

The Squire's tale ends two lines into its third section, and following this abrupt termination is the "wordes of the Frankeleyn to the Squier." The Franklin praises the young Squire's attempt at a courtly romance and says that he wishes his own son was more like the Squire. This is followed by the "wordes of the Hoost to the Frankeleyn." Many critics believe that the words of the Franklin to the Squire are intended as an interruption of the tale that threatens to go on far too long. However, I believe the words of the Franklin to the Squire were not meant to be an interruption at all. There are four main reasons why I believe the passage was not meant to be an interruption:

one, the Franklin's admiration of gentillesse would have made him reluctant to interrupt the Squire; two, the passage ends two lines into the third section when the logical place for an interruption would be at the end of the second section (Clark, 160-161); three, the passage is similar to that of the Host to Chaucer after his Tale of Melibee- which was an end comment, not an interruption ; and four, the structure and tone of the passage does not seem to be that of an interruption.

In praising the Squire, the Franklin mentions how he is impressed with his "gentilly" (674) or "gentillesse" (694). If we are to believe what the Franklin is saying, that he admires his gentillesse and that he wishes his son "myghte lerne gentillesse aright" (694), we should also assume the Franklin would try and also show gentillesse. In fact, from the General Prologue we know that the Franklin was a member of Parliament and a feudal landholder (Clark 161). Both were positions in higher society in which he would be familiar with gentility and also be expected to follow it. However, interrupting someone in the middle of his speech would be something a person with gentillesse would be hesitant to do. The arguments that the Franklin's actions were rescuing the Squire from an "awkward predicament" (Specht 154) in which his tale was threatening to go on far too long point out that in such a scenario the Franklin's actions would be a "masterpiece of tact" (Spearing, 7). I would argue with this theory for two reasons. First of all, the Squire gives no indication he wishes to be "rescued." In his tale at the end of telling of Canace and the magic ring, he proceeds to say he will tell how the other three gifts affected the lives of other characters. Clearly the Squire could have cut his story short then if he had been so inclined. Therefore I do not think it is fair to claim the Franklin was "rescuing" the Squire. Secondly, if the Franklin were indeed interrupting the Squire to end his story, he could have apologized for interrupting. Obviously the Squire has not completed his tale, he has just announced he has three more parts and is two lines into the telling of the next section. For the Franklin to begin speaking at this point he would clearly be interrupting the Squire. To preserve gentillesse it would be necessary for him to apologize for the break in. One or two lines saying he was sorry to interrupt but that he just had to tell the Squire how impressed with the tale would be all that was needed to show gentillesse.

Some critics claim that the Franklin is "pretending that the Squire has finished" (Peterson, 66-67), in order to stop him as kindly as possible. I do not believe this scenario since the Squire is obviously not finished, as I have stated reasons supporting this earlier, and therefore the Franklin would not be fooling anyone in trying to act as if the Squire was finished. In addition to that, the Host would also have to catch on to what the Franklin was doing and go along with pretending the Squire was done. If we look at some of the other comments made by the Host in the Canterbury Tales we see that he is not the quickest to catch onto what the moral of some of the tales are, and I think it would be safe to say that assuming he would catch on to what the Franklin was trying to do would be stretching things.

If we look at where the Franklin's words to the Squire begin we see that it is two lines into the third section. A more logical position for an interruption would be before the Squire begins a whole new section, like at the end of the

second section. In my discussion of the Franklin's gentillesse we have already seen that the Squire does not show any indication he plans on stopping until he has covered all the gifts to Cambuskan. An attempt to stop the Squire before he has completed his tale would be more "gentil" if it were to come at a break in the tale as opposed to mid-sentence. Also, the passage would fit better at the end of the tale than any point in the middle. If the Squire's Tale was completed and we assume that the Franklin's words still followed it, we see it would still make sense. In fact it would make more sense because there would be no need to speculate as what the Franklin was doing. He would obviously be giving praise for a tale he admired, not rescuing anyone or pretending a tale was over. It even follows the form of another passage that praises a tale after it is finished.

Specifically looking at the Host's passage at the end of the Tale of Melibee we see that it is similar to that of the Franklin's to the Squire. The Host tells Chaucer that he wishes his wife was more like Dame Prudence, a character in the Tale of Melibee; and the Franklin wishes his son was more like the Squire. Both also praise the tale which they follow. If the Squire's Tale were finished it would be a long tale of at least 3000 lines (Peterson 70). The Tale of Melibee, although not as long as what the Squire's Tale would probably be if finished, is a long tale in comparison to the other pilgrims' tales; but it is not interrupted. It is followed by the Host's comments which follow a similar structure to that of the Franklin's. Such similarities support my thesis that the words to the Franklin to the Squire were not meant to be an interruption. In fact, the two passages are titled in a similar manner, "Heere folwen the wordes of the Frankeleyn to the Squire," and "The murye wordes of the Hoost to the Monk." Suggesting they are the same type of passage, which would mean that the Franklin's passage was meant to come at the completion of the Squire's Tale, like the Host's comes at the end of the Tale of Melibee.

Neither the Host nor the Franklin sound like they are interrupting anything either, but it is still assumed, usually, that the Franklin is interrupting the Squire. If we look at other interruptions in the Canterbury Tales we can classify them into two categories (Seaman, 15). The first would be outbursts which are in "immediate response to an insult or slight" (Seaman, 15). After such an interruption bickering often arises. Examples of such would be the exchanges between the Friar and the Summoner or the Reeve when the drunk Miller announces he will tell a tale about a carpenter. Like both of the above examples, these interruptions usually occur in the prologues, but the Summoner and Friar's spill over into the early part of their tales.

The second type of interruption are not outbursts. They occur when a figure of authority stops a tale. This is usually the Host, like when he interrupts the Tale of Sir Thopas. Another example of this type of interruption is when the Knight interrupts the Monk's Tale. Both the Host and the Knight are speaking from a position of authority. Their words have the purpose and effect of stopping the particular tale. If we are to consider the Franklin's words an interruption, it would have to fall into this second category because the Franklin has not been insulted or has anything to be offended over.

However, the Franklin's words to the Squire have none of the features that are characteristic of this type of interruption. There is no ambiguity when the Host and Knight make their interruptions. They are obviously interrupting a tale in progress. Also, both of these interruptions are titled as such in the text: "Heere the Hoost stynteth Chaucer of his Tale of Thopas," and "Heere stynteth the Knyght the Monk of his tale." The Host and the Knight begin their interruptions by giving reasons as to why they are stopping the tale, something the Franklin does not do. The Host tells Chaucer that his tale is making his ears ache, and the Knight states that a little heaviness is all right, but he has heard enough.

In both the Host's and the Knight's interruptions they use similar language (Seaman 16). It also indicates that they are halting a tale. From the Host's interruption we have "'Namooore of this, for Goddes dignitee,' / Quod oure Hooste" (919-20); and from the Knight's, "'Hoo!' quod the Knyght, 'good sire, namooore of this!'" (2767). The Host again uses a similarly constructed phrase in backing up

the Knight's interruption, "'Sire Monk, namoore of this, so God yow blesse!'" (2788). The form of these phrases in the interruptions is a convention Chaucer seems to have liked. He also uses it in the Knight's Tale when Theseus comes across Palamon and Arcitite fighting in the grove (Seaman, 16). He yells, "'Hoo!/ Namooore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!'" (1706-7); Theseus uses something similar again when stopping the tournament. In both of these situations Theseus is stopping the action from a position of authority, too. There are however no such phrases present in the "wordes of the Frankeleyn to the Squier," nor does the Franklin give any reasons for interrupting.

Another consideration when looking at the structure of the Franklin's words to the Squire is the deviation of the "etiquette of discourse and conduct in the Canterbury Tales" (Seaman, 16). For the Franklin to interrupt the Squire without stating his reasons would be an unprecedented breach of power. We might even assume such action would cause the Host to be outraged, something he does not seem to be in his words to the Franklin. He does not make any comment or reference at all about an interruption being made when he speaks to the Franklin. In other instances he admonishes pilgrims for interrupting, as he does with the interruptions made by the Miller, the Reeve, the Friar, or the Summoner. Nor does he support the action of interrupting as he does with the Knight's interruption of the Monk's Tale.

Evidence from the manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales provides further support that the Franklin does not interrupt the Squire. The scribes must not have thought the "wordes of the Frankeleyn to the Squier" was a courtly interruption suitable to the character of the Franklin. Over twenty manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales the passage to link the Squires Tale to the Merchant's Tale, with the name of "Merchant" replacing that of "Franklin" (Manly, 298). Of the eight most reliable manuscripts, the Squire-Franklin link is lacking in the Corpus Christi and Lansdowne, "missing through loss of leaves in three" (Manly, 298), Cambridge Dd, Cambridge Gg, and Harley 7334. It joins the Squire's Tale to the Merchant's Tale in Hengwrt and Petworth, and joins the Squire's Tale to the Franklin's Tale in only the Ellesmere (Manly, 299). And, in none of the Canterbury Tales manuscripts is the passage introduced with such a phrase as "Heere stynteth the Frankeleyn the Squier of his Tale."

The interpretation of the Squire's Tale would only change drastically if the Franklin's words were accepted as not being an interruption in that it would no longer be considered intentionally incomplete. If we assume the words of the Franklin were meant to be an end comment, it would mean the Squire's Tale must have to be thought of as another incomplete or unfinished tale. However, how the Squire stops is similar to how Chaucer stops his Tale of Sir Thopas, in mid-sentence. If we are to believe this is intentional in the Squire's Tale like in the Tale of Sir Thopas, then it means we are missing the necessary interruption. Therefore there are two possibilities of what the Franklin's passage was meant to be if we accept it is not an interruption. It could have been written by Chaucer as an end comment in anticipation of finishing the Squire's Tale, or it is a comment that was meant to come after an interruption by someone else.

I believe there is enough evidence to contradict the idea that the passage is intended to be an interruption. Its placement, its tone and structure, the Franklin's character, and its similarities to the Host's end comments to the Tale of Melibee all support this idea. Likewise evidence from the early manuscripts show that it was never overwhelmingly considered an interruption. The tendency to try to make the Canterbury Tales more complete or a better impression of unity would make one try to present the words of the Franklin to the Squire as an interruption. But, we know that it is an unfinished work and there are loose ends in it. It therefore would be a likely possibility that the passage is just one more loose end.

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