#### GLOSSARY

(E): Refers the reader to Endpapers, a select glossary, which has fuller definitions of a few key terms (see below).

A-back: backwards A-bed: in bed Amid: in the middle A-night: in the night, at night Anon: immediately **Array**: clothing, finery Apostle: St. Paul or one of Christ's immediate 12 followers. Avaunt: boast Aye: always, continually Bear in hand: deceive Belle chose: beautiful thing. See quaint 2 and quoniam. **Bencitee** Abbr. Lat: "*Benedicite*" = "Bless (you)," "Bless (us!)" The number of syllables varies with the line: ben-stee, ben-sit-ee, ben-dis-i-tee, ben-e-dis-i-tee Bet: better Blive: quickly Boot(e): cure, benefit Bren: burn Buckler: shield But (if): unless, only, except

**Can**: know how to, be able to Cart: cart, chariot Catel / chattel: goods Certes: certainly **Cheap**: v. to buy, n. market, supply Churl: low born fellow. (E) Clepe, clepen, cleped: call, be called, be named **Coat Armor**: the cloth tunic worn over armor and often decorated with the knight's coat of arms to identify him. **Could**: knew (how to), was able to. Past tense of "can." Cuckold: a man whose wife is unfaith--ful; a figure of fun. Among other things, he is said to wear horns on his head. Daungerous: cool, aloof (E) Debt: in its conjugal sense, the obliga--tion of one married partner to sat-

-isfy the other's sexual need when required. **Deem, deemen:** think, judge

Defend: forbid, denounce Degree: social rank, age Doom: judgement, court Eft: again Eke: also Ever each: each one, everyone Eyen: eyes Fabliau: short naughty story (E) Fain: glad Fay: faith Ferforthly: As far as, to that extent Fetis: pretty, neat Fine: finish. end For-: this prefix is often "intensive." "forwrapped": completely wrapped up. "fordrunk": totally drunk Forward: a bargain, agreement Gan: began, but frequently indicates simply

past tense Gay: cheerful, fine, well dressed Gentle, gentleness: well bred. (E) Gossip: literally a godparent or godchild, a confidant. (E)

Hent: seize, seized Hest: command(ment) Hight: called, named

Ilke; th'ilke : the same, the very Inn: house

Kind: nature, birth Kirk: church

Leve: dear, beloved Lever: rather Lest: = List Lewd: ignorant, lay (as in "laymen") Likerous: lecherous. (E) Like: please, "it liketh me" = "it pleases me" List : wish, want; "Where God list: where God wishes. "list me not to write": I do not wish to write; "where him list": where he pleases Lordings: ladies and gentlemen (E) Lorn: lost Lust: see "List". Desire of any kind including

sexual desire, pleasure. Also strong feelings, like grief (See Kn.T. 3063) Luxury (Lat. luxuria): lechery, sexual lust

Maugre(e): despite; "maugre his head (eyes)": in spite of his wishesMethinks, methinketh: it seems to me

Nas, Nis = N'as N'is = was not, is not
Ne: negative grammatical particle
Nill or n'ill = ne will = will not
Niste or n'iste = ne wiste = did not know. Past tense of "n'ot."
Nones, nonce: the occasion. (E)
Not or n'ot = ne wot = does not know
Nould or n'ould = ne would = would not
Pardee: by God
Parson: parish priest, different from a friar or a monk

Quaint (1) adj: odd, clever, devious, intricateQuaint (2) noun: female genitals; same meaning as next entry.Quoniam: female genitals. (See quaint 2 and belle chose)

Quit: repay, get even

**Rede, redde:** advice (noun), advise (verb) **Rown**: whisper

Sely: happy, hapless, simpleminded, innocent (E)
Sentence: view, opinion, judgement, meaning
Shrew: wretch, nasty person (male or female)
Silly: See "sely" (E)
Sikerly: certainly
Sith: since
Somedeal: some part, somewhat.
Sooth: truth, true
Starve: die (not necessarily of hunger),
Stint: stop
Suffer: Allow, endure
Swink(en): to work
Swinker: worker
Swithe: quickly, very

Targe: shield

Thee (verb): to prosper, succeed; theech = thee ich = I prosper. Also occurs as theek = thee ik so theek = so may I prosper
Think: to think, to seem. Methinks = it seems to
 me, them thought = it seemed to them
Thilke: = the ilke = the same, the very
Tooth: taste, consumption; "colt's to o th ":
 youthful taste
Troth: truth, word of honor
Trow : guess, think
Tway: two

**Unethe(s)** or **Unnethe(s)**: barely, scarcely **Upright**: face up

Very: true, real, absolute

Villain: man of lowest social order

Villainy: conduct thought to be typical of a "villain," ignoble or shameful behavior

Ween(en): think; past t. "wend" = thought; "they wenden": they thought. Not to be confused with the next verb in this list.

Wenden : to wend (one's way), "they wend": they go.

Wher(e): whether, wherever

Whilom: once upon a time

Wight: creature, person

Wimple: a garment of soft cloth worn by women and which covered the neck and part of the chin and forehead.

Past participle of the verb is "Y-wimpled." Wisly: certainly

Wiste: knew; its negative is "n'iste" = did not know

Wit, Witen: knowledge, to know. (E)

Wood: mad

**Wot**: knows, (negative: n'ot) = does not know

**Y**-: a prefix generally indicating past participle **Ywis**: certainly, indeed.

# **ENDPAPERS / SELECT GLOSSARY**

AUTHORITY, Auctoritee, Authors: The literate in the Middle Ages were remarkably bookish in spite of or because of the scarcity of books. They had a great, perhaps inordinate, regard for "authority," that is, established "authors": philosophers of the ancient world, classical poets, the Bible, the Church Fathers, historians, theologians, etc. Citing an "authority" was then, as now, often a substitute for producing a good argument, and then, as now, always useful to bolster an argument. The opening line of the Wife of Bath's Prologue uses "authority" to mean something like "theory"--what you find in books-- as opposed to "experience"--what you find in life.

CLERK: Strictly speaking a member of the clergy, either a priest or in the preliminary stages leading up to the priesthood, called "minor orders." Learning and even literacy were largely confined to such people, but anyone who who could read and write as well as someone who was genuinely learned could be called a clerk. A student, something in between, was also a clerk. The Wife of Bath marries for her fifth husband, a man who had been a clerk at Oxford, a student who had perhaps had ideas at one time of becoming a cleric.

"CHURL, churlish": At the opposite end of the social scale and the scale of manners from "gentil" (See below). A "churl" (OE "ceorl") was a common man of low rank. Hence the manners to be expected from a person of such "low birth" were equally low and vulgar, "churlish." "Villain" and "villainy" are rough equivalents also used by Chaucer.

# COMPLEXION: See Humor below

COURTESY, Courteous, Courtoisie, etc.: Courtesy was literally conduct appropriate to the court of the king or other worthy. This, no doubt, included our sense of "courtesy" but was wider in its application, referring to the manners of all well bred people. The Prioress's concern to "counterfeit cheer of court" presumably involves imitating all the mannerisms thought appropriate to courtiers. Sometimes it is used to mean something like right, i.e. moral, conduct.

DAUN, Don: Sir. A term of respect for nobles or for clerics like the monk. The Wife of Bath refers to the wise "king Daun Solomon," a place where it would be wise

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to leave the word untranslated. But Chaucer uses it also of Gervase, the blacksmith in the "Miller's Tale." And Spenser used it of Chaucer himself.

DAUNGER, Daungerous: These do not mean modern "danger" and "dangerous." "Daunger" (from OF "daungier") meant power--in romantic tales the power that a woman had over a man who was sexually attracted by her. She was his "Mistress" in the sense that she had power over him, often to refuse him the least sexual favor. Hence "daungerous" often indicated a woman who was "hard-to-get" or over-demanding or disdainful, haughty, aloof.

DREAMS: There was a good deal of interest in dream theory in the Middle Ages, and considerable difference of opinion: some held that dreams were generally inconsequential, others that dreams often were of considerable significance. Those of the "significant" school had biblical support from both testaments e.g. Pharaoh's dream of the fat cows and lean cows and Joseph's interpretation (Gen. 41) and many others in the OT, and in the NT, e.g. the other Joseph's dreams that assured him that Mary his wife was pregnant with Christ through divine intervention (Matt. 1:20, 2:13-20). They also had Macrobius's famous Commentary on the Dream of Scipio which distinguished between 5 different kinds of dream, 3 of them significant ("visio, somnium, and oraculum") and 2 insignificant ("insomnium" and " visum" or "phantasma"). The first 3 were felt to be prophetic in one way or another by Macrobius; the other 2 either simply carried on the worries or desires of the day, or were formed of disconnected and fragmentary images (phantasma) supposedly the result of indigestion. These last two, of least interest to the philosopher, might be of more interest to the psychologist and poet.

Chaucer has several dream vision poems, in most of which he has some discussion of dream theory: *The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame, The Legend of Good Women, The Parliament of Fowls*, especially the opening of *House of Fame* on the causes and significance of dreams. The argument of Chanticleer with Pertelote about the value of his dream in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* illustrates the common medieval disagreements, and brings up references to a number of the authorities that have been mentioned above.

The most influential sources of the tradition of writing dream poems were Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and the *Romance of the Rose*, a French poem of the early 13th century. Chaucer had translated both of these in whole or in part.

"GENTLE, Gentil, Gentilesse, Gentleness: "Gentilesse" (Gentleness) is the quality of being "gentil" or "gentle" i.e. born into the upper class, and having "noble" qualities that were supposed to go with noble birth. It survives in the word "gentleman" especially in a phrase like "an officer & a gentleman" since officers traditionally were members of the ruling class. Chaucer seems to have had a healthy sceptical bourgeois view of the notion that "gentilesse" went always with "gentle" birth. See the lecture on the subject given by the "hag" in the Wife of Bath's Tale (1109-1176). But since "gentle" is used also to describe the Tabard Inn and the two greatest scoundrels on the pilgrimage, the Summoner and the Pardoner, one must suppose that it had a wide range of meanings, some of them perhaps ironic.

GOSSIP: (from Old English "God sib") literally a "God relation," i.e. a spiritual relation from baptism, a godchild or godparent. By Chaucer's time, it meant "confidant" with a flavor of our modern meaning to it.

HUMOR (Lat. humor--fluid, moisture)./ COMPLEXION: Classical, medieval and Renaissance physiologists saw the human body as composed of four fluids or humors: yellow bile, black bile, blood and phlegm. Perfect physical health and intellectual excellence were seen as resulting from the presence of these four humors in proper balance and combination.

Medieval philosophers and physiologists, seeing man as a microcosm, corresponded each bodily humor to one of the four elements--fire, water, earth, air. As Antony says of Brutus in *Julius Caesar* 

His life was gentle, and the elements So mixed in him that Nature might stand up And say to all the world "This was a man" (V,v,73-75).

Pain or illness was attributed to an imbalance in these bodily fluids, and an overabundance of any single humor was thought to give a person a particular personality referred to as "humor" or "complexion." The correspondences went something like this:

Fire--Yellow or Red Bile (Choler)--Choleric, i.e. prone to anger Earth-- Black Bile-- melancholic i.e. prone to sadness Water-- Blood-- sanguine--inclined to cheerfulness, optimism

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### Air -- Phlegm -- phlegmatic--prone to apathy, slow

Too much red bile or choler could make you have nightmares in which red things figured; with too much black bile you would dream about black monsters. (See *Nun's Priest's Tale*, 1l. 4120-26). "Of his complexion he was sanguine" is said of the Franklin in the General Prologue. Similarly,

"The Reeve was a slender choleric man" (G.P. 589). The Franklin's "complexion" (i.e. humor) makes him cheerful, and the Reeve's makes him cranky. A person's temperament was often visible in his face, hence our modern usage of "complexion." Even when the physiological theory of humors had long been abandoned, the word "humor" retained the meaning of "mood" or "personality." And we still speak of being in a good or bad humor.

LEMMAN: A lover, a sweetheart. Not a courtly term, but used by the likes of Nicholas and Absalom about Alison in the "Millers Tale," for example. The Manciple has a long gloss on this "knavish" word used of poorer women, but not to be used of ladies (unless they are trollops too). It is, he says, the equivalent of "wench." See Manciple's T. 205 ff.

LIKEROUS: Lecherous, though this sometimes seems a harsh rendering. In the "Miller's T" Alison has a "likerous" eye. "Lecherous" might fit there, though "flirtatious" is probably better. In the "Wife of Bath's Prologue" (732) it is used of Lucia who was so "likerous" of her husband that she killed him. "Jealous" seems a more accurate rendering here.

LORDINGS: Something like "Ladies and Gentlemen." The first citation in OED contrasts "lordings" with "underlings." "Lordings" is used by both the Host and the Pardoner to address the rest of the pilgrims, not one of whom is a lord, though the Host also calls them "lords."

NONES: For the Nones; For the Nonce: literally "for the once," "for the occasion", but this meaning often does not fit the context in Chaucer, where the expression is frequently untranslateable, and is used simply as a largely meaningless tag, sometimes just for the sake of the rime.

PARDONER: The Church taught that one could get forgiveness for one's sins by confessing them to a priest, expressing genuine regret and a firm intention to mend one's ways. In God's name the priest granted absolution, and imposed some kind of

penance for the sin. Instead of a physical penance like fasting, one might obtain an "indulgence" by, say, going on pilgrimage, or giving money to the poor or to another good cause like the building of a church.

There were legitimate Church pardoners licenced to collect moneys of this kind and to assure the people in the name of the Church that their almsgiving entitled them to an "indulgence." Even with the best of intentions, this practice was liable to abuse. For "where there is money there is muck," and illegitimate pardoners abounded in spite of regular Church prohibitions. They were sometimes, presumably, helped by gullible or corrupt clerics for a fee or a share of the takings. Our Pardoner tells ignorant people that if they give money to a good cause--which he somehow represents-- they will be doing penance for their sins and can even omit the painful business of confession; that, in fact, he can absolve them from their sins for money. This was, of course, against all Church law and teaching.

SHREW: "Shrew, shrewed, beshrew" occur constantly in the Tales and are particularly difficult to gloss. The reader is best off providing his own equivalent in phrases like "old dotard shrew' (291) or "I beshrew thy face."

SILLY, Sely: Originally in Old English "saelig" = "blessed." By ME it still sometimes seems to retain some of this sense. It also means something like "simple", including perhaps "simpleminded" as in the case of the Carpenter John in the "Millers Tale." The Host's reference to the "silly maid" after the Physician's Tale means something like "poor girl." and the "sely widow" of "Nuns Priests Tale" is a "poor widow" in the same sense. The Wife of Bath refers to the genital organ of the male as "his silly instrument."

SUMMONER: A man who delivered summonses for accused people to appear before an ecclesiastical court for infringements of morals or of ecclesiastical laws. He operated in a society where sin and crime were not as sharply differentiated as they are in our society. This inevitably led to abuse. Our summoner abuses his position by committing the very sins he is supposed to be chastising. The Friars Tale, about a summoner, gives more details of the abuses: using information from prostitutes to blackmail clients; extracting money from others on the pretence that he had a summons when he had none, etc.

SOLACE: Comfort, pleasure, often of a quite physical, indeed sexual, nature, though not exclusively so.

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WIT: Rarely if ever means a clever verbal and intellectual sally, as with us. It comes from the OE verb "witan," to know, and hence as a noun it means "knowledge" or "wisdom" "understanding" "comprehension," "mind," "intelligence" etc.