning in these late Middle English works. Above all, such honorific titles as *sire*, *dame*, and *madame* gradually came to be used to any class in polite speech just like the use of the second singular personal pronoun *ye*.

In Chapter 3, I have explored the conditions under which the speaker uses one particular linguistic request form over another. If one linguistic form is to be considered as a request, the conditions of the speaker and



the addressee should both be met in the situation in which that request takes place. I have considered different forms of requests from the most direct to the most indirect. Generally these forms are made in the structure of three different basic forms, imperatives, statements and questions. Different syntactic requests should be interpreted within the social context. And the same request form may be interpreted differently depending on the social context. For example, the most direct request, command, is usually made in the form of an imperative with the speaker in a position of authority. However, in other situations, the imperative form indicates either the speaker's intimacy or his rudeness. In the same way, indirect request forms such as statement and question can be interpreted as an insult or sarcasm when directed towards a person of lower status. Otherwise they should be considered more polite than plain imperatives. Therefore, these two poets capture the way a character shifts or manipulates his style of request forms to create a certain kind of relationship with another character depending on the situation.

Through the symmetrical or asymmetrical use of linguistic variants Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet show significant linguistic awareness in their manipulation of verbal distinctions. The hierarchical social structure in feudal medieval England is reflected in linguistic variations, which can be accounted for in terms of politeness at the lexical and syntactic levels in the works

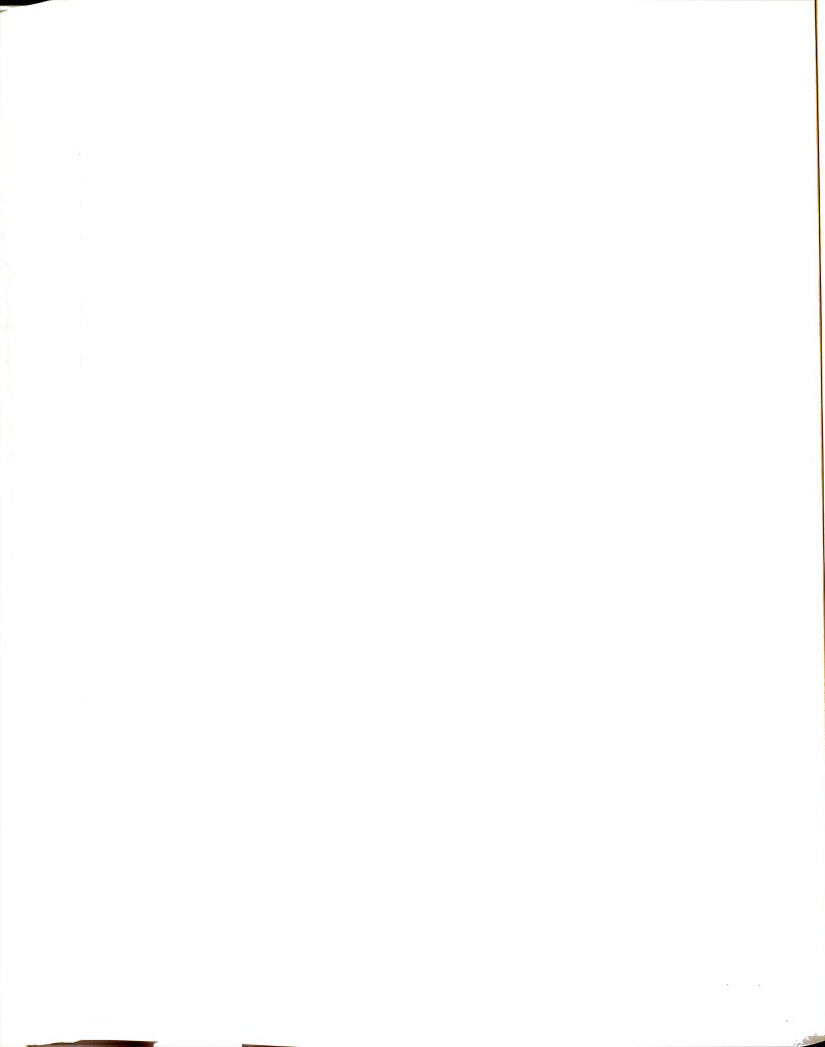
of these two poets. Two distinctive classes in that society, the higher class and the lower class use their appropriate style of language, reflecting Chaucer's distinction of the *gentil* from the *cherl*. However, the mobility of the middle class, which lies in between the hereditary nobility and the lower commoners, is reflected in their usage of the various linguistic forms found in late Middle English literature. Besides the social status of the characters and their relationships these two poets show their judgment of social system or value through the poets' viewpoints. Each poet also emphasizes such private issues as 'gentillesse,' 'courtesy,' 'courtly love,' 'marriage' and 'friendship' through the different linguistic choices of their characters which, in turn, are functions of context.

However, these two poets' attitudes towards the social life of that period often represent an ideal rather than an actual condition with regard to polite speech. The most important factor which affects polite speech in these two poets is morality, as mentioned in Chapter 1, which makes this poetry didactic. For example, the honorific polite *ye* was used in their poetry more to superiors in terms of morality than to those superior in terms of social rank. Chaucer's insistence on the unimportance of wealth and social station, and the *Gawain*-poet's insistence on the value of goodness as the essential virtue for nobility, are not quite congruous with the societies in which these authors lived. Whether or not the normal linguistic usage

in their literature is the same as that of real life, each poet sets the norm in his own way and then shows the personality of his characters by having them either observe or break it. Thus the shifts of linguistic form reflect not only the changing relationship between these authors' characters but also their evaluation of the situation.

With the similarity in showing politeness, there is a little difference between Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet in use of linguistic variants. The *Gawain*-poet, whose language is the dialect of the Northwest Midlands, sometimes chooses some linguistic variants based on alliteration and meter rather than on the meaning of politeness at the lexical level. For example, in the choice of vocatives he uses for alliteration and meter non-honorific common nouns which are of Old English derivation, which Chaucer doesn't use, instead of honorific titles. As for requests at syntactic level, however, he makes the best of the different syntactic forms to contrast the situations in which the personality of his characters is shown through the use of various request forms.

Chaucer, whose language is the dialect of the East-Midlands, attaches himself to French literary fashion, holding himself from native influences, particularly, in the use of vocatives. He chooses each linguistic variant consistently depending on the character and the situation rather than on meter or rhyme to provide an apt vehicle for moral statement. As Chaucer himself makes clear in the

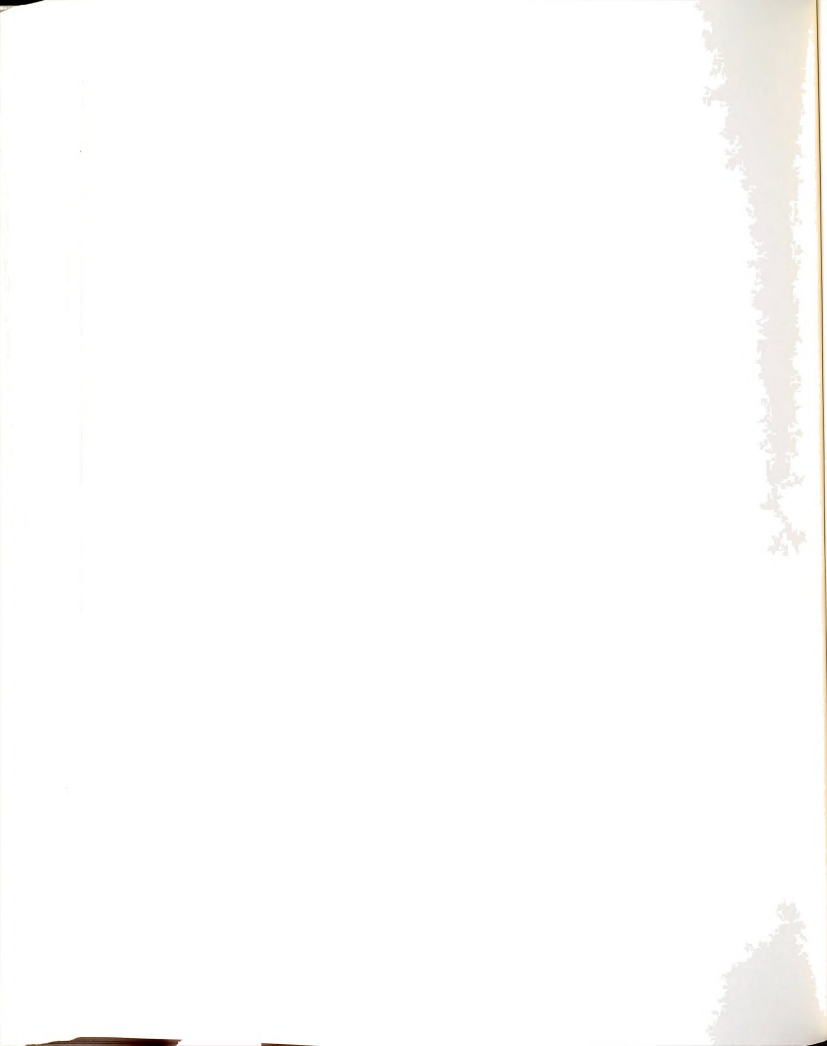


General Prologue " the wordes moote be cosyn to the dede" (I,742). He is thus keenly aware of the referential and social meaning.

In conclusion I would like to say that speech should be interpreted as 'polite' when it is used in an appropriate situation in which it is spoken, like Swift's definition of style, "proper words in proper places."

1780
1781
1782
1783

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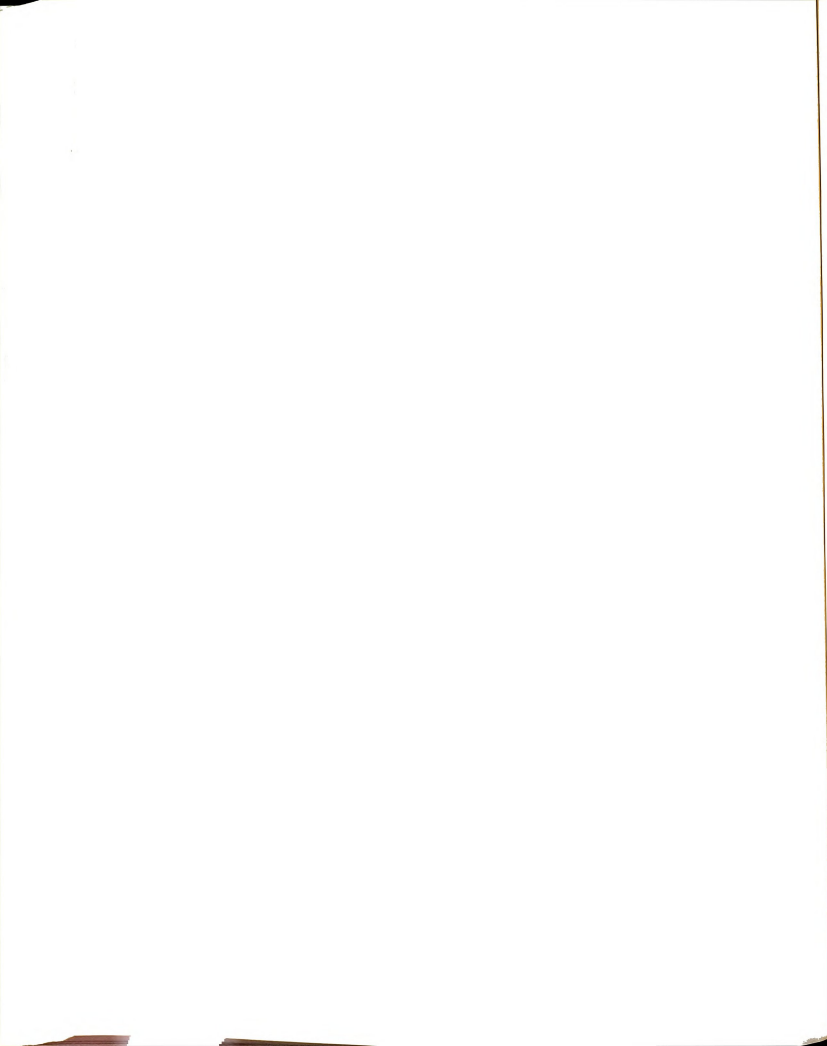
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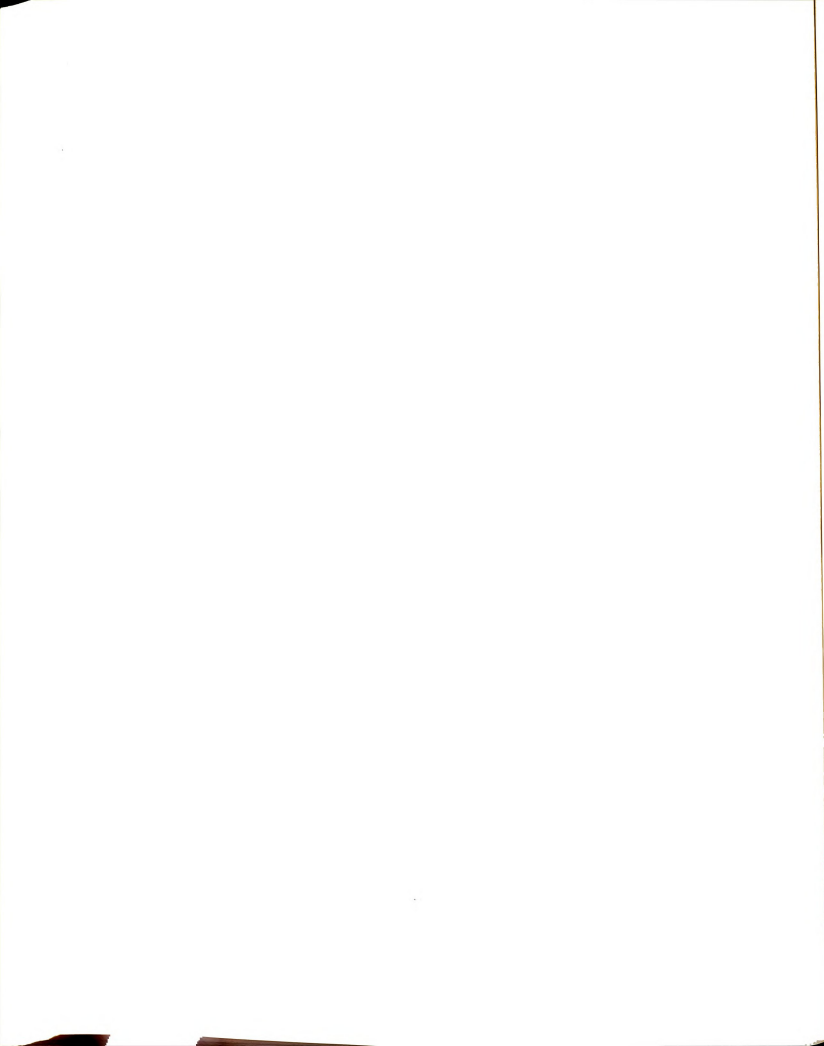


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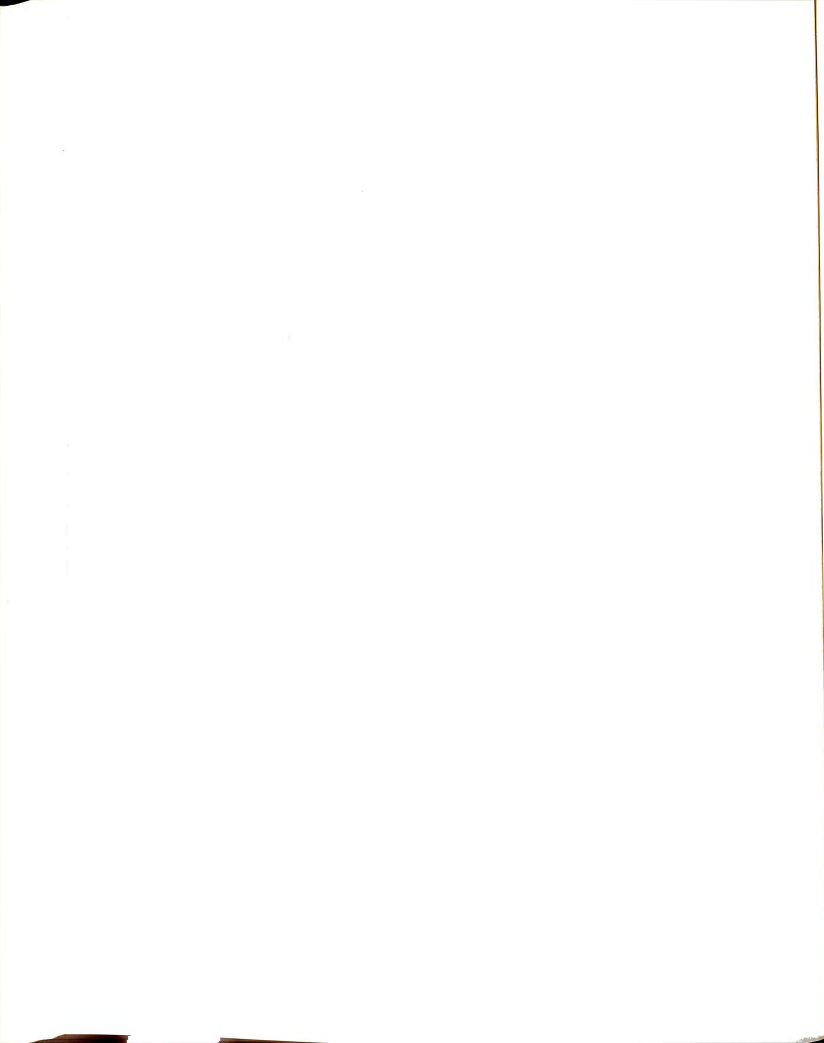
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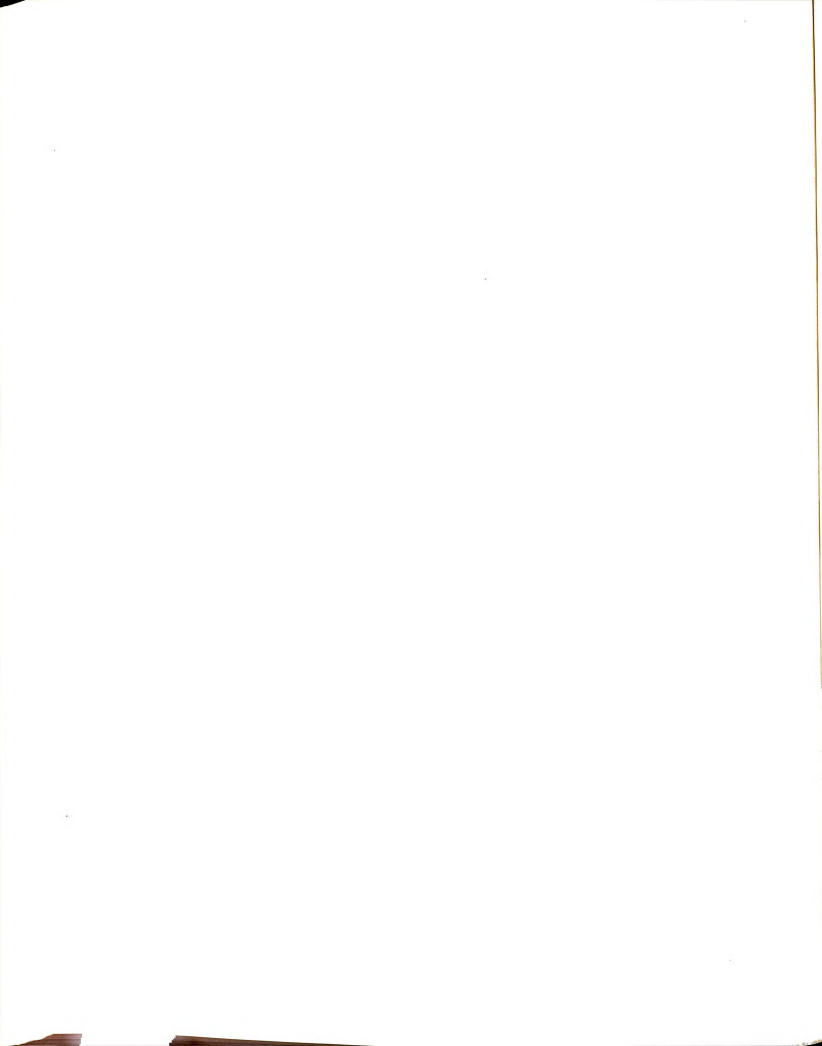
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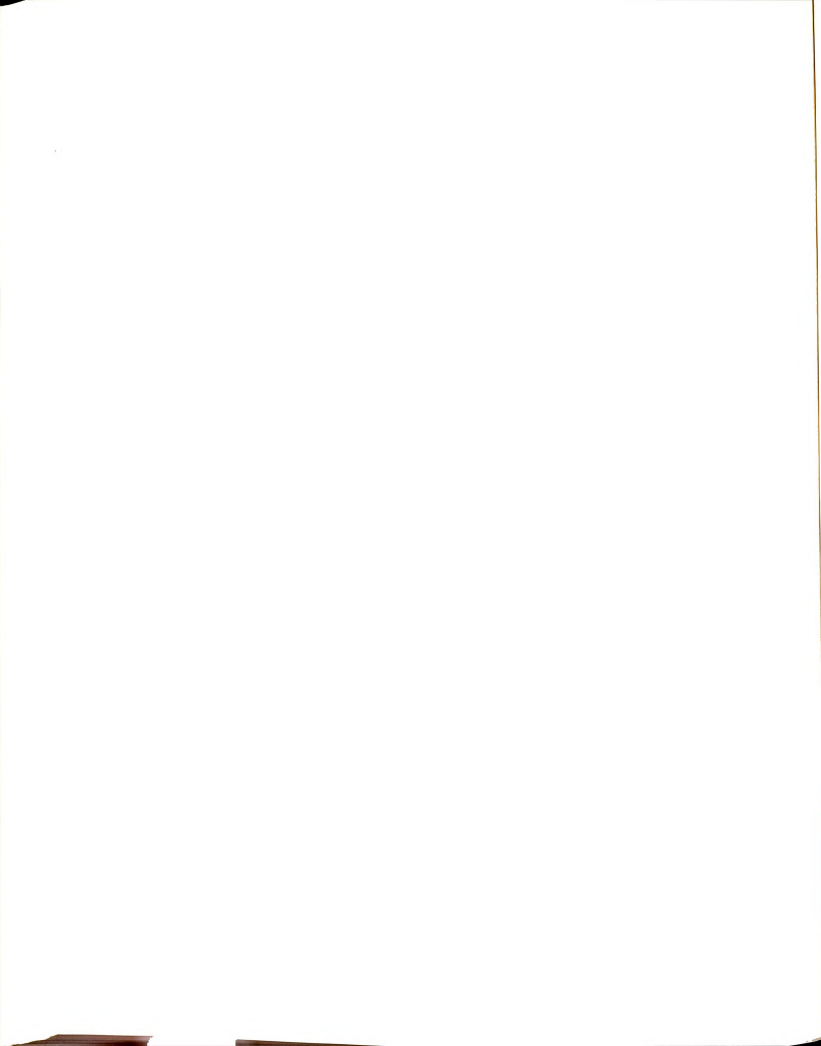
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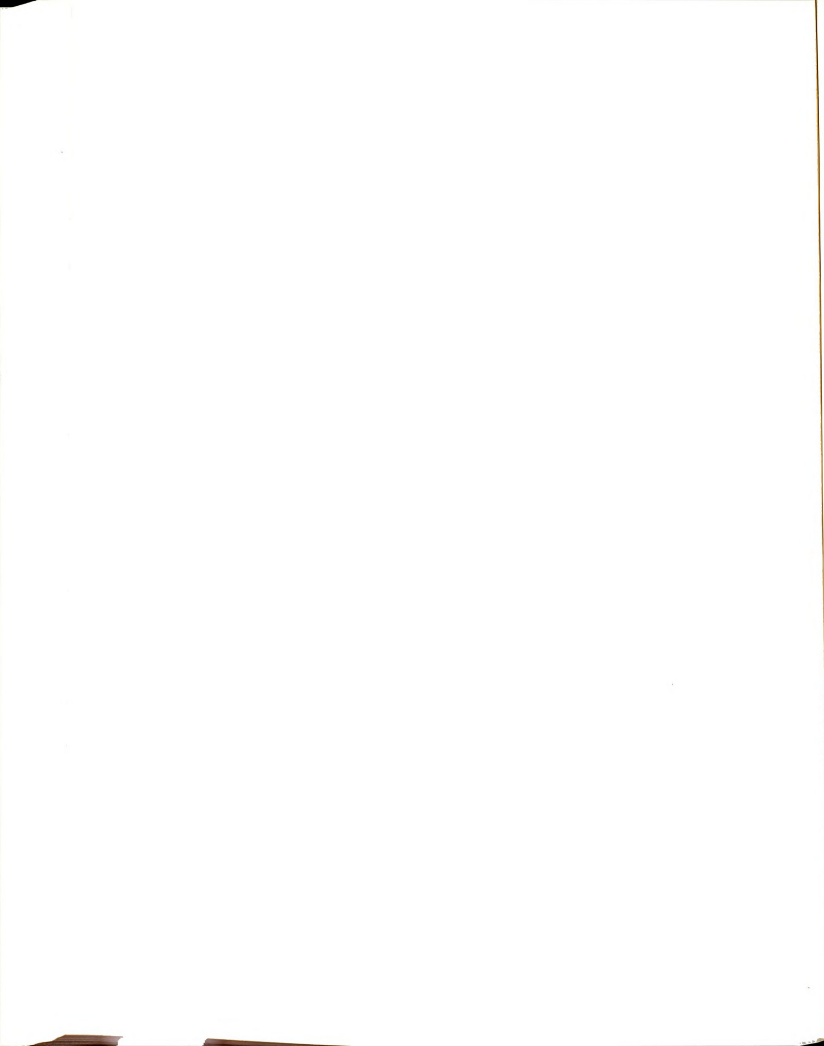
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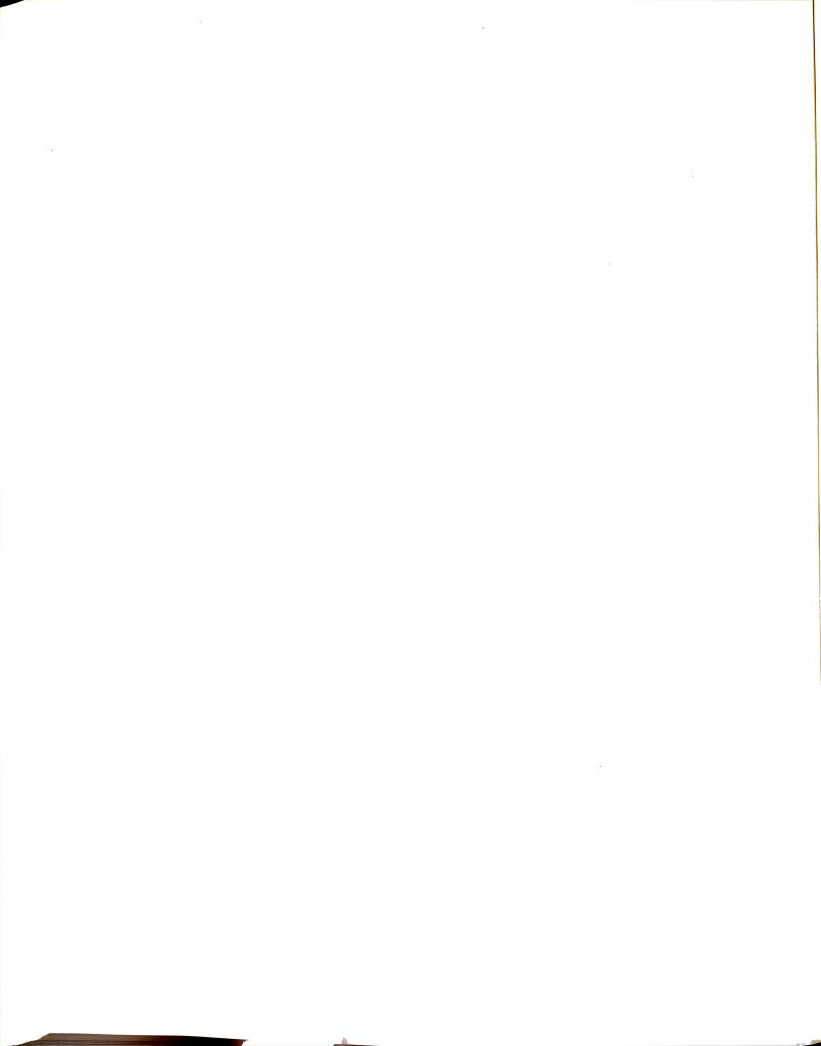
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* Quotations of the works of Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet are all from these works.



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