

Chapter Five

Griselda Translated

The story of Griselda in the fourteenth century is a story of translation. Boccaccio's version of the folktale, the last tale in his *Decameron*, was translated by Petrarch into Latin (*Seniles* 17.3) and adapted by Sercambi in his *Novella*. Petrarch's version, in turn, was translated into French by Philippe de Mézières, whose version was then adapted by the author of *Le Ménagier de Paris* and by the author of a play in verse, *L'Estoire de la Marquise de Saluce*. Petrarch's Latin prose was also the basis of a Latin verse adaptation by Peter de Hailles. Chaucer's English verse translation works from both Petrarch's Latin and an anonymous French prose translation of Petrarch, *Le Livre Griseldis*.¹

One might well ask why the history of Griselda was so popular, so apparently compelling, in the second half of the fourteenth century. The particular narrative outline of the tale, we might observe, seems well suited to the specific literary preoccupations of the late fourteenth century in England and on the continent.² The tale's clear, almost schematic outline of the relationship between husband and wife rendered it useful as an exemplum (the French versions); its potential for pathos suggested both dramatic treatment (*L'Estoire*) and an upward shift in level of style, rendering it an occasion for affective response (Petrarch); and the moral issue of the truth-value of fictional discourse itself could be thrown into relief by the tale's inclusion in collections of narratives (Boccaccio, Sercambi, Chaucer), where the meaning or value of the tale could be debated.

But these features of the narrative do not, I think, constitute the whole of its attractiveness, either to the fourteenth century or to later generations of redactors. Many late-medieval readers seem in fact to have found the story of Walter's treatment of his wife repugnant: Dioneo, who narrates the tale in the *Decameron*, was not alone in deeming Walter's trial of Griselda a needless outrage.³ How *can* the "difficult" relationship—to use one critic's delicate euphemism—between Walter and Griselda be explained?⁴ The tale's appeal, I suggest, lies precisely in its posing of this interpretive problem; for each trans-

lation—each literary treatment—provides an interpretation, implicit or explicit, of that question.

If the tale's attractiveness does indeed lie in its hermeneutic difficulty, the treatment of a woman, a wife, is the focus of this interpretive interest. What concerns me here is not the suggestion that relations between men and women are always in need of exegesis. This may in fact be true, but I am more interested in the very conjunction of the problem of the treatment of a wife with the problem of the interpretation of a text—the intersection of hermeneutics with the question of the feminine. In this literary history of the Griselda tale we see that once again woman is associated with a text to be read and interpreted by men (and to be read, as well, by women who are being trained by men to be wives). Petrarch's own approach to the text itself clearly points up this association: as he documents it in *Seniles* 17.3, the occasion of translating this tale of the proving of a wife becomes an occasion for his proving the affective value of the literary text itself.⁵ Implicitly, Petrarch takes the thematic, domestic issue of the proper function of a wife and links it with a literary issue, the proper function of a text. And it is this link, I suggest, that interested Chaucer's Clerk, surely the most literate storyteller among the Canterbury pilgrims, and a reader who, as we shall see, is profoundly concerned with the social effects of literary activity. If this preoccupation seems unlikely for the unworldly Clerk—the one who keeps twenty volumes of Aristotle at his bed's head—we might remember that he not only learns but teaches; the Clerk's world is not only one of books but of books as they become part of the social fabric.

For it is not only, in the *Clerk's Tale*, the tale of Griselda that is translated. Griselda herself is "translated . . . in swich richesse" (385).⁶ Translation takes place on a feminine body, as it does as well in *Troilus and Criseyde*; like "glossing" in the Wife of Bath's Prologue and *Tale*, it is a masculine hermeneutic gesture performed on the woman, on the text. Walter "translates" Griselda: he sees her and recognizes her natural beauty and virtues even in her impoverished condition, under her ragged clothes; he chooses her for his bride, takes her from her father, orders her to be stripped and reclothed in finery, and makes her wife and mistress of his household. The Hieronymian image of the classical text as alien woman to be passed between men, stripped, and reclothed for the bridal—the representation of allegorical reading as a trade, reclothing, marriage, and domestication of a woman—that we have been following throughout Chaucer's works is very useful in discussing Walter's acts of translation: the allegorical reading Jerome describes is, as we shall see, fundamentally an act of translation, an

act of discovering, interpreting, and carrying over wisdom from one social group to another (from pagans to Christians). Walter's "translating" Griselda closely enacts this Hieronymian hermeneutic parable; the Clerk's narrative attention to the passage of Griselda between men (from Janicula to Walter, back to Janicula, and finally back to Walter) and his attention to Griselda's clothes in this tale gain hermeneutic significance when we read the tale in reference to the image of the alien woman. These narrative preoccupations gain even greater hermeneutic dimensionality when viewed in relation to the Wife of Bath, that vociferous incarnation of the ostentatiously garbed alien herself, for whom the "Envoy" to the *Clerk's Tale* is sung. I shall argue, in fact, that the Clerk's performance is a further expression of the Wife of Bath's point that there are real and poignant consequences for women of conceiving of literary activity as a masculine enterprise that is dependent on the occlusion of feminine desire.

Among the Canterbury pilgrims, the highly educated Clerk is the one who can most easily be imagined actually to know this image of the allegorical text as veiled captive woman passed between men. But whether or not he does, his focus on specific narrative details, particularly clothing, suggests a connection to the issues of interpretation that are his explicit concern as he tells of Walter's behavior. This notion of such a connection is supported by the fact that Chaucer has heightened and pointed the clothing imagery of the Griselda tale in creating the Clerk's version, as Severs notes.⁷ If the assertively clothed Wife of Bath is an embodiment of the captive woman who hasn't been stripped, whose head isn't shaved, nails aren't pared—an incarnation of the *letter* of the text—Griselda, despoiled of her old, ragged clothes and reclothed for her marriage to Walter, is, I suggest, the truth or *spirit* of the text that has been discovered and put to Christian use.

But like "glossing" in the Wife's Prologue and *Tale*, translation in the *Clerk's Tale* has a double valence. *Translatio*, as we'll see in medieval writings, has the potential for revealing the truth and wholeness, the plenitude of the female body, but it also has a potential for turning away from, obliterating, that body; for dissembling and substituting; for estranging truth and fragmenting that wholeness. Walter's actions throughout the narrative realize both potentials of *translatio*: if he discovers the virtue, the "trouthe" of the woman, he also, subsequently, doubts that "corage"—he lies, dissembles, separates her from her offspring, and finally acts out the precise reverse of the Hieronymian warrior's action of marriage by pretending to divorce Griselda. And as in the *Legend of Hypermnestra* and the *Man of Law's Tale*, the patriarchal model's breakdown is associated with the violation of patriarchy's

laws regulating its exchange of women: Walter stages a marriage to a woman who is in fact his own daughter.

As he narrates the tale, the Clerk is outraged by Walter's actions, his "nedeles" testing of the perfectly steadfast Griselda. But we must remember, of course, that the Clerk is himself a translator, like Walter, and is thus implicated in this double-valenced activity: he is translating the tale from Petrarch, that other "worthy clerk." That text, "the body of his tale" (42), is taken by one man from another in the Clerk's own act of *translatio*. Indeed, as a student at Oxford, "unto logyk . . . longe ygo," the Clerk is associated with *translatio* in various ways: he studies the translations of Aristotle that came to the Latin-speaking world through Boethius (and, later, through the Arabic); he thereby observes, in his studies, the *translatio studii* from Greece to Rome. An elaborate myth of *translatio studii* was cultivated in reference to Oxford University itself: the legend begins with the institution's foundation by King Mempric, a contemporary of David, and traces its *translatio* by Greek professors who allegedly came over to England with Brutus after the fall of Troy; they established a school in Wiltshire, which was later transferred to Oxford.⁸ And as one who himself teaches, the Clerk participates further in this *translatio studii*, this transfer of knowledge.

But despite this parallel with Walter as translator, the Clerk sympathizes, in the telling of his tale, not with the translator but with the translated, not with Walter but with Griselda, not with the man but with the woman. Throughout his performance he condemns Walter's actions with unequivocal statements and indignant outbursts, and advances three different explanations for his extraordinary behavior (each more severe than the last, his final suggestion being that Walter is a compulsive maniac: "ther been folk of swich condicion . . ." [701-7]). Explicitly opposing himself to other clerks, he celebrates what he identifies as Griselda's specifically womanly strength and humility (932-38); and in his "thredbare" (1:290) cloak and poor-scholar aspect, he even looks a bit like Griselda, that "povre creature" (232), in her old, threadbare garments—a similarity that, given the sartorial preoccupations of the tale, is significant. Even before the Clerk speaks, the Host picks up this something about him, this resemblance to or sympathy with the female, so that Harry identifies him proleptically with the newly betrothed heroine of his tale—" 'Sire Clerk of Oxenford,' oure Hooste sayde, / 'Ye ryde as coy and stille as dooth a mayde / Were newe spoused . . . ' " (1-3)—and not with translators or *glossatores*: "This day ne herde I of youre *tonge* a word" (4; my emphasis). The Clerk responds to the Host by putting himself under the

Host's "yerde": "Ye han of us as now the governance, / And therfore wol I do yow obeisance" (23–24), that "obeisance" echoing Griselda's "obeisance" to Walter (cf., e.g., 502).

The Clerk is in a Griselda-like position not only vis-à-vis the burly Host (a would-be Walter, perhaps: he wishes his wife had heard this tale; it is, he comments, "a gentil tale for the nones / As to my purpos" [1212e–f]). He is also in such a position in relation to another figure of authority: the *auctor* Petrarch, "lauriat poete" (31). Walter and Petrarch, of course, are both translators, translators into the "richesse" of the "heigh stile." The Clerk's identification with Griselda suggests a relationship to the translator Petrarch similar to that between Griselda and the translator in the narrative, Walter (that is, the Clerk is to Petrarch as Griselda is to Walter). Both Griselda and the Clerk are in lowly positions in relation to the others: Griselda is elevated by Walter, completely dependent upon him for her noble status; the Clerk comes after Petrarch, derives his narrative material from the Italian, and praises the great poet for his "rethorike sweete" (31–32). But there is a level of aggression, too, that both Griselda and the Clerk demonstrate against the others; albeit quiet, it is deep. As Judith Ferster has observed, Griselda responds to Walter's initial marriage demands with a promise of even more than he asks, as if rising to a perceived challenge or proving that she is in fact stronger than even he requires: she promises never to disobey him "In werk ne thought" (363), although he has asked only that she not "grucche" or contradict him "Neither by word ne frownyng contenance" (356); although he does not ask her to, she swears "For to be deed" (364).⁹ When he orders her to return to her father's house, she demands a smock in return for her lost virginity, with words that are assertive, even vaguely threatening. Finally she warns him forthrightly not to "prikke with no tormentyng" (1038) his new wife as he did her. The Clerk, similarly, displays some aggression toward Petrarch: the great poet is not only dead but "nayled in his cheste" (29), and the Clerk dwells a moment too long to be innocent on the power and inevitability of death. He dismisses Petrarch's "prohemye" (unique in all the fourteenth-century versions and distinctly characteristic of Petrarch's rhetorical style) as "a thyng impertinent"; he eschews Petrarch's "heigh stile," choosing instead to render the tale in the vernacular; and by the end of his performance, as we shall see, he has demonstrated that Petrarch's allegorical interpretation—part and parcel of his "heigh stile"—is radically inadequate.¹⁰

The relationships among the translators and the translated, then, are not simple in the Clerk's performance. *Translatio* always involves a relation to a previous authority or figure of the proper. Whether con-

sidered as the basis of a theory of history (*translatio imperii*) or literature (*translatio studii*), or as a general rhetorical term that encompasses all kinds of tropes (figurative language, in which there is a substitution of one term for another), *translatio* articulates a movement away from the authoritative, the proper, and an establishment of another authority or propriety.¹¹ Taking a cue from the etymology of *translatio*, we might call this structure of identifications (Clerk/Griselda, Petrarch/Walter) loosely transferential, drawing upon the psychological implications of the term.¹² The aspect of psychoanalytic transference relevant to our purposes here is simply its structure: the relationship to a previous authority is played out in the structure of a present or current relationship. The Clerk's identification against Walter can be read as his critique of Petrarch's *translatio* and a working-out of a new kind of literary authority. I shall argue that Chaucer, through the Clerk, suggests a revision of the model of patriarchal hermeneutics more radical than the one he has developed through the Wife of Bath: the Clerk not only has the woman speak, as we shall see, and has her point out that the patriarchal model occludes feminine desire, feminine experience; he also breaks up the bonding between men that structures that patriarchal hermeneutic (and is its goal), identifying himself *against* Petrarch. As we shall see, a new hermeneutic—a way of reading, indeed, like a woman—proceeds from the Clerk's identification with the female.

Let us begin the analysis of the Clerk's performance, then, by considering two contrasting values attached to *translatio* in the Middle Ages. We have already considered translation briefly in *Troilus and Criseyde*, focusing on the act as an expression of the narrator's emotional response to the seductive letter of his text. Now I want to shift that focus to the interpretive function of the act, to argue that throughout the Middle Ages *translatio* is seen to have a dangerously double hermeneutic potential.

1

Jerome, "patron saint of translators," as Valery Larbaud has called him, uses the image of the clothed body to describe not only the classical text to be interpreted allegorically, for Christian use, but also the text translated from one language to another.¹³ In the preface to his translation of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, for example, he comments that some readers of translations of the Scriptures "*superficiem, non medullam inspiciunt, ante quasi vestem orationis sordidam perhorrescant, quam pulchrum intrinsecus rerum corpus inveniant*" ("looking

at the surface, not at the substance, shudder at the squalid dress before they discover the fair body which the language clothes").¹⁴ And the image of the captive occurs not only in his description of the Christian interpretation of the classical text but in his famous letter 57, to Pammachius, on the best method of translation from one language to another: he commends Hilarius the confessor, who "quasi captiuos sensus in suam linguam uictoris iure transposuit" ("like a conqueror . . . has led away captive into his own tongue the meaning of his originals").¹⁵

As the fact that this imagery is used in descriptions of both interpretation and translation suggests, the structure of the two activities is the same: both involve the substitution of one signified for another, the transfer of meaning into a new context. *Translatio* is in fact an inclusive rhetorical term that encompasses not only what we identify as the usual act of translation (from one language into another—"interlingual translation," in Roman Jakobson's useful terminology) but also the making of a trope (all figurative language in general, in which there is a substitution of an "improper" term for a "proper" one) and the act of interpretation, since all interpretation, substituting as it does one signified for another, is essentially figurative.¹⁶ The terms *interpretatio* and *translatio* were apparently synonymous and current during the Middle Ages, *translatio* becoming more prominent toward the end of the period. Jerome certainly uses the two interchangeably; Augustine, as Eugene Vance observes, in *De doctrina christiana* uses *interpretatio* to denote both the written *translatio* of Scripture and the understanding of figurative meanings (*translationes*). And interlingual translation in the Middle Ages had a pronounced hermeneutic function, one, as Rita Copeland demonstrates, of the discovery (*inventio*) and subsequent appropriation of meaning.¹⁷

Interlingual translation and interpretation, for Jerome, were not only contiguous activities; they constituted one integral project. Of his translation of Eusebius' *Onomasticon*, for example, he comments that he is at once "translator and founder of a new work" ("Semel enim et in temporum libro praefatus sum, me vel interpretem esse vel novi operis conditorem").¹⁸ He has corrected, interpreted, and completed the Eusebius text. He wrote his scriptural commentaries at the same time that he was translating the Hebrew Bible, but he clearly engaged in translating *as* interpretation. Translation is indeed a philological project undertaken as exegesis: even though he claimed otherwise in the case of Scripture, in all his translations he rendered not the letter, not word for word, but the sense, the spirit. He expressed this most succinctly in his letter 57, to Pammachius, in which he claims

that his intention was “non uerbum e uerbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu” (“to render not word for word, but sense for sense”), but he adumbrates this intention in many comments on translation.¹⁹

Jerome clearly believed that in the act of translation he could discover and restore the original *sensus* of the Scriptures. He was compelled to return to the “Hebrew verity,” first to write his *Hebraicae quaestiones* and *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, then to produce his own Latin version of the Hebrew Bible and his commentaries on the texts, because he felt the Septuagint and other translations of the original language had dispersed, mistaken, confused its original authority.²⁰ As a return to Hebrew, the language thought to be the original language of humankind, Jerome’s translation, I might suggest, even rediscovers the original oneness of all languages, a unity nostalgically yearned for throughout the Middle Ages.²¹

Translatio viewed in its aspect as trope can be seen, similarly, to have a creative, revelatory, interpretive potential. Augustine, in the *De doctrina*, remarks with wonder that figurative language in Scripture is more pleasing than literal statement; later, and in a secular context, Geoffrey of Vinsauf delights in the pleasures of metaphor (*transferatio*, under the category of *transsumptio*) which, he writes, transforms old clothes into something new.²² The revelatory power of metaphor was celebrated most exuberantly by twelfth- and thirteenth-century writers: Chartrians laud poetry (of which *translatio* was the most important constituent) along with music as expressions of divine creativity.²³ *Translatio* has the capacity to make the reader (or hearer) see something in a new way. As Margaret Nims writes, it finds similarity in dissimilarity, gives mental perceptions verbal form, makes them available “in a new way to human sense and imagination” (Aristotle describes the experience of metaphor in the *Rhetoric*: “How true that is, and I had missed it!”).²⁴ Nims, to whose discussion of *translatio* I am indebted here, explains this power in reference to Bede’s description of metaphor in his *De schematibus et tropis*:

Something qualitative happens to *king*, for instance, when he is called ‘lion’ or ‘pelican’ or ‘sun,’ and something happens also to the things signified by the nouns *lion*, *pelican*, *sun*. The word is receptive of metaphor, but words are signs of things, and things are themselves receptive of metaphorical meaning in so far as they have sign potential.²⁵

The idea of the creative and interpretive power of *translatio* is sustained and extended, Nims suggests, by viewing Christ himself as

"the supreme instance of a *verbum translatum*," a Word given form and made available to human sensibility.²⁶ We were created through God's utterance of this Word; poetic figure imitates the original Creation, in which God uttered the first *translatio*, and we were created.²⁷ Alain de Lille in fact characterizes the Incarnation as "*nova translatio*": translation is the mechanism of both the Creation and the Redemption. In Alain's fascinating *Rithmus de incarnatione Domini*, the personified Rhetorica rejoices in the Incarnation:

Peregrinat a natura
 Nominis positio,
 Cum in Dei transit iura
 Hominis conditio;
 Novus tropus in figura,
 Nova fit constructio;
 Novus color in iunctura,
 Nova fit translatio.
 In hac Verbi copula
 Stupet omnis regula.²⁸

On the other hand, just as we have noted the pejorative connotations of glossing in relation to the Wife of Bath, we note that *translatio* has a subversive potential. Like glossing, *translatio* can be undertaken for merely worldly ends, for selfish, cupidinous purposes. Jerome at times clearly engaged in *translatio* as polemic: in his acrimonious vendetta against Ambrose, as J. N. D. Kelly observes, he openly states that he has undertaken the translation of Didymus' treatise on the Holy Spirit to contrast himself to an incompetent plagiarist writing on the same subject, and he translates Origen's homilies on Luke, further, to show up the same sort of plagiarism in another commentary on that gospel. Ambrose is the accused in both cases.²⁹ Augustine, too, was aware of the practical consequences, the schisms, that could be provoked by translation, his concern proceeding from an acute perception of radical social disjunction of which differences among languages are a symptom: in letter 104 (Jerome's correspondence), he warns Jerome that his rendering the Scriptures from the Hebrew might cause a rift between Eastern and Western Christendom, because the Septuagint would still be used by Greek-speaking Christians.³⁰

Similarly, *translatio* as trope involves a breaking apart of the "proper" relation between word and thing, and the possibilities it offers for out-and-out deceit are obvious. As the substitution of an improper term for a proper one (thus Donatus: "*tropus est dictio trans-*

lata a propria significatione ad non propriam similitudinem" ["a trope is a word or phrase transferred from its proper signification to a similitude which is not proper"],³¹ it effects a turning away from straight signification. The common description of the trope of allegory—found, for example, in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* (1.36.22)—can be used to describe all tropes, all translations: it is *alieniloquium*, other speech, saying one thing to mean another. (We might note that Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie* [1589], calls the trope of allegory "False Semblant," alluding to the arch-hypocrite of the *Roman de la rose*, who threatens to disrupt entirely the possibility of determinate meaning in that narrative.)³² Shifting from place to place—*translatio* is a transfer of one word into another place, into the place of another, into an alien place—can be viewed *in malo*, as undermining the fixity of meaning.³³ A trope disrupts logical propriety, as Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1410b, 1412a), Geoffrey of Vinsauf (*Poetria nova* 883–85), and Peter Helias (commenting on Priscian) saw; one can concentrate on the imaginative potential of trope as discovery and expression of the essential accord of word and meaning below the surface, or one can concentrate on that potential for violation, that threat of disruptiveness.³⁴

Walter's acts of *translatio*, in fact, vividly realize both of these potentials: he engages in both joyous discovery and heinous dissimulation. We return, then, to the *Clerk's Tale*, to consider Walter's treatment of his wife. He uncovers and puts to use the truth of that text, as we shall see, and he subsequently distorts, harms, and nearly obliterates that truth.

2

Walter's initial act of translating Griselda, his betrothed, "in swich riches," and accepting her into his household as wife and mother, can be read positively, *in bono*, as a hermeneutic act very much like the triumphant warrior's reclothing of that alien woman for marriage and maternity in an Israelite household. Whereas Jerome's warrior is attracted to the captive because of her beauty, her bodily charms, however, the Clerk's Walter is pointedly *not* drawn by carnal delights: if the Israelite is seduced by the elegance and gorgeousness of the alien woman's appearance, Walter recognizes that "under low degree / Was ofte vertu hid" (425–26). He perceives Griselda's inner beauties, looks through her "wrecched clothes" to the "rype and sad corage . . . in the brest of hire virginitee" (220). In an action that is the reverse of the warrior's action, Walter orders her stripped of her plain garments—garb so rude that his refined ladies can hardly stand to touch it—

and reclothed in beautiful, rich apparel. But the hermeneutic value of his action is the same as the warrior's: he perceives the virtue and wisdom of this text, and, "translating" it (385), puts it to proper use. A good matron, Griselda runs Walter's household prudently (she "koude al the feet of wyfly hoomlinesse" [429]), ever increases in manners and gentility (407-13), and (recalling, to my mind, Richard of Bury's "sons" that make up the "race" of books) begets children: "she nys nat bareyne" (448).

In its deployment of the traditional image of the veiled woman as allegorical text, Jerome's hermeneutic parable focuses on woman's body underneath the clothes—the wisdom, the truth of the text under the letter—as the means of the increase and multiplication of the faithful. The Wife of Bath's performance has emphasized that the letter, the clothing, has an integrity and value in and of itself, but in the *Clerk's Tale* the body of Griselda is what matters; her value and significance are not in the least tied to or dependent on her clothing. Griselda increases "in swich excellence / Of thewes goode" in Walter's court, but the Clerk stresses that she remains "evere vertuous" (407). However clothed, or, more to the point, unclothed, she is absolutely true: when she strips herself at Walter's command and returns to her paternal domain "naked" (871), her purity and constancy, her "trouthe," are what are revealed. Jankyn's proverb, ruefully quoted by the Wife of Bath ("'A womman cast hir shame away, / Whan she cast of hir smok'" [3:782-83]), is thus poignantly corrected.

Biform the folk hirselves strepeth she,
And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,
Toward hir fadre hous forth is she fare.

The folk hire folwe, wepynge in hir weye,
And Fortune ay they cursen as they goon;
But she fro wepyng kepte hire eyen dreye,
Ne in this tyme word ne spak she noon.

(894-900)

Covered with "hire olde coote" once again, the cloth even older and rougher than it was when she was married, she is the same Griselda, "evere" and "ay." In these threadbare garments she returns to Walter's court to prepare for his second wedding; throughout she is patient, humble, "ay sad and constant as a wal" (1047). Walter calls attention to her tattered clothes (965), as does the courtly crowd (1020), but Griselda is conspicuously "noght . . . abayst of hire clothynge" (1011). When she is divested, for the last time, of "hire rude array" (1116) and

draped in finery, it is the clothes that finally, properly, conform to her "naked" beauty and virtue:

in a clooth of gold that brighte shoon,
With a coroune of many a riche stoon
Upon hire heed, they into halle hire broghte,
And ther she was honored as hire oghte.
(1117–20)

If we read this *translatio* as realizing the positive hermeneutic potential of translation, then, Walter's subsequent urge to test his wife's "trouthe," "stedefastnesse," and "constance" realizes the negative. Walter, the translator, is the one who with "insight / In vertu" (242–43) has discerned and revealed, made public and useful, the text's wisdom and truth. But this good *translatio* goes bad; Walter dissembles, saying one thing but meaning another; he moves about, separates people from one another, substitutes one woman for another. And he runs the risk of forever losing or damaging his wife, who, characterized by her unmoving "corage" (Griselda's is anything but "slydyng": once it is in place, nothing, she says, will "chaunge my corage to another place" [511]), would seem to promise the possibility of full disclosure of meaning, of truth.

Contrasted to Griselda's unchanging "corage" and her "contenance" (708) expressive of her "hool entente" (861; cf. 973), Walter, in fact—to shift the terms of my analysis for a moment—seems himself an embodiment of trope, of *translatio* itself:

And whan this markys say
The constance of his wyf, he caste adoun
His eyen two, and wondreth that she may
In pacience suffre al this array;
And forth he goth with drery countenance,
But to his herte it was ful greet plesance.
(667–72)

This passage is a considerable expansion of the cursory Latin ("Admirans femine constanciam, turbato vultu abijt").³⁵ In an emotional tropism, he turns away "his eyen two"; his "drery countenance" says one thing, but his "herte" feels another; and he takes care to hide his real "entente" (e.g., 587). He not only feigns looks of displeasure (512–13, e.g.), but feigned documents enter the narrative, too, as he has fake bulls made for him (743). His appearance is divided from his intent,

and he causes further division in the narrative, the violent separation of the mother from her children. This division is rendered vividly, almost melodramatically, by the Clerk: the cruel sergeant, made crueler in this redaction than in Petrarch's, grabs Griselda's daughter: he "spak namoore, but out the child . . . hente / Despitously" (534–35), and later he pitilessly seizes her son.³⁶

If *translatio* proceeds by substitution, Walter's substituting one woman for another precisely acts out this process. As he orders Griselda to "voyde anon hir place," we recall Geoffrey of Vinsauf's description of the way to make a trope: "Noli semper concedere verbo / In proprio residere loco" ("Don't let a word always stay in its own place" [*Poetria nova* 758–59]). "I wol gladly yelden hire my place" (843), replies Griselda, a locus that will be filled by another woman who does not properly belong there: Walter's daughter is, in her turn, translated by him from Bologna to Saluzzo, to a *locus in quo propria non est*.³⁷ As we have seen, women are interchangeable in the paradigm of translation as a passage of a woman between men, and Walter's ostentatious staging of his remarriage proceeds according to this understanding.

Women are also functionally mute in this paradigm; the recognition of their desires is not material to the operation of the system of exchange. But Griselda *speaks*—less vociferously, certainly, than the Wife of Bath, but no less deliberately or significantly. She not only endures Walter's translations but reacts to and interprets these actions out loud. I want to turn my attention now from the translator to the translated, to the clothed and reclothed Griselda; I want to focus on the apparel itself and what various characters make of her costume changes. As we shall see, it is in fact Griselda's own response to her stripping that points to a powerful critique of patriarchal *translatio*.

3

Chaucer selects details from *Le Livre Griseldis* to supplement Petrarch's text, and frequently adds his own comments to highlight acts of clothing and reclothing in the *Clerk's Tale*. The extent to which attire is thematized within the narrative, as a result, is remarkable: the Clerk is made to fashion his narrative around Griselda's changes of clothes. We see that his eye is constantly on the "array" of those around her as well—on the rich garb of Walter, for example, and of her estranged children. In fact, not only the Clerk, as narrator, but everyone in the narrative is acutely clothes-conscious.³⁸

The "people" constantly respond to clothed appearances. We learn, for example, in a detail that Chaucer added from his French source,

that Walter's retinue, his "ladyes," dispoiling the impoverished Griselda, "were nat right glad / To handle hir clothes" (375-76). Seeing Griselda in her new "bright" clothes and gems, the "peple" scarcely recognize her as the villager they knew, so dazzled are they by her unaccustomed "fairnesse." When Walter later stages his second marriage, the people see her children and respond to "the sighte / Of hire array, so richely biseye" (983-84). And they wonder who the badly dressed creature is who so graciously attends at the wedding feast.

Walter, too, is certainly attentive to attire; the diction describing his sartorial preoccupations is specific, detailed, tactile. Preparing to espouse Griselda, he orders clothing and adornments fit for a marquise to be made for her: "And of hir clothyng took he the mesure / By a mayde lyk to hire stature" (256-57). He then has her robed in them, "for that no thyng of hir olde geere / She sholde brynge into his hous" (372-73). Later, as he asks her to clean and prepare his chambers for his pretended wedding, he draws attention—gratuitously, it would seem—to her ragged old clothes: "Thogh thyn array be badde and yvel biseye, / Do thou thy devoir at the leeste weye" (965-66). But Walter also understands a symbolic import of Griselda's clothes. This is perhaps suggested by the gratuitousness of the remark just quoted, but it is already clear earlier in the narrative (in a passage that Chaucer has expanded and pointed toward the sartorial), when Walter first begins to torment his wife:

"Grisilde," quod he, "that day
That I yow took out of youre povere array,
And putte yow in estaat of heigh noblesse—
Ye have nat that forgotten, as I gesse?"
(466-69)

"Array" and "estaat" are interchangeable here; Walter refers by "array" not only to Griselda's clothes but to her whole station in life.³⁹ (The narrator of the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* similarly correlates "condicioun," "degree," and "array" as he sets out to describe the pilgrims [1:37-41].)

It is Griselda, however, who understands most fully the import of her own clothes. She's the one who offers an explicitly allegorical reading of her being dispoiled and reclothed, a reading that is more specific here than in any of Chaucer's sources:

"For as I lefte at hoom al my clothyng,
Whan I first cam to yow, right so," quod she,

"Lefte I my wyl and al my libertee,
 And took youre clothyng; wherfore I yow preye,
 Dooth youre plesaunce; I wol youre lust obeye."
 (654–58)

Griselda here allegorically explicates her disrobing as a voluntary, eager submission to Walter; she leaves her own will and liberty at home and takes on his will symbolized by the new clothes on her back.⁴⁰ She likewise assigns a figurative value to her own nakedness when she recounts the same scene later:

My lord, ye woot that in my fadres place
 Ye dide me streepe out of my povre weede,
 And richely me cladden, of youre grace.
 To yow broghte I noght elles, out of drede,
 But feith, and nakednesse, and maydenhede.
 (862–66)

The last line—augmented by Chaucer to include her virginity—suggests a figurative equation between her faith and her naked, inviolate body—precisely the metaphoric valence assigned to the woman's body in Jerome's figure. Indeed, we can read Griselda's words here as the words of the captive woman herself, talking about her experience of being stripped and reclothed. Griselda reads her clothes and her body symbolically. *She* exploits the symbolic power of the biblical echoes in her next comment: "'Naked out of my fadres hous,' quod she, / 'I cam, and naked moot I turne agayn'" (871–72), associating her trials with those of Job, the paradigmatic Christian "proved" by God. Not only the Clerk adumbrates the symbolic value of Griselda's experience in his narrative, explicitly mentioning Job, for example, and creating a delicate and complex religious tenor with references to a "welle," "thressshfold," "water pot," and "oxes stalle" (276, 290–91); Griselda reads *herself* symbolically.⁴¹

But she also forces us to recognize the stark materiality of her clothes (those "wrecched clothes, nothyng faire"), the vulnerability of her body, and the loss of her virginity.⁴² When she asks that Walter provide her with a smock so that her "wombe"—her fertile body—will be hidden from the people, we hear the voice of Macrobius' veiled woman, whose fertile body must be hidden from casual view. Again we hear the woman speaking from inside the allegorical image, as it were. But this time she reveals the sense of having been used. Griselda's demand that she not go smockless ("Ye koude nat doon

so dishonest a thyng" [876]) is aggressive—very different from her accommodating tone in Petrarch and the *Livre*—her language vivid and biting ("Lat me nat lyk a worm go by the weye"), her tone even vaguely threatening ("Remembre yow, myn owene lord so deere, / I was youre wyf . . ."). Griselda reads herself as allegorical image and thereby "authorizes" us to read her allegorically, but at the same time she gives us a sense of what it feels like to be made into a figure of speech, what is left out when she is read *translative*. She reads herself as religious symbol, moral allegorical image. We read her, in addition, as an allegorical image of a text, or as providing an homologous relation to a text. But both *translationes* eliminate the particularity of Griselda's experience—her bodily pain, suffered because her wifeliness is being tested—and her acerbic words to Walter make this clear and poignant.⁴³ As Ruggiers notes (without irony), "allegorical equations . . . tend to redeem much that is difficult in the rare relationship of Griselda and Walter."⁴⁴

In the *Clerk's Tale* *translatio* is represented as an act performed on the female body, but woman's experience does not enter into the conceptualization of the act. It thus does not enter into the understanding, formulation, or description of literary language (trope) or interpretation. Despite the centrality of woman's body in the model of translated (interpreted) text as unveiled woman, that model is based on man's experience, as we've seen time and time again. The narrative of the *Clerk's Tale* confirms this: *translatio* effects indeed a "turning"—a turning away from the female and her experience (when Walter turns from her, and separates her from her children; when she interprets herself as a symbol; even when Walter undresses her and dresses her again). And Griselda makes this known when she not only translates but speaks as the woman translated, the woman who would be translated away.

We read Griselda, then, both literally and figuratively—that is, when we read her *translative*, we retain the sharp awareness of what that method of reading excludes. When, in fact, Griselda mentions her "wrecched clothes"—in a confusing reference that makes sense if the clothes are figurative (or if she is somehow forgetting what happened when Walter took her from her village, which she recounts correctly two stanzas later)—she voices her literal pain.⁴⁵ Her deportment, otherwise "constant as a wal," cracks, and she utters for the first time words of surprise, bitter hurt, and heavy regret:

But ther as ye me profre swich dowaire
As I first broghte, it is wel in my mynde

It were my wrecched clothes, nothyng faire,
 The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.
 O goode God! How gentil and how kynde
 Ye semed by youre speche and youre visage
 The day that maked was oure mariage!

(848–54)

It is hard to determine what Griselda means by this reference to her clothes; even if she is not reading them figuratively but is only confused, it strikes me as significant that her only moment of befuddlement in the poem should concern her clothing. (We might note that Chaucer's handling of his sources here produces this effect of confusion; both Petrarch and the *Livre* are quite straightforward and contain no expression of regret on Griselda's part.) Her uncertainty about her own coverings brings a recognition of Walter's duplicitous troping, an understanding of the discord between his intention and his "speche and visage." This recognition is registered in words that echo Walter's own words to her earlier, as he would discount her discomfort by turning her, *translative*, into an exemplum, as it were, an allegorical image of "pacienc":

Shewe now youre pacienc in youre werkyng,
 That ye me highte and swore in youre village
 That day that maked was oure mariage.

(495–97; my emphasis)

In the narrative representation of the *Clerk's Tale*, *translatio*—interpretation, all figuration itself—is a turning away from female experience. The implications are broad indeed: Griselda's double reading of her clothes suggests that the nature of poetic figure itself—the very basis of literary activity—excludes woman's experience from its purview.

4

The Clerk's performance invites us to extend beyond the narrative this observation of a real, felt effect of literary acts and literary formulations on women: he creates a parallel between the two translators, Walter and Petrarch—Walter, who translates Griselda "in swich richesse," and Petrarch, specialist in "rethorike," who translates the tale into "heigh stile." Let us return to Petrarch now, to consider his well-documented project of translating the Griselda tale. For, as his project

will demonstrate, the ways in which literary activity—*translatio*, interpretation, allegorization, figuration—is conceived and represented have real social correlations and consequences.

Petrarch's *translatio*, like Walter's in the tale, realizes both positive and negative potentials of translation that I outlined earlier. Translation into Latin, as a humanist project, aims at discovering and restoring the glory of the classical past that has departed through *translatio imperii*, through the fall and translation of empires. Petrarch suggests, moreover, in his letter to Boccaccio, that vulgar tongues fragment and isolate speakers from one another; he undertakes to translate Boccaccio's tale into Latin, attempting to create a unified (if not universal) community of readers. Petrarch's *translatio* is in fact twofold, for he performs an allegorical reading—a reading *translative*—of the tale he has translated from Latin. Through this translation, he discovers Christian wisdom in the text: Griselda's relationship to Walter, as he reads it, is most usefully seen as every human being's relationship to God.⁴⁶ In *Seniles* 17.3, he explains to Boccaccio:

Hanc historiam stilo nunc alio retexere visum fuit, non tam ideo, ut matronas nostri temporis ad imitandam huius uxoris pacienciam, que michi vix imitabilis videtur, quam ut legentes ad imitandam saltem femine constanciam excitarem, ut quod hec viro suo prestitit, hoc prestare Deo nostro audeant.

[My object in thus re-writing your tale was not to induce the women of our time to imitate the patience of this wife, which seems almost beyond imitation, but to lead my readers to emulate the example of feminine constancy, and to submit themselves to God with the same courage as did this woman to her husband.]⁴⁷

But his translation is associated with disjunction and disruption, too, suggesting *translatio*'s negative potential. Petrarch creates a unified literary community, but it is one that excludes all but those who can negotiate Latin "heigh stile." Evident in his letter to Boccaccio is a sharp sense of exclusivity: he writes to Boccaccio as a fellow poet and stresses the mutuality of their friends, Petrarch's *legentes*; indeed, he insists that "all is common between us." His *translatio* may unite readers but it creates, all the same, an elite and homogeneous community. Dante, in his *De vulgari eloquentia*, associates the vernacular with mothers and nurses, and it is precisely this vulgar language—"babytalk," as Robert Hollander has called it, or "woman talk," which amounts to the same thing—that Petrarch turns away from.⁴⁸

What is most striking to me, in fact, in Petrarch's explanation is his distinct and deliberate redefinition of the literary community, from *matronas nostri temporis* (for whom, as Boccaccio happily declares, the *Decameron* was written) to *legentes*, readers of Latin, a brotherhood of literate men of all times and all places. As Anne Middleton puts it, "This *stilo alio* is not, like Boccaccio's, for gentlewomen, but for those who possess the language of the ancients and of high written eloquence."⁴⁹ The tale is no longer intended for—or available to—women. And it is not *about* them, in particular, either: the suffering of Griselda, the "tormentynge" practiced on the wife, becomes the suffering of everyone in relation to God (or, rather, the trials of Petrarch's own readers, literate, leisured men). This allegorization, in fact, precisely thematizes what Petrarch's *translatio* in general does: as interlingual substitution, it excludes women from the audience of the tale; as trope here, it eliminates the particular concerns of women and subsumes them into a larger vision of *mankind*. There is here an actual social corroboration of the representation of trope in the tale: *translatio*, in the narrative of the *Clerk's Tale*, is enacted on the feminine body; it is, and effects, a turning away from the woman—and Petrarch's *translatio* does just that. To represent literary activity as gendered—as a masculine activity that is performed on a feminine body, as in Jerome's parable and Richard of Bury's metaphor—is not, I suggest, mere metaphoric caprice. The context of Petrarch's *translatio* allows us, even forces us, to reread and reevaluate the images that are used in the representation of literary activity—to recognize their real bases and consequences, their power in creating and reinforcing social relationships. In this crucial sense, "the body of his tale" (42) is not metaphoric.

That the Clerk is alert to the implications of Petrarch's *translatio* is evident in his treatment of Petrarch's allegorization and his juxtaposition of it with his final comments and song for the Wife of Bath. He recounts "this auctour's" allegorical identification of Walter and Griselda with God and "every wight," and elaborates the justification for this reading in three stanzas at the close of his narrative.

This storie is seyed nat for that wyves sholde
 Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,
 For it were inportable, though they wolde,
 But for that every wight, in his degree,
 Sholde be constant in adversitee
 As was Grisilde; therfore Petrak writeth
 This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth.

For sith a womman was so pacient
 Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte
 Receyven al in gree that God us sent;
 For greet skile is he preeve that he wroghte.
 But he ne tempteth no man that he boghte,
 As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede;
 He preeveth folk al day, it is no drede,

And suffreth us, as for oure excercise,
 With sharpe scourges of adversitee
 Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;
 Nat for to knowe oure wyl, for certes he,
 Er we were born, knew al oure freletee;
 And for oure beste is al his governaunce.
 Lat us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.

(1142–62)

As other critics have noted, the second sentence in the second stanza, extending into the third stanza ("But he ne tempteth no man . . . / He preeveth folk al day . . . / And suffreth us . . . / Nat for to knowe oure wyl . . . / And for oure beste is al his governaunce" [1153–61]), seems curiously incomplete.⁵⁰ Petrarch writes:

Probat tamen et sepe nos multis ac gravibus flagellis exerceri sinit,
 non ut animum nostrum sciat, quem scivit ante quam crearemur,
 sed ut nobis nostra fragilitas notis ac domesticis indicijs innotescat.

[He still may prove us, and often permits us to be beset with many and grievous trials, not that he may know our character, which he knew before we were created, but in order that our weakness should be made plain to ourselves by obvious and familiar proofs.]⁵¹

"Non ut . . . sed ut"; in the Clerk's version, though, the "Nat for" in line 1159 goes begging for a "But" (cf. 1142–45), and we're left feeling that the reasoning behind Petrarch's allegorization, the reasoning behind God's proving us, and Walter's proving of Griselda, is not fully understood, or is not compelling. The Clerk rounds off the stanza with a couplet assuring us that God's governance is best and admonishing us, therefore, to suffer virtuously. But the justification is completed, as it were, in the next stanza: the "But" comes when the Clerk appends "o word," relocating us in the present and regendering Griselda. A brisk direct address to the audience breaks up the Latinate sonority of "governance / vertuous suffraunce," as Elizabeth Salter comments:⁵²

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:
 It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes
 In al a toun Grisildis thre or two.

(1163–65)

And since no Griseldas can be found in the modern world, he turns to what can be: “archewyves,” both “strong” and “sklendre.” He thus leaves us mindful of female bodies—uncomfortably so, perhaps—as he sings a song for that most incarnate of women, the Wife of Bath. The Clerk restores to our attention what has been translated out by Petrarch. He addresses himself, finally, not to another man—he does not pass his text on from clerk to clerk—but to women; he thus—crucially, it seems to me—breaks that man-to-man structure of clerkly *translatio* with his “But” turned toward women.

The value of these ending maneuvers, however, is very hard to determine with any finality; Petrarch’s allegorization, the Clerk’s added “o word,” and the song to the Wife of Bath form a sequence that is shiftily contradictory. In his recapitulation of Petrarch, the Clerk claims he has not told the tale in order that wives should emulate Griselda; but in his “o word” that follows immediately, he suggests that the tale is in fact just such an exemplum:

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go;
 It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes
 In al a toun Grisildis thre or two;
 For if that they were put to swiche assayes,
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes
 With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at ye,
 It wolde rather breste a-two than plye.

(1163–69)

For all his sympathy with the trials of the female, these lines suggest that such trials, however rigorous, can be endured—Griselda endured them, and women today should be able to endure them as well. The Clerk notes here that the trials are played out on bodies, but his primary point is not sympathetic: modern-day wives would fail the test, their bodies breaking instead of just bending.⁵³

The song for the Wife of Bath that follows suggests that the tale is *no* exemplum: wives should not emulate Griselda. Griselda does not and *should not* exist now. Wives, the Clerk ostensibly suggests in this song, should not take such treatment from husbands: “Ne suffreth nat that men yow doon offense” (1197). The burden of this song—taken

straight, not ironically—would seem to be consonant with the Clerk's continual criticism of Walter throughout the tale.⁵⁴

But the triumphant females whom the Clerk thus celebrates are derived directly from the clerkly antifeminist literature he has disavowed earlier (932–38), and the song, as Salter and many others have seen, paints a grotesque picture of wives and marriage. “Strong as is a greet camaille” (1196), “egre as is a tygre yond in Ynde” (1199), armed with the “arwes of thy crabbed eloquence” (1203), and ever clapping “as a mille” (1200), these wives are parodies, stock figures of the wife out of control. As products of intentionally repellent antifeminist satire, these women are hard to embrace as preferable to Griselda; it could be argued that such unappealing female bodies *should* be erased from view. What can we make of this Envoy and its juxtaposition to what has gone before? Perhaps the contrast to Griselda that these wives provide in fact renders the Griselda ideal palatable, even appealing, if also impossible; perhaps it emphasizes the purity of that ideal as against their adulterated, fallen mores. These wives would then send us right back to Griselda with an appreciation for her “relentless submissiveness.”⁵⁵ Or perhaps the Clerk is conceding the “reality” of the Wife of Bath even as he holds high the “ideal” of Griselda.⁵⁶ Or maybe the Clerk is just allowing his audience comic relief here, stinting “errestful matere” with this song “to glade yow.” But what kind of relief is afforded here? Relief that we don’t have to be Griseldas, or don’t have to deal with Griseldas nowadays, or don’t have to figure out what to make of her? And what kind of “gladness” will be conferred? We should think twice about that word “glad”; it doesn’t denote pure selflessness, by any means: the Clerk’s and Griselda’s “gladness” seems indeed alloyed with self-assertiveness and aggression.⁵⁷

It is important, I think, to hold the contradictions in suspension, not to rest on any single point. As has often been done, we could connect the Clerk’s moves with a “dialectical spirit” derived from his university training.⁵⁸ But I am not suggesting a dialectic here between Griselda and the Wife of Bath, between some “ideal” and the “real.” I am suggesting, rather, that there is something paradoxical at the heart of the Clerk’s poetic method, his practice of *translatio*, a paradox that derives from the representation of Griselda. The Clerk restores what has been eliminated from the tale by *translatio*—he restores gender, the here and now, and a consideration of woman’s point of view—even as his language, the language of antifeminist satire, would deny or preclude such a consideration or restoration. Griselda, as I have attempted to show, is a character both figurative and not figurative; that is, authorized by her reading of herself, we read her as an alle-

gorical image while retaining, at the same time and at her insistence in the narrative, a trenchant awareness of what that *translatio* is not saying. The Clerk extends this kind of double reading to his whole conclusion: he offers three different *translationes*, each of which narrows the significance of the tale and clearly excludes something that is considered significant in the tale. Petrarch makes it an exemplum for all, thus allegorizing away Griselda's cares as wife; the Clerk restores Griselda as exemplum for wives now, thereby denying his earlier contentions that the hardships are needless; the song to the Wife of Bath reduces the tale to an entirely literal contest between husband and wife, ignoring the religious suggestions of the tale. The point is not that the Clerk offers a happy pluralism at the end, throwing open the tale to various possibilities of interpretation; the point is close to the opposite: instead of concentrating on the polyvalence of tropes, the Clerk shows that *translatio* can indeed function to exclude, to turn away from something. The Clerk's identification or sympathy with the female—one who is fundamentally left out of patriarchal society—allows him to understand translation in this way, allows him to read with an eye to what is left out of the very reading he is performing—allows him to read, that is, like a woman.⁵⁹

It is significant, I think, that this final "Envoy" is "de Chaucer." This scribal heading might be a mere textual coincidence of the unfinished nature of the *Canterbury Tales*, but if it is, it is nonetheless a revealing one. The voices of the Clerk and Chaucer are formally conflated in this scribal heading; the *Clerk's Tale*, I suggest, articulates a double reading, a double perspective associated with the feminine, that describes larger Chaucerian poetic concerns as well. Such a double perspective—the awareness of what is left out by the literary act even as that act is being performed—is the product of the structure of impersonation. It describes the effect, that is, of the narrative structure of the entire *Canterbury Tales*. Impersonation depends on both the imagined presence and the simultaneously perceived absence of the character impersonated.⁶⁰ When that character is usually silenced, is excluded from or marginalized within society—when that character is, for example, a woman—impersonation thus enacts—gives visible and formal expression to—this social condition. Impersonation can thus be deployed as a "feminine" poetic strategy—as it is, I suggest, in the *Canterbury Tales*—making clear who is *not* speaking in the very act of speaking.

Further, it is this double perspective that constitutes that famous "Chaucerian irony": Chaucerian irony is not simply saying one thing while meaning another, but saying one thing with a clear sense of and vivid interest in what is left out of that saying (and who it is who is not

saying anything). These basic and notoriously "Chaucerian" poetic strategies must be understood in their social dimensions; Chaucer's sexual poetics always engages the play between what is said and what is consequently not said, what is brought into being and what is thereby eliminated, who is talking and who is not talking, who or what is allowed to signify and who or what is not allowed to signify.

That literary acts—the making of impersonations, tropes, interpretations—have social implications is made manifest in Chaucer's repeated use of the image of the text as feminine, acted on by distinctly masculine readers, narrators, interpreters, glossators, translators. I have focused on these explicitly heterosexual hermeneutic acts in *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Legend of Good Women*, and the *Man of Law's Tale*, the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and the *Clerk's Tale*. But what about literary acts that are outside the bounds of this patriarchal, heterosexual paradigm? Can they mean anything? Do they have a hermeneutic of their own? There is no better place to begin to consider these questions than the *Pardoner's Tale*. For if Chaucer's sexual poetics can be described, at least in part, as engaging a simultaneous perception of speaking and silence, presence and absence, then there is no more apt illustration of this poetics than the person of the Pardoner—figuratively, if not literally as well, a eunuch; for he is perhaps the most compelling storyteller on the pilgrimage, and the one who is most obsessed with, the one who speaks from the authority of, what is patently *not there*.

Je oÿ dire, n'a pas moult, a ·i· de ces compaignons de l'office dont tu es et que tu bien congnois, et homme d'auctorité, que il congnoit ung home marié, lequel ajouste foy au *Ronmant de la Rose* comme a l'Euvangile; celluy est souverainnement jaloux, et quant sa passion le tient plus aigrement il va querre son livre et list devant sa fame, et puis fiert et frappe sus et dist: "Orde, telle come quelle il dist, voir que tu me fais tel tour. Ce bon sage homme maistre Jehan de Meung savoit bien que femmes savioient fere!" Et a chascun mot qu'il treuve a son propos il fiert ung coup ou deux du pié ou de la paume; si m'est advis que quiconques s'en loe, telle povre famme le compere chier.

(Christine de Pizan to Pierre Col, *Le débat sur "Le Roman de la rose,"* pp. 139–40)

CHAPTER FIVE. *Griselda Translated*

- 1 For a full account and texts of the sources of Chaucer's redaction, see the classic study by J. Burke Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's "Clerkes Tale"* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1942). For an interesting and persuasive discussion of Chaucer's use of multiple sources in his translations, see Tim William Machan, *Techniques of Translation: Chaucer's "Boece"* (Norman, Okla.: Pilgrim Books, 1985), ch. 6.
- 2 Anne Middleton, in "The Clerk and His Tale: Some Literary Contexts," *SAC* 2 (1980): 121–50, analyzes the Clerk's performance as "a guided tour of several specifically secular literary canons and ideals current at the end of the fourteenth century" (p. 150), particularly those of exemplary literature, Humanistic affect, and story collections.
- 3 For another example of fourteenth-century outrage at Walter, see *Le Ménagier de Paris*, ed. J. Pichon (Paris: Société des Bibliophiles Français, 1846).
- 4 Paul G. Ruggiers, *The Art of the Canterbury Tales* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 221.
- 5 The test of the strength of the wife can be seen to be at the same time the test of the power of the text, and both pass magnificently: Griselda's unflinching conformity to masculine desire never fails, and Petrarch's translation provokes strong reactions in its readers (the Paduan bursts into tears and cannot even finish it, while the Veronese rigidly suppresses his emotions, admitting that "the style is well adapted to call forth tears" but not yielding because he knows the tale is not true). See *Seniles* 17.4 in *Originals and Analogues of Some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, Part 2, gen. ed. F. J. Furnivall, Chaucer

Society, 2d ser., no. 10 (London: Trübner, 1875), pp. 170–72; an English translation is printed in James Harvey Robinson and Henry Winchester Rolfe, *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*, 2d ed. (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1914), pp. 191–96. See also *Seniles* 17.3 in Severs, *Literary Relationships of Chaucer's "Clerkes Tale,"* and my fuller discussion of the patriarchal implications of Petrarch's translation at the end of this chapter.

- 6 In "'Whan she translated was': A Chaucerian Critique of the Petrarchan Academy," a paper presented at the 1986 New Chaucer Society meeting in Philadelphia, David Wallace analyzed the "translation" of the female body and discussed Walter and Petrarch as elitist and masculinist "translators." In his witty and provocative paper, which I read in manuscript after finishing the major outlines of my argument, Wallace suggests that Chaucer provides in the *Clerk's Tale* a critique of this "translation"; Wallace, further, situates Chaucer's critique within the sociopolitical climate of late fourteenth-century Italy.
- 7 Severs has shown that for details of Griselda's robing and disrobing Chaucer turned to his French source to fill out the Petrarch text (*Literary Relationships of Chaucer's "Clerkes Tale,"* pp. 245–46). And, as I shall note below, Chaucer adds particular emphasis at other sartorial moments in the narrative.
- 8 Hastings Rashdall, in *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, new ed., 3 vols. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), 3: 5–7, reports this myth of *translatio studii*. John Rous (or Rosse), chantry-priest of Warwick, in his *Historia regum Angliae* mentions the Mempric legend for what appears to be the first time. Ralph Higden (d. 1364), in his *Polychronicon* 6.1, Rolls Series (ed. J. R. Lumby [London: Longman and Co., 1876], 6: 352–54), mentions an Alfredian connection with Oxford University, and he is apparently the first to do so. But Rashdall dismisses "the whole story, with the vast cycle of legend of which it is the nucleus" as material for students of "the pathology of the human mind" (pp. 5–6).
- 9 See Judith Ferster, *Chaucer on Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 101–2. Ferster's discussion of Griselda's paradoxical self-assertiveness (and her observation of the Clerk's literary assertiveness) is the fullest and most sensitive I have seen.
- 10 In the context of the Clerk's aggressive stance toward Petrarch and Griselda's similar posture toward Walter, the famous tag from the General Prologue, happily quoted by generations of professors, must be reread: the Clerk "gladly" teaches; and he describes Griselda's actions several times with the same word. In turn, she says she'll "gladly" yield her place to Walter's new bride—but in a speech that includes

an unmistakable assertion of self (“my place” is what she’ll yield) and a warning to Walter. Actions performed “gladly” may not, in fact, be done with unalloyed selflessness but may be mixed with a good deal of defensive self-assertion.

- 11 Stephen G. Nichols, Jr., in *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1983), suggests this appropriative function of *translatio* in the historical narratives of the early Middle Ages: “*Translatio* was a metaphoric process whereby one construct assumed the symbolic signification of another considered greater than itself” (p. 20). See also Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 28–30.
- 12 See Jacques Lacan’s extension of Freudian transference into the very mechanism of the functioning of authority, in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), esp. pp. 230–36, 253–55. I have found Shoshana Felman’s article, “Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable” (YFS 63 [1982]: 21–44), very valuable in its discussion of Lacan on transference. For Freud’s use of the term “translation” (Übersetzung), see Patrick Mahony’s comments in *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation; Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida* (ed. Christie V. McDonald [New York: Schocken Books, 1985]):

While he considers repression to be a rift or fault in the translation, on several occasions in his writings he implicitly conceives all of the following to be translations: hysterical, phobic, and obsessional symptoms, dreams, recollections, parapraxes, the choice of the means of suicide, the choice of fetish, the analyst’s interpretations, and the transpositions of unconscious material to consciousness.

(Pp. 96–97)

- 13 Valery Larbaud, *An Homage to Jerome: Patron Saint of Translators*, trans. Jean-Paul de Chezet (Marlboro, Vt.: Marlboro Press, 1984). For Jerome’s career as translator, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), and Jean Steinmann, *Saint Jerome and His Times*, trans. Ronald Matthews (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publishers, 1959).
- 14 Saint Jerome, Preface to his *Interpretatio Chronicae Eusebii Pamphili*, in PL 27: 36; trans. W. H. Fremantle, in *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, n.d.), 6:483.

- 15 Jerome, *Epistulae*, letter 57 (to Pammachius), ed. Isidorus Hilberg, CSEL 54 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1912), pt. 1, p. 512; trans. Fremantle, in *Principal Works of St. Jerome*, p. 115.
- 16 That translation (transfer, substitution) is the mechanism of rhetorical trope in general is apparent in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.1.4–7 (ed. and trans. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959]), quoted above, in n. 21 to Chapter 1. See also Donatus, *Ars grammatica* 3.6, and Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova* ll.765–67a, both cited in n. 21 to Chapter 1.

The interpretive function of translation is suggested by Roman Jakobson's categorization (in "On Linguistic Aspects of Translations" in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Brower [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959]) of the translation of verbal signs into three classes: *rewording* (or intralingual translation, "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language"); *translation proper* (or interlingual translation, "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language"); and *transmutation* (or intersemiotic translation, "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems" [p. 233]). Rewording and translation proper are obviously interrelated, insofar as both produce verbal interpretations of the original message; and the categorization of transmutation as translation makes the interpretive function of translation explicit. For useful bibliography of literature on translations, see George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975). See also Susan Bassnett-McGuire, *Translation Studies*, New Accents Series (New York: Methuen, 1980).

- 17 On the currency of both *interpretatio* and *translatio* and the emerging prominence of the latter, Eugene Vance, in his *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 318–19, cites Gianfranco Folena, "'Volgarizzare' e 'tradurre,'" in *La traduzione: Saggi e studi*, ed. Centro per lo studio dell'insegnamento all'estero dell'italiano, Università degli studi de Trieste (Trieste: Lint, 1973), pp. 59–120. See Vance's discussion of translation in Chaucer and Spenser (*Mervelous Signals*, pp. 311–51). Rita Copeland's excellent essay, "Rhetoric and Vernacular Translation in the Middle Ages" (SAC 9 [1987]: 41–75), discusses the hermeneutic value of classical and medieval translation.
- 18 Saint Jerome, Preface to his translation of Eusebius' *Onomastikon*, in *Eusebius Werke*, ed. Erich Klostermann, Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, no. 11 (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche, 1904), p. 3. Cited in Steinmann, *Saint Jerome*, p. 195.

- 19 Saint Jerome, *Epistulae*, letter 57 (to Pammachius), pt. 1, p. 512; trans. Fremantle, in *Principal Works of St. Jerome*, p. 115. Jerome articulates the problematics of translation early on, in his Preface to Eusebius' *Chronicle* (the earliest of his translations made in Constantinople [A.D. 381–82]): "Si ad verbum interpretor, absurde resonat; si ob necessitatem aliquid in ordine, vel in sermone mutavero, ab interpretis videbor officio recessisse" ("A literal translation sounds absurd; if, on the other hand, I am obliged to change either the order or the words themselves, I shall appear to have forsaken the duty of a translator" [PL 27:35; trans. Fremantle, *Principal Works of St. Jerome*, 6:483]). In this preface he goes on to suggest his solution, later explicitly formulated in letter 57, of translating the *sense*: he suggests here that under the ugly garb of words can be found the fair body of meaning. The sense must be maintained as unaltered as possible, even if he strives to preserve the grace of Latin style; see letters 57, sec. 5; 106, sec. 3; 26; 29; 54; and Preface to Job (PL 28: 1081) and Preface to Judith (PL 29: 39).
- 20 See Jerome's Preface to Samuel and Kings, the so-called *Prologus galeatus* (PL 28:5476–58), for his assertive protest of fidelity to the original Hebrew; see his Preface to Isaiah for a strong statement of his worthiness as a translator in comparison to his post-Septuagint Greek predecessors (Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion); and see the beginning of *Hebraicae quaestiones* for the explicit statement of the necessity of the return to Hebrew to recover the original authority of the sacred Word. R. Howard Bloch, in *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* ([Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983], pp. 59–60), discusses Jerome's use of etymology—returning to the Hebrew—as a principle of exegesis. Also, for analysis of medieval translation in terms of a general ethics of speech, see Vance, *Mervelous Signals*, pp. 311–19.
- 21 For a discussion of medieval linguistic nostalgia, see Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, esp. pp. 30–63. See also Walter Benjamin's 1923 essay, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens*" (in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn [New York: Schocken Books, 1969]), on the goal of translation as a rediscovery of the original oneness of language.
- 22 Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.6.8 (ed. J. Martin, CC 32 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1962]), referring to the pleasant and stimulating labor of interpretation; Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova* ll.767–69.
- 23 See Margaret F. Nims, IBVM, "Translatio: 'Difficult Statement' in Medieval Poetic Theory," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 43 (1974): 215–30. See also Lisa J. Kiser's discussion of figurative language in *Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the "Legend of Good Women"* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell

Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 50–70. For the Chartrians, see Brian Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Sylvester* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 227–83, cited by Vance, *Mervelous Signals*, p. 312. Stock notes (p. 275) that Bernard's *Cosmographia*, in numerous late-medieval codices, is bound with treatises on composition (such as that of Geoffrey of Vinsauf) or twelfth-century poetry (such as that of Alain de Lille).

24 Nims, "Translatio," pp. 221, 223.

25 Ibid., pp. 217–18.

26 Ibid., p. 220.

27 On the Creation as the utterance of the Word, see Augustine, for example. Wary, as usual, of human language's ability to express the divine, he nevertheless describes with wonder the power of the original translation:

Postremo cetera dici possunt utcumque: ille solus est ineffabilis, qui dixit, et facta sunt omnia. Dixit, et facti sumus: sed nos eum dicere non possumus. Verbum eius quo dicti sumus, Filius eius est.

[Lastly, all other things can be spoken in some way; He alone, Who spoke, and all things were made, is ineffable. He spake, and we were made: but we cannot speak of Him. His Word, by Whom we were uttered, is His Son.]

(*Enaratio in Psalmum* 99, sec. 6 [in *Enarationes in Psalmos*, ed. D. Eligius Dekkers and Iohannes Fraipont, CC 39 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956)]; the English translation is in Marcia Colish, *The Mirror of Language*, 2d ed. [Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1983], p. 26)

Nims cites both Hugh of Saint Victor and Vincent of Beauvais on the unity or mimetic relationship of God's Word and humankind's language. According to Nims, "Translatio," p. 229 n. 17, Hugh describes the unity of "the word of man, the word of God spoken in creation, and the uncreated Word of God" in his *De arca Noe morali* 2.13, "De tribus verbis." And Vincent of Beauvais, in his *Speculum naturale*, writes:

Ita enim verbum nostrum vox quoddammodo corporis fit, assumendo eam in qua manifestetur sensibus hominum; sicut Verbum Dei caro factum est, assumendo eam in qua et ipsum manifestetur sensibus hominum.

[Man, in uttering a word, is incarnating the word of his mind in order that it may be made manifest to human senses, just as the

Word of God was made flesh in order that He might be made manifest to human senses.]

(27.6.1921b [trans. Nims, "Translatio," p. 221])

- 28 The positing of a name departs from its normal process when the condition of being man passes over to the realms of godhead. Speaking in figure, a new trope (a new turning) is created, a new verbal construction formed; there is a new stylistic beauty in this joining, a new *translatio* has entered the world. In this uniting of the Word with flesh, every rule stands stupefied.
(Alain de Lille, *Rithmus de incarnatione Domini* [in "Alain de Lille et la Theologia," by M.-T. d'Alverny, in *L'Homme devant Dieu: Mélanges offerts au Père Henri de Lubac* (Paris, 1964), 2:126–28; quoted and trans. Nims, "Translatio," pp. 220, 229])
- 29 See Jerome's Preface to his *Interpretatio libri Didymi de Spiritu sancto* (PL 23:105); and Preface to his translation of Origen, in *Die Homilien zu Lukas*, in *Origenes Werke*, ed. Max Rauer, Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, no. 49 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1959), p. 1. On the controversy between Jerome and Ambrose of Milan, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 143–44.
- 30 Kelly, *Jerome*, p. 266.
- 31 Donatus, *Ars grammatica* 3.6 (see n. 16 above).
- 32 George Puttenham writes of the "courtly figure *Allegoria*":

Of this figure therefore which for his duplicitie we call the figure of [false semblant or dissimulation] we will speake first as of the chief ringleader and captaine of all other figures. . . . To be short every speach wrested from his owne naturall signification to another not altogether so naturall is a kind of dissimulation, because the words beare contrary countenance to th'intent.
(*The Arte of English Poesie* [1589; rpt. Menston, England: Scolar Press, 1968], bk. 3 "Of Ornament," ch. 18, p. 155)
- 33 On figurative language as exile, see Margaret W. Ferguson, "Saint Augustine's Region of Unlikeness: The Crossing of Exile and Language," *Georgia Review* 29 (1975): 842–64.
- 34 If the metaphor performs an inappropriate substitution, there is disruption of surface coherence and a discord between word and meaning below the surface as well. As Bloch notes (*Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 118), Peter Helias distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate, proper and improper figures; when the transfer of a word does not retain "the similitude of the elements conjoined," it is improper ("Vitiosa est locutio ubi est translatio inconveniens"). See

Charles Thurot, *Notices et extraits de divers manuscrits latins* (1869; rpt. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1964), p. 234.

35 See Severs, *Literary Relationships of Chaucer's "Clerkes Tale,"* p. 274.

36 Alfred David, in *The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 159–69, finds that melodrama in fact renders the last parts of the tale difficult to take seriously (but there is, he argues, too little of this oversentimentality to force us into an ironic reading; it simply makes us uneasy).

37 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.1.4: a trope is "dictio ab eo loco, in quo propria est, translata in eum, in quo propria non est" ("the transference of words and phrases from the place which is strictly theirs to another to which they do not properly belong" [ed. and trans. Butler, pp. 350–51]). See n. 16 above.

38 The prominence of clothing imagery in the *Tale* has been remarked often, and its source and significance have been the subjects of considerable speculation. See Kristine Gilmartin Wallace's excellent article, which includes discussion of Chaucer's alterations of his sources, and her inclusive notes: "Array as Motif in the Clerk's Tale," *Rice University Studies* 62 (1976): 99–110. The major critical explanation was advanced by D. D. Griffith, who argues for a folklore origin for this imagery, making the clothing demarcate the border between the world of mortals and the supernatural world; see his *Origin of the Griselda Story*, Univ. of Washington Publications in Language and Literature, no. 8 (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1931), pp. 92–93. Severs agrees that the clothes are folklore relics, but finds them "impertinent" to literary versions (*Literary Relationships of Chaucer's "Clerkes Tale,"* pp. 5–6). Other critical analyses advance various religious significances: Griselda's humiliating stripping recalls Christ's Passion (Elizabeth Salter, *Chaucer: The "Knight's Tale" and the "Clerk's Tale"* [London: Edward Arnold, 1962]), pp. 47–48); her clothing is an index of her proper Christian submission (John P. McCall, "The Clerk's Tale and the Theme of Obedience," *MLQ* 27 [1966]: 260–69); her "despoiling" and "translation" suggest conversion and transfiguration (Bertrand H. Bronson, *In Search of Chaucer* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960], p. 108).

39 See Kristine Gilmartin Wallace, "Array as Motif," p. 101.

40 For a different, less generous reading of Griselda's words here, see Donald H. Reiman, who claims in "The Real Clerk's Tale; or, Patient Griselda Exposed" (*Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 5 [1963]: 356–73), that Griselda simply—and sinfully—cannot tell the difference between literal and figurative: "Griselda did not sell her conscience for the fine clothes and jewels of a marquesa, but simply lacked the

- understanding to distinguish between her old clothes and her 'liberty and will,' or between her husband and her God" (p. 366).
- 41 Major studies arguing a largely symbolic value for Griselda and her experience (Abraham, Job, Virgin Mary, Rebecca, Rachel) include Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1957), pp. 195–97; Salter, *Chaucer*, pp. 45–46; D. W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 82–83; Bernard F. Huppé, *A Reading of the "Canterbury Tales"* (Albany: State Univ. of New York, 1964), pp. 143–46, 260–69; and Francis Lee Utley, "Five Genres in the Clerk's Tale," *ChauR* 6 (1972): 217–26.
 - 42 Critics have noted such doubleness on the general narrative level: see, for example, Salter, who speaks of "the double preoccupation of poet or clerkly narrator in this Tale—the desire to interpret the story as a human document at the same time as establishing its meaning on a higher spiritual plane" ("The Clerk's Tale," in *Chaucer*, p. 51).
 - 43 J. Mitchell Morse, in "The Philosophy of the Clerk of Oxenford" (*MLQ* 19 [1958]: 3–20), suggests that Walter's "realism" prevents him from treating Griselda as an individual; he is interested in her "womman-heede," not the individual woman. Morse contends that the Clerk, on the other hand, is "nominalist" (he is from Oxford) in his democratic regard for Griselda's individuality and experience. Morse's analysis, in the terms of fourteenth-century philosophical currents, of Walter's and the Clerk's treatments of Griselda complements my own analysis of translation as a literary gesture with social consequences—the elimination of Griselda's particular experience.
 - 44 Ruggiers, *The Art of the Canterbury Tales*, p. 221. Judith Ferster, in *Chaucer on Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), makes an observation that is relevant here. While I argue that Griselda consciously articulates the consequences of figuration, Ferster reads Griselda's swoon just after her description of Walter as "benyngne fader" (1097) as a bodily index of her deep resistance to her own euphemistic treatment of Walter (p. 107).
 - 45 For an allegorical reading here of Griselda's old clothes as her "wyl and al my libertee," her old self which is now hard to find, see Wallace, "Array as Motif in the Clerk's Tale," p. 103.
 - 46 Hans Baron's *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (rev. ed. [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966]) traces the appraisal of Petrarch by humanists, early and late; Petrarch's discovery of Christian wisdom in the act of translation of texts into Latin was lauded by Salutati (as late as 1405) as the pinnacle of humanistic achievement (pp. 257–58).
 - 47 Petrarch, *Seniles* 17.3, in Severs, *Literary Relationships of Chaucer's*

- "*Clerkes Tale*," p. 288; trans. James Harvey Robinson and Henry Winchester Rolfe, in *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*, 2d ed. (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 194.
- 48 Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. Aristide Marigo, 3d ed. (Florence: Felice le Mounier, 1957), esp. chs. 1 and 6. See Robert Hollander, "Babytalk in Dante's *Commedia*" (*Mosaic* 8 [1975]: 73–84): Dante accords the highest linguistic and theological value to this "babytalk," whereas Petrarch (*Seniles* 5.2) and Boccaccio (*Vita di Dante*) see its use as the sign of an immature work.
- 49 Anne Middleton, "The Clerk and His Tale: Some Literary Contexts," *SAC* 2 (1980): 129.
- 50 See, e.g., Helen Cooper, in *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1984), p. 138.
- 51 Petrarch, in Severs, *Literary Relationships of Chaucer's "Clerkes Tale"*, p. 288; trans. Robinson, in *Petrarch*, p. 194.
- 52 Salter, "The Clerk's Tale," in *Chaucer*, p. 63.
- 53 The juxtaposition of alloyed coins here with modern wives associates women with the rupture and discontinuity of the still-emergent money economy. See Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*; and Vance, *Mervelous Signals*, ch. 5, "Chretien's 'Yvain' and the Ideologies of Change and Exchange." Griselda herself in this context becomes a nostalgic figure, a lost unity and plenitude; writes Muscatine, for example: "In all, the tale of Griselda is a latter-day parable. . . . It yearns for the naked, simple, uncompromising virtue of original Christianity" (*Chaucer and the French Tradition*, p. 197).
- 54 Helen Cooper takes this song as a summation of the Clerk's attitude throughout his tale: "In spite of Alisoun and Griselda being diametrically opposite types of wifhood, the outlook finally presented by the Wife's and the Clerk's tales is astonishingly close" (*The Structure of the Canterbury Tales*, p. 139). Other critics who take the Envoy straight, as hyperbolic but not sarcastic, are D. H. Reiman and J. M. Morse.
- 55 The memorable phrase "relentless submissiveness," which Ferster also picks up (*Chaucer on Interpretation*, p. 101), is from Robert Longworth, "Chaucer's Clerk as Teacher," in *The Learned and the Lewed*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), p. 63. Salter sums up this view: in contrast to the Wife, she writes, Griselda is made a "more acceptable, less preposterous creation than the Wife of Bath and 'archewyves' of her kind" ("The Clerk's Tale" in *Chaucer*, p. 65).
- 56 Robert B. Burlin, in his *Chaucerian Fiction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 144, picks up Muscatine's interpretive suggestion and felicitous phrase, "concessive comedy," and argues that the success of the *Clerk's Tale* depends on this inclusive view. I owe much

to Burlin's problematization of the end of the poem, although my solution finally diverges from his.

57 See n. 10 above.

58 See, for example, Charlotte C. Morse, "The Exemplary Griselda," *SAC* 7 (1985): 83.

59 Cf. Salter's claim that it is a "'human view' which is irresistible to Chaucer, and which urges him to dramatise and *then* criticise what he has created" ("The Clerk's Tale" in *Chaucer*, p. 62). It seems to me that Salter and others who point in various ways to conflicting points of view or mores in the Clerk's performance (e.g., Bronson, Cooper, Warren Ginsberg [*The Cast of Character* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1983), pp. 151–65]) use "human" here to denote all that is erased or marginalized by the rigorously Christian meaning or interpretation imposed at the end. I agree with the structure of such an analysis but argue that "human" must itself be analyzed in terms of gender. The issue in this narrative is the treatment of a woman. Chaucer's engagement with the marginal is with the female here; *translatio*, in particular, is represented as enacted on the body of a woman in this tale. More generally, I would argue that issues of exclusion in Chaucer are raised in reference to, or are based on, the gendered body; they are posed as or become gender issues.

60 Cf. H. Marshall Leicester, Jr.'s comments on the *Tales* in "The Art of Impersonation: A General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*," *PMLA* 95 (1980): 213–24: "The enterprise of the poem involves the continual attempt, continually repeated, to see from another's point of view, to stretch and extend the self by learning to speak in the voices of others" (p. 221).

CHAPTER SIX. *Eunuch Hermeneutics*

1 I take "trowe" here in its most common Middle English usage as denoting a speculation, a guess. See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "trow" 3.b: "To believe or suppose (a thing or person) to be (so and so)"; and *A Chaucer Glossary*, ed. Norman Davis et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), s.v. "trowe(n)" 1: "Believe; think, judge." C. David Benson comments:

This word most commonly indicates speculation, but even if we take it in its less usual meaning of certainty, is this the assertion of the same narrator who agrees with the Monk's idea of cloistered duty and find the murderous Shipman a good fellow? Certainly the phrase "I trowe" qualifies what is to follow to some degree.

("Chaucer's Pardoner: His Sexuality and Modern Critics," *Mediaevalia* 8 [1985 for 1982]: 339)

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