

SEEING DOUBLE—AND LOVING IT

My introduction to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as a college student was unsettling, confusing. No, I don't mean because the vocabulary was Middle English. What I do mean is that the Pilgrims who are traveling to Canterbury refused to stay on the page in an orderly fashion. Instead, each individual appeared to have a second image floating beside it, or transposed in front of it. I'm not sure how to express it; I'd never seen anything like it before. Along with the confusion, I felt a strange excitement. I wanted to tell someone, tell everyone, share this amazing happening. But how?

Of course, before I could explain to someone else, there were many questions to be answered. How could the double images I saw relate to each other? How could they be one, yet more than one, at the same time? It became the greatest intellectual adventure of my life.

As I pursued each Pilgrim, world upon world opened up for me. Chaucer has truly created a universe for us to enter into. If you are ready to follow my lead, I will be delighted to guide you, at long last. The constant overriding principle to keep in mind is: *Always trust Chaucer's words.*

The choice of characters that made up the assembled Pilgrims became a nagging question. Why did Chaucer create precisely that group? The question never left my mind. Whatever my activity, the Pilgrims were in the background of my thoughts. Then, one evening when I had little going on, the images of the Pilgrims meshed with another set of images. It happened in an instant! I suddenly KNEW the second identities. I'm about to offer you a chance to share the thrill I experienced. I have created a game using Chaucer's descriptive details. It proves that others can see the double

images I see.

To prepare for the game, you need to know that Chaucer had already arrived at the Tabard. That's where he and the twenty-nine Pilgrims, who are about to join him, will spend the night. The entire company comes on the scene at nightfall, and yet the poet gets to know each one of them, as he tells us, by the time the sun goes to rest.

To begin let's note:

There are no children.

There are no married couples.

The group is almost all men (only 3 women).

One pilgrim has no physical description, is identified only by a function —purchasing agent.

As they arrive, there is no mention of noise or confusion. We learn nothing of individual accommodations, care of horses, or personal belongings. As the game continues, take careful note of the pictures that come to your mind.

First we meet the most energetic character Chaucer describes. He has

—broad shoulders

—wide black nostrils

—and could knock a door off its hinges by running into it with his head.

Along with the broad-shouldered door-crasher, there is

—one pair of brothers.

There is also a slender journeyer who

—is easily angered

—has long, extremely thin legs

—is as dreaded as death

—and lives in the shadows on uncultivated land.

There is a man who calls for water.

Another man appears to ride very high on a horse.

They all arrive late and stay through the night. Chaucer saw them, and so have you.

Here are a couple of hints:

First, all the figures are, loosely speaking, an organized group. How many "groups" that come for the night existed for Chaucer and still exist today?

Second, concentrate on forming a mental picture of the door-smasher.

Almost every successful sleuth began with this identification. Then other identities quite readily fall into place.

If you want to sort it out for yourself, stop reading now; if not, let's continue. Do you see an unlikely image in your mind when you think of the door-smasher? A friend once asked me at this point, "Am I supposed to see a man?" I simply asked her, "What *do* you see?" She replied, "A bull!" If you saw a bull, you're on the right track. And if it's a bull that Chaucer saw—and you have seen it too—what bull could it be that comes at sunset and stays all night?

The key to all their hidden personas is the fact that—instead of arriving amid hustle and bustle—they all *appear* at nightfall. They are stars in the night sky. We looked at the constellations Taurus (the bull, the door-smasher), Gemini (the two brothers), Aquarius (the water-carrier), Scorpio (the slender, dreaded creature), and Sagittarius (the centaur, the torso of a man joined atop the body of a horse). The Pilgrim that Chaucer gives *no physical description* is Libra, the Scales. The name Libra meant *pound*;

that's where the symbol for the British pound (£) comes from. What more likely Purchasing Agent could there be? The poet is playing games with his words.

Chaucer had already written an instruction book about astronomy. He was thoroughly acquainted with each sign. In just a bit we'll take a close look at Taurus, who on the surface is The Miller. But first we'll gather some background.

The fourteenth-century mindset held allegory in high regard. This technique distinguished great literary works of the time from the mediocre. Then, knowing Chaucer's high reputation, it is only reasonable to anticipate a work of more than one level. Allegory tells a story with a literal message and an underlying moral or mystical one as well. With Chaucer's pilgrims having a zodiac identity, we can see the silhouette of the allegorical framework.

Before I ever suspected the presence of the zodiac, one double image was already clear to me. I saw the outline of a second personality in Chaucer's words that introduce the Host. He is the last character we meet. The Tabard, where the Pilgrims gather, belongs to him. He provides food for them, announces that he has a plan for the journey, sets forth rules they must follow *without discussion*, and declares he will guide them on the proper path. That seems a mighty high-handed mandate from a mere innkeeper!

Many who write about the *Tales* see the Host as pompous and comical. If his ideas were presented as absurd attempts to be in control, he certainly would be laughable. But that's not the way it plays out. Pilgrims of high estate agree to the Host's "demands" without hesitation. Comic possibilities exist, but this Host is more than a comedian.

Perhaps my being a Catholic made it more obvious to me. But many

with other Christian backgrounds are attuned to the pattern of this mental picture. Consider: This character is *always* referred to as “the Host.” The meal he sets before the Pilgrims is not described in any detail except to say it is the best of food and strong wine. Such words echo poetic references to the Eucharist, the Bread of the Altar, that is, *the Host*. His rules must be obeyed without question; those who choose to go against his wishes can expect to be penalized. He will guide the Pilgrims and a banquet at the end of their journey is promised. These attributes displayed the likeness of Christ to me before the travelers even ventured forth.

A short time later, when I recognized the zodiac parallels, I had to reexamine the status of this Host. What *celestial* counterpart could he play? It must be “someone” who provides rules, is always obeyed and sets the path for the zodiac. Listeners to talks I’ve given often recognize the figure before I reach the end of my exposition. You, too, may already see the answer. Poetic imagery over centuries, again, has merged the symbol of Christ as Son/Sun.

This allegory about the sun and the zodiac with an overlay of Christ guiding a company of pilgrims might seem more or less self-evident. It is currently embraced, however, only by a select audience—those willing to accept ideas outside the confines of standard academic thinking.

What keeps this allegorical approach from general endorsement? The answer involves the image of Christ and the attitude toward allegory.

When Victorians renewed Chaucer’s reputation, after several centuries of neglect, The Chaucer Society was formed. The Society had the poet’s works published with authority. A heated debate followed as to whether Chaucer’s loyalties had been *Protestant* or *Papist*. The debate thrived in spite of the fact that Chaucer died in 1400, more than a century

before Luther's protests.

G. K. Chesterton points out a Victorian convention that "a literary study should not refer to religion, except when there is an opportunity of a passing sneer." Eventually a tacit agreement prevailed to end discussing Chaucer's religious leanings. If we insist, now, that the Host *is* Christ, that is a direct reference to Catholic dogma. The belief became prominent and elaborately celebrated as the feast of Corpus Christi (Body of Christ) during Chaucer's lifetime. To stress this fact reopens the question of the poet's allegiance to the Church and breaks the unspoken truce.

Allegory creates another stumbling block. A brief quote from a book highly recommended to students, *A Preface to Chaucer* by D. W. Robertson (1962), says it all: "Allegory is almost universally regarded with suspicion, if not contempt," and it is adjudged "tedious."

How would Robertson's statement influence a student who saw hints of double images as he became acquainted with the Pilgrims? Unexpected images would be suppressed; incorporating nonconformist ideas into a required paper would be unacceptable.

So, between the hesitancy to deal with Christ participating in the pilgrimage, and the reluctance to insist on double images where you see them, there is no movement toward accepting the structure of the *Tales* as a grand allegory with a religious dimension.

A serendipitous find for me was a book discovered during my research; it had *not* been recommended on a college reading list. An heroic scholar Angus Fletcher (only two years after Robertson's *Preface*) published *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*. What a revelation! He illustrates allegorical technique from classic literature up to the present day. Fletcher shed light on concepts both astonishing and exciting. One factor

alone will demonstrate its value: *a creative allegory is predictable*. Once you discover the basis, all parts *must* be there. If a story is patterned after Cinderella, for example, you will find an element of “ugly step-sisters” and Prince Charming will arrive to save the day.

It is common to find two types of allegory, *interpretive* and *inventive*, both lumped together. That’s an unfortunate because *interpretive* allegory will take a well known story and force a Christian significance into it. For example, an erotic episode of the lover plucking his rosebud (13th century *Romance of the Rose*) was moralized to signify Joseph of Aramathea taking Christ’s body down from the cross. In contrast, the second type, the style to associate with Chaucer, is *inventive* where the author creates parallel story lines as an imaginative work progresses.

Returning our thoughts now to the *Canterbury Tales*, what advantage have we gained? Already able to recognize a few zodiac signs, we know that *all* twelve must be there. Recalling that there are twenty-nine pilgrims, where does that leave us? Establishing all twenty-nine identities is a challenge, but trust Chaucer’s words. He is here to help. For example, if among the Pilgrims there is a man dedicated to war, and a woman whose motto is “Love conquers all,” which celestial figures would they represent? If you named the planets Mars and Venus, you’ve caught on to Chaucer’s plan. And if two planets are there, then *predictably* all “planets” known in Chaucer’s time must be there.

The Middle Ages believed the earth to be the center of the universe. So their list of “planets,” in order from nearest to farthest, reads—the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The overall scheme regarding the Pilgrims is considerably more complex than the signs of the zodiac plus the “planets.” Trusting Chaucer’s words will prove essential.

With what we've learned about allegory, let's take a closer look at the description of Taurus / the Miller. What follows are Chaucer's Middle English words. He conceals double meanings or dual purposes in some. If you are unfamiliar with this old vocabulary, a little patience and accepting the words as being ordinary but misspelled can help make the portrait understandable. I've indicated definitions where the Middle English word is no longer in our vocabulary.

The millere was a stout <u>carl for the nones</u> ;	churl for the nonce
Ful byg he was of brawn, and <u>EEK</u> of bones.	also
That proved wel, for <u>over</u> al ther he <u>cam</u> ,	overcame
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the <u>ram</u> .	prize / ram
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke <u>knarre</u> ;	“knotted tree trunk”
Ther was no dore that he <u> nolde</u> heve <u>of harre</u> ,	could not off hinge
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.	
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,	
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.	
Upon the <u>cop</u> right of his nose he hade	top
A werte, and theron stood a toft of herys,	
Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;	
His nosethirles blake were and wyde.	
A swerd and <u>bokeler</u> bar he by his syde.	shield
His mouth as greet was as a greet <u>forneys</u> .	furnace
He was a <u>jangler</u> and a <u>goliardeys</u> ,	an entertainer
And that was moost of synne and <u>harlotries</u> .	vulgarities
Wel koude he stelen corn and <u>tollen thries</u> ;	charge thrice
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, <u>pardee</u> .	<i>par Dieu</i> / by God

A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.

Looking over the details of this depiction, the last seven lines comment on a human being who is an entertainer, a cheat and a musician. If you were not aware of the zodiac identity, you could hardly expand the image. No matter how animal-like twelve of the earlier lines appear, it would seem foolish to claim that this is the description of a bull, but all the other travelers are human.

But we *do* know this character is a bull and more. To the Middle Ages, a horned animal conjured pictures of the devil. Consider images of goats in tarot cards and common illustrations of Satan with prominent horns. And the tale the Miller tells is appropriately bawdy and perverse, as well—a tale humorous but wicked.

So, we will find here Chaucer's fashioning of multiple images: an animal, the devil, and the sign of Taurus all woven together.

Looking first for animal qualities, there are many. As a bull, he is bulky, brawny, short, and broad. Several mentions of his facial hair always compares it to hair of a fox or sow. The "beard" is not soft or long, only broad. His nostrils, thoroughly animal-like, are wide and black.

A line that caused me a good deal of confusion ultimately augmented the animal image. The line speaks of "a sword and buckler by his side," hardly how you would equip a bull. A definition of *sword* in the Middle English Dictionary, however, held a surprising animal association. Attuned to medieval imagery, a quotation regarding four-and-twenty oxen describes them as coming out of their stalls and playing at sword and buckler. Horns

of the beasts here are visualized as sporting equipment.

Turning from the animal, we search for clues of the perfidious devil. He is a crude fellow and vulgar as well as a thief. The first line calls the Miller a “carl” (churl), a crude fellow. His mouth, likened to a furnace, recalls the fires of hell, a common association used in medieval preaching. Staging in religious dramas of that period finds a large furnace of flames called “hell mouth” off to the side—the destination of wicked souls. Portrayed as a fiendish entertainer, his offerings are vulgar and sinful. In business he both steals and cheats. And in the closing lines we learn of his talent with the bagpipe, an instrument often used to represent male genitals. In morality plays bagpipe music symbolized enticement. Hieronymus Bosch, in the century after Chaucer, illustrates fiends playing flesh-colored bagpipes as they lead young people in a dance.

Inclusion of the pipes is also a characteristic feature of Chaucer’s style. The instrument is a “dead end” detail mentioned only for effect to enhance the portrait being drawn. It is never activated, never referred to again. The Miller, when the group actually leaves the town, does *not* play a tune. This is one example—there are many—of the poet’s inserting names of specific objects or names of persons or of towns that seem to have importance but go nowhere.

And now we bring the vision of the zodiac into focus. The words *ram* and *furnace* serve a second purpose here. While footnotes explain this “ram” means a “prize”—it also literally means a ram, a male sheep. For Taurus to always have/overcome the ram cleverly indicates the yearly succession of the sign of Aries followed by Taurus.

The second purpose of the furnace image points to a star cluster in the head of Taurus. Ovid described these stars as “radiant with flames.” But the

clinger of the zodiac identity is the thumb of gold. Chaucer often gives a significant clue near the end of a portrait. This one, while apparently illustrating how the Miller cheated his clients with his thumb on the scale, at the covert level focuses on the outstanding aspect of the constellation of Taurus. A “thumb of gold by God” projects the star Aldebaran—created by God, and notable because it is brilliant yellow and brightest in the zodiac.

We’ve covered a lot of material. Let’s gather several ideas together so as to be able to call upon them readily as we examine one more zodiac sign. More than one level of meaning is expected in a great medieval work. And the elements in a creative allegory are predictable. Some details can be added only to enhance the description. And lastly, we must trust Chaucer’s words.

In the portrait of the Miller we found interweaving of the features of an animal, the devil, and the sign of Taurus. His bagpipe, as a “dead end” detail, served only to add interest to the image.

Familiar with these aspects of Chaucer’s method, they will guide us in identifying one more concealed sign. It’s my favorite: the Cook. Meeting the Cook will provide a clue as to why—if there are twelve signs and seven planets—the poet expands his plan to include *twenty-nine* pilgrims. The Cook also demonstrates why—if each Pilgrim is expected to tell a tale—some never do.

We know at the outset that our task is to identify a zodiac constellation. The construction of this depiction is similar to that of Taurus. We expect Chaucer’s words to fit a pattern.

A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones
To boille the chiknes with the marybones,

for the occasion
marrow bones

And poudre-marchant tart and galyngale. (spicy flavorings)
 Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.
 He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
 Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye. thick soup
 But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
 That on his shyne a mormal hadde he. running sore
 For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

Five of the lines tell of the ability to prepare recipes in general. Two lines follow that have shock value. They function as an attention-getter. And the last line tells of yet another recipe—the only one given a specific name.

The attention-getter, the mormal on his leg, is a rotten, incurable sore! Would you really engage a cook with such a repugnant affliction? Chaucer could not have made the zodiac identity more obvious. If you're assuming this is a portrait of Cancer, you're right.

In fourteenth-century terminology, *cancer* (or *canker*) was often medically interchangeable with *mormal*.

Then Chaucer adds the clincher—as he did with Taurus—to confirm the assumption. Confirmation is found in the mention of the one additional recipe—blankmanger—when the Cook's portrait might already be seen as complete. Why the addition? Because the constellation of Cancer has only one distinguishing feature—a star cluster. That formation is called “the Manger.” How fitting the poet's choice of *blank-manger* that creates the visual image of a *white manger*.

The name of the specified recipe sounds like the dessert we call *blancmange* today. The medieval ingredients, however, produced what is more like a seafood “pudding.” One medieval blankmanger recipe calls for

seafood boiled with almonds, rice and sugar. Such a dish would often be reserved for the infirm.

Siting a specific recipe changes the narrator's point of view; it expands his point of view. He is still describing a preparer of food as well as a crab—except that the crab has also become a constellation of stars! That's why the pudding wasn't catalogued with the other foods. Because it was meant to be both surprising and a piece of supportive evidence—again at the end of the portrait, as with Taurus.

Because we know this character has a second identity, the covert image of a crab, the portrait deserves another look.

Our first impression saw a cook who assembled ingredients and processed them in various ways to produce tasty dishes. Having a crab in mind now, we can see the humor of the poet's plan as we recognize that *the crab itself* is also an *ingredient* in the stews and pies and soups mentioned. And it can be combined with spices and ale as it is roasted, broiled, boiled or fried! *Beste*, the very last word of the portrayal, contains a play on *best* and *beast*. This gives two very different readings: Blankmanger made he with *the best*—meaning other good cooks; or made he with *the beast*, that is, the crab. The second intention is clear when we note that the signs of the zodiac could be referred to as the “cercle of bestes” (circle of beasts).

The Cook is generally taken to have a simple portrait, but he is actually a complex figure that combines three images: an individual who prepares seafood; a crab that is an ingredient in the recipes noted; and the star formation of the crab called Cancer. With that already established, what is the point of having the Cook travel—as the poet says—with five guildsmen?

I must admit I've taken the liberty of reversing the poet's order of

presentation—Guildsmen *followed* by the Cook. My introducing the Cook first made identifying the constellation easier. Chances are that Chaucer introduced the Cook's "companions" first to make the zodiac identification more difficult. Allegories are intended to be difficult.

These Guildsmen contribute complexity and fourteenth-century whimsy. The poet's creativity draws upon an ancient tradition. In 1 Corinthians 12, for example, we are told, "The body is one, and hath many members"; the foot, the ear, the eye are all members of the body. Aesop produced a comparable fable which the Middle Ages called "The Belly and Its Members." It tells how body parts revolted against the stomach because it appeared to do no work, yet got all the food; not until they denied food for the stomach did they realize its importance in providing nourishment for all the members. Both stories compartmentalize abilities, but unify the ultimate function of a body.

Chaucer's contemporary John Gower, echoing Aesop, declared the belly/stomach to be the "cook" for the entire body. He says quaintly—it boils meat for all. With that snatch of quirky fourteenth-century thinking, we can now see this Pilgrim as a *cook*, a *crab*, and a *belly*. Have you noticed that the poet gives *no physical description* of this cook? There is no depiction of height, girth, facial qualities, clothing. For the picture presented to serve multiple images, only the affliction—the mormal—is adaptable.

These Guildsmen, as the members, are a group of five, the appropriate number of crab appendages and therefore predictable. In the first twelve lines of their introduction, Chaucer carries on the tradition of the members having diversified tasks. They are:

An Haberdasshere and a Carpenter,

A Webbe, a Dyere, and a <u>Tapycere</u> ,—	tapestry maker
And they were clothed alle in o <u>lyveree</u>	one livery
Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.	
Ful fressh and newe <u>hir geere apiked</u> was:	their apparel spiked
<u>Hir</u> knyves were <u>chaped noght</u> with bras	their trimmed not
But al with silver; wroght ful clene and <u>weel</u>	well
<u>Hire</u> girdles and <u>hir</u> pouches <u>everydeel</u> .	their their completely
Wel semed ech of <u>hem</u> a fair <u>burgeys</u>	them burgess
To sitten in a <u>yeldehalle</u> on a <u>deys</u> .	guildhall dais
<u>Everich</u> , for the wisdom that he kan,	everyone
Was <u>shaply</u> for to been an alderman.	fitting

With patience some lines are easy to understand and accept. A few lines, however, are difficult as they are stated. Let's examine Chaucer's method and consider his purpose.

When we are told that these five men are clothed all in *one* livery, Chaucer means exactly that. We must remember to trust his words. It is not, as footnotes will often explain, that the men all wear *the same kind of suit*. The poet offers us five men inside *one* suit—another statement meant to get our attention.

You've seen two men in a "horse suit": one the front half, the other the rear. Below their costume, we see only their legs. Picture these five men providing the ten appendages/members around the belly of a crab.

Also Chaucer's use of *lyveree* can be seen as a play on *lyvere*—a living being. So the line can be understood to say, "They were clothed as one living being," which restates their identity as members of *one* body. The

surface image of the five characters is men in a costume; covertly, however, they are the body of a single creature—or, a third fascinatingly medieval choice, they would be seen as both simultaneously.

The subsequent allusion to a "solemn and great fraternity" can be understood as a "brotherhood," which is another restatement of unified parts of one body. It is also a reference to the fraternal relationship among all Crustaceans.

In naming the guilds represented, medieval haberdashers come first. They stocked various small articles: spurs, beads, points, and much more. My feeling is that the poet selected this craft for the initial character to portray someone in charge of "various small parts," a clue to the many parts contained in this *one* sign.

The second of the craftsmen is a Carpenter. He deals in construction. This reflects the remarkable ability of crabs to create new shells to house themselves as they grow.

A Webbe is third and is defined as a *weaver* for the surface reading, but the word *web* also means a *net*. The association with harvesting the day's catch for the table is clear.

A Dyer follows. He is skillful at the changing of color—as a crab does when immersed in boiling water.

Lastly, we have the Tapycer. Rather than accepting him as "a maker of tapestry," it is more likely, for the concealed image, that Chaucer intends a play on *tapister*, someone with the ability to pierce (as in *tap* a keg). That ability is a good reason for using caution when handling crabs.

After stating their livelihoods individually, in contrast their physical description has no individuality whatever; one outward appearance fits all. They look fresh and new as the catch of the day. "Piked" describes their

apparel and is a term used for quills of hedgehogs and claws of bears. The word is equally suitable to speak of claws of Crustaceans. Picturing their well-made girdles and pouches can't help but cause a moment's uncertainty. (It recalls the oddity of Taurus' buckler and shield.) We'll explore the idea of girdles in just a bit when we get to the final six lines of the composite of these members.

The narrator's interest shifts from their appearance to their prestige as he continues. These Guildsmen "seemed" to belong at a special table. Chaucer's "seemed" always gets my attention. Here he presents the subjects as appropriate to be in a place of honor. These "burgesses" would be an attractive addition at the head table—as part of the menu.

Now let's take up the closing six lines of the Guildsmen's introduction along with their girdles and pouches.

For <u>catel</u> hadde they <u>ynogh</u> and rente,	property	enough
And <u>eek hir</u> wyves wolde it wel assente;	also	their
And elles certeyn were they to blame.		
It is ful fair to been <u>ycleped</u> "madame,"	called	
And <u>goon</u> to vigilies al bifore,	go	
And have a mantel roialliche <u>ybore</u> .	carried	

It goes without saying that Crustaceans have all the "property" and "income" they need. But what is the point of telling us anything about the wives? They aren't on this pilgrimage. And why does Chaucer depict them with their cloaks royally borne, garments trailing behind as they move? This is *not* the picture of a crab. Such an unexpected detail almost scuttles the image we have seen so clearly. What is wrong?

Actually there is nothing *wrong*; it's just more complicated. Not until I saw carvings in stone of the twelve signs of the zodiac around the door jamb of a Gothic cathedral did I understand. These constellations are seen as part of the vast universe created by God. The sign of Cancer at the cathedral was not illustrated as a *crab* but as a *lobster*. And a lobster is obviously a figure with a substantial part trailing behind.

Though we may find substituting a lobster here as peculiar, in Latin both *crab* and *lobster* are expressed by the same word—*cancer*. Knowledge of Latin was common among Chaucer's educated contemporaries.

Recognizing that Cancer, the *crab*, can also be designated as a lobster, we easily understand why the Guildsmen's "girdles and pouches" are so clean and well-made as they portray a lobster's segmented body.

One more important element in Chaucer's plan for the *Tales* is illustrated here. During the pilgrimage, the five men with the Cook never utter a word. They are never spoken to or about. The Cook and his five companions function as a unit. *They* are the sign of Cancer. The "five men," like the Miller's bagpipes, are an extended "dead end" detail. Chaucer teases us at length with their presence, adding considerable interest to the rendering of the sign, yet the elaborate depiction goes nowhere. The Guildsmen enhance the portrait, but will never be seen—or heard of—again.

The Cook tells a tale, but the five men do not, because only one story is necessary to fulfill the participation of the zodiacal unit. This is an important point. The several pilgrims who do *not* tell stories have been a matter of confusion. We have asked why—if there are twelve signs and seven planets—the poet expands his plan to *twenty-nine* pilgrims. Partly to add difficulty. Chaucer's companions, in the allegorical framework of the *Tales*, are not people but the signs of the zodiac and other celestial bodies;

they travel *disguised*, however, as pilgrims. That explains why, when a sign is portrayed by multiple characters, only *one* tale from the group is necessary. Just one story is expected from the Cook's party although six "individuals" make up the sign of Cancer. Chaucer uses the same technique with Gemini, the two brothers; to have only *one* tale told by the pair is predictable. Ah, but that's another matter.

END