

"The theme of the 'praise of good ladies' will operate to the extent that Chaucer will make Cleopatra an innocent such as she never was before or has been since, and he will pass in silence over events in Medea's history which reek too much of blood or witches' brew." (p. 14) He softens this statement in the next sentence: Although we have Gods operating in a dream sequence in the Prologue, Frank feels Chaucer, "...eschews completely any moral or theological purpose and claims for his tales a purely secular intention." This is in part, according to Frank, a result of using Ovid as his source for the tales. He points out that there were several versions of Ovid, and that, "Chaucer's Ovid ... is not (a) moral teacher, but the master of poetic narrative." Frank carefully skirts the moral question in the reworking of stories, saying that he Legend is not the "... the superior to the poetry of moral comment, only that this (his treatment) makes it different." The Legend is not a moralistic work for Frank, and he sees Chaucer "... set(ing) out to achieve independence of treatment, relying on 'these olde apprevd stories' with no extraneous propping. All that his stories will 'prove' is that particular women, and by implication many women, are faithful." (pp. 16-17) After fighting his way through some enlightening aesthetic criticism, and entangling himself himself with moral issues, I believe the last statement above corners the problem of the Prologue's function.

To prove moral detachment Frank jumps into the legend of Hypermestra, who we remember refused her evil father's demand to kill her husband Lyno, and who is transformed by Chaucer into an example of a good woman. He labels the passage as a piece of "total narrative." He chooses not to argue the success or failure of the tale, wishing to point out the method that is "...without reference to the conventions of moralizings ordinarily appealed to."