OLD HUSBANDS, YOUNG WIVES AND THE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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SUMMARY

In this article, the concept of marriage in Medieval times and old husbands who marry young wives are discussed. By deriving the concepts of lives from *The Wife of Bath's Prologue, The Miller's Tale, The Merchant's Tale* by G.Chaucer; *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ* by N.Love and the *Ludus Coventriae play, Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* it is pointed out that the age difference of the married people and the concept of marriage play a thematic role in Medieval literature.

The subject of marriage or its vices and virtues, or more precisely, the vices and virtues of having a wife, was a topic of great interest to Medieval writers. This was hardly surprising for an age so preoccupied with Christianity and concerned above all with how man's downfall came about.

Condemnations of women, based on their descent from Eve and her sin, were by no means a rare feature of Medieval writing. Chaucer could even find room for one in an animal fable:

> *Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;*
> *Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo,*
> *And made Adam fro Paradys to go,*
> *Ther as he was ful myrie and wel at ese.*[1]

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and the Wife of Bath's fifth husband has a whole book full of examples of the evils of women:

> *And every night and day was his custume,*
> *Whan he hadde leyser and vacacioun*
> *From oother worldly occupacioun,*
> *To reden on this book of wikked wives.*
> *He knew of hem mo legendes and lives*
> *Than been of goode wives in the Bible.*
> (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, D, 11. 682 - 687)

Numerous poems, both short and long were written about the evils of women and all their wrongdoings. But the one sin women were most vehemently accused of, and the one which their husbands most feared and dreaded that they might commit was that of adultery.

Almost any wife was a suitable candidate for suspicion of this crime, but for obvious reasons those thought most likely to be guilty were the young wives of old men. From this fear grew up both an instinctive expectation and almost a desire on the part of others, especially men, to see this happen, both so that their low opinion of women could be confirmed and also so that they could amuse themselves at the expense of the cuckold, and, more than likely purge their jealousy of his having a young wife by thinking that he should never have married her at his age.

Fabliaux type stories with the stock triangle of lecherous young wife, a jealous elderly husband and a clever young man, often a clerk or a priest, became very popular. The details of these varied, but the basic plot was always the same; the young wife, dissatisfied with her old husband's lovemaking, is approached by a younger man whom she finds more physically attractive, a plan is worked out, and the husband is deceived. The young couple are then most often caught, and the old man becomes a laughing stock. Often the young man receives some kind of punishment whilst the wife invariably gets off completely free.

There are a number of other common features which will emerge if one looks at just two of Chaucer's fabliaux type stories from the *Canterbury Tales,* but one feature which seems to apply to nearly all of these stories with an adulterous young wife, is that the adultery is commited not out of any love for the young man, but simply for physical pleasure alone.

In order to analyse the aforementioned concepts Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* and *Merchant's Tale* will be analysed to see what features they have in common and then Nicholas Love's *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ* and *Ludus Coventriae* version of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* will be studied to see if that too conforms to the same style.

The Miller's Tale, develops the fabliau perfectly. As with most of these stories, much of the comic effects stem from the fact that the reader is in possesion of certain pieces of information which the old husband is unaware of. The reader sees the woman and young man laying their plans for adultery and this reinforces his impression of the old man as stupid and worthy to be cuckolded. In the *Miller's Tale* this is done in such a way that one takes sides against old John and wants the plan to succeed. Nevertheless, the laughter in the story is not directed solely at John. The whole piece is presented as a farce and the reader is ready to laugh at any and all of the characters.

To begin with, the reader is not made instantly aware that the principal characters are fabliau stereotypes. All that one is told of John when he is first introduced is he "...was dwellynge at Oxenford / A riche gnof, that gestes heeld to bord / And of his craft he was a carpenter" (*The Miller's Tale*, A, 11. 3187-3189).

Then the reader learns all about Nicholas' character. Nicholas, a student, is introduced as if he should belong to a tale of courtly love:

This clerk was cleped hende Nicholas.
Of deerne love he koude and of solas;
And therto he was sleigh and ful privee,
And lyk a maiden meke for to see.
A chambre hadde he in t hat hostelrye
Allone, withouten any compaignye,
Ful fetisly ydight with herbes swoote;
And he hymself as sweete as is the roote
Of lycorys, or any cetewale.
His Almageste, and bookes grete and smale,
His astrelabie, longynge for his art,
His augrym stones, layen faire apart,
On shelves couched at his beddes heed;
His presse ycovered with a faldyng reed;

And all above ther lay a gay sautrie,
On which he made a-nyghtes melodie
So swetely that all the chambre rong;
And Angelus ad virginem he song;
And after that he song the Kinges Noote.
Ful often blessed was his mirie throte.
And thus this sweete clerk his tyme spente
After his freendes fyndyng and his rente.
(*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3199-3220)

The portrait, at first seems to be highly respectful, but as one reads on he finds that in fact it is heavily ironic. Chaucer's title for the clerk "hende Nicholas" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 1. 3199), used conventionaly to denote courtesy, is used repeatedly throughout the tale, and its opposition to Nicholas' nature and behaviour soon becomes apparent. Also comically ironic is the remark that Nicholas lived "allone, withouten any compaignye" (*The Miller's Tale,*A,1.3204). Normally this would be an appeal for sympathy, but here it later becomes apparent that Nicholas chooses to live in this manner not only to keep his astrology secret, but to enable him to carry on his clandestine love-affairs.

Nicholas' learning has already been established by the mention of his astrological skills, he:

...koude a certeyn of conclusiouns,
To demen by interrogaciouns,
If that men asked him in certein houres
Whan that men sholde have droghte or elles shoures,
Or if men asked hym what sholde bifalle
Of every thying;...
(*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11.3193-3198)

Since cleverness is one of the qualities which all the young men of a fabliau triangle possess, one should be on his guard already, but since one knows nothing yet about John, or whether there is anyone else in the story, particularly whether there is a woman involved, and since Nicholas is painted in such glowing colours, there is no cause yet to suspect he is anything more than what he seems.

But straight after Nicholas has been described, one learns that the carpenter is indeed married, and moreover that he has a wife much younger than himself:

> *This carpenter hadde wedden newe a wyf,*
> *Which that he lovede moore than his lyf;*
> *Of eighteteene yeer she was of age.*
> *Jalous he was, and heeld hire narwe in cage,*
> *For she was wild and yong, and he was old,*
> *And deemed hymself been lik a cokewold.*
> (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3221-3226)

Now the scene is completely set for the fabliau to unfold, and immediately Chaucer begins to state the theme which will recur over and again, that old men who take young wives are simply asking for trouble; but if they do then that is their business though they have been warned:

> *He knew nat Catoun, for his wit was rude,*
> *That bad man sholde wedde his simylitude.*
> *Men sholde wedden after hire estaat,*
> *For youthe and elde is often at debaat.*
> *But sith that he was fallen in the snare,*
> *He moste endur, as oother folk, his care.*
> (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3227-3232)

Chaucer goes to great lengths in attempting to give the correct impression of Alison. He presents her to the reader much as she appears both to her husband and to other men, notably at first Nicholas. As with the portrait of the clerk, Chaucer's description of Alison is one of great length and detail, which is unusual for the stock characters of a fabliau. But, the description not only gives an impression of Alison herself, but also tells us about John. It gives us some idea of his personality simply by being such a detailed picture of the wife he has chosen for himself. The sheer length of the description contrasted with the abrupt introduction of John is in itself an implication that Alison is much more complex a personality than the carpenter, a fact which he would seem to have come to realize, since he now keeps her, "narwe in cage" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 1. 3224).

Although Alison is totally at odds with her husband, it would seem at first that she has very little, apart from her youth, in common with Nicholas, for whereas the clerk is described as a lover, Alison's portrait is, "much more in the manner of the pilgrims in the *General Prologue*"[2]. As her picture is built up one begins to see why the carpenter so fears that he will become a cuckold, for though she may not be a courtly lady, there is no doubt that Nicholas, of whom one remembers Chaucer has said: "Of deerne love he koude and of solas" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 1.3200) would find her most attractive and indeed, Chaucer hints that Alison could have either been intended for a better marriage, or as a mistress for the kind of lover Nicholas has been portrayed as: "She was a prymerole, a piggesnye,/ For any lord to leggen in his bedde,/ Or yet for any good yeman to wedde", *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3268-3270), although Nicholas is not a "lord".

The one thing which strikes the reader immediately about the description of Alison is the number and variety of natural images used in it. There are to begin with a number of animal images, the first of which is the weasel: "Fair was this yonge wyf, and therwithal, / As any wezele hir body gent and smal" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3233-3235).

The image here is ambiguous, for although it sets the tone for the passage, "which never loses sight of Alison's animal vitality,"[3] it does also have an ominous hint, for whilst the weasel is both lively and slim, it is also associated with cunningnees in Medieval bestiary[4] and suggests a certain quick wittedness on Alison's part. Hussey points out how "the apparently disjointed observations which make up the description do, however, comprise two conflicting strands of imagery"[5] and suggests that Alison is painted both as the girl her husband would like to see her as, through such images as:

"A barmclooth eek as whit as morne milk" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 1.3236)
"She was ful moore blisful on to see
Than is the newe pere-jonette tree,
And softer than the wolle is of a wether." *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11.3247-3249)
"But of hir song, it was as loude and yerne
As any swalwe sittynge on a berne." *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11.3257-3258)

and,
"Hir mouth was sweete as bragot or the meeth,
Or hoord of apples leyd in hey or heeth." *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11.3261-3262)

and also the potential adulteress, because of the images which suggest her restiveness;

"Therto she koude skippe and make game,
As any kyde or calf folwynge his dame." *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3259-3260)

and,
"Wynsynge she was, as is a joly colt," *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 1.3263)

especially when these are taken together with the statement that her husband restrained her "narwe in cage" *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 1. 3224).

After establishing the three main characters of the fabliau triangle, Chaucer moves straight into the action of the tale. Nicholas makes his approach to Alison in a most straightforward manner:

> *And prively he caughte hire by the queynte;*
> *And seyde, 'Ywis, but if ich have my wille,*
> *For deerne love of thee, lemman, I spille.'*
> *And heeld hire harde by the haunchebones.*
> *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3276-3279)

But, before describing these advances, Chaucer inserts one line which is of interest. He tells us that Nicholas approached Alison whilst her husband was away: "As clerkes ben ful subtile and ful queynte;" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 1.3275).

From this it would seem that Nicolas is behaving in the way that all young clerks would be expected to and thus conforming completely to what one would expect of him in a fabliau.

But despite the forthrightness of his advances, Nicholas maintains his courtly manner, his "deerne Love" and his use of "lemman" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 1.3278), and "or I wol dyen" *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 1.

3281), are typical of the behaviour of a courtly lover and are of course incongrous when heard against the background of his physical forthrightness.

Also typical of the courtly lover is his cry for mercy when Alison initially refuses him, but more typical of the fabliaux is Alison's rather hasty change of heart. While Alison is agreeing to accept his love, she also furthers the picture of her husband as the stereotype elderly husband of a fabliau, as she implores Nicholas to be secretive:

> *"Myn housbonde is so ful of jalousie*
> *That but ye wayte wel and been privee,*
> *I woot right wel I nam but deed" quod she*
> *"Ye moste be ful deerne, as in this cas."*
> (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3294-3297)

Nicholas' reply also serves the purpose of furthering one's impression of him as a stock fabliau figure: "Nay, therof care thee noght;" quod Nicholas/ "A clerk hadde litherly biset his whyle,/ But if he koude a carpenter bigyle" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11.3298-3300).

Nicholas' studies have given him the self-confidence he shows here in his ability to out with the carpenter, but Chaucer has already made it quite clear that he is not a man of great intelligence. The carpenter has not read any great philosophical works like Nicholas, but worse than this he does not even learn from experience, as he has proved by so foolishly taking a young wife.

As soon as Alison has consented to Nicholas' requests, he changes from being the ardent courtly lover, dying for his lady's grace, to a lover with plain passion and one cannot help getting the impression that he is feeling a little smug:

> *Whan Nicholas had doon thus everideel,*
> *And thakked hire aboute the lendes well,*
> *He kiste hire sweete and taketh his sawtrie,*
> *And pleyeth faste, and maketh melodie.*
> (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3303-3306)

Now the reader is ready and waiting for the cuckolding to take place, interested in seeing if the clever Nicholas will manage to hood-

wink the carpenter, or if something will go wrong. But first of all, Chaucer moves completely away from the main story line to introduce to the reader the figure of Absolon, the most pathetic figure of the whole story.

When Chaucer begins to introduce Absolon he seems to be well qualified for the role of a courtly lover, but as the details of his accomplishments and his behaviour mount up, one's impression of him changes until one sees him as only ridiculous. He seems totally to forget that he is only a parish clerk, living in a provincial town. Many of the epithets applied to him at the opening of his description are those more commonly reserved for courtly love tales, as with Nicholas, but Absolon really sees himself in this role rather than, using it as a means to an end. So that after having witnessed the scene between Nicholas and Alison, when the reader hears of Absolon: "But sooth to seyn, he was somdeel squaymous/ Of fartyng, and of speche daungerous" *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3337-3338), the reader is immediatly aware of the huge division not only between Nicholas and Absolon, but also between Alison with all her animal vitality and straightforwardness and the affected Absolon. But, as Absolon is not as clever as Nicholas, he is as completely fooled by Alison's appearance as the carpenter was when he married her.

Absolon behaves as though he were in another world, he woos Alison as if he were a courtly lover and she a courtly lady, But as Alison is precisely not this, his behaviour only attracts her ridicule and anyway she is already preoccupied with Nicholas:

> *She loveth so this hende Nicholas*
> *That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn;*
> *He ne hadde for his labour but a scorn;*
> *And thus she maketh Absolon hire ape,*
> *And al his ernest turneth til a jape.*
> *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3386-3390)

Chaucer then inserts a proverb: "Men seyn right thus, "Alwey the nye slye/ Maketh the ferre leeve to be looth" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3392-3393).

Nicholas has indeed beaten not only his rival Absolon, but also his rival John, who was away from the house when Nicholas made his move.

From this point in the story, Chaucer makes repeated refernces to chronology, because timing is to be a crucial matter in the planned adultery. The poem takes on a note of mock tragedy as Chaucer counts down to the all important point which will make or break the plan for Nicholas and Alison:

This passeth forth al thilke Saterday
That Nicholas stille in his chambre lay,
And eet and sleep, or dide what hym leste,
Til Sonday, that the sonne gooth to reste.
(*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3419-3422)

One begins to wonder what exactly Nicholas has planned. The carpenter displaying his superstitious nature, begins to show concern at Nicholas' long absence:

This sely carpenter hath greet merveyle
Of Nicholas or what thyng myghte hym eyle,
And seyde, "I am adrad, by Seint Thomas,
It stondeth nat aright with Nicholas,
God shilde that he deyde sodeynly!
This world is now ful tikel sikerly.
I saugh to-day a cors yborn to chirche
That now, on Monday last, I saugh him wirche"
(*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3423-3430)

and when his knave brings news of Nicholas' strange condition, John becomes almost hysterical in his condemnation of the clerk's studies - something beyond his own limited understanding:

This man is falle, with his astromye,
In some woodnesse or in some agonye,
I thoghte ay well how that it sholde be!
Men sholde nat knowl of Goddes pryvitee.
(*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3451-3454)

This recalls the *Miller's Prologue* to his tale where he comments: "An housbonde shal nat been inquisityf/ Of Goddes pryvitee, nor of his

wyf" *(The Miller's Prologue,* A, 11. 3163-3164). In relation to this, John continues: "Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man/ That noght but oonly his bileve kan!" *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11.3455-3456).

It appears that he himself will have nothing to do with dealings in the supernatural, but John has already ignored the second half of the Miller's proverb by being so suspicious of his wife. Even though he seems concerned for Nicholas, he appears to dismiss his astrology as needless meddling in matters that are beyond him, claiming that studying makes men lose touch with the realities of life, which a "lewed" man like himself keeps in touch with:

> *So ferde another clerk with astromye;*
> *He walked in the feeldes, for to prye*
> *Upon the sterres, what ther sholde bifalle,*
> *Til he was in a marle-pit yfalle;*
> (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3457-3460)

One is not in the least surprised that he resorts to his own king of supernatural authority in reaction to seeing Nicholas: "Therwith the night-spel seyde he anon-rightes/On foure halves of the house aboute,/And on the thresshfold fo the dore withoute" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3480-3482).

Since John has by now established himself as so thoroughly foolish and superstitious one is not surprised either when he is ready to listen to what Nicholas has to say. Upon hearing what Nicholas' astrology has revealed, the carpenter breaks down for fear of losing his wife: "... Allas, my wyf!/And shal she drenche? allas, myn Alisoun!"" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3522-3523).

Nicholas' claim to be able to save John and his wife is received with such relief that the carpenter does not see that like the clerk who falls into the pit by not keeping in touch with reality; he too is about to be trapped and made a fool of in the very same way.

The great detail with which Nicholas describes his plans to the carpenter helps to convince him into complying totally with the clerk's wishes, and the references to Noah and his wife are heavily ironic, for Nicholas is implying that Alison may well be a cause of trouble to her

husband, when she will be but trouble of a different sort to that suggested by Nicholas, and she certainly is not going to refuse to get into the boat.

The carpenter's wife, much wiser than him, immediately catches on to Nicholas' plan, and in the manner usual to wives in fabliaux tales who are on the verge of cuckolding their husbands, assures him: "I am thy trewe, verray wedded wyf; / Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3609-3610).

The climax of the story approaches, but there seems to be no way that Nicholas and Alison can be caught, the plans have been made so carefully, and the carpenter is such a fool, yet to fulfil all the conditions of a fabliau the cuckolding cannot go undetected, yet it does seem for a moment that Nicholas and Alison have been entirely succesful:

> *Ther was the revel and the melodye,*
> *And thus lith Alison and Nicholas,*
> *In bisynesse of myrthe and of solas,*
> *Til that the belle of laudes gan to rynge,*
> *And freres int he chauncel gonne synge.*
> (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3652-3656)

But the couple have not made any provision in their plans for the persistent Absolon, who believing John to be away, decides to try once more to obtain Alison's favour. His expectations of some reward are carefully built up in a speech which is heavily laden with irony. The reader is sure that Alison will have nothing to do with him and laughs at his claim that he is sure to get something from Alison that night: "Som maner confort shal I have, parfay./My mouth hath icched al this longe day; /That is a signe of kissynge atte leaste" *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3681-3683).

Expecting this long awaited kiss, Absolon carefully prepares himself, making sure that his mouth is fresh and pleasant to receive what he is sure will be the kiss of a true lady of fin-amour, calling to her in grossly overaffected language: "I moorne as dooth a lamb ater the tete./Ywis, lemman, I have swich love-longynge,/That lik a turtel trewe is my moornynge" *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3704-3706).

But now that one has seen the less refined side of Alison, one is not really surprised to hear her curse of Absolon and to state her preference

for "another" whom one knows to be the more manly and forthright Nicholas, who knows and accepts Alison for what she really is. Absolon makes a final plea for the kiss he is expecting, and Alison complies, but carried away by her succesful cuckolding of her husband, resolves to have some more fun: "And at the wyndow oute she putte hir hole, /And Absolon, hym fil no bet ne wers, /But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers" *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3732-3734).

From here the tale moves quickily. Absolon, having been made a fool of, is bent on revenge. However, his revenge is to have more far reaching consequences, for when Nicholas decides to take the joke further and have Absolon kiss him too, he becomes the recipient of the punishment intended for Alison. But still the husband must be ridiculed too, and Nicholas' cries for water rouse the carpenter, so that thinking that the promised flood has come he cuts his rope and falls to the ground, to become the laughing stock of the whole town. All the requirements of a fabliau have now been fulfilled and the tale is neatly summed up by the Miller:

> *Thus swyved was this carpenteris wyf.*
> *For al his kepyng and his jalousye;*
> *And Absolon hath kist hir nether ye;*
> *And Nicholas is scalded in the towte.*
> *(The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3850-3853)

All three men are then, in some manner brought suffering as a conseqence of their dealings with Alison; John is cuckolded, as he married a wife too young for him, Absolon is brought down to earth about women, and Nicholas is both caught as an adulterer, because his clever plan had an unexpected loophole, and physically punished for being too clever. But whether or not Alison is the actual cause of all these misfortunes is not clear, nor is whether one should give her any sympathy for being married to an old man, or whether one should feel sorry for her husband in his humiliation. One thing is certain: one feels no sympathy for Nicholas and Absolon who bring about their own disgrace totally. Neither does one feel that Alison's adultery can be justified on the grounds that it was commited out of love, and yet one feels that it is totally understandable if not actually justifiable: But the message which comes across most clearly is: "Men sholde wedden after hire estaat,/ For youthe and elde is often at debaat" (*The Miller's Tale,* A, 11. 3229-3230).

It seems that the Miller is not the only one of Chaucer's pilgrims to stand by this maxim, for the Merchant also has a tale to tell about an old man who married a young girl and there are a great many similarities in the plots and characters of both tales.

Although the plot of *The Merchant's Tale* conforms to the fabliaux tradition, the poem itself is exceptionally long for this genre, and there are a number of additional features. Whilst the main events of the plot are almost identical to those of *The Miller's Tale,* there are a number of other things in it which are of interest.

The Merchant's Tale does, as the *Miller's Tale,* provide an amusing illustration of the arguments against marrying a young wife, but in addition to this it also shows the reader the other side of the coin, so that the impression one gets from the poem is not entirely comic. For whilst one might laugh at May's successful cuckolding of her hypocritical and lecherous old husband, one is also invited, much more than in the case of the *Miller's Tale,* to pass judgement upon January's own conduct and motives for marrying the young girl, and to weigh these against May's own motives and behaviour.

A number of topics which came under discussion in the *Miller's Tale* reoccur in the *Merchant's Tale,* firstly and most obviously is the subject of marriage itself, and in particular, marriage of an old man to a young girl. The *Miller's Tale,* though, is merely concerned to put across the point that men should marry "after hire estaat" *(The Miller's Prologue,* A, 11. 3229), rather than to denounce women totally, for whilst the Miller, in his prologue does comment: "Who hathno wyf, he is no cokewold" (*The Miller's Prologue,* A, 1.3152) he is quite prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt. To him, John the carpenter was just foolish in his choice and perhaps a little unlucky: "Ther been ful goode wives many oon, /And evere a thousand goode ayeyns oon badde" (*The Miller's Prologue,* A, 11. 3154-3155).

However, the Merchant on the other hand, tells his tale not so much as a warning to men to be careful in their choice of a wife, but as an outspoken statement against marriage at all. That is why he tells the reader of his unhappy marriage before he begins his tale and the first part of the tale is actually a comprehensive list of all the arguments for and against marrying. The whole passage is heavily ironic in the light of what is to

follow, but serves the purpose also of giving the reader a clear picture of January's character.

From the begining of the story, the reader puts on his guard against January when the reader learns his reasons for wanting to marry, for although the Merchant gives January the benifit of the doubt:

> *And whan that he was passed sixty yeer,*
> *Were it for hoolyness or for dotage,*
> *I kan nat seye, but swich a greet corage*
> *Hadde this knyght to been a wedded man.*
> (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 1252-1255)

His insistence upon a young wife is enough to make the reader sure that he seeks only pleasure, but is hedging his bets by marrying, just an attempt to preserve his soul. January thinks that he is going to get a very good deal out of marriage: his wife will attend to all his bodily needs and bring him the greatest happiness whilst he is on earth, while through the sacrament of marriage he will also save his soul.

Arguments against marriage are mentioned, but only to be overturned, Theophrastus' arguments against marriage, classic anti-feminist material, are set out:

> *"Ne take no wyf," quod he, "for housbondrye,*
> *As for to spare in houshold thy dispence.*
> *A trewe servant dooth moore diligence*
> *Thy good to kepe, than thyn owene wyf,*
> *For she wol clayme half part all hir lyf,*
> *And if that thou be syk, so God me save,*
> *Thy verray freendes, or a trewe knave,*
> *Wol kepe thee bet than she that waiteth ay*
> *After thy good and hath doon many a day.*
> *And if thou take a wyf unto thyn hoold*
> *Ful lightly maystow been a cokewold."*
> (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 1296-1306)

This argument is challenged by the statement that God made women for men and therefore they cannot be bad, and the example of Adam and Eve is quoted:

That womman is for mannes helpe ywroght.
The hye God, whan he hadde Adam maked,
And saugh him al allone bely-naked,
God of his grete goodnesse seyde than,
Lat us new make an helpe unto this man
Lyk to himself; and thanne he made him Eve.
Heere may ye se, and heerby may ye preve,
That wyf is mannes helpe and his confort.
(*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 1324-1331)

The use of such an example would be ironic in any context, but it is to become especially so here, because of the precise circumstances under which May will cuckold January and bring him woe rather than comfort.

Having satisfied himself of the correctness of his decision to go ahead with a marriage, January calls in his friends to tell them all what he has in mind. It is at this point that his insistence on a young wife is seen:"But o thyng warne I yow, my freendes deere/ I wol noon oold wyf han in no manere/ She shal nat passe twenty year certayn" (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 1415-1417). He says that he will be better able to control a young wife: "But certeynly, a young thyng may men gye,/ Right as men may warm wex with handes plye" (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11.1429-1430) and furthermore, a young and attractive wife will give him no reason to commit adultery, whilst an old one would. This again is ironic in the light of what is to follow, and despite some further warnings against marriage, January decides to pursue his plans.

After having chosen a young wife with no other concern in mind than her beauty, he calls his friends once again; his only concern is that his wife might bring him so much happiness in this life that he will be denied by such a chance in heaven. Justinus warns him that his wife may in fact turn out to be his purgatory on earth, another hint at the outcome of the tale.

January nevertheless goes ahead with his marriage, and on the wedding night the reader's suspicions that he has married only for lust are confirmed by his behaviour, but before he can retire to bed with May, the third character of the triangle is introduced:

O Januarie, dronken in plesaunce
In mariage, se how thy Damyan,
Thyn owene squier and thy borne man,
Entendeth for to do thee vileyne.
(*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 1788-1791)

January, like John the carpenter, has made a grave error and will eventually pay the price for this. But first the reader is made to sympathize with May; January's lecherous enjoyment of May is made grotesque by his hypocritical attempts to comfort her: "...Allas I moot trespace/ To yow, my spouse, and yow greetly offende/ Er tyme come that I wil doun descende" (*The Merchant's Tale,* E,11.1828-1830). May behaves as the perfect wife, and keeps her discontent to herself: "She preyseth nat his pleyyng worth a bene" (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 1. 1854).

But one or two observations that have been made about May, do take away one's sympathy a little. The reader is told that she is by no means wealthy; and certainly, she, like Alison in the *Miller's Tale* is to be associated with wealth throughout the tale, as for example when January attempts to bribe her into being faithful by telling her that she will inherit all his wealth.

In the meanwhile, the reader is turned again towards Damyan, languishing with his love for May. As with Nicholas, he is portrayed in many ways as a courtly lover:

This sike Damyan in Venus fyr
So brenneth that the dyeth for desyr,
For which he putte his lyf in aventure.
No lenger myghte he in this wise endure,
But prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a lettre wroot he al his sorwe,
In manere of a compleynt or a lay,
Unto his faire, fresshe lady May;
And in a purs of sylk, heng on his sherte
He hath it put, and leyde it at his herte.
(*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 1875-1884)

January's concern for Damyan is reminiscent of the *Miller's Tale.* The fact that January should be so anxious is ironic because of what Da-

myan is to do to him later, but nonetheless, one sees a pleasing side of the merchant's nature in his genuine concern:

> *"He is a gentil squier, by my trouthe!*
> *If that he deyde, it were harm and routhe,*
> *He is as wys, discreet and as secree*
> *As any man I woot of his degree,*
> *And therto manly, and eek servysable*
> *And for to been a thrifty man right able.*
> *But after mete, as soone as evere I may,*
> *I wol myself visite, hym, and eek May,*
> *To doon hym al the confort that I kan."*
> (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 1907-1915)

So whilst January's sentiments are straightforward and genuine, his words hold an irony for him which the reader will immediately recognize, for January, unbeknown to himself, will bring Damyan the confort that he seeks by bringing him together with May, in much the same way as John's obedience to Nicholas' instructions, in order (he thinks) to save his wife, only results in losing her to Nicholas.

The sick bed scene seems appropriate to courtly love, but a slight hint that Damyan is, like Nicholas, not quite the valiant courtly lover is suggested in his words of caution to May and, as one would expect, Damyan resembles Nicholas too in his sudden recovery from love-sickness when May agrees to: "...that she myghte unto his lust suffise" (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 1.1999). As soon as Nicholas' recovers, Damyan springs back to life:

> *Up riseth Damyan the nexte morwe;*
> *Al passed was his siknesse and his sorwe.*
> *He kembeth him, he preyneth him and pyketh*
> *He dooth al that his lady lust and lyketh.*
> (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 2009-2012)

The role of a courtly lover is assumed by May too, as she displays a strange mixture of courtly airs, and sharp wit and cunningness one finds in Alison. For whilst May's response to Damyan's letter is explained by the phrase: "Lo, pitee renneth soone in gentil herte" (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 1.1986); "pitee" being a quality one would expect to find in a

courtly romance, and whilst she also grants Damyan "hire verray grace" (*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 1.1997), she displays an uncanny instinctive understanding of Damyan's intent in her pains to read the letter in private and in her clever method of disposing of it.

But January too has courtly aspirations, as his attempts to make his life-style as close to courtly ideals as possible, indicate. But once again, January only has time for outward trappings of a courtly life. He mimics the fashions, but has none of the qualities of a gentle life.

This contradiction is shown in the contrast between his lechery as shown both in his reasons for marrying and his behaviour towards May, and his garden which he has built in an attempt to capture the life-style of the *Romance of the Rose.*

But January's mercenary use of his wealth to affect a life-style which suggests qualities not actually found in him is one of the most ironic twists in the whole tale. For just as Justinus has warned January, a wife could turn out to be purgatory rather than paradise, January's garden of love turns out to be like the Garden of Eden where the wife whom he thought would bring him comfort and save his soul, in fact brings him heartache and misery.

In this garden all the irony which has been building up against January comes together to crush him. To begin with, there is the irony of the warm wax which May uses to mould a key for Damyan as the reader remembers January's claim that he would be able to mould his young wife like warm wax. Secondly there is the irony of the garden just mentioned, and thirdly there is the irony of the tree. The tree in January's garden brings three things to mind; firstly it is the pear tree of Medieval comedy, familiar to stories of cuckolding; secondly it is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, found in Eden as May is about to bring January misery as Eve did to Adam; and thirdly the reader remembers the image January has painted of himself earlier in the tale:

Though I be hoor, I fare as dooth a tree
That blosmenth er that fruyt ywoxen bee;
And blosmy tree nys neither drye ne deed.
I feele me nowhere hoor but on myn heed;
Myn herte and alle my lymes been as grene

As laurer, thurgh the yeer is for to sene,
(*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 1461-1466)

But as one will see, January is mistaken, he is hoar and nothing can change that. His physical blindness at this stage in the story is smyptomatic of his moral blindness; he cannot see the evil in his supposed paradise, he does not see Damyan because of his physical blindness and because he is morally blind he cannot see his folly in taking a young wife to satisfy his lust and thinking that he can still have his rewards in paradise for having lived a good clean life, and the extent of his moral blindness is such that even this lesson does not teach him, as J.Winny puts it: "He does not see the tree for what it is because he cannot see the evil in his own life. Once his sight returns he still remains blind to the evil he has promoted"[6].

But before the story is brought to its fabliau climax, one more similarity with the *Miller's Tale* is seen. In the *Merchant's Tale* just as in the first story, the climax of the comedy is brought about because of the intervention of an outsider. Left to themselves Damyan and May could quite easily have cuckolded January successfully. But just as Absolon in the *Miller's Tale* was an unexpected complication, so Pluto and Prosperine interfere at this stage.

Pluto is incensed by May's treachery and, lecturing his own wife in the typical Medieval anti-feminist manner, he resolves to punish her for it:

"My wyf" quod he "ther may no wight seye nay;
Th' experience so preveth every day
The tresons whiche that wommen doon to man
Ten hondred thousand [tales] tellen I kan
Notable of youre untrouthe and brotilnesse.
(*The Merchant's Tale,* E, 11. 2237-2241)

Ignoring January's own faults he resolves to help him by giving him back his sight. But the tale would not be a fabliau if January were not a comic cuckold, so Proserpyna vows to help May by giving her an answer which will save her and Damyan. Since the wife in a fabliau tale requires quick wits, the answer which May gives January is suitably incredible,

yet January, because he is an old husband in true fabliau style, accepts it and thus increases the laughter which the whole farcical scene has brought. Since Pluto is unable to overcome his own wife's wit he too is the sorrowful object of a woman's lechery. So, at the end of the tale, both May and Damyan have satisfied their lust for each other and, January, though he refuses to believe it, knows that he is a cuckold, but has nothing to gain by trying to prove this.

The fabliaux tradition of old men with young wives then, seems to operate upon a set pattern, with common features recurring in all the stories. The main characteristics will be pointed out to see if they do occur in the play of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* so that one can decide if that too is in the fabliaux tradition:

1. The triangle of old husband, young wife and clever young man.
2. Courtly romance allusions and imagery.
3. The audience possesing more information than the old man.
4. Traditional anti-feminist arguments.
5. Outside intervention leading to a comic climax.
6. Constant irony running through the story.

However, the *Merchant's Tale* has shown that young wives were not the only women who were mistrusted or hated, and although the idea of women as a threat to men's peace of mind and virtue was not new in the Middle Ages, the expounding of such an idea was particularly common at this time. So before turning to look at *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* in detail, a brief look at other ideas and traditions about the wicked wiles of women will be given.

It should be noted that this did not need such a long and involved story as either the *Miller's Tale* or the *Merchant's Tale* to get across the idea that old men should not marry young wives or they may regret it. The sentiment was expressed equally well in a short poem entitled "The Trials of Old Men in Love":

> "I an olde whan age doth apele,
> havyng a yong thyng that lytel setteth me by.
> One such in a schyre is to many, and fele
> other than trew be; by-holde a cause why-
> I may not as I myght on my partye.

therfor I am for-sake! age, age, woo thou be!
Youught is a traytoure, her expeins at eye;
Oftyn-tymes and many the blynde etyth many a flye!"[7]

Although the idea that women were the cause of all men's sorrows did not stem from the Middle Ages, authors at this time developed and expanded anti-feminist ideals with much energy and at great length.

Books of "wikked wyves" like the one which belonged to the Wife of Bath's fifth husband were compilations of all the evils and sorrows, wives could bring and provided a stock of anti-feminist images, arguments and examples.

The same themes appear again and again in the Middle Ages, but for their origins one has to go back to the late Roman Empire. For example, Lucretius in the fourth book of *De Rerum Natura*, complains about the blindness of sexual passion, and Ovid in *Remedies for Love* advises the lover to concentrate upon his mistress' faults, providing him with a list of womens' worser features as a starting point.[8]

This tradition was inherited by the Christian Empire, which added to it the story of the Fall of Man. This tradition of man's fall from paradise to a condition where death and other woes were present, as a direct consequence of Eve's sin, was regarded as evidence enough for general condemnation of women. St Jerome saw marriage as preferable only to fornication, but greatly inferior to virginity.[9]

Many similar discussions of the inferiority of marriage ended up by being vehemently anti-feminist; though it is only fair to say that in some cases the main concern was that a partner in marriage would interfere with the demands of philosophy and study. But without a doubt, whenever man was driven to bemoan the sorrows of his life on this earth and ask what he had done to deserve them, the finger would be pointed firmly at wife.[10]

Versions of the story of man's fall, whether doctrinal, or popular, were by no means hard to come by in medieval times. The English Mystery Play cycles had their own pageants depicting this particular episode in the history of the church, but here the Anglo-Norman work *Le Mystere*

d'Adam, is of particular interest because of the poet's conception and presentation of the story as «a human tragedy with an intimate domestic meaning for a Medieval lay audience. »[11]

Instead of simply showing the fall followed by a general denunciation of women, the poet who wrote *Le Mystere d' Adam* used the play to show Eve as a woman with all the worst characteristics of a Medieval wife, and the marriage as one which was unsuccesful by any of the contemporary standards.

The main theme of the play is obedience in relationships, but interestingly a number of the features found in Chaucer's fabliaux tales emerge here too.

The question of who ought to be dominant in a marriage was a hotly debated one in the Middle Ages, and the beginning of *Le Mystere d'Adam* brings this up for consideration. When God appears to give Adam the conditions of his tenancy of paradise he outlines the relationship which should exist between Adam and Eve;

To Adam:

"She is your wife, her name is Eve,
She is your wife and partner; you
Must stay faithful to her and in turn she
Love you; both will be loved by me,
She must answer to your command
The two of you be in my hand".[12]

To Eve:

"Love Adam, hold him dear as life-
He is your husband, you his wife.
To him remain obedient;
Don't go beyond his government."
(*Le Mystere d'Adam*, 11. 33-36)

But, God does not intend that Adam should have the right to tyranize upon Eve for he specifically instructs him: "Govern her by the light of reason *(Le Mystere d'Adam*, 1. 21)" and this concern with "reason" is to prove important later in the play.

However, it is clear that God suspects Eve may be somehow more fallible than Adam for even though Eve has already agreed to obey both God and her husband, God takes pains to ensure that she is listening to his counsel: "I tell you this, and wish that Eve may hear; /If she does not, she does herself a wrong" *(Le Mystere d'Adam,* 11.61-62*).*

When God leads Adam and Eve into paradise itself, he touches once more on the subject of marriage, defining perfect marital happiness by putting it against the common source of unhappiness in an earthly marriage: "No woman shall a husband's anger know/No husband for his wife feel fear or shame" *(Le Mystere d'Adam,* 11.193-194*).*

Now God leaves the buoyant couple and Satan appears to tempt them, turning first of all upon Adam to attempt to convince him to eat the fruit, by saying that this will make him no longer subordinate to God, but equal in every way: "You shall be king in majesy/Sharing power with God, himself" *(Le Mystere d'Adam,* 11. 193-194*).*

But, Adam, knowing what his place is, above Eve, but below God, rejects Satan's advice. Satan now turns to Eve. His approach is very much that of the stock type clerk of fabliaux. He paints a picture of himself as more intelligent than the woman's husband and falsely assumes the airs of a courtly lover. He tells Eve that Adam is a fool and dismisses her claim that he is a gentleman, saying that Adam is not good enough for someone:

"...delicate and sensitive,
Sweeter to look at than a rose

A crystal-clear complexion (like snow in a icebond valley falling)"
(*Le Mystere d'Adam,* 11.227-230)

and swears her to secrecy just as Nicholas and Damyan did in their stories.

Adam sees that Eve has been talking with the Devil, reproaches her, explaining how Satan is not to be trusted as he has attempted to gain mastery over God, his superior. But by now Eve has been tempted too far and is determined to eat the fruit. The greatest attraction which the fruit has for Eve is its sensual appeal, as the Devil promises her a throne if she

eats the fruit, and the final arguments which persuade Adam are sensual too: "I've tasted it. Oh God! The Flavour! /I've never tasted such a sweetness/This apple has a taste like....like..." (*Le Mystere d'Adam*, 11.304-306).

Eve's capitulation to Satan was seen as adultery to Adam, but as well as this sin, she commits the sin of attempting (and succeeding) to gain mastery over her husband. R.Axton has pointed out how "the final movement of the Fall is presented as a domestic quarrel in which husband and wife each try to assert mastery"[13], and how Eve's eventual tasting of the apple signals the overthrow of Adam's authority, the end of the order and the reasons which have reigned in paradise, and man's plunge into the chaos in which he now finds himself: "The King of glory I've defied, /No trace of reason on my side" (*Le Mystere d'Adam* 11.349-350) and the condemnations of the senses as opposed to reason come from Eve herself: "A moment's pleasure brings me pain tommorrow" (*Le Mystere d'Adam*, 1.464).

Eve's manner after their banishment is also important since she repents again and again, confesing her guilt and asking for forgiveness from God and Adam.

Whilst Eve's sin was often seen as adultery, or at least approximate to it, her actual offence, that of disobeying both God and her husband's instructions, was the most blatant. So far as the Medievals were concerned, Eve's bid to get mastery over Adam was the act which begun the whole fall and Adam's succumbing to her could be seen as a moral weakness. To the Middle Ages, the story of the fall showed what happened when Reason, thought to be in all men, is seduced by Flesh-woman. For this reason, it was thought that men should make sure of keeping their own wives under control both to prevent their own personal fall and as a contribution towards the universal effort to regain paradise.

The figure of the shrewish wife was as common in the literature of the Middle Ages as that of the adulteress. Although many of the fabliaux dealt with the triangular situations found in the *Miller's Tale* and the *Merchant's Tale,* women were seen by some writers as combining both shrewishness and lechery as Woolf quotes:

> *Furthermore, not only is every woman by nature a miser, but she is also envious and a slanderer of other women, greedy, a slave to her belly, inconstant, fickle in her speech, disobedient and impatient of restraint, spotted with the sin of pride and desirous of vain glory, a liar, a drunkard, a babbler, no keeper of secrets, too much given to wantonness, prone to every evil, and never loving any man in her heart.*[14]

A number of fabliaux deal specifically with the story of the shrewish wife and her suffering husband. It is upon this stock figure that Noah's wife of the Mystery Plays is based, and such a stock figure explains her perverse disobedience in refusing to enter the ark in the face of rising flood waters.

Rosemary Woolf mentions a number of versions of a favorite fabliau story which provides a model for the conduct of Noah's wife.[15] In *The Art of Courtly Love*, a "wise man" who finds his marriage to his shrewish wife unbearable, but feels unable to kill her himself, prepares a mixture of wine and poison, which he warns her not to touch. Of course, she drinks the liquid as soon as her husband is out of sight. Other variations of the story also see the wife kill herself as a result of similar plotting by the husband, and occasionally the wife is only harmed physically though quite seriously, as a result of her disobedience.[16]

Noah's wife then, is portrayed as belonging to such a tradition of shrews. But as Rosemary Woolf points out[17] the dramatists' choice of such characterization was not simply to give better entertainment value, but an important innovation to serve a religious purpose. Noah's wife, by refusing to enter the ark, represents the recalcitrant sinner who refuses to enter the church, and her disobedience to Noah must be seen as approximating to Eve's overthrow of Adam's authority.

In the Chester version of the story this allegory is made fairly plain whilst at the same time retaining the comedy of the shrew's antics. When Noah summons his wife to come into the ark she turns perversely upon him: "In faith Noah I had as lief thou slept./For all thy frankish fare, /I will not do after thy rede."[18] The more the patient and obedient Noah tries to persuade her, the more shrewish she becomes:

"Yeah, sir, set up sail
And row forth with evil hail
For, and without any fail,
I will not out of this town.
But I have my gossips everyone,"
(*Noah's Story*, 11.197-201)

and she even stays drinking with another woman whilst the "flood come fleeting in full fast" (*Noah's story*, 1.225). Eventually she is ragged forcibly into the ark by her son.

All through the scene the religious significance is made clear, as Noah attempts to persuade his wife aboad "on God's half "(*Noah's Story*, 1.195), gives his sons "Christ's blessinge and myne" (*Noah's Story*, 1.222) to fetch her aboad by force. Also the contrast between Noah's obedience to God and his wife's disobedience is significant enough for the audience to grasp the full implications of her behaviour.Although Noah's wife was a famous shrew in the Middle Ages Nicholas warns John that Alison may prove difficult in the same way as Noah's wife.

Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* is an attempt to convince that the wife should have mastery in marriage, but far more interesting is the prologue to the tale in which her reminiscences upon her career of marriage could be read as a comic satire on women and married life. But the Wife of Bath knows full well her ability to overcome her husband and gain mastery, and merely enjoys this knowledge.

Her most comic argument is that since men are intellectually superior they ought to see why they should give in to women's whims: "Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees; /And sith a man is more resonable/Than woman is, ye moste been suffrable" (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, 1.440-442).

The wife's attacks do not only fall upon her husbands, but also upon the kind of authority which feels justified in condemning marriage and women. She counters the arguments of scriptural authority with what seems to her, common sense logic, arguing that the sexual organs were not made simply to distinguish between the sexes, but for reproduction and also for pleasure, so long as this is not indiscriminate.

The Wife of Bath claims that no clerk ever has a good word to say about women: "For trusteth wel, it is an impossible/That any clerk wol speke good of wyves, /But if it be of hooly seintes lyves" (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue,* 11.688-690) and claims that women could tell some sorrowful tales of the trials of their wedded lives.

However, she seems not to know or to discount the teaching that it was a woman's desire for mastery which brought man from paradise. The clergy then, could find time to praise obedient wives at anytime. But for a woman to prove that she was obedient enough to be worthy of praise could be rather a difficult task.

It appears that as there were many shrewish women, it was difficult to recognize a good, patient, and obedient wife. In the *Clerk's Tale* Griselda's trial, obedience and constancy are in many ways comparable to the experience of Mary after the annunciation, and help to show just how far mistrust of women went. As part of the trials, for example, Walter persists in a trick on his child which Griselda has to comply with him:

> *Ther fil, as it bifalleth tymes mo,*
> *Whan that this child had souked but a throwe,*
> *This markys in his herte longeth so*
> *To tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse for to knowe,*
> *That he ne myghte out of his herte throwe*
> *This merveillous desir his wyf t'assaye;*
> *Nedelees God woot, he thoghte hire for t'affraye.*
> (*The Clerk's Tale,* E, III, 11.449-455)

Griselda's upholding of the promise she gave to Walter to obey his every command is taken by the Clerk as an example of patience in adversity, in much the same way as Nicholas Love in *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf.of Jesu Christ* takes Joseph's patience as a similar example, but he is careful to point out how such wives as Griselda are hard to come by. But for a Medieval audience, Griselda would be bound to call to mind the Virgin Mary, in contrast not only to all the shrews of popular Medieval literature, but also their ancestor Eve.

Nicholas Love's *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ,* which is a translation from St. Bonaventure's *Speculum Vitae Christi,* is, as Elea-

nor Prosser[19] points out, generally recognized as a source for the *Ludus Coventriae* play of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*, yet even here there is none of the ribaldry and jesting of the play, none of Joseph's ranting or jealousy, and a number of details differ considerably.

But Love's *Mirrour* is not the only work to deal with the episode, and when one turns to other sources one sees that these are also at odds with the Mystery Play version of the story. Rosemary Woolf points out the "hesitancy", found in many Medieval writings dealing with the story[20]. In the *Protevangelium* Joseph's conviction that he has been deceived is preceeded by his reluctance to marry a young wife. Here an actual conversation between Mary and Joseph is presented, but in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, Joseph addresses only Mary's attendants, thus shielding Mary from the squabble, and in the *De Nativitate* there is only a monologue from Joseph.

In the English Mystery Plays, the episode of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* presents a figure of Joseph which conforms to the Medieval stereotype of an old man with a young wife. He grumbles and complains incessantly, makes himself appear foolish and self-pitying, and convinces himself that he is a cuckold. But nowhere in the sources there is any authority found for such a treatment of this subject.In Matthew, the only Gospel to mention the subject gives a very little detail:

> *Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be the child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.*
>
> (Matthew, I, 18-19)

Obviously a large amount of detail has been added at some point, but just where and why this was done is not a straightforward story by any means. The writers of the Mystery Plays did not invent the character, which one sees in Joseph, entirely by themselves, and in attempting to see how the Joseph of Matthew becomes the Joseph of the plays, a number of factors must be taken into consideration.

Firstly, the sources for the story developed out of Matthew, but before the time of the plays. Secondly, medieval literary traditions concerning marriage, and general medieval views on women and marriage play an important role. Thirdly, the nature and the purpose of the Mystery Plays, and more specifically, what the writer of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* set out to do with the episode could be important factors for the Joseph of plays.

Love's *Mirrour* is entitling the incident "Hou Joseph thoughte priuely to leave oure lady seint Marye",[2] almost straight from Matthew I,18-19. But he does go on to give more detail and indeed to provide a certain amount of insight and sympathy for Joseph's predicatement.

Joseph's reaction to Mary's pregnancy is presented with the utmost sympathy for Joseph's own feelings, and Joseph, whom Love describes, is by no means a stock character of any kind, but a sensitive and caring individual;

> *At the laste Joseph/seynge hir grete with childe/and byholdynge hir not ones bot ofte sithes/was wonder sory and greetly destourbled/made hir hevy chere and turned away his eiyen ofte sithe fro hir/and as in a perplexite thoughte what he mygte best do.*
>
> *(Mirrour, p.41)*

Joseph's essential goodness is shown in his reluctance to believe that Mary could commit adultery.

> *For on the tone side he sawh hir lyf so holy and no tokene of synne in hir/neither in countenaunce/neither in worde in speche/nor in dede that he dorste not openly accuse hir of avoutrie;*
>
> *(Mirrour, p.41)*

And yet Joseph is still after all a simple man, down to earth and honest. He cannot believe that Mary would have committed adultery, but sees no other way on how she could have conceived: "and on that other side he knewe nougt how that she mygte conceyve bot by man" (*Mirrour*, p.*41*).

Love goes on to both explain and justify Joseph's train of thought and his motives, implying that any man of Joseph's moral stature would have been forced to a similiar conculusion:

> *Wherefore he thougt that he wolde privelyleve hir. Sothely it may be seide of hym that is writen in the gospel to his preasynge/that is to seie/that he was a rigtwys man/that schewede wele this dede od grete vertue.*
>
> (*Mirrour*, p.41)

But here the very first hint of misogyny creeps into the narrative: "For sithen comounly avoutrie of the womman is to the man occasioun of moste schame/moste sorwe/and as a manere of wodenes" (*Mirrour*, p.41).

But as the picture of Joseph which has been built up would lead us to expect, Joseph does not act like most men would in this situation where adultery is suspected:

> *Nevertheless he vertuously tempered hymself and wolde nougt accusen hir/nor venge himself; but paciently suffring that semynge wronge/and overcomyng hym self with pitee/thougt that he wolde prively leve hir.*
>
> (*Mirrour*, p.41)

The situation as presented here is grave, solemn and almost tragic, not in any way farcical and comic as in the Mystery Plays, therefore it is quite appropriate that the resolution of the problem should be an equally grave and dignified affair. Mary is aware of her husband's suffering and prays for it to be relieved in some way, and God answers her prayer by sending his angel to comfort Joseph:

> *the whiche appeared to Joseph in his slepe/and seide that he schulde not drede to take to hym marye his spouse/bot tristily and gladly dwelle with hir; for that that sche had conceyved was not by man/ but by worchynge of the holy goost.*
>
> (*Mirrour*, p.42)

Love's *Mirrour* does not directly teach and reinforce doctrine, but: "a devote Meditacioun of the grete counseile in hevene for the restroryng of man and his savacioun" *(Mirrour,* p.13).

Love's version of the story is not told to convince its readers of the truth, but used to point out to its readers what lessons they should take from the episode and how to make the story relate to their own lives.

The Mystery Plays however were written for a much more general purpose, and their primary aim was instructive. For this reason they had to convince their audience, and the playwrights usually did this by making the situations readily identifiable, by giving the story some degree of contemporaneity. If one bears this in mind one can begin to see how Joseph in the Mystery Plays becomes the medieval stereotype of a foolish old man.

Rosemary Woolf points out that whilst western Christian writings vary in their treatment of Joseph's Trouble, eastren sermons on the annunciation developed the narrative of the *Protevangelium* into dramatic dialogues. In these, Joseph's mortification at seeing his wife pregnant is made worse by the gossip of his neighbours. It would seem that the eastern Fathers were using the same principle as the Mystery Play writers, making the situation contemporary, for such dialogues are thought to have been influenced by traditions of mime which flourished at this time.[22]

Although the story line is basically the same in the *Ludus Coventriae* play as in the Love's *Mirrour,* the playwright did make a number of changes both for dramatic effect and to allow the story to serve the purpose for which it was intended here.

Firstly, the play reverses the accepted order of Joseph's doubts and the visit to Elizabeth. The traditional order, as found in the *Protevangelium,* was that the visit followed Mary's annunciation and Joseph's doubts came after this. Love's *Mirrour* follows this order, but in the play, Joseph's doubts come first. The rearrangement of these events was clearly a most useful and effective device, for it allowed a comic and ironic treatment of Joseph and his doubts to precede and therefore enhance a

much more solemn and dignified acceptance of the holiness of Mary and the wonder of the annunciation to follow.

The second change made, concerns Joseph's discovery of Mary's pregnancy. In Love's *Mirrour* Joseph seems to gradually realize that Mary is pregnant and this is becoming increasingly obvious:

> *What time that oure lady and Joseph hir spouse dwelleden to gidre/ and hir blessid sone Jesu day by day encressed bodily in his modir wombe. At the laste Joseph/ seynge hir grete with childe/and byholdynge hir not ones bot ofte sithes/was wonder sory and greetly destourbled and made hir hevy chere and turned away his eiyen ofte sithe fro hir/and as in a perplexite thoughte what he mygte best do.*
> (*Mirrour,* p.41)

However, in the play (*Ludus Coventriae*), Joseph has been apart from his young wife for some time, and when he comes home to find her pregnant, he is understandably dismayed;

> *"...I am afraid,*
> *Thy womb too high doth stand.*
> *I dread me sore I am betrayed*
> *Some other man the had in hand*
> *hence sith I went."*[23]

But, by far the biggest change made in the play is the total inversion of Joseph's virtue of patience which Love had praised as "an open ensaumple of reproof to jalouse men" (*Mirrour,*p.41). Love makes a great deal of how despite his severe testing, Joseph showed no anger towards Mary. Despite his confusion as to how else Mary could have conceived except by having commited adultery, he remains outwardly calm, not for one moment considering venting his frustrations upon Mary.

The Joseph of the *Ludus Coventriae* play, like the Love Joseph, does not really believe that Mary could do any wrong:

> *"I knew never with her so God me speed*
> *token of thing in word nor deed*
> *that touched villainy."*

"so good a creature as she
would never ha' done trespass,
for she is so full of grace."
(*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11.100-102, 173-175)

For on the tone side he sawh hir lyf so holy and no tokene of synne in hir/neither in contenaunce/neither in word in speche/nor in dede that he dorste not openly accuse hir of avoutrie.
(*Mirrour,* p.41)

But, nevertheless, he reacts in a totally opposite manner, he rants and raves, displaying anything but a patient disposition, hardly even listening to Mary's arguments and refusing to believe that he is not a cuckold. Unlike the Joseph of Love's *Mirrour*, his main concern is his own name:

"Alas, alas my name is shent;
all men may me now despise
and sayen, "Old cuckold, thy bow is bent
newly now after the French guise".
(*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11, 53-56)

The Mary of the play, unlike the Mary of Love's *Mirrour,* tells Joseph the whole truth, that the child she is carrying is God's. But this only increases his anger, he accuses her of lying by blaming her adultery upon an angel. In the face of all this anger, Mary remains calm and prays that God will comfort him. Joseph seems to ignore her and even considers going to the bishop to take his vengeance, and although he soon decides against this: "Nay, nay, yet God forbid/ that I should do that vengeable deed" (*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11.97-98) the fact that he can even consider such a course of action for a moment again marks how different he is from the Joseph of Love's *Mirrour.* Love's Joseph decides to leave Mary because it seems to him the only way that he can both save Mary from shame and disgrace, and yet preserve his own peace of mind. He is overcome with pity for Mary for he cannot see how someone as holy as her could have got into this position. Yet the Joseph of the play decides to leave Mary not out of any respect for her but because he cannot bear to think of the shame he will have to bear and the scorn which men will pour upon him for being a cuckold:

" rather than I should plainen openly,
certainly yet had I lever
forsake the country for ever
and never come in her company;
for, an men knew this villainy
in repreef they would me hold;
and yet many better than I
yah, hath been made cuckold"
(*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11.109-116)

Now Joseph tells Mary quite bluntly that he will leave her, and asks all men to take pity on him:

" No comfort may I have here.
Iwis, wife, thou diddest me wrong!
Alas I tarried from thee too long;
allmen have pity on me among
for my sorrow is no cheer."
(*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11.121-125)

This has nothing to do with the Joseph of Love's *Mirrour* makes when he decides to leave Mary.

As in the *Mirrour*, God sends his Angel to comfort Joseph, but in the *Mirrour* this piece of information is given in an almost matter of fact manner:

And so oure lord/that suffreth and ordeyneth alle thinges for the beste/ to conforte of bothe sent his aungel; the whiche appered to Joseph in his slepe/ and seide that he schulde not drede to take to hym marye his spouse/bot tristily and gladly dwelle with hir:for that that sche had conceyved was not by man but by the worchynge of the holy goost.
(*Mirrour,* p.42)

The playwright uses the scene to develop both the character of Joseph and his theme further. For just as Joseph's general lack of faith has been shown in contrast to Mary's great faith already, so now the playwright shows one of God's angels being fully obedient to him before the audience is returned to Joseph and instead of taking immediate comfort

from the angel as does the Joseph of the *Mirrour,* the Joseph of the play continues to display his bad nature as he tells the angel to go away and leave him alone in his self-pity.

When he has heard the truth, Joseph of the *Mirrour* returns to Mary and with the utmost respect asks to hear the whole story from her. However, as the Joseph of the play has already heard and rejected this truth from Mary, his return home is much more dramatic. He makes what amounts to a formal repentance and addresses Mary with all the reverence that she is later to recieve from the church: "A, Mary, Mary, well thou be/ and blessed be the fruit in thee/Goddes Son of might..." (*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11. 202-204).

Before reaching any conclusions about the purpose these changes were intended to serve and deciding if they do in fact achieve this, one must look briefly at both the character of Joseph and the whole presentation of the play in the light of the fabliaux discussed above to see whether the play is a fabliau, and also bearing in mind the Medieval attitudes to women, to try to get an idea of how a Medieval audience would have seen and reacted to Joseph and the play as a whole.

It is clear from Joseph's own complaints in the play that as far as he is concerned he has been in a situation just like John in the *Miller's Tale* and January in the *Merchant's Tale.* He sees himself as one in a long line of old men who have suffered the consequences of taking a young wife and accordingly he delivers his warning to other men not to make the same mistake as him:

> "Ya, ya! all old men to me take tent
> and weddedth no wife in no kinnes wise
> that is a young wench, by mine assent,
> Alas, alas, my name is shent;
> all men may me now despise
> and sayen, "Old cuckold, thy bow is bent
> newly now after the French guise"
> (*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11. 49-56)

Joseph might be forgiven for jumping to such a conclusion since there was such overwhelming evidence to be found in Medieval writings of the evil nature of women. But, have the audience any justification for

seeing Joseph in this role, and what could the playwright hope to gain from encouraging such an impression? To answer these questions one needs first of all to decide if the play does bear any resemblance to the fabliaux stories discussed above. Does the play then have those features which emerged as common to the two stories from the *Canterbury Tales* disscussed above which also take their starting point the marriage of an old man to a young girl?

To begin with, the first major point to emerge from the fabliaux tales was that they revolved around a stock triangle of a jealous old husband, a young wife and a clever young man, who was often a clerk and often closely attached to the household of the old man. In the play of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* one only sees the old man and the young wife. However, Joseph's comments when Mary tells him that she concieved the child after a visit from an angel are most interesting. He is angry with Mary as he belives that she is telling him a lie and he feels sure that he knows what has really happened:

> *" An angel? Alas, alas, fie for shame!*
> *Ye sin now in that ye so say,*
> *to putten an Angel in so great blame!*
> *Alas, alas, let be, do way!*
> *It was some boy began this game*
> *that clothed was clean and gay*
> *and ye give him now an Angel name!"*
> (*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11.70-76)

The nature of Mary's explanation of her pregnancy is reminiscent of May's incredible answer to her husband and of Nicholas' highly contrived plan for his night of pleasure with Alison. As far as Joseph is concerned then there is a clever and attractive young man involved somewhere. But whearas the other old men take their punishment for marrying young wives and prefer to delude themselves that their wives' ridiculous explanations are the truth, Joseph cannot bring himself to do this.

But there are further differences in the relationship betwen Mary and Joseph and those of the other marriages betwen an old man and young girl. The other old men had married young wives simply out of lust, and this is made quite plain, especially in the case of January. Joseph however had married Mary only because he was forced to. The audience of the

play would be aware of this, having just seen the play of the marriage of Mary and Joseph.

Because there is no young man involved in the episode, the second factor which emerged as common to the two fabliaux, that of the wooing of the young wife being done in a false courtly manner, cannot be applied.

The next factor to emerge as common from the fabliaux, was the general anti-feminist sentiment. As the brief examination of other arguments about the evil nature of women showed, adulterous wives were seen as belonging to a long tradition of deceitful women all stemming back to Eve in the Garden of Eden, and Joseph's statement that he believes himself to have been betrayed makes it clear that he sees Mary as directly in line from Eve and her deceit and betrayal of Adam. Joseph's lamentations as he leaves Mary will also call to mind the cries of Adam as he was forced out of paradise:

> *"Life is a purgatorie now*
> *Now, alas, whither shall I goen?*
> *I wot never whither nor to what place*
> *for often time sorrow cometh soon*
> *and long it is or it pace.*
> *No comfort may I have here.*
> *Iwis wife, thou diddest me wrong!"*
> (*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11.116-122).

This leads into the next feature of the fabliaux, for they were strongly marked by the irony which runs through the whole of the story. This irony is present in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* though here it works in the opposite direction..This is best illustrated by a comparison of the play with the *Merchant's Tale* which has an ironic theme found in one form or another in most of the old man, young wife stories. For in these and notably so in the *Merchant's Tale,* the old men see in their wives a source of joy and comfort when they first marry them. But, the comfort they hope to find is purely the satisfaction of lust. January thinks that May will make him so happy that this will exclude him from reaching heaven. However he is warned that his wife might not prove to be quite what he expects: "Paraunter she may be youre purgatorie" (*The Merchant's Tale*, E, 1. 1670).

Of course there are other ironies running through the tale as with each story, but this particular theme is of interest as it is totally inverted in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* for in the play Joseph's conviction that he has found himself in much the same position that Adam does and that Mary for all her outward holiness (*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* E, 1.127) is really only another Eve, is an ironic inversion of the truth, for in Mary, as the medieval audience would have been well aware, audiences are faced with the anti-type of Eve.

Mary's traditional role as the second Eve, the woman whose meekness and obedience to God would restore man to the paradise from which Eve's sin of pride and disobedience had caused man to be expelled, was such a firmly entrenched and accepted image that even without any specific reference to it the audience would appreciate Joseph's mistake and the irony of it.

The last major feature of the fabliaux to emerge as common was that in each case an intervention by someone outside of the triangle is what brings about the comic climax of the tale. In the *Miller's Tale* this is done by Absolon, and in the *Merchant's Tale* by Pluto and Prosperine. In *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* there is also intervention from an outsider which brings about a turning point in the play. However this intervention, which takes the form of God sending his angel to visit Joseph and inform him of the truth about Mary's pregnancy, brings about not a comic climax, but a change of note from burlesque and satirical, to one of joy and calmness as the audience sees Joseph's attitude to Mary changes from that of untrusting and self-pitying scorn, to a reverent delight in her holiness.

Rosemary Woolf points out how in the eastern sermons which dealt with the subject of Joseph's suspicions, and the characterization of Mary also follows the same pattern. So that just as the Joseph of the eastern dialogues is influenced by the traditions of the adultery mime popular at that time, so too the Mary of these dialogues, acts as though she expects to be treated in the same way as a wife in an adultery mime.[24]

In the *Ludus Coventriae* play however, as in the other cycles' versions of the episode, Joseph is the only one to react to the situation in the way one would expect a husband from the world of fabliau to do. Mary never moves from her knowledge of the truth of her explanation, re-

maining all the time the pure and meek Saint of the cult which is to grow up around her. Throughout the play she is and remains the Mary that the audience of the play had come to know and to worship. Joseph's doubts, his raving and his display of selfishness are set in comparison to show the true extent of the meekness and unfailing trust of the Virgin, which has led God to choose her of all women to bring the saviour into the world.

Most of the audience would already know the story of creation and man's religious history before they had it acted out before them. Obviously, then, the plays were intended as something more than mere religious instruction.

The position of the plays in the church calendar should not be overlooked. The plays were scheduled to take place around the feast of Corpus Christi, and one of their principal aims was indicated by the stress which they place on the doctrine of repentance. Most of the pageants laid some strees on this doctrine and every opportunity was taken to introduce it into episodes which perhaps had not previously been thought to illustrate it.

In the play of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* then, one finds that a very brief mention of how Mary's seemingly inexplicable pregnancy had caused Joseph a great deal of anxiety, so that he had come to feel that the only course open to him was to quietly leave Mary, turned into a dramatic story about how a selfish grumbling old man is led by Mary's faith and the grace of God to repent dramatically and within the space of a few lines undergo a complete change of character.

Nicholas Love's *Mirrour* shows how a righteous and patient man came through a test of his faith and found faith and joy at the removal of his doubts. Love's work was written as a private devotion for the already faithful. The Mystery Plays had to reinforce the faith of people who perhaps did not have the time to spend in such private devotion, and for those who possibly did not attend church as often as they might have done, and the playwright had a limited time in which to get his meaning across.

The playwright, then, was looking for the best ways to convince the audience of the truth of the miraculous way in which Christ came to earth, and it would seem that the basic principle which was used was to

attempt to convince the audience that it would be foolish to disbelieve that Mary had conceieved by the Holy Ghost. Joseph therefore is made to look as ridiculous as possible in his doubts about Mary's virtue in order that if the audience felt him foolish to disbelieve, they would not be able to justify any doubts they might have felt themselves.

But the playwright was not as unsubtle as this might make him seem at first. He makes Joseph's doubts partly understandable by casting him in the same manner as a man whom the audience would not be in the least surprised to see made a cuckold, and it is only because the audiences are already sure of the way in which Mary had conceieved that they are not convinced by his doubts at this stage.

So even before the play reaches its climax the audience will be reassured of the truth of Mary's virginity, and those who may have had their doubts have been reconvinced. But simply reminding the audience of what had happened was not enough. The Christian scheme of salvation required that sin should be fully confessed and repented before redemption could be granted, and for this reason Joseph was not only required to come to believe Mary's claims but also to realize exactly what he had done by doubting them. Joseph's repentance is very specific, his sin was to doubt Mary when he knew her to be full of grace:

> *"I might well ha' wist pardee,*
> *so good a creature as she*
> *would never ha' done trespass,*
> *for she is full of grace.*
> *I know well I have miswrought*
> *I walk to my poor place*
> *and ask forgiveness I have misthought."*
> (*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11.172-178)

As extra persuasion of the merits of repentance, the playwright makes Joseph's joy at the peace which it has brought to him as attractive as he possibly can. He affirms the prophecy which he has previously dismissed as though he is about to witness it before his eyes that very moment, and makes repeated references to the mercy which he has received. After praising Mary in words which recall the traditional worship of her, he repeats his repentance to make sure that the audiences are aware that it is only because he has repented that he has been granted the grace which

has brought him so much joy, and to make this even more obvious his repentance is formalized:

> *"I knowledge I have done amiss;*
> *I was never worthy, iwis,*
> *for to be thine husband:*
> *I shall amende after his*
> *right as thine owen will is*
> *to serve thee at foot and hand-*
> *to worship Him with good affection;*
> *and therefore tell me, and nothing wond*
> *the holy matter of your conception."*
> (*Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* 11.212-220)

The complete change of character which Joseph undergoes after his confession and repentance have been made are to be taken by the audience as a sign of how they too will become changed persons if they repent their sins and cast off their doubts, and also as a sign of a more momentous change; the event which has made Joseph see his wife so diffrently is one which is to change all men and women. Mary is the link between God and man who is to overcome the break which her anti-type Eve first caused.

Joseph is portrayed as a typical cuckolded husband not only so that his mistrust and selfishness may be turned to faith and meeknes but also because in this change the play signifies that the misery which Eve has brought to man by her act of sin, and which has led to man's expectation that all women will bring him woe is about to end, as Mary provides a way for all men and women to get back to God through the church, if they will follow the example which Joseph has just set for them. Thus, the play, which portrays this theme, narrates didactic doctrines with golden pieces of advice.

In conclusion, the subject of marriage or its vices and virtues, was a topic of great interest to Medieval authors and Chaucer, Love and the anonymous author of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* dwelled on this subject and the old husbands who married young wives.

NOTES

1. G.Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale* in *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* Ed. F.N. Robinson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958, B, 11. 4447-4450. Hereafter, the references to Chaucer's works will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses.

2. S.S. Hussey, *Chaucer: An Introduction.* Methuen Books, London, 1971, p.145.

3. G.Chaucer, *The Miller's Prologue and Tale,* Ed. J.Winny, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, Notes, pp. 60-61.

4. Cambridge University, Ms.I;. 4.26 (*The Bestiary),* f.63v., 12th Century Latin Bestiary.

5. Hussey, p. 145.

6. G.Chaucer, *The Merchant's Tale,* Ed.J.Winny, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966, Introduction, p.15.

7. H.Barbey, *A Survey of French and English History. Folkloriques Livres,* Rennes, 1936, p.92.

8. *Ibid.,* p.207.

9. *Ibid.,* p.209.

10. *Ibid.,* p. 207.

11. R.Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle Ages.* Harvard University Press, Boston, 1974, p.119.

12. Anonymous Author(s), *Medieval French Plays; Le Mystere d'Adam,* Eds.R.Axton and J.Stevens, *Medieval Studies Texts,* London, 1989, 11.10-16. Hereafter, the references to this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses.

13. Axton, p.126.

14. R.Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1974, p.136.

15. *Ibid.,* p.140.

16. *Ibid.,* p.142.

17. *Ibid.,* p.139.

18. Anonymous Author(s) *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays,* Ed. A.Cawley, Everyman Publications, London, 1956), 11. 99-101. Hereafter, the references to

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19. E. Prosser, *Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays.* Stanford University Press,Sanfrancisco, 1961, p.99.

20. Woolf, p. 169.

21. N.Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ,* Ed.F.Powell, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1908, p. 41. Hereafter, the references to this work will be abbreviated as *Mirrour* and will be given in parentheses in the text.

22. Woolf, pp. 169-170.

23. Anonymous Author(s), *Ludus Coventriae; Joseph's Trouble About Mary,* Ed. K.S.Block, *E.E.T.S.* E.S. 120, London, 1917, 11. 25-29. Hereafter, the references to this work will be given as *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* and will be given in parentheses in the text.

24. Woolf, p. 173.

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