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## AN HISTORICAL ANALOGUE TO THE "SHIPMAN'S TALE"?

A satisfactory source for the "Shipman's Tale" has never been discovered in fabliau literature. As Gardiner Stillwell noted, the "sadness" of the merchant of the tale gives it an ironic rather than a satiric tone, uncharacteristic of fabliau as genre.<sup>1</sup> Neither the analogue from Boccaccio<sup>2</sup> nor that from Sercambi<sup>3</sup> is a convincing model, as J. W. Spargo indicated in *Sources and Analogues*;<sup>4</sup> while his own study of the tale as a variant on a widespread folk motif (The Lover's Gift Regained) is illuminating, it fails to explain certain aspects of characterization and the predominance of dialogue over physical action.<sup>5</sup> Armand E. Singer has suggested the Spanish legend of Don Juan as an influence, in a note including an interesting bibliography of relevant materials.<sup>6</sup> This paper discusses some references to contemporary Spanish history in the tale, and argues for Chaucer's transformation of a well-known

<sup>1</sup> Gardiner Stillwell, "Chaucer's 'Sad' Merchant," *RES*, 20 (1944), 1-18.

<sup>2</sup> John S. P. Tatlock, "Boccaccio and the Plan of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales," *Anglia*, 37 (1913), suggesting VIII, 1 *Decameron* as a source, defeats his own case: "In detail, however, they sometimes differ unaccountably, there are no verbal resemblances. . . . *Sh. T.* has not the paramour's two successive motives for his treachery, long-standing love . . . and afterwards disgust" (p. 112; p. 112, n. 1).

<sup>3</sup> Robert A. Pratt, "Chaucer's Shipman's Tale and Sercambi," *MLN*, 55 (1946), 142-145.

<sup>4</sup> J. W. Spargo, "The Shipman's Tale," *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago, 1941), p. 439, criticizes the circular argument "that Chaucer knew Boccaccio's *Decameron* because the *Shipman's Tale* resembles *Decameron* VIII, 1, and that Chaucer based his *Shipman's Tale* on *Decameron* VIII, 1, because he knew the *Decameron*."

<sup>5</sup> *Chaucer's Shipman's Tale* (Helsinki, 1930: FF Communications No. 91): see especially pp. 18, 53, 54 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Armand E. Singer. "Chaucer and Don Juan," *WVUPP*, 13 (1961), 25-30.

European scandal into this most generically puzzling of all his *fabliaux*.

The scandal involved Pedro I of Castile, called "the Cruel," and his marriage to Blanche of Bourbon, after his earlier intended bride, Joan, daughter of Edward III, had died of the plague on her way to Castile. The subsequent disaffection of English interest with Pedro began before the Spanish-French marriage, however, in a naval incident with the Castilian fishing fleet. Although this fleet was capable of being rapidly transformed into a fighting force, Pedro's father (Alonso XI) was able to maintain a carefully balanced neutrality in the Hundred Years' War between England and France. However, Pedro's chief minister, Don Juan of Albuquerque, decided to abandon this policy early in the reign of the teen-aged king:

Dos razones pesaron en ella: la intervención pontificia—Clemente VI instó vivamente a un matrimonio francés—y las fuertes promesas de dinero hechas desde Paris. La presencia de don Gil de Albornoz en Aviñon, desde julio de 1350, inició un partido castellanofrancófilo en la Curia. Pero la alianza francesa contradecía, de momento, los intereses vitales de un importante sector del país—la marina cántabra y su *hinterland*—que tenía en la ruta del golfo de Vizcaya una fuente de ingresos comerciales. Precisamente el poder naval castellano, que se había ejercido alguna vez a favor de Francia, constituía la clave de las presiones diplomáticas que Inglaterra y Francia habían ejercido sobre Alfonso XI . . . Eduardo III tardó muy poco tiempo en convencerse de la irremediable francofilia del nuevo régimen: entonces decidió quebrantar, en una brusca acción de guerra, este poder naval para impedir a los marinos vascos que se convirtieran en auxiliares de su enemigo.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Two reasons prevailed in this: pontifical intervention—Clement VI urged a French marriage strongly—and firm promises of money made from Paris. The presence of Don Gil de Albornoz in Avignon after July, 1350, began a faction of Castilian-French amity in the Curia. But, momentarily, the French alliance went against the necessary self-interest of an important part of the country—the Cantabrian seacoast and its inland region—which valued its route across the Bay of Biscay as a link with its commercial revenues. Exactly this Castilian naval power, which had sometimes been exercised in France's favor, formed the refrain of the diplomatic pressures England and France had exercised upon Alfonso XI . . . Edward III lost very little time in convincing himself of the unavoidable francophilia of the new regime: then he

Because they arrived for their annual rendezvous at Bruges at nightfall, the Spanish ships were saved from complete defeat at the hands of the British fleet (which included the Black Prince and young John of Gaunt as well as King Edward himself) concentrated off Winchelsea. But so complete was the British victory that it not only earned Edward III the title "King of the Sea," but also—as Froissart tells us—was known ever afterwards simply as "L'espagnols sur mer."<sup>8</sup>

"Brugges," mentioned four different times in Chaucer's "Shipman's Tale," unique for a place name which is not even the setting (and even settings are mentioned but once in the other fabliaux of the *Canterbury Tales*), seems to be a direct reference to the British naval victory. Twice near the beginning of the tale the merchant's contemplated voyage is stressed: "Toward the toun of Brugges for to fare, / To byen there a porcioun of ware" (55-56),<sup>9</sup> and "Er he to Brugges wente, in alle wise" (61). After the monk "daun John" has arrived, specifically from Paris (57), and arranged his debauchment of the merchant's wife by agreeing to lend her money (perhaps the French king's promise to pay the dowry for any noble bride Pedro might choose), he warns Peter the Merchant, "'That wel I se to Brugges wol ye go. / God and seint Austyn spede yow and gyde!'" (258-260). The reunion of the Spanish fleet may be suggested by "his prentys wel hym gydeth, / Til he came into Brugges murily" (300-301).<sup>10</sup> And the uncertainty of the venture emerges from the merchant's comment to his wife:

'To Flaundes wol I go to-morwe at day,  
And come agayn, as soone as evere I may.' (239-240)

decided to break its naval power, in an abrupt action of war, by holding back the Basque ships which might be converted into auxiliary vessels for his enemy." Luis Suarez Fernández and Juan Regla Campistol, "*España Cristiana: Crisis de la Reconquista; Luchas Civiles*," *Historia de España*, Tomo XIV, ed. Ramon Menendez Pidal (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1966), 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> J. Froissart, *Croniques*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels, 1867-1877), III, 6-18.

<sup>9</sup> *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), "The Shipman's Tale," pp. 156-160. All citations by line nos. in text.

<sup>10</sup> By "his prentys," Chaucer may have meant Albuquerque, an apprentice at prime-ministering whose idea the French alliance had been.

Finally, the tragic outcome of the affair at "Brugges" for the merchant, in spite of his making "feeste and cheere" with his wife, emerges in the lines:

And telleth hire that chaffare is so deere  
 That nedes moste he make a chevyssaunce;  
 For he was bounden in a reconyssaunce  
 To paye twenty thousand sheeld anon. (328-331)

Besides these internal references to the British victory over the Spanish in the tale itself, there is evidence in the portrait of the Shipman in the *General Prologue* that he may well have participated in "L'espagnols sur mer." Most of the references to the Shipman's knowledge of "alle the havenes" are Spanish: he can seek "herberwe" in "Cartage" (*GP*, 404), or the Spanish port of Cartagena; he is familiar with the "cape of Fynystere" (*GP*, 408) in Galicia; and, finally he knows "every cryke . . . in Spayne" (*GP*, 409). He has also been identified by Margaret Galway with an actual shipman of Chaucer's time, a naturalized Englishman who was a native of Biscay.<sup>11</sup> Such knowledge of the Spanish coast would have proved invaluable had the British fleet been able to give chase to the Basque fishing ships, which nightfall prevented them from doing. The line "By water he sente hem hoom to every lond" (*GP*, 400) is still another hint: the single instance in the fourteenth century of drowning prisoners cited by Pollard is in the battle of "L'espagnols sur mer."<sup>12</sup> The teller of the tale is thus appropriate for a story which transmutes the Spanish defeat and the subsequent Spanish-French marriage into ironic comedy.

Circumstances preceding and surrounding the marriage of Pedro the Cruel to Blanche of Bourbon are suggested throughout the tale, which is the only Chaucerian fabliau with a French setting—specifically, St. Denis, whose chief distinction is its ancient abbey, once the burial place of the kings of France and containing in its crypt the family vault of the Bourbons.<sup>13</sup> After the disaster

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Galway, "Chaucer's Shipman in Real Life," *MLR*, 34 (1939), 497-514. See also "A Basque Word [*phislyas*] in Chaucer," *TLS*, Oct. 3, 1942, p. 492.

<sup>12</sup> Robinson, "Explanatory Notes," p. 661.

<sup>13</sup> "Saint-Denis," *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1950.

at "Brugges" the merchant "is to Parys gon / To borwe of certeine freendes that he hadde" (332-333), apparently a reference to the protracted negotiations between Pedro and John II of France (instigated by Avignon, which alone kept the affair going). In 1352, two years after the costly defeat at Bruges, the marriage was finally arranged, with the French promising a huge dowry<sup>14</sup> which was never to be paid. This was apparently the real reason for Pedro's leaving his new wife,<sup>15</sup> although the popular imagination ascribed it to Blanche's supposed love affair with Fadrique,<sup>16</sup> bastard older brother of Pedro and *maestre* (or grand-master) of the powerful military-religious Order of Santiago.<sup>17</sup> That legendary love affair and the unpaid dowry of Blanche seem to form the nexus of sex and money which has been recognized as the insistent and intertwined theme of the "Shipman's Tale."<sup>18</sup>

Blanche's money seems to have been more important to Pedro than her sexual charms (he already had a child by his adored mistress, the high-born Maria de Padilla). Once she had confessed to him under duress the inability of the French to pay her dowry, even in part,<sup>19</sup> he abandoned her, the third day after he had married her, to the scandal of all Europe. Chaucer seems to be noting Pedro's dilemma in the lines,

<sup>14</sup> 300,000 florins in gold, in annual payments of 50,000. Fernández and Campistol, 19.

<sup>15</sup> J. B. Sitges, *Las Mujeres del Rey Don Pedro I de Castilla* (Madrid, 1910), p. 354 ff., reproduces papal documents in which Pedro tried to free himself from Blanche because of her confession of the French duplicity.

<sup>16</sup> All modern historians deny that there was ever such a love affair; W. J. Entwistle, *European Balladry*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1951), p. 157, suggests that the ballads alleging the love affair may have been planted Pedristic propaganda.

<sup>17</sup> Francisco de Rades y Andrado, *Chronica de las tres Ordenes de Sanctiago, Calatrava y Alcantara* (Toledo, 1572), fol. 45, notes that Fadrique, twenty-seventh *maestre* of Santiago, was elected by his father, Alonso XI, at the age of ten "no obstante que era de menor edad y no nascido de legítimo matrimonio."

<sup>18</sup> See especially Albert H. Silverman, "Sex and Money in Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*," *PQ*, 32 (1953), 329-336.

<sup>19</sup> Not only was Blanche's journey across France deliberately delayed because King John II could not meet even the first installment, but the French were also unable to meet the second installment, which was to be paid on the wedding day. Sitges, pp. 337-345 and 354, reproduces documents relating to the French promises and the Spanish protests against their lack of faith.

The thridde day, this marchant up ariseth,  
 And on his nedes sadly hym avyseth,  
 And up into his countour-hous gooth he  
 To rekene with hymself, as wel may be,  
 Of thilke yeer how that it with hym stood,  
 And how that he despended hadde his good,  
 And if that he encessed were or noon. (73-81)

Chaucer's reference in the verse directly preceding these lines, "a day or tweye," may be a sly allusion to his single, two-day reunion with Blanche, or perhaps even to his briefer, bigamous, two-day marriage to Juana de Castro in 1354.

Pedro's concern with her dowry rather than with Blanche's person is perhaps reflected in the complaints of the wife to the monk:

'Myn housbonde is to me the worste man  
 That evere was sith that the world bigan.  
 But sith I am a wyf, it sit nat me  
 To tellen no wight of oure privetee,  
 Neither abedde, ne in noon oother place . . . .  
 As helpe me God, he is noght worth at al  
 In no degree the value of a flye.  
 But yet me greveth moost his nygardye.' (161-165, 170-172)

Blanche of Bourbon's letters to Pope Clement, her only defender once the French government decided to abandon her, are full of such complaints of Pedro's failure to render the marriage "dette" to her and of his refusal to grant her financial support.<sup>20</sup> The wife's claiming to need money "'myself for to arraye'" (179) and her telling her husband that the money the monk claims to have left with her (but which is actually the merchant's loan to the monk) was spent on "'myn array, / And nat on wast'" (418-419) probably refer to Blanche's extremely costly trousseau, the only part of her dowry Pedro ever saw. The loan which the monk requests of the merchant may represent the unpaid dowry, with the "'hundred frankes, for a wyke or tweye, / For certain

<sup>20</sup> See Fernández and Campistol, *passim*, for details as to the nobles of Pedro's realm using the king's abandonment of Blanche and, the next year, Juana de Castro (whose relatives were extremely influential), as pretexts for rising against him.

<sup>21</sup> See G. Daumet, *Clément VI et Blanche de Bourbon* (Paris, 1889), p. 87 ff.

beestes that I moste beye" (271-272) equivalent to the extension on the dowry to which Pedro finally agreed: as the monk buys the wife, so Avignon and France bought Blanche of Bourbon as a peace pledge—on Pedro/Peter's extension of credit. The lines near the beginning of the tale on the "sely housbonde" who "moot paye" for "al" (10-11) extend the "arraye" of the wife, or Blanche's trousseau, into a metaphor suggestive of Pedro's predicament (which he at last resolved with Blanche's murder in 1361). While the merchant's name suggests Pedro's, and the monk's "daun John" the Don Juan legend which originated during Pedro's reign (perhaps out of circumstances surrounding his abandonment of Blanche),<sup>22</sup> the wife is nameless in the tale. One obvious reason is that Blanche was not only the name of the first wife of John of Gaunt, Chaucer's patron, but had also been eulogized in its English translation, White, as the name of the heroine of a far different poem, *The Book of the Duchess*. Such a name would have been highly inappropriate for the all too fallible wife of a fabliau.

One problem with the wife's character is its inconsistency, and here, too, the marital history of Pedro the Cruel may be of assistance. In the first part of the tale, the wife, as we have already noted, complains that her husband performs poorly in bed and is niggardly with his money. But once he returns from his voyage to Paris, he shows himself both a lively bed partner:

And al that nyght in myrthe they bisette. . . .  
 Whan it was day, this marchant gan embrace  
 His wyf al newe, and kiste hire on hir face,  
 And up he gooth and maketh it ful tough.  
 'Namooore,' quod she, 'by God, ye have ynough!'  
 And wantownly agayn with hym she pleyde. . . . (375, 377-381)

and a generous husband, as he lets his wife keep the money the monk claimed he had left with her for the merchant himself:

<sup>22</sup> Pero Lope d'Ayala, *Cronica del Rey don Pedro* (Seville, 1495), "Año Quarto," cap. XII: "E con todo esso no llegaron con el rey si no tres . . . Diego garcia [sic] de Padilla y juan tenorio [sic] su repostero mayor del rey y . . . perez de quinones [sic]." For a theory as to how the apparently innocent Don Juan Tenorio's name became attached to the legend, see my paper, "Don Pedro and Don Juan," read before the Midwest Medieval Conference, Ann Arbor, October 23, 1971.



This marchant saugh ther was no remedie . . . .

'Now wyf,' he seyde, 'and I foryeve it thee. . . .' (427, 430)

There are two possibilities here: first, the wife has lied to the monk for her own profit; or second—and here I reach the most speculative part of my argument—Chaucer means the wife as a composite picture of Pedro's situation as an *homme à femmes*. The marriage with Juana de Castro was not Pedro's only venture into bigamy; he also seems to have married Maria de Padilla, and her children were his only recognized heirs,<sup>23</sup> one of them—Constance—becoming the second wife of John of Gaunt. Since, after abandoning Blanche three days after their marriage, Pedro fled to Maria, who continued to be the only woman (in spite of numerous infidelities) he seems really to have loved, possibly Blanche is the wife of the first part of the tale, Maria that of the latter.

Although the physical adultery between wife and monk gets scant attention in this most intellectual of fabliaux (317-318), it was perhaps based upon popular rumors, turned into ballads after Pedro's murder of Fadrique which the people apotheosized into a just punishment for adultery,<sup>24</sup> that Pedro left Blanche because she had fallen violently in love with his brother Fadrique. One finds these rumors even in the *Crónica* of Pero de Ayala, in spite of its anti-Pedristic<sup>25</sup> bias the most reliable source for the facts

<sup>23</sup> Fernández and Campistol, p. 76: "el rey declaró, asistido por el testimonio de Diego García de Padilla, Juan Alfonso de Mayorga y Juan Pérez de Orduña, abad de Santander, que su unión con María de Padilla había sido matrimonio legítimo, contraído por palabras de presente antes de la boda con Blanca." This statement, made after Maria's death in 1362, was accepted, and Maria buried with "honores de soberana" and her daughters declared *infantas* and successors to Pedro.

<sup>24</sup> Even in the ballads the affair is left suppositional, however. Entwhistle, p. 157, quotes the lines, "It is noised among the people, / whispered, not as something known."

<sup>25</sup> Ayala was writing to justify himself and his entire class of *ricos hombres* who had risen against their king, and during the reign of Enrique, Pedro's murderer. Nevertheless, P. E. Russell, *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II* (Oxford, 1955), p. xi, notes his reliability as compared to Froissart's "hopelessly inaccurate and ill-informed [commentary] on Spanish affairs."

of his reign, as well as in the Spanish *romancero*, or ballad sequence, of which the songs about Fadrique's murder are the oldest extant example of the use of historical incident.<sup>26</sup> Apparently the Castilians (for there is evidence of Pedristic propaganda in the *romancero*, since no historical basis for the supposed affair has ever been discovered<sup>27</sup>) wanted to cover up their disgrace in the "chevyssaunce" with France, preferring a monarch bested at sex to one bested in a money deal. What evidence, then, do we have that Fadrique is the "daun John" of the "Shipman's Tale"? It has long been noted that the monk of the "Shipman's Tale," while his physical transgression is rendered more delicately than those of other fabliau heroes, is essentially more immoral, false not only to his vows but to hospitality and to common gratitude as well.<sup>28</sup> This consummate falseness is apparent also in the career of Fadrique, who repeatedly betrayed both his vows to the Church<sup>29</sup> and his vows of feudal allegiance to his brother, Pedro. Both monk and merchant are called "noble"—an adjective Chaucer does not use elsewhere in the *Canterbury Tales* for Monk or Merchant, even satirically (his choice is inevitably "worthy")—in parallel introductory phrases of the tale (20, 62). Their close kinship is stressed in the tale at least a dozen times: "The monk hym claymeth as for cosynage" (36); "And ech of hem gan oother for t'assure / Of bretherhede, while that hir lyf may dure" (41-42); "Oure deere cosyn, ful of curteisye" (69); "'O deere cosyn myn, daun John'" (98) and "'Nay, cosyn myn'" (114), both from the wife; "'Cosyn,' quod she" (143); "'Cosyn, it standeth so'" (257); "'I prey yow, cosyn'" (260); "'O cosyn myn, daun John,'" (282) "'And fare wel deere cosyn, til we meete!" (364); "'Betwixen me and my cosyn daun John'" (387); "'For cosynage, and eek for beele cheere'" (409). This emphasis upon "cosynage" and even "bretherhede" in one instance suggests the stepbrotherly relationship of Fadrique

<sup>26</sup> Entwhistle, p. 156.

<sup>27</sup> This in spite of Entwhistle, p. 152, "the Castilian 'romances' are unsurpassed in Europe for their . . . veracity."

<sup>28</sup> Robert K. Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer*, rev. ed. (Gloucester, Mass., 1957), p. 189.

<sup>29</sup> Rades y Andrado lists dispassionately the names of the bastard children of Fadrique, fols. 45-50, *passim*.

and Pedro. To this we may add the twenty occurrences of the word "daun" before the monk's name. This is no such sporadic use as we find in, say, the headlink of the "Monk's Tale" or within "The Nun's Priest's Tale." Rather, it seems an insistence upon the noble birth of the monk; since at this period the definition of "daun" was "A Spanish title, prefixed to a man's Christian name,"<sup>30</sup> it also appears to be a deliberate device for fixing attention upon the Spanish origin of the tale. Even the shifting liaisons of Fadrique and Pedro once the always rebellious Castilian nobles had risen against their king may be ironically indicated by:

Thus been they knyght with eterne alliaunce,  
 And ech of hem gan oother for t'assure  
 Of bretherhede, whil that hir lyf may dure. (40-42)

Like the monk, Fadrique played a duplicitous role in the money affairs of the husband and wife, Pedro and Blanche. During October of 1354, having joined his twin, Enrique (eventual murderer of Pedro) and the other *ricos hombres* of Castile in their rebellion against the king, he carried away from Toledo Pedro's treasury—and also the funds of Queen Blanche, in whose ostensible support the rebellion had been inaugurated! This cheating of both his brother and the woman he was alleged to have been adulterous with corresponds to the monk's borrowing money from the merchant and his subsequent cheating of the wife (whose favors have been sold for money she probably would have wheedled from her husband anyway) in the spirit of the deed if not the letter. So does the monk's hasty retreat once he has told the merchant he has left his money with "Youre wyf, at hom, the same gold ageyn / Upon youre bench" (357-358): Fadrique, who with Enrique stole this time the very pack mules of Pedro's train, fled with similar speed from Toledo once the nobles' cause seemed temporarily lost.<sup>31</sup> Even the eventual easing of the merchant's money troubles has a parallel in the history of Pedro the Cruel. After the failure at "Brugges" and the monk's shifting of his own debt to Peter into the hands of Peter's wife,

<sup>30</sup> *OED*, s.v. "Don," III, 597, n. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Fernández and Campistol, 28-29, 33.

This marchant, which that was ful war and wys,  
 Creanced hath, and payd eek in Parys  
 To certeyn Lumbardes, redy in hir hond,  
 The somme of gold, and gat of hem his bond;  
 And hoom he gooth, murie as a papejay. . . (365-369)

Pedro's constant recourse in any money crisis, whether the failure of the French dowry to materialize or the depredation of his treasury by Fadrique, was to his favorite and chief moneyman, Samuel Levi. Levi, in turn, depended upon the Jewish population of the cities of Castile for his fundraising, a constituency which seems to have responded more readily than might be expected, perhaps because of Pedro's noted tolerance toward Jews and Moors—a tolerance which earned him the hatred of the nobles but the love of minority groups.<sup>32</sup> Since "Lumbardes" were not only famous money-lenders but also often the euphemistic term under which Jews survived the medieval persecutions (a particularly vicious pogrom was carried out by the Trastamarans, the party supporting Enrique for king over Pedro<sup>33</sup>), Chaucer's reference here may be to Levi and his Jewish money suppliers.

In numerous details of language and plot, then, the "Shipman's Tale" is reminiscent of the British naval victory, "L'espagnols sur mer," and of the ill-fated marriage of Pedro the Cruel to Blanche of Bourbon. But why was Chaucer interested in Pedro, and how was that interest sustained until the 1380's, when he is presumed to have written the tale? With the recent discovery of the safe-conduct issued to Chaucer by the King of Navarre in 1366, we have proof, for the first time, of Chaucer's interest in Spain and his physical presence there during Pedro's reign.<sup>34</sup> Whether the

<sup>32</sup> John T. Dillon, *The History of the Reign of Peter the Cruel* (2 vols., London, 1788), I, 240-241: "At a time when the Jews were most inhumanly treated in England by our great monarch Edward III, they led a tranquil life in Spain, under the reign of Peter, and were perfectly free from persecution, holding different offices in the state."

<sup>33</sup> Enrique had been given the title Count of Trastamara by his father, Alfonso XI.

<sup>34</sup> Suzanne Honoré-Duvergé, "Chaucer en Espagne? (1366)," *Recueil de Travaux Offert à M. Clovis Brunel*, Mémoires et Documents Publiés par la Société de l'École de Chartres, No. 12 (Paris 1955), II, 9-13.

poet traveled as soldier of fortune<sup>35</sup> or as agent of the Crown,<sup>36</sup> or even—a possibility so far overlooked—as a simple pilgrim to Santiago de Compostella,<sup>37</sup> he would have been able to amass much information about Pedro, by then deeply involved in civil war. Chaucer's interest in the Castilian monarch would certainly have been revived by the marriage of John of Gaunt to Constance, Pedro's daughter by Maria de Padilla, in 1371, for the poet's wife, Philippa, attended Constance for about two years after her marriage.<sup>38</sup> John of Gaunt's Spanish ambitions continued further through the marriage of his daughter by Constance to the grandson of Enrique, whose line succeeded Pedro to the throne of Castile, in 1386. That Chaucer was sensitive to these ambitions is indicated by his changing a line in the "Monk's Tale" relative to Pedro's murder by Enrique in that year.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the English court was even familiar enough with Pedro's story "for it to understand the heraldic puns in 3573-76 [of the "Monk's Tale"] which refer to his killers,"<sup>40</sup> which Chaucer retained in the later version of the poem. Scholars have demonstrated the historical connections of Chaucer's Knight with the tragedy of Pedro of

<sup>35</sup> Honoré-Duvergé, p. 12, suggests that Chaucer and his companions wished to join the Free Companies in the campaign of Enrique to dethrone Pedro.

<sup>36</sup> Thonas J. Garbaty, "Chaucer in Spain, 1366: Soldier of Fortune or Agent of the Crown?", *ELN* 5 (1967), 81-87. See also A. C. Baugh, "The Background of Chaucer's Mission to Spain," *Chaucer und seine Zeit*, ed. Arno Esch (Tübingen, 1968), 55-69.

<sup>37</sup> Martin C. Crow and Clair C. Olson, ed., *Chaucer Life-Records* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 64-65, note that "about 1366 there were in Spain, especially in Navarre, many Englishmen," and that documents "preserved in the Navarre cartulary for 1365-1366 refer also to safe-conducts granted by the King of Navarre to various pilgrims who were on their way to the shrine of St. James of Compostella."

<sup>38</sup> Robinson "Explanatory Notes," p. 749.

<sup>39</sup> Robinson, "Explanatory Notes," p. 749.

<sup>40</sup> Donald K. Fry, "The Ending of the *Monk's Tale*," *JEGP*, 71 (1972), 355-68, read in an earlier version at the Conference on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, May 21, 1970. I am grateful to Professor Fry not only for sending me a copy of his paper but also for valuable conversation on Chaucer's interest in contemporary history.

Cyprus,<sup>41</sup> with which the tragedy of Pedro the Cruel is paired in the "Monk's Tale." With all of the interest that the Spanish Pedro's career must have aroused in Chaucer's contemporaries because of England's continuing ambitions in the Iberian Peninsula, Chaucer might understandably be moved to weave details from Pedro's most traumatic monetary and sexual crux into the "Shipman's Tale," just as he wove details from Pedro of Cyprus' career into the portrait of the Knight in the *General Prologue*.

Such a historical analogue would explain many of the details in the "Shipman's Tale" which have puzzled critics in the past. The double entendre on sex and money<sup>42</sup> with which the tale ends,

Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende  
 Taillynge ynough unto oure lyves ende. (433-434)

and the wife's earlier remark to her husband, "score it upon my taille" (416), unusually sophisticated puns for a fabliau, take on new significance when seen in the context of Pedro's difficulties with women and money. A. H. Silverman has noted that these puns are an important element to the story, and that Chaucer has also added the wife's revenge, which is found in none of the supposed analogues.<sup>43</sup> Such a revenge could have been suggested by Pedro's defeat and death in the civil war his brothers and the Castilian nobles justified because of Blanche's wrongs. The tone of the tale, ironic rather than satiric like Chaucer's other fabliaux, would be appropriate for approaching contemporary scandal. And the striking predominance of dialogue over physical action, observable in this fabliau alone, would be required to alert the court audience to its source in real life.

Perhaps the concentration upon patristic and aesthetic elements in Chaucer's work in the last twenty years has blinded us a little to the poet's impressive contemporaneity. Chaucer lived during

<sup>41</sup> Fry, pp. 1-4, p. 17; Thomas Hatton, "Chaucer's Crusading Knight, A Slanted Ideal," *ChauRev*, 3 (1968), 77-87. I am indebted to Professor Fry for the latter reference.

<sup>42</sup> For a brief and not very spirited controversy over this couplet, see Claude Jones, "Chaucer's 'Taillynge Ynough,'" *MLN*, 3 (1937), 5-10; and Robert A. Caldwell, "Chaucer's Taillynge Ynough," *MLN*, 4 (1940), 262-265.

<sup>43</sup> "Sex and Money in Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*," *PQ*, 32 (1953), 329-336.

a fascinating period, and he lived an extraordinarily active life. His interest in international affairs must have been fostered by his travels to various European countries, including—as we now know—Spain. That he incorporated international history into a well-established international genre, the fabliau, is one more proof that, like his own *Wife of Bath*, he depended upon “experience” as well as upon “auctoritee.”

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