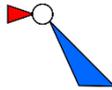


1223 AE1

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bncdoc.author	Hines, John
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<1223/c>	the monk's expressed thoughts soon turns into a pornographic play, in the dialogue between monk and wife whereby each tests and reassures the other that their desires, and their readiness to hide those desires under the dissimulation of a financial bargain, match. The slow deliberacy with which the wife commences her reply, with not a hint of offence in her reaction but rather a hint of care in selecting the right mode of reply, emphasizes her willingness to converse on the topic: So does her subsequent appropriation of a rhetorical device, the occupatio, a statement emphasized by the speaker feigning unwillingness or lack of freedom to express it: The monk too takes a moment's pause before replying: again seeming to digest the implications of the wife's words, or (and?) to express, silently but with an eloquent action, astonishment at the wife's ready invitation to him to continue to converse on this topic. The next necessary act in this play is for the two to reassure each other of their discretion; from the monk: And from the wife: Agreement on the sexual exchange is thus sealed: They can then indulge themselves in filling out the details of their play - and anticipating the events of the act to come - at a certain amount of leisure. Although the monk does not tell the wife where the hundred francs have come from, and creates potential trouble for her by telling the husband that he has paid her this sum, the wife in the Shipman's Tale is quite the opposite of the foolish, deceived creature that Margery is in Dame Sirith. Unlike Margery, this wife knows exactly the power and value of her own sexuality - its power to allure and gratify men (and herself), and its current exchange value in direct cash terms. She makes the scenes in which she moves pornographic in the etymological sense of the word: prostitutes' tales (Greek /pornos = prostitute). In substance and spirit there is much in her portrayal that coincides with the stereotype of woman found in medieval antifeminist literature: lascivious and insatiable, alluring to men, drawing them to a fall - e.g. tempting the monk to sin, and befooling her husband (or, more seriously, tempting him to indulge in sexual intercourse for its own pleasure and indeed for its cash value). A further seam of antifeminism may be introduced by certain early lines of the Shipman's Tale which unmistakably imply a female speaker: Most critics have accepted the assumption that the Wife of Bath is the only female pilgrim of the Canterbury Tales who would be a suitable narrator of this scurrilous narrative, usually by weighing her character up against
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>the profession of the nuns</p>
	<p>, the only other women amongst the Canterbury pilgrims. If we ignore, momentarily, the " " murie wordes of the Hoost to the Shipman " " at the end of the tale, and assume that the narrator of the tale is a woman - it really does not matter who she is - the narrator then becomes a close parallel to the wife within the tale: a wordsmith; a user of language who combines the sordid matere of carnal indulgence with a gilded linguistic cover. The narration of the Shipman's Tale has its fair</p>

measure of rhetoric. The apostrophe: is in the narrator's voice, but the greatest concentration of rhetorical ornament comes in the dialogue between the wife and the monk, particularly in the words of the woman. There is hyperbole: or: and occupatio: and exclamation: The wife's greatest linguistic tour de force is the climactic pun on *taille/taillynge* at the end of the tale. If, then, the narrator is characterized as a woman, and, moreover, a woman who boldly presents this tale of female prostitution and financial gain as a jape in which the wife as well as the monk triumphs at the husband's expense, the implication that women innately conform to the medieval antifeminist stereotype is doubled in strength. A reading of the tale as a satire on merchants is usually supported by reference to the pilgrim-narrator to whom the tale is ultimately ascribed, the Shipman. For the Shipman, as a pirate, the merchant is a natural enemy: It is not particularly difficult, however, to reconcile the appearance of a female narrative voice in lines 11-19 of the tale with the male narrator that it has within the dramatic framework of the *Canterbury Tales*, and thus to preserve the presence of both of these voices and their critical implications. The simplest case was that put forward by Murray Copland in the 1960s, suggesting, simply, that in modern editorial terms inverted commas should be put around these lines so that we see that in these lines the Shipman is imitating (a) woman. Contextual and generic considerations strengthen this case. The context of the *Canterbury Tales* is one in which Geoffrey Chaucer, a historical poet, feigns to speak through a fictitious mouthpiece, "Chaucer" the pilgrim-narrator, who both, in turn, feign to speak through a further series of mouthpieces, the individual pilgrim-tellers. (Conversely they have those fictitious individuals speak through them, "rehearsing every word as closely as he/they can" (I: 732-3).) It is not so difficult, in these circumstances, to accept that at least one of the pilgrim-tellers should be represented as speaking through an