

the foolish and pretentious Chauntecleer is 'a poor basis on which to erect the earnest condemnation of male tyranny' (p 539). [PG, DS]

- 691 Benson, C. David. *Chaucer's Drama of Style. Poetic Variety and Contrast in the Canterbury Tales*. Chapel Hill, NC, and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

Critical complaints of a discrepancy between the Monk of *GP* and of *MkT* assume the existence of a 'realistic character consistency' which was not a literary virtue in the Middle Ages (p 9). It is possible to take an ironic view and see *MkT* as deliberately bad, but in this case the dramatic principle is being used to support modern prejudices (p 14). Where *NPT* concentrates on 'solaas,' *MkT* concentrates on 'sentence' (p 31); but good 'sentence' must still reach its audience, and *MkT* only bores (p 24).

·Review by James Dean, *MP* 86 (1988—89), 77–9. The book will serve as an important corrective to the excesses of dramatic readings of *CT*.

·Review by Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *JEGP* 87 (1988), 101–4. The book offers 'close and skillful counter-readings of several tales' (p 101), but although it attacks the dramatic theory, it relies in the long run on importing an authority from outside the text: 'an unproblematized author, the historically real and psychologically consistent "Chaucer"' (p 103). [DS, PG]

- 692 Boitani, Piero, and Jill Mann, eds. *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Rpt 1987, 1988.

Contains Frank 764 and Spearing 1044. [PG]

- 693 Ellis, Roger. *Patterns of Religious Narrative in the Canterbury Tales*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1986.

Contains chapters on both *MkT* and *NPT*. The Introduction argues that the religious tales may properly be approached as separate contributions to the meaning of the whole work, and that the narrative voice of each is established by cooperation between the author and the fictional narrator.

The Monk is one of several pilgrims to propose a double performance, here a sequence of tragedies followed by a saint's life (*MkP* VII.1970–7), but his audience becomes impatient with the first part of his performance and prevents this scheme from being carried out. On the one hand, his ideas are interestingly diverse: he postulates three interacting causes of tragedy - God, Fortune and man - and presents three groups of figures - Old Testament, pagan, and medieval Christian - as affected by these causes in different ways. On the other hand, however, his narrative is flat: he focuses not on the ideas but on bookish matters; there is no thematic arrangement - the stories are merely told in the order in which they come to mind (pp 198–9); and they are recounted with little feeling for pace or sense of direction. This becomes particularly clear when they are compared with Boccaccio's originals, as the stories of Samson and Zenobia show. Amongst the religious tales discussed,

MkT represents one investigation of the relevance of narrative skills to didactic success.

Most religious narratives have an emblematic structure, whose linear development takes the form of a test. The widow and her lifestyle in *NPT* are emblematic of widowed poverty - for example, the simple house is a well-established emblem of humility; the soot which discolours its walls could be read as sin - although this is not a fixed quantity like Grisilde's patience. The widow functions as a norm, which the story will temporarily disrupt. Chantecler's lifestyle, paralleled in many ways to the Monk's, is the emblem of all that the widow's lifestyle opposes. Chantecler's story should function like a rake's progress whose 'tragic end can be averted only by self-knowledge and repentance' (p 274), but Chantecler's escape undercuts this. No precedent exists in religious literature for the sinner to save himself, rather than following the established route of repentance and restoration to grace. The beast fable structure does not support an unambiguous religious interpretation; it suggests the necessary co-existence of the spiritual and natural realms. Whereas *MkT* regularly sees God as the heavenly *auctor* of human tragedy, the Nun's Priest is unwilling to relate God directly to the events of the story. Chantecler's escape is ascribed to Fortune rather than God, third in the Monk's triad of tragic causes. Although the narrator urges the audience to find a moral in the story, he makes no attempt to guide them. His commentary fails to generate a coherently argued understanding of the events of the tale.

·Review by H.L. Spencer. *MÆ* 57 (1988), 106–7. Ellis is 'hard pressed' to justify the inclusion of *MkT* as 'religious' (p 106). The book's strength lies in its close study of particulars, but *MkT* seems to have inspired Ellis less than *NPT*. [PG;DS]

- 694 Haas, Renate. 'Chaucer's Use of the Lament for the Dead.' In Wasserman and Blanch 698. Pp 23–37.

The Monk seems to echo the traditional idea of tragedy as *luctus carmen* by adding 'in syngyng' to his Boethian definition of tragedy (*MkT* VII.2762); in Lydgate's view tragedy is characterized by laments. The tragic laments in *MkT* are answered by the deliberately overblown lament for Chantecler in *NPT*. [DS]

- 695 Knight, Stephen. *Geoffrey Chaucer*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Chaucer's works express the social strains and conflicts of his time. In *MkT*, the old tradition of monastic history is exposed 'in its most naïve and reductive form,' as blame for the disasters that befall the great is placed variously on Fortune, the treachery of others, or personal sin. *MkT* dismisses 'old-style scholarship' as 'powerless to comprehend and respond to disorders, past and present' (pp 139–40). *NPT* 'sports with, realizes and then discards the

ultimate complexities of late fourteenth century thought, and at last advocates rural simplicity' (p 141). Its social and cultural conservatism is not dull, however, but redeemed and legitimized by the brilliance of its comedy. The morality of the tale's ending urges a rejection of the 'chaff' of contemporary literary culture in favour of the 'fruit' of the widow's simple, yet peaceful, life. ·Review by N.R. Havelly, *MÆ* 57 (1988), 309–10. The concern with socio-historical context lends edge to the discussion, although some historical details and interpretations are questionable. [PG, DS]

- 696 Mehl, Dieter. *Geoffrey Chaucer. An Introduction to his Narrative Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Trans. and rev. by author, of *Geoffrey Chaucer: Eine Einführung in seine erzählenden Dichtungen*. Grundlagen der Anglistik und Amerikanistik 7. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, [1973].

MkT is not particularly in keeping with the Monk's portrait in *GP*. The Knight interrupts because he is depressed by the insistent reminders of the inconstancy of Fortune, whereas the Host merely gives vent to his boredom. *NPT* is characteristic of the experimental diversity of forms in *CT*. It contains elements of sermon, moral exemplum, beast fable and mock heroic, but corresponds to none of these exactly. It is a synthesis of 'best sentence' and 'moost solas.' Such morals as the warning against flatterers and blindness provide solid edification; and entertainment is produced by the discrepancy between the realistic background of the farmyard and the rhetorical embellishments of amplification and digression. Chaucer may be making a literary joke about the propensity of preachers to find significance in every minor detail: however, *NPT* should not be considered a parody or satire but a product of a distinct persona who raises fundamental questions about the uses of fable and the legitimacy of interpretation. [GC, DS]

- 697 Rogers, William E. *Upon the Ways: The Structure of The Canterbury Tales*. English Literary Studies 36. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Press, 1986. The Monk attempts to transmute suffering into art but fails: it is difficult to find a philosophical or literary pattern amongst the tragedies. The most insightful comment on *NPT* is still Donaldson's 866 that the point of the tale is found in the rhetorical elaboration of its telling. The tale reveals the inadequacy of rhetoric, of language, to deal with the problem of evil in the tales of the preceding fragment. *NPT* seriously calls into question the whole literary enterprise, questioning whether words are real or unreal. Many of the issues which loom large in *Troilus and Criseyde* are treated comically in *NPT*, including the poet's responsibility for what he writes. [DS, PG]
- 698 Wasserman, Julian N., and Robert J. Blanch, eds. *Chaucer in the Eighties*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986. Contains Haas 694, and Kamowski 766.

- 699 Bishop, Ian. *The Narrative Art of the Canterbury Tales. A Critical Study of the Major Poems*. London and Melbourne: Dent, 1987.

The exempla of *MkT* inspire Chauntecleer's in *NPT*. The story of Croesus, abbreviated from *RR*, is significant because it depicts dreams ambiguously. The Host interrupts, 'not because he thinks his performance is incompetent, but because he maintains that human kind cannot bear too much unrelieved gloom' (p 85). *MkT* shows indifference to the rewards of vice and virtue alike, as the stories of Lucifer, Zenobia, Ugolino, and Nero show; only the first part of the Boethian view of Providence is presented. The story of Ugolino differs from Dante mainly in presenting a scene not knowable to the outside world through an omniscient narrator, and in the invention of the child's speech at VII.2431–38. Every medieval schoolboy would have expected a fable to yield a moral and it is important not to dismiss too lightly the learning and seriousness of *NPT*. It is the most 'textueel' of all the tales and can be revealingly analysed within the framework of the Seven Liberal Arts. Rhetoric, in particular, occupies a central place in the tale. The tale, however, contains many traps and ambushes for the unwary interpreter.

'Review by J.D. Burnley, *RES* n.s. 41 (1990), 240–1. The book is 'not a learned treatise . . . but it is pleasant reading in congenial material, and offers fresh perceptions' (p 241). [DS, PG]

- 700 Blamires, Alcuin. *The Canterbury Tales*. The Critics Debate Series. London: Macmillan, 1987.

The ambiguity of interactions between pilgrims or tales is apparent in *MkT*, which may be a retort to the Host for joking about the Monk's virility, or an attempt to match the Knight's philosophical tragedy. *NPT* is dealt with in terms of source study, literary conventions, medieval intellectual contexts, social and political historicism, and dramatic or psychological readings. *NPT* burlesques the conventions of narrative edification; its 'wisdom' is too complex and subtle for trite moral formulae. [DS, PG]

- 701 Howard, Donald. *Chaucer and the Medieval World*. New York: Dutton; London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.

The two historical Peters were known personally in Chaucer's society: in 1363 Peter of Cyprus, in England to urge a crusade, was entertained by John of Gaunt; in 1371 John of Gaunt married Constance, daughter of Peter of Spain ('the Cruel'), whose kingdom had been restored to him through the military intervention of the Black Prince in 1367, and Philippa Chaucer was an attendant of the queen. The *MkT* stories were originally intended as a straightforward 'collection' (p 438), but Chaucer later 'capitalized on the fact that they *would* be boring if told one after another' (p 446). Jakke Straw led the slaughter of the Flemings in the Vintry, the world of Chaucer's childhood. *NPT* gives the other tales of Fragment VII a unity in retrospect. It was written

in Chaucer's later years, although not later than 1397 when Chaucer turned to more sombre topics. Its narrator is an almost faceless figure because a strong personality for the narrator would intervene in a tale whose spirit is so much Chaucer's own. The whole of the tale is told with a playful view of rhetoric; much of its humour derives from the sudden transitions between intricate arguments and highstyle to barnyard noises and actions. *NPT* is 'one of the great masterpieces of satiric and parodic writing' (p 440), even poking fun at *CT* itself in sly references to the other tales. Most attempts at finding a moral make their authors sound like Chauntecleer. [DS, PG]

- 702 Lindahl, Carl. *Earnest Games: Folkloric Patterns in the Canterbury Tales*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Chaucer 'reshapes literature into festival' (p 45), and in festival 'the more extravagant the rhetoric, the sillier its object is made to seem' - compare the Host's mock praise of *gentil* clerics like the Monk (*MkP* VII.1924-64) with his less subtle derision of the Parson and the Pardoner. His jest about the celibate state of the Monk (*MkP* VII.1945) illustrates the point that most insults in *CT* have to do with trade affiliations. The Knight's criticism of *MkT* is urbane and deferential, but the Host translates his words to another realm of discourse. The Knight expresses a dislike of pious excess. The Monk does not enjoy the story-telling game, but his attitudes are not generally shared by the pilgrim characters, any more than they would be by real pilgrims, who, as travellers, were the 'archetypal' story-tellers (p 39). In folk tales, magic and miracles are especially common on the pilgrim's road, for example the magical dream telling of a friend's death in the exemplum related by Chauntecleer. [DS, PG]

- 703 Stone, Brian. *Chaucer*. Penguin Masterstudies. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987. Rpt in Penguin Critical Guides, 1989.

Contains an outline of *MkP-MkT-NPP-NPT-endlink*. The stories of *MkT* 'illustrate the impossibility of frustrating fate, but do not deal with the religious solution to such a problem,' this failure corresponding to the Monk's own failure in religious observation described in *GP*. By the time Chaucer wrote *CT*, the fox had become a popular and humanized villain of beast epics and fables, many of which were pointed with religious moralization. The idealized portrait of the widow in *NPT* may symbolize the Church, and her yard the world. The central joke of the tale is that a 'ludicrous cockerel' should represent 'humanity's complex aspirations' (p 72). Chauntecleer, the Adam of the story, regains his paradise through wit and cunning rather than virtue. The transitions between the high classical mode and domestic farce are one of the narrative accomplishments of the tale. The endlink, genuine though meant to be cancelled, effectively rounds off Fragment VII, in which the Host's interventions are always surprising and amusing. [PG, DS]

- 704 Williams, David. *The Canterbury Tales: A Literary Pilgrimage*. Twayne's Masterwork Studies 4. Boston: Hall, 1987.
MkT is 'sententious and boring,' and may represent vengeance on the Host for his 'unmasking' of the Monk (p 36). It 'has depressed the company by its theme and bored them thoroughly by its technique' (p 88).
 The 'meaning' of *NPT* is not to be found in the doctrine of original sin, nor is it an allegory of the Fall. *NPT* reflects back on the whole of *CT* in its theory of fiction and its revelations about the function of poetic language in expressing truth. [PG, DS]
- 705 Hussey, S.S. 'Chaucer's Host.' In *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*. Ed. Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron and Joseph S. Wittig. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1988. Pp 153–61.
 The Host of *GP* is not only 'semely' but 'myrie,' and looks particularly for mirth in stories. Bored by the tragedies of *MkT*, he suggests a hunting story from the Monk. The Nun's Priest is praised for a 'murie' story in the endlink. When Melibee was given to Chaucer the pilgrim - perhaps originally intended for the Man of Law - a new link with *MkT* had to be written; the extra lines in the link develop a one-sided picture of the domineering wife. The remark about the 'tredefowel' in the endlink better fits the manly monk. [PG]
- 706 Jager, Eric. 'Croesus and Chauntecleer: The Royal Road to Dreams.' *MLQ* 49 (1988), 3-18.
 In his account of Croesus, the Monk omits the debate between Croesus and his daughter about the interpretation of dreams which is found in his source, Jean de Meun's *RR*, thereby suppressing the link between literalistic reading and death. In *MkT*, Croesus's pride still occasions his downfall, but because it attracts the notice of Fortune rather than because it leads to his moral or intellectual blindness: the cause of his fall is external and cosmic rather than personal and psychological, making the account more appropriate to the generic context of tragedy. Thus, *pace* Hemingway 605 and Watson 634, Jager argues that the subsequent reference to Croesus in *NPT* is a response to rather than an echo of the *MkT* passage. There are many parallels between Chauntecleer and Croesus, in terms of nobility, wealth, sensuality and luxurious lifestyle, although Chauntecleer differs from Croesus in being genuinely alarmed by his dream. Instead of seeing Croesus as a victim of Fortune, the Nun's Priest portrays him as the victim of his own rationalization. [DS, PG]
- 707 Kendrick, Laura. *Chaucerian Play: Comedy and Control in the Canterbury Tales*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988.
 The *MkT* tragedies provoke rather than assuage anxiety because they are too brief to allow us to identify with the sufferer or to experience 'wish-fulfilling detours' such as escape from death (pp 51–2). The Knight interrupts because *MkT* satisfies only one imperative of fiction, to imitate public morality, not the other, to satisfy individual desires. The tragedies are a response to the Host's

joke, antipathetic to the Host and to play, their implicit lesson being man's powerlessness to control his life. From the narrator's point of view, *NPT* is an example of 'abreactive play that satisfies a desire for control, frustrated in reality' (p. 36), a fiction of power over females. The tale satisfies the victory of *eros* and enterprise, a comic answer to the Monk's pessimistic view of destiny. [DS, PG]

- 708 Koff, Leonard Michael. *Chaucer and the Art of Storytelling*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988.

For the Knight who interrupts, 'a story is good if it reinforces the socially positive,' and *MkT* is 'a great discomfort to the body social because it implies the futility of renown' (p 85). Although most readers are more sympathetic to the Knight than to the Monk, the Knight's response does not imply Chaucer's own. *NPT* examines the problem of the efficacy and value of both texts (the written word) and revelation (the words of God through dreams). Chauntecleer misreads and then disregards his own words, although his use of words to the fox finally saves him. Chauntecleer is Chaucer's 'most profound and blatant hermeneutist, not a parody of the real thing' (p 104). The narrator's leave-taking at the end of *NPT* invites the reader to do comically what he is later asked to do seriously at the conclusion of the *Parson's Tale*. [PG, DS]

- 709 North, J.D. *Chaucer's Universe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Chaucer delighted in astronomical schemes; the most sympathetic pilgrims tell astronomical tales; and the best tales contain the clearest traces of astronomical allegory. *MkT* does not distinguish between cases of sin, original sin, and adversity brought about by no personal fault. The only day that makes astronomical sense for Chauntecleer's adventure in *NPT* is 3 May 1392. There is a simple parallel between Chauntecleer and the Sun, backed up by many comparisons, such as the 'burned gold' (VII.2864) of Chauntecleer's colour. Pertelote and her six sisters are associated with the seven stars of the Pleiades, commonly known in the Middle Ages as a hen, or hens. The fox is most likely Saturn. The highly specific time references in *NPT* are absent from all sources. Appendix 7 (pp 541–2) discusses the connections between Chauntecleer and the Nun's Priest; appendix 9 (pp 545–8) provides a horoscope for Pertelote. [PG, DS]

- 710 Reed, Thomas L. Jr. 'Nebuchadnezzar and Chauntecleer: Chaucer's Fortunate Fowl.' *NM*89 (1988), 44–56.

It has long been argued that *NPT* 'corrects' *MkT* in more than mood. *MkT* presents only the dark side of human experience; the narrator does not correlate his heroes' falls to any notion of personal responsibility; nor can he envision the possibility of any 'redemptive reversal' (p 45) in their fortunes, or the possibility of learning from experience. The 'tragedy' of Chauntecleer derives, on the other hand, from a flaw in his character, his pride, demonstrat-

ing the operation in the world of a system of providential justice, and he clearly changes for the better as a result of his fall. The Monk's tale of Nebuchadnezzar, unique in his compendium for offering a story of reform through self-knowledge, provides both a narrative and thematic source for *NPT*. As punishment for his pride, Nebuchadnezzar is reduced to the condition of a beast, but one who also shows, in his eagle feathers and sharp nails, the characteristics of a bird. [PG]

- 711 Brown, Emerson, Jr. 'Fragment VII of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and the "Mental Climate of the Fourteenth Century".' In *Traditions and Innovations: Essays on British Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Ed. David G. Allen and Robert A. White. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990. Pp 50–8. Fragment VII is marked by 'the relatively low intrinsic quality of most of the tales . . . and the unsurpassed quality of the links that join them together and of the last tale of the group, the Nun's Priest's' (p 51). Chaucer's references to the great intellectual debates of the fourteenth century are often disappointing, using them as material for revealing the intellectual or moral condition of his characters. David Knowles has drawn attention to the tendency of fourteenth-century culture to take ideas to extremes. With the exception of *NPT*, all the tales of Fragment VII 'turn dark in their implications about art and morality' (p 53). The tendency to extremism is reflected in the tendency of flawed narrators to produce tales which are themselves morally flawed. In *MKT*, literature is pushed to the extreme: the Monk's view of tragedy is unrelieved by Boethian philosophy or the Greek heroic view of human dignity. *NPT*, on the other hand, is the most thoroughly Boethian work Chaucer ever wrote. It rescues storytelling from the extremes of Fragment VII: 'mirth and doctrine blend to form an indissoluble whole' (p 55). [PG]

- 712 D'Agata D'Ottavi, Stefania. 'Specularità e Parodia: La *Mise en Abyme* in "The Nun's Priest's Tale".' In *Il Racconto allo Specchio: Mise en abyme e tradizione narrativa*. A cura di Donatello Izzo. Rome: Nuova Arnica Editrice, 1990. Pp 37–66.

The widespread use in medieval literature of the mirror as image and as metaphor is particularly well-suited to represent such fundamental ideas in contemporary culture as contrast and difference, especially as it lends itself to a notion of difference within a context of similarity, continuity and tradition. (Although the image in the mirror duplicates the real world, it has only a relationship of similarity to it, it is not identical with it.) An analogous phenomenon is the increasing popularity of texts that contain stories within stories, collections of *exempla* or framed narratives for instance, which illustrate well the poststructuralist concept of *mise en abyme*. Not only do individual tales of *CT* reflect and parallel each other, they can provide images in

little of the themes and structure of the whole work. *NPT* contains within itself several stories *en abyme*, stories within the main narrative, and their effect is always to enrich and complicate issues of structure and meaning. *NPT* has relationships with all the tales of Fragment VII, but especially with *MkT*; it is both its mirror image and comic reversal. Although both tales share the tragic mode and echo each other in many details of plot and character, *NPT* presents a multiplicity of narrative voices, characters, themes and structures in contrast to the univocality of narrator, the singleness of characterization in each story and the simplicity of theme of *MkT*. The complexity and multiplicity of meaning in *NPT* is an image of the complexity of *CT* as a whole. [PG]

- 713 Ganim, John M. *Chaucerian Theatricality*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

A Bakhtinian reading, designed to update Chaucer criticism. *NPT* ‘throws itself into the obsessive human dialectic of certainty and uncertainty’ (p 98). It formulates an ‘anti-summa’ (p 99), taking up all the philosophical and literary concerns of *CT*. The discussion of poetics in *MkP* reads differently depending on whether we see the interrupter as the Host or the Knight. *MkT* reasserts the Monk’s monkishness; in his art, history, and fable are one. The Knight’s interruption suggests that the Monk’s strained seriousness is flawed philosophically, leaving out ‘the Boethian distance from Fortune that makes the difference between philosophy and pessimism’ (p 102). *NPT* satirizes pretensions about human order by parodying rhetoric, the linguistic counterpart to that order, but also concerns itself with rhetoric ‘as a series of conventions about communication’ (p 102). The central irony of the Knight’s remarks to the Monk is that the Nun’s Priest tells the sort of tale that the Knight asks for, but in doing so he questions the basis, not just of *MkT*, but of *KnT* as well. *NPT* is the true Monk’s last tale.

·Review by Laura Kendrick, *JEGP* 91 (1992), 222-3. In discovering a ‘Chaucer for the nineties’, we discover ourselves in Ganim’s Bakhtinian reading. ‘To imagine that Chaucer should be deliberately . . . engaged in disrupting the “certainty” of “official” . . . culture through his art is a fascinating reflection of our own desires’ (p 223). [PG]

- 714 Knapp, Peggy. *Chaucer and the Social Contest*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.

An analysis of the contest within *CT* between tales and pilgrims in the context of the wider social contest and change of fourteenth-century England. Outriders like Daun Piers not only dealt with feudal lords but behaved like lords themselves. In a similar way, *MkT* ‘enacts a subtle kind of competition’ (p 47) with *KnT*. The Monk stresses the admonitory aspect of Boethius but offers little of his consoling poetry. *MkT* deploys all the usual armoury of

authority, including aristocracy, patriarchy and antiquity. *NPT*, on the other hand, is the most comically egalitarian of the 'dialogic' *CT*. *NPT* is in dialogue with nearly all the other *CT*. After the interruption to *MkT*, it falls to the Nun's Priest to work out the correct balance of delight and instruction in the context of the ancient debate about the truth value of fictional narratives.

The difficulty is that the Nun's Priest provides too many morals in his tale 'to keep balanced on the narrow perch of his cock and hen' (p 86). The tale is 'ultimately ironic about the efficacy of storytelling for inspiring Christian morality' (p 90). [PG]

- 715 Hill, John M. *Chaucerian Belief: the Poetics of Reverence and Delight*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991.

Chapter 8, pp 127—50 consists of a comparison between *MkT* and *NPT*. The paired tales of Fragment 7, including *MkT* and *NPT* are 'companion' tales rather than 'quitting' tales. Both *MkT* and *NPT* continue the exploration of the theme of Prudence established in *Melibee*. *NPT* contains genuine morality as well as folly. Although the reader responds to the tale's mock-heroic quality, the Nun's Priest himself appears not to, but 'takes it literally, as plot and action' (p 145). [PG]

- 716 Kang, Du-Hyoung. 'The Problem of Tragedy in *The Canterbury Tales*.' *English Language and Literature* [Seoul] 37 (1991), 825—41.

CT does not present a single or an orthodox view of tragedy, and many of the tales question the presence of a transcendental design in the universe. The problem with *MkT* is whether it contains any kind of moral message: punishment is meted out to virtuous and sinful alike; the deaths of Ugolino's children seem especially cruel, yet fail to provoke any emotional response from the Monk. The story of Croesus, involving the theme of the relationship between man's free will and predestination, links *MkT* and *NPT*. Various theological doctrines about predestination are presented in *NPT*, but none is given precedence over others, and the controversy is satirized. The main focus of *NPT* is the richness of human experience. [PG]

- 717 Neuse, Richard. *Chaucer's Dante: Allegory and Epic Theatre in the Canterbury Tales*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991.

The argument of the book is that *CT* is modeled on *The Divine Comedy*. *MkT*, like the *Comedy*, contains 'an unorthodox, though not . . . heterodox, notion of history' (p 142). The Monk uses the rhetoric of Fortune to counter the moralistic, grand-design theory of history to be found in more orthodox works like Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* and to move closer to Dante's stress on individuals and on moral responsibility. In the tale of Ugolino, the Monk 'replaces Dante's demonically obsessed, mysterious count with a strangely abstracted, self-contained character' (p 157). The Monk's greater

concern with the incomprehension of the children underlines the theme of *deus absconditus*, the God whose face is hidden. The Monk's idea of a 'tragic' Lucifer should be taken seriously. Lucifer is the 'originator, with his fall, of history as a series of catastrophes in the course of which human beings nonetheless continue in their attempts to establish their collective autonomy' (p 194). *NPT* is a 'comedy of verbalism' (p 89), in which the boundaries between the verbal and the real are blurred and questioned, and it performs a commentary on the whole tale-telling game of *CT*. The tale does not reject allegory, but keeps it 'dependent on the primary, literal level' (p 92). [PG]

- 718 Astell, Ann W. 'Chaucer's "Literature Group" and the Medieval Causes of Books.' *ELH* 59 (1992), 269–87.

Fragment VII is structured according to Aristotle's four causes of books: *causa finalis*, *causa efficiens*, *causa materialis*, and *causa formalis*. *MkT* calls attention to the problems of the *causa materialis*: it is 'mere substance without style; content without form; the raw, undeveloped *materia* of art' (p 278). In an analogous fashion, the Monk's tragedies focus only on losses that Boethius associates with the body, not the soul. *NPT* focuses on the formal causation absent in *MkT*, dramatising 'the "modus poeticus" in its pure form, classically understood as a concealment of truth under fiction' (p 279). This concealing veil is often seductive, sometimes keeping the truth hidden, and the tale offers little hope of an 'heroic resistance to poetic images' (p 281). *NPT* remains 'elusive and teasing, undisclosed and undiscoverable, flattering and frustrating our ability to interpret' (p 281). The tale also breaks the four-fold frame of Aristotelian causes, insisting on the reader's responsibility for what he or she learns from books. [PG]

- 719 Woods, Marjorie Curry. 'In a Nutshell: *Verba* and *Sententia* and Matter and Form in Medieval Composition Theory.' In *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies. Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*. Ed. Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope Reed Doob, and Marjorie Curry Woods. Studies in Medieval Culture, XXXI. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992. Pp 19–39.

'Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille' (*NPT*. VII 3443), the kernel theory of poetry, an idea inherited from late classical thought, was crystalized in the hierarchy of subjects in the medieval educational system in which 'the study of words formed the basis of, but was then superseded by, the study of thoughts' (p 20). There is increasing evidence, however, that sophistication at the literal level was prized and sought, and it is important to distinguish the rhetorical from the philosophical traditions of commentary: Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, widely used in schools, in fact contains both. *MkT* is a parody of school exercises in *abbreviatio* - rather than generating con-

ciseness, it generates prolixity and formlessness - and *NPT* parodies school exercises in *amplificatio*. [PG]

- 720 Scanlon, Larry. *Narrative, Authority, and Power: the Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

A study of some major literary texts in the context of the two main strands of the exemplum tradition: the sermon exemplum and the public exemplum of the *Mirror of Princes*. *MkT* is a miniature exemplum collection, and its miniaturization foregrounds 'the compression already built into the genre, making the tale as much an analysis of the genre as an instance of it' (p 215). The Monk's ecclesiastical status leaves no direct mark on his narrative. The Knight's interruption affirms the lay community's ultimate control of textual authority. One of the greatest ironies of *NPT* is that it provides the kind of story the Knight wanted from the Monk. The crucial opposition in the tale is 'between the exemplary and the fabulous rather than the allegorical and the ironic' (p 232). [PG]

- 721 Astell, Ann W. *Chaucer and the Universe of Learning*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Pp 190–6 repeat the argument of 718. [PG]

- 722 Rigby, S.H. *Chaucer in Context. Society, Allegory and Gender*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; New York: St Martin's Press, 1996.

Examines the debate between 'Robertsonian' and 'Donaldsonian' interpretations of medieval literature in ch 3, 'Allegorical versus humanist Chaucer,' pp 78–115, using *NPT* as the main example.

The articles of Dahlberg 452 and Donovan 843, and the book of Huppé 882 are critically reviewed. There is no necessary reason why allegorical readings should be counterposed to dramatic ones: a knowledge of the allegorical symbolism of the cock enlarges a reading of the tale in terms of the relationship between the narrator - often seen like Chauntecleer - and the other pilgrims. The target of the satire of *NPT* is the gloomy *MkT* which precedes it. The tragedies of *MkT* are, from the perspective of the spiritual and eternal, ultimately as trivial as the affairs of a barnyard cock. Allen's 940 fivefold classification of the ways in which literal and spiritual meanings can combine in medieval literary texts is endorsed. [PG]

- 722a Jensen, Emily. "'Winkers" and "Janglers": Teller/Listener/Reader Response in the *Monk's Tale*, the Link, and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*.' *ChauR* 32 (1997), 183–95.

MkT and *NPT* need to be read together to avoid facile distinctions between one tale as a grab-bag of tedious stories and the other as one of Chaucer's most finished and sophisticated tales. The link is crucial to understanding the tales. The Knight objects to *MkT* because it is monotonous, but modern readers have tended to criticize the tale for lacking a single unifying prin-

ciple. The underlying thematic progression in the stories is, however, the treatment of the concepts of Fortune and tragedy: the Monk explores ‘the nature of tragedy in a Christian context by examining the way pagan Fortune applies to pagan figures and seeing the extent to which that concept may be applied to Christian stories’ (p 185). Abstracting a single meaning from a range of particulars, although an essential trait of skilled reading, can blind us, however, to the uniqueness of the individual story. This is analogous to the cock and fox in *NPT*, who close their eyes when they should remain open and open their mouths when they should keep them shut. The Nun’s Priest brilliantly mocks this need to abstract a single generalized meaning from particulars and the need to provide a generalized moral that captures the essence of Chauntecleer’s story. The multiple morals the story provides undercut each other. The real morality of the tale is that we should not adhere determinedly (‘Al wilfully’ [VII.4622]) to one moral. [PG]

722b Beidler, Peter G., ed. *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998).

Contains Sharp **778d** and Thomas **1076**. [PG]

722c Davenport, W.A. *Chaucer and his English Contemporaries: Prologue and Tale in The Canterbury Tales*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998.

MkP is not identified as a ‘prologue’ in the Ellesmere MS. Fragment VII shows Chaucer’s development of prologues as a ‘form of running commentary, interestingly weaving the tales and their reception into a continuous sequence’ (p 42). The individual stories of *MkT* vary greatly in length: the story of Zenobia is more than half the length of *PrT* while some others are only one stanza long. Chauntecleer’s speech to Pertelote (VII.2970ff.) is the longest verse speech given to any character in *Canterbury Tales*. The narrator of *NPT* has no character beyond ‘this sweete preest.’ The tale changes from narrative with dialogue to speech with commentary, and much of the narrator’s contribution is rhetorical discourse. [PG]

722d Finlayson, John. ‘The “Povre Widwe” in the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* and Boccaccio’s *Decameron*.’ *Neuphilologische* 99 (1998), 269–73.

The picture of the widow’s simple life and diet does not only contrast with the magnificence of Chauntecleer but recalls satirically the ascetic life that clergy, such as the Monk, should live. Although depictions of priestly self-indulgence are fundamental to medieval anti-clericalism generally, some of the closest parallels to Chaucer’s corrupt clergy are found in Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (see Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (Cambridge, 1973)). The story of Rinaldo (day seven, story three) in particular has several elements that relate closely to the picture of the poor widow, such as the contrast between the corrupt life of the clergy and the ideal of a simple life, founded upon a meagre diet and abstinence. [PG]

- 722e** McGerr, Rosemarie P. *Chaucer's Open Books: Resistance to Closure in Medieval Discourse*. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998. *NPT* revises the 'single-voiced discourse' (p 149) of *MkT* and its rejection of fiction, an echo of the relationship between the Parson's Prologue and Tale and the Retractions. Fragment VII contains 'Chaucer's most ironic portrayal of himself as author' (p 151). The innovation in citing Romans 15:4 lies in extending the parallel with the Bible to the entire structure and meaning of *CT*. Although *CT* can never claim the Bible's authority, it 'suggests that the word of God does not inhere in a single book of the Bible or in the voice of a single commentator' (p 151). [PG]
- 722f** Condren, Edward I. *Chaucer and the Energy of Creation: the Design and Organization of the Canterbury Tales*. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1999. Gaylord's claim **639** that fragment VII makes a serious attempt to identify the craft of literature has by now received general acceptance, but no two critics agree about what these literary perceptions might be. In calling for a merry tale from the Monk, the Host mistakes the Monk's external form for the man within. The Monk's actual tale overcompensates, but the narrator is not confident in the tragic mode. The Monk's definition of tragedy does not accord with other usages by Chaucer (for example in *NPT*), nor does it accurately describe all the stories he tells. In the story of Croesus, the Monk recasts his definition of tragedy, locating it 'in the dynamic between some central figure's self-consciousness and a Fortune able to respond with a moral lesson' (p 232).
The tale of Ugolino shows the pull being exerted to move the Monk away from his *de casibus* form. The interruptions by Knight and Host focus in different ways on the relationship between form and matter in story-telling. *NPT* contains 'the political, social, and theological struggles that define much of fourteenth-century culture' (pp 236–7), yet the everyday barnyard skirmish that is central to the plot would pass unnoticed were it not for the narrator's brilliant dilation. The hero of the tale is vellum and ink. [PG]
- 722g** Gruenler, Curtis. 'Desire, Violence and the Passion in Fragment VII of *The Canterbury Tales*: a Girardian Reading.' *Renascence* 52 (1999), 35–56. Fragment VII of *CT* addresses the theme of human violence as well as the more commonly noticed issues of genre and interpretation. René Girard has argued that the Gospels oppose those myths of human culture that are founded on violence by telling the story of Christ's suffering from the perspective of the innocent victim. The 'sentence' of all the tales in the fragment rests on an understanding of Christ's Passion as the key to healing violence in the human world. The first three tales of the fragment show the tendencies to mythologize violence. *MkT* and *NPT* 'explore the potential for discerning literary responses to violence through the modes of tragedy and comedy' (p 38).

Depending upon the text, there are two alternatives to accepting the suffering of the tragedies of *MkT*: accepting the heaviness of tragedy in small doses, as does the Knight; or rejecting suffering as contamination, as does the Host. The tales all illustrate the part played by rivalry in bringing about human suffering and ruin, especially the ‘transcendent rivalry’ (p 52) against God or Fortune. Comedy surprises tragedy in *NPT*, but although the proud tricks his way out of a catastrophe, the morals of pride and self-knowledge should not be disregarded. The simile used to describe the barnyard commotion, ‘it semed as that hevене sholde falle’ (VII.3401) reminds us that ‘apocalypticism is the most violent discourse of all’ (p 54). [PG]

722h Brown, Peter. *A Companion to Chaucer*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Chaucer emphasizes the Latin encyclopaedist lineage of *MkT* in his rubric, but the tale is not a systematic imitation of Boccaccio’s treatise, *De casibus*. Although the Monk’s interruption of the tale is couched in broad language, it offers a complex critique of the Monk’s performance. Elsewhere, for example in *CIT*, there is a recognition that ‘the humanist encyclopaedic impulse ... is considered surplus to current requirements’ (p 226). Pertelote’s speech about dreams (VII.2923-39) and her prescription of laxatives (VII.2942-66) sound much like a parody of Bartholomeus’s *De proprietatibus rerum*. *NPT* is a ‘prime example of Chaucer’s ability to speak through traditional forms’ (p 370). At the risk of sounding absurd, Chauntecleer does develop self-insight and self-reflexiveness by the end of the tale: ‘what Chauntecleer has at the end of his experience is experience’ (p 371). [PG]

722i Phillips, Helen. *An Introduction to the Canterbury Tales: Reading, Fiction, Context*. Houndmills Mcmillan, 2000.

An introduction to *CT*, with chapters on each of the tales. *MkT* is a version in miniature of the whole of *CT*, but focused on the single theme of the fall of great men. Although the medieval concept of tragedy belongs to a religious worldview, the Monk’s focus is on this world: ‘the stories are well told, enlivened with rhetorical variety, and have plenty of interest of their own’ (p 181). There are many allusions to man’s contemporary matters of concern, but Chaucer omits crucial information in the Modern Instances. *NPT* is clearly a tale with multiple meanings, many looking back to *MkT*, and it is also ‘a rhetorical *tour de force*’ (p 186). The tale raises questions to do with both textual reception and with interpretation. There is no need to be a thoroughgoing Robertsonian to accept that *NPT* demonstrates an important Christian truth, ‘that a fall into sin is caused by mental blindness born of his own worldliness and sensuality as much as by the devil’ (p 190). [PG]